

THE INSTITUTE FOR ANACYCLOSIS
EXCERPT FROM
THE REVOLUTIONS OF CIVILISATION
BY W. M. FLINDERS PETRIE

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Note: This text contains a summary description of a long-term civilizational cycle which correlates to Anacyclosis. It is presently unclear whether Petrie referred to descriptions of Anacyclosis made by other writers in coming to his conclusions, or whether he did so independently.

(31) Stages of Government.

Forms of government are left to the last, as the regulation of daily affairs, and the repression of wrong, is of little meaning in civilisation, when compared with the great formative interests of man's mind, whose phases we have studied. It is true that men thinks and talks much about government, in all ages. But then the concern of man is no measure of the real value of a subject, as appears by his perennial interest in gambling, which now occupies a large part of the printing in this country. So also government is of great concern, but little import. Constitutional History is a barren figment compared with the permanent value of Art, Literature, Science, or Economics. What man *does* is the essential in each civilisation, how he advances in capacities, and what he bequaeths to future ages; the relations between the different classes of a country are merely subsidiary. England, France, and Russia will be remembered by Newton, Pasteur, and Mendelieff, when all their forms of government are forgotten.

At every invasion by a new people, which, as we have seen, is the necessary foundation of a new period of civilisation, there must be strong personal rule. The holding together of the invaders, the decisive subjection of the invaded, the strife of the fusion of peoples, all require an autocracy of greater or less scope. This period lasts during four to six centuries.

The next stage is an oligarchy, when leadership is still essential, but the unity of the country can be maintained by law instead of by autocracy. This stage varies in length; in Greece and Rome it was about four centuries, in Mediaeval Europe about five or six centuries.

Then gradually the transformation to a democracy takes place; beginning about the great phase of literature in Greece, Rome, and Modern Europe. During this time — of about four centuries — wealth, that is the accumulated capital of facilities — continues to increase. When democracy has attained full power, the majority without capital necessarily eat up the capital of the minority, and the civilisation steadily decays, until the inferior population is swept away to make room for a fitter people. The consumption of all the resources of the Roman empire, from the second century when democracy was dominant, until the Gothic kingdom arose in its ruin, is the best-known example in detail. Such is the regular connection of the forms of government, or the relations of the classes, which is inherent in the conditions of the revolutions of civilization.

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