PART IV

CONCLUSION
Those generals who followed Alexander the Great to rule the empire he created became tyrants of an unabashed sort, absolute monarchs with little pretense at submitting to checks and balances. So much for the Greek ideal of the examined life, and for saving the Greek world from Persian tyranny. Many went so far as to call themselves gods, as if declining faith in the traditional gods, at least in certain intellectual circles, did not interfere with increasing appeals to the superstition and credulity of the masses. It would seem Communism and Fascism’s “cult of personality” had plenty of predecessors.

Though the ancient world had plenty of belief in the importance of virtue for regulating society, they had much less faith in how to achieve it. These tendencies of the ancient world have reappeared in the modern world. Thus the increasing anonymity and bureaucratization of modern life have produced increasingly relativistic ethics in our private lives but absolutist ethics (in the form of high expectations even when they are unrealistic ones) for our leaders to create social order for us, even in America, but even more so in Europe.

There is just after generation after generation of technical progress much less faith that the average person can achieve much, and so must defer to bureaucratic specialists to take the lead. In fact the average citizen increasingly does not know how to evaluate leaders and so must defer to their expertise, something that modern leaders, just like their ancient predecessors, know how to take advantage of for their own benefit.

Something known ever since ancient times, that the benefits of an increased standard of living must be balanced by the costs, the loss of emotional satisfaction in those areas of life that cannot be bought, is true now as always. Also we don't really know what to do about it except by muddling through, now as always.

The American ideal, dating back to frontier days, is one of personal independence mixed with communal loyalty but not being a cog in a bureaucratic machine. This is unlike Europe which has accepted bureaucratization of society for many generations now and even has cultural ideals of how “aristocratic” leaders should behave.