“The Earth Itself Is a Suburb”: Local Attachments and Universal Norms in the Natural Law

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The work of J. Budziszewski highlights an important dimension of natural law ethical and political theory, i.e., the interplay between particular customs and universal moral norms. This discussion investigates that relationship through a reading of G. K. Chesterton’s The Napoleon of Notting Hill—a novel that presents a nuanced picture of the vitality and danger of robust patriotism. Chesterton directs our attention to the necessity of real local attachments if we are ultimately to conform to the universal justice of the natural law.

Recently the First Things website featured an article by J. Budziszewski entitled “The Problem with Conservatism” that originally appeared in the April 1996 issue of the magazine. I noted this in particular because I well recall my first reading of the piece. I was young at the time, but, being of a naturally Burkean disposition, viewed the title with some suspicion. Either Prof. Budziszewski’s piece was going to be quite short—a confession that he couldn’t really think of much to say—or I was going to have a substantial list of disagreements. But given that his previous essay had been entitled “The Problem with Liberalism,” I gave him the benefit of the doubt and proceeded with an open mind. I recall thinking at the time that he hadn’t gotten conservatism quite right, or at least I myself did not identify with the problems he named. The passage of time, however, and the acquisition of a Ph.D. in political theory (under his advisement, I should add), have brought me round to an appreciation of Budziszewski’s diagnosis of conservatism’s characteristic pitfalls.

The thing I did not fully recognize as a young reader is the ease with which the dynamic relationship between universal norms and particular usage becomes imbalanced—or one completely eclipses the other. Conservatism’s emphasis on the continuity of particular customs and traditions causes a proclivity to imbalance away from a transcendent moral order according to which those traditions may be measured. Most of the conservative pitfalls Budziszewski identifies fall within this general class of error. For example, he argues “instrumentalism” subordinates religious faith to the ends of the state and so assumes that there is no good, no final end, that outstrips definition by temporal political authority. Likewise, the
error of “traditionalism” favors existing usage on the basis of mere convenience or an unreflective reliance on the status quo. The mistake here is to treat tradition as the final standard of truth rather than as the best means of its discovery. Inasmuch as conservatives heavily rely on particular traditions as carriers of inherited wisdom, the temptation continually presents itself to forget the end and get comfortable with the means.

A right understanding of the dynamic relationship between the universal moral order and particular traditions is also at the heart of classical natural law theory, which has been the main focus of Budziszewski’s scholarly interest. However, as he points out in his recent Companion to the Commentary (on Thomas Aquinas’s Treatise on Law), many theorists fail to appreciate this fact. They point to Aquinas’s description of natural law as the imprint of eternal reason on the created order and conclude that particular customs and usage become all but irrelevant in light of these universal norms. In response, Budziszewski argues that this forgets a crucial dimension of the natural law’s universality: “the foundational principles of natural law are not only right for everyone, but at some level known to everyone.”

This idea undergirds Aquinas’s view that it is possible for custom to obtain the force of law. Human action is in fundamental ways informed by the universal principles of the natural law, thus Aquinas accords significant authority to custom and traditions. Classical natural law, Budziszewski continues, works from the bottom up. It does not pull premises out of nothing and then foist them upon plain people whether they like it or not; rather it tries to “connect the dots” of their common moral sense, seeking to elicit, illuminate, clarify, harmonize, develop, ennoble and unconfuse what they dimly know already. . . . [The natural law tradition] plants its seeds in the warm and fragrant loam of shared human experience.

It is a grave misunderstanding of natural law to suppose that it works by the rigid imposition of deductively derived moral norms. There are some cases, of course, where the movement between natural law and positive law is one of deduction. However, the primary mode of interaction between the two is deeply reliant on shared human experience. Immersion in and attachment to particular customs and traditions is not at odds with the natural law, but rather a primary way that we come to understand it. Thus, a dynamic tension (or perhaps “conversation”) between universal principles and particular custom lies at the heart of the natural law tradition.

In what follows, I would like to explore this relationship through a reading of G. K. Chesterton’s philosophical novel, The Napoleon of Notting Hill. Published in 1904, this was Chesterton’s first novel, and
he uses it to explore the nature of true patriotism. The themes in Prof. Budziszewski’s work I have referenced are tightly related to the fundamental question Chesterton raises in *Notting Hill*, namely, how should we understand the human capacity for deep, exclusive attachment to particular people, places, and traditions relative to our capacity for a detached, rational universalism?

**A READING OF THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL**

In 1904, G. K. Chesterton published an essay entitled “The Patriotic Idea” in a collection of writings on England. Although he is a partisan of patriotism, Chesterton is disturbed by England’s imperialism, most recently the annexation of the Republic of Transvaal and the Orange Free State at the conclusion of the Second Boer War in 1902. Chesterton argues that the expansion of the British Empire represents not a robust patriotism but a bastardization of the real thing. True patriotism is assailed from two directions. On the one hand, cosmopolitans eschew genuine patriotic feeling by elevating the universal love of humanity over love of one’s next-door neighbor. For modern man, love of country is irrational and outdated. On the other hand, England’s imperialism masquerades as a natural extension of patriotism, but in reality it is merely a repackaged “opportunistic cosmopolitanism” that seeks to subsume other countries whenever possible. Yet, this cannot be *real patriotism* because it cannot involve love. Love is a form of attachment, and attachment requires that we have something to be attached to—something with limits and definition. “A man is a citizen of that Commonwealth the nature of which he can conceive, and no other,” Chesterton argues. But empires are defined above all by lack of definition and limitlessness. Thus, the aspirations of the Imperial Patriot are a conceit, yet another attack by a soulless cosmopolitanism on the true spirit of patriotism.

That same year, Chesterton also published *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, in which he takes up the themes of the essay with greater complexity and even more panache (which, for Chesterton, is saying a lot). In it he presents a remarkably subtle account of patriotism that is alive to both its beauty and its danger. *Notting Hill* paints a splendid picture of the particular loves and local attachments that animate patriotism. Yet, Chesterton’s narrative also shows that if unmoored and unbalanced by a broader moral perspective, patriotism carries the seeds of its own destruction.

The action of *Notting Hill* takes place eighty years into the future, but Chesterton does not write a futuristic tale. Rather, he describes a London of 1984 that is marked by a bland sameness.
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Very few words are needed to explain why London . . . will be very like it is now. . . . The reason can be stated in one sentence. The people had absolutely lost faith in revolutions. All revolutions are doctrinal—such as the French one, or the one that introduced Christianity. For it stands to common sense that you cannot upset all existing things, customs, and compromises, unless you believe in something outside them, something positive and divine.8

Chesterton envisions a London in which modern materialism has persisted unchecked by any belief in a transcendent or divine order that might challenge the status quo. The inhabitants of London do not embrace custom in a rich Burkean sense; rather there are simply no criteria according to which it might be evaluated or challenged. Convention is all there is. This produces a moribund stagnation—“a vague and somewhat depressed reliance upon things happening as they have always happened.”9 The people have lost all interest in politics. Democracy is dead; civic life has been replaced by the monotonous efficiency of bloodless bureaucrats. Much like the soft despotism Tocqueville famously describes in Democracy in America, Chesterton’s London drones along under a “dull popular despotism” that mechanically pursues but the vaguest notion of “the public interest.”10

This monotony is interrupted, however, when a new King of England is chosen by lot (in accord with the regnant spirit of democratic pessimism). The lucky fellow is Auberon Quin, an odd little man with a penchant for irony. He has more than a penchant, in fact; Quin is singularly fixated on the absurdities of life. “How can . . . people strike dignified attitudes,” he demands, “and pretend that things matter, when the total ludicrousness of life is proved by the very method by which it is supported? A man strikes the lyre, and says, ‘Life is real, life is earnest,’ and then goes into a room and stuffs alien substances into a hole in his head.”11

Quin is a man “whose soul has been emptied of all pleasures but folly.”12 He is a detached, and at times ruthless, satirist who cannot bring himself to take anything in life seriously. Once elevated to the throne, Quin sets about to turn the whole London bureaucracy into a grand burlesque. What better way to mock modern pretentions than to plunge London back into the Dark Ages? King Auberon institutes a grand “Charter of the Cities,” which revives the ancient customs, offices, and histories of the London boroughs. London has become a soulless bureaucracy; Quin determines to revive its ancient fires of patriotism.

[H]e proposed to devote his remaining strength to bringing about a keener sense of local patriotism in the various municipalities of London. How few of them knew the legends of their own boroughs! How
many there were who had never heard of the true origin of the Wink of Wandsworth! What a large proportion of the younger generation in Chelsea neglected to perform the old Chelsea Chuff! Pimlico no longer pumped the Pimlies. Battersea had forgotten the name of Blick.  

This is all uproarious fun for Quin, festooning the stolid civil servants of London with the costumes and pageantry of medieval England. No one else is laughing, but they are forced to play along.

The grand charade continues unabated for a decade with no indication that patriotism has actually taken root. Under their robes, the provosts of London persist as bureaucratic functionaries, and the denizens of the boroughs continue on in casual indifference. There is one man, however, who doesn’t get the joke. Only a young boy when King Auberon instituted the Charter of the Cities, Adam Wayne is now a young man of nineteen who has just been named Provost of Notting Hill. He takes to his office with relish and is vexed to discover that the government is planning a road that runs right through Notting Hill. No other borough has objected, but Provost Wayne refuses to yield even an inch of his city to the claim of public interest.

At first Auberon Quin thinks he’s found a fellow satirist. Here is a man playing the charade with sublime irony! Citing the king’s edict, Wayne decries the unholy violation of Notting Hill:

I fight for your royal vision, for the great dream you dreamt of the League of the Free Cities. You have given me this liberty. . . . This leadership and liberty of Notting Hill is a gift from your Majesty, and if it is taken from me, by God! it shall be taken in battle, and the noise of that battle shall be heard in the flats of Chelsea and in the studios of St. John’s Wood.

Adam Wayne, however, is not a cynic. King Auberon is dumbfounded to discover that the gesticulating lunatic before him is very much in earnest. Provost Wayne is devoted to the liberty of Notting Hill. The proposed road violates the sanctity of his home, and nothing could be as important as its protection.

Wayne is not a spirit kindred to Quin, but rather a diametrically opposed force of nature. Quin has played at patriotism with the detached irony of a humorist. Adam Wayne is animated by all the passion and exclusive attachment of a lover. Quin is a debunker, a universalist, a philosopher. How could Notting Hill—that spot on the map—be anything more than an absurdity? After all, “the earth itself is a suburb,” and men of Quin’s ilk can at most “feel only drearily andrespectably amused as they move upon it.” Wayne, on the other hand, is a true believer and a patriot for whom even the street lamps of Notting Hill are “things quite as eter-
nal as the stars.”¹⁶ The gravity of Notting Hill is just as obvious to Adam Wayne as its insignificance is plain to Auberon Quin. He answers Quin in a lovely passage that must be quoted in full.

“I was born, like other men, in a spot of the earth which I loved because I had played boys’ games there, and fallen in love, and talked with my friends through nights that were nights of the gods. And I feel the riddle. These little gardens where we told our loves. These streets where we brought out our dead. Why should they be commonplace? Why should they be absurd? Why should it be grotesque to say that a pillar-box is poetic when for a year I could not see a red pillar-box against the yellow evening in a certain street without being wracked with something of which God keeps the secret, but which is stronger than sorrow or joy? Why should any one be able to raise a laugh by saying ‘the Cause of Notting Hill’?—Notting Hill where thousands of immortal spirits blaze with alternate hope and fear.”¹⁷

Wayne’s patriotism is rooted in everyday life—all the memories, affections, love, and relationships that make up his personal history. Notting Hill is his home, and its value is as self-evident and palpable as the goodness of life itself. Quin can only laugh at the smallness and insignificance of the little London borough; for Wayne, it is precisely its smallness that makes it so significant. “[T]he patriot never under any circumstances boasts of the largeness of his country, but always, and of necessity, boasts of the smallness of it.”¹⁸

Despite the King’s incredulity, Wayne is resolute in his resistance. And his opponents are just as determined that the road will go through. He cannot be reasoned with; he cannot be cajoled or bought; so, in the end, Notting Hill must be crushed. The King does not support the use of military force, for after all, it was all only a joke—nothing worth fighting about. However, he is summarily overruled by treasonous administrators. Meanwhile, with some doing Wayne is able to rouse his fellow citizens to the city’s defense. Just as the bureaucrats assumed Notting Hill had a price, they are confident it will be easily overwhelmed by superior numbers. Yet here again, they grossly underestimate Adam Wayne and completely misunderstand the vital force of patriotic affection. To summarize a good chunk of the novel’s action, in a series of harrowing battles, Notting Hill prevails.

If Chesterton had been interested in penning an ode to patriotism, the narrative might have ended here—the cosmopolitan cynic and the modern bureaucrat subdued by the true patriot. However, as his essay on patriotism indicates, he is deeply concerned with the threat of a false spirit of patriotism that gives rise to imperialism. Thus, in the final movement of
**Notting Hill**’s narrative, Chesterton explores how the patriotism of Adam Wayne—for all its vitality—contains the seeds of its own destruction.

Notting Hill’s glorious defeat of the armies of South Kensington at Campden Hill is the coup de grace to London’s bureaucratic oppression. Notting Hill establishes itself as the dominant borough in London, and, indeed, its victory represents the triumph of patriotism itself, or at least patriotism of a kind. In the wars between the boroughs, every citizen of London takes up arms in the interests of his own city. Wayne persuades the Notting Hillers to defend their city, but soon, the citizens of Bayswater, North Kensington, and South Kensington all have rallied to their own standards. In fighting for their respective boroughs, Londoners at large shake off their former lethargy. The battle cry of “Notting Hill!” is met with shouts of “Bayswater!” and “South Kensington!” In the midst of battle, with the ultimate outcome as yet unclear, “‘We have won!’ crie[s] Wayne, striking his flag-staff in the ground. ‘Bayswater forever! We have taught our enemies patriotism!’”

Twenty years later, however, the patriotic enthusiasm of Notting Hill has metastasized into tyrannical imperialism. The citizens of Notting Hill have finally learned to venerate their own history and customs, but they have come to love them as superior to those of their vanquished foes. Their enthusiasm for the history and customs of Notting Hill becomes a passion to spread that culture. Bayswater must not memorialize its own heroes and cherish its own traditions; it is forced to embrace those of Notting Hill. Now, this is certainly not the spirit of Adam Wayne. Wayne fought “not merely for my own city . . . but for all places in which these great ideas could prevail. I am fighting not merely for Notting Hill, but for Bayswater itself; for North Kensington itself.” Wayne fights for the triumph of local patriotism and wants other cities to enjoy the same freedom he defends for his own home. Yet, in the twenty years since leading Notting Hill to victory, Adam Wayne has practically retired from public life. He spends his time “mostly wrapped in dreams, and sits with his old sword beside the fire.” Without him, Notting Hill has become a tyrant.

At the same time, the principle that ignited patriotism in Notting Hill sparked an identical love in its foes, and thus Notting Hill’s imperialism stands as a constant affront to the honor and loyalty of the other boroughs. They will not brook rough subordination indefinitely, and thus, Notting Hill’s days are numbered. When at last the oppressed unite and Adam Wayne is called once more to the battlefield in defense of his city, he knows that all is lost. He fights knowing that Notting Hill will be defeated because now at last, it ought to be defeated. The soul has gone out of Notting Hill, and thus it is utterly destroyed.
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This brief summary certainly does not do justice to the richness and fun of Chesterton’s narrative, but it provides enough detail to unpack his main lines of thought on patriotism. With the glorious victory and tragic demise of Notting Hill, Chesterton prods us to ask, “What is it about Adam Wayne’s devotion to Notting Hill that puts the city on course to an imperialistic tyranny?” The first thing to note is that it is not precisely Wayne’s own patriotism that leads to Notting Hill’s oppression of the other boroughs. The particular character of his patriotism, in fact, is unique in the story. Wayne sees Notting Hill as no one else sees it. He is somehow untouched by the bureaucratic malaise that has infected London, and for him, Notting Hill glows with all the warmth of a living room hearth. It is his home—“a high ground of the common earth, on which men have built houses to live, in which they are born, fall in love, pray, marry, and die.” Wayne’s is the patriotism of love and attachment that can only emerge through personal relationships, connection, and memory. He has come to know the romance of Notting Hill as no one else has, and for him, “all common and noble things are in a democracy of combination.” Yet, there is a problem: How is that vision to be communicated to neighbors that have become entrenched in the monotony of life and detached from their community? The substance of Wayne’s patriotism cannot be imparted; it must be experienced. Thus, Wayne’s initial attempts to rouse the civic spirit of his fellow citizens fall on deaf ears.

There is, however, another way to stir the patriotic fires of Notting Hill: take up the sword. “I know of a magic wand,” Wayne muses, but it is a wand that only one or two may rightly use, and only seldom. It is a fairy wand of great fear, stronger than those who use it—often frightful, often wicked to use. But whatever is touched with it is never again wholly common; whatever is touched with it takes a magic from outside the world. If I touch, with this fairy wand, the railways and the roads of Notting Hill, men will love them, and be afraid of them forever.

Wayne knows that if he can incite his neighbors to defend their home, that sacrifice will imbue Notting Hill with transcendent meaning. As Lincoln said of Gettysburg, “The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract.” Wayne is right. The people of Notting Hill never see their home in the same way after they have spilled blood to defend it. They become devoted to its history and traditions and see its glory in a way similar to Wayne. Still, the root of their patriotism is fundamentally different than his. It is grounded in defense and defined in opposition. Most importantly, it is not a devotion springing from ordinary affections and organic attachments—
the familial and friendly relations of everyday life. These contain an intrinsic limiting principle. The true patriot boasts of the smallness of his country because life is lived within the constraints of the particular. The world cannot be known the way one comes to know Notting Hill. Wayne understands this because he has become deeply attached to all the unique delights that make Notting Hill worth defending. His fellow citizens, however, are still mired in the social and political malaise that defines modern London. Wayne is able to rally them to fight, but their real reasons for doing so are grounded in self-interest, not love. They become attached to Notting Hill through the fight; they do not fight because they are attached. Because personal attachment is the root of Wayne’s devotion, he can wield the sword justly. As a group, however, Notting Hill embraces a patriotism of the sword. It is forged in glorious victory, and thus, extending the scope of that superiority is its natural effect.

Therefore, as Chesterton argues in “The Patriotic Idea,” the problem with the cosmopolitanism of the modern bureaucratic state is not only that it tries to eliminate the natural human goodness of particular attachments; it eviscerates a powerful force of political restraint. The patriotism of attachment must be experienced and felt to have real force. Without it, all too often, in Alexander Hamilton’s words, “When the sword is once drawn, the passions of men observe no bounds of moderation.” Thus, the cosmopolitan, in trying to rid man of a natural desire for preferential attachment, exposes him to its corruption. Cosmopolitanism yields the opportunism of empire.

So, patriotism can go awry if established on the wrong basis, but Chesterton also indicates that there are deep fractures in Adam Wayne’s own devotion. His great deficiency is his singularity of vision. On the one hand, Wayne really sees Notting Hill—like no one else does. He palpably feels the joy and gravity of the mundane. For him, Notting Hill can never be just a little “spot of earth.” On the other hand, Notting Hill is very nearly all that he sees. Indeed, in Wayne’s mind, it has come to possess the magnitude of the world itself. “The artificial city had become to him nature,” Chesterton writes, “and he felt the kerbstones and gas-lamps as things as ancient as the sky.” Auberon Quin is a man who laughs at everything in detached dismissiveness. Adam Wayne cannot laugh at Notting Hill because there is nothing beside which it loses significance, nothing that stands outside and apart, to take measure of the city. Thus, Notting Hill must be held inviolate; any trespass must be treated with deadly seriousness.

Wayne’s limited moral vision works out practically in the story in a couple of ways. First, as Provost of Notting Hill, he is immediately and obdurately opposed to yielding right-of-way for the road. The offend-
ing bureaucrats operate on a thin, utilitarian notion of public interest that
cannot make sense of deep communal attachment. By the same token,
Wayne’s single-minded devotion to his home precludes any notion of a
wider common good for which Notting Hill might reasonably sacrifice.
However, aside from a willingness to engage the interests of the broader
community of London boroughs, the liberty for which Notting Hill fights
is simply the right to be left alone (another of the shortcomings of conser-
vatism that Budziszewski highlights).

Just as important, Wayne’s preoccupation with the goods of life in
Notting Hill keeps him from attending to just governance and the wider
common good of the London boroughs once the war has been won. Wayne
is mindful of the danger of taking up the sword in the first place. It is “a
wand that only one or two may rightly use . . . stronger than those who
use it—often frightful, often wicked to use.”28 Yet, having ignited Notting
Hill’s patriotism with the power of the sword, Wayne essentially retreats
from public life—sitting at home by the fire for twenty years while the
political dominance of Notting Hill devolves into tyranny. Wayne’s love
for the quiet little life of Notting Hill is the heartbeat of patriotism, yet at
the same time, it is insufficient by itself to sustain that life. Wayne lacks
the necessary universal concern, and, again, the willingness to act for the
sake of a wider common good.

The polarity Chesterton establishes between Auberon Quin and Adam
Wayne is the philosophical backbone of The Napoleon of Notting Hill. We
discover in the final pages of the novel that each of them alone represents
a kind of madness that is healed only when they are brought together in
balanced unity.

You and I, Auberon Quin, have both of us throughout our lives been
again and again called mad. And we are mad. We are mad, because we
are not two men, but one man. We are mad, because we are two lobes
of the same brain, and that brain has been cloven in two. And if you
ask for the proof of it, it is not hard to find. It is not merely that you, the
humorist, have been in these dark days stripped of the joy of gravity.
It is not merely that I, the fanatic, have had to grope without humour.
It is that, though we seem to be opposite in everything, we have been
opposite like man and woman, aiming at the same moment at the same
practical thing. We are the father and the mother of the Charter of the
Cities.29

Quin’s madness comes from his inability to see the world from any-
thing other than a universal perspective—“the earth itself is a suburb.”30
He sees life with a detached rationality that cannot help but mock its in-
significance and absurdity in light of the whole. From that vantage point,
however, he is robbed of feeling and happiness—"stripped of the joy of gravity." In this, his madness is less human than Wayne's. Wayne speaks a deep truth when he says, "Come forth and tell to the ends of the earth this lesson. Oil is from the North and fruits from the South; rices are from India and spices from Ceylon; sheep are from New Zealand and men from Notting Hill." Men are from Notting Hill. The particular attachment and devotion that Wayne has to his home are the source of his great capacity for love and joy. Moreover, the patriotism of attachment is necessary to community and a just social order. Yet, for Wayne, to cleave in love to the particular is "the only happiness . . . the only universality."

Notting Hill, however, cannot be the measure of all things. We must, with Auberon Quin, be able to laugh at our own smallness and see the parochial absurdity of our own customs and traditions. Such laughter is not opposed to love of the particular or devotion to tradition. Ultimately, it is necessary to its vibrancy. Recall Chesterton's initial remark about the stagnancy of London in 1984: They had lost all sense of anything beyond custom that might call it into question. They had lost all sense of the divine. The result was a lifeless submission to the mechanistic dullness of dead social forms. Essentially, they suffered from the bland, self-interested traditionalism that Budziszewski identifies as a potential pitfall of conservatism. Apart from Auberon Quin, Adam Wayne makes Notting Hill the measure of all things, but this leads to spiritual dry rot. What is needed is the unity of the two: particular attachments and transcendent detachment, local customs and universal norms, patriotism and accountability, love and laughter.

In conclusion, let me say a word about how we might go about striking a just balance between the particular and the universal. Budziszewski rightly observes that very often the appropriate form of "universal particularism" eludes us. Fashionable shibboleths such as multi-culturalism purport to treasure the diversity of the particular, but in practice dissolve into a "gray ideological sameness." How do we avoid pretenders to the golden mean?

Above all, I think we must emphasize Budziszewski's point about the "bottom up" epistemology of the natural law that I referenced at the outset. The right process of understanding is of essence here. If we begin from universal abstractions about humanity, community, equality, and so forth, imposing those notions on the personal relations and communities that permeate daily life, we are bound to fall out of balance. The order of our reasoning should follow the order of nature; we begin from the particular—both in love and knowledge—and work upward to the universal. Edmund Burke famously made this point in the "little platoon" passage of
his _Reflections on the Revolution in France_, but a lesser known passage from the same work puts the point more powerfully, I think:

> We begin our public affections in our families. No cold relation is a zealous citizen. We pass on to our neighborhoods and our habitual provincial connections. These are inns and resting places . . . so many little images of the great country in which the heart found something which it could fill.  

No cold relation is a zealous citizen for the same reason that St. John observed that “he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” We come to know what love is by loving our neighbors, and we come to understand the unique goods of particular communities—those whose integrity must be protected together with more universal concerns—by engaging friends, families, churches, and neighborhoods in deep forms of shared life. The trouble with so much theorizing that purports to balance particular and universal goods is that it betrays but scant appreciation of the particulars—and thus subjugates them to universal abstractions. One prominent theorist, for example, argues for the state’s primacy in educating for “autonomous citizenship” by attributing to parents the “desire above all to perpetuate their particular way of life.” With such an anemic understanding of parental love, is it any wonder that the ostensible requirements of Progressive civic rationalism carry the day? A better path—that of the natural law tradition, that of Burke and Chesterton, and indeed, that of J. Budziszewski—is to begin from particulars, cultivating the fruits of wisdom in the “warm and fragrant loam of shared human experience.”

**Notes**

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. See Thomas Aquinas, _Summa Theologica_, I-II, Q. 95, Art. 2.
7. Ibid., 614.
9. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 245.
13. Ibid., 256.
15. Ibid., 374.
16. Ibid., 285.
17. Ibid., 279.
18. Ibid., 287.
19. Ibid., 348.
20. Ibid., 294.
21. Ibid., 361.
22. Ibid., 278.
23. Ibid., 235. This idea is expressed by another character in the novel, but it nicely communicates part of the essence of Wayne’s view.
24. Ibid., 280.
26. Federalist No. 16.
28. Ibid., 280.
29. Ibid., 378.
30. Ibid., 374.
31. Ibid., 291.
32. Ibid., 372.
33. I am grateful to Prof. Budziszewski for his insightful comments on a previous draft of this essay at the 24th Annual National Meeting of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists, Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, October 28–29, 2016.