

[Excerpt from Harry Oldmeadow, *Recovering the Sacred: Religion, Science & Politics in a Dark Age*, Bendigo: Carbarita Press, 2026]

TAGE LINDBOM

(1909-2001)

The Kingdom of Man or the Kingdom of God?



Who will rule, God or man? This is the great constitutional question of human existence...The perennial question is always whether we humans are to understand our presence on this earth as a vice-regency or trusteeship under the mandate of heaven and the divine commandments, or whether we must strive to emancipate ourselves from any higher dominion, with human supremacy as our ultimate aim.¹

Tage Lindbom was a distinguished Swedish political thinker who attained some eminence in his own country but whose biography, career and philosophy remain little known in the West. Four of his books have appeared in English translation but have as yet gained little traction outside perennialist circles. Lindbom was born out of wedlock in Malmö where his parents had gone to by-pass a potential scandal in their home city of Gothenburg, a sea-port on the west coast and the second largest city in the country. Tage was placed in a home for adopted children where he was sometimes visited by his parents.

Eventually he was sent to a middle-class Lutheran family in Hudiksvall in north-eastern Sweden. During his teenage years the adopting family fell upon hard times during an economic depression, leaving Lindbom scarred by the experience. Perhaps this trauma sowed the seeds of Lindbom's early interest in socialism and his nominal membership in the SSU, the Swedish Social Youth League, a wing of the Social Democratic Party in which he was later to play a prominent role. While in high school he also participated in another group, a small federation of young socialists who were strenuously opposed to alcohol, a popular stance in Sweden at that time, particularly among both students and workers with socialist and/or evangelical proclivities. By the time young Lindbom's schooling was complete the family had lost contact with his biological parents. But his adoptive mother managed to contact them and persuade them to finance Tage's university studies, pursued at the University of Uppsala where he came into contact with a more radical socialist youth club, *Clarté*.

After taking out a doctorate in political science at the University of Stockholm, and a brief spell as a 'Moscow communist', Lindbom moved into the more moderate faction of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, eventually becoming one of its most influential theoreticians. He was recognized as one of the principal architects of the Swedish Welfare State, much of his work being informed by Marxist theory. For almost three decades Lindbom served as Director of all the library archives affiliated with the party – effectively all of the Swedish Labour movement, including *Landsorganisationen* a large blue-collar union.

Lindbom was active in the nation's cultural and political life, serving on many commissions and public boards including that of the Royal Opera, and rubbing shoulders with Sweden's leading intellectuals, writers, and artists as well as political and business big-wigs. He also came to know many socialist leaders and intellectuals in Europe, such as Bruno Kreisky and Willi Brandt (he was impressed only by the former). Lindbom married in 1942 and son Tomas was born in 1949 (later to become the principal custodian and translator of his father's writings). In the same year Lindbom visited the USA to forge connections with American socialist leaders which he was able

to do only after being incarcerated for three days in a prison on Ellis Island, suspected by McCarthyist authorities of being a 'commie' subversive.

In the years after WWII Lindbom grew increasingly disenchanted with the political path he had chosen and with the ideas and values which had shaped his commitments and aspirations, and with the pervasive materialism (in both its philosophical and colloquial senses) in the Swedish Social Democratic milieu.² As early as 1951 he was writing a critique of socialist theory in *Efter Atlantis* (*After Atlantis*, available in German but not in English translation). By the mid-50s, after a visit to Chartres Cathedral and a mystical experience which he described as 'a meeting with God', his outlook took a religious turn, eventually crystallizing in the abiding intuition that any god-less society was built on sand; this was to be the adamant conviction on which much of his subsequent philosophizing was to be based. It was, in his own terms, an existential departure from the 'Kingdom of Man' and an entry into the 'Kingdom of God'. The final and utterly decisive break with his past came about in the early 1960s through his encounter with the writings of René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon to which he was introduced by Kurt Almqvist, the preeminent Swedish perennialist at that time and the author of a slender introduction to the *sophia perennis*, *Den Glömda Dimensionen* (*The Forgotten Dimension*). Lindbom devoured the book in a single sitting; it launched him on a new spiritual journey.³ He converted to Islam and became one of Schuon's disciples, entering his Sufi *tariqah*.

In a recent interview his son Tomas recalls his shock at inadvertently discovering his father on a prayer-mat in a darkened bedroom and being told in rather icy terms by his mother that his father 'had become a Mohommadan',⁴ a development unlikely to be met with any very warm approval by either the pious Lutherans or atheistic social democrats who made up much of the Swedish population at that time. The episode in question took place in 1962. In a recent interview with Tage's son Tomas, Johan Nilsson reminds us that the first mosque in Sweden only appeared in 1979, underlining Islam's 'alien' status at that time and for a long time thereafter – so much so that Lindbom himself kept his Islamic and Sufi affiliation

shrouded in secrecy for most of his life. But both the person and the writings of Frithjof Schuon were to be Lindbom's guiding light. Here's an excerpt from an essay, written in the year of Schuon's death (1998):

The unique position of Frithjof Schuon's message is especially characterized by the fact that he provides an answer to the spiritual misery of our times. His message is an alternative to the spiritual crisis of the twentieth century, which contemporary secularized man cannot resolve. Frithjof Schuon was not a reformer, who would reestablish 'lost values' and make 'promises' for the future. The deepest significance of Frithjof Schuon's message is an unveiling of the Real, formulated as a Truth expressing this Reality as *sophia perennis*. When we say that this is an alternative to the plight of our times, we mean that this is a message that bears within it the attributes of eternity and plenitude.⁵

Lindbom did not repudiate his interest in politics and political philosophy but these were now located within a perennialist vision which, he had come to believe, provided the only valid answer to 'the spiritual misery of our times' and 'the spiritual crisis of the twentieth century'. He had come to the conviction that 'because of progressive secularization – and the confusion that results from it – the West has been ensnared in a Luciferism that has had disastrous consequences in many areas of Western life'.⁶ His life and thinking had undergone a fundamental transformation. As Johan Nilsson remarks, Lindbom became 'the single perennialist writer who has written the most directly about politics'.⁷ (Some folk might want to adduce Julius Evola as the preeminent perennialist writer on politics but Nilsson has made it clear elsewhere that, like myself, he does not categorize Evola as a perennialist-proper, still less so another controversial figure often described as a 'traditionalist', Alexander Dugin.) Of Lindbom's political thinking another scholar has observed that

Lindbom is interesting not only as a Swedish Traditionalist but also as a rare example of an explicitly political Schuonian Traditionalist... Followers of Schuon and Guénon may have political views, but they do not normally write about them, given the primacy of the transcendent over the political. Lindbom, however, was well established in political life before he encountered Traditionalism, and first became a *Maryami* [a

member of Schuon's *tariqah*] relatively late in life, at the age of 53. This may be why he did not drop his earlier political interests and emphases.⁸

Seyyed Hossein Nasr credits Lindbom with elaborating 'the most profound criticisms of socialist and Marxist ideas written by a European'.⁹

Lindbom's mid-life commitment to a traditionalist outlook and all that it implied was accompanied by a radical break with the humanistic-secularist-progressivist ideology which he had previously championed. From the mid-60s onwards he devoted his energies to fashioning a political philosophy consonant with the perennialist perspective, conservative in the proper sense of the word but now sullied by all manner of unfortunate associations. This entailed a rigorous exposition and defence of traditional principles and values as they pertained to political governance, economics and the social order. Concomitantly he elaborated a searing critique of the philosophical assumptions underlying the prevailing political ideologies of the era, of both the 'left' and 'right'. Of one of his major works in this field, *The Myth of Democracy*, James Cutsinger wrote the following:

Tage Lindbom brings into the bright light of first principles what the triumphant rhetoric and wishful thinking of Western liberals are designed to conceal. Freedom and equality are at best relative goods, and their contradictory fusion in the shape of democracy is in part cause, not the cure, of contemporary society's spiritual and moral malaise. This book forces us to reconsider the entire political enterprise – whether in its totalitarian, socialist or liberal forms – as a fundamental betrayal of the divine principles that alone can give meaning to human life.¹⁰

Amongst the philosophers who drew some of Lindbom's fiercest condemnations were Rousseau, Marx and Heidegger. He became an implacable critic of 'democratism', one of the mainstays in modernity's pseudo-deification of man. As one reviewer of *The Myth of Democracy* observed, 'Lindbom analyzes some of the most important elements of the protracted process that finally produced the modern myth of self-governing man. Turning the tables on our progressive age, Lindbom asks readers to consider the possibility that democracy is quintessentially the manifestation of spiritual debacle, the attempt to replace the true sovereignty of God with

the “kingdom of man”.¹¹ More generally Lindbom denounced the secularism, humanism, materialism and relativism which characterized so much of modern thought. Like Guénon before him he saw many of the apparently triumphant ideologies and philosophies of modernity as essentially *negations* of traditional principles and values, often as a kind of inverted parody. ‘It is in negation and denial,’ he wrote, ‘that we encounter evil, but evil is and must remain a negation, subordinate to the power of destruction expressed by God’s Omnipotence.’¹² Moreover,

The time of triumph and final victory for the efforts of the ‘Kingdom of Man’ seems to have arrived in the middle of the twentieth century: the time of human supremacy and popular sovereignty on earth. It is just now that the crisis, barely concealed beneath the antagonisms and conquests of previous generations, becomes obvious and can no longer be hidden, in spite of constant attempts to disguise it. The emptiness of life as an existential stream, its lack of purpose as well as meaning, cannot be concealed, however many fires are lit on the altar of democracy.¹³

Lindbom was the author of more than twenty books of which four are presently available in English (in the order of their translation): *The Tares and the Good Grain: Or, The Kingdom of Man at the Hour of Reckoning* (1982), *The Myth of Democracy* (1996), *Encountering the Koran* (2024) and *The Windmills of Sancho Panza* (2025).¹⁴ Some excerpts from his books appeared in English translation in *Studies in Comparative Religion, Sophia and Modern Age*, and in two anthologies of perennialist writings: *Every Branch in Me: Essays on the Meaning of Man* (2002) and *The Underlying Religion: An Introduction to the Perennial Philosophy* (2007). The essay ‘Lucifer’ was also included in *Religion of the Heart: Essays Presented to Frithjof Schuon on His Eightieth Birthday* (1991).

Lindbom’s most salient theme was the incompatibility of a belief in God (and more generally religion as traditionally understood) and the secular ideologies of modernity, particularly as they were informed by a Promethean humanism and idealism. The following passage from *The Myth of Democracy* gives us a taste of his tone and style:

Draped in the shining garment of idealism and humanism, the West has accomplished a manipulation whereby the deepest meaning of the Fall of man is concealed. In the name of idealism

and humanism, secularization is legitimized. More and more, Western man is living in a world in which he listens only to his own voice, which begins as the voice of rationalism; and listening to this voice, he is able to refer continuously to the 'legitimation' that he believes the idealist and humanist pseudo-spirituality confers on him. In this world, secularization progresses because man can be represented as a higher being, carrying 'the eternal' in his breast, conquering all creation, and at last proclaiming himself as universal sovereign.¹⁵

Lindbom not only ranged over a wide range of political and philosophical issues but was also, necessarily, concerned with the imperatives of the spiritual life. In his later years, by then well known as an authoritative voice in the traditionalist school, he took on some responsibilities as a spiritual guide to a small group of young Muslims of Middle Eastern descent. One of his last projects was an esoteric commentary on the *Qur'an*, *Möte med Koranen*, the first to be written in Swedish and recently translated into English by his son Tomas.¹⁶ Lindbom died in 2001, his passing marked by both Muslim and Christian rites.

Lindbom's view of history is thrown into sharp relief in Johan Nilsson's review of *The Windmills of Sancho Panza*. Comparing the ideas of Lindbom and Edmund Burke, Nilsson observes,

the key difference between the conservatisms of Burke and Lindbom are more obviously to be found in their varying perspectives on historical progress. Lindbom sees recorded history, as do all Perennialists, as a more or less steady process of decline. Implicit in Burke's thought... is a progressivism founded on the notion that civilization rests on the accumulated wisdom and experience of our ancestors. This notion is not only foundationally anthropocentric, but implies a process of intergenerational progress, however iterative or tectonic it may be. Here it would be hard to make the case that Burke's position is more in keeping with Biblical eschatology than Lindbom's. Rather, Burke's notions of historical progress as a partnership of man and God could be taken to anticipate the doctrines of Teilhard.¹⁷

The Windmills of Sancho Panza, written in 1958 but not published until 1962, marks an interesting point in Lindbom's intellectual and spiritual trajectory as it comes *after* his disillusionment with 'leftist' political philosophy and *before* his full engagement with perennialism. The book was such an unforgiving critique of modernity that most publishers

regarded it as far too controversial. When it finally appeared in the light of day it caused such discomfort amongst the Social Democratic elite that Lindbom was eased into early retirement, a move that he actually welcomed as he now wanted to devote himself more fully to his own writings.¹⁸

Lest we fall into the trap of thinking of Lindbom primarily as a 'political philosopher' (undoubtedly his most important public role) we must also remember that his ideas can only be fully understood in the light of his religious commitment and spiritual practice. In this respect it is perhaps fitting to conclude this sketch with a brief reference to his essay 'Virtue and Morality' in which he stresses the need for both religious orthodoxy and an aspiration to Virtue which transcends it:

In inward certainty, relying upon God's grace to bless our willing effort to hold fast to everything implied in the word 'faith,' we have strength to go out into the world without courting disaster. But even faith, 'that can move mountains,' may go astray. Men can devote themselves to a doctrine, and yet find the direct sincerity of that devotion threatened, and a life of faith can lose its spiritual health and vitality if sentimentality gains the upper hand. A man who seeks to shape his spiritual life aright must be guided by the twofold criterion of doctrine and life. He must build his life in the world on two pediments, the first of which is orthodoxy; but then, lest it be subverted by Pharisaism and the letter that kills the spirit, orthodoxy must be illuminated with enlivening virtue, for virtue is the second pediment.¹⁹

Although Lindbom remains relatively unknown in the English-speaking world there are now welcome signs of a renewal of interest in his work both in Sweden itself and in the West at large. He deserves an honourable place alongside other political philosophers who launched profound critiques of modernity from a platform of religious conviction and/or metaphysical principle, several of whom appear elsewhere in these pages; one may mention such figures as René Guénon, Lord Northbourne, Jacques Ellul and Augusto Del Noce; Lindbom is not out of place in such company.

Sources and Recommended Reading

A comprehensive listing of Lindbom's works, which have appeared in many different languages, can be found in the *Wikipedia* entry. *The*

Tares and the Good Grain: Or, The Kingdom of Man at the Hour of Reckoning and *The Myth of Democracy* are the principal works available to English-language readers. 'Lucifer', one of the three essays comprising *The Myth of Democracy*, can be found in *Every Branch of Me: Essays on the Meaning of Man*, ed. Barry McDonald, and *In Religion of the Heart: Essays Presented to Frithjof Schuon on His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr & William Stoddart. 'Virtue and Morality' is excerpted from *Mellan Himmel och jord (Between Heaven and Earth)* and may be found in *Studies in Comparative Religion* 9.4, 1975, and in *The Underlying Religion: An Introduction to the Perennial Philosophy*, ed. Martin Lings & Clinton Minnaar. 'Frithjof Schuon and Our Times' was published in *Sophia: the Journal of Traditional Studies* 4.2, 1998. 'Lucifer' and 'Virtue and Morality' can also be accessed on the World Wisdom website. Currently Johan Nilsson is Lindbom's principal expositor and advocate in the English-speaking world; his commentaries can be found on his YouTube Channel, 'Political Perennialism' as can 'The Life and Thought of Tage Lindbom: An Interview with His Son, Tomas Lindbom' as well as 'An Interview with Claes Ryn About Tage Lindbom'. Nilsson's review of the recently-translated *The Windmills of Sanch Panza* can be found at Academia.edu. I am indebted to Johan for giving me access to three of his short articles on Lindbom: 'Tage Lindbom: Der Lange Weg Zum Eigenen Glauben' [Tage Lindbom: The Long Road To One's Own Faith] in *Sonntag* Issue 24, June 2025, an overview of Lindbom's intellectual and spiritual trajectory, based largely on the interview with Tomas Lindbom; 'Christian States Do Not Exist and Never Will', exploring issues signalled by the title, taken from Lindbom's *The Tares and the Good Grain*; and a Review of Lindbom's 1988 *Fallet Tyskland (The Case of Germany)*, an analysis of National Socialism which has received scant attention outside Sweden: politicalperennialism.substack.com.

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- ¹ T. Lindbom, *The Myth of Democracy*, quoted in A. Lakhani, "'Who Will Rule, God or Man?" – Politics and the Sacred', *Sacred Web* 35, December 2-25. See Lakhani's essay for some commentary on this passage from Lindbom, especially an explanation of why we need not understand the principles at stake here in the explicitly Christian terms deployed by Lindbom. As Lakhani makes clear, those principles far surpass the limits of any 'theological particularism'.
 - ² Some of Lindbom's earliest misgivings about the Swedish socialist movement were expressed in his 1951 book, *After Atlantis*.
 - ³ Lindbom and Almqvist became close friends, and remained so. They both died in 2001.
 - ⁴ 'The Life and Thought of Tage Lindbom: An Interview with His Son, Tomas Lindbom' by Johan Nilsson. *Political Perennialism* You-Tube Channel; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pt9v-5jC0A4>

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- 5 T. Lindbom, 'Frithjof Schuon and Our Times', *Sophia* 4.2, 1998;
http://www.frithjofschuon.info/uploads/pdfs/articles/66.pdf
- 6 'Lucifer' in *Every Branch of Me: Essays on the Meaning of Man*, ed. Barry McDonald, 74.
- 7 'The Life and Thought of Tage Lindbom'.
- 8 <https://traditionalistblog.blogspot.com/2020/03/new-article-on-traditionalism-in-sweden.html>
- 9 S.H. Nasr & R. Jahanbegloo, *In Search of the Sacred*, 2010, 216. For my own part I would suggest that such a distinction Lindbom shares with Augusto Del Noce.
- 10 J. Cutsinger, back cover of *The Myth of Democracy*, 1996.
- 11 A reviewer on the Amazon website entry for *The Myth of Democracy*.
- 12 'Frithjof Schuon and Our Times'.
- 13 'Frithjof Schuon and Our Times'.
- 14 In addition, a pamphlet by Lindom, *Sweden's Labor Program*, was published in New York by the League for Industrial Democracy.
- 15 'Lucifer', 74.
- 16 Published posthumously in four parts in *Minaret*, 2002-2004.
- 17 J. Nilsson, Review of Tage Lindbom's *The Windmills of Sancho Panza*; Academia.edu.
- 18 Tomas Lindbom provides the following account (slightly edited): 'The fact is that he himself wanted to withdraw from his position as chief of the library. When he told Sven Aspling, the president of the board of the library and at the time Minister of Social Affairs in the social democratic government he was very sad about Tage's decision. I remember that Tage and Vera invited him and his family (wife and two boys of my age) one Saturday evening and it was a very warm atmosphere during that night. There were people in the party who were critical of Lindbom but many remained on friendly terms.' (Personal correspondence, November, 2025).
- 19 'Virtue and Morality', World Wisdom website.

