

András Láncki

FUTURE OF MAN:
A RIGHTIST INTERPRETATION OF ORDER

Abstract

In order to understand the cleavage between Left and Right one must reveal the roots of this opposition. The rift began with the quarrel between the ancients and moderns in 17-18th centuries culminating in the Enlightenment. As a result, modernity questioned almost everything inherited from the past: traditions, God, natural law and right. They were replaced by the ideas of new, history, infinite progress, social justice, and rights. What we consider the political Right today has always been related to a worldview which regards the classical meaning of Nature and its derivatives like natural law and rights still valid and the sources of political and moral judgments. Beyond the practical use of the Left-Right opposition, European culture could regain her earlier strength if she could regain the view of the whole, the major characteristic of the classical philosophy, as represented by authors like Aristotle, St. Augustine, Dante, Shakespeare or Goethe. Thus man could set aims for himself in the future on the basis of wisdom.

1. *The idea of 'new' as the central issue*

It always takes time for a generation to notice what the real issues are, and to understand what are the most relevant questions to be raised. We have, however, a compass that helps us to show directions and raise points which could select what is relevant and what is not. Wisdom is the ultimate resort in our endeavor to tell the relevant from the irrelevant. Wisdom is nothing else than a need for a comprehensive view whatever the matter on the agenda is. The more we lose our belief in (and supporting knowledge of) the possibility of being capable of understanding the comprehensive view of our life, the less we can hope for in our search for particular knowledge. Wisdom is indispensable firstly when we are to give the name of an event, action or decision we are surrounded and determined by. Today we are also confronted with the problem of what is our most relevant issue that decides, directly or indirectly, our choices while living and organizing our life.

The major question is what the goal is that gears our decisions and choices. We have many goals in our daily activities but each of them unavoidably leads towards to the few questions which are final ones by their very nature. With the evolution of modernity the standard of what is our aim or goal is framed in the following way: what is new is superior to what is old. Modernity is a comprehensive conception for the adulation of the new. Therefore the fundamental distinction between various forms of political commitments and ideas should be judged by the diverse attitude towards what is new:

those who are inspired by the idea of what is new, will form the group of progressives who are split along a wide range of the ideological spectrum from Marxists to radical liberals, socialists, Freudians, followers of most modern economic schools etc.; and there are those who do not accept the idea of progress, and are skeptical about the superior quality of what is new in comparison to what is old. This is the reason why tradition (“what is handed down”) has become the central idea of modern conservatism which is certainly not identical with the idea of modern Right.

The rift between modern political Left and Right is due to the issue of whether it is the ancient authors or the modern ones who can give better answers to man’s needs and questions. One must be reminded that authors before modernity did not have to be categorized as ‘leftist’ or ‘rightist’. Plato, Aristotle, Cicero or Dante, Shakespeare, Hobbes or even Rousseau were simply authors, thinkers, but never leftists or rightists. But something happened over the centuries of modernity which challenged the integrity of human life. In modernity no one can live a life without being forced to be labeled as either leftist or rightist. If the only question is whether you accept the historically supported idea of progress, or you refuse it, then we shall not be able to break the barriers between Left and Right. It is not an expression of emotions but an insight allowing us to realize why it is a misleading endeavor to think about politics in terms of Left and Right. Conflicts are intrinsic in politics, but the conflict between the Left and the Right is an artificial one, brought about by the modern idea of progress.

2. *The Quarrel Between Ancients and Moderns*

What is Right or Left politically rests on the understanding and application of what knowledge is. The European culture has always been determined by the definition of what knowledge is. In politics it was political philosophy that represented the rational and common sense treatment of political matters, usually communicating the general trends in philosophy at a particular age. The classical understanding united the practical and the (in modernity so-called) theoretical aspects of political judgments. The modern way, with its discovery of analytical thought, according to which phenomena can be explained by logical connections, deliberately severed the uniting threads of knowledge of empirical, theoretical, artistic, and intuitional type. The major standard of what Truth is, is what is logically inferred. Political Right and Left can only be studied and interpreted if we are able to detect the original split within the realm of knowledge. It means that philosophy had to be analytically dissected or reduced to one of the aspects of classical philosophy, which comprised epistemological and moral contents, trying to achieve harmony. As a consequence, philosophy gradually lost its original meaning, defined as ‘love of wisdom’, and became ‘philosophy’ in its modern sense. Modern science is unphilosophical, and modern philosophy is not only unscientific, but oblivious of wisdom, too.

What was once called political philosophy, until modernity, slowly but steadily became ideology. As the most practical aspect of philosophy, political philosophy discussed issues of man as a communal being, or *zoon politikon* in a way which was supposed to support political life directly. Political knowledge did not get split from political activity,

and political philosophy acted as an arbiter because its viewpoint was based on the concept of wisdom, or love of wisdom that unites citizens. Political philosophy as such was able to put forward judgments or statements which transcended the particularity of different views and meant to unite aspects of political epistemology (vs doxa), moral issues (vs mere use of force or coercion), and questions of natural order and right (vs rules by nomos or positive laws).

Modern Enlightenment created the need for and favorable conditions of the rise of ideology, or rather ideologies. Before that, the intellectual standards of what is true and what is right were offered by the understanding of the whole, the major concern of the classical philosophy. Then philosophy meant science, and science was identical with philosophy, and was confronted only by the theological and artistic understanding of the whole. The moment when doubt grew to an extent that it is hopeless to suppose that we are capable of understanding the whole, the judgment of political matters also lost its power to be comprehensive or philosophical. Lowering the standards became standard in every corner of philosophy, and finally philosophy in general, and political philosophy in particular gave way to fragmented understanding of reality. Not the whole, but the particular was targeted from then on. Not nature but history began to be viewed as the standard of judging human existence. The rise of ideology is a symptom of the gradual loss of the human self-sufficiency to be able to understand being and human existence. The key to modernity or a powerful or convincing recommendation was that all evils and deficiencies of human life can be remedied by simply erasing everything that was rooted in the history or traditional way of life. The split between what the ancients offered to answering man's needs and concerns, and the moderns who strongly believed in human reason without any assistance given by old advice or experience, ultimately led up to an abandonment of the ancients, at least regarding the dominance of modern views that favored ideas of the new demolishing old approaches and views in terms of human development.

It is taken for granted that there was a split one day between the classical and the modern understanding of human existence. This split was openly initiated by early modern philosophy. Machiavelli, for instance, deliberately neglected classical political philosophy, and Francis Bacon overtly declares that he wants to write a new philosophy and methodology ("new organon") vis-à-vis the Aristotelian system of science. Before Descartes definitely no one could have been labeled as leftist or rightist. Neither Plato nor Aristotle, neither St. Augustine nor St. Thomas, and neither Dante nor Shakespeare can be put into either category of right or left. Machiavelli, despite all possible concentration of mental efforts, cannot be called a rightist political thinker. The division between left and right is a symptom of modernity in the political dimension whereas similar divisions can be identified in modern economy like marketable and not marketable, believers and non-believers in terms of religions, educated and non-educated in cultural dimension – many divisions which make only sense if we regard them as the expression of the growing dominance of *progress* as the comprehensive concept of the *new as good*. Political Right and Left is destined to fuel political competition without harming the general political frameworks composed of well-defined and prescribed institutions defined by written constitutions, which are written because politics or power must be curtailed by normative legal rules and agreed moral requirements. Modernity is

based on dualities in order to channel all conflicts and aspirations under the conditions of ever increasing economic output and intellectual development. Enlightenment just deepened the original conflict of man – there are given circumstances of human existence, but man is not only capable of rationalizing his plight but can also rationalize the contents of his emotions and desires and create conditions in words opposed to the reality around him. Future seemed closer than ever before, and what is more, a dimension that can and should be untied to the past and the unbearable present. What was needed is changing the quality of human mind and furnish it with the Method of constant human research. One had to separate the individual as the sole researcher of truth and reality (identified with experience), independent of any authority or outside objective limits: transforming nature into a collection of physical objects and phenomena contrasted notwithstanding to the original meaning of nature which is to be seen as the overall context of all things living following the mandate of their internal character. Modern understanding of nature yielded a purely materialistic view of the qualities of individual entities thus allowing them to define their own identities.

To be sure, the reason for the recognition of Descartes as the main initiator of modern Enlightenment is to be sought in his inclination to fix the best method of intellectual pursuit of knowledge. It was him, and a process that supported his ideas, who put an end to the classical way of judging what is knowledge. Teleological standards of what a thing or living being is were to be discarded, because things are what their history records show or logical inference can justify. The final split between various intellectual capacities of man took place most markedly in Descartes' philosophy and was observed first by Pascal. Pascal was the first to notice that if Descartes' philosophy had gained ground, then the basis of human existence, which balanced between faith and rationality, would have been disrupted to the detriment of man. Faith is irrational, therefore it should be neglected, and wisdom can be replaced by modern science, i.e. the moral aspects of knowledge (let alone divination) should be eliminated in order to reach a more and more precise prediction of human reason,. Here are some of Pascal's unhesitant judgments of Descartes' new philosophy:

“76. To write against those who made too profound a study of science: Descartes; 77. I cannot forgive Descartes. In all his philosophy he would have been quite willing to dispense with God. But he had to make Him give a fillip to set the world in motion; beyond this, he has no further need of God; 78. Descartes useless and uncertain; 79. [*Descartes*. – We must say summarily: “This is made by figure and motion,” for it is true. But to say what these are, and to compose the machine, is ridiculous. For it is useless, uncertain, and painful. And were it true, we do not think all philosophy is worth one hour of pain.] And also about mathematics; 61. *Order*. – I might well have taken this discourse in an order like this: to show the vanity of all conditions of men, to show the vanity of ordinary lives, and then the vanity of philosophic lives, sceptics, stoics; but the order would not have been kept. I know a little what it is, and how few people understand it. No human science can keep it. Saint Thomas did not keep it. Mathematics keep it, but they are useless on account of their depth”¹.

Taken all things together, Pascal worried about the reduction of knowledge to an aspect, usually some mathematical argument, which is unable and does not even endeavor to include the wholeness of human life. Most noteworthy is Pascal's remark on the limits of

¹ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, New York NY: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1958, passim

mathematics in terms of order. Every single aspect of keeping order is ailing, but mathematics is “useless” the moment we want to fathom the depth of the issue of order. In other words, mathematics is relevant except for the most relevant aspects of human life. Let me add a comment on the issue:

“He [Pascal] is fully aware of the difference of subject-matter; and his famous distinction between the *esprit de géométrie* and the *esprit de finesse* is one to ponder over. It is the just combination of the scientist, the *honnête homme*, and the religious nature with a passionate craving for God, that makes Pascal unique. He succeeds where Descartes fails; for in Descartes the element of *esprit de géométrie* is excessive”².

This latter remark can be so rephrased: an argument is scientific if it is logically subtle and convincing. Modernity is a triumph of logic, in terms of epistemology, over other forms of knowledge like wisdom, rhetoric, intuition and the like.

The new epistemology initiated by F. Bacon and Descartes could not be counterbalanced by Pascal or anybody else. Without sketching the story of modern epistemology, it is worth while mentioning the next decisive step towards an epistemology that underpinned the later political Left whatever form it has assumed over the next few centuries.

“For Nietzsche, the French Revolution represented the “continuation of Christianity” and Rousseau was its “seducer” [*Will to Power*, 94]. As noted above, the starting point of Rousseau’s idealism is the forgetting of man’s nature. Only by “cleaning the slate” of human nature can perfectionists like Rousseau promise to “begin the world anew.” Utopia, Rousseau and the socialists tell us, can be realized by sweeping away the old “order” and replacing it with something kinder, gentler, and more humane. With these new institutions in place, man can recover his lost innocence and social harmony will follow. Nietzsche thinks this is pure folly. Against this faith in the infinite malleability and perfectibility of human nature, Nietzsche offers a much more “realistic” view”³.

It would take a longer analysis to point out the deep philological reasons why certain epistemological choices lead to certain political decisions and positions usually linked to either the “Left” or the “Right”. The Right is tied to epistemologies which are capable of explaining man’s commitment to ruthless or indifferent nature and the resultant practical and moral consequences including politics. The political Right directly or indirectly regards Nature as ultimate source of what is morally right, usually supposing that natural right is backed by a divine order. The Left, to the contrary, looks upon Nature as an enemy that should be conquered, and instead of Nature man is capable of creating an order without even considering divine order as a precondition of a rightful condition for man. The idea of modern rights trumps classical natural right. Thus two different starting points present themselves for what is taken to be rational, and what is not. For the political Right rational should be in accordance with rules or laws of nature, whereas for the modern progressive Left it is human intellect and logic that are the ultimate sources of rationality.

² T.S. Eliot, *Introduction*, in B. Pascal, *Pensées*, XVIII.

³ N. Buccola, “‘The Tyranny of the Least and the Dumbest’: Nietzsche’s Critique of Socialism,” *Quarterly Journal of Ideology*, 31 (3-4/2009), p. 17.

3. *Good or Justice, and Progress*

The supporters of political Left seldom consult authors living before modernity. If they do, they do it for producing as much evidence as possible in order to back the idea of progress. This concept is crucial in our attempt to find the real roots of the distinction between what is political Left and what is political Right. As almost always it is unavoidable to go back to ancient thought. According to Walter Bagehot ancient Greeks did not have a conception of progress, whereas Henry Maine, to the contrary, was convinced that it was precisely the Greeks who “created the principle of Progress”. E.R. Dodds stressed that progress is one of those ideas which are hard fix as for its origin and use. There are at least two Greek words suspicious of coming close to the meaning of progress. The first is *epidosis* which means “increase”, the other one is *prokopé* meaning “pushing forward”, a term “which Cicero translates by *progressus* or *progressio*”⁴. Our modern concept of progress is associated with future and thus indirectly with the past. Up until modernity any use of progress did not construe systematic thinking or speculation about the future. The actual suggestion for a generalized conception of the future summed up by progress started with the discovery of history other than mere description of deeds, events and moral judgments of human characters in particular situations. But history as this-worldly divination was gradually developed along the lines of modern secularization, the rise of modern science, and the consolidation of the concept of ‘new’ as something ‘good’. The new concept of ‘history’ is also good to the extent that it can replace the natural law conceptions as the ultimate source of different entities and qualities in life. A world interpreted in terms of natural laws and natural right will be furnished as ruthless and indifferent nature which allows us to live only under severe commands. According to natural law there are slaves and masters, man is superior to woman, and wars are not erasable from human existence. But if the world is interpreted or constructed as the playing ground of man, and we see things around us infinitely changeable and ready for manipulation, then history is a much better source of human thought and action. And then science is the opposite of religious and metaphysical speculations, there is no need for God at all, arguments of equality will gain the upper hand in debates, justice equals to good, and wars can be ended (“perpetual peace”).

At one point of the 19th century the idea of modern natural sciences was used to make scientific also the study of history, which was based on the search for historical laws and social laws in general. Modern scientific laws are ‘necessary’ because what is material is subordinated to the laws of the matter. And history, through the actions of the flesh and blood man, can be interpreted like the behavior of any other configuration of the matter. The moment the idea of necessity was combined with history, the most radical political conclusions could be inferred. If the task is to discover the laws of historical necessity, any time a new elite of the knowers of history will claim to know what is best politically

⁴ E.R. Dodds, *The Ancient Concept of Progress and Other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 1.

at a given moment of time. For comparison, Machiavelli himself turned his back to ancient political philosophy, and turned towards history, and in that he can be called the first modern political thinker, yet he never believed that history has intrinsic laws or there is historical necessity. Those Leftists who accept the Marxian concept of historical necessity easily end up in radical political positions, and today when this idea has got weakened, the liberal idea of progress still fuels intentions which regard history as a source of progress. This strange combination of progress, historical necessity, justice, and modern sciences and technological development has yielded a vocabulary of the Leftist thought, the concepts of which are good unquestionably. These are untouchable dogmas.

The idea of good, however, has other interpretations and political consequences. For the Right the idea of good precedes that of justice. It is a crucial distinction, since the order of virtues, and not values as it is voiced by Leftists, would create an order of preferences when it comes to decisions and actions. Political thinkers like John Rawls believe without any doubt that the first political value is justice, thus it is the first moral value, too. Since 1971 most Leftists (I mean the liberalized Left) have no doubt as to the face value of justice. There is not a single utterance by a Leftist who does not immediately mention the irrevocable standard of justice when political issues are on the agenda. Rightists would rather prefer the virtue of good. Good is a more comprehensive and decisive factor of human life than justice which is the first most important virtue subordinated to good. Justice has several aspects like retributive, commutative, retaliatory or distributive justice which have a decisive role in approaching what is good. Without justice there is no idea of good. But good is more than entertaining justice. Good is the aim and not the means or instrument. Modern leftist judgment would choose justice compared to good. The latter one is too vague and hard to politicize, but in modernity, and one should not forget that the Left has its roots in modernity, whereas the Right, owing to its commitment, in one way or other, is committed to natural law and related ideas, you are to translate every single idea into the language of politics. Political has become everything in modernity, the solution to man's problems as it was primarily suggested by Rousseau. As a result, totalitarian political tendencies are lurking at every corner in modern times. If good were to be the preferred idea or virtue for both communities and individuals, and not justice that has a strong, mobilizing and politically radicalizing potential in modernity, then we would probably experience less radical political movements and actions by the political actors who seek a better regime than any available or real. Good is a more comprehensive concept than justice, at least to the ancient understanding of the political realm. It denotes the goals of man which include various aspects of life like justice, order, nature, character, common sense reality, joint ground of thought and action, taste and music of human life. The modern Left, following the battle-cry of modern philosophical epistemology à la Descartes, has been seeking 'the' method or an aspect of life to which all other human intentions can be reduced to. Whether it is the scientific method by which technological and economic development can be made infinite, or the class and exploitation theory of the Marxists that must be combined with the theory of historical necessity, and a ready-made political program would evolve instantly – all this is regarded as a mere figment of the mind according to Rightist thinkers beginning with Edmund Burke, or the German Novalis.

One must also remember that the roots of what was later on called Rightist political thought were always parallel to the emerging and victorious modern individual rights thinkers. The key is probably not so much the attitude towards the Enlightenment, but to modernity which is a more comprehensive term. Whereas Pascal assailed Descartes, Paine picked up a quarrel with Edmund Burke, the initiators of modernity were less systematically but resolutely challenged by authors like Maurice Barrés, Charles Maurras, Joseph de Maistre, Friedrich Nietzsche, Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, Oswald Spengler, Ortega y Gasset, or more recently Alain de Benoist. It does not mean that they have been the only critics of modernity, but most of them had some direct political involvement, too. And there were different schools of political philosophy in the 20th century which centered around distinctive figures like Leo Strauss, Russell Kirk, Eric Voegelin, Michael Oakeshott, Hannah Arendt and a lot more writers, thinkers, scholars who became systematic analyzers of modern political thought and very often indirectly influenced the development of Right-wing political action and movements. The distinction between what is Right and what is conservative is relevant, but needs a separate treatment. What joins the diverse group of thinkers challenging modernity is a couple of points like the judgment of natural law and right theories, the relationship of religion and public life, the usefulness and uselessness of history with special focus on the idea of “historical necessity”, interpretation of economic, technological and moral progress, judgment of the role and sphere of the individual in a community, and last but not least answers to the ultimate question of how man should live.

Currently the major issue in terms of political modernity is a latent but devastating debate between the idea of ‘good’ and ‘justice’ as the moral expression of questions about the nature of order, how it can be maintained, and the first concern of politics, i.e. “how should we live?”. This will remain so until the frameworks of modern constitutional and democratic arrangements are not changed along the lines of this philosophical issue. So far there is a tacit agreement among men of letters that all debates between the Right and the Left are understood within democratic political arrangements. Yet there have always been voices and ideas that democracy is a misnomer, and rests on a belief of infinite economic progress, gradual abolishment of inequalities, and complete control over nature. America is the symbol of the major intentions of modern man prior to the split of political Left and Right, which follows the consolidation of ideas like progress, conquering nature, and democracy as the best form of government. Today the major and distinctive feature of the Left is the demand for a more egalitarian distribution of wealth. This has remained for the Left after the aborted communist attempts. The great and final reduction of Leftist political thought.

4. The American Experience and the Races

There is one lasting regime that has initiated and become successful in modernity with no doubt, and it is the United States of America. With a little exaggeration America stands for the most profound meaning of modernity. It represents the capacity and ambition of modern rationality and imagination. America is the symbol of what modern man can aspire to. It is a new regime — inspired by European philosophy, especially by

its very idea of the republican constitutional order, and Christian morality — which is free from European burden of social or class conflicts, religious hostility, wars, and economic instability or precariousness. The American civil war was due to an internal concern about races, slavery and political wisdom. The division between Left and Right did not actually start with the French revolution but with a serious conflict between those who sought economic development at whatever price, and those who sought an idea of political equality at whatever price. The original and internal conflict of the American founding has decided the political structure of modernity all through the American-European civilization. This conflict is about the relationship of races which was most acutely faced by the American founders and the 19th century politicians of the New World.

Left and Right are divided only in their different judgment of progress – this perspective and division is most clearly visible in the case of America. The American way of life has become known for allowing individual freedom, competitive economic activity, equality of all races and cultural differences. Alexis de Tocqueville was the first who comprehensively described the advent of a new world and a new way of life that might be seductive to offsprings of all nations and civilizations. This life is based on earning money (Tocqueville’s letter to Ernest de Chabrol, 9 June 1831):

“As one digs deeper into the national character of the Americans, one sees that they have sought the value of everything in this world only in the answer to this single question: how much money will it bring in?”⁵

For what is not lucrative, is not worth making effort to. It is also a strong sign of pragmatism both in economic and intellectual pursuits of man. American way of life is competitive and often aggressive, which is softened by a Christian inspired civilized morality that commands civility between man and man. Decent behavior and manners matter more than who is right in a certain issue. The alloy of being pushy for profit and being civilized is the strange mixture of American way of life.

Another relevant feature of America is a historical attempt to transcend natural inequalities among men by political instruments. Tocqueville also noted the roots of this primordial issue in terms of slavery:

“You may set the Negro free, but you cannot make him otherwise than an alien to the European. Nor is this all; we scarcely acknowledge the common features of humanity in this stranger whom slavery has brought among us. His physiognomy is to our eyes hideous, his understanding weak, his tastes low; and we are almost inclined to look upon him as a being intermediate between man and the brutes.”⁶

⁵ O. Zunz-A.S. Kahan, *The Tocqueville Reader. A Life in Letters and Politics*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002, 41.

⁶ A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Engl. transl. H. Reeve, Hazleton PA: The Pennsylvania State University, 2002, 392 (Chapter XVIII). This chapter is a long treatment of the issue of the races in the United States. Not only the black slaves but also the Indians or “native tribes” are to be handled. Tocqueville finds it possible that owing to the mixture of races, a third race would evolve: “In some parts of America, the European and the negro races are so crossed by one another, that it is rare to

Tocqueville, to be sure, did not see it feasible to emancipate or integrate slaves or the races (Indians and blacks even if they are freed, “they cannot become the equals of the whites”)⁷ into one mould or political community. It will simply happen that different races mix, but it is impossible to predict how this integration would evolve in the long run. Today it seems a taboo to raise the question of the status and judgment of the survival of races. The classical or original Left was not really confronted with the problem of races, although its hatred of the capitalists has been accompanied with anti-Semitism, which still exists today. It is one of the most profound issues how the modern idea of equality could be reconciled with the differences of cultures, civilizations and ultimately life-styles. There is a real tension between the visions of natural right thinking and the modern human rights thinking about the issue of how people should live together, or what the basis of order is. Natural right order grows on natural laws, and customs that create and maintain man’s second nature; whereas the position of human rights is to create an order which is warranted by a series of political consents and compacts. The American experience, which has natural right roots, is about how they can maintain a regime and counterbalance the original sin of holding slaves and almost total annihilation of the aborigines. But since America has become a world power due to its size and modern economic and technological development, not independently of her political arrangements, her original concern has also become a world-wide problem along the line of the modern European philosophy of individual rights and immunity to communal needs of responsibility. Two views of order have been struggling from the beginning of modernity.

The model is this: American (national) interest has priority, individual rights excel in moral judgment, and American constitutional arrangements are to be copied based on the modern belief that radical new is possible everywhere when it comes to be the case of African nation-building after colonization or Eastern European regime-changes. They are mostly peaceful, but actually or in the long-term they may not be so. To start everything anew is the exception, and not the rule. Most rightists claim that traditions should and will ultimately withstand the modern demand that traditions are just obstacles to necessary developments. Most Western understanding of communism is simply unwilling to grasp the actual experience of earlier but still existing communism of Eastern Europe, which is sometimes labeled as “the reformed Left”.

The American experience is a great thing – surely for the Americans, but has limited impact on other nations or civilizations despite ongoing Americanization after World War II. It is a philosophically false or politically motivated assumption that American liberal agenda is right and those who have other ideas about national pride and interests are simply nationalists with a bad connotation. This is simply an ideology and acknowledgment and seeking pardon of a particular horrendous past crime like in the case of Germany. There is not a single method to solve the riddle of existence neither in

meet with a man who is entirely black, or entirely white: when they are arrived at this point, the two races may really be said to be combined; or rather to have been absorbed in a third race”.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

science, nor in politics. To start things new will not answer the first question of how we should live. It might only offer an opportunity.

5. *Leadership and Political Realism*

Power works the same no matter who wields it. The difference between the Left and Right is that the Left, especially its liberalized version, tries to mitigate the roughness of power by claiming norms as ultimate source of political judgment, whereas the Right is convinced of power subordinated to laws irrespective of who wields it. Political realism is posited against the utopianism of normative political attitudes. The great story of European political thought is divided into two epochs. The classical one, beginning with the period of ancient Enlightenment, highlighting Socrates and his attitude of *zetetic* philosophy, a special skepticism that would not confront revelation and philosophy, was broken by Machiavelli, a political thinker who craved for the new, wanted to see politics as it is without elevating political deeds by lofty or philosophical ideas, and paved the way for modern political thought. Modern political thought is mainly utilitarian in its goals. In European culture we have been struggling with our own ghosts. If our tradition is rooted in ancient philosophy, but considerably modified by Christian morality, and mainly sidelined by modern secular thought, the only conclusion can be that traditions and heritage are relative, and open to any modifications. Paradoxically the supporters of modernity are undermining their own position, too, by their neglect of traditions. Not a single family, let alone community can survive without claiming beliefs, traditions, judgments, and spheres of self-government. Government is a serious issue. Who cannot govern its community, is doomed to be governed by others who have beliefs, inherited wisdom, and solid judgments. The central issue of government raised by Machiavelli, namely that one's decision should be based on the deliberation of what is the goal and what are the means, and who is to decide about them, points towards a situation in which politics is neither solely moral, nor pragmatic. The modern attempt to separate these two aspects of political action, the goal and the means, was meant to be handled by creating doubles like the Left and the Right. In human life conflicts are inevitable, thus it is better to create them intentionally than to suffer them naively. The central idea, however, remains intact that modernity is good, and all conflicts are within it. When there are tensions in modernity, and if they do not challenge modernity, they will serve modernity. The rivalry between Coca Cola and Pepsi is about the consumption of cola and not about cola as such or whether it is good or not. Right and Left are the two sides of the same coin. The new is good, progress is inevitable, only our attitude and the speed of modernizing are subject to debate and fighting. Roughly this is the major division line between today's parliamentary Left and Right, but the Right often goes beyond this settled and controlled political opposition. It is because of the dissatisfaction with the modern nature of truth, which is founded on the consent of man, and deliberately lacks any transcendental dimension.

6. *Restoration of Order and Political Wisdom*

All cultures and civilizations can only survive if they are able to accumulate wisdom. It means that the experience of each generation is preserved, and adopted by the next generations' judgments. Not all experience is worth being preserved. Each generation has to have a sense and rationality to be able to tell the precious from the irrelevant. Each generation is subject to maintain order as they interpret it. Without order there is no human life, there is no hope for a meaningful life.

Wisdom has two ways to be realized in every community. The one is the metaphysical-religious, the other is the rational-philosophical. Only the European culture has accorded the rational-philosophical approach to gain the upper hand over the other aspect of human judgment. Wisdom, however, should include both aspects of man's efforts to understand who he is, why he is here, and where he is from. That the ultimate question of human existence is crucial, even if man tends to forget about it in his daily routines, is to be proved by the life-style a community pursues. The way one is living depends on what he believes in, and what he thinks about knowledge. Today's American-European culture or civilization believes in modernity, infinite economic development, and political consensus. This is conceived in political oblivion about the nature of power. As if the nature of power could be tamed and limited at the will of the rational man. This is the illusion of the Left, whereas the Right has never given up its sense of reality. Order means the most effective sense of realism for the Right, whereas for the Left order is ensured by man's insights provided by man's unassisted reason. Reason, however, cannot constitute itself. Thus we need to assume that there is 'something outside'. Be it God and/or Nature, or something outside man's decision. So we return to the original problem if nature can be conquered or not, provided one has finished with God. The Right believes that there is something outside, beyond man's capacity, whereas the Left still adheres to its commitment to 'everything is inside', i.e. within the capacity of human reason, will, and insight. Order is an outcome of human efforts; the Right, however, wants to accommodate his action to laws of the universe. Hence the difference between the Left and Right in ideas about family, education, the relationship between the individual and the community, and the meaning of life.

Today we are enchanted by the achievements of modern natural sciences. This is the only field of our life that is not questioned neither by the political Left, nor by the political Right (at least not substantially). This is the last area of human intellectual activity which is resistant to any cursory or substantial critical assault because man as such is identified with trying to solve the riddle of his existence – very much like in Sophocles' Oedipus. Man is compelled to raise the same issues at any time. Man's existence is preceded by what he calls 'nature' as the ultimate condition of his life, and the riddle itself, for what man has always perceived in it, is an order given by either God or a higher law that we cannot approach completely. Thus man suffers and lacks that insight that could render the solution to man's ultimate problems, mainly why we are here, who we are, and what we can do. Anyone wishing to understand the conditions or plight of modern man must first put the question of 'what is nature?', and 'how should man live?'. Modern philosophy has been trying to act like modern natural sciences ("rigorous philosophy"), but she has been unable to so far. Philosophy once being the

“love of wisdom”, the name that she once enjoyed became an obsolete suggestion. Loving wisdom is a comprehensive term for clinching the meaning of what ‘good life’ means, and how order can be maintained. All other understanding or interpretations of philosophy are to be seen as mere seeking for acknowledgment of philosophy as no more than a prop of modern sciences, especially natural sciences.

There was a time when men of letters were simply distinguished by their intellectual profoundness. They could not be separated or contrasted on political grounds. It was due to general context of how they conceived themselves. Just because our vocabulary is completely imbued with concepts like “Left” and “Right”, let alone “democracy”, we should be aware of everlasting issues which cannot be replaced by political denominations. The everlasting issues are power, education, economic activity and our attitude towards life, death and belief. Thinking or intellectual achievements have always been linked to ideas that had to do with man’s response to the conditions under which he had to live. Modern ideologies are wrong because they have given up their philosophical grounds, which are not identical with arguments to support particular political goals.

We have to clarify an issue before writing or reading anything. Today, when our Western civilization is still infected with the ideological thought and political dominance, we must make it obvious that thinking about politics is not necessarily normative. Most modern or contemporary thinkers mainly want to achieve particular political aims, what they say is mainly normative in their views and hardly descriptive. The Right is for the good, i.e. what is real according to common sense and limited rationality; the Left is for distributive justice, i.e. the extra incomes of the affluent class of the few must be taken away and allocated among the many deprived.

Certainly there is no future for the Left and the Right in their present forms. If there is future, it is for man with particular goals. Yet we are confined to address our questions and answers to the Leftists and Rightists. What is Right and Left today is dimmed by the mere fact that this is both a historical and a functional concept which prevents us to be able to define these concepts on their own basis. They are relational and interdependent concepts which are today denied by more and more people, because their meaning is in harsh opposition to their experience. Today we are experiencing a revolt against the elite, which consists mainly of the Leftists, less of the Rightists, because in the past decades it was the Left which defined what is good and what is not. Today the Right has been trying to recapture its relationship with the people. This is why such a revolt is labeled ‘populist’ by the Left and not by the Right. The Leftist elites who have been dominant in recent decades feel jeopardized by the rise of a new political mentality that they call ‘populist’. In a constitutional democracy populism cannot aspire to become an ideology, it will remain a recurring attitude to express dissatisfaction with the comfortable ruling elite which tends to neglect the firm support of a democracy, i.e. the people. Populism, if it is a correct term at all, is regulatory or correctional in its intent. It simply points towards a need for a more integrated intellectual and public life in which the division between Left and Right has only historical meaning. The ancient answer to man’s problem was according to Euripides in his *Hippolytus*: “Yes, if we humans follow

heavenly usage.”⁸ The modern is “Yes, if we follow the secular usage.” In the long run the umpire is nature, sooner or later she announces her judgment for every generation.

⁸ Euripides, *Hippocritus*, pp. 95-100.