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**THE UNITED STATES, THE EUROPEAN UNION,
EASTERN EUROPE: CHALLENGES AND DIFFERENT
RESPONSES TO MODERNITY**

The United States and the European Union have become an arena of interesting developments, political as well as cultural, in the post-communist, post-1989 world. The issues concern such fundamental problems as the meaning of the West, the unity or discontinuity between the European and American civilizations, attitudes to the crises of modernity, attitudes to modernization of the East-European part of the European Union. There are several interrelated problems here. One is the hegemonic status of the United States. The challenge for America is to find military and political means to secure its national interests without provoking an anti-US across-the-board coalition, and without subordinating its sovereign, constitutionally established power, to international law, institutions, and powerful NGOs with their own interests and ideological agendas. With this goes a crucial issue of how to combine this hegemonic status with the soft cultural power: not the unchallenged mass culture, but 'culture' understood as the American metaphor of democracy, republican participation against post-political bureaucratic tendencies, religious freedom and plurality, freedom of opportunity and solidarity as opposed to the mindless pursuit of equality – mechanical and based on resentment. The other problem concerns the claim of the European Union, even if recently muffled, to form itself into a new and morally higher civilization not just in terms of economic growth, but as an ideological and cultural model of the first post-national, post-political and post-metaphysical empire based on the administration of human rights. The problem how to combine rights

and prosperity with peoples' sovereignty subjected increasingly to bureaucratic 'enlightened' elites brings to the fore the issue of a new European oligarchy.

This poses a question of the status of the post-communist Eastern Europe inside the European Union. It concerns the national and cultural identities of the nations 'frozen' by the Soviet empire, the relations with the United States and the old European Union, and the role of Russia as a new regional power. The traditional European Union seemed not to be aware that the East-European inclusion brought Russia into European politics, and Russians play the old geopolitical game, not paying much attention to the post-political model the European Union would like to pursue. To the peoples of Eastern Europe, on the other hand, the European Union is a guarantee of its security, but also a civilization where the post-political managerial tendencies and metaphysical boredom pose an identity problem. Eastern Europe brought another destabilizing unknown to the European Union, by forcing the old Europe to face the stark realities of international power relations, to become political again. The European Union was not prepared to deal with the Russian problem, which forced it to modify its apolitical position and its relations with the US, who has no intention to withdraw from Europe. The rupture between the old European Union and the new Eastern part seems to be yet smaller than the more serious transatlantic crisis. Described in political terms as a consequence of the Iraq invasion by America in 2003, it has long been in the wings since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. A common enemy kept the unity of Western Europe and the United States. Once this enemy disappeared, the hidden differences between America and the European Union showed up. They are mainly cultural, more structural than immediately political, and have only been exacerbated by the inclusion of the former communist states of Eastern Europe.

The United States and the European Union face a problem of recovering the transatlantic relations, finding new metaphors for the preservation of this most robust civilization. Its core has always been a unique combination of the best heritage of Athens and Jerusalem, of reason and revelation, of resilience in face of adversity, flexibility and adaptability to the new challenges. The modern features of this civilization were formed in the Enlightenment, but both the United States and Europe have repeatedly responded to the challenges of modernity differently and sometimes foolishly. This foolishness was named *hubris* by the ancient Greeks. Christianity named it conceit. *Hubris* is in the fundamental sense a grave offence against the order of the universe, in Christianity against natural law, thus against God's law, the usurpation of power which does not belong to humans and which may cause only misery and despair. For this sin, and this sin alone, Satan was condemned to stay in hell for eternity. This Christian religious image has a universal meaning. The conceit of the United States is to forget sometimes about the inapplicability of its cultural metaphor to other people who do not necessarily want to be its enemies. The most aggressive features of this sin are relatively easy to correct, subjected to a continuous process of soul searching and adjustment, which

the American pluralistic, grassroots democracy, has plenty. Whether the deeper, messianic feature of this sin can be tamed, or whether its rectification would be sufficient to change the very essence of American civilization remains to be seen. But it would be unreasonable to think that America will abandon its special role, and – in an increasingly turbulent world – renounce power and willingness to use it, becoming an ordinary nation. Robust, self-confident civilizations do not behave this way because they cannot.

The conceit of the European Union is more difficult to rectify, even if possible to define. It is a conviction that the world is a safe place, the transnational organizations are populated by angels and not by ideologues with their axes to grind, and that dialogue is an armor against the unmitigated evil. There is also a temptation to create a single ideology defined as the ‘European values’, to be substituted for the rule of law which built the glory of the West, enabling different peoples with different views to live with each other. This conceit of imposing this new monistic liberal-left ideology of political correctness, a new ‘religion’ of ‘European values’ on a continent of so different cultural traditions is dangerous. The longest catalogue of legal rights written into all kinds of charters, the army of judges and social workers will not convince the strong to bow their heads, if the truth has been declared to be just a convention of the present time. No catalogue of duties is going to convince anyone why they should be performed, and why such a civilization should be defended. We can have a civilization perfectly administered by bureaucracy and adept in providing prosperity and operating according to the idea of non-discrimination and the metaphor of equality which seems to be the essence of the European project, but the richness of life and ultimately freedom might be jeopardized. The maximization of individual and ‘social’ rights at the expense of democratic self-government may mask spiritual vacuity of the European Union which seems to fear its own legacy and search for an abstract substitution.

Up from communism: the radical imitators and the classicists

The opening of the European Union to the post-Yalta, post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe, a solid one third of the continent with about 120 million people, was done, somehow by default, due to the sheer optimistic momentum after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990, related to the prattle about ‘the end of history’, ‘democratization of Russia’ and ‘one European family’. Eastern Europe has become in this context a challenge to the European Union. It is relatively backward economically, yet it has a long memory and scars from resisting the Soviet empire. Eastern Europe looks at the administrative, bureaucratic state without idolatry, but with suspicion. Its inclusion into the UE opened new debates and engaged the people of Europe on an unprecedented scale, to the dismay of the European governing elites fearing populism. But contemporary East-European populism seems to be simply

a defense mechanism against the revolt of the elites against the societies they govern, stemming from the Enlightenment tradition of looking at Eastern Europe as a task to civilize.¹ The liberal-left dominant elites of the old European Union and the liberal-left elites of the new states believed that modernization in the East would resemble the West-European pattern. Reforms in the post-communist Europe were riding the wave of enthusiasm that communism was over. The liberal elites defined thus the language, the institutions and the course of transformation eliminating all alternative visions. In this view the European Union was looked upon as a comprehensive economic, social and cultural yardstick. Modernization was to be imposed from above. Politics was to disappear, only the clear-cut rules of administrative governance mattered.

A rising resistance to such post-political modernization was expected. The economic cost of transformation was only a part of it. Such a modernization neglected first of all cultural identity, the durability of historical memory as a political factor, and the attempts of the East-European societies to define themselves anew after the ravages of communism. They had to decide which parts of their traditions were to be discarded and which were to be recovered, forming a renewed core of their national identification.

After communism, Eastern Europe was trying to recover its sense of identity. It searched in their own traditions for a solid ground, exactly at the moment when such traditions in the European Union were increasingly defined as useless, since they only brought conflicts. The basic East-European problem was

not so much the restoration of political freedom, this was done nearly automatically, but rather the rebuilding of the 'old' surviving remnants of pre-communist past. It was necessary to formulate anew or to activate the basic distinctions, unveil the new meanings of the old conceptions, to reactivate mores, enliven institutions, to mend the ruptured past. And it was this problem which caused the major explosion of discussions in the post-communist world. The recaptured negative freedom did not solve the problem. There were many controversies concerning the question to which currents in the past it was reasonable to build bridges, how to define the concepts, how to perceive the human nature, how to form the hierarchy of aims. For some, anything old was worthless and they tried, like in the state of nature, to built the rules from scratch; others were searching for solutions by importing the rules from outside. The argument got complicated, because in case [of the post-communist societies] there was even no consent as to which fragments of reality survived a destruction of communism, and which were lost.²

The recovery of traditions has been long in the making and took sometimes quixotic turns. There was in the 1970s and the 1980s a mythical concept of cultural Middle Europe, visible in the writings of the East-European dissidents and oppositionists. Vaclav Havel, Gyorgy Konrad, Adam Michnik dreamed about anti-politics

¹ An excellent analysis of this Enlightenment creation of the "inferior" Eastern Europe as a task to civilize see L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford 1994.

² R. Legutko, *Traktat o wolności*, Gdańsk 2007, p. 79.

as a means of resistance to the authoritarian regime, which seemed to compromise the Enlightenment reason for good.³ After 1989 such a search for the lost tradition was considered dangerous by the liberal elites. The discussion took especially dramatic turns as the nations of Eastern Europe grasped for its different cultural and symbolic strands.

The bitter line of conflict inside East-European societies – especially in Poland, the Baltic States or Hungary – was between, to simplify, the radicals and the classicists. The radicals, associated with the wide camp of the liberal left or post-metaphysical liberalism, wanted to reject the historical heritage and also any metaphysical justifications rooted in first principles, essentially derived from Christianity and the classical tradition. Such justifications were essentially untouched – because of the communist ‘freeze’ – by Western philosophical developments since the upheaval of the 1960s. The 1960s revolution put at its center a concept of radical moral autonomy, an emancipation from traditional culture, and fascination with minorities, as allegedly possessing a deeper insight into reality, by the sheer fact of battling the dominance of oppressive majority culture, with a victim as the hero in a post-heroic culture. This amounted to a rejection of the classical concept of truth as a basis of discussion for the vacuous concept of New Tolerance, postmodernist methodology, a stress on individualism as against community and a corresponding obsession with rights.⁴ Democracy was not understood only as a political order but as a desired and expected state of society, culture and individual existence in general. From the perspective of such a cultural model the new countries of the East were not only politically subjugated, they were also crippled by the very fact of the communist ‘freeze’ of traditional culture and institutions, which were at the same time considered to be the real bastions of resistance against communism, for instance traditional family or the Catholic Church. From a post-1960s Western perspective, such institutions were considered an anachronism, ready to be quickly dispensed with in the new liberal society.

This traditional mode of culture and institutions could not be thus treated in the new post-communist reality as an asset to be recovered, reinvigorated and used for the general benefit of free societies and states, the basis of the organic civil society. They were defined as obstacles to the successful modernization of Eastern Europe along the Western road. Not only the traditional political sphere was to be radically ‘liberated’, the goal immediately achieved, but also oppressive social relations were to be radically overhauled. Family relations, relations between men

³ This search, paradoxically, had a tenuous common ground with the contemporary search of the European Union for a non-political politics, of forming an ethical empire through a process of dialogue and accommodation. For this concept of anti-political politics in the context of the post political Europe see a New Left publicist S. Sierakowski, *Antypolityka, polityka, postpolityka*, “Europa” 2008, January 12.

⁴ The literature concerning this radical fulfillment of the Enlightenment tradition and at the same time its alleged overcoming is voluminous. See, for instance: A. Bielik-Robson, *Inna nowoczesność. Pytania o współczesną formułę nowoczesności*, Kraków 2000; M. Berman, *Wszystko, co stałe, rozpyływa się w powietrzu. Rzecz o doświadczeniu nowoczesności*, transl. by M. Szuster, Kraków 2006.

and women, parents and children, definition of the family, legitimate and non-legitimate authority of the Catholic Church, definition of normality arbitrarily imposed by the ‘oppressive’ traditional culture, were to be destroyed. A question of the full public inclusion of all minorities’ mores and the public education as a means of new consciousness formation – were to be subjected to thorough revision. This new political ‘religion’ was a language of the media and dominant culture. The cultures of Eastern Europe were treated as a ‘problem’, while the East-European countries looked at their cultures as a blessing, which helped them survive the communist subjugation. The real front line, a fundamental cultural war was beginning to brew. On the one side there were the dominant liberal elites of the West together with the modernizing elites of Eastern Europe. On the other – the majorities of the East-European societies.⁵

There were thus three formal freedoms to be won as a package of this liberal modernization of Eastern Europe. The first was political, the formal restoration of democracy with free elections, institutions, constitutions, separation of powers, independent judiciary, political parties, pluralistic press, freedom of association and speech.⁶ The second was economic, restoration of the free market, part of the economic modernization after the ravages of communist rule and the earlier underdevelopment of Eastern Europe.⁷ The third was socio-cultural, the practical execution of the liberal left paradigm of ‘private is political’, the battle cry of the ‘emancipation’ movements of the 1960s.

The European political, economic but also cultural project has been, symbolically speaking, shaped by the elites of the generation of 1968. This liberal-left generation has successfully redefined the traditional cultural code of Europe and also the terms of modernization.⁸ The bitter discussions about reference to Christianity in the preamble to the first version of the Constitutional Treaty of 2005 was just an example of this. A patronizing, ignorant and condescending condemnation by the European liberal left of some of the East-Central countries, like Poland, for their allegedly widespread prevalence of ‘racism, xenophobia and homophobia’ was

⁵ Chantal Mouffe, one of the feminists of the liberal left of the ‘liberation’ generation of 1968 defined precisely such a program when she stated that after the fall of the classical left, killed by consumerist capitalism, “the capitalist liberal society found itself in search of a new just society, a new enemy [...] in the [East-European] bloc [...] which demand [...] the enlargement and deepening of democracy, so all repressed and excluded could be liberated from the traditional ties of oppression-the place of family, religion, tradition, so to gain a bigger freedom to ‘difference and expression’. In contrast to the old left, there is no more bourgeois capitalism, but there exists cultural and political ‘house of slavery’ built on superstitions of tradition and interpersonal relationships”. Quoted in: A. Bielik-Robson, *Nowa Lewica i kapitalizm*, “Życie” 2001, June 7, p. 16.

⁶ The practical operation of such institutions after their formal restoration was of course a point of debate, including the concept of postcommunism as a distinctive political system. See: J. Staniszkis, *Post-konunizm. Próba opisu*, Gdańsk 2001; A. Czarnota, “Po postkonunizmie – następny etap? Rozważania nad rolą i miejscem prawa”, unpublished paper of which the earlier version was published in the “Annual Review of Law and Social Science” 2006, Vol. 2.

⁷ A. Sosnowska, *Zrozumieć zacofanie. Spory o Europę Wschodnią (1947–1994)*, Warszawa 2004.

⁸ On that process see: Z. Krasnodębski, *Demokracja peryferii*, Gdańsk 2003.

another.⁹ Cultural differences have been considered by the liberal left elites both in the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ Europe as a problem to be quickly ameliorated, in the tradition of a post-colonial ruling class, rather than a tribute to diversity and freedom of the common Europe of nations with different traditions. This visible cultural rift between both parts of the European continent signified thus deeper differences.¹⁰ Culture became a field of a bitter fight for identity.

A new, post-1960s anthropology was based on an autonomous moral individual, a carrier of rights, increasingly defined by his subjective will against community and culture. As a consequence, legitimate power relations were defined in the broadest possible terms, and democracy was understood as equality of moral claims. Choice was the king, democracy and freedom were its instrument.¹¹ Moral freedom completed this project of total democratization which began with Kant and Rousseau, and moved to a new phase of post-metaphysical, postmodernist type of politics. All philosophy became politics, because politics and meaning of life became a free moral choice of an unencumbered self. Man was liberated from all ties and authorities, all metaphysical concepts, all loyalties and all loves but himself. As Frederick Nietzsche stated a long time ago “we burned our ships and there is no going back”. Such a state of society and culture has increasingly become a reality in the West, with institutions devised to accommodate this change, which took a generation. This approach weakens in consequence any lasting ties, liquidates even the Enlightenment’s reason as “oppressive” and wants it removed as a tool of authoritarian cultural construct.¹² It creates a society operated by a will of an individual, destroying any vestige of authority and institution which might portend a rise of a new “oppression”. All three models of ‘liberation’, claimed liberal radicals, were thus to be implemented in Eastern Europe at once, a precondition of real

⁹ Idem, *Chrześcijaństwo czy Europa? O nieoczekiwanym powrocie dawnego dylematu*, “Christianitas” 2005, No. 23/24, pp. 171–180. For instance, a resolution of the European Parliament in June 2006, pushed through by the European liberal left fraction defined Poland as a country with visible “significant rise of intolerance caused by racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and homophobia”. It was more an attack by proxy on the government of Jarosław Kaczyński – newly elected in 2005 and – on behalf of the liberal left in Europe and in Poland – an attempt to delegitimize any diversion from the officially sealed concept of Europe as devised by the liberal left generation of 1968 on the grounds that any alternative is dangerous. The cultural matters were of paramount importance here. Poland was culturally different and, to brand it with words of the new crimes, was to cut off discussion and isolate Polish government. The liberal left simply seized an opportunity to galvanize itself by opening a new cultural front. This is analyzed by G. Sorman, www.dziennik.pl/europa.pl/article46565/Polska_broni_Europe_przed_banalnoscia, pp. 4–5. The amount of xenophobic, anti-Polish stereotypes spread at that time in major European media shows that the European elites’ self-perception as an enlightened, tolerant and pluralistic brotherhood of the future has to be considered in terms of science fiction. In the meantime, all the surveys concerning Polish society prove that Poland is among those European states that are most open to other nations and people’s of Europe.

¹⁰ G. Weigel, *Europe’s Two Culture Wars*, “Commentary” 2006, May, pp. 29–36; idem, *The Cube and the Cathedral: Europe, America and Politics without God*, New York 2005; A. Bielek-Robson, *Europa środka. Reaktywacja*, “Europa” 2006, January 18, pp. 9–11; B. Cywiński, *Fikcja jednej Europy*, “Rzeczpospolita” 2004, May 22–23, pp. A5–8.

¹¹ A. Wolfe, *Moral Freedom*, New York 2003; L. M. Friedman, *A Republic of Choice*, Cambridge Mass. 1991.

¹² Z. Krasnodębski, *Demokracja peryferii...*, pp. 158–164.

modernization and catching up with the West represented by the already conceptually 'closed' European Union.

The opponents of the radicals in Eastern Europe were, figuratively speaking, the classicists. For them without metaphysical justifications and traditional institutions which survived communism, the institutional organization of the new freedoms was inconceivable and the very concept of cultural "oppression" was a cant. For the classicists, the abandonment of the metaphysical concepts and religion, were not necessarily based on a sound premise. Without metaphysics resistance to the monistic impulse of the modern state trying to get into every sphere of autonomous institutions to secure moral autonomy of an individual was, according to them, futile. The elimination of metaphysics as a basis of a moral and political reasoning ensures that the modern state could not be challenged. Metaphysics gives moral law a ground outside society's immediate utilitarian urges. There was no ethics without metaphysics, the classicist argued. Culture and religion formed thus a tradition of metaphysics not reducible to personal self. It was the publicly organized form of a creed and was necessary to sustain moral life.¹³ Thus, imitation of Western modernizers' ideas, for instance in education, was suicidal. The cultural tradition in Eastern Europe – mauled by communism, but nevertheless existing and untouched by the 1960s revolution in the West – was not only valuable but desirable, possible to sustain in the conditions of rapid modernization and in the face of the apparent axiological crisis in the West.

Another paradoxical consequence of the radical version of modernization concerned its approach to communism. The metaphor of 'emancipation' as a key to modernization would require a treatment of communism as an exercise in modernization. In such a view communism was not a criminal system without any redeeming features, but a modernizing force: a failed, but nevertheless progressive road into the future. Communism would have common features – to follow the logic of the radical modernizers – with liberal democracy and its concept of progress: an egalitarian impulse, destruction of traditional communities, a break with the oppressive past, attack on religion as hindering a vision of an individual as an autonomous moral self, a Hegelian conviction that change is inevitable and always for the better. Such a 'liberation' from culture, history and memory was to be also visible in liberal democracy's attempt to base its operation on the technical rules of administrative governance. History and memory, or culture in general, were thus not treated as repositories of wisdom allowing societies to escape the pitfalls of the *hubris* of a rational mind, but as ideology. Both the liberal way of democratization and the communist way of modernization followed thus the iron law of history, proclaiming that there was just no alternative to such a course of action. In this light – claimed the classicists – the ideological conflict over modernization was not perceived by the radical modernizers as a necessary and natural way through which the society showed its pluralism, vibrancy and freedom of action, but as a neces-

¹³ G. Meilander, *Talking Democracy*, "First Things" 2004, April, p. 27.

sary phase in a dialectical process of resistance of the old, soon to be overcome by the new, correct form of civilization. The paradox of such a thinking is that liberal democracy breeds here its own contradiction. Freedom would mean something which Marx named a ‘conscious necessity’. We would have a free post-communist society but at the same time we would be enslaved by the new iron law of historical necessity, this time the ‘liberation’ road to modernization, from economy to one’s own consciousness. In theory thus, we would have freedom to choose after communism, but at the same time one could not choose as one wills, only such a choice would be allowed which was congruent with the proper form of ‘emancipation’. This crude form of overseeing one’s will and choice so one will not choose badly, nullified the very concept of negative freedom against outside interference, and precluded the choice of common action to form, for instance, a community based on authority rooted in consent.¹⁴

The argument between the radicals and the classicists or between the liberal modernizers and the conservative modernizers was in fact the major front line in nearly all post-communist countries and elicited different responses from the West-European elites. The latter, not having any conceptual tools and willingness to understand Eastern Europe, were in general favoring the radicals and trying to de-legitimize the classicists as a source of potential instability. The latter were allegedly harking back to anachronistic past, and subverting already established liberal-left paradigm of relations between individual and the state, which had to be imposed on Eastern Europe. Modernization was to be done from above: a kind of a bureaucratic imposition of the Hegelian iron law in the style of Alexander Kojève.¹⁵ But the argument between the radical and the classicist was a real argument. On the one hand, there were defenders of the right to a genuine identity being recovered from the rubble of the post-communist societies, an attempt to reach the very essence of the lost past and thus trying to establish a contact with the rudiments of tradition. On the other, there were imitators, people who thought that the best way of modernization was to let the Western system imbibe Eastern Europe, a final harmonizing force on the road of human progress and freedom. In fact, neither the former approach was so anachronistic, being more a case of defending the very essence of human freedom which meant a defense of one’s way of life, nor the latter was so freedom-oriented, being a subtle form of not so original postcolonial frame of mind. There were thus essentially cultural problems of identity involved, and a problem of intimidation: silence before false authority without an apparent alter-

¹⁴ Thus negative freedom would entail, at least hypothetically – as one of the classicists observed – a possibility “to shape social environment and the institutions serving the individual’s good and the community’s good, allowing also to form rules distributing this freedom. But at the same time we would have to accept as something obvious, that there is one general system, which does not allow any significant modifications, and any exercise in freedom to introduce them is thought to be futile and harmful”, R. Legutko, *Traktat o wolności...*, pp. 81–82.

¹⁵ On this division line in Poland, although described in terms that are not entirely accurate and self-serving, see: C. Michalski, *Krytyczna funkcja “Europy”. Jak oczyścić nowy świat ze starych idei*, “Europa” 2008, February 2, pp. 7–9.

native. Modernization, as conceived by the liberal elites of both parts of Europe was to be both economic and cultural. The communist rule – so the argument went – ‘froze’ time in the East. In the meantime, Western Europe had become culturally a post-religious, post-Christian, post-metaphysical, post-political, welfare-state administrative organism. Eastern Europe, in turn, was still in part religious, political in the classical sense, nation-oriented, devoid of the strong states and striving to establish ones, not ready to discard its identity for the promises of the post-political, administrative order.

The Iraq war of 2003 was a catalysts of the open conflict, exactly at the moment when the new post-communist states were entering the European Union. The latter treated the Iraqi war as an opportunity to reassert itself as separate from the American civilization.¹⁶ The East-European states – some overtly, some covertly – treated the war as a pragmatic move to reassert their own political fields of maneuver inside of the European Union, and at the same time to distance themselves from this post-political politics portrayed by the latter as a higher stage of human development. This was all done in a situation when Russia was trying to regain its control over the post-Soviet countries, playing the card of splitting the enlarged European Union. Eastern Europe knew the weakness of Europe from experience, the illusion of post-geopolitical world with Russia being now its neighbor. America seemed to them to be a natural ally to provide security and an opportunity to reassert their relative political equality in the Union itself. This constituted also an attempt to salvage the unity of the West. In the meantime, the Americans themselves were not sure whether they wanted to treat the European Union as a rival to be subverted by playing the card of Eastern Europe or as a partner in the transatlantic relations, as a merciless competitor in the global economy, or as a competitor within a family. After the introduction of the common currency, the Euro, it seems that the battle for the control of the global market may pit the United States, which initially did not believe in its success, against the European Union, possibly forming occasional alliances.

Whatever the conflict over Iraq inside of the European Union showed, it definitely dispelled the illusion that the East-European inclusion would proceed along the line of pure, Western modernization project.¹⁷ It is possible that it prompted the

¹⁶ Such was a tone of the famous letter of Jacques Derrida and Jürgen Habermas (2003), two best-marketed Western public intellectuals, who defined European civilization in terms of Kantian peace, and the American civilization as a war-mongering civilization still in the throes of the illusions of the Westphalian order. That was also the time when – on both sides of the Atlantic – public intellectuals began to ponder the differences between both civilizations, in terms of their ideals and their responses to crises. See e.g. the most popular essay by R. Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, New York 2003.

¹⁷ President of France, Jacques Chirac, criticized some East-European states for their attitude towards the United States during the invasion of Iraq, barely hiding his contempt for these new, backward ‘tribes’ in the East, just admitted to higher civilization. He snarled that they “just wasted an opportunity to be quiet”. One symptomatic instance of that misunderstanding was a discussion in Poland conducted by Jan Rokita, Polish MP for Platforma Obywatelska, with a French politician, and witnessed by the author in Kraków in 2004. The French guest expressed dismay that in Central and Eastern Europe, things were resistant to the course already set by the European Union and its future development, which Eastern Europe should no more than humbly ac-

West-European elites to envision and build, as quickly as possible, the new constitutional scheme forming the new federation with its own sovereignty, including a framework of the basic 'European values' which, once accepted, would radically curtail plurality of responses in political, social, economic and cultural areas. Paradoxically, the first such attempt at Constitutional Treaty in 2005 was rejected, not in Eastern Europe but by the peoples of France and the Netherlands, and for the reasons which had little to do with the doubts of the East-European countries. That is why the elites of the old European Union could not make such a mistake again. The second attempt, the Lisbon Treaty of December 2007, essentially the same treaty as the one from 2005 with some cosmetic changes was different. The treaty was not going to be submitted for the national referenda of the European Union countries, placing its fate in the hands of national parliaments.

The West and the East: Enlightenment and modernization in Europe

Differences between both parts of the continent are much deeper than these stemming from the communist past. They reflect different paths of modernization since the Enlightenment, and a corresponding, distinctive cultural image of Eastern Europe in the West. The West-European elites had little knowledge whom they were accepting in 2004. East-Europeans have mentality formed by centuries of defeats but also a fierce determination to overcome them. By and large they have always considered themselves as belonging to one Europe, or Western culture. The resentment of failure may manifests itself in populist movements, in fervent patriotism (a.k.a. 'nationalism' in the language of the post-national liberal left), and would at times breed apathy. It may also cause a flight of the new countries' elites from their traditions. In a clear, postcolonial pattern observable for instance in Africa after decolonization, a large part of the East-European elites, mainly liberal and liberal left variety, have considered their own societies and traditions as backward obstacles to be shed, in order to catch up with the Western way of living in which these elites were already participating. In their judgment, such a change, impossible to be executed internally, could be implemented only with the EU pressures.¹⁸ The

cept. Rokita retorted that, first of all, the old Europe still did not know where it wanted to go, and secondly, that the entire new Europe was a partner now and would not accept the role of the eternal apprentice. "It is like in matrimony," snapped Rokita, causing a real dismay and panic on his interlocutor's face.

¹⁸ This attitude was not only represented by the major voices of the liberal-left opinion. For instance, in Poland it has been represented symbolically by the entire broad milieu of the "Gazeta Wyborcza" national daily. It is also characteristic of some professions, e.g. the neo-liberal economic school and the legal profession of the mostly positivist bent at major universities in their attitude towards the European Union's law. However debatable this view of the 'set' course of history may be, in the case of professions it can nevertheless be accommodated within a legitimate approach of economic and legal 'synchronization' of two parts of the continent. Some of their members, an attitude much more visible with the legal profession than with the more 'recalcitrant' economic one, evidently exhibit the postcolonial frame of mind. See: E. Thompson, *W kolejce po aprobatę. Kolonialna mentalność polskich elit*, "Europa" 2007, September 15.

liberal-left elites were here the main interlocutors of the EU elites who were essentially preparing the unification of the continent. The latter knew that Eastern Europe was devastated economically, but they made one cultural and one political mistake. The crucial cultural mistake was made due to the fact that Eastern Europe was perceived in the West essentially through the ideas, of which the origins were laid in the 18th- and 19th-century. Eastern Europe as a political entity consisting of different states did not exist until 1989, the years 1918–1939 in-between the First and Second World Wars being a short interlude. The countries there, it was historically thought, including the vast Commonwealth of Poland–Lithuania partitioned in the 18th century, were apparently incapable of governing themselves. The 18th century was a nadir of politics as defined by Carl von Clausewitz. War was just its continuation. Thus Edmund Burke understood well that “the crime of Polish partition rose directly from the rules and needs of standard eighteenth-century politics”.¹⁹ Exactly this crime, applied generally to the national aspirations in Eastern Europe, formed a background of the international propaganda of the European powers in the 19th century. They formed the image of Eastern Europe as a non-entity: a monster incapable of governing itself, except in a violent and tribal way. Russia, Prussia and Austria were to guarantee stability. France and England wanted to have peace there, so to form predictable alliances. This image is still with us today, and makes it difficult to assert East-European nations’ identity congruent with their cultures. The modernization model which was to be accepted there was thus ridden with the historic Western images, among them also a very potent even if subconscious one of German *Kultur-träger* model. Even when the independent East-European states existed in the short period between the two world wars (1918–1939), they were treated by Russia and Germany – but also by Western Powers – as ‘seasoned states’, incapable of governing, with the possible exception of Czechoslovakia.²⁰ Their image as the site of the nationalistic, ethnic, and economic instabilities, a hotbed of xenophobic and populist eruptions has persisted till today. But it was the Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, not Eastern Europe, which destroyed Europe and these two states made the Eastern part of the continent their killing ground, contributing decisively to the total breakdown of social order and social structure there.

After the Second World War, soon to be created politically by NATO and the Common Market Western Europe, had to deal only with the German Nazi past.

¹⁹ Quoted after John Lucas in: *Remembered Past: John Lucas on History, Historians and Historical Knowledge*, ed. M. G. Malvasi, J. O. Nelson, Wilmington 2005, p. 255.

²⁰ After the first world war, Poland was treated by many as an aberration and abhorrence. Therefore, disdain and ignorance on the part of Western elites was rife. For instance on October 31, 1939, after the fall of Poland, Lloyd George, the former UK Prime Minister, classical liberal and an enemy of the Church made a speech in the Parliament. He celebrated the end of Poland – unworthy of respect, feudal and backward, in which he repeated the arguments of Hitler presented in Reichstag but a couple of days earlier. In this speech, Hitler referred to Poland as ‘backward’ – a fact, which ‘in the eyes of a modern progressive person looking into the future is the greatest crime – ‘backwardness’, and which can never be pardoned’. E. von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Ślepy tor. Ideologia i polityka lewicy*, Wrocław 2007, pp. 302, 408, On this postcolonial and ignorant attitude, see an excellent article by E. Thomson, *Sarmatyzm i postkolonializm*, “Europa” 2006, November 18.

The German Nazi episode and the second world war was to be the last straw, the ultimate end of ‘bad history’, transformed step-by-step for educational purposes into a certain myth devoid of historical context. It was to be overcome by the New Europe, both in opposition to its past, and to the Soviet Union and its clients in Eastern Europe. The latter was to be opposed politically – because it was communism, culturally – because it was the East: whether Moscow or Warsaw. The ‘Hitler screen’ with its shadows of Auschwitz and wartime bloodshed reoriented West-European cultures. It made it mandatory to purge them of any traits which could possibly return Europe to barbarism. This policy turned out to be successful, yet it made the Western mind neurotic, the process being aided by the revolution of the 1960s and its crucial New Left concept of culture as ‘repression’ responsible for any social and personal evil, soon to be incorporated into the mainstream liberal thought. Any type of conflict or moral discrimination was soon looked upon as a stepping stone to disaster, and demanding the immediate action irrespective of the validity of claims made. This approach was used as a tool to repress any claim that truth may exist. Truth was branded ideology, an instigation to violence. Tolerance and moral auto-creation was to be the ethics of the West with the new ‘religion’ of human rights slipping progressively towards extended lists of human desires defined through the lenses of radical equality.

The 1968 rebellion against conformity, consumerism and hypocrisy of the older generation, however justified, was anthropologically mistaken. Yet the idea of ‘emancipation’ and radical autonomous ‘self’ became the basis of contemporary liberalism as a hegemonic ideology of modernity. They were the concepts through which Western elites began to perceive themselves and the world outside. It was an attempt to push Western civilization into a community of new brotherhood. En route, the mythical history of the European past was created to aid this process. A ritual was performed, hell was separated from heaven: a purifying act of the new civilization. On the one hand, the counter-cultural view of history and culture as a site of corrupted thinking and practices was institutionalized, a type of a collective Western White Male Crime, sealed into a propaganda tool. History was looked upon without any reverence for complexity and moral distinctions and its mode of reasoning was criminalization by association. Inquisition was coupled with Auschwitz, the United States – with the Soviet Union, Vietnam – with Gulag, the Catholic Church (via anti-Semitism) – with Holocaust, religion – with private superstition, capitalism – with communism, patriotism – with nationalism, truth – with hidden repression, family – with violence, normality – with abnormality, and abnormality was elevated to liberating normality with the new language and mass marketing. Against this ‘Hitler screen’ more than only historical memory was slowly to be falsified in the service of the new ideology, having just two categories of peoples: victims and oppressors.²¹ This politicization of history made the truth

²¹ Out of this dichotomy, comes from instance, the new German historical reinterpretation of the issue of the so called “resettled” from the East under the terms of the Potsdam agreements in 1945. They were put

the real victim. History was manipulated by these who could define the cultural terms of the debate.²² A new fundamentally just civilization of which Europe was to be an embodiment was to be built. History was a place for moral regeneration, where one could find oppression and at the same time put oneself in a position of a someone morally superior today, so ‘never again’.

This mythical view of history is corrupting and dangerous. It forces us to consider the European history as an incessant string of violence, with worthless traditions for the future. All of them have to be overcome and history has to begin anew. This approach provokes an attempt to impose, from the top down, a new ‘correct’, ‘non discriminating’ history being read in the light of the ‘European values’.²³ This myth of history radically separating the old, ‘bad’ history, from the ‘good’ one was implanted and subtly transformed by the counter-cultural rebellion of 1968. The rebellion was conducted in the name of ‘emancipation’ coupled with the corresponding liberal left interpretation of cultural criticism. The latter understood culture as a zone where ‘oppression’ was battling ‘emancipation’, a new class conflict which was ultimately going to create a wholly tolerant and inclusive moral education. The traditional moral education, which was by definition based on the hierarchy of values and moral distinctions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ was branded as suspect. It allegedly was instigating intolerance which was defined as the most radical moral crime. Intolerance was defined as an invitation to ‘exclusion’ and violence, along the road of the *ad Hitlerum* argument. The new morality was to be based on the absence of the old one,

into a new revisionist model of Eastern European history in the Second World War. Eastern Europe during the second world war is described subconsciously as a site of a great conflict between the forces of “evil” which violated human rights represented by Nazis on the one side and the forces of “good” and the victims on the other side. Attempts to make Poles join the bandwagon with Nazis who murdered the Jews, the only collectively remembered event of the Second World War, showed also this danger of a new ‘religion’ of Holocaust, as a yardstick of assessment of anything in history. All new victim groups, as e.g. homosexuals, were associating themselves to Holocaust: in a falsified mythical view of history operating according to its own rituals. On that in the American context, see: P. Novick, *The Holocaust in American History*, New York 2000, pp. 222–224. The manipulation of memory in contemporary Germany was interpreted by some as an attempt to counter the more assertive Polish policy inside the European Union, using the language of the latter’s ‘European values’ to discipline the Poles demanding the truth about the Second World War and protesting relativisation of guilt, and an equal role inside the EU. The powerful Russian lobby in Germany is vitally interested in this ‘trouble-making’ image of Poland playing on the resentment and the myth of *Mittleuropa* as a tool for controlling the post-Soviet Eastern Europe. See: Z. Krasnodębski, *Kto w Niemczech przeciw nam*, “Rzeczpospolita” 2007, January 3, p. A8; also: M. Cichoński, *Porwanie Europy*, Kraków 2003.

²² Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, a Polish historian teaching in the United States and a member of the US Holocaust Council, defined this process in the context of Jan Gross’s *Fear* as follows: “One of the moral relativists said that history is only a question of interpretation. I am convinced that there is an academic, empirical method [...] with which we can at least approach the truth. Especially, if one uses a logo-centric approach. (Today) the postmodernist approach is used. Deconstructionist. Here, there is no place for the category of the truth. This is a totally new method used by Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault. This method cannot be converted into a logo-centric method [...] and (is based) on a lay morality” to which everyone else should be submitted [...] Today what counts is not politics or money. What counts is culture. The most important thing is who rides the wave of the spirit of time. [...] If one dominates an intellectual and cultural discourse, one has power. Once one has this power one does not have to worry about the money, it comes on its own. Then you rule the souls”, in *Gross używa Żydów jako wymówki*, “Gazeta Polska” 2008, January 16, p. 17.

²³ The danger of this was shown by R. Spaeman, *Europa nie jest związkiem wartości*, “Europa” 2005, November 25.

which resulted in morality emptied of meaning, significance and authority. The effort to create the all-inclusive morality, an escape from the horrors of history, strengthened by the ideology of ‘emancipation’ of the 1960s revolution with its key concept of moral auto-creation, reduced morality to the platitudes severed from the social, historical and cultural contexts. The contexts, which are necessary to make morality concrete and therefore compelling. The new moral virtues were presented as generalities without any ontological grounding, decoupled from different cultural or religious traditions and institutions as e.g. families or churches. Not anchored by any normative community, except the new community of ‘tolerant’ educators and ‘experts’, who made the educational system a ram of destruction against any vestiges of ‘intolerant’ thinking and institutions, instigating an incessant top-down fight for organized ‘good’ causes, such a morality had a powerful aesthetic appeal. It provided a sense of ‘brotherhood’, but at the same time was soon going to create a ‘herd of independent minds’, the conformist multitude increasingly looking up for moral guidance to the providers of the new meanings.

The vocabulary and epistemology of such a moral education propelled and driven against the ‘the Hitler screen’ was essentially negative, a prevention of moral distinction in any sphere of life, kind of education beyond good and evil in the traditional moral sense of the word. The vocabulary of right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust became utterly obsolete for the simple reason that such words shared fewer and fewer points of reference. These were increasingly being provided by the professional dispensers of ‘good’ causes on which the pliant populations were increasingly dependent, alternating between the senseless, ‘intolerant’ and ‘inexplicable’ eruptions of ubiquitous violence and the mass actions, ‘wars’ against ‘violence’, ‘intolerance’, ‘xenophobia’, ‘anti-Semitism’, ‘racism’, ‘obesity’ or ‘smoking’. The forceful forbiddance of traditional moral distinctions for fear of pushing Europe towards the abyss of calamities were at the same time combined with forceful intimidation to participate in the promotion of new ‘liberated’ morality, which was going to form the new morality of the European Union, the core of the ‘European values’. Such a new educational push, the enterprise of the – symbolically speaking – generation of 1968, for fear of repeating history and in the name of ‘emancipation’, began to abstract the rules and selves, that is personalities, from the normative traditions that could give them substance and the social contexts which could let them instill concrete injunctions. Moral, objective values grounded in ontologically reasoned arguments became just diverse ‘values’, which have increasingly put on a mask of mere sentiments, personal judgments impossible to verify by definition: just expressions of individual whim.

Something which started from a serious philosophical problem of questioning the ontological and epistemological basis of grounding objective morality and cultural precepts, turned progressively to the rejection of any grounds, pretending at the same time that they may be created from a scratch.²⁴ Such a position had to

²⁴ In such a framework we arrive at a situation where utility and the individual wish are the only consequence, and a war of all against all irrespective of the rhetoric of ‘tolerance’. Moral action is defined solely

clash with the East-European cultural framework since it condemned many identity points of reference which the nations of Eastern Europe considered essential to regain their subjectivity. Among them were: a nation state, Christianity, and simply memory. For centuries, they have been there, the peoples' very sources of survival. Right now they were told that they were to shed them instantly, as a precondition for joining the European Union not only as a political and economic project, not even as a social project, but fundamentally as a cultural monistic value project of the new ideology of 'European values', a kind of liberal monism which excluded plurality and freedom. Modernity was to be not just a civilizational modernity, it was to be – like Christianity in the 9th and 10th centuries – a rejection of the old gods for the new one, a transformation of minds and souls, if need be by force of laws, courts, the media and the educational systems, with an incessant pressure to conform and catch up, the unintended parody of the not-so-long-ago experienced communist modernization. The post-1968 Western mental developments were at odds with the post-Soviet East-European countries. The 'Hitler screen' combined with the "emancipation" liberal-left approach in Western Europe had the nation state and traditional Christianity defined as oppressive entities.²⁵ And this is here, where the problem with Eastern Europe began.

as the capacity of the individual to choose as they see fit. The individual has a capacity to make moral commitments, of course, but these commitments "are not binding, since one always retains the right of withdrawal. The highest normative ideal, trumping all the others, is the ideal of an individual free to move among multiple attachments, and the merit of those attachments is measured by the degree to which they facilitate personal well-being. Unanchored as they are to anything concrete outside the self, the values and virtues encouraged by the leading strategies of moral education provide meager resources at best for sustaining and supporting our far-reaching moral commitments to benevolence and justice. When moral discourse is taken out of the particularity of the moral community – the social networks and rituals that define its practice, the *weltanschauung* that gives it significance and coherence, and the communal narrative that forms its memory – both the self and the morality it seeks to inculcate, operate in a void. Filling the void, in part, is a system of laws, procedures, and entitlements designed to ensure due process among individuals and groups who are assumed to be maximizing their interests. Myriad good intentions stand behind (such regulations) and behind each court order. But here too there are unintended consequences. In such an environment, the very idea of 'developing values', 'cultivating character', or generating 'good' human beings is difficult to imagine, much less realize", J. Davison Hunter, *Leading Children Beyond Good and Evil*, www.firstthings.com, 2006, May 14.

²⁵ In such a view, Christianity as a potential source of oppression was to be tolerated only on condition, that it subjected itself to the criteria of public functioning defined by its adversaries. Christianity, Europe's fundamental religion, and its idea of freedom and human dignity was suddenly put in the dock as a danger to these values. It was to cow itself to the new religion of human rights coexistent with the existing institutions of the new ideal state of the European Union. This explains the schizophrenic attempts to obliterate Christianity from the European past. Since the decisive chunk of this mythical past of the 'bad' European history was Christianity, there was a short step to consider Christianity to be one of the culprits on the road to Hitler. The absurdity of this view, crime by association, continues to hold. For criticism of this corrupting view by a Jewish thinker, see: G. Himmelfarb, *Jews and Gentiles*, New York 2007, pp. 99–118. Naturally, to associate Christianity and the Catholic Church, and especially Pius XII, as henchmen of the same ideas that Hitler followed, has plenty to do with the contemporary politics of the liberal left, which tries to hit the contemporary Catholic Church and its teaching, with which it rabidly disagrees, with Hitler's club, to compromise it with a technique of criminalization by association. Holocaust is naturally not a problem of Christianity: it is solely a problem of the Germans. Whatever sins and glorious deeds the Christians and the Catholic Church have perpetrated in this context, as other nations and individual people, they should never be debated even remotely in the vicinity of the main culprit. This is an entirely different league. On the danger of such a thinking see: L. Kołakowski, *Jeśli Boga nie ma...*, London 1987, p. 150.

1) On the road to unification, a nation was declared to be dangerous. This was a new development. The postwar European efforts to overcome the calamities of the past did not eliminate the nation-state. Europe had never had a common history, and the only common system of values was the medieval Christianitas, still forming the basis of the major anthropological points of reference for the European culture, even if ruptured by the Reformation, the French Revolution and *les philosophes*. The nation state was a response to this division and thought to secure the new Europe with slowly developing liberal democracy. To the European founding fathers Adenauer, Schumann and de Gasperi, Catholics all, a nation state and Christian anthropology were still taken for granted.²⁶ The 1960s, with its 'liberation' project, shattered it. The nation-state was defined to be dangerous, as culture was understood as 'repression' from which an individual had to 'liberate' oneself towards the moral freedom of an autonomous self. The idea that individual claims had to be tested within a common framework of truth and justice was rejected as repressive against minorities, the claim which boiled down to the idea of the ultimate minority of an individual with absolute moral claim against everyone else. The subjective will was the new starting point for building the European project and the new modern hero was the victim. Soon, the subjective will was associated with ever expanding rights and the new 'European values' created from scratch and judged against 'Hitler screen'. They were to form the new European moral unity, out of which anything which did not conform to this new secular, subjective anthropology was to be purged as dangerous. The nation state was for this reason suspicious. Patriotism was equated with nationalism. Christianity with oppression.

For a long time, even after 1945, Europe and the nations developed in parallel and produced the most spectacular economic and peaceful revolution of modern times. But this convergence disappeared after Maastricht Treaty of 1992. Since then, the unity of Europe had to be based on denationalization of nations. The procedure of unification lost its subordinate and ancillary role and began to live a life of its own. Europe was captured by

an ideological project of a world without borders, to unite all inhabitants of the earth in one universal body. This new European project was to develop indefinitely, turning its back to the national and Christian past. We have come with this new European Project to the last stadium of democracy liberated from its old form, not tied to the people, territory, special mores or tradition. We decided to create 'democracy without people'.²⁷

European elites tried at all costs to avoid a question what 'Europe' meant. If anything Europe was to be defined through the negative concept of escape from the

²⁶ On the modern nation state as a positive phenomenon, see: L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to modernity*, Cambridge Mass. 1992, esp. pp. 27–188. For a good overview of the Christian dimension of the newly formed United Europe in the thought of its founding fathers, especially of Konrad Adenauer, see: C. S. Bartnik, *Fenomen Europy*, Radom 2001, pp. 304–321.

²⁷ P. Manent, *Kryzys Europy, kryzys narodów*, "Europa" 2007, April 9.

past. The past was defined as a horrible string of events out of context, put next to each other without any order of importance. Inquisition was tantamount to Holocaust, lack of voting rights for women and destruction of environment – to Gulag. Multiculturalism and postmodernism as philosophical concepts legitimized this disjointed reality, and reflected a profound disappointment with the Western civilization. The past was radically cut off as a site of calamities from which nothing of value could be salvaged, including the nation state. The lack of hierarchy demanded thus the creation of new ideology of ‘goodness’, new ‘European values’, cut off from any cultural roots and increasingly becoming a prey to a rational-utilitarian theory of a civilization, where human rights were tantamount to ‘the European values’. These ‘values’ themselves have become prey to ideological lobbies trying to redefine their particular values as human rights and secure them in the constitutional documents, for instance the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Such fundamental values, secured through the judicial system, would form a civilization, in which the old values would be subject to legal and cultural scrutiny, and possibly found wanting and de-legitimized. Plurality and freedom of autonomous institutions to reproduce them would be subject to instant court scrutiny.²⁸

As a consequence, the nations of Europe began to be treated, operating within the new framework of ‘European values’ understood increasingly as human rights, in an analogous way as ethnic, linguistic, and religious divergences that once threatened the nation-building processes. The judicialization of politics was thus considered an additional safety valve, with constitutional courts performing a crucial role in the nation-building processes and securing order and legitimacy, and slowly treating nations as liability. The high constitutional courts were transformed into decision-making institutions defining *raison d’être* of the polity itself. They have become one of the major bodies responding to the political crisis of un-governance or threats of violence and breakdown of social and political order.²⁹ There has been an attempt to create a community of ‘European values’ through escape from history and culture defined as a land of violence, into abstract entities, derived from the idea of equality and dignity of human beings secured by the constitutional

²⁸ The most spectacular example of such a theory that captured generations of European elites was John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*, with its utilitarian model of a righteous society along with his utopian vision of a new world order. This pushed the whole generation of western intellectuals, building on the 19th-century progressive ideas, in the direction of forming the very sort of administrative despotism that Alexis de Tocqueville foresaw and warned against, and which the minute bureaucratic rules of the European Union increasingly resemble. This secular, materialistic, and egalitarian project devoid of any considerations of ultimate questions was meant to create a neutral, liberal, and egalitarian society, morally disarmed as a civilization driven into acedia. See: B. Watson, *Illiberal Justice: John Rawls vs the American Political Tradition*, Ohio 2007; B. C. Anderson, *The Antipolitical Philosophy of John Rawls in his Democratic Capitalism and its Discontents*, Delaware 2007, pp. 91–106. On the ideological kidnapping of human rights by liberal-left “liberationist” lobbies see: J. Cornides, *Prawa człowieka wykorzystane przeciwko człowiekowi*, “Międzynarodowy Przegląd Polityczny” 2008, No. 2, pp. 5–41.

²⁹ This is happening increasingly for instance, with demands for turning the ‘right to abortion’ and the right to the so-called ‘homosexual marriage’ into rights tantamount to human rights.

courts acting in the name of humanity.³⁰ With the new ‘religion’ of human rights and an autonomous individual, whose demands have an un-compromised priority, this safety-valve of the courts received an ideological justification. They become dispensers not only of the rule of law but also of justice. The courts have been changing from their role as part and parcel of the constitutional, democratic system into the role of the moral leader of the recalcitrant societies and national cultures. Together with the incessant stream of legislation, the courts try to purify the reality of any trace of discrimination, inequality or authority defined as a threat to the very fundamental human right, namely, the unlimited freedom of a moral choice of any individual in any circumstance and at every stage of his life. This change meant a challenge to any institution or claim that did not accept the assumed, allegedly universal definition of a particular right. From the aforementioned point of view the nation states were defined as anachronistic entities refusing to subject themselves to the administration of human rights as defined increasingly by the courts. Their history was defined as responsible for barbarisms of the 20th-century Europe. The ‘Hitler screen’ was used to subject nations to the same category of judgment as murderous conflicts once were, which put them instantly on a defensive and called for an explanation of their legitimacy. A distinction between nationalism and patriotism, never especially strong in Western languages, for reason of the Western nations never being threatened in their existence, was obliterated. An attachment to national culture, mores or a way of life was considered to be suspicious. Thus no one

can fail to be aware of the educated derision that has been directed at our national loyalty [...]. The loyalty that people need in their daily lives, and which they affirm in their unconsidered and spontaneous social actions, is now habitually ridiculed or even demonized by the dominant media and the educational system. National history is taught as a tale of shame and degradation [...]. This repudiation of the national idea is the result of a peculiar frame of mind that has arisen throughout the Western world since the Second World War, and which is particularly prevalent among the intellectual and political elites. No adequate word exists for this attitude, though its symptoms are instantly recognized: namely the disposition, in any conflict, to side with ‘them’ against ‘us’, and the need to denigrate the custom, culture and institutions that are identifiably ‘ours’.

Being the opposite of xenophobia we might describe this state of mind as *oikophobia*, meaning, to stretch the Greek a little, the repudiation of inheritance and home. *Oikophobia* is a stage through which the adolescent mind normally passes. But it is a stage in which intellectuals tend to be arrested [...]. The *oikophobe* repudiates national loyalties and defines his goals and ideas against the nation, promoting transnational institutions over national governments, accepting and endorsing laws that are imposed on us from on high the European Union or the United Nations [...] purified of all reference to the particular attachments of real historical community. The *oikophobe* is, in his own eyes, a defender of enlightened universalism against local chauvinism. And it is a rise of the *oikophobe* that has led to the growing crisis of legitimacy in the nation states of Europe.

³⁰ Such a situation constitutes one of the most important developments in the Western world. Constitutional courts have become involved in resolving major controversies about the most basic questions the nations face. The last thirty years have transformed liberal democratic political systems, giving the constitutional courts the unprecedented power through constitutional judicial review. See an excellent study by R. Hirschl, *Towards Juristocracy: The Origins and Consequences of the New Constitutionalism*, Cambridge Mass. 2004, p. 172; also: R. Bork, *Coercing Justice: The Worldwide Rule of the Judges*, Washington D.C. 2003.

For we are seeing a massive expansion of the legislative burden on the people of Europe, and a relentless assault on the loyalties that would enable them voluntarily to bear it.³¹

Once the concept of a nation-state was defined as an obstacle and the idea of the new Europe was based on the new ‘values’, the idea of Europe as such lost its clarity, lying in the future and never in the past. The pro-EU elites and the Brussels’ bureaucracy began to promulgate a concept of Europe as an ‘escape’ from the past, as a bicycle which has to be constantly moving to the future for fear of falling down”. This meant that the integration process was going all the time without the idea what Europe was and what were its *limes*. Trying to form a ‘democracy without people’, Europe was

hiding in the crowd, again and again accepting new members, there were never enough candidates [...]. In this way a problem of what is Europe, and who belonged to it, was to be unsolved forever. But the emptiness of this Europe, all the time bigger and bigger, has begun to cause doubts. A human being cannot inhabit this world without any form. The result of it was predictable. The nations of Europe began to circle around, they began to apply the ‘Italian strike’. And finally they overtly said what they thought about the whole endeavor, as was the case in the Netherlands and France in 2005, when they rejected the new Constitutional Treaty.³²

The further integration along this universal, transnational line was thought by the European elites to be the only possible option. Since democracy is rooted in the nation-state, the additional effect of such a construction was to transfer power from the nation-states to a bureaucratic oligarchy of Europe. Together with the non-accountable international agencies and the transnational organizations, a new international faith of the Kantian peace was declared, with distributive justice as its ultimate goal being administered by constitutional courts.³³

This constituted an ideological ‘abduction of Europe’. Slowly, the nation states were judged against the ‘Hitler screen’ and the nation and Auschwitz

³¹ R. Scruton, *Conserving nations*, [in:] idem, *A Political Philosophy: Arguments for Conservatism*, London, pp. 23–25. This flaw stems essentially from an anthropological mistake. See J. Keke, *The Illusions of Egalitarianism*, New York 2003, pp. 1–7. Its basic error is the futile attempt to solve the problem of metaphysical boredom. See: M. A. Casey, *Meaninglessness: The Solutions of Nietzsche, Freud, and Rorty*, Lexington 2003. A notion of human dignity requires a clear anthropological definition of a human being, otherwise it is empty. If the anthropology assumed is defined on the basis of moral auto-creation, that the concept loses any meaning at all. For instance, the European Court of Human Rights declared in 2007 that dignity of man ceases with death, and thus a mutilation of a corpse is not an offence against dignity. The same applies to such issues as euthanasia, abortion, death penalty etc. What is striking here is the sheer arbitrariness of the concept in numerous other contexts. On that concept, see my voice in a discussion about The Charter of Fundamental Rights in: A. Bryk, M. Kozuch, A. Zoll, “Międzynarodowy Przegląd Polityczny” 2008, No. 21.

³² P. Manent, *Kryzys Europy, kryzys narodów...*, p. 2. Although the new Lisbon Treaty, repeating nearly everything from the Constitutional Treaty rejected in 2005, with slight cosmetic changes, was accepted in December 2007, its ratification was entrusted to the governments and parliaments not to referendum, in the top-down approach, for fear that it might be rejected again by citizens. See: A. Kołakowska, *Sztuka owijania w bawełnę*, “Rzeczpospolita” 2007, December 15–16, p. A 14.

³³ R. Hirschl, *Towards Juristocracy...*, pp. 169–190; J. O’ Sullivan, *Facing Reality: Towards a Conservative Foreign Policy*, “National Review” 2007, February 12, p. 27.

became synonymous [...]. We are being separated from our own political history [...]. The past begins to be cast only in a role of the accused, on the scene there has been left only the idea of the European unification. It was accepted with enthusiasm by the large part of the political class. It is more than clear why this is so. The idea of unification gives it legitimacy of a higher order than a national legitimization. That is why they appealed so often to the idea of Europe, justifying their actions. They referred to the representation of a nation much more scarcely. This is why all parties, except the radical ones, accepted the European direction as their own. The Right traditionally referred to a nation, which represented the people. This division is long gone. First, the right changed in the 1970s its legitimization to the European one. We did not see that change at first, since the left retained the real features of the populist party [...]. But then it changed [...]. The left stopped being the alternative party [...]. Beginning with the 1980s the parties of the left discarded the new society project and accepted European ideology as theirs. This European unanimity caused a total blockade of politics, the inability to articulate the new antagonism [...] which would articulate a new division of clear cut roles. As a result[...] the rise of the radical movements is inevitable. The voters come to the conclusion that nobody listens to them, and they say 'no' more often [...]. The great problem of representation shows up. Europe does not get any support among the people. The parties base their activities on a program which the people like less and less [...] which leads to a rising paralysis [...] to a situation of a demise of politics[...] the rulers don't give a damn about what the ruled think [...]. Both sides do not listen to each other and have no intention to do this [...]. Paralysis transform itself to the [European context], which stems from the 'European unanimity' of the rulers.³⁴

Europeans wanted to believe in the unity of the human race and try to convert this into the global secular fate. Maastricht was signed in 1992, when optimism of the Western liberal civilization to 'end history' was at its height. But the Tocquevillian image of the world as marching towards democracy and the Western image of reality with a faith in a particular notion of development is over, including its anthropological vision and disregard for religion.

Economic globalization strengthens the civilizations and countries not only different from the West but also inimical to the West and the European capability to transform the reality outside of itself is limited. One paradox of the European Union's is drive to homogenization is its rising parochialism, as if a conviction about its moral universal role has not resulted in a curiosity about the outside world. The Western core is also not interested in Eastern Europe. It is becoming a civilization incapable of self questioning. Self questioning is not a metaphysical doubt, the latter being prevalent in Europe, but the ability to challenge its underlying premises in case of crisis. European elites avoid at any cost the question about cultural identity of Europe. The only question asked concerns the future society, formed from top down by the 'European values' and administrative procedures, a life which Sloterdijk called 'a crystal palace'.³⁵ What good can come, Europe asks, from German or Polish or Italian culture, if such inquiries amount to dabbling in the anachronistic past to be overcome by the correct rules of the administrative-bureaucratic elites. Europe forgot that nations rise "not only from inside, but also from outside, that

³⁴ P. Manent, *Kryzys Europy, kryzys narodów...*, p. 3.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

their fate depends first of all from their vision of the world. The nations of Europe are absolutely passive [for instance], they move on the margins of the American politics. They criticize it or accept it, they can do no more”.

Forming the ideological, ‘values’ project, the European elites have no choice but to consider any diversion from this a priori model a subversion of Europe and its idea of progress – a kind of moral yardstick, an ontological verity. But they have no means to conduct any foundational discussion and resort to moral condemnation. What is yet absolutely essential is

not to express [all the differences] in a language of a moral progress where the particular European norms [...] assume a shape of a particular emancipation doctrine, into which, for instance, the so-called homosexual marriages are written. It is in the name of this emancipation [that] some actions are condemned [...] which even if they have their drawbacks have the same democratic legitimacy as the other which [the elites] consider to be more advanced”, not having for their justification any basis except exactly that, an arbitrary doctrine. In such a view “some nations have thus ‘progressive’ and emancipated world vision, the others more conservative. But the conservative nations have the same rights as ‘progressive’ ones. There must be diversity here, as is the case with the perception of the welfare rights.³⁶

Such an ideological monism smells of totalitarianism. The East-Europeans are deeply suspicious of this approach of creating the ‘European values’ not because they are against Europe, but because this ideological monism reminds them their not-such-a-distant past.³⁷ Europe thus faces today a crisis despite civilizational success, because

the universalistic ideology, ideology of unification of human race in the name of the European unification loses its appeal. It is difficult to say why. It has simply its boundaries. We see it more and more clearly that the nations are for us a natural environment. The nation state has to exist in Europe because, we have nothing else at hand. And in the meantime these nations have been weakened. The degradation of politics in each of the nations has a real meaning for the rest of Europe. Even people, who say ‘let’s save the nations’, have no faith in them, which their parents had. We do not know how to live in them, how to make them, with no parenthesis – ours. Great, proud nations caused, and also experienced, too many calamities. We cannot recreate the situation from the beginning of the century, [which means that] these who want to renationalize the European space are also wrong. We are in a state of mutual paralysis, of nations by Europe, and Europe by nations. We are in the middle of a river. On the one bank there is Europe, and we cannot go there. On the other hand we cannot return

³⁶ P. Manent, *Kryzys Europy, kryzys narodów...*, p. 5.

³⁷ One of the ridiculous instances of such an imposition was the Resolution of the European Parliament in 2007 to honor all the victims of the death penalty. A penal institution recognized as currently unnecessary for building a benign civilization, is treated as a yardstick against which all past actions are treated as inhuman. This would honor for instance Adolf Eichman, and would have made an execution of Hitler or Pol Pot look like a crime against humanity. It was such an epistemological mistake that made Spaeman look with suspicion at the attempt to built Europe ‘of values’, instead of Europe of ‘the rule of law’. This drive to consider death penalty per se, as a crime against humanity is senseless, since it is one of the instances of dismantling the greatest taboo of humanity. As one of the English criminologists stated one does not kill because there is a fear of death penalty, one does not kill because it is a horrible thing, something so inconceivable, an ultimate breaking of a taboo, and this is horrible because there is even a death penalty prescribed for it. Quoted in: J. Kochanowski, *Niewyobrażalne nie może stać się wyobrażalne*, “Rzeczpospolita” 2004, January 31–February 1, p. 2.

to the other bank where being a Pole, French or German was sufficient for us all. We are clinched, we stay between two forms of life and we are incapable of choosing any.³⁸

2) After 1968, Christianity – being the largest and ‘Europe-forming’ creedal faith, with distinctive moral rules to be taught in public to the believers – has increasingly been defined as another potential danger, next to the nation-state, mainly because it employed the concept of moral truth which in the parlance of the New Tolerance was equated with fanaticism.³⁹ Secularization was thus a necessary condition of peace and well-being. Religion was considered a source of violence. This belief has been significantly on the rise since radical Islam made the idea palatable. Christianity was associated with this political use of religion today as another religion of violence. This is a historical manipulation. This primitive equation between Christianity and Islam, putting them in the same category of ‘religion’ irrespective of the fundamental difference between the two in relation to the separation of the sacred and the profane – crucial to Christianity and absent in Islam – has nevertheless had profound consequences. Christophobia was tied to the new image of Europe and to its ‘evil’ past. The fate of peaceful Europe was tied to the cause of radical secularization, which began with the Westphalian order, when the absolutist state subordinated religion to the reason of the state, with a time-delayed resistance of the Catholic Church. Secularization was thus tantamount to de-Christianization, politics became separate and superior over any limitations, let alone Christian ones. In wit, Christianity was somehow to become a department of the state. The new anthropological idea of moral auto-creation, defines in turn the meaning of human rights in relation not to reason and the truth but to power, the ability to impose ones own view on others, and was strengthening this move towards subordination of Christianity to the state.⁴⁰

Religion, mainly Christianity was thus redefined as any belief system of subjective values privately held.⁴¹ In such a view, both Christianity and witchcraft were equally valid and could not have any claims in public on others. The core of Christianity, the very belief that it contains the reasoned truth was tantamount to

³⁸ P. Manent, *Kryzys Europy, kryzys narodów...*, p. 5. This approach made Marcel Gauchet claim that the European Union has abandoned the Enlightenment’s project of pursuing inquiry and knowledge for the obscurantist, parochial model: Marcel Gauchet in “Europe” 2005, December 28, p. 9.

³⁹ This vision of monotheistic religions as dangerous caricatures, which – to be legitimate – should as quickly as possible become a department of Green Peace and welfare state, is strikingly visible even among the most prominent western liberal intellectuals, with the unequivocal demand to reject traditional universalism as a precondition for acceptance. See: P. Sloterdijk, *Otwarta jest tylko droga cywilizacyjna. Szansa na pokojowe współistnienie religii*, “Europa” 2008, January 19, p. 12; also in the same vein: U. Beck, *Bóg jest niebezpieczny*, “Europa” 2008, January 28, p. 14. For instance, the Rocco Buttiglione scandal and the attack on public Christianity in Western Europe prove this generally hostile attitude. See: “Christianitas” 2007, No. 34, pp. 171–173.

⁴⁰ For the analysis of Christianity considered as danger to Europe in a wider context, see: G. Weigel, *The Cube and the Cathedral*, Kraków 2003; J. Weiler, *Chrześcijańska Europa*, Poznań 2003; Z. Krasnodębski, *Chrześcijaństwo czy Europa*, “Christianitas” 2005, No. 23/24, pp. 171–180.

⁴¹ M. A. Glendon, *Rights Talk. The Impoverishment of Political Discourse*, New York 1981, p. 112, 128.

violence. The new ‘religion’ was human rights and the New Tolerance. The Christian language was deemed intolerant and unacceptable. Moral demands, including an insistence on a clear distinction between a person and the acts defined as sins, became considered to constitute symbolic violence.⁴² With the demise of Christianity, considered not as a legacy but as a threat to ‘the European values’ Europe may be destroying the preconditions for the ultimate security of individual freedom. Christianity implanted in the European culture fundamental barriers between the sacred and the profane, the state and the individual. With Christianity’s language, ethical images, theology, taboos, played in the public realm and considered to be a threat and gone, the survival of culture defending freedom may be increasingly in doubt, blurring ultimately the boundaries between the state and the individual. Such metaphors sustaining culture may be essential to sustain the claims of the European Union.⁴³ To form a European Union on a fully secularized project, with Christianity defined as danger and pushed out of the public sphere remains in sharp contrast to the project of Europe as devised by Adenauer or de Gasperi, who still looked to Christian natural law as an answer and guarantee, that such calamities as the Second World War would never be repeated.

Although the demise of Christian cultural code, including the language of natural law, was long in the making, the 1960s’ revolution radicalized it. But as long as an aggressive and atheistic Soviet Union was a threat, this development was not so visible in public. Since the 1990s this attack on Christianity defined as

⁴² A much more sophisticated role for religion is reserved in P. L. Berger, *Secularization falsified*, “First Things” 2008, February, pp. 23–27. In Berger’s view religion is back, exposing the naive images of it built into modern western anthropological vision. But even he thinks, that religion is going to be more a psychotherapeutic way of the individualistic road to finding the existential meaning, beyond the established creed and institutional discipline, which is a very American way of defining it. The western intellectuals are afraid of theological debate, meaning debate about truth. Politics of boundless conciliation and dialogue, not a serious inquiry into the essence of human existence, becomes an object of consideration among the intellectuals of the liberal West. To lay a claim to truth on behalf of one’s religion is considered a violation of a good conduct. Monotheistic religions are meant to play a nice script of affirming a truth they shared, and differences were dismissed as trivial and unimportant – a typical Enlightenment faith best captured by G. E. Lessing’s, *Nathan the Wise*. Such disputations went out of style in the West, when religions lost their confidence in the power of reason to establish theological truth, which constituted a mirror image of the Rorty-type postmodernist submission to the liberal faith in immediate niceties. There exist some, though isolated, profound disputes on the meaning of truth in the West as e.g. the Habermas – Ratzinger debates between liberalism and Catholicism or the corresponding Jacob Neusner and Benedict XVI’s Jewish – Catholic dispute in the tradition of the great medieval debates, as distinguished from the mere modern ‘dialogue’. On this, see: R. J. Neuhaus in “First Things” 2007, August–September, p. 73–74.

⁴³ In wit, the very rationality of natural law language – the secular equivalent of Christian religious language in public discourse, as a universal language in an attempt to engage others in conversation about common humanity, based on the ontological search for truth and justice – was declared illegitimate. On this aspect of natural law language as a language capable of rebuilding a reasoned public discourse in the most basic areas of human life, and on the applicability of natural law language through which the religious questions could be put forth for a reasoned debate, see: R. P. George, *The Clash of Orthodoxies: Law, Religion, and Morality in Crisis*, Wilmington 2001; also J. Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, Oxford 2000; H. Arkes, *Natural Rights and the Right to Choose*, Cambridge 2000. On the Christian roots of modernity, individual freedom and democracy, see an excellent work by R. Braque, *The Law of God: The Philosophical History of an Idea*, Chicago 2007; also H. J. Berman, *Law and Revolution*, Cambridge Mass. 1983; see also an opposite, standard contemporary liberal view by Mark Lilla and a powerful criticism of it in: R. J. Neuhaus, “First Things” 2008, January, in “The Public Square”.

a dangerous usurper of truth which sows discord has yet become strongly visible. One of the reasons for this acceleration was the fact that Christianity was the only real competitor to the universal secularist vision of the liberal left project of the United Europe. The demise of Christianity was thus a sine qua non condition to repeat the same operation which the absolute states did in the 17th century with the Westphalian treaty. Then the sovereign state subordinated Christianity to the nation state. Now it is to be the pan-European universal new civilization based on human rights rooted in moral auto-creation. New Tolerance, respect for all forms of life and behavior, with an injunction to accept them as morally equal was the basis of this. In such a situation condemnation of any moral judgment passed on them, that is a demand of nonjudgmental 'morality' had an automatic consequence of subordinating Christianity. Christianity has become the enemy by default. If it wanted to reassert the claim to the absolute truth of its creed publicly preached, it immediately clashed with the 'religion' of the New Tolerance and non-judgmental civilization. It could thus be tolerated only on condition, that it would reduce itself to a kind of a Roman religion, one among the many, with the same aim as Roman religions were to fulfill: to strengthen the empire and to work towards the glory of its power. The new European empire was not of course an empire in the political sense but the 'empire' of new laws and 'European values'.

Christianity, in such a view, either had to reduce itself to a role of one among many faiths and beliefs, a specific form of welfare organization and psychotherapeutic cult, abandoning any pretence to declare openly its 'exclusivist' creed, or it would be attacked as intolerant. Now, as in Rome, Christianity has become a subversive institution, in defiance against idolatry. The fight with Christianity in Rome aimed at the preservation of the unity of the state and society, and the prevention of the radical separation between the sacred and profane, in order to prevent the birth of the western notion of individual conscience and freedom, institutionally secured and legitimate, so it could subsequently pass an independent moral judgment on the state and society. This constituted the ultimate destruction of the arbitrary power. The fight with Christianity today is again a means to preserve the unity of the state and an individual, when the state, through its human rights defined as a defense of an absolute moral freedom, protects an individual in all his actions defined as will others, blurring a crucial distinction between private and the public sphere. A defense of religious freedom of Christian judgment is thus tantamount to a defense of political freedom. The general demand put on Christianity: to submit to the 'neutral' public sphere is a new ideological cant. Noting of this sort exists. The new 'European values' ideology of the new 'empire' is pitting Christianity against the new totalitarian pretensions of liberal-left monism. If Christianity thus wills to stand up to this challenge and to proclaim its creed it risks catacombs, a constant, and more or less open message of Pope Benedict XVI.

Christianity is also a competitor because its religious, eschatological impulse has been increasingly substituted by the new quasi 'religious', eschatological

impulse of the new European political ‘religion’ of ‘European values’, the new gnosis cloaked in the form of new political messianic faith, which, having many of its elements being non acceptable to orthodox Christianity treats the latter as a danger to its monistic pretensions. The European Union project may turn to this monistic pretensions with a temptation to substitute ‘European values’ for the old religions, this time realized under the tutelage of the new elites and courts. This puts the European Union on a dangerous course of repressing those who do not consider the prescribed catalogue of the ‘European values’ as binding on them. These values are cloaked in the language of the universal human rights but are in fact in many instances, a form of a liberal left ideological project, as is the case, for instance, with the Charter of Basic Rights. The ‘European values’ project may turn out to be another ideological empire, liquidating plurality of views and conflicts which have to be repressed. This liquidates politics as the only modern recourse of making peace in a free society between different views, the glory of the classical liberal civilization. The idea of the transnational community united by the monistic liberal-left values, a project different from the idea of the European founding fathers and accelerating since the 1960s with the dominant liberal-left elites at the helm, had thus to clash not only with some of the pluralistic values of the Western society, but it clashed quickly with the societies of Eastern Europe accepted to the new European Union. In this context, the so called European Constitution, essentially a useless document, hysterically marketed as a necessary condition of surviving in the globalized world, was favored mainly by the bureaucratic elites, as a means of disciplining the recalcitrant new states, both in terms of neutralization of their different approaches to ‘European values’ in foreign policy, as for instance their allegedly superior moral status vis-à-vis the American empire, and in terms of neutralization of their cultures, through for instance the Charter of Basic Rights, so to discipline peoples’ mores in the recalcitrant states, who resisted the acceptance of the new pan-European ideology.⁴⁴

The ideology which made the nation state and Christianity irrelevant elements of the new European Union was bound to cause complications after East-European countries were admitted in 2004 and 2007. Eastern Europe was under Soviet domination from 1944 to 1989. It did not exist in the West-European elites’ consciousness, a kind of situation similar to that before 1918. If Eastern Europe existed at all, it was only during the eruptions of resistance to the communist rule. At best it was a paternalistic pity, an idea, as Leszek Kołakowski once observed, that what would be horrible for the civilized peoples of the West, might have served

⁴⁴ On the uselessness of the Constitutional Treaty for the future well-being of the European Union in the suggested forms both in 2005 and 2007, see e.g.: M. Cichoński, *Niepotrzebna konstytucja*, “Rzeczpospolita” 2006, March 4–5, p. 8. On the concept of the “European values” as transnational values being enacted by the common effort of transnational organizations, NGOs, and international law, see: A. Bryk, *Is the nation state obsolete: The United States realism and the European Union post-political utopia*, a paper presented at the “Quo Vadis America?”, International Conference, Warsaw 2007, December 8–9, to be published by Collegium Civitas in 2008.

these people right. The communist inefficient way of modernization, as the Western establishment perceived it, was nevertheless a modernization, to be accommodated through patient *détente* and slow convergence of liberal and communist systems, without rocking the boat. Western elites did not believe in popular sovereignty in the East, wished to deal with governments rather than peoples, hoping that the crude modernization will do away with anachronistic, nationalistic, religious sentiments. The Soviet Union was a dangerous empire, so the thinking went, but it was at the same time safely on the side of the Enlightenment, at least this was the idea which a large part of the Western elites for a very long time harboured. As Voltaire in the 18th century considered Catherine II of Russia a modernizing force, so the overwhelming part of the dominant liberal left elites, considered the Soviet Union a useful device on the road to the final Enlightenment, starting with the economy and ending with individual consciousness. A Marxist philosopher Tadeusz Kroński (1901–1958), declaring in the 1950s his support for Stalinism, and stating that “with the Soviet bayonets we will modernize Poland”, was not at all different from a liberal-left star of the German Frankfurt School, Jürgen Habermas of the 1970s, expressing the same sentiment.⁴⁵

Such a frame of mind had two lasting consequences. On the one hand, the logical conclusion was that Communism, was on the right side of history, it modernized Eastern societies, even if inefficiently. It could not be defined as a bastard form of thinking. Thus the liberal left point of reference did not have to be challenged, at least not until Alexander Solzenitzyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* was published in the West in 1975. When communism was gone, the European Union was to end the final modernization of the East.⁴⁶ The post-communist elites and the liberal-left elites of the post-Soviet Eastern Europe formed here an alliance, considering their societies an object of political, economic, but also cultural and moral modernization. It was a package deal. To built highways was tantamount to accepting that, for instance, a traditional family was an anachronism and the new forms of the family were to be necessary. To be a traditional Catholic excluded a chance of learning how to operate modern business, and to be a patriot meant that one was a nationalist xenophobe against Europe, waiting to persecute minorities. Such an interpretation of the East-European predicament was part of the power struggle to monopolize the language and power in the post-communist states by the liberal and post-communist left and gain support of the Western elites just after 1989, its most symbolic name being the leading liberal-left newspaper of Poland, at least until 2003 – “*Gazeta Wyborcza*”. This operation in Poland was not difficult to do, since the liberal left opposition, which was the main current of the anticommunist opposition of Poland

⁴⁵ Visiting Poland, Habermas could not understand the enmity towards communism among all his Polish interlocutors. For him, communism was just a new, even if crude, form of continuation of the French Revolution and its Enlightenment project, by definition good and in need of the final completion. I owe this story to professor Zdzisław Krasnodębski.

⁴⁶ The sophisticated analysis of this process is given in Z. Krasnodębski, *Demokracja peryferii...*

since 1970s, painted constantly a rather grim picture of Eastern Europe in the West, defining its set image. The conservative, religious, mainly Catholic, patriotic, in wit pluralist currents of the opposition were weak and intellectually arid. Their traditions were censored. Their major spokesmen were liquidated by the Germans and the Soviets in the Second World War, and later by communists after 1944, others were broken down or forced to emigrate. The most important and vocal part of the opposition to the communist rule which could rise, was mainly the inner-system opposition. It was also intellectually prepared for the task. If there were other points of view inside of the anticommunist opposition, they could not get through to the public opinion in the West. The latter's cultural code in the meantime, was slowly being dominated by the liberal-left 1968 generation, which considered the voices of the East-European non liberal-left opposition to be anachronistic, let alone dangerous. Thus, both the dominating voices of the East-European opposition, and the dominant elites of the West were strengthening their mutual views of reality and nurturing their ideological preconceptions and superstitions.

This showed itself in Poland during the Solidarity movement of 1980–1981. For the liberal-left in the West, the Solidarity experience was useful, because it challenged the rotten system which corrupted the progressive myth. Solidarity was to regenerate this worn-out myth, to bring forth politics understood as an incessant process of not only political and economic emancipation from communism, but from cultural oppression as well. In this view

what Poland, what 'Solidarity' symbolized [for them] in the 1980s was a dream about the third road between socialism and capitalism [...]. It was expected that Poland would create the left anew. But Poland had no willingness to do this.⁴⁷

The essentially non-violent, Christian, let alone Catholic, character of the movement was treated as embarrassment. Christianity in the progressive vocabulary of the secularized elites of Western Europe was considered an anachronism, in the most radical versions of the New Left an oppression. Solidarity's Catholic character was thus consistently played down, considered an aberration of the new revolution in Eastern Europe towards modernization. The East-European liberal-left and post-communist opposition, having the monopoly of interpretation of Polish events in the West played this card consciously in the post-1989 system, for ideological as well as political purposes, to retain its political preeminence. One of the methods employed was an idea that Communism froze for half a century all xenophobic, nationalistic tendencies of the East-European societies. The Solidarity movement was considered also to be full of them.

The new modernization was thus to be total, economic, political as well as moral, from the top down, this time by reference to the European 'standards' and 'values'. Otherwise – so the thinking went – the populist revolutions – fuelled by

⁴⁷ G. Sorman, *Polska broni Europy przed banalnością...*, www.dziennik.pl/europa/article46565, p. 5.

the economic resentments and lack of the proper civil society there – were just waiting to attack the tolerant, democratic Europe with all the ghosts of the horrible past, captured by the symbolic metaphor of ‘the Hitler screen’, still palpably useful in the East. The liberal-left opposition in Poland employed here a new dichotomy, taken over from the reality of the communist experience. A paradigm of ‘totalitarianism’ versus ‘civil society’ was used as a description of a conflict. It was subsequently applied in the new conditions of the post-communist Europe.⁴⁸ On the one hand, the totalitarian reality transforming itself through the ‘Hitler’s screen’ to all the ugly ghosts of the past being reborn: nationalism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, religiosity, oppression by the private institutions as e.g. family, etc, on the other – the new liberal society as conceived by the liberal-left textbooks. Totalitarianism/Reaction vs. the New Utopia was a litmus test. Into this totalitarian metaphor paralleling the West-European ‘Hitler’s screen’, the reality of ‘frozen’ Eastern Europe was thrown, associated with the post-communist liberal left image of a threat to a new ‘open’ society to be built on the ruins of communism, but also on the ruins of the frozen and backward culture. The latter could include about everything. Traditional Catholicism was a threat, only the ‘open’ Catholicism as defined by the new ideologues was acceptable. The huge network of traditional civil society based on parishes, churches, and families was the wrong type of civil society, the correct one was to be constructed. Religion, that is Christianity and Catholicism in particular, was to be given lip service for its role in combating communism, but it should immediately be privatized as the only tolerated form of its existence in liberal society.

Irrespective of any cultural traditions and the wishes of the society a liberal-left textbook definition of ‘neutrality’ of the state was to be implemented at once, freedom meant freedom for ‘us’, the carriers of progress, but not for ‘them’ – the backward ‘tribes’ to be purged of their sick ideas, if need be a massive transformation of consciousness. Patriotism, the most prominent feature of the Polish strive for freedom, was defined as a variant of nationalism and a stepping stone to racism.⁴⁹ Traditional family was anachronistic and a seat of pathologies, and its

⁴⁸ D. Gawin, *Blask i gorycz wolności*, Kraków 2006, pp. 80–81.

⁴⁹ The late echo of this initial liberal-left definition of reality, was given in the editorial of the leading national daily “Gazeta Wyborcza” on August 16, 2007. It was entitled “Patriotism equals racism”. It was an assessment of a military parade in Warsaw on the Polish Army Day. Such parades are, of course, the standard fare of any country, including European countries as e.g. France or Great Britain. Moreover, the meaning of such parades there may be equivocal. After all, it could be argued, the British celebrated also their colonial adventures and the French additionally, the glory of the French Revolution, with its dubious legacy, including the first modern ideological genocide, the Vendée extermination of the entire population. In Poland, the parade was to honor the struggle for independence of generations of patriots. The date signified the Battle of Warsaw in 1920, when Marshall Piłsudski defeated the Communist Red Army, possibly saving at least Germany, from being captured by the Soviet Russia. This was the victory of civilization against barbarism, freedom against slavery, survival against looming genocide, Europe against its enemies, and last but not least – human rights against the modern ideological murderous communist system. This was the meaning of the Warsaw parade. An article “Patriotism is racism” was modern liberal-left equivalent of the Rosa Luxembourg internationalism, with all the hidden assumptions. Of these, the idea that the army is there to exploit the downtrodden was one. The other was that we may have a ‘correct’ liberation or an ‘incorrect’ liberation, with liberation by communists being apparently the proper one, and the liberation of Poland by the ‘bourgeois’ Piłsudski was not. The modern liberal left internationalism was

defense was considered to be an attack on the new forms of families, which were to be accepted with alacrity as a standard by any ‘progressive’ and ‘open’ mind. Any effort to recover the memory of the glorious historical past, suppressed by the communists, was defined as nationalism and falsification of history. An attempt to reveal all communist atrocities was portrayed as an unnecessary disturbance of the national concord. The past, in turn, if it did not conform with the contemporary standards of the ‘Hitler screen’ was to be totally deconstructed. Only these elements of historical past were to be tolerated which dovetailed to the contemporary politically correct version. Canons of civility were to be defined as repression, tolerance was to mean New Tolerance for the right thinking, intolerance for the wrong one, as defined by the new culture commissars.⁵⁰ Education and the media were to be used as a means of social engineering, lest the old type of menacing society could solidify and threaten Europe. Only after all devils of the past and present have been destroyed – so the thinking went – the new citizens, in the new civil, ‘open’ society will be ready to join the United Europe.

This vision of Eastern Europe was ‘bought’ by the West. It was a vision that was as anti-freedom as it was anti-pluralist. It was moreover skillfully and subtly disseminated and supported at the same time by the Soviet propaganda apparatus, mainly the KGB agents and the so-called ‘agents of influence’, always interested in forming a threatening image of Eastern Europe in the Western minds, so as to keep it better within the Soviet zone of influence. That was true both in the communist times and after 1989, this time by the new agents of the Federal intelligence. It was an extension of the old propaganda of the 19th century, to portray the peoples in Central and Eastern Europe as non-civilized and not ready to govern themselves

parroting the old one. In its view communism was the form, after all, of modernization because it stood on the side of progress. For this reason, the dominant liberal-left elites of Western Europe experience difficulties today to accept communism as an equal partner of nazism in the common memory of the European Union. One could answer this scurrilous editorial with a quotation from an English writer and a great friend of Poland, Gilbert K. Chesterton whose comment might be a fitting description of the meaning of the Warsaw parade: “The real soldier fights not for what is in front of him but what is behind him, not for an empire but for home.”

⁵⁰ This New Tolerance was, and is, a form of political correctness. It means that the single truth does not exist, and all convictions are to have the same value except, of course, the convictions of the commissars of the new Tolerance. Tolerance was defined, and here the liberal-left in Eastern Europe immediately understood the meaning of the new Tolerance in the West, not as a real tolerance of opinions which one does not share, but as an ideology and a political tool to be accepted by politicians and state institutions. The phony moralism, combined with ritual support for the ‘right’ causes, and condemnation of the ‘wrong’ ones, has become a staple of public discourse in the European Union. These ideological pieties were means of symbolic violence against ‘intolerant’ views, a threat to force people to be silent and impose the only correct language, an Orwellian newspeak, so that people stop thinking in terms of ‘incorrect’ ideas. On this corrupted use of ‘tolerance’, see: A. Kołakowska, *Intelektualne korzenie politycznej poprawności*, “Przegląd Polityczny” 2003, No. 59, pp. 8–19; D. Leszczyński, *Tolerancja i jej wrogowie*, “Przegląd Polityczny” 2003, No. 62–63, pp. 22–31; R. Legutko, *Euroświętoszki*, “Nowe Państwo” 2006, No. 3, p. 117; for a wider approach to this problem, see: Ch. Milton-DeIsol, *Skazani na konflikt*, “Znak” 2002, December, pp. 22–30. The most cherished causes of human decency, as e.g. the fight against anti-Semitism or racism, were harnessed as an ideological tool of brainwashing and intimidating the people of different political opinions. On this problem, and applicable also to other post-communist East-European countries (e.g. Hungary), see an excellent article by R. Krassowski, *Antysemityzm Polaków jako problem polityczny*, “Dziennik” 2008, January 19–20, pp. 10–11.

and causing trouble in Europe.⁵¹ The surrealistic character of such a perception showed that the West still stayed both in the 19th-century frame of mind as well as the liberal-left frame of mind of the 1968 generation as far as the image of Central and Eastern Europe was concerned. All cultural characteristics of East-European cultures: strong desire for independence, freedom, religious attachments, communal instead of individualistic attitude to society – were deemed by the liberal left as suspicious and oppressive, ready to be repeated and cause havoc that Europe had not-so-long-ago experienced and forsaken.⁵² A certain expiating analysis was provided by the prominent liberal-left historian Tony Judt.⁵³ Judt showed this warped vision of Eastern Europe and the crucial role of the liberal-left and post-communist opposition elites in monopolizing the channels of communication to Western Europe. This fact, in his judgment, has been largely responsible for the Western elites' ignorance as far as identity and real problems of East-European societies were concerned, contributing to the hazy expectation of what kind of politics would be possible in the new, united European Union. The West saw a Pandora's box of dangers in East-European nations and, to quote Judt,

the similar pessimism was characteristic among the dissidents. Please remind yourself this sentence of Adam Michnik: 'It is not Communism which is the worst, but this which will come after it'. Czech dissidents behaved the same way.⁵⁴

⁵¹ This strengthening of prejudices of the western liberal left by the Soviet secret service is stressed by a historian M. J. Chodakowski, "KGB disseminated in the 1980s an opinion, that Poland will become the second [Khomeini's] Iran. What surfaced at the beginning of the 1980s in Poland made me furious. I read it in the States, I knew that such materials were supplied. They used the liberal left discourse dominant in America, and progressives against freedom of Poland. The suggestion was that if Poland becomes independent, there would be the second Iran there. This was to build a belief that it is better to stay socialist", but the idea stuck and was playing to the prejudices of the liberal left in which the xenophobic, nationalistic, Catholic Poland was to be a threat against minorities and rights of liberal society. "The same method was used in a certain way against [Kaczyński's] government. The message was, that this government supports anti-Semitism, xenophobia; *Gross używa Żydów jako wymówki...*, "Gazeta Polska" 2008, January 16, p. 17.

⁵² There are exceptions. On the liberal side the most prominent was Timothy Garton Ash, at least in the first stages of the post communist East-European developments, also Neal Ascherson and Norman Davies, and on the conservative side – Roger Scruton and Guy Sorman.

⁵³ T. Judt is the author of *Postwar Europe*, London 2006. The book is fascinating, also because of the selection of things omitted. Not especially prone to recognize the role of Reagan or Catholicism in resisting communism, he does not, for instance, give any credit to John Paul II, for his contribution to its demise.

⁵⁴ Tony Judt interview with Maciej Nowicki, *Polacy zaskoczyli Europę*, "Europa" 2007, November 17, pp. 3–5. On the fear of the post-communist left intelligentsia of the so-called March 1968 generation in Poland, as far as the rebirth of the authoritarian, xenophobic, anti-Semitic right, see: D. Gawin, *Blask i gorycz...*, also a discussion held in 2008 in the context of a *Fear* by Jan Tomasz Gross, which confirms this line of reasoning. Explaining why Gross portrays Poland's past and present in the light of such bleak anti-Semitism and xenophobia without exceptions, a sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis stated that Gross's view was shaped solely by the message he received from the major liberal-left "Gazeta Wyborcza" national daily published by his friend, Adam Michnik. As seen by J. Staniszkis, Gross "received a totally deformed picture of Polish reality. Of a country in which the forces of progress, represented by his [liberal-left] friends battle the traditional Polish demons of anti-Semitism and radical nationalists. He believed, that everybody who criticizes Michnik in Poland, did this because Michnik is a Jew. [...] Thus he tied to the current political strife, the real problem of Poles facing their historical question of settling the accounts", at the same time applying the Manichean way of analyzing reality. When Gross came to Poland for a short period of time after communism, he stayed within the same milieu. The mood that reigned there was a feeling of terror. Barbara Toruńczyk said that "we were terrified [...] horrible articles in some marginal

Judt's journalist-interlocutor, adds ironically that this was the reason why West-Europe elites

felt fear of fascism which was coming together with Poland of Kaczyński brothers' [government of 2005–2007]. Everybody forgot [...] that such comparisons were ridiculous". Judt agreed, stating that "the West simply forgot that in Poland there simply was no fascism before the [Second World] War. It is obvious that the interwar period speaks for the states of Central and Eastern Europe – fascism was born in Italy, Spain (sic! – AB), Germany. One cannot say that in the East there were backward fascists and in the West democracies. A strange picture of Eastern Europe was constructed because [the West] knew nothing about it. [...].

History of Central and Eastern Europe was purely an element of the so-called Soviet studies, and was important only as a part of the history of the Soviet Union. After the Second World War, the West accepted the metaphor coined by [the Austrian Foreign Minister and Chancellor from the time of the Vienna Congress of 1815 and after] Metternich: 'The East begins at the gates of Vienna'. [Europe] reverted to the mental map of the 18th and 19th centuries, and to change this requires much time and much effort,

which embracing the European Union did not change automatically.⁵⁵ Judt properly defines this message of the liberal-left and post communist elites of Eastern Europe and the error of their Western counterparts. Both wanted to execute a double task of 'escaping' – both to the European Union, and from the traditions of devastated Eastern Europe which they considered dangerous. This escape from the allegedly anachronistic cultures to the allegedly 'set for good' culture of the European Union and its administrative mechanisms was fuelled by additional fear of costs, and also pessimism that Eastern Europe would not be able to achieve civilized, mainly economic success, and that it would have to be permanently in a state of dependence. Judt tries to objectify the process showing the origins of the liberal elites' thought.

papers [...] People used a word 'Jew' in the streets. Something that was not present under communism. Everything, when communism was no longer with us, came to the surface. The atmosphere was horrible, it seemed that the magic of the Polish workers of 1980–1981 was gone". Piotr Zychowicz comments in this context: "it is enough to look through the issues of "Gazeta Wyborcza" of its first years after regaining independence to realize how the situation was seen then by the milieu in which Gross [and Michnik] lived. It seemed, that there would very soon be an eruption of pogroms, and Poland will soon roll itself into the abyss of the radically nationalistic dictatorship". Instigated by the communists, the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968 played an important role in this view of the Polish liberal-left intelligentsia. Some of the leaders of the students protests against censorship in 1968 were Polish students of Jewish origin, children of the highly prominent communist apparatchiks who rebelled against their fathers. Some of them were treated by the communist secret police with the anti-Semitic remarks, as a part of the strife within the communist party. This "confrontation with a brutal, primitive agent referring to anti-Semitic stereotypes, [...] made its mark [...]. In the view of the most active Polish liberal-left, March [1968] turned out "to be an extension of the Second World War". In the meantime, the 'Hitler screen' in the West began to look at the experience of the war only through the lenses of the Holocaust. Because of this the events in Poland were not only horrible but inexplicable. For an excellent analysis of the problem why the cultural anti-Semitism survived the war, see: A. Smolar, "Aneks" 1986, No. 44. As Eva Thompson described it "the Holocaust became the central fact of the Second World War, for which the real war actions and the sufferings of other nations were just a screen. In such a version, the history of annihilation of the Jews was the only crime which took place during the war. All the other victims were in the second plan, the relations of the survivors were to be foundational, and more and more guilt was thrown at the 'nazi collaborators', whereas the 'nazis' assume not the face of a concrete nation and movement but are treated as barbarians from the space outer, and the collaborators as the real perpetrators." P. Zychowicz, *Oko w oko z tuszczką*, "Rzeczpospolita" 2008, January 26–27, pp. A18–19.

⁵⁵ T. Judt, *Polacy zaskoczyli Europę...*, s. 3–5.

One thing for him was obvious, the whole discussion about Kaczyński's government in 2005–2007 in the idiotic context of fascism, the classical device of criminalization by association, shows that the process of mutual learning will be long.⁵⁶ Another western intellectual, the conservative liberal Guy Sorman showed this nexus between the liberal left inside of Poland and in the West in the context of the liberal-left search for a noble cause, the 'progressive good', against the 'reactionary evil' during the fight against Kaczyński's government in Poland. But he also pointed out the hidden xenophobic attitudes of the official politicians reverting to the postcolonial disdainful attitude:

Kaczyński government provoke[d] an incredible hostile reaction. A total ideological war was waged against him. Can we talk here about the conspiracy of the old European left? [...] In many respects that is exactly this. The old Marxists loose all their battles. They lost the intellectual battle a long time ago, after this the economic battle, and recently [in France when Sarkozy won] they lost the political battle. In this context the old left tries to regenerate itself through a defense of the secular and progressive Europe [...] it loses at home and tries to shift the field of battle to the European scene [...]. There the Marxist left is simply stronger. Especially in the European Parliament. The [Kaczyński] government was an ideal aim of attacks for it, it is with the help of Kaczyńskis that the left wanted to regain its lost youth. It prayed for such a present for years. And finally it got it. In the ideal form, the Polish government embodied nearly all values against which the French [and not only French] anti-Christian left has been fighting for the last two centuries. But it did have no one with whom it could fight. And suddenly the Kaczyński brothers showed up [...]. These are often the same people who supported Solidarity in the 1980s [...]. [Yet] one has to remember that 'Solidarity' symbolized [for them] in the 1980s [...] a dream about the third road. [...] And the more Poland moves away from this dream of the left, the enmity grows [...] 25 years ago [they] supported Solidarity to show that one was a progressive and anti-totalitarian intellectual. Today Poland is attacked as a fascist country – which has become the dominant discourse – to show, that one is a man of progress. But what is at stake is not a true Poland [...]. They know nothing of Poland [...] German and French publicists never go to Poland to learn what is happening there [...]. They do not care about Poland, but use it just for a certain strategy of intellectual and political power. For them Poland is like Ubu the King, simply does not exist. [...] But not only that [...] Poland is of course not a darling of the French or German diplomacy [...]. Here, the argument transcends the fight between Kaczyński's and the left. [...] The German-French duo has always thought about Europe dominated by Paris and Berlin, social democratic Europe. And here, suddenly appears Poland which by its nature is rather nationalistic [in the patriotic sense of the word – AB], Christian, pro-American and at the same time anti-Russian. For fifty years Europe was constructed as a place half-way between Russia and America, and the Poles doubt this logic. [...] [But] in such fundamental issues we are destined for a conflict.

The conflict for Sorman is a blessing for the sclerotic European elites still fighting the ideological battles of yesterday, and using categories of thought from the past.⁵⁷ Another conflict portrayed by the Western elites as divisive and dangerous, has been the so-called 'historical politics' conducted allegedly, only by the East-European countries. In case of Poland, for instance, the accusation against

⁵⁶ For an interesting, cynical analysis of this process of 'copying' and 'escape' in the context of Eastern Europe and its adventure with modernity, see: C. Michałski, *Krytyczna funkcja Europy*, "Europa" 2008, February 2, pp. 8–10.

⁵⁷ G. Sorman, *Polska broni Europy...*, pp. 4–5.

Kaczyński's government was based on the idea that Poland was trying to renew an anachronistic conflict over history, both externally – as for instance with Germany – over the meaning of modern history, or internally – as with 'vetting' i.e. the screening of the institutions of public life for the presence of the former secret agents of the communist secret police. The latter case was hypocritical, nearly all European countries, including Germany, did it, but much earlier. As far as the West-European criticism of 'historical politics' was concerned, a hysterical image was projected, a radical contrast between the past and the future of Europe, the post-historical nations like France or Germany and history-obsessed nations like Poland or the Baltic States. The post-historic countries were allegedly done with history and focused on the future of Europe. Poland or the Baltic States were in turn allegedly trying to wake up the ghost of nationalistic past to foment discord. Sorman considers rightly such a dichotomy a monstrous ideological lie and a form of symbolic violence, in fact a racist, postcolonial type of mentality, also in service of immediate political goals.

The division of Europe between allegedly anachronistic and dangerous Poland or the Baltic states which were allegedly looking back into the past, and France or Germany which settled their accounts with history was one big falsification. Not only the Western nations play ruthlessly 'historical politics', but they have not exorcised their own ghosts yet. The most important intellectual debate in Germany, barely 10 years ago

was the so-called 'battle about history' [...] the most bitter conflicts over the meaning of German identity [...]. In France the assessment of the French Revolution was furiously debated, since the very founding myth of the French Republic was at stake. The debate was solved for good with a book of Francois Furet *The past of a certain illusion* in the middle of the 1990s, but [...] the meaning of republicanism was changed for ever". Before this debate, "the approach to the French revolution was enthusiastic, Furet made it rather a negative phenomenon. The Poles are criticized for *lustracja* [vetting], when the French had only recently a very big problem with Vichy [government]. So-called Papon trial took place just several years ago [...]. Sarkozy during his trips to Africa [...] talked about the French colonization [...]. This argument will come back. The immigration is such a big problem for France, and it touches history. The problems with immigrants remind us constantly that France is not any more a big power, and thus it does not constitute a model any more for the coming people, it lost its assimilating potential.

For Sorman, Poland's assertive new policy was for the West a handy substitution for the old Europe's problems and fears, and the inability to come to terms with the new reality and a crisis which is visible after the unification of Europe. For this reason, Sorman thinks, there was a psychological need to "find a culprit of this crisis and it would be best if such a culprit was pro-American. The United States are a very easy image of what Europe does not want to be, but at the same time it wants to be a system which is utopian. So the culprits of contemporary European Union are the Poles, as some time ago were the English."⁵⁸

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*. Sorman is right, that it is naive to think that the countries of the European Union are not

But one feature of this historical debate was crucial to understand its deeper meaning, especially in Poland but also in Hungary and the Baltic States, and Sorman did not grasp it. The real clash of ideas was between the Polish and the German versions of history, and the other – between the Polish and the Jewish versions of history. Both clashes were symptomatic because they showed different approaches to studying history. Poland was searching for the true meaning of the historical past, the context, and the sense of memory rooted in real history of 20th-century Eastern Europe. Germany embarking on its revisionist history, in large measure in good faith, looked through the lenses of the ‘Hitler screen’ and human rights, from the hindsight of the new European standard of ‘goodness’. This was essentially an ahistorical and ‘presentist’ view. It had not much to do with real history and the Eastern Europe’s complex reality but was meant to built another mental barrier against actions which should never happen again. In this light, for instance, both the forceful resettlement of Poles under German and Soviet occupation and by international arrangements like Potsdam of 1945 were as bad as the flight and the resettlement of the Germans. Both violated human rights and were unjust. The same concerned the Polish-Jewish relations as looked upon through the lenses of the Holocaust. The Holocaust was transformed as the defining experience of the second

running ‘historical politics’. But, if he thinks that this is simply a matter of forming a ‘settled account’ version of history, and closing away the past, he may be missing a point. Historical politics today is a part of the incessant media politics. Every generation writes its history and the community in which it lives anew, so it can be converted to success in the media. The creation of historical politics is a must in the world of contemporary mass media market, as a means of political and economic success. Even if my nation’s history is horrible and hard to bear, for instance the facts of the German crimes, or the facts of the Polish or Jewish historical defeats, it has to be converted into a media event strengthening the community and turning this into a tool for pursuing national, state interests. This is why, Germans are playing the card of their “resettled” as a badge of belonging to the ‘good’ history of the persecuted, or stress the importance of the German internal resistance against Hitler, so to create a psychological operational political space. The same concerns the Jews and Israel, which turned for instance Masada and the Holocaust into tools of political activity. The media creation of the proper historical image of a nation, and sometimes its other side of creating a bad image of another nation, are done for the purpose of the future betterment of a chance of a particular state or nation. The media creation of the national image is not a ballast, but a *sine qua non* condition of achieving national interests. The media game of historical politics at the level of particular states as e.g. Germany, France, Russia or Israel is also played at the level of the bigger ideological entities as e.g. the European Union. The struggle for the shape of this media image of historical, as well as ‘political correctness’, type of properly institutionalized moral politics in Europe, is one of the crucial fronts of the ‘culture wars’ inside the European Union, the game played both at the level of ideological transnational politics by the medially dominant liberal-left, figuratively speaking, of the generation of 1968, and the particular states inside the European Union. In the European Union, geopolitics has not ended. It is not an ideal space where each actor limits itself voluntarily in the name of cohesion. Each state strives for their own position, and the stronger nations play the game for themselves. To read this game, to learn how to play it, is a precondition of not being pushed to the periphery zone. Historical politics is a crucial part of it, and it is dangerous to disregard it. Eastern Europe was entering the European Union disregarding this crucial ‘interest’ aspect of historical politics, and its conflict-ridden potential which could not be avoided. The use of ‘historical politics’ in Poland in the years 2005–2007 Kaczyński’s government, however crudely executed and however consciously played, elicited such an enormous resistance because it began to use a weapon which tried to made Poland an important player, *toutes proportions gardees*, in the European game, which would prevent pushing it into the status of a dependency. The Polish elites did not essentially understand this game, which, for instance, President Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic plays quite well. Among the Polish public intellectuals, the best understanding of historical politics as a political weapon is shown by Z. Krasnodębski, see especially: *Zmiana klimatu*, Kraków 2007; M. Cichocki, *Władza i pamięć*, Kraków 2005, and D. Gawin, *Blask i gorycz wolności...*

world war in Eastern Europe, against which everything else should be measured irrespective of the nuances or real facts. The double myths of the Nazis coming from cosmos and Holocaust, elevated to the central categories of explanation were suddenly turned into the instruments of falsification of history, which in turn was used by the different lobbying groups.⁵⁹ For the East-European countries, still fresh from the communist falsifications and manipulations of history, a recovery of the true memory and facts, and the burying of the lost dead was a paramount existential urge, the very process to recover their identity. To see manipulations of recent history, whatever the noble causes in the name of which this was done, smelled of not-too-recent communist violence and brought protests against the new lie. The rebellion was not in the name of the anachronistic, divisive past. The rebellion was against mendacity of the new ‘common’ European Union’s history, which East-European immediately sensed. For this reason, there is also a reluctance in Eastern Europe towards the issue of ‘shared’ historical textbooks. They are perceived as an official bureaucratic ideological enterprise of changing consciousness of the students towards the new ‘proper’ version of European history. There is also a resistance to the idea of common European ‘civic’ manuals. Both history textbooks and ‘civic’ manuals are laden with ideological brainwashing, mainly of the liberal left kind, an attempt to create the common European ‘values’ from the top down by means of the educational system.⁶⁰

In none of the above clashes it was reasonable to portray Europe as in crisis. For Sorman, again, Europe does not go through any crisis. Europe is

one of the greatest successes of modernity, both in economic as well as political sense. All aims planned for by the founding fathers have been met. We live in peace, there is no inflation, we can move around freely. The only crisis which we have is the crisis of the European bureaucracy, which wanted to create from day to day, one great European nation and with its help to settle all matters among themselves. There are still some economic problems, but they are not insolvable. In wit I have a great problem with the understanding of the very concept of ‘crisis of Europe’. And because there is no crisis there is no Polish guilt [...]. The Poles make of course mistakes in their foreign policy, and they have a very bad marketing. But first of all Poland is needed in Europe, because it embodies

⁵⁹ For an analysis of various aspects of this process, see: Z. Krasnodębski, *Zmiana klimatu...*; P. Novick, *Holocaust in American...*

⁶⁰ The recent French-German post-1945 history textbook is an example of such ideological falsification of history in the name of the common European values. The United States is portrayed there as being responsible for the Cold War and history seems to begin in 1945, out of the void. Equally unserious and political correct is a common school textbook written by the Polish and German historians about the Second World War. It gives scant attention to the Polish Underground State, but a prolific attention to the German resistance to Hitler. There is also no history of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. *Zrozumieć historię – kształtować przyszłość. Stosunki polsko-niemieckie w latach 1933–1949. Materiały pomocnicze do nauczania historii*, ed. K. Hartmann, “Dziennik” 2008, February 8, after “Rzeczpospolita” 2008, February 9, p. 2. On the other hand, if such a manual can be treated as an exercise in interesting endeavors at mutual better understanding, and not as a means of imposing the only correct version of history for the sake of the common future, it might be commendable. See: *Książka uczywa i zwiędła*, “Rzeczpospolita” 2008, February 21 The problem, however, is real. See e.g. a European ‘civic manual’, some parts of which were rejected by the Polish Ministry of Education as an instrument of social engineering aimed at changing consciousness, the process being visible in the new ideological meaning applied to numerous institutions, e.g. the family: <http://eycb.coe.int/compass/en/chapter1/13.html>.

resistance towards banality. The picture of Poland is like history of Solzhenitsyn. He was in France enormously popular, because he resisted Stalinism. And suddenly he began to talk that his fight was inspired by Eastern Orthodoxy. Then the left turned against him. The same happened to Poland. At the beginning Poland embodied the vision of Third Way, and then it turned out it was Christian. And the left turned against it, as earlier it turned against Solzhenitsyn [...] [For instance] France is not any more Christian, when Poland remained Christian. And this is how Europe should be – there are countries in it which are [culturally] progressive [in the liberal-left sense of the word] and conservative ones. This is very good that there is a country, which sustains yet religious, political, cultural traditions which disappeared in other places. Poland is necessary from that point of view [...]. Your resistance towards the European technocracy is a very good thing. Opposition towards Russia is a very good thing. This is a matter of common sense – Europe does not have it, and here a certain aggressiveness, too much of anti Russian animus of the Poles is positive. It is also important for some countries to be pro-American like Poland – so the whole of Europe would not become a bastion of idiotic anti-Americanism. The Poles can say certain things in a provocative way, which forces others to ponder them. Let's take the Polish demand that Christianity be a part of the European Constitution. All were of course against it. But at least this forced to pose the problem of Christianity in Europe. In Europe where nearly no one thinks any more, which found itself in the great technocratic sequence, Poland embodies resistance against banality.⁶¹

Judt's view, not as intended, and Sorman's more consciously, analyze the frame of mind of the Western elites. They seem to embody traits of post-colonial thinking. Their reaction towards Kaczyński's government, aided strongly by the post-communist intelligentsia and the dominant liberal-left media in Poland, was ignorant and patronizing, rooted in the 19th-century mentality. An excellent analysis of this attitude was provided by Eva Thompson, when she applied the post-colonial theory in an original way to the relations between Eastern Europe and Western Europe within the context of the European Union.⁶² A similar observation was made by Norman Davies. Showing the cultural differences between the European West and East, Davies traced the origins of the negative picture of Eastern Europe and its subsequent evolution.⁶³ The modern mental and intellectual notion of Eastern

⁶¹ G. Sorman, *Polska broni Europę...*, p. 5. Sorman wrongly thinks that everybody was against it. At the beginning its most strong proponent was Germany and some other states. It was only due to the brutal protests of the French and the skillful French diplomatic maneuvers that the socialist government of prime minister Jospin imposed its will on the rest, arguing that the French Constitution with its lay system forbids it. The same concerned the preamble to the Charter of Fundamental Rights where the former German president Roman Herzog suggested a reference to 'spiritual and religious heritage'. This formulation met again with a protest by Lionel Jospin. A bizarre situation appeared, where two versions of the Preamble function today, with one mentioning only spiritual heritage.

⁶² E. Thompson, *Sarmatyzm i postkolonializm and W kolejce po aprobate...*

⁶³ The idea of the 'civilized' West and the 'barbarian' East has a long pedigree and dates back to Greek and Roman culture. The crystallization of the Greek identity during the Persian wars in the 5th century BC "was done under the influence of the 'invention of a barbarian', as an alien from outside. The Romans did the same when they defined the borders of their empire as 'limes'. The idea was resurrected in the Renaissance, and in the beginning of the 20th c. by all Europeans who received classical education. This meeting of the Greeks and 'barbarians' [...] constituted the beginning of the idea of 'Europe'. It embodied arrogance and the alleged high culture, the assumption of seniority and the pretences to the natural right of expansion and dominance. Christianity replicated this division into the civilized people and the pagans. Inside Christian civilization there was also a division between the Western and Eastern Christianity, whose echo was heard in the civil war in Bośnia in the 1990s. N. Davies, *Zachód i Wschód, czyli Piękna i Bestia*, [in:] idem, *Smok wawelski nad Tamizą*, Kraków 2001, pp. 153–154.

Europe's inferiority and Western Europe's superiority was created in the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was deeply infused with it. *Les philosophes* of the 18th century were mainly responsible for this intellectual construction termed 'Eastern Europe'. The 18th century constituted a period of the ultimate decay and decomposition of the multinational and republican Commonwealth of Poland–Lithuania. This unprecedented total breakdown of the machinery of the state, as an instrument facilitating 'progress' and implementing the 'reason of state', was contrary to the official doctrine of the absolute monarchies around Europe, whether in classical or the Enlightenment version of it. In such circumstances, the Commonwealth of Poland–Lithuania met with the utter disdain of the absolutist monarchs and *les philosophes*.⁶⁴ The latter were the forerunners of the 20th-century intellectuals who in the modern machinery of the state sensed a chance of transforming reality according to their image of 'progress'. At the same time it gave them a chance to take part in this endeavor as the advisers to the Prince.

The end of the multicultural Commonwealth of Poland–Lithuania was thus a good pretext to show one's progressive stance. It was then, that many Western travelers replicated a picture of Eastern Europe as a place of incredible exoticism, with the teeming, dirty masses of Jews, peasants, wild animals and lice as well as all possible religious superstitions. Especially disdainful to the enlightened mind of *les philosophes* was Catholicism. Some of the major thinkers of the Enlightenment as e.g. Voltaire considered termination of the Commonwealth of Poland–Lithuania a blessing. The idea was duly and skillfully disseminated by the partitioning powers' propaganda machinery among the elites of Western Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. Edward Gibbon thought that his history of the *Fall of the Roman Empire* could be used as a metaphor of what was happening in Eastern Europe. Gibbon who never traveled to Eastern Europe stressed the 'horrors' of the peoples of the East and their bigotry. Christianity, mainly Catholicism, towards which he was deeply prejudiced, constituted an especially odious part of this bigotry. By doing this Gibbon, as Voltaire, justified the crimes of his powerful sponsors from Prussia or Russia, who could consider themselves great educators of the barbarians, with the Absolutist state being a perfect instrument of progress.⁶⁵ It was therefore the Enlightenment, which impressed on the minds of the Western elites, the image of Eastern Europe as a backward, rule-less and directionless part of the continent. As a consequence it obliterated totally the position of Poland and Hungary at the

⁶⁴ One of the exceptions, although not solely for the reasons Poles wanted to see, was Jean Jacques Rousseau who wrote "The Government of Poland" in 1769. For an excellent analysis see: W. Kendall, *Introduction to the American edition of "The Government of Poland"*, Indianapolis 1972, pp. IX–XXXIX. Barely known in Europe, Kendall's analysis is very instructive to the understanding of the complicated relations between the wishes of the commissioning Polish Committee and Rousseau.

⁶⁵ Frederick the Great aided his friends in the philosophical circles expressing his disdain towards "these imbeciles breeding themselves by hundreds, whose names end in -ski". In 1771, shortly before the First Partitioning of Poland he mentioned "a country, where nothing has changed since the time of the Creation". An American tourist who visited Poland in 1788, compared it favorably with Russia, but right after that he contrasted it to 'the angels of civilization who dwelled the godly lands of the West'. N. Davies, *Zachód i Wschód...*, pp. 154–155.

very center of European Christianitas and Renaissance, and slighted their roles in Reformation and later Romanticism. The 19th century intensified such an image of Eastern Europe as lands not touched by industrialization, political liberalism, and democracy. The East was seen as a backward, unruly cauldron, the backwater of the East-Central Empires, which tried to digest it culturally and economically. The Vienna “Concert of Nations” considered the nationalistic aspirations of the multitude there to be a danger to the order of Europe. The Enlightened prejudices were strengthened and duly confirmed by the partitioning powers. With some exceptions, including Marquis de Custine, the Western elites considered even Russia to be a more civilized state. Racism of the 19th century strengthened in general such prejudices towards Slavs and predominantly unassimilated dominant masses of the Ashkenazi Jews in the East.

The German invasion of Poland in 1939 and the Nazi propaganda were deeply influenced by such racial prejudices, as well as by the eugenic ideas thought to be a means of race selection.⁶⁶ Even the victory of the Allies in 1945 did not change much. Furthermore, it obliterated Eastern Europe from the bad consciousness of the West which consigned it in Yalta to the communist camp. Its subjugation to the Soviet Union was justified subconsciously by the fear of nationalistic hatreds, backwardness, and inability to rule itself independently, the prejudices strongly supported by the communists and the leftist intelligentsia in the West.⁶⁷

Modernization by the Soviet bayonets, was also the faith of the anticommunists of the left, e.g. Czesław Miłosz, and communist intelligentsia as exemplified by Tadeusz Kroński. Western post 1945 anticommunism was not strong enough to obliterate this feeling, because anticommunism was considered anti-progressive among the dominant part of Western intelligentsia. Thus nothing so much strengthened the negative image of Eastern Europe as the Cold War. For the four long decades

the new ‘western world’ developed under the American hegemony and with the frontal confrontation with the other side of the iron curtain [...] as well as in isolation from it. Two generations of the West-Europeans, who were sunbathing in the warmth of the achieved welfare, were told that *only they* are the true Europeans. It was accepted that Europe meant [the Western] system of the Common Market, and then [Western] European Union. A large number of ‘Schools of European Unity’ were created, interested in nothing, apart from the major languages and cultures of Western Europe.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ For instance see: D. P. Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present*, Atlantic Highlands 1995; K. Kawalec, *Spór o eugenikę w latach 1918–1939*, “Medycyna Nowożytna. Studia nad Kulturą Medyczną” 2000, Vol. 7/2; T. Matzek, *Zamek śmierci Hartheim*, Warszawa 2004.

⁶⁷ The Kielce pogrom of 1946, instigated by the communist secret service was one instance on the road to building such an image. Very few people wanted to know and understand Eastern Europe. One was an American historian Hugh Seton-Watson, another – an English writer G. K. Chesterton, also an Austrian conservative Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn.

⁶⁸ N. Davies, *Zachód i Wschód...*, pp. 56–57.

Since the 1970s, intellectuals forming the opposition in the East began to remind the West about the idea of the 'lost' Europe, showing its larger and deeper meaning. It was at that time that the idea of Central Europe being a separate cultural entity was born among the anti-political intellectuals mentioned earlier, whose number included Havel, Konrad and Michnik as well as literary figures, with Milan Kundera being its major and most widely marketed exponent. The literature of the little 'heimats' of the 'lost' Europe was everywhere, in Poland visible for instance in the writings of Julian Strykowski and Andrzej Kuśniewicz, showing the wealth of spiritual resources in East-European cultures. The idea was visible also in Solzhenitsyn and the case of the religious Orthodox culture, and in John Paul II and the new instance of the old discussion about the direction of modernization and the possibility of separate cultural and economic roads leading to it.

This effort however was futile and in fact utopian. The generation of 1968 in the West began to rewrite history in its own way, in which Eastern Europe was this time to be modernized their way, mainly because of its allegedly pervasive anti-Semitism, its religiosity, the rather anti-Vatican II, populist Catholicism, its outmoded family structures, and numerous other hidden 'oppressions'.⁶⁹ In addition, the idea of the radical 'evil' began to be identified with the new image of the Holocaust. The complexity of the East-European history of the Second World War was obliterated by its simplistic image, perceived only through the lenses of the Holocaust, racism and anti-Semitism. Until 1989, censorship and the lack of free public opinion to discuss history made difficult any polemic discussions with the Western liberal-left dominant intelligentsia. Its progressive frame of mind dovetailed well with the liberal left intelligentsia of the post communist opposition. Eastern Europe was again perceived as ready for modernization from backwardness, also cultural backwardness of 'oppression'. Historical revisionism began to treat history of Europe as a great laboratory of psychotherapy by means of the 'Hitler's screen' method for the sake of the future, eliminating all sorts of "discriminations". In this simplistic and ideological image, Eastern Europe was cast again as a villain. But this time it was done within the modernizing European Union framework and its 'European values', usually in good faith. The modernizing, dominant liberal elites in Eastern Europe faced the challenge of defining their countries anew in relation to culture, history, community and were essentially escaping a question of identity. They based its image of the community on a contemporary theory of citizenship conceived as an open, procedural, formal democracy. Every other attempt to define the community was considered to be threatening the 'open' society and 'exclusive'. The case of Poland is instructive here. In Poland, new democracy was to include a definition of history as 'threatening' after the fall of communism, also the idea that the strong cultural identity might not be 'inclusive' enough. For the liberal mod-

⁶⁹ The communist government-sponsored anti-Semitic campaign of 1968 in Poland, being part of the inner party struggle in Poland, in response to the radical change of Soviet politics in the wake of the Arab defeat at the hand of Israel, contributed to this image. On this see: J. Jedliński, *Chamy i Żydy*, Paris 1963, pp. 17–60.

ernizing elites, this made any idea of a strong national identification dangerous, at best irrelevant. Collective national memory was downplayed, a sensitized idea of the past was put forth. The liberal and post communist elites dominating the institutional framework after 1989 decided to built the new identity of Poland on the idea of the market economy and constitutional patriotism, a kind of post-political ideal. Constitutional patriotism of the German Federal Republic became a model for a large part of the constitutional and legal thought very much under influence of the German legal culture. This was an error of judgment. Germans were a special case. They chose constitutional patriotism to cut themselves off from the horrible past of their own making, and for lack of a viable historical tradition useful after 1945. Conditions in Poland were different. Poland did not have to escape from history and its memory after the Second World War, as Germany had to do. There was a need, hotly contested, to recover tradition after Communism. Moreover, Polish cultural identity was not as strong as Germany's and after the calamities of the 20th century had to be strengthened, not weakened. This tradition was not an obstacle to modernization, but the only asset Poland had. Nevertheless, the non-liberal elites were silenced and cut off from influencing the media, culture and social policy.

When Kaczyński's government came to power in 2005, it symbolized the recovery of this silenced part of Polish public opinion, putting a question of national identity as a precondition of successful modernization, not an obstacle to it, and trying to recover a sense of the torn to shreds social solidarity. The historical, collective memory, cultural points of identity, the 'battles for memory' and 'historical policy' which Poland dangerously lacked, were defined as a precondition for building

a feeling of community, which precedes trust, which is absolutely necessary to sustain the procedural [democratic republic]. It is also necessary to set here certain boundaries. The political community's identity cannot have an unbound character. In this case a liberal can show a multitude of models of collective identity, to which different groups, living in the same society can appeal. This is true, but there is even in this case a minimum of 'closeness', setting some barriers and retaining standards which enable the assessment of the past. They allow to retain a certain horizon of live, collective memory [...] in which a constant debate is conducted between the different points of views, different models of identity, which accept yet the basic values, which define their rules.⁷⁰

Such a 'closing' of national identity may be labeled as a certain myth formation, an ideal model of upbringing which has as its aim the very task of setting a particular community against the other. From the liberal point of view, such a community myth makes this activity an opposite of rational thinking. The latter tries to destroy myths, not to create them. In the new European context such myths were resembling, so the liberal left elites believed it to be, the thinking responsible for the calamities of the European as well as Polish history. That is why liberals decided to cut themselves off from history, traditional morality, and patriotism

⁷⁰ D. Gawin, *Blask i gorycz...*, p. 139; M. Cichoński, *Władza i pamięć...*, pp. 73–164.

as conceptually dangerous in the new post-historical and post-political European Union.⁷¹ What, according to them, was needed was a cold-blooded, sensitized rational procedural democracy and modernization – an escape to the technocratic-bureaucratic European Union. The mythical identity was dangerous because it allegedly bred conflicts and excluded many. Yet the very ideas which such a technocratic, procedural liberalism was allegedly trying to achieve – an inclusion and justice for all – turned out to be illusory. A withdrawal from discussions and conflicts as far as justice was concerned, made the rational and cold-blooded power of money and the market the only victorious idea. A liberal anti-political, non-exclusionary politics was possible in the old European democracies, and even there it was and is ridden with moral and legal cynicism. In the new East-European democracies it was dangerous, because in such countries

it is impossible to avoid crucial decisions, and thus to make value choices [...] some values against the others [...]. The representatives of the intellectual and political elites were deceived or they deceived themselves as far as the nature of the political, thinking that a liberal apolitical discourse [was possible]. Theoretically we may subvert any values and warn against any arbitrary projects which define the common identity [in the West], there is yet a tacit agreement as far as the basic values, as far as the shape of collective identity.

The building of consensus politics through procedural democracy and technocratic decisions, turned out to be an illusion. The non-political, non-conflict politics was possible in the West-European states with established societies, which made their strategic decisions a long time ago. But in Eastern Europe people and the politicians

have to make such decisions constantly [...] we are bound to have a strong conflict, to have a contest of different interests, because we are still condemned to reform, building, and cannot silence the emotions. Even in England and Germany history has not ended yet. And here it has especially not ended.⁷²

For instance, the mistake of the Polish so-called Round Table talks in 1988–1989 which transferred power from the communists to the liberal opposition was to treat it as a guiding principle for the future, not as a pragmatic compromise to be adjusted according to the challenges.⁷³

A political philosophy was built, justifying such a policy as a fundamental value. This was precisely a policy which was responsible for a disintegration of the Polish community and the deepest resentment of a large chunk of the Polish society.

⁷¹ This is a challenge with which Cezary Michalski confronted professor Andrzej Nowak, who criticized the simplistic modernizing argument of the liberal elites, in their famous exchange in "Europa". C. Michalski, A. Nowak, *Dlaczego młodzi odrzucili Kaczyńskich?*, "Europa" 2008, January 5.

⁷² D. Gawin, *Blask i gorycz...*, p. 143.

⁷³ P. Zaremba, *Tusk nie może poprzestać na byciu anty-Kaczyńskim*, "Dziennik" 2008, January 26–27, p. 10.

In different ways this mechanism was also visible in other East-European countries.⁷⁴

Western modernization and the East-European Christianity as a problem for the secularized elites

A deeper problem of culture is involved here. During the last several generations Christianity in Western Europe collapsed. The Christian story of man's life on earth and eschatology ceased to move culture's imagination. Moral autonomy seems to be the sole collective ground of forming individual sense of existence. This fragmentation of belief poses a challenge to human solidarity and charity. Philosophy of rights, and human rights in particular, was to be the substitution of religion. But this looks illusory.⁷⁵ The market and mass culture made the trivial and momentous the basis of identification. Conformity of consumption is a real danger, a menacing thread in the major analyses of liberal democratic civilization at least since Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* of 1835. Culture and humanity, to paraphrase C.S. Lewis had to go underground. In such a situation an affirmation of a belief system, the 'rehabilitation of a system of belief', as one critic termed the first modernist poem describing the new existential situation [*The Waste Land*] of T.S. Eliot, seems to be in order.⁷⁶ Culture is vital here, and with it must come cultural freedom which is

an integral part of a free society [which requires] that distinctive cultures be allowed to preserve their homogeneity; that creators of cultural works should not be hobbled by political and sociological dogmas; and that in a given culture a tradition should be left free to find its own way of renewing itself. Violation of any of these shows a fundamental ignorance of what culture is and how it ministers to the life of the spirit.⁷⁷

To consider any culture of a nation as an addition to its well-being, to spur patriotism and to demand love of humanity via human rights is in fact tantamount to demand from people that they abandon their loyalties and their loves, their identities which gave them a sense of solidarity which could then be offered for others to share. The cold procedural liberalism seems to be oblivious to that. The liberal elites of the European Union seem in this context to forget this cultural dimension. The culture of rights is the rights culture, the culture of self sufficiency and

⁷⁴ This created a political problem because "where there is no feeling of identity bonding people together into community, there is no place for trust or solidarity. They are necessary in case of human community which holds the great task of transformation. Without this assumption concerning the existence of this layer of politics, democracy inevitably turns into battle of egotistical group interests, a clash of forces, which see only zero-sum game in politics". D. Gawin, *Blask i gorycz...*, pp. 143–144.

⁷⁵ M. J. Perry, *Toward a Theory of Human Rights: Religion, Law, Courts*, New York 2007.

⁷⁶ C. Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, University of North Carolina Press 1939, p. 171.

⁷⁷ R. Weaver, *The Importance of Cultural Freedom*, "Modern Age" 1961–1962, Winter, p. 33.

non-solidarity. Only a culture of organic dependency is a culture of solidarity. Such a culture can only be grown inside of the national cultures as a process of organic nurturing and love, not against anybody but for everybody else. Culture will never be a substitute of religion, because there is never salvation through culture, but culture can warm us in the cold night of senseless existence of the market and rights. Superficially, it does not seem to be much. But this is all we have, when – at least in the West – as Nietzsche said, “we burned our ships”. This may be a precondition of sustaining a community of cultures in which the language and sensibility towards human condition will be sufficiently felt, so the recovery of religious dimension may eventually proceed. In this sense, as Burke said, and as liberals should take notice “[a] country is not a thing of mere psychical locality”, it is a state of mind, love, loyalty, and roots which help us to sustain bad weather and to shoulder those who are too weak to walk alone, in your own house, or anywhere else. The recovery of cultures in Eastern Europe, the recovery of pride, seemed in this context the most pressing issue for the new countries devastated by the communist social engineering and threatened by the new social engineering, a precondition of solidarity in the most basic sense.⁷⁸ Pride is a condition of moral equality and solidarity, self sufficiency and a master of courage. It is necessary for the task of taking up responsibility for oneself and the other. Pride is the enemy of dependence and inferiority and the barrier to others’ patronizing disdain. Eastern Europe needs pride inside of the European Union and this pride has to be won, even in the post political European Union for which Eastern Europe is still a nuisance.

The political, mainly liberal elites in Eastern Europe faced a dramatic choice after the fall of communism when they debated how to modernize. The accession to the European Union did not solve this problem and it will not solve it soon. Modernity for the underdeveloped countries is always a sort of violence, real and symbolic as well. This process is not necessarily intended, it is just that “everything which is solid melts into air”. History seems to look as an iron law, a fatalistic monster devouring the set forms of life. Usually the impulse to modernization is slow in the making and does give time to the people who experience it to adjust and to mount makeshift countermeasures. This was the Western European case. But when modernization is quick, as has been the case after communism, the reactions are violent and polarized. The liberal elites of Eastern Europe wanted to make this process more or less quick and total, with the problems also solved by the bureaucratic structures of the European Union. But neither the people in Eastern Europe

⁷⁸ M. Cichoński, A. Nowak, *Władza i pamięć...* It is culture which forms the great bonding of social solidarity, a quality which Coleridge, in his “Essays on his Own Times” referred to in the following manner: “In every state, not wholly barbarous, a philosophy, good or bad, there must be. However slightly it may be the fashion to talk of speculation and theory, as opposed, silly and nonsensically, to practice, it would not be difficult to prove, that such as is the existing spirit of speculation, during any given period, such will be the spirit and tone of religion, legislation, and morals, nay, even of the fine arts, the manners, and the fashions. Nor is this the true, because the great majority of men live like bats, but in twilight, and know and feel the philosophy of their age only by its reflections and refractions”, in: R. Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*, Chicago 1986, p. 1.

would tolerate this process politically for too long, nor the modernizing project of the European Union is unproblematic. In terms of culture, modernization was to assume in Eastern Europe – in the liberal elites’ view – an imitating pattern, which reminded the peoples of Eastern Europe of ideological imperialism, an imposition of the new ideological monism, from which East-European countries had just escaped. The populist movements in Eastern Europe – whatever this means – are part and parcel of this process. In a chaotic way, they try to win space inside the European Union for cultural identity, since without this, they risk to remain a permanent periphery of the European Union.

There are many authors who confirm this postcolonial pattern at the level of economic analysis, showing that between the First and the Second World Wars there was a conscious effort on the part of the East-European elites to structure the economic system in such a way as to fuel resources to the elites, so they could be on par with West-European ones. The East-European strategy of modernization did not aim at the leveling of the differences between the periphery layers of the society, but at the “transfer of income from the poor to the elites”, so the elites could gain resources to follow their counterparts in the West. The process was similar to the one happening to the rich African elites during the last five postcolonial decades. Local elites changed the private needs into public policy and defined the latter in the light of the former.⁷⁹ A similar process occurred after 1989 in Eastern Europe. There, one of the most important political tasks was to revert this logic of ‘private needs’ translated into the state polity. This would require changing the elites’ mentality and creating of the new ones, which would mean opening upper advancement by demolishing barriers obstructing it. This could not be done without the strengthening of political, but first of all cultural sovereignty, to force such a change at the level of the European Union. For Eastern Europe, this would mean, in turn, that “the end of politics” attitude, and an option for no more than just an efficient administration being the only means of governance, was not only premature but suicidal in many respects. In such a contest, administration substituted for politics turns out to be the repetition of the Marxist iron law of history or the ‘end of history’ determinist thinking, which was once and for all set by the elites. As a political scientist Andrew Janos wrote

the differences between the old (Soviet) and new (western) hegemony are, of course fundamental, but to see the differences between these two regimes, the observer could not ignore certain elements of continuity. First of all we have to remember, that the transition does not mean a change from hierarchy to equality. But from the one form of hierarchy to other. There is no doubt, who is the leader in today’s Central and Eastern Europe, or [...] who is ‘missionary’ and who a ‘local native’, whose fate is to wait for a conversion to the universalistic canon [...].

⁷⁹ D. H. Aldcroft, *Europe’s Third World. The European Periphery in the Interwar Period*, Aldershot 2006; Z. Krasnodębski, *Demokracja peryferii...*

Communism tried to create 'a new man', when the new missionaries of the new universalism want to create new liberal personalities equipped with transnational sentiments of the new age and liberated from the traditional social ethic and different taboo.⁸⁰

This means that the countries in Eastern Europe face not the end of history inside of the European Union, but the real political and cultural challenge of not being reduced to dependency. It is up to the East-European elites, if they associate with their societies and would like to represent them or whether they just want to 'escape' to the European Union and its administrative empire of wealth and influence supervised by the liberal-left cultural monism.⁸¹

The battle with this liberal-left ideological monism has been visible in the most spectacular way in the European Parliament. The East-European delegations shocked the deputies there and forced them to rethink certain issues.⁸² The resistance in East Europe was an 'identity' resistance, a populist rebellion which showed a fault line between the Western and Eastern European liberal elites, and the societies. Populism is in Europe, although not in America, a suspicious phenomenon, evoking the images of prewar European politics with its Weimar Republic crisis, fascist movements etc. In this light, such events like the ones that took place in Poland in between 2005–2007, but also a rebellion against the post-communist government in Hungary in 2007, and the one in the Czech Republic were immediately branded as such. Hysterical words: 'fascist', 'antidemocratic' and 'anti-European' were used as a tool of analysis, mainly for the Polish situation of 2005–2007. It was the rebellion of the masses against the liberal elites using massive tactics of economic, social, and cultural social engineering to modernize the recalcitrant populations steeped allegedly in backwardness and prejudice. Ivan Krastev wrote in this context

The dominance of the liberal dominance in such a shape as it existed in the period of the political transformation [of the 1990s and early 2000s] has ended. The most characteristic feature of such transformation was the total dominance of the liberal elites into which a part of post-communist

⁸⁰ A. C. Janos, *Central and Eastern Europe in the Modern World. The Politics of Borderlands for Pre- to Post communism*, Stanford 2000, quoted after Z. Krasnodębski, *Epitafium dla chwilowego radykała*, "Rzeczpospolita" 2008, January 8.

⁸¹ Kaczyński's government in Poland challenged such a scenario, that is why his policies touched the nerve, both of the West-European liberal left elites and such elites in Poland.

⁸² For instance, the protest of the liberal left part of the parliament against Sandra Kalniete, the deputy from Latvia, who wanted to equate communism crimes with nazi crimes. It exploded with an offensive of the liberal left against the new democratically elected, conservative government of Poland. One instance concerned declaration against 'homophobia'. It constituted an unprecedented attack on Poland, although not supported by 250 deputies of the Christian Democrats, who were convinced that the attack was groundless, apart from the fact that the 'homophobia' bears all the features of an ideologically devised 'crime'. When in December 2005, a Polish delegation erected a pro-life exhibition in a corridor of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, MEPs from France and elsewhere protested and the exhibition was removed. As a result of the Polish presence, a British MEP Michael Cashman said "on women's rights and gay equality, we are fighting battles that we thought we had won years ago". The meaning of this statement and the removal was, that certain topics were censored and off limits for discussion; an ideological monism was termed human rights. Quotation from "First Things" 2006, February, p. 64.

nomenclature was built into. The elites introduced democratic reforms and built the free market order. At the same time they imposed 'non alternative' vision of the future, which guaranteed them hegemony. It was against this 'non alternative' vision of history that populists and dissatisfied electorate rebelled, which brought to power [new governments]. This populist revolution in Eastern Europe will not destroy democracy, but it will change its character for good. The proper conclusions from this revolution should be drawn first of all by the elites.⁸³

The deeper cultural causes are here at stake, which make modernization more intractable in Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe belonged to Europe for roughly 1000 years, but it did not belong to the West as defined by the French Enlightenment pattern of modernization, radicalized by the 1968 revolution. The category of the West is the post-1789 invention, where the universalistic ideology of the French Enlightenment was to be spread all over the world.⁸⁴ The Eastern Europe's nations were not touched much by the Enlightenment in the French version. It was mainly the idea of the elites of the dominating them empires. But by 1789, the East-European nations already had a very strong religious identity which for centuries had been their way of belonging to the European Christianitas on its borders, whether it had been Catholic or Protestant Christianity, the case of Croats, Hungarians, Slovaks, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians and, of course, Poles, or the Orthodox Christianity of Serbs, Romanians, Bulgarians, Moldavians, and Ukrainians from Central and Eastern parts of the country. Between these two great paths of nations stretching from the Adriatic to the north-eastern part of the Baltic Sea lie territories that are religiously mixed: Bosnia, Western Ukraine, Belarus, Transylvania, and Eastern Małopolska. All those lands were treated by the empires as border lands available for grabs. In the fight for survival, the most powerful weapon against the invader was, as usual, culture, and the most powerful part of it was the religion, mainly Christianity. All these elements were combined during the fight against the empires into the modern nationalist feeling. Here, the role of the Poles was paramount. Poles invented modern nationalism, the most efficient weapon against the empires.⁸⁵ It was after them that other European nations began to use this weapon.

Poles were lucky in the most unfortunate conditions, they were partitioned by Russia, Prussia and Austria exactly at the moment when their distinct and strong national consciousness was already being formed, rooted in the freedom-oriented cultural identification, coming from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ethos

⁸³ I. Krastev, *Niech żyje populizm. Koniec liberalizmu w Europie Środkowej*, "Europa" 2008, January 12, p. 13; also: E. Todd, *Populizm zwyciężył*, "Europa" 2007, May 26.

⁸⁴ A Polish historian Andrzej Nowak writes in the Polish context, also characteristic for the rest of Eastern Europe, that at least in its Latin part it is "the pride coming from the historical belonging of Poland to Europe and at the same time the understanding of the difference between Poland and the West, and not the inferiority complex stemming from this difference. Poland has belonged to Europe for a thousand years, to the West we have never belonged – this is an 18th-century idea, which functions since the times of the French Enlightenment as an instrument of, not only, mental colonization of the entire non-Western [world]." C. Michałski, A. Nowak, *Dlaczego młodzi...*

⁸⁵ R. Szporluk, *Imperium, komunizm i narody*, Kraków 2002.

of the masses of poor nobility turned into intelligentsia.⁸⁶ For a very long time, this identification was still lurking back to the myth of the multinational and tolerant Commonwealth of Poland–Lithuania, despite the fact that after the calamities of mid-17th century, i.e. wars with Lutheran Sweden, Orthodox Russia and Islamic Turkey – Catholicism became an important religious and cultural identification point of the Poles. It is not therefore surprising that still until the 1860s, well before the other modern nations and national ideologies in Central and Eastern Europe were created, the lost Polish–Lithuanian state was a point of reference for many ethnic groups of the former Commonwealth, for instance, Jews.⁸⁷ It was only at the end of the 19th century, when East-European nationalisms, including Jewish Zionism, exploded, that the ways of the former inhabitants of the Commonwealth of Poland–Lithuania began to diverge.

Nevertheless, it was the Poles who in the 19th century were the greatest obstacle to the consolidation of Central and East European empires, and were on the barricades of every revolutionary and nationalist movement struggling for freedom, beginning with Napoleon and ending with Afghanistan invaded by the Soviets in 1979. With their battle cry ‘for our freedom and yours’ they were the most destabilizing factor of the 19th-century Europe and a threat to the absolutists empires, mainly Russia and Prussia, and – after 1871 – Germany. That is why we had the incessant black propaganda of these superpowers, acting in concert with the Western powers afraid to subvert the Congress of Vienna order, to portray the Poles as the nation being the obstacle to the civilized ‘ordering’ of the East attempted by the Russians and the Germans. After the brief period of independence in 1918–1939, this ‘ordering’ of the East was going to be done again by the Stalin–Hitler Pact of 1939, and then again by the Yalta Agreement of 1945. It failed for good in 1989, but the subconscious vocabulary of such an ‘ordering’ of the East, is still discernible in the European Union, especially Germany as well as in the Russian message to the EU about for instance ‘recalcitrant’ Poles trying to subvert its smooth cooperation with Russia. The message of ‘troubling’, ‘anti-Semitic’, ‘xenophobic’ Poles disseminated for instance during Kaczyński’s government period was an echo of this

⁸⁶ It is enough to quote the famous advice given to Poles by Jean Jacques Rousseau in his “The Government of Poland”. Asked what to do in the face of the Partitions he stated that the Poles may be devoured by the empires, but should never let themselves be digested.

⁸⁷ The lands of Poland–Lithuania were the most tolerant seat of the largest, the most vibrant Jewish community in the 16th- and 17th-century world. This is why the name of Poland was in the Yiddish parlance ‘Polin’, meaning both ‘Poland’ and ‘one rests here’. The Commonwealth of Poland–Lithuania boasts of the two centuries of operation (until 1764) of the so-called “Council of the Four Lands”, being the largest and most influential system of Jewish self-government, the only such institution between the Sanhedrin of Ancient Israel and the Knesset of Modern Israel. After the Partitions, the lands of Poland–Lithuania captured by Russia, where the overwhelming majority of Jews lived, were termed the Pale of Settlement to which they were confined. It is thus no coincidence that Jews participated in all Polish national uprisings until the last one in 1863. On the position of the Jews in the Commonwealth of Poland–Lithuania, a huge state occupying the vast expanses of Central and Eastern Europe, and with the widest scope of individual rights and tolerance in Europe, see e.g.: A. Bryk, *Jewish Autonomy in the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth from the 16th Century to the 18th Century*, “Archivum Iuridicum Cracoviense” 1988, Vol. XXI, pp. 51–69.

post-imperial mentality of the European elites and a large chunk of the liberal left elites in Poland, fuelled in the latter case by their postcolonial resentment and an attempt to escape from their own societies, and the inability of the Poles to recapture the European Union language and the marketing, image forming techniques for their own purposes.⁸⁸

Christianity was a major part of this identity of East-European nations on the borders, with the Christian identity of Western Europe slowly eroded after the French revolution of 1789. Its secularized elites turned against Christianity perceived as a menace to liberal culture. The experience of the East-European nations was the lack of independent states. Destruction of the nation states in the region by the imperial powers playing sovereignty politics, taking over a place of European Christianitas, was for the East-European nations an act not only of political but also religious violence.⁸⁹ Everywhere, slavery meant an attack on the faith and thus the faith and the organizations of particular churches became the headquarters of resistance against empires. The overwhelming desire of such nations in the 18th and the 19th centuries was that of freedom. But it was an idea different from the liberal one in the West, where freedom meant something cultural and institutional at the same time: a rebellion against the internal structures of the states taken for granted. First of all, it was personal freedom, freedom of thought and expression, as well as full citizens' rights for all, and the liquidation of estate privileges. Freedom of thought and expression showed itself through the rejection of all authorities and dogmatic axioms, and thus it had to hit at the institutionally sponsored state Churches, mainly the most powerful Catholic Church, but also any creedal religion as part of the absolutist framework. Equal political rights quickly developed to social rights, and a demand for social reforms again pitted the lower echelons of the society against the authority of the Church, at least until the *Rerum Novarum* encyclical of Pope Leon XIII in 1891. Since this drive for social justice was often combined with revolutionary upheavals, the Church was for a long time antagonistic towards them. This way, both traditional liberalism and socialism were subverting the established order.

Such a development meant that the Western idea of freedom was very much congruent with antichurch and anti-Christian attitude. It slowly evolved into the basic Enlightenment principle of faith for the Western liberal and socialist elites defining culture. For this very reason the West-European culture has been decisively split since the eighteenth century between the elitist and dominant antireligious and antichurch current and the popular one, where mainly rural communities together with the waning aristocracy supported Christianity and its major denomination Catholicism. The Church was painted as antidemocratic, anti-freedom and

⁸⁸ E. Thompson, *W kolejce po aprobatę...*; M. Muszyński, K. Rak, *Kompleks polski*, "Wprost" 2008, January 27, pp. 44–45; C. Michalski, A. Nowak, *Dlaczego młodzi...*

⁸⁹ The Orthodox peoples of the Balkans were under the occupation of the Islamic Ottoman Empire. The Catholic Poland – mainly under the Russia and its Orthodoxy, and protestant Prussia. Catholic and Uniate Lithuania – also under Orthodox Russia, and the Catholic Austria conquered the Hussite Bohemia and strongly protestant Hungary.

anti-progress institution, when, after Darwin and Nietzsche, Christianity was increasingly looked upon as an anachronistic superstition. Thus, the Western idea of liberal freedom was mainly defined against religion and against the Church, the former considered by the dominant liberal elites as being tantamount to prejudice, the latter as an anachronistic and reactionary institution.⁹⁰ The emergence of the Western idea of freedom was thus coterminous with the creation of two distinctive cultures battling each other. This fight was essentially over in the 20th century with the general weakening of Christian faith caused by secularization. The process was accelerated by the revolution of the 1960s, with its basic concept of ‘liberation’, tantamount to the right of an autonomous self to moral auto-creation, the final fulfillment of the Kantian autonomy principle, and the general demise of the Christian anthropology.⁹¹

Eastern Europe was different. Freedom reflected there the experience of the outside domination. It was violence against the national identity and national culture, the danger which the countries of the West never experienced. The attack on human freedom and dignity was first of all an attack against the communities which could nurture them, the nation and its culture. For this reason, the aims of the freedom fighters there were mainly national, to liberate the nations and their cultures. Here the churches and religion were not the enemy of freedom, they were its most important ally. It is true that the tangle of nationalities and different religious and national goals in Eastern Europe brought about also a struggle, sometimes bloody, between these nations. Yet that was not the only impulse of such freedom-oriented efforts. As a Polish socialist thinker Edward Abramowski stated at the beginning of the 20th century, the Poles were fighting ‘for freedom of Poland and freedom of everyone in Poland’, the modern equivalent of the traditional Polish battle cry

⁹⁰ This is why, many of the future West-European civil wars had a very violent, sometimes murderous, antireligious and anti-Catholic Church component on the one side, and the pro-religious and pro-church stance on the other. Such was the Portuguese revolution of the 1920s, the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939, the Italian strife for unification in the 19th century, and the 19th-century French protracted battle for full secularization, culminating with the Concordat of 1905. The same occurred in Mexico, let alone the genocide of the Christian clergy in Soviet Russia. This decoupling of Christianity from culture in the West, Christianity which ceased to move culture, was well captured by a Polish theologian, who left the Catholic Church in 2007, Tomasz Węcławski: “What Christian theology has to say in face of this disintegration of faith among humans and in societies. [...] Let’s repeat the question, has Christianity anything to say yet in this situation of disintegration of faith, which touches not only individuals, but entire societies, formerly Christian. What in a world of dead faith can one expect from Christianity, which apparently lost the battle for the soul of this world? Is not this whole world where [...] the lights of faith are just fading or turned off, a proof of [...] Christianity’s defeat. [...] What is happening in the very middle of the disintegration process, which happens to us against our will. [...] What is Christianity in the face of this disintegration?”, in: *Królowanie Boga. Trzy objaśnienia wyznania wiary Kościoła*, Poznań 2004, pp. 407–408; Paweł Hertz described this situation in other words: “As a consequence of the perceived separation between religion and culture something happened, something which is already irreversible. Culture has been chased away from its paradise. *The Iliad, The Odyssey, The Aeneid, The Bible, The Divine Comedy* [...] There is no going back to this seriousness, depth, simplicity, sureness and peace.” In: W. Wencel, *Wiersze zebrane*, Warszawa 2003, p. 146.

⁹¹ On that see: D. Leszczyński, *Ludzie jako bogowie. Nowa lewica i zagrożenia dla cywilizacji chrześcijańskiej*, “Opcja na Prawo” 2008, January, pp. 21–25.

all over the world ‘for your freedom and ours’.⁹² The religious dimension of this fight for freedom had thus a transcendent reference, and its earthly support in the organization of the Church. For this reason, the liberal elites in Eastern Europe were never able to dislodge this nexus between the fight for freedom and rights on the one hand, and Christianity and the churches on the other.⁹³ This was the reason why even some of the radical, even atheistic supporters of modernization in Eastern Europe realized this religious dimension as a source of cultural identity. It was a social capital, not an obstacle to modernization. From such a perspective the universal model of modernization whether of the revolutionary, socialist type of the kind Rosa Luxemburg represented, or the French Enlightenment secularization type of modernization, were treated with an enormous cultural suspicion.⁹⁴ Because of this unique difference

the experiences of the fighters for freedom in the East and the West of Europe totally branched off [from the 18th century onwards], they turned out, in fact, to be totally contradictory. As a result of this development the reach and depth of the 19th century secularization has been different. In France and in several different countries [in the West] it has become a massive phenomenon. In Central and Eastern Europe, with the sole exception of Bohemia, it has touched only these social circles, in which the fashionable West-European culture overtook the ties with their own culture. This is why [the East-European] secularism and atheism are sociological phenomena different than in the West, they do not constitute a distinctive community. I may be an atheist, you may be an atheist, but the secular ‘we’, as an integrated cultural and ideological subject – on a social scale does not exist.⁹⁵

One element of this religious ‘gap’ is visible in the context of the role of the Catholic Church in Poland. It plays a special role in Polish democracy. It does not compromise the separation of state and the church principle at all, but definitely, more like in the American case, recognizes the public role, language and natural law thinking in public discourse. This role of the Catholic Church has been special, not only because of its historical and institutional role as a focal point of Polish fight for freedom and cultural identity. It is unique, because it was the Catholic Church which was a midwife of Polish liberal democracy in the crucial period of 1981–1989 during the talks between the communist government and the liberal opposition. Thus, the Catholic Church has since the 18th century played the historical

⁹² On the ethical dimension of this fight for freedom see: B. Cywiński, *Rodowody niepokornych*, Paris 1985.

⁹³ This situation had probably only a tiny equivalent in the West in the case of Catholic Ireland fighting against the subjugation by Protestant England.

⁹⁴ It is instructive to recall here Stanisław Brzozowski, the ‘modernizer’ who wanted to escape Poland’s backwardness, the guru of the generations of the radical Polish intelligentsia. In one of his influential books “*Plomienie*” of 1905, two revolutionaries, a Pole and a Russian enter a discussion on the tactics of revolution. The animated Russian, having heard a reference to Catholicism from the Pole, throws into his face an accusation as condescending as derisive: “Ah, you, Poles, always St Mary [Mother of God] and St Mary”. To which, the Polish revolutionary of the name Tur, reacts violently, clutching a chair and snorting against his opponent: “Shut up! I am not a believer, but of *Her*, it is hands off!!!”, *Plomienie*, Warszawa 1997, p. 400.

⁹⁵ B. Cywiński, *Między dwiema tradycjami. Fikcja jednej Europy*, “Rzeczpospolita. Plus-Minus” 2004, May 22; C. Michalski, A. Nowak, *Dlaczego młodzi...; Z. Krasnodębski, Demokracja imitacji...*

role of the interrex, she was a legitimate substitution for an independent state under the Partitions, during German and Soviet occupations of the Second World War, and under communist rule. At no time was this unity of the Church's fate with the nation's fate as clear as during the Second World War where 20% of the bishops, priests and nuns were murdered, altogether about 3000 thousands of them. Under communism, the Church survived the lethal threat of annihilation right after the war, and – after Stalin's death – was the institution defending the human rights in the name of the silenced nation, providing also a cover to all currents in the opposition movement since the 1970s, the role recognized then even by the most anti-Church liberal left groups in Poland.⁹⁶ In this sense, the institutional forms of the Catholic Church in Poland constitute the very essence of civil society, while its huge network of religious movements, charity chains, and vibrant local media is a fundamental backbone of a large chunk of the Polish civil society, irrespective of the diverse voices of Polish bishops. The new reality of liberal democracy has of course forced everyone to rethink an institutional role of the Church anew, and this is being done in most torturous and often misconceived ways. But in case of the Polish church, modernization can never be understood in simplistic Western way of secularization, let alone French type of *lad'cité*, let alone the Louis Zapatero's Spain, which in the latter case is simply another chapter of the old civil war of 1936–1939. If there is a need to rethink the role of the Church in the new conditions of democratic independence, it is simply a need for a new, wider state doctrine concerning the Polish state – church relations which cannot replicate the worn-out categories found in the abstract constitutional textbooks. It would have to take into consideration a number of simple truths regarding cultural identity. First, as one of the commentators observed, it

would make clear the nature of Res Publica itself, which has had a spectacular and original 'substitution' [for so long]. Second, it would describe the rights of the Church not as a representative of some sociological 'majority', but as an institution permanently written in the historic continuity of the Polish state. It is obvious that such a state of affairs would be contested by the constructivists theoreticians of the state and would be also contested by part of the liberal-left critics. But it would be more intellectually honest" than the present state of theoretical void. It should also be commensurate with the political culture of Poland, a form of plurality congruent with the vision of free and plural European Union.⁹⁷

East-Europeans had also their misconceptions about the role of religion in the West. For them, Christianity was a language of freedom, while for the increasingly secular West-Europeans it was like harking back to the anachronistic past that was to be overcome, so loyalty once given to religion and culture could safely be placed in the hands of the secular state. The dominant East-European non-liberal left elites, let alone societies, who, whether religious or not were using more or less subconsciously the language and anthropology congruent with Christian-

⁹⁶ On the latter see: A. Michnik, *Kościół, lewica, dialog*, Paris 1977.

⁹⁷ R. Matyja, *O roli Kościoła w wolnej Polsce. Milczący arbiter*, "Europa" 2008, January 5.

ity, also at the universities' humanities departments, were surprised, after the communist freeze was over, that the West does not speak any more the cultural code of Christianity. At the theoretical level they knew it, but the cultural prevalence of secular model was stupefying.⁹⁸ The United Europe of Adenauer, Schuman, De Gasperi – all Catholics and all inspired by natural law – turned out to be deaf to such references. John Paul II who was elected the pope in 1978 still tried to relate to this language and anthropological imaginary during his pontificate, realizing at the same time that optimism of the II Vatican Council was probably misplaced. There was simply no need for the dominant liberal-left West-European elites to conduct a dialogue – any dialogue – with Christianity. Vatican II was in this sense a gravely belated diagnosis who the partner of this dialogue might be, and because of this mistake, it probably accepted a misguided strategy. John Paul II in his interpretation of the Vatican II sensed this. On the one hand, he still tried to preserve the deposit of the Catholic faith, refusing to accept the progressive liberal Catholicism's claim that history of the Catholic Church was divided into two parts, pre Vatican II and post-Vatican II. In other words he staunchly defended the claim that there was no radical rupture in the earthly history of the Church because of the Vatican II. On the other hand, not sure what this dialogue might bring, he tried desperately to connect to the culture of the West-European secular frame of mind.

The fascinating developments in theology seemed to define the situation of Christianity and the Catholic Church at the time and after the II Vatican Council. They are best captured by two distinct and at the same time opposing theological visions of the German theologian Karl Rahner and the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, the latter in the tradition of another great Swiss Protestant theologian Karl Barth. Both Rahner and Balthasar confronted the dramatic question of what the relation of Christianity to modernity in fact was, what the essence of the argument between them was, and – if there was an argument – whether it was to take a confrontational or dialectically symbiotic form. For Rahner, who is associated with the so-called anthropological revolution in 20th-century theology, the problem was on the Christian side, or to put it differently, the problem lay in the form in which Christianity expressed itself in modernity, the language it used and to whom it talked in this language. For Balthasar the problem lay definitely on the side of modernity, which was on a collision course with Christianity, irrespective of what Christianity would or would not do. The consequences of accepting one or the other perspective were serious for both sides. Rahner thought that what we define as modernity was intrinsically present in Christianity, and whether we liked it or not, we could not avoid it. We were part of modernity and our modern consciousness was the only medium through which

⁹⁸ J. Staniszkis famously referred to it as a contrast between Western Europe which passed through the nominalist revolution, and the Eastern part which has not, remaining within the cultural imaginary of the classical definition of truth and natural law. She thinks at the same time, that this separateness will vanish because to retain this language of natural law may not be possible without traditional structures 'frozen' for so long in Eastern Europe, which may not survive. On her debate with P. Sloterdijk, see: *Czy Polska przetrwa w Europie*, "Europa" 2007, November 3.

we could find a path to God. Christianity and modernity were the same and to disentangle nexus and its limitations was possible only if we humbly accept the axiom that an individual searched for God as a subject that was autonomous, authentic and unsure of anything. This was the essence of his anthropological breakthrough, since it had an implicit assumption that every theology, because of incarnation, remained anthropology forever, until the Revelation. Anthropology was at the same time theology. The road to God was only through an individual and his self awareness in concrete time. This was an opportunity his Christianity to connect with modern Western civilization and its culture, the language it used and the aims it searched for. But there was also a danger that Christianity would become another subjectivist perspective of an autonomous self and God would simply become his auto-creation, the suicidal path the liberal theology since the end of the 19th century took with alacrity.

Balthasar's perspective was different. For him Christianity was to be a sign of defiance, since modernity was not a natural state of God's history, but a history in rebellion against God. If so, Christianity has as its urgent task to oppose the most heinous and nihilistic aspects of contemporary culture. This meant that Christianity and theology could not be part of modernity, but possessed conceptual, intellectual instruments, and a duty to go outside and pass judgment on this world. Rahner wanted modern Christians to overcome the intellectual schizophrenia into which modernity put them, Balthasar wanted them to understand that the choice existed and that this choice had to be made. For Rahner there was a correlation between Christianity and modernity in its hegemonic political form of liberal-democratic state, for Balthasar there was a challenge to the new metaphysical monism of the liberal state which decided to consider itself as a new Deity, the hegemonic culture which was a new heresy. The absolute rationalism of moral auto-creation with its fetish of 'tolerance', 'openness', 'dialogue', the injunction to stop asking the ultimate questions made a statement that "God of Christianity does not exist because He should not exist" its main commandment.

This was a dramatic choice and it seemed that the Vatican II sinned on the side of the optimistic account of modernity, John Paul II did not harbor such illusions, but still thinking that a dialogue with the Western, dramatically secularized culture was possible. He had one advantage of being the freedom leader for the East-European people under communism, finally helping to deliver them from bondage by means of his spiritual perseverance. Yet his language of Christian anthropology was rejected by the dominant culture in the West. It accepted Christianity, only if it was going to assume a specific subordinate role, if it melted into the framework of the existing liberal institutions, which considered dignity of man commensurate with the Christian message only on condition, that it became – to put it somehow ironically – a department of the welfare state. Because John Paul II tried to influence this culture of secularism, his message was rejected in Western Europe by the dominant liberal circles. Pope Benedict XVI, former Cardinal Ratzinger, harbors no illusion and seems to reject the idea of a dialogue which refuses

to grant the Church the right to be itself and wants only to tolerate it on condition that it accepts the language and conditions outside of it.

The Pope and the Church were thus to be accepted as one of the departments of the humanist civilization controlled by the enlightened progressive elites, not to challenge it into serious dialogue. In their view, John Paul II was useful, possibly as a fighter against communism, but otherwise he was a nice anachronism in the West: an ornament. To Eastern Europe, he was a beacon of hope and freedom. His final and unassailable loyalty was higher than the earthly powers, the moral universe which could never be given away at a peril of loosing freedom. That was probably the reason why the fight against communism was successful and non-violent. The European Union of post-Christian generation of 1968 was decisively not willing to tolerate this cultural difference.

The language they used, especially that of ‘neutrality’, sometimes brings back the communist ghosts of religious persecution to East-Europeans. The mechanical language of rights as demands against community, the anthropology of sheer moral auto-creation clashes with the solidarity and the republican spirit of the European vision. But the liberal-left secular elites in Eastern Europe hoped, that after the accession of its nations to the European Union, this West-European hegemonic, liberal, secular culture would be accepted as the non-negotiable model of transformation.

This model termed ‘the European values’ in popular parlance, so as to give it a semblance of universality and hide its ideological character, was to be a yardstick towards which all the reforms would have to conform. It was to be also a tool of de-legitimization and intimidation, a new cultural paradigm, a metaphor of good and the antithesis of the bad. This was to be the essence of the post-political project of the 1990s in Eastern Europe. A stress put on administration and the allegedly set and done with for good ‘European standards’, was to preclude any idea that the discussion about the new, enlarged Europe will ever be possible.

Modernization as an open cultural problem

One may thus say that too often the image of the East-European’s modernization inside the European Union was looked upon through the lenses of the classical postcolonial model of periphery v. center. On the one hand, this approach put the other models of modernization on defense, on the other hand, it also elevated the status of the liberal-left elites in Eastern Europe. They began to define themselves as the vanguard for a new modernization of which the perfect model already existed.⁹⁹ For this type of transformation an alliance between the new liberal-left elites

⁹⁹ In Poland, this role was being symbolically played by the tone-setting liberal left “Gazeta Wyborcza”, and the host of intellectual centers around it, which monopolized the circulation of information, the language and the terms of the debate until the so-called Rywin corruption scandal of 2003. At the center of

and the post-communist elites was good. The latter were interested in getting the property and were essentially considering this new type of society neutral to their aims, which were liberal in economy and culturally nihilistic.¹⁰⁰ Modernization was going to proceed exactly as it proceeded in the West from the 1960s on, by catching up not only economically but culturally as well. It was a kind of crude neo-Marxist thinking where the advanced economic model was going to be combined with a particular type of cultural ‘superstructure’, a cultural model.

Eastern Europe puts a disproportionate stress on culture, identity and long historical memory. Its nations did not have sovereign states: instead, they were pressured to accept other identity. There, the state was always foreign, a symbol of enslavement. This situation was repeated under the communist domination. The communist state was ideological. Communism attacked the distinctive cultural and religious traditions. As the pre-1918 empires, the communists attacked cultural identity, whose important element was religious identity. Again, for the societies there the state was alien, a menace. It could not extract any lasting loyalty. The great suspicion of the top down manipulation nullified any attempt at reconciliation of a state and society. This was a historical, psychological difference which set the political culture of Central and Eastern Europe apart from Western political culture. West-European societies have no fear of losing their states as the best framework of nations’ life, even if organized not on the ethnic, but citizen’s type understanding of it. A state for an average West-European citizen is taken for granted. It is the secular shell with secular public space and religion increasingly pushed out from culture into the private domain. A state assumes a role of a catering Leviathan from which the services are extracted, a provider of equality. This modern idolatry of the state has as its source the fear of anarchy of the religious and civil wars of the 16th and the 17th centuries. This idolatry turns into full faith in the elites. The state as the best executor of the nations’ wishes meant that citizens fully identified with it. The community’s faith was tantamount to the faith in the state. The public sphere purged of religion was taken over by the state. It was slowly perceived as an institution responsible for all the material and spiritual needs of its citizens.

There was no way that such a conception of the state, subconsciously realized at the level of the trans-European institutional framework of the European Union, with all the necessary caveats as far as the differences in construction were concerned, would not clash with the East-European mistrust of a state, any state. To put it sharply, there is no idolatry of the state in Eastern Europe, and no unlimited trust in the elites operating it. Historical experience explains much. The unconditional acceptance of such a concept of the state, which the western elites consider

this discussion stood such key concepts as ‘tolerance’, ‘neutrality of the state’, ‘separation of church from the state’, ‘emancipation’ from oppression’, ‘transvaluation of culture’, ‘transvaluation of Polish history’, looked upon as a history of endless oppression etc.

¹⁰⁰ The former post-communist prime minister Józef Oleksy stated in 2006: “My gang shoved Poland up their asses, but I never did... the expression recorded during a private meeting with one of the most wealthy Polish businessmen Aleksander Gudzowaty.

to be universal across the continent, would require from the Eastern part of the continent to change also its cultural identity. Exactly this operation was demanded by the historical empires in the past. Eastern Europe does not have such a faith in the state as a provider of everything from welfare to spiritual identification with its secular ideology. This is one of the reasons why the massive economic assistance from the European Union has not caused a corresponding massive gratitude in the East but a growing resentment, also in the West. The new states in Central and Eastern Europe are important, but the cultural code is anti-state. The nations and cultures come first, so there is an anarchistic distrust, a refusal to grant the state, whether it is a despotic or a liberal one, responsibility for the well-being of the individuals and societies.¹⁰¹ From the point of view of the secularized western elites this is anachronistic. From the point of view of the Eastern societies, it is prudence combined with the realization that the new construction of Europe can also become an ideological, bureaucratic entity, the final obliteration of the venerable distinction brought to European culture by Christianitas between the sacred and the profane.

The argument of the unity of economic-political-cultural modernization sounded to the East-Europeans too close to the language communists used: an attempt to impose new monistic ideology. The slogans about 'European values' or 'proper' and 'improper' forms of civil society looked as a symbolic, postcolonial, ideological violence. When a Western liberal intellectual thinks populist he conjures the images of the Weimar Republic, thugs destroying democracy, anarchy, xenophobia, etc. – the images supported by the liberal-left elites in Eastern Europe. But populism in the style of the Weimar Republic is a German or Italian specialty and has little relevance to Eastern Europe. There, it is a sign of 'the political', more in the American grassroots sense of a resistance against manipulating elites. The latter's postcolonial mentality and the resulting inevitable rebellion against their own societies caused in turn a rebellion against the postcolonial mentality of the country leaders and the European leaders' postcolonial subconscious thinking.¹⁰² The age-old conflict over what kind of modernization in Eastern Europe is needed is thus between the modernizers by imitation, or modernizers wanting to retain cultural identity: a dilemma of all postcolonial countries globally. Is this rapid western modernization going to mean, as historian Andrzej Nowak sees it in the Polish context,

an abandonment of the national identity. And this is exactly how it happens today. [Should we] breach ties and strive towards a complete a-historic, anti-historic, all encompassing irony [...]. [Should] it be founded on the experience of political and communal nihilism [...]. This critique of Pol-

¹⁰¹ This anti-state attitude was additionally enhanced in the economic sphere during the last years of the communist rule. The socialist state which always prided itself to be also an extensive welfare state began to decompose. The colossal loss of faith in the socialist welfare state, forced people to be self-reliant and first of all to shed psychological ties to the welfare state mentality, which the Germans or the French still have in excess. Poland was here in the 1980s the most visible example. This is why the imposition of EU regulations concerning welfare on Eastern Europe may be looked upon as an attempt to stifle the creativity of its societies.

¹⁰² E. Thompson, *W kolejce po aprobacie...*, and *Sarmatyzm i postkolonializm...*

ishness happens in the conditions of a total lack of all standards, and not as an alternative proposition but solely as a model of national nihilism [...]. The consequence of such a critique will be a resignation from the national identity.¹⁰³

Nowak in fact indicates the problem of the entire Eastern Europe. The strong identity of Western nations as e.g. France or Germany is not threatened by this post-political, post-national philosophy of modernization, whatever the utopias of the dissolution of nations, for good or bad reasons, argue. For the East-European nations, recovering yet from centuries of domination, such an imitation, may mean annihilation, mainly cultural. Their successful elites' desire to 'escape' to the European Union is self explicable. This attitude stems from the mental impossibility of living any more in the conditions of defeat. This would be perpetuated in the judgment of such elites, if an effort was taken up to reconstruct again nationalities on the basis which in the West was termed obsolete. The elites' mistake, even if for some of them made in good faith, was to forget that the West-European nations could do it, with a feeling of giving away something which did not destroy in any way their cultural identity and national assertiveness. Eastern Europe has no such mental and cultural space, no strong elites, no uninterrupted history, no short memory. They have souls haunted by fear, not of the European Union, but of cultural annihilation in the modernization tide, without having the same anchors which the strong nations of Western Europe have. Thus, the modernizing standard in Poland and Eastern Europe is justified only on condition

that Poland [and Eastern Europe] constitutes its significant pole, until this modernization accepts Polish [and EE countries'] identities, distinctiveness and serves the goal of strengthening, not liquidating [them].

Nowak explains the cultural significance of the 2005–2007 Kaczyński's government in Poland which elicited so much enmity from the West-European elites and the liberal left Polish elites. Without seeing this cultural dimension, there is always one way out,

the other model of the modernizing standard outside of Poland, this is the West. And [...] it is always easy to escape to either socialist internationalism in which Poland ceases to be important at all [once Rosa Luxemburg, today the ideologues of globalization] or escape to the inferiority complex forcing everybody to imitate the West. Today's attacks on [alternative roads to modernization] are conducted along the simple lines: let's destroy everything, because Polishness was wrongly conceived [...]. The problem is that our geopolitical competitors [as in the case of some of the old European Union] countries still exist on the map, but they have no tradition of a contemporary version of the republican patriotism [that is equal and partnership oriented], but solely the imperial one [as in case of Germany] or modernizing one [as in case of the European Union as conceived for instance by some elites, and also as practiced by Germany] [...]. Utopia takes today a more veiled, less crudely packed forms, the politics of expansion at the expense of weak neighbors is realized in a much more subtle way. But such menaces will be visible [...] freedom is not given [us] for good [...] it is impos-

¹⁰³ C. Michalski, A. Nowak, *Dlaczego młodzi...*

sible for the elites to realize their policies in a secret way, telling at the same time the masses, that is the electorate, the citizens, that there is no politics any more, that there are only smiles. This is the real *gnosis*, in which [the enlightened] and possessing the secrets have the right to manipulate the masses of idiots. Such a cleavage is against the community. Kaczyński talked to everyone, not only to the elites, saying that the reality of politics is a field of conflicts and a field of values, which define the community. Apparently he did not do it successfully [...]. [Nevertheless] he opened the Polish debate to all aspects of reality which were previously made taboos by those, who know better and want to decide in the name of the Polish ‘filthy pigs’, as minister Bartoszewski said, what kind of fodder they can eat.¹⁰⁴

The German misunderstanding and sharp criticism of the Kaczyński’s government, coming mainly from the media, is especially instructive here in the context of the historical relations and modernizing pattern. This criticism and a barely disguised racist superiority complex show that the recent whirlwinds in the Polish-German relations have very deep roots. The problem is not the condemnation of Nazism by contemporary Germans – only someone with really wicked intentions would say anything like that. The real problem in the Polish-German relations are the mental throwbacks, reminiscences much older and stronger, going back to the colonizing tradition of the so-called the East. This turns itself into thinking that the East is a *terra incognita*, ready only to suck out the money and not ready to take responsibility for Europe. And here the problem begins. It is a question of what responsibility is and what modernization of the East means. The German problem is still the hidden complex of *Kulturtrager* and difficulties connected with this mental frame to accept politically independent Poland as a partner inside of the European Union and also to impose on it an ethical abstract standards which the Germans, responsible for the calamities of the 20th-century history consider a yardstick for the settling of accounts. It is this abstract yardstick which causes problems of historical memory, and which also prevents the civilized settlement of the claims of the resettled Germans from the East. The question is not of legal claims, however feasible they may seem or not seem, but mental claims. This makes, that

any political action in Poland not congruent with the German interest or images [how it should behave], is treated as a sign of Polish nationalism.¹⁰⁵

This difficulty to accept Poland as a political reality, was visible historically also among these Germans who did not identify with nazism as Gerd R. Ueberschar [who writes]

We have to state that the opposition in the military forces, which has to be understood as a part of the power elite of the Third Reich, was congruent with the hegemonic plans of the nazis, for instance when we thought about attacking Poland.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁵ Z. Krasnodębski, *Nieudana próba wypędzenia z Warszawy*, “Rzeczpospolita” 2007, August 11–12, p. A10.

In the plans of many conspirators, Poland was to exist solely as Rest-Polen, dependent on Germany. For instance von Stauffenberg wrote about the inhabitants of Poland:

this is an incredible scum. Very many Jews and very many mixed races. These people will be obedient only under a whip. Thousands of the war prisoners will be used for the purposes of our agriculture. In Germany, they will be useful, laborious and modest.

He stressed that it was

an important thing for us to begin a systematic colonization of Poland. I have no doubts that this will happen. [These examples show that] a critical settling of accounts with the past may not limit itself to a condemnation of a narrowly understood nazism, but [it must include] the total severing of ties to a tradition of an attempt to hegemonize East Central Europe. [Reconciliation] will happen only, when the Germans will really be able to accept Poland as a fact, as a political partner, even if [Poland] happens to be unruly, defiant, uncomfortable, and when they cease to think, that Poland is their 'cultural task' to perform on, also inside of the united Europe.¹⁰⁶

A Hungarian writer, Peter Esterhazy observed wryly on Jürgen Habermas's criticism of East-Europeans and his comments about enlarged Europe after joining the European Union in 2004:

For a long time I was an East-European, after that I rose to the club of Central Europeans [...] several months ago I became a new European, but before I managed to adjust a little to this fact, I learned now, that I am not an original European.

Esterhazy's remark constituted an ironic confirmation of a poignant and menacing prediction of Tony Judt. Writing right before East-European nations were going to enter the European Union, he unequivocally stated in his important essay *Europe – a great illusion?* that the Eastern and Central European countries should have no illusion. The conditions on which they join the European Union, wrote Judt, would be dictated by the old members, first of all France and Germany.

This was understandable, he continued: that while the countries of Central and Eastern Europe were entering the club, the rules of the game were accepted, even if this was a bitter truth. But even after joining the club the countries [of Eastern Europe] are immediately threatened that the old boys will want to retain the upper position and decide about the future shape of the European Union.¹⁰⁷

There are thus real differences between West- and East-European approaches to modernization which make the creation of the common European Union a torturous process. But there are, inside the transatlantic civilization, equally deep differences between the United States and the European Union, or to be more precise Western Europe.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, also quotations from German sources.

¹⁰⁷ Quotations from *Ci wspaniali rdzenni Europejczycy*, [in:] M. Cichocki, *Władza i pamięć...*, p. 176.

Their mutual approaches to political, social and cultural factors defining the modern situation are different.

Western Europe and the American universal Creed

The United States and the old European Union, are two civilizations shaped by modernity symbolically associated with the Enlightenment, and in a popular parlance defined by an imprecise, but useful heuristic category of the West. The idea of the West is traditionally applied to Europe and the United States which have grown out of the same tradition. This approach was, for instance, visible in the canonical works of the prominent twentieth century philosophers of history Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee. Such a shorthand definition is still handy, but many contemporary scholars like Samuel Huntington or Dennis Bark think that the United States is a separate part of the West. The idea of ‘the West’ has also another meaning. It is a cultural concept invented in the 18th century signifying a civilization bent on converting others to its distinctive mode of life and rationality. Although such an idea is still shared by the American and the Western elites, the meaning of this conversion has changed. For the Americans it is still, in general, a valid way of modernization. For the European Union it seems, at least in theory, no longer to hold water. The idea of the West signifies for the latter a dialogical project based on human rights, transnational organizations as well as international law shaped according to the European Union’s picture of it. The American model seems to be more confrontational, the European – more conciliatory, and allegedly acceptable to all, but it contains obviously a great doses of ideological assumptions and the corresponding illusions.

Despite common Enlightenment roots, the American and the West-European models of modernity are different in their responses to political, social as well as cultural challenges. One paramount difference concerns the mode in which the United States and Europe were built. Whereas Europe was built inside the state structure by the privileged classes, America was essentially built by immigrants, beginning with the colonists, the most daring demographic stock, who avoided practices they always resented. America was built from the ground up, Europe from the top down. The immigrants’ purpose was to form their own government themselves. Europe, on the other hand, was built by those who enjoyed privileges and who had much to gain from participating in government rule from the top down. This profound difference marked the historical outlook, shaped the view of the world and has affected the way Europeans and Americans live their lives. As a result, history of Western Europe has produced dependence by the ruled on those who govern, whereas Americans believe that it is the government’s responsibility to protect the freedom of the individual, and not to limit it.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ D. L. Bark, *Americans and Europeans Dancing in the Dark*, California 2007, pp. 11–14.

The picture is complicated by two caveats. This division runs not only between the United States and Europe. It is visible inside of the societies concerned, a process which might be termed, for lack of a better shorthand, a culture war. In the United States this culture war is strong, conducted in public with great intensity considered as acceptable, if not healthy for liberal-democracy.¹⁰⁹ In the European Union it is more subdued and considered rather to be a potential danger to public peace built by the paternalistic elites, bent on creating a prosperous and ideologically monistic zone in the name of the people, sometimes above them, an attempt to built a post political, transcending traditional conflicts, society. This ideological consensus has been effectively defined by the so-called generation of the 1968, which has achieved nearly a cultural monopoly and is mainly responsible for the present phase of the European Union's development. For this reason, in contradistinction to the United States, the foundational discussion about the shape of the modern European project, to all practical purposes, ceased to exist, and any attempt to ignite it is drastically criticized. This applies also to the internal, virtually consensus politics inside the old European Union countries with some exceptions including the United Kingdom. Structural problems of 'foundational' significance, for instance, the expensive welfare entitlements, a disastrous birth rate, chronically underemployed but demographically robust Islamic immigrants, and the role of Christianity are shunned away.¹¹⁰ Additional complication in the mutual interactions concerns the open question of who will define the European Union's politics in the long run, for instance what the role of Germany will be in the EU, and what the Union's relation to Russia will be. For the European Union, Russia has been considered strategically its natural ally since 1991, due to historical sentiments of mainly the French and German elites. Russia, in contrast, has considered the European Union a rival. Russia will be playing its game to prevent the European Union to solidify into a successful and independent international player, and will possibly play it with Germany. Russia is also playing with the assumption that the American hegemony is temporary and will be waning. Another complication is the opening of the European Union to the post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe described above. Last but not least, there is the question whether Americans consider the European Union to be a rival or a benevolent new empire whose aims are congruent with the American ones, and whether the Euro is a global competitor to the dollar.

It is usually thought that the United States as created by the Declaration of Independence of 1776 and the Constitution of 1787 is a typical ideological construction, an intensely modern, universal, ideological nation, full of proselytizing fever – source of both its dynamism and blunders. Having its merits, this view is

¹⁰⁹ The literature on culture war in the United States is enormous. The term was popularized by J. Davison Hunter in: *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, New York 1991; also J. Petry-Mroczkowska, *Amerykańska wojna kultur*, Warszawa 1999; D. Bell, *Wojna kultur zastąpiła walkę klas*, "Europa" 2007, July 7.

¹¹⁰ B. S. Thornton, *Decline and Fall: Europe's Slow Motion Suicide*, Encounter Books 2007.

nevertheless in need of revision. America is definitely a modern, creedal nation but the content of that creed has been built out of many sources, giving the United States a singular quality in relation to other modern ideological projects, for instance the French of 1789. The French and American models were created by 18th-century revolutions, but the operation of the Enlightenment ideas in the two societies was different. American modernity turned out to be a singular case in itself, set apart from the European model and treated by the latter as an irritating oddity. To begin with, Americans had their modern project rooted in the covenanted universal mentality of early Protestantism. They combined it with the secularized universal project of the Enlightenment – the social contract, and its conception of rights, visible in the Declaration of Independence of 1776, being the founding document of the new polis. Because of this unique combination Americans have a natural tendency to analyze their democracy not only in the light of original ideas, at the expense of historical evolution and forms they have taken, but also in the light of a particular religious promise, however secularized, which gave these original rights a messianic bent of being on the right side of history, as well as the cosmic order. Such a mentality is extremely resistant to any form of disenchantment, being at the same time prone to soul-searching and quasi-religious fear of failure, of breaching the terms of God's covenant. In this sense the original 17th-century protestant, mainly puritan religious experience, paved the way for a distinctively American, modern Gnostic heresy, a unique transformation of Christianity and its immanence in history, without its simultaneous total conversion to a secular, inimical project as done by the European modernity. The 17th-century

Puritan 'lust for massively possessive experience', an un-Christian *libido dominandi* for achieving existential security by drawing transcendence into immanence to transform all experience into proofs of divine election

gave the American political culture a messianic trait, transcendental and practical at the same time. History was going to be its testing ground, and history was on the American side, since God was on their side.¹¹¹

American democracy has thus been from the beginning and is still today an intensely political and eschatological endeavor, in contrast to a post-political project of the allegedly administrative model of today's European Union. It understands itself as a place of a battle over its true shape and character. This battle has engaged many sides in American history with a heated moral rhetoric. But, beyond rhetoric, these arguments have always had a hidden dimension of unrealized promise of American dream and at the same time a fear that God's Covenant and the very republican experiment could be wasted. The American heritage creates consensus at the level of an exceptional idea, but this foundational creed causes

¹¹¹ M. Henry, *Civil Theology in the Gnostic Age: Progress and Regress*, "The Modern Age" 2005, Winter, p. 38.

constantly civil wars over its interpretation with intensity in the media, society and politics similar only to the once violent religious wars between the orthodox and heretics.¹¹² In a society, founded both on a religious covenant and a political creedal revolution, there have always been attempts to confirm, renew or reinterpret the foundational values. The latter usually

involve elements of purification, Puritanism, mass participation, egalitarianism and the renewal of moralistic devotion [...]. In various periods of American history the level of creedal passion has increased generally throughout the body politic. New generations deeply concerned with the gap between the ideal and practice supplant earlier generations that were deeply concerned [...] to bring reality in accord with principle [...]. The question – how does [one] reconcile his belief in American values with his perception of American reality [...] is inescapable.¹¹³

Americans often fight violent civil wars to defend their interpretations of the same creed. Sacvan Berkovitch, a student of the Puritan origins of the American psyche, coming from Canada in the 1960s, was shocked by their intensity. He observed:

I found myself inside the myth of America [...] a country that despite its arbitrary frontiers [...] bewildering mix of race and creed, could believe in something called the True America, and could invest that patent fiction with all the moral and emotional appeal of a religious symbol [...]. It gave me something of an anthropologist's sense of wonder at the symbol of the tribe [...]. To a Canadian skeptic, a gentile in God's country [...] [here was] a pluralistic, pragmatic people [...] bound together by an ideological consensus. [...] It was a hundred sects and factions, each apparently different from the others, yet all celebrating the same mission.¹¹⁴

At the same time the founding myth of America is perceived as fully rational, because America was formed by common sense and rational people

not prophets, poets, or heroes. [...] Other men were not required to believe what they heard from the Framers but had merely to look at what they pointed to and judge for themselves [...]. Convinced that they had the best of any discussion about the good regime, the Framers [...] challenged [everyone] to meet them on the field of reason [...] to test their conviction. [...] This is the peculiarly American form of patriotism [...], our regime is founded on arguments not commands. Obedience to its fundamental law is not against reason, and it can claim to have resolved what was thought to be the unresolvable tension between good citizenship and philosophizing.¹¹⁵

¹¹² See e.g.: S. M. Lipset, *Consensus and Conflict: Essays in Political Sociology*, New Brunswick 1985, pp. 1–109.

¹¹³ S. P. Huntington, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony*, Cambridge Mass. 1981, pp. 131, 85, 84. Huntington formulated this return to original sources also in a different way when he remarked that “critics say that America is a lie because its reality falls so far short of its ideals. They are wrong. America is not a lie; it is a disappointment. But it can be disappointment only because it is also a hope.” *Ibidem*, p. 262. Gunnar Myrdal had similar criteria of looking at American politics explaining the civil rights revolution as a conflict between the American Creed and practice. G. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, New York 1944, p. 4. Postmodernist, and later in life socialist, Richard Rorty looks at the source of American passion for reform the same way, titling his book *Achieving our Country*, Cambridge Mass. 1996.

¹¹⁴ S. Berkovitch, *Rites of Assent: Rhetoric, Ritual, and the Ideology of American Consensus*, [in:] *The American Self: Myth, Ideology and Popular Culture*, ed. S. B. Girgus, New Mexico Press 1981, pp. 5–6; S. M. Lipset, *American Exceptionalism. A Double Edged Sword*, New York 1996, p. 291.

¹¹⁵ A. Bloom, *Introduction*, [in:] *Confronting the Constitution: The Challenge to Locke, Montesquieu,*

The ideological, rational side of the American creed meant a futuristic, individualistic project understood as progress, liberating individual from all artificial shackles. This was a distinct modern code of the Enlightenment, its progressive mantra. Its political expression was the idea of a democratic, republican liberty in practical operation, not just imagined like in France of 1789.¹¹⁶ The American futuristic, modern project was thus founded on the idea of a nearly religious faith in the unlimited possibilities of human mind and spirit to create the world anew.¹¹⁷

This modernist creed makes Americans an intensely ideological and at the same time an open nation, which constantly, consciously or subconsciously asks a question “Who are we as a nation created in 1776?”. In no other country such documents as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are not only legal, but at the same time theological documents, around which Americans can and want to gather.¹¹⁸ This universal, democratic idea that the United States is not only national, but first of all purely ideological entity was perceived by foreigners from the beginning. The Austrian Francis Grund wrote in 1837:

An American does not love his country as a Frenchman loves France, or an Englishman loves England: America is to him but the physical means of establishing a moral power [...] theological habitation of his political doctrines.¹¹⁹

Jefferson, and The Federalists from Utilitarianism, Historicism, Marxism, Freudianism, Pragmatism, Existentialism, ed. A. Bloom, Washington DC 1990, pp. 1–2.

¹¹⁶ In the 20th-century Europe some thinkers of the left were fascinated by this practical democratic republicanism and liberty, considering such features as the necessary preconditions for socialism. For instance, Antonio Gramsci believed that Americans had national ideology as their most defining feature of political egalitarian culture. He wrote in 1920 that for Italy to be socialist, the Italians would have to become first like Americans, socially and economically, the embodiment of bureaucratic, democratic society without the pre-capitalist past still to be found in Italy and other European societies. In: S. M. Lipset, *Exceptionalism...*, pp. 291–292.

¹¹⁷ This was understood in America from the beginning by common people. When ex-president Andrew Jackson was buried, one of the participants asked Jackson’s black servant whether he thought Jackson, who as many former presidents converted to formal Christianity, would go to heaven, to which the servant replied: “He will if he wishes to.” D. W. Brogan, *The American Character*, New York 1956, p. XVII. It was these ‘liquid’ potentialities of modernity combined with religious probity and courage which prompted Winston Churchill during the Second World War to declare: “When all other options fail, we can always count on Americans, that they do the right thing.” Quote after J. Surdykowski, *Dokąd zmierza Ameryka?*, Warszawa 2001, p. 166. Karl Marx in *Das Kapital* had America in mind while commenting that “the more developed country, the less developed image of its future it shows,.. In his judgment, the United States was in fact less exceptional, because other nations would follow suit, develop and ‘Americanize’”. In: S. M. Lipset, *Exceptionalism...*, pp. 291–292. See also: M. Berman, *Wszystko, co stale...*, p. 21. Marks was describing ‘liquid modernity’, something which Oliver Cromwell, had in mind, in a different context when he said, that no one goes as far as the one who does not know his direction.

¹¹⁸ Thus, an exceptional role of the national flag in the patriotic and heroic American culture, one of the few visible symbols of a fluid, pluralistic nation. This central position of the flag is reflected in “The Pledge of Allegiance”, an oath written in conjunction with the 400th anniversary of Columbus voyage to America in 1892, when it was feared, that the tectonic social changes, including immigration, brought by modernity, could weaken the American identity.

¹¹⁹ C. Van Woodward, *The Old World’s New World*, New York 1991.

A British journalist Alexander Mackay writing in the 1840s noticed that “America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed”.¹²⁰ In 1923, an English Catholic writer G.K. Chesterton exclaimed to Americans:

“You are a nation with the soul of a church”, adding that, America is “the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed. That creed is set forth with dogmatic and even theological lucidity in the Declaration of Independence; perhaps the only piece of practical politics that is also theoretical politics and also a great literature”.¹²¹

A writer in the tradition of the Southern Agrarians, Robert Penn Warren observed in the same vein that

to be an American is not [...] a matter of blood; it is a matter of an idea – and history is the image of that idea.¹²²

The once famous liberal journalist Theodore H. White stated at the same time that “Americans are held together only by ideas” and a conservative publicist George Will referred to this democratic, universal concept of American identity when he declared a generation later that

we are, as Lincoln said at Gettysburg, a nation ‘dedicated to a proposition’. There is a high idea-content to American citizenship. It is a complicated business, being an American. We are [altogether] like Jay Gatsby – made up, by ourselves. Rather, we are made up of moral and intellectual resources that have been winnowed by time and must be husbanded. [...] America is always dependent on its collective memory.¹²³

A Catholic intellectual George Weigel concurred:

The continuity of America is not the continuity of race, tribe, or ethnic group – the continuity of blood, if you will. Rather, it inheres in the continuous process of testing our society against those defining public norms whose acceptance as defining norms constitutes one as an American. In other words, American continuity is the continuity of conviction [...] the concept of America-as-experiment.¹²⁴

Allan Bloom, political philosopher, an important critic of American culture and education at the end of the 20th century wrote that the American experiment was based on

¹²⁰ *America Through British Eyes*, ed. A. Nevins, Peter Smith 1968, p. 261.

¹²¹ G. Chesterton, *What I Saw in America*, New York 1923, pp. 7, 11–12; writing in 1923 Chesterton did not yet perceive the Soviet Union.

¹²² R. Penn Warren, *The Legacy of the Civil War: Meditations on the Centennial*, New York 1961, p. 78.

¹²³ T. H. White quoted in M. Lind, *The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution*, New York 1996, p. 220; G. F. Will, *Commencement at Duke in his “The Leveling Wind: Politics, the Culture and Other News”*, New York 1994, pp. 127, 132; see also: his, *Statecraft as Soulcraft: What Government Does*, New York 1983, p. 153.

¹²⁴ G. Weigel, *Catholic and the American Proposition*, “First Things” 1991, May, p. 38.

a liberation from prejudice, legitimized by reference to principles of justice assented to by man's most distinctive and most common faculty and persuasive to a candid world. The genius of this country – which cannot and does not wish to treat its citizens like plants rooted in its soil – has consisted in a citizenship that permits reflection on one's own interest and a calm recognition that it is satisfied by this regime.¹²⁵

Americans felt exceptional from the beginning, this exceptionalism forming the basis of a specific ideological patriotism. A sense of national pride verging on superiority and xenophobia was noticed early on, by many. Alexis de Tocqueville gave it a sophisticated description in *Democracy in America*. Such a pride is irritating, as it is based on a conviction that the future belonged to Americans, because their identity was universal. It was to explain both the past and the future at the same time, the covenant with Providence once signed, and the end of history already guaranteed by the very existence of the United States. The past which was at the same time becoming the future. Such a feeling was expressed by nearly all American presidents from George Washington, through Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson to Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush.¹²⁶ This does not mean that this American identity, modern and ideological is devoid of traditional cultural, pre-foundational, pre-constitutional elements existing before 1776, later additionally enriched by the immigrant waves, melting-pot experience and other historical bonds of memory.¹²⁷ American culture, customs and common memory have always been very much part of American identity and will be described shortly. Nevertheless it is this creed, political faith of exceptionalism and universalism at the same time, which transforms formal liberal democracy of contractual character into a secular religion, giving Americans a sense of self identification bent dynamically forward with reference at the same time back to orthodoxy, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, political, social and cultural innocence and hope, something which prompted John Locke to remark when speaking about his social contract theory that “at the beginning the whole world was America”.¹²⁸ This secular religion has its rituals and symbols, kind of transcendental self identification with the once made covenant with Providence, meshed, more or less consciously, with Christian symbolic images, the cultural-religious code which for four centuries defined America's public language. It was the Word, the biblical language, the only truly original American high culture disseminated passionately through its history

¹²⁵ A. Bloom, *Introduction...*, pp. 1–2.

¹²⁶ E.g. Wilson, in his speech to a group of naturalized citizens in Philadelphia in 1915 remarked that “You have taken an oath of allegiance to a great ideal, to a great body of principles, to a great hope of the human race”, [in:] M. Kammen, *Mystic Cords of Memory*, New York 1991, p. 231; R. Reagan, *Moja wizja Ameryki. Najważniejsze przemówienia 40. prezydenta Stanów Zjednoczonych*, ed. P. Toboła-Petrkiewicz, M. Chodakiewicz, Warszawa 2004, pp. 286–288, 264–265. In his Second Inaugural in January 2005, George W. Bush stressed American uniqueness, speaking about a country pushing the world in the “visible direction, set by freedom and the Author of freedom, which referred to the idea of a covenant. See: D. Linker, *The Theoccons: Secular America under Siege*, New York 2006, p. 177.

¹²⁷ M. Lind, *The Next American Nation...*, pp. 234–337.

¹²⁸ J. Locke, *The Second Treatise on Government...*, p. 49.

by countless preachers, the language now secularized and included in the political creed about America as the Promised land.¹²⁹

This is not a coincidence that the American Creed as a kind of secular faith fused with religious, Christian sentiments, was codified at the time of the First World War. The end of the 19th century was significant for American universalism in yet another way. American Protestantism, in all its diversity, began to decompose, influenced by the Protestant European liberal theology coming mainly from German universities. It had to confront a question what exactly the relationship between Christianity and modern culture was, a question ferociously assaulted by the combined forces of science and biblical criticism. The preachers of the dominant, main American churches, as well as the reform rabbis in Judaism came to a conclusion that because reality around them was changing, Christianity was to change with it. Trying, in their judgment, to save Christianity, Protestant liberalism put in fact in its place a modernist heresy, a new religion. It differed from the historic doctrinal rules such as the essence of personal Deity, the Bible, the meaning of Christ and the identity of the community of faithful, that is the church. Christian God was going also to be the immanent force in history, something like Hegelian spirit, rejecting the original sin, an ineradicable part of human existence, to be combated by personal conversion. The original sin became understood more as a consequence of historical process, the Christian equivalent of Rousseau's removal of evil from nature into history. Now it was possible to correct it by human means, making history the arena of personal redemption.¹³⁰ The secular version of this Protestant liberalism became a basis of its hope for a redemption from evil through the location of its sources entirely in history and social structure, the transformation of which was to bring equal and just society, both domestically and internationally. Internationally such an approach was visible on a grand scale at the time of the First World War when progressive Christian leaders in America transformed themselves from principled pacifists to crusading interventionists. They saw themselves as evangelists for the new gospel of democracy, international peace and ultimately for a redemption of the entire humanity, also through the agency of total war for a perpetual peace and democracy. That messianic gospel was symbolically represented by Woodrow Wilson's crusade to "make the world safe for democracy".¹³¹ Domestically, this utopia

¹²⁹ An interesting instance of such a ritual was the public recitation, until recently, of the "American Creed", of which the more or less conscious equivalent was, a paradox in a largely protestant culture, the apostolic Creed of the Catholic Church. See: S. Huntington, *American Politics...*, p. 159. The Document, written during the first world war, became at the national level an ideological combination of messianic message with internationalism.

¹³⁰ On liberal Protestantism see: *Religious Issues in American History*, ed. S. Gaustad, New York 1968, pp. 173–224.

¹³¹ See: R. M. Gamble, *The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Rise of the Messianic Nation*, Wilmington 2003, esp. pp. 89–110, 149–232. The roots of this messianic democratic faith may yet lie deeper. In fact, this faith may be rooted in the Aristotelian classic idea of character being shaped by the conscious process of inculcating virtue, the universal endeavor transcending family, close relatives, and ethnic kin, possible to be applied to all who were termed barbarians. James Q. Wilson tried recently to answer the 'fundamental question' of how it happened that "people in the West were induced to believe that

became visible in a massive change of emphasis of the Protestant churches from Christian orthodoxy to Christian charity, making Christianity relevant and applied in history which became a vehicle of human redemption.¹³²

That approach influenced the American and in general Western social sciences after the second world war. They became step by step convinced, that human problems could actually be solved by a proper application of progressive thinking and messianic zeal of secularized, heretical, protestant Christianity.¹³³ This philosophy gave later birth to such messianic liberal programs as The War on Poverty and The Great Society of the 1960s, and subsequent different social policies planned and executed by the federal government. Their aim was the total liquidation of poverty and eventually of human suffering through, for instance, an application of psychotherapy and other social sciences. Liberal Protestantism gave justification to such secular radical reforms by providing 'spiritual' support, resigning at the same time from a pretence of theological transcendentalism to judge the world on the meta-physical basis. This evolution brought liberal Protestantism to a position of being just a tool of the radical liberal reforms causing splits in all the churches.¹³⁴

One of the dangers of such an immanently understood redemption of Christ through historical process, the American protestant equivalent of the Hegelian spirit, was a tendency to treat government and the state as an instrument of transforming reality in conjunction with God's plan. That way, surreptitiously, liberal Protestantism made Christianity the applied religion, making it a tool different from evangelical purpose, which was eschatological only in a perspective of individual redemption. This change had another pernicious consequence. Any resistance to the liberal progressive aims of Christianity were deemed automatically beyond the pale of legitimate social behavior, and vice versa, a resistance to liberal social programs were considered to be against the iron law of history set by God. Christianity was going to be only social charity congruent with the aims of the liberal state and subject in terms of its doctrinal content to intense privatization. In other words if not only social charity, Christianity was automatically commensurate with any other socially insignificant belief, as for instance magic. As a serious, legitimate point of reference it was confined to a stark choice. It was either social charity or

our moral sentiments should extend to many, perhaps all people". Aristotle was thus the staunchest critic of cultural relativism in relation to moral sentiments, that "our deepest moral sentiments, to say nothing of our more transient or ephemeral ones, are entirely the products of culture, in which we are raised, and thus have no enduring significance outside that culture. The view has become so pervasive that many people, otherwise quite secure in their moral convictions, feel timid expressing them, for fear that others will think them unsophisticated or ethnocentric". *The Moral Sense*, New York 1993, pp. XII, XV.

¹³² M. Gamble, *The War for Righteousness...*, pp. 49–68.

¹³³ It would be a subject worth studying, to trace this connection between liberal Christianity and modern progressive sociology starting with Herbert Croly's, *The Promise of the American Life of 1906*, through Gunnar Myrdal studies of the 40s, and culminating with the most classic of all progressive, messianic liberal works, namely, John Rawls's, *A Theory of Justice* of 1973.

¹³⁴ See: J. Budziszewski, *Four Shapers of Evangelical Political Thought*, [in:] *Evangelicals in the Public Square*, ed. J. Budziszewski, Michigan 2006, pp. 91–92.

nothing. And social charity as explicated by liberalism was commensurate with Christianity. It was either social liberal or nothing, in other words any opposition to it was reactionary and beyond the pale of respectable discussion.

Thus, the rebellion against such a role – prescribed for Christianity and religion in general to be a social program only – was treated with alarm, publicly suspect, and constitutionally considered a breach of the First Amendment. This largely liberal Protestant approach affected the Catholic Church as well, especially in the wake of the II Vatican Council.¹³⁵ The religious “Naked Public Square” was to be the goal of the American republic. A therapeutic welfare state with aims commensurate with the progressive liberals’ philosophy was to be its religion, extremely jealous of any competition. Religion was to be either a kind of a private faith or a cultural faith, an ornament of multicultural America.¹³⁶ This coupling of Christianity with liberalism and culture and the subsequent emasculation of its orthodoxy, has not been entirely successful in America. A rebellion of evangelical and conservative mass religiosity since the 1970s against this type of progressive Christian thinking, was in large part a purely defensive reaction ignited symbolically speaking by the *Roe v. Wade* abortion decision made by the Supreme Court in 1973. This rebellion turned out to be partially successful, forcing the secular liberal culture to question its basic assumptions. A monopoly of interpretation put on the American Creed by secular, progressive, liberal monism, with Christianity being part of it has not succeeded. But such an evolution has essentially succeeded in Western Europe, where Christianity has progressively become a religious department of the European Union liberal monism, with its sub-departments of welfare state and psychotherapy. It is tolerated solely on such terms, making the mission of the United Europe expressed in purely secular, aggressive antireligious value terms, its cherished orthodoxy.¹³⁷

It is this religious dimension which forces us to look closer at the American creed. Although rooted originally in the universal Enlightenment ideas it does not resemble universalism of the European, continental Enlightenment. The political projects rooted in the Enlightenment in which the United States and the European

¹³⁵ For an excellent analysis of this process, see: J. Bottum, *When the Swallows come back to Capistrano: Catholic Culture in America*, “First Things” 2006, October, pp. 27. The greatest achievement of John Paul II was probably to stop this sliding of the Catholic Church into a kind of social charity, history-oriented type of faith, focusing on progressive causes and sharply cut off from the tradition. He reintegrated the progressive interpretation of the 2nd Vatican Council into the entire history and eschatology of the Catholic Church and its project of redemption, taking it out of history, which befell the liberal Christianity, and giving it the transcendental dimension again. Possibly, in this way, the Catholic Church will cease to be a part of one’s chosen history, commensurate with the progressive social causes, and will again become an inherited tradition judging reality from outside. On this aspect of John Paul II’s teaching, see: A. Dullés SJ, *Blask wiary. Wizja teologiczna Jana Pawła II*, Kraków 2003.

¹³⁶ R. J. Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*, Michigan 1984; P. M. Garry, *The Cultural Hostility to Religion*, “The Modern Age” 2005, Spring, pp. 121–131; R. P. Kraynak, *Christian Faith and Modern Democracy: God and Politics in the Fallen World*, Indiana 2001, pp. 1–44.

¹³⁷ J. J. Weiler, *Chrześcijańska Europa?. Konstytucyjny imperializm czy wielokulturowość?*, Kraków 2003; idem, *The Cube and the Cathedral...*, pp. 72–77.

Union have their origins, were not the same, the fact which accounts for their striking differences and misunderstandings. It accounts also for the religious orthodoxy being a legitimate part of the American public discourse, and its nearly total public extinction in Western Europe.

The American and the French Enlightenment

The cultural separation of the European Union – mainly its western part, is now apparent. It stems both from historic circumstances and distinctive Enlightenment traditions. The differences between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ European Union are also visible, due to the separate ways in which the Enlightenment has been experienced there, mainly its lack in the latter. Such diverse traditions bear on the contemporary responses to modernity. Naturally, the Enlightenment had common foundation, attacked the church as an established institution and first of all collectivism, seeking to replace feudal obligation with public citizenship, and revealed religion – with skeptical reason. After all an individual, freed from the self-incurred tutelage, was, as Kant said, the measure of all things. The modern liberal state was thus the summation of such individual preferences out of which a public policy would be devised. The colonists going to America, the British and the inhabitants on the continent accepted this view. But there were differences. And in fact they lead to the most basic question of today’s life as well, namely whether the good life depends on rights or on virtue and how virtue is acquired.

The American Enlightenment was influenced mainly by its Scottish branch, or more broadly, by the British one. Continental Western Europe was influenced decisively by its French variant. It was the French Enlightenment model which was to be accepted after 1789 by the dominant European elites. Their thinking and language has shaped the cultural language of Europe. The British Enlightenment was more common-sense and skeptical than the French. The latter was radical, speculative, purely rational. The French philosophers elevated reason to the primary role in human affairs, the Cartesian cultural trait which reached its highest embodiment in Voltaire, Diderot or Rousseau. The Scots and the British did not sanctify reason while analyzing reality. They gave it a secondary, in large measure instrumental role, putting emphasis on virtue, not so much on personal virtue as social virtue or social virtues. As the most important among them they counted compassion, benevolence, sympathy. The British believed that such social virtues bound people naturally, in an instinctual way. According to them people tended to habituate to certain mores by practicing certain social virtues from bottom up, this is what shaped character.¹³⁸ For instance, Adam Smith in his *Theory of Moral*

¹³⁸ G. Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French and American Enlightenments*, New York 2005, pp. 23–34. In this sense, the British Enlightenment had certain distinctive classical references to the Aristotelian idea how character is formed by practicing virtues. For a clear reference from a thinker of the same

Sentiments of 1759 argued that sympathy, benevolence, and charity sprang directly from human nature. Being virtuous towards others, one was simply fulfilling man's true nature and at the same time approximating the universal moral order, which was not contrary to the moral order mandated by Christian God. In other words, human condition and social life in general had a purpose which lay beyond moral, rational auto-creation, had a built-in *telos* which made people both virtuous and at the same time benevolent towards each other.

Abstract reason was just one element of ordering the 'good' social order. Because of this ontological fact of human nature, intellectuals, the main purveyors of abstract reasoning, were just one group among the others, not outside others as having a unique insight into moral sense and virtue. *Ipsa facto* they had no privileged status of an 'elite' telling the ordinary people in which direction history had to go, first of all in the moral sense. David Hume in turn claimed, that the moral and political understanding was not the outcome of the rational thinking, but depended on sentiment rooted in culture, in the long experience which only then could bring fruit of the proper moral and political understanding. Our loyalties, criteria of conduct, our sense of morality and justice as such were not, argued Hume, stemming from moral absolutes, universal ideas formed by an abstract mind, but belonged to the long cultural memory, moral, social, linguistic code. Hume could be interpreted as a utilitarian, when he argued that the family and family virtues were not based on religion as such or an abstract sense of duty, and also not on an innate, pre-cognitive moral sense, but on utility of such institutions. But he was not consequential and not a pure utilitarian. For him, it was obvious that although, for instance, it was useful to have fidelity in marriage and marriage was useful to the child, love of a child was not stemming from utility, it was stemming rather from nature, and nature's habits, the idea he was taking from Francis Hutcheson. Thus, the political system for Hume was not only the outcome of the abstract thinking, but of the shaping of institutions on the basis of transmitted sentiments treated as a precondition of the good political order. A destruction of this pre-political basis would be tantamount to the destruction of the political order in the first place. For Hume, to use reason in such a way as to destroy the customary ways of thinking was imprudent, and was an invitation to social engineering which threatened public order and morality, especially private morality.

We may also include into the ranks of the British Enlightenment philosophers, these thinkers who have traditionally been considered conservative like, John Wesley and Edmund Burke, but who as well opposed the French type Enlightenment. Burke regarded moral virtue as the mainstay of society. In his judgment it stemmed from a recognition that manners, moral sentiments, and opinions were the

moral school as Himmelfarb, see: J. Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense...*, p. XIII. Wilson, writing in the tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment, takes up a task of explaining what justifies moral rules, "an effort to clarify what ordinary people mean when they speak of their moral feelings [...] and explain, insofar as one can, the origins of those feelings. This effort is a continuation of work began by certain 18th-century English and Scottish thinkers, notably J. Butler, F. Hutcheson, D. Hume, A. Smith.

most important sources of human conduct and they were not stemming from pure reason. Not *ratio* alone, but such sentiments, manners and moral opinions should be the basis of social relations and political life if a decent and stable society was ever to be formed. Thus moral action did not spring from the deliberate effort to translate into reality some idealized concept of what ought to be, how we should behave. Moral ideas arose out of habitual human behavior, they were implicit in our predispositions. They were accumulated more by a morality of customary, habitual behavior, it was out of such habitual behavior that they were translated into abstract ideas – abstract because they were simply transformed by a reflective thought, not created by it. Thus, as a motive of action, moral sentiments, passions, ‘prejudices’ offered a surer guide than reason. That was why

we are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small and that the individuals would be better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations, and of ages. Many of our men of speculation, instead of exploiting general prejudices, employ their sagacity to discover the general wisdom which prevails in them.¹³⁹

Appeals to ‘prejudices’, moral sentiments, natural feelings of repugnance and love was a basis of the English Enlightenment rationalists for whom emotions, innate moral impulses were wiser than human reason. We thus become virtuous by the practice of virtue, as Aristotle said: the way we acquire crafts, when many small moral actions arise simply because we acquire them by doing moral actions. This is, of course, at the same time a profoundly Christian sentiment, stemming from the idea of the original sin and the fallen nature of human condition. Virtues arise in us by training, not by nature or against nature, but in a sense that we are by nature able to acquire them and reach our betterment through habit.¹⁴⁰

Americans of the 18th century were very resistant to the abstract reasoning of intellectuals, where any justification of a human action was going to be grounded solely in reason, instead of religion and moral life, where it was based on sheer utility or choice rather than scripture or custom. They rejected the conceit, that reason alone could independently order the impressions of the chaotic world and create stability, to make an individual a social and morally responsible creature. There was no cultural climate in America for a class of intellectuals, although all of them were people of the Enlightenment, to tell ordinary Americans that their moral decisions were made in the void and everyone, including children, could reinvent the rules all over again, every time they chose to. Moral decision making was always a part of a narrative and any morality removed from a narrative which gave one’s

¹³⁹ E. Burke, *Prejudice, Religion and the Antagonist World*, [in:] *The Portable Conservative Reader*, ed. R. Kirk, New York 1996, pp. 25–26; G. Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity...*, pp. 86–88; M. Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics*, New York 1962, p. 73.

¹⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, [in:] *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes, New Jersey 1984, 1103a23–1103b1, pp. 1742–1743.

individual life and community shape and direction was without any meaning. There was a danger that the merely intelligent and politically cunning would monopolize social values and aims. Such intellectuals would have an inclination to treat all not as morally equal citizens, but would consider them stupid, imposing on them their understanding of reality, dividing society on the wise elites and the stupid mob led by them. Something more than reason was needed to make sense of reality, to create free, democratic society, to socialize and bind them together. Burke named this something ‘prejudice’ – a moral idea. Kant tried to capture it by his notion of ‘categories’. Otherwise, as James Wilson, one of the American founding fathers, stated, referring to Hume, human personalities become merely a

combination or collection of different perceptions, following each other with the unimaginable speed [...] in incessant chaos and motion.¹⁴¹

Thomas Jefferson made a similar observation that

his own creed on the foundation of morality in man ‘impels him to reject the idea that’ on a question so fundamental, such a variety of opinion should have prevailed among men

that only reason and speculation were the tools given to man to make sense of his life. His observations compel him to conclude that

The Creator [made] the moral principle so much a part of our constitution as that no errors of reasoning or of speculation might lead us astray. [...] The Creator would indeed have been a bungling artist, had he intended man for a social animal, without planting in him social dispositions. It is true they are not planted in every man [...] but it is false reasoning which converts exceptions into the general rule [...]. When it is wanting, we endeavor to supply the defect by education, by appeals to reason [...] education, which exercises the functions of the moralist, the preacher, and legislator.¹⁴²

The American Enlightenment, after the British one, had common sense understanding of reality, culture and common moral sentiment of the ordinary people as a barrier to the fantasies of a free floating abstract mind of the French thinkers. Common-law culture and rights against the encroachments of political power stood at its center. The American constitutional tradition was thus from the very beginning already established from the bottom up, with the ordinary people organizing their affairs. American society considered itself ‘good’, free by the laws of experience and the laws of the British constitution, despite the latter being violated by London. The constitution of 1787 was thus written as a short and negative document enumerating rights given to the new federal government and leaving the rest

¹⁴¹ J. Wilson, *Lectures on Law 1790–1791*, [in:] *The Works of James Wilson*, ed. R. G. McCloskey, vol. 1, Cambridge Mass. 1967, pp. 213–214.

¹⁴² “*The Moral Sense*”, letter do Thomas Law, [in:] T. Jefferson, *Writings*, ed. M. D. Peterson, New York 1984, pp. 1335, 1337–1338; G. S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution: How a Revolution Transformed a Monarchical Society Into a Democratic One Unlike any That Had Ever Existed*, New York 1992, pp. 234–241.

to the states and the sovereign people. Irrespective of what has changed in such a picture, mainly through the activist power of the Supreme Court, the American constitutional experience has been fundamentally freedom-oriented, focused on the bottom up actions of the people able to form strong civil society.

The European experience has been different. The French Enlightenment contained a notion of a planned society, resistant to this bottom up discourse which might arise only between the individuals and groups spontaneously forming, seeking the arrangements through problem solving and compromising their demands. In the French Enlightenment there was an idea of an 'irresistible change', of history's direction already known and of the bureaucratic means applied to its furthering, an idea of progress implemented by the rational elites. This tradition was also recently visible in the discussions about the European Constitutional Treaty as well as are visible in the modern interpretations of what the human rights are. They are defined mainly through the dominant liberal-left concept of equality and 'inclusion', without a notion in relation to what, an 'exclusion' may be contemplated. In fact, the notion of 'inclusion' is based on a relativist concept of truth, which gives power to define such concepts to the strongest. Rights become thus the property of bureaucrats and courts.

Ideology of 'inclusion' so much part of the European Union constitutional parlance masks

the bureaucrat who is overseeing a system that ostensibly excludes no one from its benefits [but who] can easily justify the exclusive privileges that he himself enjoys. This trick was perfected by the Communist Party, which loudly condemned all privileges and distinctions, while rigorously excluding anyone who might jeopardize the privileges bestowed on its members. Hence the constant witch hunts, and the constant return to a 'correctness' that the party alone was authorized to define [...]. All European documents [...] including the constitution, contain gestures towards an 'inclusive' ideology, and this ideology will gradually exert a controlling influence over regulation. Not that regulation will actually achieve the goal of 'social inclusion': for like all technicalities of Eurospeak, this term denotes a mystery that cannot be unraveled.

The point is that measures must pass an ideological test. As long as the phrase 'social inclusion' can be uttered over them, regulations will be blessed and protests will condemn themselves as politically 'incorrect'. The function of the 'inclusive' ideology is not to include anyone, but to exclude those who pose a threat to the new political class. Hence the fate of Sir Rocco Buttiglione thrown off the gravy train for his orthodox Christian beliefs [...].

When people plan for humanity, they cannot allow human life to take its natural course, since that is a course inimical to comprehensive planning. The concepts that arise in normal dialogue arise from the need to compromise, to reach agreements, to establish peaceful co-ordination with people who do not share your projects or your affections, but who are as much in need of space as you are. Such concepts have nothing to do with the schemes and plans of the bureaucrat, since they permit those who use them to change course, to drop one goal and pick up another, to amend their ways and to show infinite flexibility.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ R. Scruton, *A Political Philosophy...*, p. 172.

This rationalist Enlightenment tradition has had relatively uncontested ride in the European history. It was additionally rooted in the long tradition of the European *noblesse oblige* of medieval times, the absolutist state and the elevation of the victorious rationalist intellectuals, as opposed to religious imagination, to the position of the only 'knowledgeable', 'enlightened' class, knowing the direction of history within an arbitrarily construed 'logic' of progress.

Christianity and the two Enlightenments

One of the most important differences which distinguishes the American from the European continental Enlightenment in relation to a source of social virtue, is the attitude towards religion. American creedal passion is in fact intensely religious, or to be more precise – Christian, infused also with a gnawing fear of failure and betrayal of its covenant with Providence. This foundational, rational, Enlightenment creed has a distinctly Christian dimension, making it part and parcel of the cultural American code. The creed and religious beliefs have historically influenced and strengthened each other, making some rejoice, others decry that connection. American modernity did not delegitimize religion, mainly dominant Christianity, as part of the public discourse, such an effort has been attempted only since the 1960s, albeit with limited success. But for two hundred years American modernity incorporated religious dimension as its most basic and dynamic element, event if in a maddening, individualistic, confusing, largely symbolic and rhetorical way. Nevertheless, this religious dimension of American modernity put it at striking contrast with the post-metaphysical cultural code of the European Union, possibly with some exceptions, Poland being still the most visible one. Europe, or rather the European Union, has essentially become a post-religious society. Metaphysical boredom permeates its existence. Its culture ceased to be moved by religious, meaning mainly Christian, imagination. In fact the European Union treats any religious argument expressed in public a danger to social peace. The lack of Christian imagination has become in the eyes of its dominant ideological secularists a precondition of the modern, European self identification. Europe essentially went beyond the mortal fight out of the French Revolution between Christianity and the laicite, because the laicite won. Culture is no longer moved by religious metaphysics.¹⁴⁴

The consequences of this situation for law and politics has been visible in an abandonment of any non positivist sources of reference. It was still possible to refer to the natural law tradition when Catholics Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and de Gasperi began the European Union project half a century ago. Today, the post-1968 counter-cultural revolution following the logic of moral auto-creation made references to Christianity's ancient history. The human rights ideology as the new 'religion' of the European Union is just a fig leaf. It lacks any justification not

¹⁴⁴ D. B. Hart, *Religion in America: Ancient and Modern*, "New Criterion" 2004, March, pp. 6, 16.

only why human rights should operate outside of Europe, but why they should be obeyed in the first place. The only justification supplied is purely political, conventional. Moral autonomous freedom is their ultimate justification, and thus pressure to add constantly new rights to the list defined as human rights – for instance abortion or euthanasia – is incessant. There is simply no compelling reason why they should not be there, if moral auto-creation, beyond any objective standard as e.g. natural law or the very concept of objective moral truth, is the only justification of human existence.

Modern America is still far from such metaphysical boredom. Its culture, society and public life are permeated with religious references, language, ritual and morals. It would be a wild exaggeration to state that America is today a religious nation, let alone Christian one, if by that one means a society driven by the precepts of a particular faith in its day-to-day operations. But America is a religious nation because it is a nation with a mission rooted in a metaphysical justification very hard to dispel. This justification is a distinctly Christian one. And the public language still considers religious language, grounded partially in natural law, as part of the serious moral discussion which gives moral issues, despite all messiness of culture wars, moral gravity, engaging more people in a serious public argument. Both the Founding Fathers and politicians, preachers and common people have always had this burning thought at the back of their heads, that America's liberty was not tantamount to freedom as a moral license. Liberty has always been a communal affair of a chosen nation. It was just a morally neutral quality, defined by the objects to which it was devoted. In that sense America has been and still is a profoundly moralistic country infused with fear, that without a moral mooring, its liberties would collapse. The present culture wars which divide the United States are just one of the stages of that perennial battle. That is why

The American Creed [although] it doesn't play favorites when it comes to theology – atheists receive the same protections under the law that fundamentalists do – it does however, rest on a moral foundation. To abridge people's religious freedom cuts against the American grain, but no more decisively than to exercise freedom without a sense of moral responsibility. The American Creed calls our nation under judgment of an authority higher than sect, mammon, or self interest. Prompted in part by legitimate concerns about the direction society was taking, fundamentalists called on Americans to reopen their Bibles. They insisted that, apart from morality, the country would languish.¹⁴⁵

Biblical morality has been symbolized by public utterances of the American presidents from the beginning. This has traditionally given powerful legitimacy to the religious sentiment in public life, since presidency is a symbolic American office, kind of a preaching pulpit, something which Theodore Roosevelt termed

¹⁴⁵ F. Church, *The American Creed*, New York 2002, p. 82.

the bully pulpit, recognizing that the people expected the president in his monarchical capacity to be a moral leader.¹⁴⁶

Speaking to an assembly of students at Tsinghua University in Beijing, China, on February 22, 2002, president George W. Bush, borrowing Gilbert K. Chesterton's definition of America being 'a nation with the soul of a church', summed up that strict union of faith and freedom in American psyche:

Faith points to a moral law beyond man's law and calls us to duties higher than material gain [...]. Under our law, everyone stands equal. No one is above the law, and no one is beneath it [...]. Faith gives us a moral core and teaches us to hold ourselves to high standards, to love and to serve others and to live responsible lives". He combined this ringing apology of American faith with one of American freedom. "In a free society, diversity is not disorder. Debate is not strife. And dissent is not revolution. A free society trusts its citizens to seek greatness in themselves and their country. The United States is, he added, a nation [which] shines as a beacon of hope and opportunity, a reason many throughout the world dream of coming to America.¹⁴⁷

The continental European Enlightenment as defined by French *philosophes* was different. They were obsessively anticlerical, antireligious, mainly anti-Catholic. The British or Americans, both the elites and the people, were not antireligious, although very often anti-Catholic, decrying the double loyalty of the Catholic Church's faithful, and motivated by the fear of renouncing one's individual freedom in deference to the papal authority. There were reasons for that difference. The French Enlightenment thinkers were opposing sclerotic absolutist feudalism of which the churches, mainly the Catholic Church, seemed to be one of the major mainstays. That is why they could also count on a large part of the people driven by a burning resentment. But the virulent antireligious sentiments had also different sources, which explain why anti-Christian, mainly anti-Catholic attitude among the European elites persist till today. The Catholic Church and Christianity in general, were the only competitors, both to reason understood as self explaining source of human conduct which characterized modernity as such, and to the universal claim over civilized world which the Church and the rational elite of the West claimed to possess. The Church, Christianity and religion had thus not only to be battled as a political competitor, it had to be demonized and culturally delegitimized. Christophobia, the virulent bias against Christianity which has been visible in the West, and especially in Europe, began in the French Enlightenment which has since then defined the terms of a dominant legitimate cultural discourse against Christianity. This animus against Christianity was aided also by traditional Reformation's arguments against the Catholic Church, but since the Revolution turned against religion as such. In the French Enlightenment

¹⁴⁶ F. McDonald, *The American Presidency: An Intellectual History*, Lawrence 1994, p. 436.

¹⁴⁷ F. Church, *The American Creed...*, p. 134.

the argument kept coming back to this – the great enemy, *l'infame*. The people were uneducable because they were unenlightened. They were unenlightened because they were incapable of the kind of reason that the *philosophes* took to be the essence of Enlightenment. And they were incapable of reason because they were mired in the prejudices and superstitions, the miracles and barbarities, of religion.¹⁴⁸

The Anglo-Saxons understood the basic Enlightenment concepts such as human rights, liberty, tolerance, equality, let alone reason, science or progress as complementary to religion, that is Christian religion and the organized churches, not opposing them. The difference between the French *philosophes* and the British and American thinkers did not only stem from the fact that the former had as their background one state church they were battling, whereas in America there was a plurality of faiths and churches. If that was the source of differences, one could

¹⁴⁸ G. Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity...*, pp. 152–155. The irony of the French Enlightenment was, that the reason for the public reading of the philosophers' treatises was the Church, which in its schools taught the lower classes to read; these were the schools "for which the philosophers had such contempt". G. Weigel, *Enlightenments, modest and otherwise*, "The Public Interest" 2005, Spring, p. 155. It is interesting that today, in the multicultural context, religious beliefs are taken to be a part of 'culture', a kind of anthropological ingredient to be accepted as given and thus beyond any criticism. There is only one exception, that is Christianity, and sometimes, especially recently, orthodox Judaism. This Christophobia goes quite naturally back to the Enlightenment, and has to be sustained in today's multicultural circles of the liberal-left, because Christianity is taken for granted as the 'oppressive' religious structure of the dominant West, against which the multicultural framework could define itself. Christophobia, rooted in the Enlightenment, was based on the most hubristic idea which could really come out of the human mind, that mankind had hitherto been dominated by prejudices and superstitions, but now it was the province of the age of reason and the mankind will abandon this irrational magic for good. The corollary of this rejection was to define human essence in a sharp contrast to the theology of the original sin. Humans were searching and having a right to earthly happiness, with humanity having actual power to bring it around. This was the very core of the modern progressive thinking, whose instances included Jacobinism, socialism and rationalisms of various kinds, and logical positivism. The 19th century enshrined this idea as progress, the 20th century called it, in the language of the Frankfurt School "the Enlightenment Project". This modern superstition was based on the most cherished myth of the progressive thinking, that of control, but the starting point of it was the first need to totally remould the world by political means. At the surface, multiculturalism was battling this myth, since it renounced the idea, that all civilizations and peoples were to be incorporated within this project of earthy salvation, a global project. But at the same time, it made Christianity a part of the West's 'oppression' screen, and was willing to accept it merely as a part of the cultural frame, relativist and purely anthropological. Multiculturalism rejected any pretence of Christianity to engage this world in a reasoned argument about its moral condition, with a special stress put on showing what the result of human moral failings would be. The main aim of Christianity has always been to preach in public, not what the people wanted, but what it has always preached to humans, so that they understand that they want it. The public context of such a message could not thus be discarded, and the status of Christianity as a department of the multiculturalist model has to be rejected. In this sense, multiculturalists are not much different from the new atheists, like, for instance, Richard Dawkins, for whom religion is essentially the false explanation of this world, and thus the dominant though receding Christianity, is the main obstacle to it. That is why its religious, rational argument about the human condition, has to be merely reduced to a private superstition. Both the new atheists and the multiculturalists refuse to grant Christianity a status of a serious interlocutor in a conversation about the human condition. They consider their "rational" arguments, in case of the new atheists, and multiframe cultural framework, in case of multiculturalists, both taken from a vantage point of an 'objective', 'superior' point of view, as the only acceptable way of passing a judgment on this world. On Christophobia, see: K. Minogue, *Christophobia*, www.newcriterion.com/archive/23/sumo5/bowman; also: Z. Krasnodębski, *Chrześcijaństwo czy Europa...* Criticism of the new atheists' attempts to revive the old Enlightenment superstitions, being part and parcel of the West-European dominant cultural frame of mind, which is absolutely incapable to attain the goals which it set itself to accomplish, for the reason of starting from the wrong assumptions which only religion could supply, see e.g.: R. Girard, *Polityka nikogo nie przeraża, liczy się tylko przemoc*, "Europa" 2007, December 29, p. 3.

argue that the Church of England or different state churches in the colonies, let alone those in some of the new states after 1787 when the constitution excluded the option of a single federal religion, should have provoked the same attitude. But it did not. The thinkers of the British and the American 'Enlightenments' realized that reason had no bounds, and that left alone it was the most subversive of agents, destroying not only the church and religion, but also all the institutions dependent upon them. Reason entered the role and became substitute of the absolutist state, and the Enlightenment French elite of *philosophes* found themselves in a position of the new king reigning over the subjects. That was visible in a way the French *philosophes* used reason to create a nation as a collective, rational entity, collective individual operated by state governed by the wise declaring a policy for all, the situation inconceivable in America. Americans

did not conceive of a nation, or a people, or a state, in terms of a unitary entity, a collective individual. None of these concepts were reified; they remained, as in England, but more conspicuously so, collective designations for associations of individuals. It is indeed a singular feature of the political language of revolutionary America that the word 'people' in it is used, as a rule, in the plural, for instance in the Declaration of Independence.¹⁴⁹

This had profound constitutional consequences. The First Amendment separating the state and religion in the American constitution aimed at preventing the state's encroachment on religion, rather than defending the state from religion. Religion was never treated as an alien threat to human reason. Modernity's central precept that religion equals revelation, and as such is the enemy of the rational way of knowing, was never very appealing in America, although since the 1960s such a primitive view of it has been portrayed as its essence.¹⁵⁰

The pitting of religion as revelation against politics as reason is based on a prevalent, although increasingly anachronistic conviction, that the religious wars of the 16th and the 17th centuries gave the modern state no choice, but to exclude religion altogether from public life as a precondition of securing public peace. This elimination was mainly caused by the rulers of the emerging nation-states, who wanted to eliminate any challenge to their absolutist rule. The idea of the reason of the state, as embodied by the corresponding idea of the 'divine rights of kings', whatever Christian justification was given to it, was a new idea, not commensurate

¹⁴⁹ L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism...*, p. 426. Of course, rationalists of the American Enlightenment also shared this proclivity to treat Christianity as a pillar of the society bound to achieve happiness in this world and through American experiment. It was the idea implicit in the covenant, but this idea was much more muted, in comparison with the French rational plan to remould the world. The American constitutional system gave the civil society a radically wider space of independence from the political social engineering of the state machinery. It was characterized by actions from bottom up, resistant to outside manipulations, at least until the 1960s.

¹⁵⁰ This liberal-left standard perspective on religion is visible in an extremely shallow book, an example of the so-called 'learned stupidity', by an otherwise perceptive political philosopher Mark Lilla in *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West*, New York 2007. Lilla, to mention but a few examples, does not have a clue what the difference between e.g. Islam and Christianity is, does not recognize the role of natural law, especially in Catholicism, which is treated as a non entity.

with the 'divine right of kings' of earlier Christianitas. Its purpose was solely to protect the king, that is the absolute state power, from any rival authority irrespective what its source was, whether it was popular demand, reason or the Church. For the Church to accept this logic, and become either an impotent entity or a department of the state was suicidal, and the complicated relations of the state and religion in the West, let alone in Orthodox Russia, or American Liberal Protestantism from the end of the 19th century testify to that. But for centuries the Church was a separate entity, and whatever corruption was in it and how much it was combined with the powers that be, there was no doubt that it was the most powerful challenge and a barrier against the ambitions of the state.¹⁵¹ Thus it was equally important that

the existence and prestige of the Church prevented society from being totalitarian, prevented the omniscient state, and preserved liberty in the only way that liberty can be preserved, by maintaining in society an organization which could stand up against the state [...]. The adjustment of the relation between these two societies was, of course, no easy matter. The history of the relations between Church and state in the Middle Ages is the history of the long dispute waged with wavering fortune on either side. Extravagant claims by one side called forth equally extravagant claims on the other. The erastianism of post-Reformation settlements was the answer to earlier imperiousness on the other side. But the disputes between the secular power and the papacy, however long and embittered, were boundary disputes. Neither party denied that there were two spheres, one appropriate to the Church, the other to the state. Even those partisans who made high claims for their side did not deny that the other side had a sphere of its own. They only put its place lower than did their opponents. The Christian always knew that he had two loyalties: that if he was to remember the apostle's command 'to subject unto the higher powers', he was also to remember that his duty was 'to obey God rather than man'. There are things which are Caesars and things which are God's. Men might dispute as to which were whose, but the fact of the distinction no one denied.¹⁵²

The notion of religion as revealed commands from the sky being in competition with human reason was the very essence of the French Enlightenment, but was never a part of the American Enlightenment, and it stayed this way until at least the end of the 19th century where the New Humanism movement and the new pedagogy of Whitman and Dewey arrived. New Humanism tried to replace the references to moral law derived from biblical tradition by reference to rationally created rules of conduct, based on the new psychology and soon psychotherapy as, allegedly, overcoming religious superstition.¹⁵³ Whitman and Dewey wanted to replace religion and God as an object of adulation with America as an object of auto-

¹⁵¹ See on this H. J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*, Cambridge Mass. 1983.

¹⁵² A. D. Lindsay, *The Modern Democratic State*, as quoted in R. J. Neuhaus, *Religion and Politics: The Great Separation*, "First Things" 2008, January, pp. 60–61. This is the reason, why the elimination of the Christian reference from the preamble to the European Constitutional Treaty had also political and legal, not only moral, implications. See: M. Cichocki, *Porwanie Europy*, Kraków 2004, pp. 112–118, and especially 116. The lack of that reference was also a clear sign, corroborated by many politicians, that Europe began with the French Enlightenment.

¹⁵³ For an excellent study of this transformation of the American Enlightenment tradition see: A. R. Heinze, *Jews and the American Soul: Human Nature in the 20th Century*, Princeton 2004.

creation, to replace God and to redefine religion and God as their future selves. Always a danger in the covenant Protestant religiosity, and in fact accepted as a goal of Protestant liberal Christianity at the end of the 19th century, New Humanism of Whitman and Dewey turned democracy into neither a form of government nor a social expediency but a metaphysics of the relations of man and his experience in nature. It was a kind of transformation of traditional monotheism to secular, rational civil religion.¹⁵⁴ Self-explicable human nature scientifically explored, was to replace the religious references as far as morality was concerned. America as a purely secular project of human auto-creation and betterment was to replace references to metaphysics. This development was responsible for the first splitting of American culture into two battling ‘cultures’ – religious and secular, similar to the European post-Enlightenment development and taking over the liberal elites towards nonreligious camp. This was the real beginning of the American ‘culture wars’, which in Europe began much earlier. The only difference being that, in Europe, the culture wars were so it seems for now, won by the secular side, some parts of Eastern Europe being notable exceptions, whereas in the United States the battle still divides the country.

Historically British moral philosophy which shaped American character, was distinctly reformist rather than revolutionary, respectful of both the past and the present, looking into the future, optimistic. But it had no problems with religion as part of the public presence and religious language as a mover of morality. In the United States the churches were the staunch supporters of the Enlightenment ideas, including liberty, in this religious liberty, which was a natural state of affairs. Religion in America was divided into many churches and sects who were guarding its freedom of worship. It was also very individualistic, because both Protestantism and American economic individualism went here hand in hand.¹⁵⁵ This constituted this double difference of the American religious landscape from the European one.

In Europe religions were highly institutionalized and for a long time connected with the state structures, and they were firmly locked within the orthodoxy as defined by official authority, which was true for a very long time even in the protestant churches. Neither condition was existent in America, and this lack was pushing towards religious freedom not only in institutional, classical liberal terms, but also in a psychological sense of religious choice and auto definition.¹⁵⁶ But in

¹⁵⁴ On this poetic idea of Whitman and its application by Dewey, see the late exponent of this view, R. Rorty, *Achieving our Country...*, pp. 15–30, 22–38; also: J. Boffetti, *How Richard Rorty Found Religion*, “First Things” 2004, May, pp. 24–30.

¹⁵⁵ H. Bloom named this religiosity *American gnosis*. See: *W co wierzą Amerykanie*, “Europa” 2005, September 21.

¹⁵⁶ In this sense, the role of Christianity as an ally, not an enemy of liberty is similar to the experience of Catholicism in recent Polish history, visible in the Solidarity movement and the phenomenon of John Paul II. Such a symbolic role was visible especially during the Pope’s pilgrimages to communist Poland, when the large contingents of people, believers and non-believers from other communist countries were present. Such a human rights potential of the Church was at that time accepted even by the Polish thinkers of the liberal left, operating in a tradition of the French Enlightenment, generally hostile to Catholicism, which they considered a hotbed of

the British and American Enlightenment in general, religion and the religious sentiment of charity, philanthropy and judgment under God's law was the *sine qua non* condition of liberty, not an obstacle to it.¹⁵⁷ This difference between the French and the American Enlightenment cannot be overstated. Creating their political system, Americans never looked upon religion as an enemy of liberty and the churches did not look upon liberty as enemy of religion. The experience of liberation from the persecutions of particular European state religions, partially explains that difference. For instance, the Anglican Church was persecuting the puritans. Yet, the

the xenophobic and nationalistic feelings. See: A. Michnik, *Kościół – Lewica – Dialog*, Paris 1976, where the author realizes that the Catholic Church was a force of liberty and issued a call to Catholics to form an anti-totalitarian alliance; a diagnosis largely ignored by the liberal left in the West.

¹⁵⁷ R. J. Neuhaus sounds convincing, when he explains the rationale behind the First Amendment in such terms. See his seminal *The Naked Public Square*. But he was only reacting against the secular "wall of separation" interpretation of the 1st Amendment as applied by the Supreme Court since 1940s, when the latter made the incorporation of the 1st Amendment into the state law. That Neuhaus's interpretation was correct, can be seen in many statements, as diverse as James Madison's comments during the Federal Convention, Members of the First Congress of 1789 and of the public press. It is visible also in a letter by the Jewish Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island to George Washington, and in his response of August 21, 1790. See: *George Washington Letter*, Newport 2002. In 1833, the most prominent commentator on the U.S. Constitution in the 19th century, justice Joseph Story explained the purpose of the religious freedom clause. It was adopted, claims Story, because different religious denominations and sects predominated in different states and, "it was impossible that there should not arise perpetual strife and perpetual jealousy on the subject of ecclesiastical ascendancy, if the national government were left free to create a religious establishment. The only security was in extirpating the power. [...] Probably at the time of the adoption of the constitution, and of the First Amendment, the general if not the universal sentiment in America was, that Christianity ought to receive encouragement from the state if it was compatible with the private rights of conscience and the freedom of religious worship. An attempt to level all religions, and to make it a matter of state policy to hold all in utter indifference, would have created universal disapprobation, if not universal indignation". "Commentaries on the Constitution", as quoted in: *The Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation*, ed. E. S. Corwin, Washington 1952, pp. 758–759; all sources confirmed this opinion: the Americans approved religious tolerance and religious establishments were left to individual states, but they also generally endorsed the idea of a religious foundation for their political order. *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville shows this attitude well. As late as 1952 William O'Douglas, definitely a liberal justice of the Supreme Court stated the following in the *Zorah Case*, writing in the majority opinion: "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme being. We guarantee the freedom to worship as one chooses. We make room for a wide variety of beliefs and creeds as the spiritual needs of man deems necessary. We sponsor an attitude on the part of government, that shows no partiality to any one group and that lets each flourish according to the zeal of its adherents and the appeal of its dogma. [...] To hold that government may not encourage religious instruction would be to find in the Constitution a requirement that the government show a callous indifference to religious groups. That would be preferring those who believe in no religion over those who do believe. [...] We find no constitutional requirement which makes it necessary for government to be hostile to religion and to throw its weight against efforts to widen the effective scope of religious influence", *Zorah v. Clauson*, 342 U.S. 313–314, as quoted in: *The Supreme Court and the Constitution: Readings in American Constitutional History*, ed. S. I. Kutler, New York 1984, pp. 526–527. The religious freedom of the First Amendment was thus in the spirit of Gelasius, that the church and the state 'two are there'. But the First Amendment does not set up those two, State and Church, in fortified camps, at feud, but as guardians of freedom, forever watching each other. Unlike the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution contains no reference whatever to the Creator, or even to 'Nature's God'. Indeed, except for the First Amendment, the Constitution's only mention of religion is in the Article VI about the forbiddance of the religious tests as a qualification for any public Office or public Trust. But this neutrality notwithstanding the creators of the U.S. Constitution "took it for granted that a moral order, founded upon religious beliefs, supports and parallels the political order. The Constitution was and is purely an instrument for practical government – not a philosophical disquisition. The practical government in the United States, and in every other nation, is possible only because most people in that nation accept the existence of some moral order, by which they govern their conduct – the order of the soul"; R. Kirk, *The Roots of American Order*, Malibu 1977, p. 439.

nearly two hundred years of plurality and relative freedom of religion as well as economic independence on the American shores contributed to that nexus between liberty and religion.

The churches had it also easier to adapt to the liberal, egalitarian institutions in America, since they were part of an organic, active and pluralistic social development, mainly the protestant churches participation with their covenantal mentality. There were colonial state churches and later state churches, but there was always a chance of escape from their rigidities. The Constitution of 1787 protected this cultural, religious reality in the new federal republic. The First Amendment was put into the constitution not to protect the state and society from the churches and religion, but to the contrary, to protect religion and the churches from the federal state.¹⁵⁸ Such a rationale for the church – state separation in the post-1789 Europe, with the subsequent, gradual formation of liberal governments in the 19th century was absent on the Continent. The churches, mainly the Catholic Church were treated, generally, as a threat to the liberal state, to be limited in its institutional and cultural influence. This enmity towards Christianity and organized religion has survived in Western Europe, despite the fact that Christianity ceased to be in any way a cultural, let alone institutional competitor of the state. This enmity was strengthened by the cultural acceptance of the liberal left idea of ‘emancipation’, the legacy of the 1968 revolution.¹⁵⁹ The aforementioned interpretation of the First Amendment has not been shared by the liberal-left in the United States and the Supreme Court since mid-20th century, but the ability of a pluralistic American society to organize itself against this ‘European’ attitude towards the relations between the state and religion, its finances and ability to create counter elites still keep at a distance this ‘European’ attitude from capturing the public language, culture and the state institutions.¹⁶⁰

In America reason, religion and science formed a friendly combination, while in continental Europe the French idea of sharp enmity between them began to define the culture as espoused by the major elites. The solidified myth that rationalist means secularist and statist at the same time, the idea influencing much of the present European Union bureaucratic and judicial elite’s thinking and activities, was neither present at the time of the American Founding nor is present today. America balances faith, freedom and common sense, something which Jon Meacham called

¹⁵⁸ The 1968 revolution transformed culture. The idea of the autonomous self has been universally accepted as the sole basis of moral judgment and rights, set against any autonomous institution which would deny itself such moral freedom. The churches, mainly the Catholic church with its creedal teachings, were automatically putting themselves as adversaries of such a meaning of culture, and because of such a position, were considered by the 1968 believers to be an obstacle to the final liberation of an individual. The same concerns all the institutions trying to instill arbitrary moral judgments, for instance family.

¹⁵⁹ J. Bethke Elshaint, *The Bright Line: Liberalism and Religion*, Chicago 1999, pp. 139–156; see also her, *The Liberal Social Contract and the Privatization of Religion*, [in:] *Religion as a Public Good*, ed. A. Mittleman, New York 2003, pp. 13–26.

¹⁶⁰ On this attitude towards religion of the European bureaucratic elites in their approach to human rights see: M. Bracho wicz, *Agencja Praw Podstawowych Unii Europejskiej. O najnowszym pomysle inzynierii społecznej*, “Krakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe” 2007, No. 1, pp. 7–46.

a distinctive ‘American gospel’, a system of basic truths and convictions which may not necessarily represent orthodox Christianity or Judaism but are much closer to them than to the secular materialism of the elite culture.¹⁶¹ America was founded on a peculiar mélange of public beliefs: a belief in the sacred importance of individual conscience put into Declaration of Independence’s dictum, that pursuit of happiness is the inborn, inalienable right and a belief in religious liberty as a precondition of liberty in general, not as a threat to it.¹⁶² Since 1787 political and cultural background was to form the backbone of republican virtues, since citizens’ virtues were necessary so the constitution could be secured. This belief still defines the dominant cultural code of America, despite counter pressures of the ‘European’ style liberal left.¹⁶³ America in this sense has a peculiar, to use Benjamin Franklin’ term, ‘public religion’. It was different than public religion as conceived by Rousseau in France, which was artificial, man made. Franklin’s public religion derives a lot of its conceptual references still from the biblical culture and is tied to religious liberty as the main barrier against the idolatry of the state. It infuses Americans with nearly religious obligation to defend liberty at home and around the world.¹⁶⁴

That is why the British and American Enlightenments, the common moral sense and religion as a socialized force have never been in opposition to modernization and traditional mores of society but treated them as mainstays of the free and modern society. The lack of conflict between reason and religion prevented the intellectuals from the hubris of having the uncontested free ride in implementing the policy of enlightened despotism as a political instrument of choice. Religion, mainly Christianity was a natural impulse strengthening free individual against encroaching modern state and reaffirming democracy, natural and practical, as opposed to merely philosophical, notion of equality of all. Britain and America formed cultures where the aforementioned combination was visible, where

religion, moral philosophy, and their egalitarian assumptions shaped the era. They worked together for the common cause: the material as well as the moral reformation of the people [...]. The environment in which these ideas and practices were born and how firmly they still mold the moral sense and common sense of the English speaking world today.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ J. Meacham, *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation*, New York 2006.

¹⁶² D. L. Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*, Oxford 2006.

¹⁶³ Such an idea of public religion has its supporters and critics, both from the religious and nonreligious people. Franklin spoke up for “the Necessity of a Public Religion”. In the 20th c. Roman Catholic visitor to America from England Hilare Belloc referring to it as an experiment, was suspicious, stating: “I must close with this suggestion, putting it so that it shall be as inoffensive as possible. [...] The new and separate spirit which has made America, which creates spiritual condition peculiar to that Continent, may produce, perhaps will soon produce, at any rate tends to produce, some quite unique experiment in the field of religion. We have had islands, as it were, of such experiments. But [...] seeing the rapid intensity and unity of such action, I cannot but think that the future holds some rapid [...] new American growth; a new body and organization of the domain of religion. Not an isolated, fractional experiment, but a great national or cultural invention. A new Religion.” Quoted in: M. E. Marty, *Religion and Republic: The American Circumstance*, Boston 1987, p. 167.

¹⁶⁴ K. Windschuttle, *Which Enlightenment?*, “The New Criterion” 2005, March, p. 68.

¹⁶⁵ G. Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity...*, pp. 82–83.

For this reason, although not for this reason alone, the Anglo-Saxon world has so far found a better formula for being more dynamic, economically robust, prone to charity motive, stemming not from the bureaucratic command of a taxing state, but from the moral impulse of citizens. This dynamic motive has been in large measure religious, indispensable to freedom and well-being. As Edmund Burke said

religion itself, and religious dissent most noticeably was the very basis of liberty – of all liberty, not only religious liberty

and that is why it was, as Methodist John Wesley remarked, Enlightenment ‘for the common man’.¹⁶⁶ It was an Enlightenment

within piety, not an Enlightenment against religious conviction”, that is why it was much better in ameliorating disruptions of modernization, more moral and social reform oriented by innumerable measures of common people. Thus religious conviction and religious establishment and a considerable degree of religious tolerance.¹⁶⁷

The French Enlightenment project has been defined predominantly through the lenses of personal ‘liberation’, beyond any communal experience. The rights trump any communal duties and the legitimacy of any political order and civil organization has began to be assessed through such lenses. In this context religion should be pushed into purely private domain of individual pastime.¹⁶⁸

Rationalism and human rights

The English Whigs looked upon the social contract theory after 1688 ‘Glorious Revolution’ in the light of a unique combination of reason filtered through the English tradition of common law. The rights were never understood in England as separate from the procedural and institutional setting of political life, as formed in abstract by rational speculation. David Hume, William Blackstone and Edmund Burke were aware of that. In England there was always a reference to the ancient

¹⁶⁶ G. Weigel, *Enlightenments...*, p. 154.

¹⁶⁷ America is, of course, already divided. The traditional American Enlightenment pattern of both modernity and religiosity is visible in the so-called ‘blue’ states as against the ‘red states’, where liberalism understood as a combination of secularism, statism and elitist rule seems to be regnant among the elites. The lesson of the American Enlightenment in this regard, that is the combination of modernity and religiosity, seems also to be more conducive to any reform in the Middle East Muslim countries, where the rationalist and aggressively secular project in a nonstarter.

¹⁶⁸ D. T. Rodgers, *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics since Independence*, New York 1987, pp. 50–51; W. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Chicago 1979, reprint, Vol. 1, pp. 51, 91, 157; D. S. Lutz, *The Relative Influence of European Writers on Late Eighteenth-Century American Political Thought*, “American Political Science Review” 1984, Vol. 78, pp. 189–197; H. F. May, *The Enlightenment in America*, New York 1976.

constitution of England.¹⁶⁹ John Locke asking a question who was going to stop a tyrannical government, if it violated the rights of social contract, could only point to rebellion, but rejected it. Rebellion outside the institutional framework as well as the idea of rights outside of political practice of parliamentary sovereignty was inconceivable in England. Hume was very suspicious about abstract human rights, the state of nature in which they were allegedly in pure form exercised by humans, and the way they were to be rationally discovered. He was aware that the idea of rights, the social contract and the state of nature theory of John Locke were in vogue. So was the idea of emancipation of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Yet, such an intellectual enterprise was from his point of view preposterous. In an essay *Of the Original Contract* of 1748 Hume ridiculed the idea that for instance the 18th-century British subjects born into society could be treated as visitors from the state of nature, carrying rights formed there. For Hume, Blackstone and Burke it was not the mythical, abstract, rationally conceived hypothetical past, point zero in history, but history, change and experience, the basis of political solutions. A similar argument was used by another Scottish political philosopher Adam Ferguson who in 1767 wrote that

If we asked, then, where is that state of nature, the answer would be not at the beginning of creation but 'here', 'at present', where concrete, historical people use their practical reason for the betterment of their conditions.¹⁷⁰

The British and American thinkers lived in a different world than the French *philosophes*. The latter lived in a world of abstraction, the former were men of action. For instance the authors of the American constitutional system had practical experience in democratic politics of give and take, experience in government as well as experience in business, and generally liked the society in which they were operating. They were concerned with politics of order and liberty, so the bigger constitutional frame was intended merely to ensure this liberty would be more secure against the exigencies of outside world. For this reason the constitution of 1787 was short, concrete and negative, and so was also the Bill of Rights attached to it in 1791. The French philosophers had little public experience and contact with the real 'people'. Their adage *liberté, égalité, fraternité* was to be construed out of the abstract image, after the society so far existing was to be destroyed. This difference of approaches was visible, for instance, in Edmund Burke. Burke, like Fergusson or Hume, treated the British constitution, with the king in parliament, as born time out of mind. An attempt to dig into some abstract, rationally defined human rights, wrote Burke in his polemic with Paine

¹⁶⁹ S. C. Stimson, *The American Revolution in the Law: Anglo-American Jurisprudence before John Marshall*, Princeton–New Jersey 1990, pp. 42–44; L. Armour, *John Locke and American Constitutionalism*, [in:] *Constitutionalism: The Philosophical Dimension*, ed. A. S. Rosenbaum, New York 1988; A. Bryk, *The Origins of Constitutional Government: Higher Law and the Origins of Judicial Review*, Kraków 1999, pp. 230–231.

¹⁷⁰ D. T. Rodgers, *Contested Truths...*, pp. 51–52.

in all their nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction was only a catastrophic dream, destroying every political society.¹⁷¹

Burke who urged Parliament to respect the American quest for representation and warned against punitive actions, regarded moral virtue as the mainstay of society. He recognized that moral sentiments, opinions and manners, not reason alone, were the important sources of human conduct and should be the basis of social relations if a decent and stable society was ever to be formed. William Blake rebelled also against abstract reason. For him, reason meant something else than *ratio* – everything which was just opposite to imagination, the same way as for Burke *ratio* was something contrary to prescription.¹⁷²

For Burke and Blake the limitations of abstract reason came from the same source, its circular argument. Thinking was first of all the consequence of mutual relations between men, the world and experience

creating in the world the thing in the imagined meaning of men, so that way such a model of the world could be created, in which the man should live and in which lived, before reason began to deal with it. Reason can create nothing in the world: it can only look into it as into the mirror, so it can then create the logic of circular argument, like the squirrel in a cage [...]. Whoever sees ratio only sees himself only.¹⁷³

The revolutionary Americans were cautious to turn from concrete to abstraction. John Adams, using the experience of the colonial society as ‘good’, was unsure where intuition about rational, natural human rights might lead him. Practical Franklin was suspicious of any abstract, rational speculation of the philosophers. In the 1770s the notion of natural rights began to be understood in abstract. In *The Common Sense* (1776), the wildly popular revolutionary pamphlet by Thomas Paine, rights were a retrospective construction derived from abstraction called the state of nature. But the idea of abstract rights never entirely took hold in America. It would have meant that colonial politics and society was illegitimate, waiting to be destroyed in its totality, as was the case with the feudal, absolutist state and society in France. The rhetoric of abstract rights visible in the Declaration of Independence was wider, and differed from the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Americans harnessed the general, abstract natural rights of the Declaration by the rules of the Constitution of 1787. The doctrine of extralegal, beyond the British constitution, natural rights of the Declaration was just a rhetorical device to justify independence. But immediately such rights were tied to the concrete institutions with reference to already existing political order considered to be good, formed as part of

¹⁷¹ E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, [in:] *The Portable Conservative Reader*, ed. R. Kirk, Penguin Books 1982, pp. 18–19.

¹⁷² N. Frye, *Biblia Blake'a*, “Znak” 2006, December, p. 88.

¹⁷³ L. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, Chicago 1950. Thus, it seems fair to conclude that if the United States were settled not by the British, but, for instance, by the French or the Spaniards, the American idea of liberty, republic, and in general the character of the American Enlightenment, would have been totally different.

the original covenant with God, as *novus ordo seculorum*. The anarchy of creating new, abstract, a-historical rights was closed. The state of nature was closed.

In general, this tradition of practical, social natural equality, self-government, benevolence of a republican, religious society modified significantly Locke's epistemology and hubris of continental Enlightenment rationalism, and the conviction that the elites can master it. A distinctive colonial history and culture gradually modified, caused the Americans to be impervious to the absolutist faith in the power of reason to order the information about the world, which Locke's sensualism made the source of knowledge. Americans accepted milder versions of British rationalism, relying more on the common sense of David Hume and seeking in the moral, commonsensical thinking, sympathy and benevolence due to nature given to every man, a moral compass of everyday conduct. Hume appealed naturally and logically to culture in its traditional, Latin meaning of the word, 'culture' as taking care of, growing, grooming, betterment, from a word 'cultura'. At the beginning it was applied to agriculture, but when applied to public matters 'culture' began to mean the organic, nearly invisible, historically changing, as a glacier, set of notions, in opposition to abstract, purely speculative and imaginary, ideological connotations. In such a context the creed of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution could only be understood in the wider context of history and culture. The Lockian tradition of natural laws must here be interpreted through the lenses of American religious tradition, making out of the Christian idea of personal betterment and moral truth, the limiting element of rights understood not only through the lenses of individual desire. The constitutional tradition loses then the stigma of abstract universality to be accepted by all. Cultural traditions in such a sense have always been in conflict with unequivocal ideological and purely rational interpretation of the natural laws' tradition. Leo Strauss had that exactly in mind when he had reservations about the idea of natural laws as contrasted with the idea of natural law. He thought it to be a slippery path of natural law turned into natural rights understood as subjective will of the autonomous subjects.¹⁷⁴

Natural rights should then be understood not solely as an outcome of a philosophical, abstract thinking, but would be limited by the necessary obligations of a community, organic principles of a given society in confrontation with abstract ideas. In such a context, a tradition of religious natural law does not have to be contradictory to natural laws but in fact may contain them. This is visible in the Declaration of Independence. Culture in this context becomes heritage, understood instinctually, beyond rational categories. Identity in such a situation is not a primitive attachment to *Gemeinschaft*. It becomes a point of confrontation with the rational schemes of the imagined world. Such a process lets one ask questions about moral justification of any theoretical constructions, and to what extent they are

¹⁷⁴ On Hume and the American tradition, see: B. C. S. Watson, *Hume, Historical Inheritance, and the Problem of Founding*, [in:] *The American Founding and the Social Compact*, eds. R. J. Pestritto, T. G. West, Lexington Books 2003, pp. 73–94; idem, *Creed and Culture in the American Founding...*, p. 36.

an outcome of the hubris of the autonomous self. The acceptance of such a British tradition which preceded the modern Lockian liberal tradition of natural rights meant automatically, that the Americans felt well both with a language of natural rights and cultural and organic concepts which they could find in Hume, Burke or William Blackstone. Their self-understanding could be congruent with reference to custom and moral sentiments, that is with the whole experience of already established society, considered to be good, before the federal constitution of 1787 was adopted. Its construction was both the outcome of abstract thinking and political culture. It was taken for granted that a destruction of the latter would destabilize political order which imposed real limitations and tasks on power. The objective of the strong government was not so much the incitement of public passion in the name of abstract ideological programs, but simply limitation of the destructive passions threatening social stability. This conservative program was based on the thrust in the elites having confidence in their own society, with an understanding of political culture as an organic and elastic whole which could cope with the challenges. Naturally functioning moral and social order was thus crucial for the preservation of the institutional political order in contradistinction to pure speculative, philosophical mind.¹⁷⁵ The slavery problem was, of course, an altogether different matter, impossible to tackle head on and waiting to be solved in due time. The fallacy of this assumption was soon obvious.

The American republican thinkers combined the traditions of Locke and Hume. Liberal, universal ideas mingled with the conservative ideas of Hume. Ratio and experience were treated as a point of departure for a proper understanding of the American Enlightenment after 1776. The Declaration of Independence is thus not solely a classical liberal document. It clearly refers to a cultural heritage, stressing that

prudence will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

The Declaration then goes to the concrete accusations against the king and the British Parliament. Historical grievances, the violation of the colonists' rights belonging to them as subjects of the crown since the time immemorial, was the cause of rebellion, not the love of abstract ideas. The accusations were contrasted with the violated common rights. Thus the Declaration entailed a special kind of constitutionalism, soon to be codified in the Constitution of 1787, where

¹⁷⁵ *An American Primer*, ed. D. J. Boorstin, New York 1966, pp. 86–87.

the fury stems from the hidden assumption of the English constitutional tradition, at least the common law rights and liberties guaranteed by that tradition, which Americans treat as their legitimate inheritance¹⁷⁶.

The Declaration looked thus both into the future and to the past. In *The Federalist* we can also find references not only to the social contract theory of Locke. John Jay in *The Federalist* No. 2 wrote that

Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people, people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs [...] established by their general liberty and independence [...] this country and this people seem to have been made for each other, and it appears as if it was the design of Providence that an inheritance so proper and convenient for a band of brethren, united to each other by the strongest ties [cultural and historical], should never be split into a number of unsocial, jealous, and alien sovereignties.¹⁷⁷

The American constitutional tradition was thus very much in the spirit of Hume, stressing culture and not putting reason to the fore, or at least creating their synthesis. In the constitution the founders stressed the experience and public attachments to the incrementally created and exposed sentiments, memory and fears, sometimes treating them as an ally in the common enterprise, sometimes imposing limitations on these passions considered to be destructive. In that endeavor reason alone, the abstract schemes imposed on the social and cultural reality, could not be too helpful. The task was to unite and divide the public opinion in a new republic, with an assumption that it was necessary to be suspicious about abstract absolutes. In 1787, in Philadelphia, John Dickinson of Maryland (1732–1808) expressed the common sentiment of the members of the constitutional convention, stating that the debate could not be conducted by the purely theoretical principles. In his judgment “experience must be our only guide. Reason may mislead us”.¹⁷⁸ People could be by nature morally equal and have equal share in public power through representation, but at the same time society, in an organic manner articulates its needs through different interests, opinions and passions which compete in the agora so to convince the others.¹⁷⁹ Hume’s spirit informed also James Madison in *The Federalist* No. 10, where he put forth his *Idea of the Perfect Community*. He warned in his polemic with Jefferson that a tension between the public good and individual rights

¹⁷⁶ J. Stoner, *Is there a Political Philosophy in the Declaration...*, p. 5; see also his “Sovereign Judging: Common Law and Liberal Political Philosophy as Sources of American Constitutionalism”, unpublished PhD Dissertation, Harvard University 1987, in which he clearly stresses the indispensability of both traditions: common law and the liberal, Lockian social contract for the understanding of the American constitutionalism.

¹⁷⁷ *The Federalist Papers*, ed. C. Rossiter, New York 1961, p. 38.

¹⁷⁸ In: R. Livingston, A. Schuyler, *The Constitution of the United States. An Historical Survey of Its Formation*, New York 1923, pp. 90–91; see also D. Adair, *Experience must be our only guide: History, Democratic Theory and the United States Constitution*, [in:] his, *Fame and the Founding Fathers*, ed. T. Colburn, New York 1974, pp. 107–129.

¹⁷⁹ B. C. S. Watson, *Creed and Culture...*, pp. 35–37.

was impossible to be liquidated and their harmonizing had to proceed in an organic way, not through the impositions of an abstract reason creating the general norms, in the name of which there would then be appeal to the passions of ‘demos’. Such a policy resulted not in a creation of the public order and civilized society but in politics of demagoguery and the mob, known from the French revolution of 1789. Politics, claimed Madison should be conducted in such a way so passions and rational ideological schemes be filtered by culture of a given society. American constitutional system was not based on a rational imposition of the preconceived ideal, but on cultural assumptions accepted subconsciously. For instance, the authors of the constitution did not doubt the

key meaning of Christianity and the morality based on it for the success of the American experiment. They believed that reason and revelation were the true guides in human affairs, both showing in the same direction as far as matters connected with natural rights and moral conduct [...]. George Washington in his farewell address claimed clearly that the traditional religion, more than philosophy, may instruct and discipline many.¹⁸⁰

English common law was also treated by Americans as a cultural axiom. Through the process of long refinement – thought Edward Coke, Matthew Hale and William Blackstone – natural law, by confronting the individual matters created general rules from the bottom up, not the other way round.¹⁸¹ Reason was not severed from concrete in the law formation.¹⁸² For the American Founders the rule of law could not be severed from this existential and conservative understanding of the common law, that is why the Americans did not feel, in contradistinction to the French in 1789, like rejecting their traditional legal heritage, which for the French was considered a *sine qua non* condition of rejecting feudalism and absolutism. The Americans treated common law both as ancient and modern at the same time, protecting the rights of the British subjects, which meant the protection of rights of all people. The common law tradition and the English idea of liberty were parallel to the rights and liberties of humanity. That was a classical Whig theory of history, treated as the stage of universal march of freedom preparing the way for everyone. But it was at the same time an instance of hubris and efficacy in the process of building national pride based on tradition and modernity, the basic combination of American patriotism and dynamics. Such a synthesis of the common law tradition, its justification by Hume, and Locke’s individualism formed the core of American

¹⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

¹⁸¹ A. Bryk, *The Limits to Arbitrary Government: Edward Coke and the Search for Fundamental Law*, Kraków 1996; K. Ryan, *Coke, the Rule of Law, and Executive Power*, “The Vermont Bar Journal” 2005, Vol. 31, No. 1.

¹⁸² B. C. S. Watson, *Creed and Culture...*, p. 37. Michel Zuckert formulated this attitude as follows: “Partially because of Blackstone, Americans could think about political society as both rational result of the social contract and the entity formed and ruled by law based on custom, deriving its authority from antiquity and character, organically accrued”, *Social Compact, Common Law, and the American Amalgam: The Contribution of William Blackstone*, [in:] *The American Founding and the Social Compact...*, pp. 42–43.

constitutionalism. This was visible in Alexander Hamilton's quotation from Hume at the very summing up of the *The Federalist Papers*. Hume, quoted by Hamilton pointed out that

to balance a large state or society [...] on general laws, is a work of so great difficulty that no human genius [...] is able, by the mere dint of reason and reflection, to effect it. The judgments of many must unite in the work; *experience* must guide their labor; *time* must bring it to perfection, and the *feeling* of inconveniences must correct the mistakes which they inevitably fall into their first trials and experiments." [My emphasis, AB] To which Hamilton adds that "these judicious reflections contain a lesson of moderation to all the sincere lovers of the Union, and ought to put them upon their guard against hazarding anarchy, civil war, a perpetual alienation of the states from each other [...] in the pursuit of what they are not likely to obtain, but from *time* and *experience*."¹⁸³

There is thus a deep sense of "political" expressed by Hamilton, a feeling that nothing is set for ever and the experience of the common people and the democratic process is a check on the hubris of a rational mind.

The American messianic universalism

The American Creed, consisting of many currents, mainly Protestantism and the idea of biblical covenant implicit in it, combined with abstract social contract of Locke, created a peculiar theology of public, civil religion.¹⁸⁴ It gave America's identity a sense of uniqueness and the unassailable optimistic lurch forward. The Protestant project was based on a deeply held conviction that America was the chosen land of Christian God who made a covenant with it, for her glory and as the hope for the world, an example to rectify its ills, mainly the lack of liberty.¹⁸⁵ The first settlers, the puritans of Massachusetts, the Quakers of Pennsylvania and the Scots-Irish of Tennessee were dynamic people, not an impoverished mass of individuals asking admittance to a developed, already existing society where they would dwell and assimilate. They were at the same time suspicious of any centralized religious authority which was especially visible in the dominant strands of Protestantism including Presbyterians, Quakers, and Puritans.

The overwhelming majority of settlers adhered to these faiths. The decisionmaking process was for them a congregational affair, not centralized like in Catholicism, or Episcopal like in the Anglican Church. In addition they followed a very worldly dominant ethos of work. These churches in fact made a 'reformation of Reformation' being antiauthoritarian, pragmatic, suspicious of the institutions which did not explain to themselves. They had no trait of deference to established

¹⁸³ D. Hume, *Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences*, [in:] *idem, Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. E. F. Miller, Indianapolis 1985, p. 124.

¹⁸⁴ R. N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial*, Chicago 1992, pp. 36–60.

¹⁸⁵ S. Berkovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*, New Haven 1975, pp. 16–186.

orders along the lines of the European established institutions, felt no resignation in face of adversity and suffering, and had no patience and reverence towards poverty. In other words, the early protestant settlers were activist in their outside outlook, consisting of human material which by the very fact of the voyage across Atlantic challenged the passivity of the European established life.¹⁸⁶ They were like invaders, arriving as distinct groups, with clearly defined communal belief and practices, focused on success in the land which they perceived to be theirs by a wish of Providence. The very beauty of infinite spaces, the nature itself, this virgin, the only still existing ‘fingerprint of God’ as one of the Puritans remarked, gave additional credence to a conviction that they began the world anew and that this was the wish of God. That is why they were willing to stay there and inhabit the land at any cost, buying the land or wresting the continent away from the tribes of native hunters and gatherers fighting one another. They were irresistible and they stayed that way till today.¹⁸⁷

The United States, having behind it the myth of a chosen land, the living myth of the “good” civilization of the original colonies, was thus infused with a tremendous historical and eschatological consciousness. America was simultaneously functioning with the political culture brought by the settlers, the common law and ancient constitutionalism.¹⁸⁸ This political culture dovetailed with the religious inheritance and in due course with the universal theory of a legitimate government derived from Locke’s social contract and natural rights, implied in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. This messianic American universalism, a combination of religious, eschatological belief, the British tradition and the Enlightenment rational idea of a social contract and rights was confronted with an inhospitable nature. In this confrontation, not mediated by centuries of history, Americans had to cope without the established societies and states (present in Europe). The state in the United States has thus always been treated mentally as an external entity, in contradistinction to the European tradition. The aforementioned features gave America an irresistible dynamic and creativity.¹⁸⁹ It treated itself as

¹⁸⁶ S. P. Huntington, *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America’s National Identity*, Simon & Schuster 2004, pp. 37–106.

¹⁸⁷ D. Hacker Fisher, *Albion’s Seed*, New York 1989; R. Kirk, *The Roots of American Order...*

¹⁸⁸ M. P. Zuckert, *The Natural Rights Republic*, Notre Dame 1996; idem, *Natural Rights and Protestant Politics*, [in:] T. S. Engemann, M. P. Zuckert, *Protestantism and the American Founding*, Notre Dame 2004, pp. 21–75; T. G. West, *Vindicating the Founders*, Lanham MD 2001; idem, *Transformation of Protestant Theology as a Condition of the American Revolution*, [in:] T. S. Engemann, M. P. Zuckert, *Protestantism...*, pp. 187–223; B. A. Shain, *The Myth of American Individualism*, Princeton 1994; P. A. Lawler, *Religion, Philosophy, and the American Founding*, [in:] T. S. Engeman, M. P. Zuckert, *Protestantism...*, pp. 165–185; R. Stoner, *Is there a Political Philosophy in the Declaration of Independence?*, “The Intercollegiate Review” 2005, Vol. 40, No. 2, Fall–Winter, pp. 3–11; R. L. Clinton, *God and Man in the Law: The Foundations of Anglo-American Constitutionalism*, Lawrence KA 1997; B. Hart, *Faith and Freedom: The Christian Roots of American Liberty*, Dallas 1988.

¹⁸⁹ S. Berkovitch, *The Puritan Origins...*, pp. 79–81, 94–95; E. Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America’s Millennial Role*, Chicago 1980, pp. 50–53, 64–67, 75–84; this dynamic stands, as Alan Bloom remarked, at the center of America as the first modern nation, the embodiment of the promethean project

a unique country, with a peculiar character, faithful to common ideas of liberty, individualism, optimism and initiative, ingenuity, self reliance, root democratic impulse, at the same time populist and egalitarian and devoid of any sense of limitations, convinced that wealth was within the reach of everybody and poverty was a transitory phenomenon.

Although America has experienced bloody clashes between capital and labor, their social movements have never been tempted to capture the state with a purpose of revolutionary transformation. The reforms have always aimed at letting everybody share in the existing wealth, to fulfill the promise of equal and free citizenship anchored in a covenant with Providence. Such a mythology has definitely limited the boundaries of social debate. On the other hand, it has focused the interpretative discourse on the foundational creed, giving the United States a dynamic impervious to any intellectual disenchantment. The discussion between someone who knows he is part of the Covenant and the one who does not understand it, is simply impossible. The United States was thus based on a peculiar credo imposed on its historical experience. This credo was the collection of unverifiable, infalsifiable principles defining her unique identity and religious mission. At the same time this Covenant and mission made America a country constantly in search of itself, a process of periodic self-flagellation, with a fear that the mission might be corrupted or betrayed. The waves of unbound optimism and self doubt have defined its rhythm. From the European perspective such an approach might look like immaturity and arrogance of a teenager, a radical rejection of limits, the state of soul and mind when, as T.S. Eliot expressed it 'progress annihilates fate'.

The unique combination of Christian mission, covenant with Providence, fear of failure and at the same time boundless optimism of unlimited possibilities was already visible in the sermons of the American clergy, mainly of the protestant stock, before and after the revolution of 1775–1783. For instance a minister Bishop Madison wrote in a pamphlet of 1795:

There are few situations more interesting to the human race, than that which the people of America this day presents. The temples of the living God are every where, through the rising empire [...] with worshipers, whose hearts, are impressed with a just and lively sense of great things [...]. It is in America, that the germs of the universal redemption of the human race from domination and oppression have already begun to be developed; it is in America, that we see reintegration of divine love for man, and that the voice of heaven itself seems to call to her sons, go ye forth and disciple all nations, and spread among them the gospel of equality and fraternity [...]. Our ancestors, amid the wrecks of human rights, and the convulsive tempests with which ambition had so often overwhelmed the nations [...] still evinces no small portion of that eternal spirit, that ardent love of liberty, which glows in American breast. It was this indomitable spirit, this attachment to the inherent rights of man, stronger infinitely than the fear of those storms, which agitate the immense Atlantic, or of the fierce and cruel tenants of the howling wilderness, or the ravages of disease, or the famine and death itself,

first envisioned in modernity by Rousseau. It was through Rousseau that Bloom read Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, as the first truly universal description of a society in the grips of modernity. *Rousseau-the Turning Point*, [in:] A. Blom, *Confronting the Constitution...*, pp. 211–234.

which urged our forefathers to the distant shores [...]. It was this noble principle, this love of liberty, which defying all dangers, conducted our fore-fathers to America [...]. This principle [...] no where to be found [...]. Who doth not see, that thus to have transported it to America, thus to have incorporated it with the primary social institutions of this country, may be justly deemed an event most fortunate for mankind, nay, most worthy of the providence itself. Had this principle been equally transported to the [other countries of the world] they also would have had their apostles, nay their martyrs of liberty [...]. If then we dare attempt with mortal eye to trace those causes, by which the Almighty operates, it will not be thought presumptuous [...] not only to ascribe to his directive wisdom the introduction of a principle, which here fostered, will redeem the captive nations of the earth [...] until the complete restoration of the human race to their inherent rights be accomplished, throughout the globe. Let the tyrants of the earth set themselves in array against this principle 'they shall be chased as the chaff of the mountain before the wind, and the like the down of the thistle before the whirlwind' [...] when our forefathers here first rested the soles of their feet [...] the guardian Angel of America withdrawing the curtain of time, had opened to their view [...] America free, independent [...] had shown to them the bright portrait of that heroic citizens, whose prudence, fortitude, and whose wisdom shine equally resurgent in war as in peace [...] We possessed of all those blessings which flow from governments founded in wisdom, justice and equality; doth the morning of America break forth resurgent with unclouded glory. [...] 'This is the Lords doing [...]. And is there a soul present [...] who do not trace, in the eventful history of America, the conspicuous displays of the hand of providence?'¹⁹⁰

Such an oration would sound well in the mouth of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Ronald Reagan or George W. Bush. It contained all the treads of American eschatology: Covenant with Providence, exceptionalism of America as a new paradise on earth, the new beginning of history of freedom as fulfillment of God's plan, mission towards the world. This eschatology was equally well captured by Timothy Dwight (1752–1817), President of Yale College (1795–1817), an enemy of the Jacobin type of the Enlightenment. In a 1798 oration he thundered

Look through history of your country. You will find scarcely less glorious and wonderful proofs of divine protection and deliverance, uniformly administered through every period of our existence as a people [...]. Can it be believed. [...] that Christianity has been so planted here, the church of God so established, so happy a government constituted, and so desirable state of society begun, merely to show them to the world, and then destroy them? No instance can be found in the province of God, in which a nation so wonderfully established, and preserved, has been overthrown, until it had progressed farther in corruption [...]. Turn your eyes, for a moment, to the face of providence, and mark its new and surprising appearance [...]. O Thou God of our fathers! [...] enable us to watch, and keep our garments [...] and that both we and our posterity may be entitled to the blessing which thou hast promised.¹⁹¹

The aforementioned sources of identity created a peculiar form of American ideological patriotism which, derived from historical experience, native development, eschatological Christianity of early puritan Protestantism as well as political expression of American uniqueness visible in the Declaration of Independence. This ideological patriotism coalesced into a form of one particular doctrine, the

¹⁹⁰ *Manifestation of the Beneficence of Divine Providence towards America: A Discourse*, [in:] E. Sandoz, *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era 1730–1805*, Indianapolis 1991, pp. 1309, 1312–1313.

¹⁹¹ T. Dwight, *The Duty of Americans, at the Present Crisis, Illustrated in a Discourse*, [in:] idem, *Sermons...*, pp. 1392, 1394.

allegiance to which became a national duty. This doctrine was not the outcome of pure rational abstraction but was also rooted in practical reason of American political, social and religious development. America has based itself on a particular Credo, an expression of faith, the collection of political precepts describing its cultural code.¹⁹²

Such a Credo gives Americans a passionate allegiance to its heritage and at the same time an internal and outward dynamic, mobility, self confidence, democratic sense of common purpose and self reliance, all of them formulated out of a conviction that America is a covenantal nation of which past lies in the future. Following Tocqueville, that was a purely subversive, nonnegotiable, self-fulfilling prophesy, messianic cultural code, a revolutionary fever making all the conservative aims of the Founding Fathers futile. This patriotic ideology has its own dynamic, living its own life transforming all the twisted, multi layered, diverse currents of history and consciousness into a propelling force making America the most dynamic, democratic and dissolving all hierarchical distinctions civilization in human history. The colonies accepted a lot from the aristocratic stratification of Britain and its imperial constitution. But a sense of individual English liberty secured by the myth of the ancient constitution protected by the concrete institutions of the common law, especially of private property embedded in a medieval doctrine of *meum* and *tuum*, pluralism and religious freedom, once severed from the political ties with Britain and its aristocratic culture, immediately made this set of institutions available to all. It formed the most egalitarian, most materialistic, most individualistic and most evangelical Christian-society in Western history

[...] Democracy became for Americans more than the broader suffrage and the competitive politics of their political system [...] democracy represented a new social order with new kinds of linkages holding people together [...] there was a sudden bursting forth, an explosion – not only of geographical movement but of enterprising energy, of religious passion, and of pecuniary desires [...]. No country in the Western world has ever undergone such massive changes in such a short period of time. The Revolution resembled the breaking of a dam, releasing thousands upon thousands of pent-up pressures [...] [and] nothing contributed more to this explosion of energy than did the idea of equality [...]. Once invoked, the idea of equality could not be stopped, and it tore through American society and culture with awesome power. It became what Herman Melville called ‘the great God absolute! The center and circumference of all democracy.’¹⁹³

Equality meant of course equality of opportunity, individual ability and character to move up the social ladder. It was to guarantee that the permanent differences would not solidify into permanent classes. But in time equality began to mean something more than equality of opportunity. This way it became a radical engine propelling the entire culture, a phenomenon described by Tocqueville. The

¹⁹² H. Keyserling, *America Set Free*, New York 1929, pp. 237–239; S. M. Lipset, *American Exceptionalism Reaffirmed*, [in:] *Is America Different? A New Look at American Exceptionalism*, ed. B. E. Shafer, Oxford 1991, pp. 16–17; idem, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, New York 1963, pp. 78, 341; L. Samson, *Toward a United Front*, New York 1935, pp. 16–17.

¹⁹³ G. S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution: How a Revolution Transformed a Monarchical Society into a Democratic One Unlike Any That Had Ever Existed*, New York 1992, pp. 230, 232.

idea of equality became so potent in America because it was understood in such a way that everyone was really

the same as everyone else, not just in birth, not in talent or property or wealth, and not just in some transcendental religious sense of the equality of all souls. Ordinary Americans came to believe that no one in a basic down-to-earth and day-in-day-out manner was really better than anyone else. That was equality as no other nation has ever quite had it.¹⁹⁴

And it was this equality coupled with the institutions of British origin and the messianic puritan feeling of covenant, secularized and sealed in the Declaration of Independence that made America an engine of ingenuity, courage, enterprising spirit, flexibility and heroism unparalleled in the Western world till today.

Common sense republicanism vs. the rebellious elites against the masses

Culture of equality speeded up by the revolution of 1775 did not spring out of the blue. It was implicit in the puritan covenant thought, it was practiced in the social contract arrangements beginning with the Mayflower Compact of 1620, which created, first a society out of the motley of individuals and then a political union by the sheer will of the colonial elites and the people. It was visible in the republican ideology of the Declaration of Independence and in a revolutionary stress on the circulation of elites and talents, reverence for common sense and a belief in the ability of ordinary men to choose those with character and merit to govern them. Such a philosophy entailed a moral probity of the entire society and its right to make moral and sound judgments on par with the elites of birth or order. In America such a right could play itself in the most democratic way because there were no feudal structures which muted the practical operation of such a right. It was visible in a canonical text of the American Revolution *Letters from an American Farmer* of 1782 by J. Hector St John de Crevecoeur.

Asking himself a question “What is an American?”, he responded that the poor of Europe, who were escaping “the rich, the severity of the laws, with jails and punishments; who owned not a single foot of the extensive surface of this planet”, who were coming to America, as he called it “this great American asylum” did not enter the structures which they left behind on the other side of the Atlantic. In America

every thing has tended to regenerate them; new laws, a new mode of living, a new social system; here they are become men: in Europe they were as so many useless plants, wanting vegetative mould, and refreshing showers; they withered, and they were moved down by want, hunger, and war; but now by the power of transplantation, like all other plants they have taken root and flourished! Formerly they were not numbered in any civil lists of their country [...] here they rank as citizens.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 234.

By what invisible power has this surprising metamorphosis been performed? By that of the laws and that of their industry. The laws, the indulgent laws, protect them as they arrive stamping on them the symbol of adoption; they receive ample rewards for their labors; these accumulated rewards produce them lands; those lands confer on them the title of freemen, and to that title every benefit is affixed which men can possibly require. From whence proceed these laws? From our government. Whence the government? It is derived from the original genius and strong desire of the people ratified and confirmed by the crown. This is the great chain which links us all. What then is the American, this new man? He is either an European, or a descendant of an European, hence the strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country [...]. He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners receives new ones from the new mode of life he embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims, who are carrying along them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigor, and industry which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle [...]. The American ought therefore to love this country much better than wherein either he or his forefathers were born. Here the rewards of his industry follow on the basis of nature, self interest; can it want a stronger allurement? [...] Here religion demands but little of him; a small voluntary salary to a minister, and gratitude to God; can he refuse these? The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labor, he has passed to toils of a very different nature. This is an American.¹⁹⁵

American colonial development, subsequent republicanism and the influence of the British Enlightenment subverted thus this aristocratic and rigid class distinctions between elites and masses both at the level of individual consciousness and social practice. Such distinctions were not recreated, this time at the level of intellectual hierarchy, in political sphere after 1787. A belief that the enlightened, allegedly knowledgeable elite has the right to command those who have not sufficient reason to correctly understand reality was absent in America, a striking contrast with the French revolutionary elites and in general the European elites coming out of the *noblesse oblige* tradition. The European continental conviction that the enlightened elite has the right to dictate the masses who do not possess sufficient reasoning power, how the society, its aims and the individual lives should look like never took hold in America, although there were attempts to do it. The most dramatic example when such an attempt was taken up and failed was the first Federalist government under the new constitution in 1789–1801.¹⁹⁶ It is therefore fair to stress, that the British Enlightenment which formed the dominant philosophical justification of the American experience did not – in contradistinction to the

¹⁹⁵ Ch. Ricks, W. L. Vance, *The Faber Book of America*, London 1992, pp. 241–242.

¹⁹⁶ A. Bryk, *Federaliści u władzy 1789–1801*, [in:] *Historia Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki*, Vol. 2, ed. B. W. Sheehan, I. Wawrzyczek, Warszawa 1995, pp. 63–90. The Enlightened paternalism, although visible in the colonial society, never reasserted itself at the level of popular consciousness, let alone at the level of practical politics. See: G. S. Wood, *The Radicalism...*, pp. 145–168. The similar lack of such a distinction between the elites and the masses was visible in the republican, liberty obsessed, culture of the Commonwealth of Poland–Lithuania, although it was limited to the class of nobility, even if comprising a significant population, approx. 10–12% of all the residents. This consciousness is still manifest in contemporary Poland and a deep suspicion of the top down ways of governing.

French one – trumpet solely the virtue of reason against the recalcitrant matter of politics and societies in which it operated. American elites did not show a paternalistic attitude, largely concealing contempt, towards the lower orders and did not conduct politics, even if benevolent and welfare oriented, in their name. Unlike the continental Enlightenment driven by passion for the abstract, the domain of pure intellectual reason wallowing in search for the ideal, the British and then American Enlightenments stressed not the social virtues of reason, but reasonableness of virtue-like compassion, sympathy and benevolence able to instill in their societies a non-egotistic motive elicited in ordinary members of society. Such virtues were possessed by all, by the elites as well as the common men, to serve long-term goals of patriotism, endurance and self-reliance, without always looking towards the betters who operate the state machinery.

This attitude of paternalism has been visible in the European welfare state which came out of the rational principle of social contract beginning with Hobbes and Locke to John Rawls. Allegedly, the social contract and its corollary welfare state is based on the principle of justice. In fact, it is a form of utilitarian self-rationalization incapable of overcoming a problem of stagnation and constantly putting demands on the state. It is more prone to the dilemma of the free-rider or the so-called prisoner's dilemma syndrome and it constantly confronts a question: "why is it more reasonable to bide by the contract than to pretend to bide by it?"¹⁹⁷ The social contract type of the welfare state is incapable of creating non-egotistic motives in the societies at large, in fact it corrupts them, pretending that it is just. Human emotions are often wiser than reason, 'prejudices' express human moral feelings better than rational systems. Purely rational ideas of justice as devised by the social engineers, bureaucrats of 'goodness' are more prone to corrupt rather than create the humane society. The wheels of justice, as another English thinker of the Enlightenment period, William Blackstone stated, are oiled by emotion, in fact, strictly speaking, only by love. The elimination of the passion-forming process from the bottom up in the autonomous human organizations, can never be substituted by the rational planning of 'elites' who know well what the social life and morality should look like. In his *A Theory of Justice* (1973), a canonical European political theory of justice justifying the welfare state John Rawls tried to explain, as his numerous followers later have done, why people should pursue justice on the basis of a rational, general elitist plan of social behavior. But such a theory is absolutely incapable of persuading people, why they should first care about other people. What is needed are sentiments – moral impulses. William Shakespeare in *King Lear* understood perfectly that love and sympathy are prior to the notions of justice and desert. Without love people break promises to others, since it is a common sense observation that reason can always find ways to justify injustice.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ R. Scruton, *A Political Philosophy...*, s. 39; G. Hardin, *The Tragedy of the Commons*, "Science" 1968, No. 162, pp. 1, 243–248.

¹⁹⁸ F. H. Buckley, *Are Emotions Moral?*, "The New Criterion" 2004, January, p. 31.

This drive for bureaucratic perfection according to the rationally preconceived plans what the society should look like, is the other side of this disguised contempt for the lower orders, their passions and their loves, their loyalties and attachments, the lower orders which are allegedly incapable of governing themselves, the poisoned heritage of the hubris of the European Enlightenment. It is striking how the European Union idea was kidnapped by this utilitarian project as represented by the generation of 1968. What that generation recognized as its major enemy of progress was for instance the nation state and the various attachments which bind an individual to loyalties other than the autonomous, sovereign self. The nation state and the attachments, dubbed usually as ‘authority’, were considered responsible for the calamities – both social and personal – of the past. As a result the whole idea of ‘inclusion’ of everyone in the community of equals, requiring as a first precondition the liberation of everyone from various attachments, creates the society whose only meaningful basis of obligation is the micromanagement of rights between individuals, and the ‘inclusion’ of every minority considered ‘excluded’ within the community of obligations based on a social contract. That is not only self-defeating, since that is the endless game, but it excludes by definition any natural bonds of voluntary obligations which are suspect *ipso facto*, if not based on ‘equality of rights’.¹⁹⁹

American republicanism has been different. Deriving its conceptual framework from the British Enlightenment, and organizing its institutions accordingly, it had no such a high brow attitude full of contempt as shown by the French revolutionary elites towards their own societies, treated collectively as the lower orders. For symbolic in that context Voltaire or Diderot, societies and individual people were incapable to recognize their own interests and understanding of reality. This did not mean that the intellectual classes in Britain and in France did not share the same sentiments, for instance in attacking religion. After all it was Edward Gibbon, remembered mainly for his seminal *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, who wrote the most cynical line of the Enlightenment, characteristic of the majority of all intellectuals at all times:

The various models of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true, by the philosopher as equally false, and by the magistrate as equally useful.²⁰⁰

Here came a hint of utilitarianism, characteristic of the entire British educated class and so visible in Hume and later Bentham and Mill, but nevertheless also a high-brow feeling of disdain towards the prejudices of the lowly classes. In fact the intellectuals question custom everywhere, by definition. They want to alter habits and challenge common sense, thus their hubris is to destroy – for themselves

¹⁹⁹ M. Brachowicz, *Agencja Praw...*; A. Bryk, *Akcja Afirmatywna. Doktryna różnorodności a plemienna koncepcja społeczeństwa liberalnego*, “Krakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe” 2004, No. 2, pp. 32–110; *idem*, *Pole bitwy ideowej*, “Nowe Państwo” 2006, No. 3, pp. 15–17.

²⁰⁰ E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 1, New York 1946, p. 22.

and for others – the established ways of behavior and thought. For every action, an individual reason is thought to be the surest and the only guide for them. Custom, mores, habits, let alone the Bible as a source of action should be rejected. Only utility and choice made in a reasoned way counted.

This was a revolutionary idea, because it prescribed not only the epistemological tools of approaching reality in practice, but in fact it delegitimized all institutions existing so far, as seedbeds of unreason. If the common man considered cultivation of familial morality his goal, the intellectual had other goals, including liberation of human reason from the shackles of the established habits, and also family and the church. For the intellectual, the cultivation of ‘liberation’ of his talent based on reasoned organization of his life, was the preeminent goal, as well as the expressions of his sensibilities, which was the case with a specific ‘artistic genre’ of the intellectuals. This ‘liberation’ and expression form together the contemporary idea of self-fulfillment. The ordinary people have of course an in-built subconscious assumption that what they do is a fulfillment of inherited moral habits having a certain universal validity to make their life happy and full of sense. Their moral code is thus not only ‘good’, but they hope to continue this existence, passing this code in a form of moral education, or a religious belief in a form of a creedal inculcation, to their children. Yet, the intellectuals are also unable to reject all the moral precepts and mores, otherwise a totally ‘liberated’ life would be unbearable and open to brutal force. They do it inadvertently, they prey on it, they do not, imbibe it, let alone try to pass it to others. The consequences to the social institutions of such a frame of mind are profound. The family is instantly defined as a repressive institution, so is the church, so is any system of thought which is not rationally arrived at. Individualism and egalitarianism are to be the *modus operandi* of every member of the family, including a child. The stress is not on moral guidance, but on opportunity and autonomy, fostering sympathy and self-expression, which has a modern tendency to produce self-indulgence, political radicalism and countercultural lifestyles. As a result of such a challenge, the family as well as other autonomous institutions faced a dramatic choice which forms the very essence of moral dispute today: does a good life depend on rights or on virtue and where it can be achieved, where does it come from?²⁰¹ There is a fundamental question here, namely, explaining what in fact justifies ultimately moral rules. What exactly ordinary people mean when they speak of their moral feelings, and what the origins of those feelings are. This effort is a continuation of work began by certain 18th-century English and Scottish thinkers, notably Joseph Butler, Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith.²⁰²

²⁰¹ A. Bryk, *Affirmative Action...* A concept of na „adversary culture” was coined by a prominent liberal literary critic, evolving towards neo-conservatism; L. Trilling in *Beyond Culture*, New York 1965, preface, chapter 1.

²⁰² J. Q. Wilson, *On Moral Sense...*, pp. 217–218.

Intellectuals have a natural tendency to believe in systems of thought rather than habits of ordinary life, which they consider to be just worn out sets of prejudices, ready to be reorganized according to their images of how the rational life should be organized. Intellectuals thus are constantly striving for the complete systems of thought by which they can live, that is, by which they hope to live. History of humanity has been littered with such systems, but the intellectuals try nevertheless and thus are more prone than ordinary people, some of who may be equally cultured, intelligent and knowledgeable as the intellectuals themselves, to create new systems against the ‘ignorant’ multitude. Thus intellectual culture is by definition an adversary culture. That is why, on the one hand the intellectuals are subject to bouts of cynicism and nihilism, knowing that they are in fact unable to construct the system explaining everything, a single ‘Great Theory’, ‘the mother of all systems’, and on the other – they are constantly irritated that the masses do not want to accept the latest project of world salvation. In this sense, the intellectuals have always been prone to create the so-called adversary culture, a culture opposed to wishes, preferences and habits of the majority of the people, which in its radical form meant a constant push to carry to its ultimate conclusion the individualistic tendencies of the western family and other independent autonomous institutions inculcating ‘authoritarian’ habits and virtues. A drive for radical auto creation is thus bound to propel the rational mind of individuals at the expense of the habits and mores inculcated in the autonomous institutions, considered just prejudices. There is no end to this drive, since the total moral auto-creation at every time requires in fact a completely fluid personality, which can never solidify into anything solid, for fear of becoming another prejudiced habit or prejudice which has to be constantly questioned.²⁰³

This is true, that even some of the most radical rationalists of the French Enlightenment, as e.g. Voltaire, believed, that man’s nature was fundamentally moral, that man had “certain inalienable feelings” that constitute “the eternal bonds and first laws of the humanity”,²⁰⁴ and in fact the elites and the masses pursued many of the same activities. But the difference between the masses and the intellectuals is constituted by the fact that the former does it by default, not considering them ‘good’, merely useful, they are living on borrowed capital

a debt they were scarcely aware of in the 18th century, began to worry about in the 19th, and found they could not repay in the 20th.²⁰⁵

If the intellectual class of Enlightenment – and later – has acquired the same habits of thinking, how come there was such a difference between the British and

²⁰³ A. Bryk, *Affirmative Action...*

²⁰⁴ J. Q. Wilson, *On Moral Sense...*, p. 221; and *idem*, *On Character*, Washington DC 1991.

²⁰⁵ G. Weigel, *Enlightenments...*, pp. 155–156; G. Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity...*, pp. 163–168.

the French Enlightenment possible? The reason is that the British intellectuals formed a part of their society, there was never a great stress put on the high status of the sheer intellectual speculation in Britain. This stemmed from the fact that the intellectuals were part of a civil society, part of the commercial, administrative, cultural life in a much wider sense than the French. The latter were alienated, not contributing anything to the society in the practical sense.

However much this aristocratic intellectual attitude was visible among the British intellectuals, they were exactly kept in check by the civil servants attitude, which was characteristic of the *noblesse oblige* classes of Britain, in a much wider sense than the French ones. This is why this abyss between the masses and elites in Britain and America has never turned into a cultural pattern of thinking, as it was the case, for instance, in France. This was the conceptual and practical distinction which has had significant practical, political consequences and makes the difference between the Anglo-Saxon world, especially the most vibrant and dynamic United States, and Europe, clearly visible.

Social virtues in Britain and in America were dependent both on philosophy, organic growth, including religious beliefs and practices. They were part and parcel of both common sense life and practical reason, not only abstract reason of the philosophers. The rational philosophers of the French type were imagining themselves to be creating a more humane world out of the pure speculation with the unabashed elitist contempt for the people they were allegedly trying to educate. They were cut off from practical life, not

personally involved in benevolent enterprises or practical reforms [...]. When reason trumped benevolence, conceptually and practically, the net result was that benevolence itself came to be seen as a weakness-another aspect of infame to be eradicated.²⁰⁶

American elites have never had such a paternalistic attitude towards their citizens and shared a conviction that the state is the external force. The state's task was to enable the individuals to 'pursue happiness', as the Declaration of Independence declared not to decree how it was going to be realized according to rational models executed towards pliant citizens, killing their initiative, teaching them passivity, igniting at the same time a demanding attitude towards the state and the community.

The radical heirs of the Jacobin tradition took over an aristocratic feeling of superiority, and from the inherited right they converted it to the right of intellectual superiority, which has had lasting consequences as far as the reforms of the society and the political style in Europe are concerned, beginning with 1789 and reaching to the European Union. The new mandarins have always insisted that it is they who

speak for the wretched of the earth. In eighteenth-century France they claimed to speak for the people and the general will. In the nineteenth century they said they represented the working classes against their capitalist exploiters. In our own time, they have claimed to be on the side of blacks,

²⁰⁶ K. Windshuttle, *Which Enlightenment?...*, p. 66.

women, gays, indigenes, refugees, and anyone else they define as the victims of discrimination and oppression.²⁰⁷

The French philosophers had this intellectual aristocracy's inbred hostility towards lower orders, thinking that the chasm between social classes was caused not only by the difference of material wealth, but first of all ignorance and superstition, of which a religious faith was the main culprit. This is why they despised Christianity, since it was the core value system of the lower masses. An editor of *Encyclopedie*, Denis Diderot stated, that the common people had no role to play in the Age of Reason:

The general mass of men are not so made that they can either promote or understand this forward march of the human spirit [...] the common people are incredibly stupid,

he said and considered them little more than beasts as they

distrust the judgment of the multitude in matters of reasoning and philosophy; its voice is that of wickedness, stupidity, inhumanity, unreason, and prejudice [...]. Distrust it in matters of morality; it is not capable of strong and generous actions [...] heroism is practically folly in their eyes [...] [they are] too idiotic – bestial – too miserable, and too busy” to enlighten themselves.²⁰⁸

The common people were stupid, argued Diderot, because they were in bondage of religion and the church, and the progress of Enlightenment would liberate them from that horrid state of ignorance and false consciousness. Similarly, Voltaire thought that the lower classes lacked the intellect required to reason. Because of this, they had to be locked in superstition and their beastly nature could be only kept in check by religion and its rituals, sanctifying in turn and strengthening further that superstition. The people could not be educated because to be like that you had to possess an Enlightened mind, and they were unenlightened. They were unenlightened because they did not have the ability to reason properly, to be capable to reason the way the *philosophes* did. This kind of reason was the essence of the Enlightenment according to the *philosophes*. People were incapable of such a reason because they were mired in the prejudices and superstitions of religion, which prevented them from gaining a proper insight into the essence of reality. It is here, that the French Enlightenment elevated secular abstract reason to the only legitimate way of gaining an insight into human condition. Not only into the natural world which the scientific reason had been doing for a while, but into the moral world as well, in other words into the meaning of life. By doing that it declared by faith that religion was totally incapable of providing anything of the sort, it was simply a superstition. The religious language was thus totally delegitimized in the moral sphere. It was termed not as

²⁰⁷ G. Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity...*, p. 154.

²⁰⁸ For a good analysis of this frantic search for a new order, see: S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision-Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*, Boston 1960, p. 9, and the chapters on Machiavelli and Hobbes.

an alternative way of gaining an access to the human condition but recognized as an obstacle to it. Religious language, in this case the Biblical language, was nullified as a legitimate presence in culture, as a superstitious pastime at most, a danger preventing an enlightened mind to grasp the essence of life. This was a radical, totalitarian endeavor, taken up in the name of ideological first principles and imposed as the new paradigm of human thinking, the opening through which the European intellectual class deemed itself the masters of the universe. And since to be such masters one had to possess an enlightened mind, which only the chosen could have, the masses were permanently locked in the unenlightened state of being, incapable on their own to gain a proper and truly right insight into the correct understanding of being. Thus their religion was for the time being a crippled substitute. Yet, since it was a dangerous, pernicious superstition for the well-being of society, and for this reason destructive – it had to be destroyed as quickly as possible, so the superstitious masses could be led by the enlightened intellectuals towards the glorious future. And they could not be allowed to stay in this state of harmful ignorance, because they had a right to be enlightened.

This was a good which should be distributed to all, otherwise the world would for ever be kept in the state of un-Enlightenment: in the state of Darkness. This Darkness was political, economic, social – the very ancient regime and Christianitas, but at the same time was philosophical and moral – staying in a frame of mind which perpetuated this basic social and political condition of discrimination, perpetuating a state of permanent error and sliding towards decadence. Such a diagnosis provided the intellectuals and the sophisticated with the justification, of why they held the preeminent position on the road to this new enlightened society. They were immediately the leaders of the stupid masses on the way to the glorious future. At the same time, however, this placed the intellectuals immediately in the position of advisers to the Prince. They were to be the main consultants on how the power was going to be used, and towards which ends. Power was defined by the intellectuals as an instrument of ideology, not of order, as a tool to be used for aims defined by them and considered a constant tool of social engineering until the proper enlightened type of society would eventually be created. This was a massive declaration of war on everything that Western culture so far created, a glorious call to arms for a perpetual fight, the eternal *la lotta continua* to reform this corrupted world in the name of the enlightened rational mind. It was, however, also a principled harking back to some classicist currents and a practical application of the modern conception of reason as put forth earlier by Thomas Hobbes. In this sense it was – it had to be – the modernity's declaration of war against Christianity.

Since the Renaissance, modernity was fascinated with the state, individualism, science and reason behind it and decadence awaiting the West, since the world which emerged from Christianitas was entering a phase of utter unpredictability and chaos. Machiavelli was the first to show, with his focus on the Roman Republic, that the state was an agent, which had to deal with a question of decadence

and corruption, and power should be applied to stem it. Montaigne gave rise to a concept of modern individualism, although he used it more as a refuge, than a basis of society's reordering. Disintegration of Christianitas, brutal commerce as a form of decadence, cynicism of the religious wars, put a question of prevention of decadence and individual at the same time, all that done in the conditions of the waning of the organic medieval world.²⁰⁹ There was a call to action and a yearning for a mover of the human universe which was disintegrating. There were two candidates for the latter, the scientific reason as applied to reality, and the state as the user of this rationality. There was also an implicit need for intellectuals, the masters of the new reason and also a realization that decadence and a call for action made the Christian language and conceptual universe obsolete. The world of people understood as pilgrims in this fallen world, never to be perfected, just temporarily, was gone. The reference to the classical antiquity was very much visible in the Enlightenment thinking, with its concept of decadence derived from the cyclical theories of the Greeks and Romans. This appealed to the Europeans, mainly the

²⁰⁹ The idea of progress is not of course a uniquely modern idea and its rise is not the consequence of secularism understood as Western's thought liberation from Christian theology. The idea originated in classical Greece and was fully developed in Christian theology and philosophy of history. Yet the modern idea of progress liberated from Christianity, and tied to the purely rational mind exposed itself to a grave danger. The Christian idea was tied to the progress of knowledge as in the works of the Church fathers, for instance Tertulian, Eusebius and Saint Augustine, but was also indispensable to the grand task of spiritual and moral progress in time, sacred history as understood by the Jewish conception of sacred history. History could not have been other than it actually was, and achieving natural growth through time at the same time. Yet all the ideas involved the clear philosophy of progress, slow, gradual and continued advance through time of all mankind, towards the higher stages of development, where necessity, direction and purpose were tied together, part and parcel of Christian philosophy of history. Providence was an indispensable part of it. With modernity, Providence disappeared, but the ideas of human advancement – this time directed not by theological myth, but by rational aim defined out of human history – was retained. The idea of progress, from the time immemorial safely tied to myth, ritual, and religion was let loose, but this time it was tied to history and science without any safety valve which made the non-attainment of progressive aims bearable. Progress was rational, that is, it was immediately attainable. If it was not attainable yet, its time was coming and it was within rational power of human mind to achieve it at last. The end point of progress was always in the future of history, but without the anchor in the sky. The result could only be a growing resentment and the ever increasing efforts to speed it up. See: R. Nisbet, *Prejudices: A Philosophical Dictionary*, Cambridge Mass. 1980, pp. 238–243; also his, *History of the Idea of Progress*, New York 1980. With this decoupling, came another feeling of 'homelessness'. Christianity made cosmic 'homelessness' bearable. At the same time it rooted the individual in the progress in time as a task never to be finished, and never to be within the human powers to define in advance, in terms of 'totality'. Progress was metaphysically meaningful and at the same time limited, there was no rushing up to its completion. The rejection of Christianity by the modern rational mind has not yet removed the yearning for religious explanation of meaning, which had to be provided this time by history, rationality and political power of transformation. Modernity has not changed the finitude, fragility and mortality, it simply made an operation of placing its fulfillment in the hands not of religion but in the hands of progressives, intellectuals and power apparatchiks trying to tie this metaphysical yearning to history and political transformation. The profound metaphysical anguish was to be alleviated by the new idea which was to replace religion, progress understood as equality. *La lotta continua* with every conceivable inequality understood as non-discrimination was its name, and a diagnosis of the unequal reality became to be defined both by the rational mind as well as the incessant resentment fuelling it. Democracy was the operational code word for it and the idea of the society based on authority, any authority, was gone. The organic society gave way to a society of fever and drive for equality of all against all. On the idea of metaphysical homelessness, see: P. L. Berger, B. Berger, H. Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*, New York 1973, pp. 184–187; on the idea of equality and resentment as tied to the idea of progress, see: R. Nisbet, *Twilight of Authority*, Indianapolis 1975, pp. 180–187.

intellectual classes, the growing caste of advisers to the Prince, in the form of lawyers, bureaucrats, thinkers, academics, lawyers. They began to lead a double life from the time of the Renaissance, spiritual and temporal, with the learning focused on goals to be achieved irrespective of the eternal values of Christianity. They were stoic and epicurean in morality rather than evangelical, republican in politics, and classical in their tastes.

This approach in the form of the enlightened rationalism was subversive to established Christian morality, let alone monarchies. It became slowly the very essence of elitist thinking, potent and self-confident, producing innumerable books, Masonic lodges, academies and salons, and created a vibrant intellectual rationalist milieu essentially against the established order. There was one additional belief growing, that this world was corrupt, that it was prone to false consciousness and error and that they – the intellectuals – possessed the truth out of the intellectual arrogance of science, this time extended to every aspect of human life, including the very definition what was its essence and meaning. They might have not known where they were going, except that it was a fuzzy, future ideal society cleaned of all superstition and prejudice. The very error of human existence was to be defeated by means of rationalism. This was preciously little in terms of guidance where to go, but the intellectuals knew what they were against, and where this superstition and prejudice reigned. In politics, it was an absolute monarchy, in morality it was Christianity. The ultimate epistemology and ontology of this intellectual endeavor was rooted solely in rationalism. Christian epistemology and ontology with its allegedly superstitious, mythical language was considered to be a lethal obstacle to it. The idea of progress was created in every aspect of human life, and tied to rationalism declared to be a means towards achieving the reign of truth.²¹⁰ This way, Enlightenment rationalism was

a remarkable, and remarkably intolerant, tradition of thought because it was a combination of classical and modern elements. It combined two famous conceptions of reason. The first was the classical reason which, after the manner of Plato, was a faculty deemed capable of discovering the only right and natural order of human life. The second was the modern conception of reason as a limited instrument for exploring an alien world, and in particular, for finding means for the attaining of whatever ends and passions might suggest. This was the type of reason described by Hobbes as a scout to spy out the land, and by Hume as a slave of the passions. From the first conception of reason, the revolutionaries of the Enlightenment derived a total certainty about their opinions; from the second, they derived a propensity to believe that technology, including the technologies of government and education, can solve all problems. The shock, as well as the excitement, generated by the French revolution corresponded to the first unveiling of what this combination might achieve.²¹¹

This approach to reality was purely ideological. At its center stood a belief removed from Christian theology, and put entirely into society and history, that evils of life were not part of human condition per se: something that Christianity

²¹⁰ K. Minogue, *Alien Powers: The Pure Theory of Ideology*, New Brunswick 2007, p. 33.

²¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

considered its core teaching of the original sin beyond the human power to change. The evils were not even a set of problems with which the best way to cope with was politics through an adjustment of different concepts of life in their full richness.

The evils were part of

a single system of dehumanization which determines everything that happens, and which cannot be changed except by a complete transformation.²¹²

The French Enlightenment elites marketed this idea into European culture. It was an ideology of the new class of intellectuals, convinced that they possess the truth, an insight into the laws of history and society due to their intellectual superiority. At the same time, no one else, let alone the masses possessed it, which constituted a kind of methodological alienation, not only from the Establishment, which they wanted to take over and become one, but from other people, or in wit from life as such. It was this alienation and superiority which gave the *philosophes*, then and now, a badge of sophistication and insight, being at the same time a distinguishing sign of moral elevation and superiority. The carriers of such sophistication, so they thought, were not only intelligent and knowledgeable about everything, they became, because of it, good, moral people. They were good and moral in a way unavailable to those less learned, less aware and less sophisticated, towards whom only a disdainful paternalism, at most – a benign one – can be shown. This therapeutic alienation of the intellectuals allows no qualms whatsoever concerning the rock-hard conviction, that people are stupid and that their sentiments, their loves, their beliefs are just a nuisance to be overcome for their good on the road to the glorious future.²¹³ Something which began as a necessary correction to the limitations of the absolutist society turned into the monistic program of transformation, a holistic approach, where nothing could be left beyond the reach of the intellectuals craving for power, to achieve implementation of their vision of the only correct reality.

Religion, mainly Christianity, was in such a view not only a competitor in terms of the vision of reality, but an evil and harmful competitor, a scandal to be liquidated as quickly as possible. The bearers of such a Christian vision were thus not only wallowing in harmful superstition, incapable of overcoming this shortcoming, because of the lack of intelligence and knowledge. They were at the same time morally bad and corrupted, to be dealt with alacrity and transformed, or left to their station and led. For such a reason religion, demanded Voltaire,

must be destroyed among respectable people and left to the canaille large and small, for whom it was made [...]. Every sensible man, every honorable man, must hold the Christian sect in horror [...].

²¹² I owe an expression “therapeutic alienation” to John McWhorter who used it in “American without Americanness”, paper delivered at the Bradley Symposium “Who are we Today?: American Character and Identity in the 21st Century”, May 3, 2007, Washington D.C.

²¹³ G. Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity...*, pp. 154–155.

Every sensible man and every honorable man” who were not the common people. The latter could be neither sensible or honorable because they were brainwashed by Christianity. Diderot thought of the lower orders with utmost contempt, calling them ‘imbeciles’ in matters of religion, too idiotic – bestial – too miserable, and too busy, the quantity of the canaille is just about always the same.

In his famous witticism Voltaire yet treated religion, that is Christianity as a useful superstition, which kept the lower orders docile:

I want my lawyer, my tailor, my servants, even my wife to believe in God, because it means that I shall be cheated and robbed and cuckolded less often [...]. If God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him.²¹⁴

The philosophers’ enmity towards Christianity and their support at the same time for its social utility, has often been treated as a paradox, a contradiction in their thought, an outcome, allegedly, of their realization that it was impossible to create an organic, viable conception of the society on their secular, deistic or overtly atheistic beliefs.²¹⁵ But this description of the actual French society was for the *philosophes* also a normative statement. The society was not only divided, the chasm between the common people and the enlightened philosophers being great. This situation was as it should be, a permanent division between the better and the lower, the former leading the first to the enlightened future. The French philosophers had no conceptual – let alone practical – means to bridge the gap, since they thought it desirable, until the day comes when they announce that the society will have already been properly constructed.

This difference of approach towards the division between the people and the elites was visible, in a striking contrast, in the American Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights on the one hand, and the French Declaration of the Rights of Men and Citizen on the other. The Americans, exhibiting a deep suspicion of any power, looked at the rights of men not as a foundation on which one builds a perfect system of governance and society, but as a barrier which should guard the people against the abuses of power. Moreover, the source of such rights,

²¹⁴ See for instance: R. I. Boss, *The Development of Social Religion: A Contradiction of French Free Thought*, “Journal of the History of Ideas” 1973, October–December, p. 577.

²¹⁵ This is the greatest shortcoming of the modern human rights project, which tries to define human dignity as the basis for these rights, for instance in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. For a human right to be inviolable it must have the source of its dignity beyond human reach. It seems, that without religious sources of such a grounding the very aim of human rights, their inviolability in relation to one’s inherent freedom and autonomy is impossible. Thus “human being is free and independent from any power only then, when his autonomy comes from outside of him. Is free [...] if this who he is, does not come from others, is not a picture created by the public, an element of common memory. Otherwise for a human being to exist [as an individual] one has to differ, has to strive to be noticed, to be remembered, impressed in memory. In such a case gestures, rebellions [also ubiquitous exhibitionism – author’s note] are just an instrument by means of which we relate to others. If we are not persons [...] we are the slaves of the present time, the public, fashion. Where there is no source of existence outside us, excluded from the world of opinions, we are there just to the extent, that we are noticed. If individuality is not rooted in eternity [...] it is an illusion”. P. Lisicki, *Nie-ludzki Bóg*, Warszawa 1995, p. 191. On the impossibility of establishing the inviolable basis of human rights without religious justification, see also: M. J. Perry, *Toward a Theory of Human Rights...*, esp. pp. 7–13, 141–143.

as clearly stated in the Declaration of Independence, was natural law and God. The message was clear. The federal government was only to enable the civil society to act as it existed and according to the tested rules and institutions. As a consequence, the most important were the institutional remedies, clear statements of concrete rights, so the federal power, including the judges, would have difficulties enlarging them. In the French Declaration, the source was the sovereign people and the aim of the revolution was to create the new society and destroy the old one, a colossal act of social engineering according to the abstract ideas, in the citizens' name, and for their own good. Listing the rights and formally guaranteeing them, the French Declaration did not, in fact, guarantee them. It gave the legislative enactments the ultimate right to define the real rights of man and citizen, their boundaries, the ways in which they could be executed and the inception time of their operation. The French sovereign, that is the theoretical, abstract 'people', was to be the only source of rights and the only interpreter of them, and the sovereign could do this only after the perfect society had been established. The American Declaration of Independence rooted the human rights not in the people's will, but in the will of God the Creator. Thus, for instance, neither The Declaration of Independence nor the Constitution were looked upon as dangerous by Catholics in a totally Protestant society. The Creator created people equal and free, and no one could take this away from them. For the French, people were born free because this was declared by reason and the people willed it this way. Man himself sent a message that people were free and equal, equipped with consciousness and intelligence, having an obligation to be brothers to each other. The people conferred on themselves prerogatives, from which they could also arbitrarily exempt themselves. There was absolutely no ontological basis of such rights.²¹⁶

It is here, that Rousseau's General Will entered. Even Rousseau's General Will was a means of subordinating the lower orders to the general framework of thought, which was to be defined by those who know better. Rousseau's paradox was, that he rejected the society, its traditions, customs, mores – in short culture, so as to discover the true innocence of each individual, who in turn would form a social contract with other individuals of perfectly equal people-citizens, expressing their individual free choice. Such a contract would have a redemptive force, overcoming for good human alienation of each individual and at the same time of the society at large, creating a 'civil religion', imposing on citizens the unmediated relation between them. They were not to be burdened by any social institution, tradition, custom, thought. Unmediated relation which the good heart in every human being requires.²¹⁷ Two ideas of Rousseau's democratization were correspond-

²¹⁶ This logic is analyzed in an excellent work by J. Staroński, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Przejrzystość i przeszkoda*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 33–46; R. Scruton, *Rousseau and the Origins of Liberalism*, [in:] *The Betrayal of Liberalism: How the Disciples of Freedom and Equality Helped Foster the Illiberal Politics of Coercion and Control*, ed. H. Kramer, R. Kimball, I. R. Dee, Chicago 1999, pp. 19–42.

²¹⁷ L. Kołakowski, *The Main Currents of Marxism*, Vol. 1, Oxford 1977.

ing here to this totalitarian frame of mind of the *philosophes*. The General Will, a shorthand for democratization, was the sine qua non condition of a legitimate society and political order. Every power which was not 'democratic' was by definition illegitimate, beginning with the state machinery and ending with family relations. Thus, since 1789 the logic of democratization of everything at any cost, a precondition of justice, was let loose in Europe, destroying slowly another competing idea of authority in any sphere of life, including family or creedal organizations, as e.g. the Catholic Church. At the same time this lack of democratization was constantly blamed for the society's evils. Authority, any authority, was to be responsible for the individual's inability to achieve autonomy, a state of innocent nature, a precondition of good life which could then be construed at will. But to achieve this stage a guidance was, is, and will be constantly needed, and this guidance will be provided by the enlightened. They will only know when and if, this lack of authority will be already perfect, so the General Will might finally be automatic, and the wise and knowledgeable decide to let the patronized stock to be free.

There is a lethal paradox here. It has played itself repeatedly in the West's history in the redemptive thought of philosophers who followed Rousseau, for instance Fichte, Hegel, Marx, Lenin, Sartre and in some of the currents of the contemporary liberal-left through.²¹⁸ If the society was to be blamed for evil deeds of the people, if its institutions, its culture, its morality and mores were to blame – in other words, if everything what human civilization in all its plurality and richness created was defined *a priori* as an enemy to be destroyed, then two conclusions followed. The punishing of wrongdoers was senseless, because they were the victims of society, thus the very idea of moral education of the people ceased to have any real sense. The reform of the institutions should thus be the major object of human activity and once that aim has been accomplished the moral wrongdoings automatically cease, since the perfect uncontaminated goodness of man reasserts itself. Moreover, we cannot create a good society and a good individual until the destruction of the existing society has been completed. The war on institutions and culture as such must be thus incessant. But the ignorant people are incapable of doing that, moreover, they fiercely resist such an operation and fight against it. For this reason, the enlightened elite must lead them to that glorious future and crush any resistance encountered by the ignorant multitude. Only when such a final point of destruction will have been achieved the elite might relinquish its hold on conceptual and political instruments of their power. There is of course another paradox here. The reality can never approach such a utopian point, that is why there will always be a continuous need to fight with recalcitrant society and the people as such. The more the traditional society has been reformed, the more need there is for more reforms, according to the rationalist schemes of the enlightened elite. This was the mental source of both Stalin's adage that the class war intensified, even as the enemies of socialism were being systematically defeated. This is the mental source of the

²¹⁸ A. Bryk, *Akcja Afirmatywna...*, pp. 47–87.

contemporary liberal-left war campaigns against all forms of ‘discrimination’ and ‘exclusion’ which can never stop, should intensify and will do so.²¹⁹

The attitude of the French *philosophes* of the 18th century was, of course, conditioned by the political, social servitude and degradation of the lower classes in pre-revolutionary France or continental Europe, something which later prompted Marx to remark in the same vein about peasants as ‘the sack of potatoes’. But such a contempt was combined with and strengthened by the pure speculative mind. It bred in due course a genocidal fruit in European history since it gave rise to the one hideous idea of modernity. It was a conviction that there were disposable people, people whose existence hindered progress and whose liquidation was a precondition for creating the good, finally perfect society. Its practical application was already visible in the Vendée genocide in 1794, but that genocide which was to dispose of recalcitrant “Catholic idiots” resisting the march of revolutionary progress was not an exception, it was an icy portent of what was to come in the 20th century.²²⁰

The hubris of rational mind could wreck havoc, also because the French revolutionary intellectuals experienced an utter alienation from the ordinary activities of life, showed a conspicuous lack of responsibility and attachment to anything other than their own conceit of being superior by the very fact of being just intelligent in the narrow speculative way, the first modern instance of ‘learned stupidity’. Their contempt was in fact the other side of a hatred of life as such. It exhibited also their corresponding urge that – because they were unable to participate in real life – the best way to gain control over it was to destroy it, a common disease of the intellectual class in modernity, so perfectly analyzed by Fyodor Dostoevsky in *The Possessed*, best expressed in Verkhovensky’s monologues. Helplessness and insignificance bred dreams of superhuman status, in which power was to be used for their own elevation to the positions of society’s masters over the idiots, to breach finally from the incurable and impossible to bear alienation from the real life, its attachments, loves, responsibilities, and finally from the very drudgery of day-to-day existence, which helped to reconcile oneself with the intractability of human existence. The rejection of this humble lesson brings either despair and suicide, or dreams of total control and destruction, again well captured by Dostoevsky’s twin protagonists: Verkhovensky and Stavrogin.

The United States never had, until the 1960s, such a temptation on the part of its elites. There was no radical fissure between the higher and lower ranks. The difference was never thought of as fixed, not considered to be insurmountable. The

²¹⁹ The not so subtle scapegoating of religion, mainly Christianity, for the 20th century genocides rooted in the allegedly intolerant frame of mind extending to Inquisition, is a common game of many contemporary liberal-left intellectuals, kind of criminalization by association. To which one of the liberal scholars responded “It’s a simple fact [...] that contrary to the current scapegoating of religion, more people were slaughtered during the 20th c. under secularist regimes, led by secularist intellectuals, and in the name of secularist ideologies, than in all the religious persecutions in Western history”, O. Guinness, *On Faith*, “Wilson Quarterly” 2005, Spring, p. 17.

²²⁰ G. Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity...*, p. 156.

British tradition appropriated in America was characterized by the relative equality, prosperity and democracy of manners combined with religious practices recognized as essential part both of prosperity and liberty. It made Americans impervious to attempts of total transformation of the existing society and kept intellectual elites firmly an organic part of the people as such. There was a chasm between the lower orders and the elites but it did not even remotely correspond to the European experience. The practical operation of colonial society excluded that. The British tradition ensured, that whatever the social chasm there was, it was

bridged by the moral sense and common sense that were presumed to be innate in all people, in the lower classes as well as the upper.

This prevented the elites from developing the burning feeling of contempt and impatience towards the lesser orders who were never considered less wise, merely less educated, education and speculative intelligence never equated with any moral superiority over practical intelligence and wisdom. The French philosophers, in turn allowed to the common people

neither a moral sense nor a common sense that might approximate reason, consigned them, in effect, to a state of nature, [but this time] a brutalized Hobbesian, not a benign Rousseauian, state of nature, where they could be controlled and pacified only by the sanctions and strictures of religion.²²¹

Thus religion, mainly Christianity, was never in the *philosophes'* schemes part and parcel of a free, modern mind and society, a legitimate ingredient of moral, social and political order, a meaningful ordering of finite human existence, to be protected as a treasure without which chaos and human anomie in general, not just among the lower brutes, would befall the society. Religion was treated by the French *philosophes*, as a province of the lower brutes kept on a leash, at best their necessary bridge to the better world, or at worst, as a redundant superstition to be pushed back into purely private realm of magic, never to be allowed in the public forum.

²²¹ With hostility to Christianity, the liberal-left elites are not only flogging a dead horse today. They exhibit the last 'respectable' prejudice of the progressive mind: an instance of secular fanaticism. A deeper problem is involved here. It is a question, whether modernity accepts that nature has any moral purpose at all, or whether what there is in nature, is just an auto-creation of autonomous self. If modernity with its attitude towards nature is anti-teleological, then hostility towards the Catholic Church and its theological engagement in the world, as manifested during the discussions about the preamble to the European Treaty, as well as in the European Parliament's refusal to award due place to Buttiglione's natural law argument, is natural and taken for granted. Since "as long as a teleological conception of nature is in place, there remains the possibility that the Church can engage that account of nature dialectically. If nature points us towards the divine, then theology can remain a part of rational public discourse. If however, nature does not point at all, or points in multiple, incompatible directions, all of which refer back to the whims of our desires, then theology becomes just an opinion among many, one rather peculiar way of satisfying natural cravings." T. S. Hibbs, *Modern Times*, "First Things" 2007, February, pp. 47–48. The latter point of view is put forth by the contemporary atheistic evolutionists or postmodernist thinkers as e.g. Richard Rorty. See: *How Richard Rorty Found Religion...* On a usefulness and validity of theological biblical arguments for contemporary moral discussion and their indispensability see: L. R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom. Reading Genesis*, Chicago 2004; also his, *Defending Human Dignity*, "Commentary" 2007, December, pp. 53–61; D. Berlinski, *The God of the Gaps*, "Commentary" 2008, April, pp. 33–41.

In either case, religion belonged to that contemptible mass of ignorant and stupid, but was considered to be a laughable superstition among the enlightened. However that feeling constituted a rationalization of the earthly fight for power between the secular state and the church, it has remained an indispensable part of the liberal and leftist elites dominant thinking in Europe, long after Christianity ceased to be a viable competitor for the secularist state.²²²

In addition, the American intellectuals were practical people who in turn were never allowed to have a special, superior status by means of their intellect. Not only the British tradition bore it ill. Religious pluralism and protestant individualism contributed to such a historic suspicion towards the alienated elites. It was because of such combination of republican social equality of British Enlightenment, rooted in the common and moral sense belonging to all, and the lack of moral differentiation between the masses and elites, which formed the cultural code of the society. Protestant individualism made everyone equal in the eyes of God through epistemology of *sola scriptura*, causing democratization of the religious impulse. Such a convergence was the beginning of an egalitarian, participating, optimistic, and lurched towards the future consciousness of the entire society. Together with the Enlightenment ideas and the protestant egalitarian axiom that even the most unschooled could be a part of society, this consciousness formed modern America. It created a nation that was the most equal in terms of non-acceptance of any social limits, impatient, prone to experimentation and most eschatological in history, with the democratic education in practice belonging to all, and the innate feeling that everyone was capable of being a master of his own fate without the guidance of the betters.²²³

That this American and British relationship between the elites and the masses was different, was of course connected also with the material well-being of the American masses. The poverty gap was in the 18th century not as big and as fixed as in Europe. In Britain it could be also big but not as fixed. The social differences were smaller. England was the prime example of a flexible society exchanging people between the estates already in the medieval times. True, the aristocratic sense of disdain was not lacked there, but the whole social structure was more compact. The existing mental bridge between the poor and the rich, the higher and the lower, the more intelligent, and the less intelligent, formed by the moral sense and the common sense the Scottish Enlightenment attributed to all individuals, was part of the social ethic and intellectual culture. Everyone, whether they were members of the lower or higher classes shared common humanity and a common fund of moral and social obligations. It was this social ethos which formed the common bond out of different people in the English speaking world, whether it was Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, secular philosophers, religious revivalists, bishops of the Church of England or preachers of

²²² See: R. E. Shalhope, *The Roots of Democracy: American Thought and Culture 1760–1800*, Boston 1990, pp. 139–165; G. S. Wood, *The Radicalism...*, pp. 271–287..

²²³ J. P. O'Leary, *The Pursuit of Equality in American History*, Berkeley 1978, pp. 146–147.

other denominations. There were many excluded in England, to name just industrial workers at the beginning, or the Catholics until fairly recently, but the political elites step by step included them into the common bond of Victorian obligation.

In America, the social ethos combined with the religious and relative equal colonial practice formed from bottom up, was inimical to a feeling both of helplessness and paternalism. Opportunities were always understood more in terms of their individual utility, not in comparison to others. This outlook has prevented making the envy the operating principle of American consciousness or politics. "Create for us an equal society" was never the cry of reformers and revolutionaries in America. It was "let us join the table" that was their rallying cry and guarantee of the equal opportunity. The American notion of equality was without doubt understood as the equality of opportunity but always subservient to the pluralistic, not barely economic understanding of that opportunity. What one of the historians of American equality stated in connection with the Jackson's Age may be applied to the entire American experience. The idea of equality of opportunity, the unifying idea of the American cultural ethos, of which the political equivalent was the concept of equal citizenship, was the idea which, that is true, always

exulted in a higher proportion of rhetoric than practical meaning. [But] The social function of the rhetoric was to give hope, thus drawing off discontent even among those for whom the doors would never open. [Yet] opportunities did not have to be equal in order to be real, however; whenever business or farming or the professions were reasonably open to talent, and where people's energies and abilities were engaged with some degree of satisfaction, the notion of equality was merely an adornment to their conception of opportunity. It neither described it accurately, nor furnished them with causes of discontent. But the national belief in opportunity, and the rhetoric of equality, impaled a distinctive flavor to the American system of incentives, and bestowed an exceptional touch of moral authority on the force of liberated individuality – at first deplored but later exalted under the name of individualism.²²⁴

True, American individualism has always been haunted by a subconscious fear of failure, by the horror of insignificance in the face of modernity, and the gnawing feeling in the back of consciousness, that life is beyond control. But the hope has never, despite changes, been entirely placed in the hands of politics understood as the state operated by 'experts', by the elites who should reorder society from bottom down. The American sense of individualism, rooted in voluntary associations, basic, common decency, gentle populism and religiosity has always had a shadow of anarchical liberty lurking behind, liberty being the most cherished value. For this very reason challenges have been met face to face from bottom up, by communal experience of self-organization, a real subsidiary practice, in Europe used only more and more as the fig leaf of bureaucratic intrusion. Americans hate

²²⁴ *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, New York 1995, p. 5–6; see also: J. Beer, *On Christopher Lasch*, "The Modern Age" 2005, Fall, p. 330. The American elites, mainly media and academic ones, in the wake of the 1960s revolution and influenced by, this time, modern 1968 philosophers, acquired a distinctly European pattern of patronizing disdain.

politicians, but they hate the ‘know better’ elites and experts even more, whether the latter deal with politics or education of their children. Their heterogeneous conservative movement in the latter half of the 20th century was a testimony to it. It was a rebellion named by Christopher Lasch, once radical and a cultural conservative by the end of his life, a rebellion against ‘The Revolt of the Elites’ against their own societies. Using the phrase in the title of his book, Lasch meant several inter-relating developments by the term ‘revolt of the elites’. First of all, it was the initial definition of the American society by such ‘progressive’ elites as in need of instant and constant reforming from the top down by those who know better. Secondly, it was the corresponding feeling of hatred and despise towards the same society for not conforming to the elites’ image, what it meant to be modern. Lasch writes:

The new elites are in revolt against ‘Middle America’, imagined them to be technologically backward, politically reactionary, repressive in its sexual morality, middlebrow in tastes, smug and complacent, dull and dowdy”.²²⁵

kind of fundamental, unheard of so far, cultural detachment, both physically and ideologically from common men and women.

Resistance to this type of social engineering is enormous, and culturally Americans do not bear it well. There is a fierce, populist resistance, democratic and anti-liberal in the French Enlightenment tradition, against depoliticization of politics and a drift liberal towards smug social engineering of the intellectual bureaucrats who know best, what the direction of history is. This depoliticization is still in its initial place in America, but very much is the *modus operandi* of the European Union project. Pierre Manent locates this depoliticization in the modernity’s promise of liberation from all sources of obligation extrinsic to the human will. Kant termed this independence ‘autonomy’, the capacity to give oneself the law and thus to be liberated from heteronomy. Contemporary politics is increasingly characterized by that tendency and the European Union is the example of this. Democratic process in such a system is purified of any obstacles and ties coming from history, place, language, including memory itself. These were the features of politics which have traditionally reflected political process and richness of life since antiquity and came up with the idea of democracy as a form of government. Walker Percy, an American writer of the South, called this modern heresy angelism, which he understood as a denial of our bodily nature and a hubris of utopian life. For Manent, modern state is increasingly moving towards administration, a world beyond politics, despite the ideological obsession of public policy with tolerance, diversity, identity. The European, post-1968 separation of politics from national politics, the people with certain attachments and loyalty to a nation and culture which it creates and sustains, testifies to that. Americans, still in contrast with Europe, identify their own social and political order more with populist democracy and consider it the univer-

²²⁵ R. Hittinger, *Dissecting a Democratic Illusion*, “The Intercollegiate Review” 2006, Fall, p. 53.

sal model. The new Europe tries to be apolitical, transcending the nationality and politics opting for pure democracy free of any attachments and loyalties. This is paradoxical since that provides no basis for any geographical or cultural definition of Europe. Depoliticization is caused by three developments, great ‘emancipations’: of commerce, of right – which allow judges to rule directly in the name of humanity, and of morality – detached from its social framework:

Commerce, right, morality: these are the three systems, the three empires that promise the exit from the political. Each in its own form: commerce, according to the realism, the prosaic character of interests rightly understood; right, according to the intellectual coherence of a network of rights rigorously deduced from individual autonomy; and finally, morality, according to the sublime aim of pure human dignity to which one is joined by the purely spiritual sentiment of respect.²²⁶

One does not need here a political order, the compromise world of political action where deals are struck and consensus achieved within a national community is redundant, the participation and loyalty which bring a sense of belonging, for instance in cultural memory is absent. These three emancipations are essentially emancipations into nature: economical, legal, moral. Political zone becomes in such a case an empty, artificial, useless, discarded space, because it can bring no sense, no happiness, no roots: an obstacle, not help. The political mediation within the nation state gives way to other mediations which are multi layered and neutrally separated: a motley of convenient styles, based on pure moral autocrateion. These mediations can in no way be useful to dovetail with the national community. Moreover, they cannot be played out without conflicts, but these play themselves in the realm of culture, where the moral autonomy and moral freedom of one individual clashes with the moral freedom of the other, and there is absolutely no criteria by which any mediating structure can sublime the mutual desires in a whole larger, and transcending the autonomous desire of the self. Politics will disappear, becoming more or less an instrument of these three emancipations, by definition non-political in the traditional sense.²²⁷

The European project has been strongly on the way to depoliticization, with the elites busy dismantling the nation state defined as a danger. But the United States still maintains a strong, nationalistic state, resistant to the monopolistic claims of the great non-political empires of commerce, morality and rights, all requiring the supervision of adjudicating judges speaking in the name of universal human rights, that is in the name of humanity. True, the American Supreme Court

²²⁶ P. Manent, *A World Beyond Politics...* Some thinkers claim that this is just a temporary phenomenon and that depoliticization is going to affect the United States as well, together with the entire world. This is on the one hand the Marxist vision of capitalistic, depoliticized market and the Orwellian world of a couple of global, battling empires. See: J. A t t a l i, *Demokracja i rynek w XXI wieku*, “Europa” 2007, February 3, pp. 12–13.

²²⁷ This emancipating role of the judges in America and worldwide, adjudicating in the name of ‘humanity’, without necessarily normative or textual basis of it, is succinctly demonstrated in R. B o r k, *Coercing Virtue: The worldwide rule of the judges*, Washington DC 2003; see also: H. A r k e s, *Liberalism and the Law*, [in:] *The Betrayal of Liberalism...*, pp. 71–92.

has a strong tendency to take over politics and adjudicate the constitution along the aforementioned lines, but the society resists such attempts. The European people have for all practical purposes given up on that, marching towards the administrative state, ready to supervise therapeutically, the benign and pliant populations. In America such a depoliticization, being the opposite side of democratic politics of free people, meets with the fiercest resistance from all walks of life, despite the fact that deadening conformism and consumerism weakens the forces of resistance, and the revolution of the 1960s made the cultural climate of 'liberation' the language of the mass media. Nevertheless, Norman Thomas the socialist leader of early 20th century expressed that feeling of *libertas* of the resisting common people well, the very source of American eternal populism in the best sense of the word. When confronted with the chants of his audience "Lead us Norman! Lead us Norman" he, socialist himself, retorted, "I am not going to lead you anywhere, since if I lead you somewhere, someone else may lead you the other direction". Which translated into plain English means: "As grown-ups, you can think for yourself, and I as a leader can only participate in that, not because I am wiser but because I am one of you".