

# **Morality in the Age of Political Redemption**

By

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# Contents

Preface.....	vii
Introduction .....	vii
<b>Chapter 1: The Concept of Political Redemption.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Man's second nature .....	5
Ideology or political philosophy? .....	28
The Changing Meaning of Nature and History .....	45
J. S. Mill's refutation of Nature as the source of morals .....	50
German Philosophy on Freedom: J.G. Fichte on Nature and Ethics.....	54
R. G. Collingwood on the Idea of Nature .....	60
The Fourth Meaning of the Idea of Nature .....	65
Moral Realism at the Dawn of Modernity.....	71
Lost Meanings of Reality .....	92
The Peak of the Moral Development of Modern Age: Narcissistic Morality.....	101
<b>Chapter 2: Loss of Meaning, Loss of Aims: Necessity, Leadership, and Lurking Totalitarianism in Western Culture .....</b>	<b>126</b>
Basic Issues .....	127
Loss of Meaning.....	133
Equality, Rights, and Reality .....	136
Globalized or Universal Values, or What? .....	140
Ongoing Totalitarianism.....	141
<b>Chapter 3: Laws Beyond Relativity. Command or Fairness? .....</b>	<b>145</b>
Divine Law, the state of religion.....	147
Natural Law: the state of nature .....	152
Human Laws: the state of modern politics .....	156

Bibliography .....	164
<b>Chapter 4: Freedom and law .....</b>	<b>165</b>
Freedom ancient and modern .....	166
Saint Augustine on free will .....	172
Natural law, law of nature.....	179
Paine’s discussion with Burke on freedom.....	181
Pope Leo XIII’s two encyclicals on freedom.....	186
Christian freedom in practice and its two aspects.....	191
Bibliography .....	194
<b>Chapter 5: Constitution of Government and the Nature of Conflict ....</b>	<b>195</b>
What is Government? .....	198
The nature of conflict.....	212
Oakeshott on governing.....	219
New Conflicts of Government .....	222
<b>Chapter 6: How to Lose a Culture - a reflection on Walking and Migration .....</b>	<b>227</b>
Intellectual meaning of walking .....	228
Walking and thinking.....	230
Moving in nature is a precondition of change .....	231
Mass Migration.....	234
Debate about migration at an age of the masses.....	236
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>238</b>

## Preface

A paragraph from Ortega y Gasset's essay "Unity and Diversity of Europe" is helpful to understand the main concern of this book: "Total politicalism, the absorption of everything and of the entire man by politics is one and the same phenomenon of the revolt of the masses. The man in revolt has lost all capacity for knowledge and capacity. It can contain nothing but politics, a raving, frenetic, exorbitant politics that claims to replace all knowledge, religion, wisdom – everything, in short, really qualified to occupy the center of the human mind. Politics drains men of solitude and intimacy, and preaching total politicalism is therefore one of the techniques of socialization."<sup>1</sup> Ortega did not originally inspire me to write this book, but as the idea of the book has unfolded, I had to admit to myself that in a sense Ortega, using the strange term "politicalism", already named the phenomenon that I call "political redemption". It is perhaps not a chance that where he put down these lines was an essay on the idea of Europe. He believed that Europe is the focus of modernity, the West was a society rather than an empire or anything like that. Thanks to diversity there are countries and nations with different ways of living their lives but even European wars had not been real wars, rather, they were internal household conflicts, because European peoples had always regarded themselves as somehow relatives. Gasset loathed homogeneity and when he suggested, even predicted a unified Europe, he had wanted to base it on diversity as the key to intellectual profoundness without which there is hardly any higher standard of living. If "politicalism" eats up everything that is private or intimate, the individual will become a slave again. It is hard not to mention "economism" as a parallel development in modern Western life. These together are able to express the most debatable aspects of modern human life. If "politicalism" is rampant, and "economism" is all persuasive and comprehensive, then man can rely only on either politics and economy whatever problems he or she is encountered with. Therefore it is not an exaggeration to call current scene of Western man as yearning

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<sup>1</sup> Ortega y Gasset: *Toward a Philosophy of History*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1941. p. 71

for political redemption. We expect solutions and remedies to our personal or individual wounds by politics. Or, the government or the state, that is, politics as such. There is hardly any aspect of human life which is not dependent on public concerns. Modernity, it seems, has devoured the character, the individual, though the symptoms of radical individualism are visible, cf. narcissism. But if there is no self-reliant individual, what remains of personal morality? Or if everyone is so dependent on "politicalism", nothing remains as private or individual morality. In other words, today's morality is actually a faceless or undefinable mess of relativized moral commitments, replaced by political sidings seeking surpluses. If the realm of morality is hard to gauge, the individual is subject only to the remnants of old remnants of moral obligations and commitments. If politics becomes overwhelming then the lack of individuality will erase the basis of diversity. Ortega y Gasset was a philosopher who felt being jeopardized by the growing homogeneity of modernity. I presume that we have reached a stage where we really have to deepen our understanding of modernity.

Politically the foundation of modernity is the idea of social contract that opens the gate of the people to renew or even radically change their political circumstances whenever they feel like so. In politics radical changes have become a modern innovation to get things right along the lines of ideologies which are designed to provide and justify ideas for revolutions and radical changes. But in morals radical changes are impossible. The morality of capitalism or the morality of communism are either theoretical descriptions, or at worst, slogans and desired norms which may have impacts on a society, their profoundness depends on the length of time these norms are maintained by certain ideologies, and political institutions. Even the best ideas can evolve into a degenerate form of ideological goals, therefore while morality is the least resilient set of man's attitudes, emotions and thoughts, publicly disseminated ideas may distort man's morality. Distort in what sense? Today one has to defend himself if wants to rely on classical ideas of his culture: ancient philosophy, Christian revelation, early modern philosophy of science, but primarily, the united mindset of the European people prior to modernity that split man's integrated view of the world. Morally speaking we cannot really speak about liberal, socialist or conservative morality. Moral conceptions cannot

be categorized in terms of ideologies. The relationship between man and man cannot rest on but continuity. Individual man's life is continuous, and Ortega y Gasset is right in saying that there is a right to 'continuity'. What he could not predict is a situation when there are societies which have been paralyzed by radical political changes, i.e. German national socialism or Eastern European communist systems, and then they should continue their lives. But how? To ignore and completely deny their concern to a vicious system? Or to declare that by a new social contract, called 'system change' or 'regime change', as in the post-communist countries, these societies can start everything afresh, as if what had happened would not have any influence on the future. Do the post-communist countries (a term almost forgotten) have to pertain to a 'right to continuity'? The answer is 'no' politically but morally it is 'yes'. What is morally disgusting in a post-communist country, is to be attributed to the morality of the modern world, too. In the West there is an indifferent attitude to the problems of the post-communist world. Once you have the political recipe, what else could matter? Moral reservations? Are you joking? Man is primarily a moral being, and then a political being. The two are interdependent, but today most people believe that the political is superior to the moral concerns of man. Who says so, is wrong, and is responsible for the moral degeneration of the West into a nihilistic condition persuasively communicated by the unconditioned fans of individual reason.

The most inner incentive of the human life is mutuality kept in balance. When an individual wishes to achieve anything, he is compelled to cooperate directly or indirectly with other individuals. The central issue of ethics, therefore, has always been the question of how one can get somebody else to act in a certain way. Ethical norms are designed and maintained to ensure the conditions that determine the rules of what may and what may not be done in order to get anyone to do something. Yet man has a wide range of freedom how to apply (or disregard) the rules. Thus, morality is the unwritten code of man's behavior. Irrespective of age and type of community men can only survive if they maintain a balance of mutuality. Commutative justice is an intellectual exposition of this idea. In modernity this mutuality is supposed to be maintained through the extension of the self, thus increasing his sense of freedom, but is limited by other selves' similar extended egos. The price of this type of mutuality is

permanent insecurity of the self, suffering from a lack of solid moral guidelines and loneliness. The most obvious symptom of an encapsulated modern self is the anxiety about the meaning of life. The meaning of life is inherently tied to morality, the way man has an opportunity to live together with other man, i.e. whether man has real or only sham communities. The modern solution is offered in the framework of politics or *politicalism* – the paradox result is either collectivism despising individual freedom or secluded individual life facing the abyss of the nihil.

What follows is an attempt to argue for the balance of the self and the community based on seeking a morality that can restore at least the question of the meaning of life.

# Introduction

When man decided that a covenant, which can be renewed any time by considering the old one erroneous, concluded among men is more relevant for the actual lives of man than the one concluded with God, the European man believed that by political instruments the most fundamental conflicts of human life can be solved more efficiently than with a covenant based on revelation. This covenant was called social contract theory. This theory has produced a lot of wanted and unwanted outcomes. First, if the mere existence of the government or state depends on men's consent, then it is unavoidable to frame a written constitution that lays down the basic structure of political institutions that is meant to provide the most comprehensive and decisive context for man to live together. But also, man has to define who belongs to the community of the covenant. You need to fix the standards who is a citizen of the commonwealth created by a contract. In order to measure what the actual needs of the citizens are, people's will and political preferences must somehow be tested and to be accounted for. Hence the rise of modern democracy. The more sophisticated modern democracy has become, the more political a common man's life has become. The paradox is obvious, since the safer the individual's life was to be made in modernity, the stronger and bigger the state had had to be constructed or let to have evolved. Today there is hardly a niche in man's life which is not monitored by the government very often with the active participation of the citizens, because it is just the citizens who want something from the state, i.e. the state is entitled and expected to provide benefits and services that are to be mitigating conflicts, especially material or financial ones in nature, which used to be otherwise private.

Thus, today political redemption has completely replaced divine redemption. First, we expect the political not only to interfere with our private sphere, but we are desperate to offer all our intimate secrets and matters to be solved by the public or the commonwealth, or the state, or the government. We are ready to share our most internal desires with others making ourselves almost more defenseless compared to the original

premodern status of the individual, hoping that we can be redeemed. Secondly, all this has guided us to the realm of a totalitarian world in which almost everything is free but only for the individual, not for communities like ethnic minorities or religious ones. For a long time people believed that the Nazi or the Communist countries are totalitarians, but it is wrong – they represented the essence of modern totalitarianism that liberal democracies cannot escape either. One might rightly say that people are not killed because of their political views in a liberal democracy. But they are not free to tell their views. Persecution has many faces and means other than killing a dissident view. All this began with the rise and dominance of the idea of social contract, about which, for instance, Ortega y Gasset lambasted with these words:

A society is not brought about by a willed agreement. Inversely, any such agreement presupposes the existence of a society, of people living together under certain customs, and the agreement can only determine one form or another of this coexistence, of this pre-existing society. The idea of a society as contractual, and therefore juridical, union is one of the silliest attempts that has ever been made to put the cart before the horse [...] To expect law to govern the relations between beings not only living in effective society seems to me – if I may be pardoned for my rudeness – to have a confused and ridiculous idea of law.<sup>1</sup>

The key to modernity is the changed meaning of law, all modern revolutions are rooted in the novel idea of law that entitles any number of men to declare a new law independently of the rules, customs and mores the people live by. Modern law is set of norms agreed by people, and are opposed to inherited customs and rules, mostly unwritten. Ortega y Gasset is relevant here, too: “In revolutions the abstract tries to rebel against the concrete.”<sup>2</sup> A wrong idea is not distinguishable from a good one in that the former is impossible to be implemented. If enough support is created behind an idea, in modernity it could be executed. All you need is to capture the authority to determine law.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 50

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 78

The most profound impact at the age of political redemption has occurred in the morality of modern man. All morality is dependent on an explicit or implicit contract. Premodern morality was rooted in man's beliefs rested on myths, customs, hard-fought experience, and the community-imposed rules of revelation and nature. Whichever is the final source of morality or the mixture of a set of diverse rules, man was forced to accept that moral rules are outside individual competences. Morality as such is the evidence that we live in communities, man is a communal or social being. Shortly, the premodern self was the subject of subordination. The self was limited, and nothing could challenge it. Yet the self in European culture was not ever totally subordinated. In our culture the individual has a history described by the verb "to be developed". It is to be attributed to the special status of philosophy, a synonym of individual rationality and for many centuries of science, that is, knowledge. Accordingly, man considered himself to be able to determine what is morally good and bad, that is, to tell the right from the wrong. Modern man on the grounds of political redemption started to create moral frameworks that are phrased by individual rationality without any outside, i.e. divine or natural right, assistance. The purpose of this new morality is to serve the needs the individual or the self. Modern morality intends the liberation of the self. The self should not have any constraints or limits because modernity is for the welfare of the individual, and limitless development of scientific knowledge that would boost all forms of progressive political intentions. Man will conquer the known and the not yet known part of the universe. No limits, no moral constraints except the ones that are not agreed upon. But what is agreed upon is a matter of majoritarian consensus, thus communication of the most powerful will decide the issues. Hidden authoritarianism is the secret of modernism, and the disappearance of it. The nature of power is always the same, the display is what does really count. Modern morality serves this hypocritical political construction thus cynicism is the most characteristic feature of modern democratic regimes.

# Chapter 1

## The Concept of Political Redemption

In the first decades of the twenty-first century Western culture still lives under the umbrella of the intellectual influence of the Enlightenment that supported secular philosophy, or speculative reason to oust wisdom of revelation, and classical reason to dominate man's understanding of the world. Modern knowledge dethroned wisdom, and science replaced classical philosophy. God has had to bow to reason, and methods devalued finesse as Pascal used this word. We have been living at an age in which most people are overt or unconscious atheists, favor the autonomy of the individual, and firmly believe that truth is relative, if it exists at all. Truth, thus, is subject to interpretation, it is invented or constructed. There is no exception, whether it is law, God, let alone political and moral concepts. The Reformation at the beginning of the sixteenth century in Western Christianity opened up the route towards relativity of truth while Calvin and Luther wished to strengthen the faith in God. This is perhaps the first paradox of modernity, i.e. if you want to purify religious practice you may end up with weakening the trust in truth. The curse of thinking is rooted in the procedure and practice of thinking, which means that thinking as such is directed at making distinctions, creating divisions and forming new intellectual and moral attitudes towards the objects of knowledge. Wisdom has meant to correct the deficiencies of knowledge, because wisdom and knowledge are not identical. Revelation did not only seek the status of the sole interpretation of man's existence and conduct but provided solace and comfort through wonder and divine justice. Even more revelation promised eternal life through redemption and pious conduct. But God came to be under lethal attack by the new use and mode of man's reason. The new tendency assumed new methods under the pressure of individual reason that revealed new understanding of science, knowledge, nature and human life. To put it shortly – man could live his life differently from what is the custom of the majority. Old morality became not only suspicious, but even the cause of man's unhappiness.

Most men and peoples have always lived in communities according to the customs of the majority. The Romans called it “*mos maiorum*”, the custom of the majority. For long, even in modernity, public morality or ethical rule has been based on this perennial practice. Man had to obey the divine and/or natural laws and follow the major rules of the community often called customs. The “way” is the inherited set of customs that had to be followed by all members of the particular community. What is good and bad are framed in a number of rules and examples. The modern individual, however, conceived that individual reason is capable of, what is more, is ready to determine the best instrument to find out what is good for him. The old individual was a human being subject to the collective insights of moral behavior, the new individual was, in contrast, an autonomous being who is separated from the others by legal barriers, thus producing a world of moral duties and freedoms in which the individual needs are equally relevant, sometimes even superior, to the common goals under peaceful conditions. The modern individual is also a communal being but enjoys a series of unalienable rights the number of which can be extended at the wish of the general will of the individuals. While the moral behavior of the old individual rested on the acceptance of the customs of the majority, the new individual begirded by a number of legal safeguards has the opportunity to judge everything by his own consideration. The liberalization or emancipation of human reason brought about the liberalization of human morality as well. Prioritizing the individual needs and wishes as the ultimate aim of public goals led up to the hailing of democracy, the rule of common man, and constructing a new concept of liberty the focus of which is man as a reasonable and autonomous being who succeeded in casting off outside restraints and authorities. The highest and most powerful authority used to be God. But once you ask your most natural questions, like ‘Is there God?’, then you will not be able to stop your investigations at any point of your convenience. And finally, this has been the major intellectual developments in the Western culture, namely, if there is no God, and the skeptical views get surfaced, then it is man who is going to replace the place of God. Jacobi in his famous letter to Fichte declares the following:

This is not how it is, and for this reason man loses himself as soon as he resists finding himself in God as his creator, in a way

inconceivable to his reason; as soon as he wants to ground himself in himself alone. Then everything gradually dissolves for him into his own nothingness. Man has this choice, however, and this alone: Nothingness or a God. If he chooses nothingness, he makes himself unto a God, that is, he makes a phantom into God, for it is impossible, if there is no God, that man and all that surrounds him should be anything but a phantom. I repeat: God is, and is outside me, a living, self-subsisting being, or I am God. There is no third.<sup>1</sup>

Jacobi was the first who stressed nihilism as a possible outcome of modern man's use of reason. For him it was obvious that Spinoza's philosophy was atheistic, and that you cannot have both ends meet. If your reasoning contradicts the existence of God, then you have no other choice than establishing a world in which human reason directs and judges without the help of revelation. Here are again Jacobi's words: "even if I were obliged to call your doctrine atheist, like that of Spinoza; I would still not consider you, personally, an atheist for that reason; nor a godless man. Whoever knows how really to elevate himself with his spirit above nature, with his heart above every degrading desire, such a one sees God face to face, and it is not enough to say of him that he only believes in God." In the Enlightenment, it is true, "belief in God" was no longer enough to argue for anything. The idea of God had to be defended in the face of the individual reason, too, especially in the field of epistemology.

The whole modernity is an everlasting revolutionary epoch, has not ended yet. This evolving revolutionary mindset was initiated by a couple of interdependent but separately evaluated developments. The idea of modernity is to be explained by its central idea, i.e. "modern" which simply means "new". Tilo Schabert described the essence of modernity as judging every single tradition from the perspective of the present that regards itself superior to the past, hence the basis of the modern idea of limitless progress. The conflict between ancients and moderns has several other symptoms like revolutionizing the structure of the sciences by putting natural sciences on top and accepting every innovation by them without

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*. London-Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press. 1994. p. 525

any critique. Innovation is the highest quality of this new mindset, thus emphasizing the worthlessness of the past. And by historicizing truth, modern authors stress the relativity of truth. (Was Ist Modernität?<sup>2</sup>

Earlier Hannah Arendt also tried to grasp the core idea of modernity:

Our tradition of political thought had its definite beginning in the teachings of Plato and Aristotle. I believe it came to a no less definite end in the theories of Karl Marx. The beginning was made when, in The Republic's allegory of the cave, Plato described the sphere of human affairs all that belongs to the living together of men in a common world in terms of darkness, confusion, and deception which those aspiring to true being must turn away from and abandon if they want to discover the clear sky of eternal ideas. The end came with Marx's declaration that philosophy and its truth are located not outside the affairs of men and their common world but precisely in them, and can be "realized" only in the sphere of living together, which he called "society," through the emergence of "socialized men" (yergesellschaftete Menschen). Political philosophy necessarily implies the attitude of the philosopher toward politics; its tradition began with the philosopher's turning away from politics and then returning in order to impose his standards on human affairs. The end came when a philosopher turned away from philosophy so as to "realize" it in politics. This was Marx's attempt, expressed first in his decision (in itself philosophical) to abjure philosophy, and second in Marx intention to "change the world" and thereby the philosophizing minds, the "consciousness" of men.<sup>3</sup>

This somewhat long observation by Arendt sums up how political thought reacted to modernity, or rather how the *break* between what is ancient or classical and what is modern tremendously affected the aims, intentions and methods of political philosophy owing to the disruption of the tradition of philosophy. No wonder, although not necessary an inevitable development, that there was a return or even a rediscovery of something we used to call political philosophy in the twentieth century. A generation

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<sup>2</sup> Tilo Schabert: *Das Gesichte der Moderne*. München: Verlag Karl Alber, 2018., pp. 45-47

<sup>3</sup> Hannah Arendt: *Between Past and Future*. The Viking Press, 1961., pp. 17-8

of European intellectuals affected by the radical political turmoil of the century turned towards the intellectual understanding of the radical political endeavors of the century: how could it have happened that man in possession of never ever seen amount of knowledge got involved in two world wars, and what is more, politics had become a sort of redemption for the suffering of man who was already the most enlightened in history. Something must have been flawed in the Enlightenment project or ideas. Man did not get better, to the opposite, evil, parallelly to the ever growing strength of technological progress, had shown signs of penetration earlier never experienced. Most profound crisis of European civilization, let alone culture, occurred when the moral bonds became not only suspicious but corrupt. Corruption of a community begins from inside, and the outside infiltration just finishes off what was indefensible. Europe was on the verge of losing all what it had stood for from the very beginning from its inception: ancient Greek poetry and drama, Greek philosophy of its vast variety, Roman law and political arrangements, esp. the idea of the classical republic, history writing of both Greek and Roman, Christian religion with revelation and promise of redemption. The problem is that Europe had already lost many of these cultural and civilizational elements by the time of political radicalisms of the twentieth century, let alone the Left's cancel culture at the beginning the twenty-first century. There was only one platform to rely upon, and it was the early modern idea or theory of political community that is created by consent of the people and a pact or contract among them. In modern times the social contract theory came to be the ultimate source of legitimacy that was also construed after the demise of the divine law as the source of earthly power. Neither God's law, nor his revelation provides any respectable source of man's power, i.e. political endeavors.

### **Man's second nature**

Ancient philosophers all shared the view of man that he is a mixed character having beastly and divine traits alloyed in him. Their moral theories based on this insight recommended education, the development of the character in order to fight against man's lower instincts, what is more, their political theories were also connected with their education. A good

city can only be really good if the citizens are good, too. Good is what is desirable for its own sake, so good cannot be mistaken for any phenomenon of the good. Dividing man into a divine and a beastly part did not mean to sever him into two halves, on the contrary, man is a whole and must be treated accordingly. Ancient philosophers, Plato perhaps the greatest in this respect, kept looking for the narrowest path one can imagine that led from the particular to the most comprehensive. Man is torn apart because of his undecided character that he has to carry even if he is aware of the task he ought to overcome. This task is much bigger than what man can rationally overtake. But man does all the time from generations to generations. Otherwise the search for the meaning of life would become hopeless and useless. Man needs meaning whatever he does and thinks, and he must have faith in his action to realize his thoughts or ideas about what he is up to without any intellectual sophistication. Seeking or thinking of the meaning of life is tied to the level of education one happens to have. Meaning of life serves man just as air or water does for maintaining man's existence. We all know that, but since human life is so wretched that most of us fail to think of this question, the meaning of life is neglected until the very moments when someone reaches the limits of life and death. We admire ancient works because of their attitude, as a matter of fact, towards the fundamental issues of life. Nature was not an enemy but a template for finding out the rules of how man should live, i.e. morality was combined with the dictates of nature or natural laws, let alone divine fate that begirds the life of all human beings.

In opposition to the ancient view the modern social contract theory drew a dividing line between the two parts of the human character, the one is, the beastly part was simply separated from man's spiritual or moral character. The beastly or instinctual qualities of man cannot be refined by education only, because man's passions are stronger than the mind. But if we subject man's instincts to a higher control, i.e. man's rationality is empowered to create a second nature of man, then we could establish a good society irrespective of the moral quality of the particular individual consisting of the political community. Second nature is the invention of the early modern political thought initiated by the first contractual thinkers, esp. by Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes distinguished between two main constituents of human nature: man as such, and man as citizen, i.e. man has first and second

nature. "For man is not just a natural body, but also a part of the state, or (as I put it) of the body politics; for that reason he had to be considered as both man and citizen, that is the first principles of physics had to be conjoined with those of politics, the most difficult with the easiest."<sup>4</sup> Hobbes preserved the ancient dual character of man, and thus the moral duality in human nature: one is based on nature/natural law, the other is on man's consensus which is free from the natural law because human reason is capable of creating laws of both politics and ethics without the aid of natural law:

Finally, politics and ethics (that is the sciences of *just* and *unjust*, of *equity* and *inequity*) can be demonstrated *a priori*; because we ourselves make the principles – that is, the causes of justice (namely laws and covenants) – whereby it is known what justice and equity, and their opposites injustice and inequity, are. For before covenants and laws were drawn up, neither justice nor injustice, neither public good nor public evil, was natural among men any more than it was among beasts.<sup>5</sup>

Hobbes claims no less than that moral concepts are but the products of human reason under the conditions of mutual understanding and determinations. Only a blind intellectual could fail to observe that any *a priori* ethical laws would not be other than relative rules how one should live. Rules made by human reason are all but endorsed by flexible accommodation to the ever occurring new circumstances. Once it is approved that laws are relative, i.e. they are matters of the moral commitments of the majority, there is no need to regard man's first nature – the newly conceived laws are mandatory as if they were on a par with natural laws, but actually they are separated from them. They are *a priori*, because they are not founded on experience or considerations beyond human reason, but on logical inferences.

It is not difficult to point out that all other representatives of modern social contract theory used the separation of natural human qualities from those

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hobbes: *Man and Citizen*. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991. p. 35

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. pp. 42-3

developed from man's second nature. The first set of qualities, i.e. man's natural passions, instincts, sentiments, must somehow be controlled but cannot hardly be grasped as the source of man's civilized character. Man's bellicose nature, the ineradicable conflict between the I and the We, the individual and the community, hate and love, selfishness and altruism produce a desire how to live in peace with others. Ancient suggestions were either about education directed at perfecting of man's virtues, or creating favorable conditions for man by making good laws, i.e. constitutions. Good virtues combined with good laws would make a good society. This has been the equation of politics and morals over thousands of years in European culture. In classical times religion and philosophy were forming the intellectual of man how to solve the equation. In modern times sciences and the law (both "tainted" by diminishing strength of philosophy) snatched the chalk and has been writing new programs on the blackboard of man's fearful history. The meaning and significance of the state created by means of a social contract is that man can construct political life upon ethical principles which are conceived by man himself. Making politics ethical was always a dream of political thinkers, this is the contents of the equation of good governance. Relying on religious dogmas and commands incurred man to regard the highest divine law mandatory blueprint for framing his written laws, and the prescription of how man should live was demanding, which was reflected by the very harsh legal punishments, let alone rigid moral consequences. The legal and the moral coincided, and the form of politics could only be grounded on the rule of the one as it was already expressed in Homer's or Vergil's works up to Dante's *De monarchia*. But once the goodness of politics or government was no longer considered applicable by dint of laws in accordance with the divine law, the government by consent, first, challenged the one-man rule thesis, and second, the most fundamental and solid religious basis of moral commitment was replaced by a public ethics that gained its entitlement by one of the central ideas of the social contract theory, namely, a government by the will of the people morally is binding for the individual, since the individual or citizen obeys himself when obeys the decisions of the government. This is John Locke's central idea of his social contract theory. Like a beautiful geometrical object. Everything fits both legally and morally in a consensual design.

The social contract theory is not the only solution to the equation of good laws, good morals, good city by the dint of distinction between man's first and second nature in order to seek a new foundation of politics. W.G. Hegel used the idea of man's second nature to make politics ethical, but he did not resort to any of the available contract theories, instead he forged the vague and questionable relationship of politics and ethics stronger and closer by focusing on man's freedom which is the actualization of the Spirit, the highest phenomenon of existence. According to Hegel human will is central because it is the embodiment of man's actualized freedom, thus what man does must be ethical whether he wants it or not. W. G. Hegel took this view of man's second nature as taken for granted. In his *Philosophy of Right* he says this: "freedom constitutes the substance and essential character of the will, and the system of right is the kingdom of actualised freedom. It is the world of spirit, which is produced out of itself, and is a second nature".<sup>6</sup> Hegel distinguishes the two qualities of man, i.e. the physical or instinctual and the spiritual, the characteristic of the second is will which is combined with freedom, man's will and freedom are one and the same:

The animal acts according to instinct, is impelled by something internal, and so is also practical. But it has no will, because it cannot place before its mind what it desires. Similarly man cannot use his theoretic faculty or think without will, for in thinking we are active.<sup>7</sup>

For Hegel's complete philosophy is based on his idea of the Spirit, he radicalizes the ancient concept of both man's rational capacity and his will which is inseparable from freedom, since thinking itself is the sign of man's unique trait that is expressed by the idea of freedom: "Everyone will, in the first place, find in himself the ability to abstract himself from all that he is, and in this way prove himself able of himself to set every content within himself, and thus have in his own consciousness an illustration of all the subsequent phases."<sup>8</sup> In other words, Hegel conceives man's second nature as will, freedom stripped of other qualities of human character, but also the

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<sup>6</sup> *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Clarendon Press, 1952, Translated: with Notes by T M Knox 1942. §4

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4

foundation of his political thoughts as it was discussed by Thomas Khurana. He writes: “True freedom lies neither in the freedom of abstraction nor the freedom of choice, but rather in what Hegel calls ‘self-determination’: the willing of a content that is itself a product of spirit becomes objective, that our freedom is realized. By bringing forth such a world through collective action, it became possible for the will to will something determinate and concrete – the object of this spiritual world – and thereby will the free will itself that manifests itself in this will.”<sup>9</sup> Hegel’s conception deepens and radicalizes man’s participation in the Spirit, the achievements of this is that politicization of man’s life is something internal, by definition ethical, and not something invented like a machine, and defended by abstract instruments like human rights versus the right that Hegel proposes. Hegel does not have to eliminate the historically and analytically visible stratification of man’s communal existence, when he claims that the social world in which freedom animated by the Spirit consists of three parts: the family, the civil society and the state. There is nothing surprising in declaring that Hegel’s concept of the “second nature” poses an alternative to the social contract theory. Let us be clear on this point: the social contract theory stresses the safety of the individual in forming a good city or political community, and expects individual allegiance to abstract norms; the Hegelian proposition is centered around a self-constructing principle, the Spirit (rational God by human standards), but the realization of the freedom rooted in the character of human nature (man is free because he is a willing being) depends on collective action – the family, the civil society and the state. The idea of the social contract is individualistic, the Hegelian one is collectivistic or communal in its essence and mode. This is why it is understandable that Thomas Khurana finds the Hegelian conception illuminating with respect to two contemporary views, the one is the concept of the liberal depolitization, and the other is the conception of identity politics and struggle for recognition.<sup>10</sup> Hegel’s conception can be well used against the contemporary so-called liberal views which still concentrates exclusively on the individual, and regard

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<sup>9</sup> Khurana, Thomas: “Politics of Second Nature.: On the Democratic Dimension of Ethical Life.” In *Philosophie Der Republik*, edited by Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer and Benno Zabel, 422–36. Mohr Siebeck GmbH and Co. KG, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv7h0t1k.26>. p. 423

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ibid. p. 435

political judgment exclusively confined to their own standards of moral good and bad. But if politics is still limited to the praise and defense of individual needs and desires, then the society would be suffering from the lack of glues that are to be in function unless we believe that man is capable of surviving in Robinson's conditions in a desert island. Today when the West and East within the Christian culture get confronted again, and when the supporters of capitalism clash with anti-capitalists (namely, Marxists of various persuasion and modified hidden versions), and when identity politics entitles anyone to stand for himself often without communal or majoritarian support, the issue of what politization and depolitization is, is relevant.

It is highly relevant to take a quick look at how Marx considered Hegel's concept of 'second nature', because it demonstrates how the classical view of nature was more radically destroyed at the hands of post-Enlightenment materialist and historicist thinkers like Marx and Engels. They were unsatisfied with Hegel's concept of nature, especially with its concept of 'second nature'. Alfred Schmidt, who devoted a complete book to Marx's concept of nature, analyzing Hegel's philosophy of nature and its impact on Marx who scoffed at Left Hegelians in general, summarized Hegel's conception thus:

Hegel's philosophy of nature is [...] the science of the Idea in its other-being. In nature the Idea confronts us in an immediate form not yet purified to become the Concept. It is the Concept posited in its lack of conceptual content. Nature is not a being possessing its own self-determination, but the moment of estrangement which the Idea in its abstract-general form must undergo in order to return to itself completely as Spirit. One of the strangest and most problematic transitions in the whole of Hegel's philosophy, criticized equally by Feuerbach and by Marx, is the transition from the Logic whose conclusion is the pure Idea, to the Philosophy of Nature, that is to say from thought to sensuous-material being:

'The absolute freedom of the Ideas that it... decides to release freely from itself, as its own mirror-image, the moment of its own

Specificity, and of the first determination or other being, the Idea immediate, i.e. nature.'

How far does the Idea, so to speak, lose its dialectical character in the course of its transformation into nature? How, in view of the fact that, as 'absolute', for the idea is always present to itself does it come to estrange, to destroy itself in a world of objective-material existence? These questions remain shrouded in darkness in Hegel.<sup>11</sup>

Marx, in many respects under the influence of Engels, conceived nature on a radical concept of materialism and history as a context of man's internal development. "For Marx nature was completely indifferent or nothing if it is not treated within the framework of man's activity. Nature had a meaning only as the constituent element of human practice" (Ibid. p.30) Philosophically speaking Marx wanted to avoid regarding nature, which, in the broadest sense is the whole of reality, a dogmatic or final metaphysical principle, or something mystical or ideological. "Materialist philosophy consists, in the words of Engels, in explaining the world from the world itself."<sup>12</sup> The Marxian conception preserved Hegel's overall framework of how we can consider nature as such but tried to radicalize it to maintain the meaning or strength of the Hegelian Spirit that dissolves or disappears in the material existence. It is man's exchanges with nature in which nature and its laws assume relevance for man who aspires to control nature that is not benevolent to man. What is more, nature is nothing for man:

Hence the following decisive emphasis in the Paris Manuscripts: '... nature, taken abstractly, far itself, rigidly separated from man, is nothing for man.

As long as nature remains unworked it is economically valueless, or rather, to be more precise, has a purely potential value which awaits its realization:

'The material of nature alone, in so far as no human labour is embodied in it, insofar as it is mere material and exists

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<sup>11</sup> Alfred Schmidt: *The Concept of Nature in Marx*. London: NLB, 1971. p. 23

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 29

independently of human labour, has no value, since value is only embodied labour...'<sup>13</sup>

All through the intellectual history of modernity this is the most radical opposition of man and nature. For the classics nature is the ultimate source of Law, thus the rules or prescriptions for man's behaving and bearing in life. Separating man from nature, or more precisely, completely making nature dependent upon man's rational control over and use of what is available in nature, is the core of modern materialist conception of man. Man is not only entitled to contrast himself with nature but can give meaning to nature by using and manipulating her. This meaning is akin to the utilitarian view of nature. Without man, who is the embodiment of Hegel's Spirit or the God of Reason, there is nothing that has worth in itself.

The adulation of reason by Marxism is Hegelianism minus Spirit. Human spirit or reason is capable of achieving anything, even politics can be made fully rational. If it is fully that, then there is no need for waiting for an outside savior. Man can save himself, and what really makes this idea irresistible is that is founded on Marx's theory of history, the hub of which is historical necessity that has the same force than any natural laws do, like e.g. gravitation. Marx needed a concept of nature that is devoid of any traces of rationality. His proposal is a man who really and radically quitted what is natural, so he could take the rein over his own life. This is why Marx had to radicalize Hegel's conception of second nature, too:

"The 'second nature' is still the 'first'. Mankind has still not stepped beyond natural history. This fact explains the closeness of the method of Marxist sociology to that of natural science (Naturwissenschaft)."<sup>14</sup> The only solution is to gain control over nature as if it was an enemy to man: "The concept of a law of nature is unthinkable without men's endeavours to master nature."<sup>15</sup> Hence the admiration towards the technological development. Therefore economic activity of man enjoys priority and the source of use-value is derived from nature. Man's yearning for redemption is not a metaphysical dream any more, but can become tangible and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 30

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 43

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 70

feasible. The Marxian vision of man's development was framed wholly by a materialist understanding of anything that man has realized. History has its own laws, among which is the law of exploitation or the development of the productive means, and the conflict between them can be flattened by human reason and human institutions provided political power is snatched by the intellectual representatives of the Marxist ideas relying on the mass support of the deprived classes. Marx's conception of man's second nature is the idea of communism, in which nature is completely mastered and the sources of human inequality and subjection are annihilated by founding new political institutions, and if things go properly, there will be no need for any institutions as if the completely enlightened man could complete his dominion over both natural world and human history. The most radical modern idea of political redemption was suggested by the representatives of communist ideals. Their main weapon was politics, the magic instrument for modern man. But Marxism has not failed despite the collapse of real communist states at the end of the twentieth century. The central idea of Marx's philosophy has produced several new forms, the most radical one is the 'green idea'. In its essence it shares the major tenet of Marxism: nature must be controlled by new technological inventions. The underlying philosophical idea of the greens suggest a milder approach to nature without reconsidering the fundamental view of man created by early modern thinkers. Mainstream greens do not substantially depart from the basic dogmas of modernity. Man needs welfare, development of technology, and man's moral character is formed by man's reason by itself. We can step out of history provided we introduce 'satisfactory' political systems. They mix liberal individualism with leftist thirst for technological progress. If we run into a technology-related disaster, they call for more technological investments and development. The historical treadmill, however, keeps turning round.

That political redemption became more and more the center of modern man can be demonstrated by pointing out changing focus of moral philosophy. In contrast with the classical moral theories, the modern ones gradually founded their ideas on political grounds or political conditions. The moral foundations of the American founding are twofold, the classical and Christian moral codes and combined with the novel ideas of the early Enlightenment period with a hope that man's morality can be developed

just like a technological innovation. The peak or major achievement of this was J.-J. Rousseau's concern with man's loss of what is natural but can be amended by man's second nature, i.e. political character, and its institutional arrangements delineated by both the American Constitution and declared in French revolutionary documents. Rousseau earned his name by his radical vision of man's moral capacities recommending political solution to man's most fundamental anxieties. Morality cannot be other than the one derived from or reconciled with political necessities – the moral language was translated into political rhetoric. The first systematic modern moral theory which directly connected moral philosophy and politics or government was utilitarianism. The idea of utility came along much earlier but definitely after the rise of modernity. Strangely enough Machiavelli was still a real classical thinker of morality while he introduced the basic elements of the idea of utility by identifying it with success. Without success nothing is achieved by a prince of the state, in worst case one can risk his sheer existence.

In man's moral life radical changes are simply impossible. Any significant moral change must be preceded by a period of changes in man's customs – if man's customs are untouched, no real changes can be implemented in the moral life of man. What is more, there is no progress in man's morality. It is not a progress that what was viewed morally noxious earlier, it is no longer that, i.e. homosexuality, even it can be reevaluated as completely tolerable by both legal and moral means. Between man and man there can be many changes, withdrawals, or amendments. But it is not progress, it is a natural consequence of developments and man's adaptations to changed conditions. Various turns of adaptations are not principal changes in the judgment of what is good and what is bad. Man has been still living under the hard rules of nature which communicate to him, what you may do, and what you may not do. Morality cannot be conquered like nature. Man remains man as long as he has a dual character, anchored partly in beyond man's will, partly in his rationally manageable desires and goals. But, we are aware of it, there are always new standards of morality. Unlike in technology or natural sciences, the human world has remained under the conditions of power-building, because there are no lasting decisions without providing some sort of political conditions and institutions. Despite of more and more technological developments, politics or creation

of power will remain indispensable for making any decision. All suggestions for a theory of morals will have to confront two issues: how can it handle earlier codex of morality, and how it wants to create a new morality. In modernity every new political conception wishes to introduce a new morality which is almost impossible without destroying what we have already achieved as man as such.

Tacitly the utilitarian ethics has been extremely influential until now, what is more maybe the most influential one among other ethical doctrines. It is important to study to what extent the roots of the idea of utility are conducive to the rise of politics as redemption. Jeremy Bentham's seminal work, *Principles of Morals and Legislation* has the central idea according to which man's fundamental motives are to have as much pleasure and as little pain as possible. What is interesting is that Bentham placed the whole problem within the realm politics:

It has been shown that the happiness of the individuals, of whom a community is composed, that is their pleasures and their security, is the end and the sole end which the legislator ought to have in view: the sole standard, in conformity to which each individual ought, as far as depends upon the legislator, to be made to fashion his behaviour. But whether it be this or any thing else that is to be done, there is nothing by which a man can ultimately be made to do it, but either pain or pleasure. Having taken a general view of these two grand objects (viz., pleasure, and what comes to the same thing, immunity from pain) in the character of final causes; it will be necessary to take a view of pleasure and pain itself, in the character of efficient causes or means. II. There are four distinguishable sources from which pleasure and pain are in use to flow: considered separately they may be termed the physical, the political, the moral and the religious: and inasmuch as the pleasures and pains belonging to each of them are capable of giving a binding force to any law or rule of conduct, they may all of them termed sanctions.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Jeremy Bentham: *Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Chapter III: Of the Four Sanctions or Sources of Pain and Pleasure. [1781] <https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/bentham/morals.pdf>. p. 27

Bentham clearly sees the relationship between what is moral and what is political, which can assist or hinder the other. They share common duties to impact man's behavior as religious sanctions do, too. The connections of the three moulders of man's conduct can be both fruitful and unfortunate mainly depending on the rationale of the sanctions they prescribe. Bentham inquired the following:

Does the political sanction exert an influence over the conduct of mankind? The moral, the religious sanctions do so too. In every inch of his career are the operations of the political magistrate liable to be aided or impeded by these two foreign powers: who, one or other of them, or both, are sure to be either his rivals or his allies. Does it happen to him to leave them out in his calculations? he will be sure almost to find himself mistaken in the result.<sup>17</sup>

From our standpoint it is the call for "calculations" that matter, for Bentham urges that the merits and demerits, the gains and losses must be observed if we want to have useful achievements at man's behavior. Bentham also resorts to mathematics as a sure instrument to improve our efficiency of seeking the truth:

... truths that form the basis of political and moral science are not to be discovered but by investigations as severe as mathematical ones, and beyond all comparison more intricate and extensive [...] Truths in general have been called stubborn things: the truths just mentioned are so in their own way. They are not to be forced into detached and general propositions, unincumbered with explanations and exceptions. They will not compress themselves into epigrams. They recoil from the tongue and the pen of the declaimer. They flourish not in the same soil with sentiment. They grow among thorns; and are not to be plucked, like daisies, by infants as they run.<sup>18</sup>

These words are full of optimism and claim that truths are the ultimate basis of any investigation in both political and moral sciences. Now the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 29

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 13

question is how we can decide what is right or wrong, and how we can influence an action to have positive effects. The will of God is obviously a measure of when an action is right, but Bentham demands that we should first know “the thing” itself before focusing on the righteousness of an action: “it is necessary to know first whether a thing is right, in order to know from thence whether it be conformable to the will of God.”<sup>19</sup> There is only one method to detect if a thing is right.

There are two things which are very apt to be confounded, but which it imports us carefully to distinguish:—the motive or cause, which, by operating on the mind of an individual, is productive of any act: and the ground or reason which warrants a legislator, or other bystander, in regarding that act with an eye of approbation.<sup>20</sup>

Bentham had to find a solid ground for bridging the particular and the general, and it was his “principle of utility” which is apt to name the concrete “motive” of an action. Once the motive is precisely pinned down, we safely proceed towards generalization of man’s conduct, i.e. predictions of human behavior. Ironically the pleasure and pain dichotomy is a powerful explanation of man’s motivations but almost completely silent about the right aspect of the thing itself. Emphasizing one aspect of man’s behavior, esp. one that is shared with animals, misses the whole of the ethical dimension, and it is because Bentham wishes to secure political utility rather than a moral one. Anyone can say that by improving the efficiency of a government would indirectly ameliorate the morals as well. It can be true, but it means that morality is subject to the political: if the actions of the government are good, then public morality would develop, too. It is just the opposite of the classical assumptions that proclaimed that good individual moralities are a precondition of the good city. The utility principle, in contrast, requires good government in order to create or educate morally good man. The priority of morality is ousted by the priority of politics or the government. Shifting priorities allow us to propose that functions of the classical ethical systems were also taken over by politics. Bentham keeps mentioning “sanctions” independently if they

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 25

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 25

are religious, moral or political. As for the political sanctions "If at the hands of a particular person or set of persons in the community, who under names correspondent to that of judge, are chosen for the particular purpose of dispensing it, according to the will of the sovereign or supreme ruling power in the state, it may be said to issue from the political sanction."<sup>21</sup> The core of the political sanctions is self-preservation,<sup>22</sup> whereas political sanctions contribute to preventing future evils to be committed. Together with religious and moral sanctions the political sanctions are capable of impacting the whole community, and the principle of utility is meant standardize moral behavior through a better government.

It is obvious that modernity could only have evolved by the approval of new principles which were argued by several early modern thinkers. The relevance and complexity of the complete procedure was superbly captured by Ernst Cassirer who beheld the distinction between experience and logical definitions as distinction between how we could find a common set of concepts in such delicate issues like moral, political or legal: "Leibniz was merely drawing a clear and definite conclusion from an idea stemming from Grotius when he declared that jurisprudence belongs to those disciplines which do not depend on experience, but on definitions, not on facts, but on strictly logical proof. For experience could never reveal what law and justice are in themselves. Both concepts involve the concept of a correspondence, a harmony and proportion, which would remain valid even if it were never realized in a single concrete instance, if there were no one to exercise justice and no one toward whom it could be extended. Law is in this respect like pure arithmetic; for the teachings of arithmetic concerning the nature of numbers and their relations imply an eternal and necessary truth which would not be affected, even if the whole empirical world were destroyed and there were no one to count with numbers and no objects to be counted. 1 In the preface to his masterpiece Grotius's argument centers around the same comparison and analogy. He expressly declares that his deductions concerning the law of war and peace are by no means intended for the solution of specific concrete questions, for problems of current politics. In this exposition Grotius says he placed all such

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 28

<sup>22</sup> cf. Ibid. p. 124