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# LEGITIMACY AND MODERNITY

## SOME NEW DEFINITIONS

Over the past three centuries in the West, there has been a sort of oscillation between two antagonistic visions of the world. One sees the world as being fundamentally inert, in such a manner that all hopes, dreams and technological delights are permitted. The other thinks of the world as inhabited by a spirit who consecrates all its parts by recording them in a great whole. We can think of the pantheism that sets itself in opposition to Newton's materialism or, more exactly, to the materialist interpretation given to Newton in the 18th century. In the 17th century the opposite had occurred. The magic universe of the Renaissance had given place to the triumphs of the Cartesian mechanism. As for protestantism, which is said to have been one of the most powerful factors of disenchantment after the 17th century, how was one not to see it prolonged, by reaction, into a philosophy for which nature is the tangible presence of God? When Calvin wrote that nothing

Translated by R. Scott Walker

happens in nature that is not a direct effect of the divine will,[1] we already see appear in the background the mystic ecstasies that Rousseau experienced in nature. For if no single leaf flutters and no breeze blows without divine intervention, then receiving the slightest sensation would mean, according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, entering into direct contact with God.

In this way the enchanted universe and the disenchanted universe seem to call to one another, independently perhaps of a historical context. It can be observed in this respect that, just as in Western culture, there are tribes among so-called primitive peoples for whom the universe is relatively disenchanted, alongside animist or fetichist tribes. The progression from enchantment to disenchantment is, therefore, not an inevitable evolution. The anthropologist Mary Douglas did not hesitate to affirm that the idea of profound religious feeling among primitive peoples is an absurdity.[2]

In any event it is this oscillation between enchantment and disenchantment since the great scientific revolution of the 17th century that will occupy our attention here, especially the political consequences of this oscillation.

These consequences are evident. Participation in the life of the body politic is either impossible or else presented as an absolute. The disenchanted universe is the universe of juxtaposition and of individualism, while the enchanted universe is that of revolutionary exaltation and fusion. The individualist is not concerned with the totality in which he lives, and he uses beings and things for his own profit. The revolutionary embraces his city and the universe in a mystic exaltation which, in the final analysis, does not recognize the other as other (thing or being) any more than did the individualist. At the level of history or of politics, the oscillation between enchantment and disenchantment brings about suppression of the *participation in otherness*, in the same way that participation of the spirit in the life of the cosmos is eliminated by epistemological bases rendering this oscillation possible. If these bases were to be questioned, this would not only mean that the

[1] See Calvin's *Institution de la religion chrétienne*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1936, vol. I, pp. 52-56.

[2] Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, London, The Cresset Press, 1970.

possibility of a cosmology would be revealed, but also the possibility of political thinking and practice going beyond the alternative between individualism and collectivism, stability and revolution, conservatism and progress.

Political or cultural movements that reject the idea of progressive disenchantment without falling into pantheistic exaltation today are marginal. In any case they have hardly shaken our representation of the world. The force of this representation consists, on the one hand, in the fact that it has led to systematic exploiting of natural resources (an exploiting that only a tiny minority is prepared to renounce) and, on the other, that it has provided a foundation of legitimacy to the theory and practice of liberal democracies, that is to a type of political regime in which control tends to replace domination, functioning and participation.

Moreover, this representation can produce a violent reaction against the democratic-liberal regime to the extent that the rational model it proposes excludes participation. Far from inciting men to align themselves in the regularity of perfect functioning, it pushes them instead to create, by revolt or by revolution, areas of participation (soviets, councils) where political decisions are no longer made according to a functional model but at the end of a process which would require such participation of those figures involved in the elaboration of the political decision that it would lead ultimately to the totalitarian requirement of a fusion of consciences into the voice of the people or of the class.[3] There too a relation of otherness is impossible. Let us now see in what consist the epistemological foundations that have made possible this oscillation from functional juxtaposition to revolutionary fusion.

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Let us recall that with the 17th century, the order of nature ceased depending on divine immateriality and began to depend on a subjective immateriality (*cogito*), so that the notion of order,

[3] For further details on this point see my "World Order or World Control?", *Review of Politics*, 1985:4, pp. 588-610.

whether it referred to nature or to the city, was progressively understood to be the rearranging of inert matter by a thinking substance. If nature has order only to the extent that a subject has ordered it, *a fortiori* the city would also be ordered by a subject. But not just any subject: the question is indeed complex. Let us pause for a moment on this point.

We know that the Cartesian subject is not ... subjective. The rule of evidence, after the clean sweep of radical doubt, guarantees that the order of the world will not be based on illusions or caprices. Truly a strange adventure, this Cartesianism, which accords the omnipotence of doubt to the subject, dissolving being in order then better to efface this same subject in light of clear and distinct ideas. First calling upon the ontological solidity of things, Descartes ultimately succeeded in proposing a method which makes them so evident both in themselves and in the stability of their interactions (mechanism) that they impose themselves on the mind with irrefutable necessity. At this point every moment of questioning or of listening before things is excluded, so that man's relation to the world no longer is based on the *word* of an interrogating mind but on the *viewing* of evidence. We shall call this special way of looking at things *iconic viewing*.

And so there developed, with Descartes, the condition for the possibility of a relationship between man and the world which is no longer in any way based on a word exchanged within a community nor within the self. This development was completed within what can be called the *Cartesian paradigm*, that is a rational model for which the grasping (iconic viewing) of internal and quantifiable relationships within the thing apprehended leads it definitively to the verbal, or, to create a more appropriate term, *logal* relationship of the mind to the thing. The subject who orders the Cartesian universe is a subject who does not speak. This is why it is not really a subject but a thinking substance. Such a substance has nothing further in common with the notion of subject. The *res cogitans* in effect is able to state absolutely evident propositions: it does not need the world in order to think. The past and the future do not count at all in its eyes. All these are acts that a normally constituted subject is incapable of accomplishing.

However, the tendency to eliminate the word in favor of viewing in the act of knowledge coincides inevitably with the elimination

of that which makes cosmology possible: a dialogue between the mind and the cosmos (*logal relationship*). Modern acosmism has various causes, but one of the most important consists undeniably in the growing impossibility encountered by the Moderns in their attempt to insert nature into a discourse.

Every discourse between men and the apparent mutism of things implies that these things be not considered as the ultimate term of the act of knowledge, in other words that they are not given only to be seen but also to be heard. If an object is profoundly apprehended only from the moment in which it is also "heard", it necessarily refers to something other than itself, for hearing does not allow grasping the meaning unless what is heard can be referred to other things already heard. *As soon as the mind is in relation with an object which refers to something other than itself, this object can no longer be the term of the act of knowledge.*

The idea that the meaning of a word becomes clear not from the relation of the word to the thing but from the relation of the word to other words is a common feature in modern linguistics. Today we know that it is impossible to grasp the significance of a word by an intuition which would reveal to us the essence of the thing or of the idea to which this word corresponds. We do not see an object through an intuition revealing it to us in a clear and distinct idea. An object surrenders itself to us only if it is linked to other objects, and it is quite precisely this type of link that we are calling *logal*. We have nothing else available to us other than the model of the *logos* to enlighten the mystery through which things give themselves to us. Thus the world does not reveal itself to us because we see it, but because we hear it. Scientific historians know well that the *vision* of a new fact (what Bachelard called a polemic fact) is made possible only through the continuation of a *discourse* whose coherence has been thrown into question by this fact. Or again, the perception of a vacuum by Torricelli or of a new star by Tycho Brahé was only possible because these phenomena had first been introduced into the discourse then current about the world (Aristotelian paradigm), then "heard" thanks to the dissonance they introduced into this discourse: a new star, the idea of a vacuum are inconceivable in Aristotle's cosmology.

It is, therefore, impossible to inscribe in a discourse objects that are closed in on themselves. Such objects cannot lend themselves

to iconic apprehension and perhaps will not even be perceived. A world fully inscribed in an iconic way of viewing would thus be insignificant and non-existent. Modernity tends toward this insignificance or non-existence to the extent that it has sought to replace the logal relationship of the mind to the world through an iconic grasping.[4]

A logal relationship, it can be seen, constitutes the condition for the possibility of otherness between the subject and the object. But because the object is not the term of the intellectual act or, to use the language of Husserl, because the intentionality of consciousness cannot be cancelled in its object, this otherness cannot be conceived as a relationship between two fixed terms. According to Husserl also, it is an "error" to believe that "the thing we are conscious of, on the one hand, and consciousness, on the other, enter into a relationship with one another in a real sense".[5] Otherness, then, exists only to the object it is pursuing. In this way the object is present to consciousness (otherness) because it is in a certain manner beyond what we perceive and because this beyond is given to it by the discourse in which we record it. The richer the discourse, the better the world gives itself to us. The logal relationship of the mind to things dissolves the rigidity of things in the innermost depth of their interactions, and it is paradoxally in this process of dissolution that they are revealed.[6] Berkeley had seen this clearly, and he did not want there to be postulated, beyond the limits of our perception, any atom of matter in which the object could be contained in itself. For Berkeley things

[4] It is in logical positivism and logical atomism that can best be seen this tendency to "eliminate" the world. By excluding the possibility of a word between the mind and the world (everyone is familiar with Wittgenstein's famous proposition stating that nothing can be said of the world), these two philosophical movements have systematically denied that it was possible simply to receive the significance of a phrase dealing with the world. According to A.J. Ayer, for example, a phrase "has a veritable significance for a given person only if that person knows how to verify the proposition it means to express." *Language, Truth and Logic*, New York, Dover Publications, 1952, p. 35. Although the theme of the verification of a proposition is more complex than it seems, nevertheless let us note that to demand verification means rejecting or (at least) ignoring any *given* significance.

[5] Edmund Husserl, *Recherches logiques*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1959-1963, tome II, 2nd part pp. 178-80.

[6] This was clearly seen by Heidegger for whom, according to Françoise Dastur, it is necessary "to open oneself to that which in language *shows itself only by eliminating itself*". *Histoire de la philosophie*, Paris, Gallimard, 1974, tome III, p. 626 (italics mine).

acquired their substantiality only in the link uniting them to a spirit (that of man or of God). His error was in having conceived this spirit much more like vision than discourse. However, by making of immateriality the condition for the possibility of the appearance of beings and things, he was practically the last natural philosopher to understand that the world could be neither reconstructed nor perceived from the postulate that objects exist primarily within the enclosure of their mass. In a certain manner modern science is also in the process of rejecting this postulate by discovering that the observation of nature cannot be radically detached from the mind engaged in this observation.

Thus it is only things which do not refer only to themselves, things *ontologically separate*, which can become the signs of the discourse penetrating them and which can thus be inscribed in a cosmology. Accepting or refusing an ontological split in things thus means accepting or refusing the possibility of a word between man and nature.[7] With identical beings and things (which Heidegger called *die Seiende*), there can be no cosmology. But non-identical beings and things cannot be reduced to a clear and distinct apprehension (iconic way of viewing) because they allow the person seeking to understand them to hold a discourse situating their points of articulation beyond them, in an invisibility that underlies a *logal relationship* of the mind to the thing.

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The elimination of the conditions of the possibility for cosmology at the end of the 18th century, has had a profound influence on the development of political societies in the West.

First of all because, up until the French Revolution, order in the city had always been understood as the reflection of cosmic order and the growing impossibility of developing a cosmology obviously made order in the city problematic. And then because the

[7] Accepting an ontological division in things means accepting that things are not everything that is. By ontological division I mean something like what Husserl called the suspension of the thesis of the world, if it is true that this suspension, as René Schérer observes, allows us to escape the obligation of "referring all the meaning of being to the being-object." *Histoire de la philosophie, op. cit.* p. 540.

elimination of the word in man's relation to the world has also drawn men to do without the word in their relationships with one another, thereby encouraging regimes of *functional integration* as well as violent protests against this integration. From Descartes, who, in the *Discourse on Method*, declared that one should not worry about what others had said, to Wittgenstein, who declared at the beginning of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* that it was unimportant to him to know if his own thoughts had already been thought by others, the West has applied considerable effort to replacing the *meaning* which arises from a word exchanged with that mechanical intelligibility that an iconic way of viewing accords. To the extent that there is no specifically political sector other than through the existence of a public place where words are exchanged, the replacement of the word with an iconic way of viewing has undermined the institutions and the customs that protected this place.

Can we conceive of a political or natural order without words being exchanged? This question, without being formulated explicitly, is perhaps the one that has most tormented the modern age.

We know that by the 17th century all order, whether natural or political, rested upon the subjective immateriality of the *cogito*. When, in the early 17th century, matter was extracted from the cosmic harmonies to be reconstituted in inert and juxtaposed masses, in the entire universe there remained only the Cartesian *cogito* to reunite these masses into an intelligible order. By excluding the possibility of a logal relationship between the mind and things, the *cogito* reduces these things to islands of matter that its *iconic way of viewing* alone can succeed in linking together. As we know, however, these links cannot constitute a world. The iconic way of viewing is the corollary of acosmism. The price to be paid for the constitution of the world by the subject is, we might even say, the elimination of the world. There remains but a tissue of relationships that can no longer generate otherness between man and the world. Moreover, no further presence can manifest itself within this tissue.

If we now admit that this model for the *acosmic reconstruction* of the world has influenced the political organization of Western societies, we immediately understand what effects this influence

has wielded: the dissolution of a common world, functional and no longer cosmic integration of individuals, the disappearance of relationships based in otherness, the decreasing importance of the word.

Let us briefly compare the *cogito* as center of political organization to a monarch, for example.

The King is indeed a subjectivity (just like the *cogito*), but the political order which rests upon him does not depend on his capacity to take in the totality of the *res publica* in a single glance. It is his word that orients and animates the State and not an iconic inspection of the mechanisms out of which this State is composed. From that point on his legitimacy is not claimed to derive from his capacity to control all the interactions he initiates. His legitimacy does not depends on an iconic way of viewing. Nothing like this can be found in the notion of order that comes from the "Cartesian paradigm". There the order of nature, and later that of the city as well, depends on the capacity of the subject to grasp instantaneously and exhaustively the apprehended object, a capacity which every individual can rightfully develop. And from this derives the so-called democratic legitimacy of modern societies. Their organization is no longer anchored in a monarchical or oligarchical subjectivity, but in a subjectivity to which all can accede. Unfortunately, to the extent that this subjectivity is the corollary of natural or political acosmism, it leads to elimination of the otherness of beings and things. What kind of a regime is it in which no one can understand its social organization other than by renouncing the perception of the *presence* of the individuals making up this organization? What type of legitimacy can be based upon the evisceration of the political cosmos?

As can be seen, the political legitimacy that derives from the *cogito* is neither dynastic, nor democratic, nor charismatic. It is alogal and iconic. Alogal because theoretically it does not require an exchange of words in order to make itself recognized, and iconic because it situates individuals in a mechanical totality.

Yet if, on the level of scientific epistemology, we may doubt the possibility of a subject so removed from the world that it could contemplate it in its totality, similarly on the political level we can doubt the possibility of a way of viewing so iconic that it would owe nothing further to the subjectivity of the one engaged in it.

Political legitimacy derived from the Cartesian paradigm is too improbable to ever be established. The consequence of this is that, even while seeking to establish political legitimacy on an alogal and iconic comprehension of the city, modern societies never cease to doubt the possibility of being able to achieve such an establishment. They want this establishment to rest on the "universal subjectivity" of the *cogito*, but at the same time they cannot believe in their project. There is a constant effort to hold the subject as source of full legitimacy, on the one hand (human rights—voice of conscience), and on the other hand, an obsessive suspicion that this effort is doomed to failure. But the most serious aspect is that in developing an impossible alogal and iconic legitimacy institutional, political and administrative instruments are created which should one day allow integral (totalitarian) control over the body politic. How, it can be asked, can men deliberately set up the instruments for achieving such control?

The answer is that this operation, in the final analysis, is justified by the fact that totalitarian control of the body politic would be at the service of all thanks to the rigor and the objectivity of the iconic way of viewing upon which it would be based.

But the more the operation moves forward, the less it seems probable that such a way of viewing can ever be created. The instruments of control risk falling into the hands of a partial (i.e. incomplete) and non-impartial source of knowledge. It is then necessary to fend off the threat of control exercised by a minority by cancelling subjectivities through a system of self-regulation of the body politic. Certainly it had been planned that the mechanics of this body would be carefully controlled, but in the name of a way of viewing which, because it is iconic, would have taken into account both the nature of each element and the sum of their interactions. Such a way of viewing, no longer dependent on a particular subjectivity, could not be accused of regulating political society in an arbitrary manner. It would be the way of viewing of all, of everyone and anyone, just as the scientific way of viewing claims to be.

As soon as an iconic way of viewing proves to be unattainable, *as soon as knowledge of things cannot organize human life*, it is essential to prohibit anyone from exercising this power. This

operation also is impossible, and only relative success can be achieved. From a depersonalization of power through the universalization of the way of viewing which would have given it a basis, we have shifted to a depersonalization of power through the differential cancelling of individual desires. The legitimacy of such a power can no longer be derived from a moral norm (traditional societies) or an intellectual norm (iconic way of viewing), but from its capacity to perform a functional integration of all economic and social variables. We can thus define the *functional integration* of modern societies as an historico-political process determined by the increasing and ultimately overwhelming difficulties encountered in the construction of an alogal and iconic legitimacy.

Thus the manner in which the Western world reformulated the notion of order after the 17th century has helped to nourish the hostility of this world to the idea of order in general and to the political order in particular. For although we can doubt the capacity of a subject to raise himself to universal considerations (iconic way of viewing), this is the condition for the possibility of all *order*, which is thereby thrown into doubt also, since there is nothing other than the subject after the 17th century who bears in himself sufficient invisibility to constitute the focal point at which beings and things meet. As soon as the capacity of a universal subject to grasp a natural or political totality is thrown into question, we must necessarily be satisfied with a mechanical equilibrium between the various parts of the body politic, or with mathematical functions that explain the movements of natural bodies.

The impossibility of founding the political and natural orders on the Cartesian subject reinforces the creation of cybernetic systems once the hope for such foundation has secretly prepared for the coming of these systems. Or, in other words, the disenchantment of the world induced by the reflux (then the fixation) of the invisible on the human subject alone (and no longer on the divine or natural) constitutes the *epistemological* preamble to the major *functional integrations of the modern age*. There is also the fact that, with the 20th century, the death of the subject has accelerated this functional integration, which could still be confused with order

as long as there remained the hope of establishing the structure of the natural or political cosmos on the invisibility of the Cartesian subject. Very rapidly it was no longer a matter of limiting the disorders of the age by reducing them to the proportions of an intellegible order, but of guaranteeing at least the self-regulation of political society, a self-regulation that the evolution in the notion of the law would serve to reinforce even more.

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Robert Boyle, at the end of the 17th century, was one of the last to think that the notion of law had meaning only if it was attached to the will of an intelligent being. Natural laws, for him, are derived from the divine will, just as civil laws are derived from the will of the monarch. One century later no one still believed it necessary to associate the laws of nature with nature's creator or the laws of the city with a legislator.[8] Robert R. Palmer describes a significant episode at the beginning of the French Revolution. A solar eclipse took place, and it was the occasion of great rejoicing. Despite the deterioration of the political climate, no one thought of interpreting this *natural* event as the manifestation of a *supernatural* will disturbed by the nascent political troubles.[9] The order of nature had ceased being linked to a creative will capable of inspiring in beings and in things a desire to become other and more than oneself. Very little time would pass before the order of the city would also be made independent of a political will capable of inspiring such a desire. The only thing remaining would be economic interests easily compatible with the rational cycles of functional integration.

Natural and political things thus seem to function by themselves in such a way that it is no longer thought necessary to associate this functioning with a spirit who would have conceived it. There is here an intellectual attitude that is difficult to understand, since even the simplest cybernetic system refers to an intelligence that

[8] See E.A. Burtt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday & Company, 1954, pp. 198-99 (first published in 1924).

[9] See R.R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 44.

had previously imagined it. But man now wants only the objects that surround him and refer to something other than that which is placed there right before him. He sees the movements of the cosmos as a series of interactions that have been constituted by the random chance of physico-chemical affinities. With a self-regulated cosmos, the epistemic foundation was given for a functional city, a city with no governing will. To speak once more of order in such a city is abusive. The notion of order includes, among the ordered elements, a tendency to *become* something other than oneself. Such elements are not identical with themselves and do not aim at persevering in their being. Exactly the opposite occurs in functional integration; interdependent elements are closed in on themselves and, so to speak, are perfectly stable ontologically. There is no tendency or desire within them which would lead them beyond their inertial mass. But modern cities have been created from a functional integration model.

Naturally it will be necessary to wait still another century to see if Western countries begin to eliminate all references to a unique and personal will from their laws. It is also doubtful that such a separation can ever be achieved. The notion of popular will, even if it no longer refers to a personal will, still pays homage to the idea that a country must be guided by something other than a set of mechanical and impersonal laws.

It is no less undeniable that Western democracies today are tending to eliminate the impact of will or desire in human affairs. First of all because will makes economic forecasting difficult, and the economy is the activity that now underlies all political and social life. And then, as we have seen, because the political order must be made into a blind mechanism, the only form of order that does not refer us to a subjective immateriality, which we no longer believe capable of being made universal. That there can be a non-subjective immateriality, founder of both a cosmic and a political order (a possibility that was a reality for traditional societies): this is what we, Modern Man, can no longer believe, even if our earthly cities are far from being perfectly independent of our representation of the universe. They are, in fact, so far from this that, without the new image of the world born from the scientific revolution of the 17th century, the notion of functional integration could not have appeared. However, and this must now

be stressed, this notion *has nothing further in common* with the notion of cosmic or political order as it is traditionally understood. To convince us of this, let us turn for a moment to Plato.

At the end of the *Republic*, Socrates emphasized the rational character of the cosmos in order to encourage us to believe that the city too could be organized on a rational basis. Plato, and later Aristotle as well, "transfer their desire for a better-made society into an ideal Nature ... (that they place) before the State and the individual as a model to be imitated."[10] The notion of order, as we see, is normative (a model to be imitated), that is, it has meaning only for elements (beings or things) capable of *tending* toward it by becoming progressively other than what they are (from ignorance to wisdom) or, at least, by attempting to become other than what they are (from imperfection to perfection). It is evident that for Plato order obliged society and individuals to espouse an idea, so that it did not constitute a *functional integration* organizing beings and things as they are. We repeat that *functional integration* of the cosmos or of the city is only conceivable with beings or things that are strictly identical: eternal atoms or consumers without desire. In other words, the elements of functional integration should not and cannot tend toward their own perfection, toward what formerly was called their entelechy. Then, in the terms Jacques Ellul used to describe societies derived from the scientific revolution, "only the eternal substitution of homogeneous elements reigns."[11] Let us note that, at this stage, time, as the dimension in which substantial changes could occur, disappears. It is commonly stated in the history of sciences that Cartesianism, paradigm of the functional integration of the cosmos, excludes temporality. Parallel to this, societies based on the model of functional integration also slip outside temporality by conceiving of themselves (in Saint-Simon, for example) as machines "all of whose parts contribute to make the whole function";[12] or, as Karl Mannheim put it a century later, as a world "in which there would never be anything new ... and

[10] Robert Lenoble, *Esquisse d'une histoire de l'idée de nature*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1969, p. 115. See also Ernan McMullin "Cosmic Order in Plato and Aristotle" in *The Concept of Order*, Saul G. Kuntz, ed., Seattle and London, The University of Washington Press, 1968, pp. 63-76.

[11] Jacques Ellul, *Le Système technicien*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1977, p. 23.

[12] Saint-Simon, *De la philosophie appliquée à l'amélioration des institutions sociales*, Paris, 1875-76, tome 39, p. 180.

where every instant would be a repetition of the past."[13]

We see what a close link unites temporality to the possibility for beings and things to tend toward the place of their fulfillment or their perfection. In the cosmos or the city, time tends to disappear as soon as things and beings are integrated with a kind of functioning independent of the natural or (respectively) intentional finality that they can pursue. *A process of atemporalization necessarily accompanies the functional integration of the political and natural worlds.*

In pre-Galilean physics, a process of atemporalization was inconceivable because all creation tended toward its creator and no movement of this creation was intelligible outside the context of this tension. Even a falling rock was part of this tension. But as soon as the closed world of our ancestors exploded into an infinite universe, the age of relativism began, since the movements of nature can be understood using any arbitrarily chosen system of reference whatsoever. There is no longer movement nor rest in things, since their mobility or their immobility no longer depend on whether they seek to attain a place or a state, but on the point of view from which they are seen. The principle of inertia, corollary to the relativity of Galilean movement and foundation of the infinity of the universe, makes of movement a state just like rest. How then can movement denote desire or tension? After the 17th century, the intellectual procedures that gave access to the intelligibility of movement manifests a tendency to attain a place or a state of perfection.

With the disappearance of a *logal relationship* between the mind and the universe, for things there is a corresponding disappearance of any tending toward a goal, or, to give a more philosophical definition to this tending, of any *entelechic movement.* In both cases objects can either be understood or can move independently of the postulate of entelechic movement that would situate them within the discourse of the Creator or within a desire for perfection.

It is evident that order, from Plato to St. Thomas, was not the means of functional integration. Order had a normative character

[13] Karl Mannheim, *Idéologie et Utopie*, Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1956, p. 232 (French translation).

because it obliged the individual and society to espouse an ideal and because this ideal was also the object of a *desire* generating relative autonomy in the *entelechic movement* of inanimate or animate moving bodies (including man).

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It is thus an error to believe that the modern age has liberated itself from every cosmological sanction in the organization of human relationships because modern political regimes are also dependent, not exactly on a cosmology, but on the absence of cosmology. There is a relation between the earthly city and the heavens, but this relation, instead of bringing the city into contact with a transcendent order, places it in contact with the infinite space of the new universe born of Descartes, a space which, on the one hand, eliminates the condition for the possibility of all entelechic movement and, on the other, establishes the possibility for functional integration. With infinite space and a mechanized city, human liberty is detached from all cosmic or political order and seeks to realize itself in a sort of vacuum, both cosmic and political.

Thus two currents have contributed to the formation of the modern city. One led to a concept of order which, by placing the source of order in subjective immateriality that could not be universalized, in the long run made existing order intolerable and led to its being replaced by functional integration. The other led to an emptying out of the heavens, authorizing a Faustian concept of human liberty. The individual was thus made to withdraw into his own sphere in order to attempt to find the liberty refused him by the mechanical character of the cosmos or of political society. Individualism was born, along with its fraternal enemy, political romanticism, bearing revolutionary movements toward a freedom of participation. Here we find once again the oscillation described at the beginning of this essay.

If we examine more particularly the consequences of individualism, we see that the more the individual seeks his liberty in the enjoyment of his private life, the more he expects the State to be transformed into a self-regulated mechanism for increasing goods and resources. Since political liberty is no longer conceived

of as *participation* in the order of a collectivity, political legitimacy resides above all in the capacity that the State has for increasing the area for the exercise of the liberty of enjoyment. An increase in the gross national product, an increase in the public debt, the importance of questions of taxation and redistribution of income are all phenomena which, in the eyes of specialists, characterize modern industrial societies. But the fact that we must insist on above all else is that these phenomena are in no way the fruit of an inevitable historical development. These phenomena have their own logic. As soon as the functional integration of modern States begins, the liberty of enjoyment must be guaranteed and increased, for power has no other means at its disposal for manifesting and exercising its legitimacy. Unless, once again, this type of legitimacy is violently rejected in the name of a totalizing and totalitarian participation in the life of a community directed by a charismatic leader. This rejection, as Max Weber has emphasized, leads to an *impasse*, and once it is exhausted, it makes the community turn with more determination than ever toward the path of functional integration.

In this way the Cartesian paradigm, by indirectly promulgating the idea of an order that no longer rests on any kind of immateriality, encouraged the development of political regimes for which an increase in productivity constituted and still constitutes the only source of legitimacy. Upon reflection, it is not clear what other means the modern State could use in order to establish its legitimacy. Values, symbols, passions, norms and charisma can no longer play a role in functional integration. From a political legitimacy which, from Antiquity to the Renaissance, was anchored in an order that was both guarantor and generator of entelechic movements, with the appearance of the Cartesian paradigm, there was a shift to a legitimacy based in the final analysis on effective management of the political instrument. This new type of legitimacy, which has been gestating over the past two centuries, appeared clearly in the middle of the twentieth century at a time when "all Western States were seeking to compensate the loss of traditional legitimacy by affirming that they exercised their power only in order better to promote industrial development."[14]

[14] Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1978, p. 146.

From this point of view the extraordinary fascination manifested by the Marxists for the subject of control or of ownership of the means of production can be easily explained. If the legitimacy of the modern State truly resides exclusively in its capacity to enhance the well-being of its citizens, then only the State that promotes an increase of well-being equal for all is legitimate. From this it is but a short step to conclude that to establish a just State, it suffices merely to eliminate private property. Postulating, with good reason, a disenchanted body politic, Marxists could not derive political legitimacy from any value whatever, so that they could imagine this legitimacy as being truly established only if the organization of production was done by all and for all.

But is a legitimacy that is based on the rationalization of a society guaranteeing material progress still legitimacy?

Many experts in political theory have asked themselves this question. Carl Schmitt, for example, who came up with a negative response.[17] In his opinion, the legitimacy of the modern State, that is the complex of rules and procedures through which political decisions are made, does not represent a new form of legitimacy but, to the contrary, the abolition of all legitimacy. This comes from the fact that, according to Schmitt, there is, in the notion of legitimacy, a reference to a moral good, a reference which obviously no longer exists in the functional integration that now determines the affairs of a State, however abundant in other respects might be the discourse on values, human rights or national destiny. The more this integration is established, the more modern nations are slipping, so to speak, for better or for worse, toward a rule of totalitarian management of lives and of goods.

This is, of course, a trend which, like all historical trends, can be reversed. And there is no dearth of signs pointing to a possible reversal of this trend.

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[15] See Carl Schmitt, *Legalität und Legitimität*, Munich, 1932.