

# A Liberal vs A Conservative

## The Hidden Temporal Structure of Our Political Identities

*Andrey V. Raychev, Kancho M. Stoychev*

**Andrey V. Raychev**, PhD in Sociology  
Institute for Social Values and Structures, Sofia, Bulgaria  
Associate Professor

E-mail: a.raichev@me.com  
Tel: +359888611020  
Address: 23 James Bauchier Blvd., Sofia 1164, Bulgaria

**Kancho M. Stoychev**, PhD in Sociology  
Institute for Social Values and Structures, Sofia, Bulgaria  
Director

E-mail: k.Stoychev@me.com  
Tel. +359888611025  
Address: 23 James Bauchier Blvd., Sofia 1164, Bulgaria

DOI: 10.31278/1810-6374-2022-20-2-66-82

Over the past few years, politicians, experts and publicists have been competing in the search and actualization of fault lines, as well as areas of disagreement and disengagement—both in international relations and within societies and polities. With the onset of the COVID-19 epidemic, the cacophony of fears and concerns (which, paradoxically, sounds quite harmonious, like church catabasia) were accompanied by mantras like “the world will no longer be the same.”

If this wide spectrum of gloomy warnings and dark prophecies indicates anything, it clearly signifies the confusion of the best minds

unable (or not willing) to comprehend what is happening. In this essay, we attempt to identify the causes and examine the mechanisms of this confusion and dare offer a remedy to “cure” this grievous ailment and, moreover, a way to alleviate and resolve these contradictions and concerns.

To do this, we will introduce a kind of coordinate system of political ideas that humanity used in the past and uses up to date. By tracing the development of social thought within this matrix with regard to time (past, present and future), we classify and analyze 3+2 main strands of socio-political thought (liberalism, conservatism and revolutionary idea + left/right). As a result, we arrive at the conclusion that the time has come to work out a socio-political concept aimed at achieving consensus rather than goals, and show the locus of this concept.

Humanity has been engaged in this kind of reasoning almost since the emergence of philosophy, so there is no need to burden our essay with a long martyrology of the names and ideas that have contributed to this discussion. If we tried to follow this debate, our idea would risk drowning in a flood of contradictory concepts, definitions and arguments. This is just an essay—not so much a study but rather an invitation to discussion.

## **HIDDEN STRUCTURES**

Any political judgment is inevitably “calibrated” in two coordinate systems: left-right and liberal-conservative. Ultimately, we always run into these two oppositions, which some see as functional, others as meaningful, and still others take for granted, almost as a “tag.” These two oppositions are separate and self-sufficient, as can be seen from everyday political practice, when parties are defined as left-conservative, right-liberal, etc. But the grounds for this self-sufficiency are not obvious.

Opposite definitions (both left-right and liberal-conservative oppositions look like that) are usually generated by some hidden, invisible structure that reproduces them. So, we will try to identify such structures by relying on our temporal concept of sociality.

It all begins with pushing the “guilty person” to the sidelines, that is, the one who must atone for his sins in church, get closer to eternal

life, etc. The place of the guilty person is taken by a kind man, a “good savage,” who is not bad by nature, is not burdened with original sin, and, therefore, is not yet spoiled by society.

A whole bunch of thinkers, regardless of their personal mutual sympathies and antipathies, have asserted, as an obvious fact, that society (or the “ambience”) is bad, and that it is society that spoils a person. The conclusion that follows from this is very simple: a better society must be created. Suddenly, it turns out that society can be “made,” that its members are able to “build” it—something unheard of before and very, very bold. Attempts to build society (in the form of ideological projects) date back to the Renaissance and were realized in a classical form at the end of the 18th century during the French Revolution. Of all the chaos created by that revolution, one self-reflection has come through the ages, encapsulated quite well and fully in the “Freedom, Equality, Fraternity” motto.

And it is from formal equality and *formal* freedom that the left-right relationship arises in socio-political life.

According to our conception (which views “conservative” and “liberal” as another type of contradiction), the “left” and the “right” are different interpretations of the “equality” and “freedom” hierarchy. For the right, the understanding of the social world sounds like this: “I am free, you are also free—this is where we are equal, and all our inequalities arise from my and your free choice.” “There is no need to talk about equality because it is fundamentally provided for in our freedom”—this is the core of a typical claim the right would make.

On the contrary, the approach of the Left says: “There is no need to talk about freedom because every morning I have to beg you for work, for which you pay me; otherwise, both I and my family will starve to death. My freedom is illusory. I am not actually free since I am not equal to you. When I take away/limit your property, we will be even. Only then will we both be free.” This is the core of a claim the left would make.

In other words, *the right-wing formula says: “We are equal because we are free,” while the left-wing formula says: “We are free because we are equal.”* As we can see, the formulas have something in common as

they do not exclude one another, do not contradict each other in their base, and they are commensurate. The history of European political life oscillates within the width of the “freedom-equality” pendulum’s swing, and this correlation is constantly readjusted, depending on who and how felt the deficit of freedom or, vice versa, equality.

So, the “left-right” opposition is based on freedom being opposed to equality, unlike the “conservative-liberal” opposition. The fact that gives rise to the latter opposition is that equality and freedom proclaimed by the French Revolution are *formal*.

Equality is formal in the literal sense of the word. It arises literally in the form of a list of equal people (as ultimately any list is based on sameness). This list is called a nation, and a part of this list is called voters. These are no longer dukes/peasants/priests, but formally equal citizens, the French.

It is important to note that *formal* equality (later denied and criticized) replaces formal inequality. I am a bourgeois, not a nobleman and, therefore, I have no right to wear a sword. I have no right to participate in a whole number of situations. I cannot even dream of marrying a whole category of women, nor do they have the right to marry me. Caste society is unequal in principle. It was replaced by a society of formal equality and this, of course, was a huge step forward.

Thus, the “left” and the “right” arise from the “freedom-equality” opposition, and the “formal-informal” opposition sets the “liberalism-conservatism” opposition (although there is also a third, hidden element).

The “left-right” is a continuum. There is no room for a third element here. Centrism and all its varieties cannot be a third self-sufficient element between these two poles. It is just an interim element, a kind of mixture of right and left ingredients taken in certain proportion, producing a variety of center-left or right-wing intentions and actions. But the conservative-liberal space has room for a third element, which we will now introduce to you.

So, the political history of the modern West begins with formal equality. It becomes a supreme value and a norm extolled on one side and criticized on the other two.

What is the apologetics of formal equality?

The first and the main basis and premise of formal equality is the postulate that there are only individuals in the world. Marriage is individual, guilt is individual, crime is individual... An individual bears all responsibility in the form of his rights and obligations, since he is formally equal—a private individual, a bourgeois individual, a self-sufficient individual, who stands at the center of apologetics and becomes the foundation of liberalism as such, and his freedom boils down to his ability to make a choice. *The human substance is reduced to choice*. All people are equal simply by virtue of their identical rights and obligations—the subject of a social contract.

As we have already mentioned above, the main complaints about formal equality boil down to two points.

All conservatism stems from the postulate that there is *natural inequality*. Formal equality overshadows the fact that there is no equality. It is just a formality, but not in the sense that there is another, real and desirable equality somewhere, but in the sense that it was introduced artificially. A conservative says: “Formal equality is stuck on an individual and covers up the fact that people are not equal.” For this reason, a conservative speaks of human essence (and this is where the fate of conservatism lies). “On the other side of your considerations about how to call and how to treat a person, on the other side of all your liberal efforts to prove that formal equality is the truth of last resort, there is another, ultimate truth—what a person is really like, and what his essence and his nature are like.”

Therefore, conservative theories are built on the narrative focusing on the essence of man. A conservative claims that outside of his rights and obligations, outside of public and other agreements, a person has *something that cannot be included in a social contract* and that is his human essence. This explains the paradox noticed a long time ago: there are dozens of different kinds of conservatism and each of them is conservative in its own way. And more and more kinds of conservatism are emerging.

Conservatism stems from a certain interpretation of human nature. The basic procedure is as follows: a conservative attributes a certain nature, certain eternal, and unchanging essence to a person.

Another, more radical claim recognizes formal equality, but declares it deception and falsehood.

While conservatives argue that there is human essence (not just formal equality), this second kind of critics, the revolutionaries, declare equality an empty formality that does not exist in reality. This is a different opposition to formal equality. Again, we see the criticism of liberalism, but from diametrically opposed positions: “All your formal equality is only ideology, the product of false consciousness. You claim that people are equal, but this is not so, because they have different property, different gender, etc.”

So, some celebrate formal equality as equal access to choice, others say that formal equality does not exist, but there is human essence; still others claim that so-called formal equality is just a disguised form of domination, that is, an ideologeme that passes off the particular as universal.

If all of the above is true, then these three points of view on formal equality are parts of a single whole: conservatism, liberalism, and revolutionism are existing in one and the same person, but in different doses, and defined not once and for all, but vary depending on the subject of reasoning.

However, in socio-political life, these are three separate points of view and each has its own “fate.”

1. The fate of conservatism is to search for essence. A conservative finds manifestations of essence in everything, that is, he looks for the universal and eventually always comes to God, for God can play the role of this universal better than anyone else. (In our temporal concept, it is the past).

2. The fate of liberalism is in the increasing formalization of equality, which is facilitated by the constant simplification of meanings. At the beginning of the search for equality, liberals distinguish their shades, but as this point of view gains momentum, nuances fade and meanings become more and more universal, pushing to the extreme, as we can see these days. This simplification of meanings and universalization of equality represent an unconscious attempt to reduce an individual to the position of an entirely private person who lives strictly and only in the present (which in its extreme form leads to presentism).

3. Still others—revolutionaries—hold diametrically opposed views: for them time has a vector character, and they are committed to the future. In their eyes, any real form of equality is designed to cover up invisible inequality, and therefore must be annihilated. And since it is annihilation, one can hear the word “nihil”: an-**nihil**-ation (in the 19th century, Nietzsche heard “nihilism”).

Any revolution sets vector time by virtue of the fact that it plots an-nihil-ation, striving for some kind of “nothing.” And if “nothing” is set for the end of time, the world will get a vector to follow (not only in Christianity; the idea of annihilating capitalism also sets a vector, like any millennialism). Only “nothing” can create an arrow of time, for there is no other force capable of doing this. (This is one of the consequences of our temporal concept of sociality.) This case provides an excellent illustration. Freedom turns to be tightly linked to an-nihil-ation, which means there is a substitution at the basic level, a radical substitution as “freedom” gets replaced by “liberation.” In other words, my story about how I will live as a free person is replaced by a story about how I will become free. This creates a serious paradox which entails serious consequences: freedom, viewed as liberation, is gone after liberation! Strictly speaking, it becomes only a regulative function, just something obligatory, a revolutionary duty.

### **HOW THE HIDDEN STRUCTURES FUNCTION**

How do the three concepts we have described—conservatism, liberalism, and revolutionism—relate to different (specific) objects? Let us try to look at this world through the lens of essence, choice and shackles. As we have seen above, a conservative places emphasis on “essence,” a liberal, on “choice,” and a revolutionary, on “shackles.”

So, let us take one step at a time.

**Nation.** 1) For a conservative, a nation is essence. In some variants, it may even mean “blood.” It is a kind of super-essence comparable to God. 2) For a liberal, a nation is a matter of choice. 3) For a revolutionary, a nation stands for nothing but shackles. Therefore, according to the conservative version, a nation must be accepted unquestioningly. A liberal chooses his nations freely and goes through

them as he is entitled to become whatever he wants. According to a revolutionary, nations should be destroyed because they are just forms that create the illusion of equality, which, however, hide the actual inequality.

**Religion.** 1) Religion is essence. 2) Religion is choice. 3) Religion is opium. Faith is considered from these three possible points of view.

**Fatherhood, that is, primary power.** 1) Father is natural. This is common truth for a conservative. 2) Any power is a matter of choice, a liberal will say. 3) Father is an opposing force (that is, in the eyes of a conservative who accepts power and fatherhood as essence, the others look like bastards and patricides).

**Gender.** 1) It is essence, of course, a conservative will say. 2) It certainly is choice, a liberal will object. 3) Shackles, a revolutionary will retort. (LGBT extremists echo Proudhon; after all, there is no difference between the following statements: “property is theft” and “gender is shackles”). For a liberal, gender is a matter of choice; for a conservative, it is intrinsic essence. This incommensurability emerged long before fierce contemporary debates.

How is it possible to apply the same procedure to the homeland, to gender, to power, and to faith? In fact, it is possible because all of the above examples involve a play of the past, the present and the future, and hidden temporal dominations. In the first example, the past is perceived as essence; the second example makes the present the most important thing; and in the third example, the future becomes a decisive factor, taking over the other two times. *“Essence,” “choice,” and “shackles” are simply three different ways to describe the same social object through different temporal lenses.*

This can best be illustrated by notions of bastardism and patricide. “Every revolutionary is a patricide and every liberal is a bastard.” In the eyes of a conservative, this looks unquestionable and structurally defined. So a conservative acts as an apologist. *A conservative “inherits the land” and is obliged to preserve it and transfer it intact: Homeland, Fatherhood, Gender.* An even more expressive illustration is communism and its program of three an-nihil-ations: marriage, private property, the state. Annihilation makes people free because

*formal* equality and *formal* freedom are annihilated and replaced by real freedom and equality.

The three concepts of equality described above lead to **three concepts of freedom**, respectively.

**The first concept.** Freedom for a conservative is a conscious necessity.<sup>1</sup> The word “necessity” itself hints at something that cannot be circumvented (ancient Greeks used an even more beautiful word—“fate”). So, *a conservative gives priority to fate and duty*, thereby getting trapped by a very important contradiction: “necessary but impossible.” Any conservatism inevitably falls into this “necessary but impossible” trap by virtue of the fact that it accepts necessity as its freedom and thus it is not “*free from...*,” as liberals are, but “*free in...*” A conservative is free because there is God (his God), there is the family, and there is the state. His freedom stems from his obligation, that is, he is obliged. (Hegel playfully argued about a person’s obligation to give away his property to the poor. Hegel says that if this obligation is fulfilled completely, this will not eliminate poverty, but will eliminate the obligation itself. When we have given away all our property, the obligation disappears, it eliminates itself. An obligation contradicts itself. Fichte exposes the structure of this contradiction: *necessary but impossible*. We set ourselves a task that cannot be solved in principle).

This is the tragedy of conservatism. A conservative seeks essence in things which he is dependent on as the only way to gain freedom. With such a conservative approach, a person cannot be free without being dependent on anything. A conservative’s freedom boils down to the awareness of necessity and therefore, in his own eyes, the stronger he depends on something—his homeland, his mother, some idea—which he accepts freely, without external coercion(!), the more human he is. Going like this, he eventually runs into the last possibility: “I love them and this puts me much higher than you”—bastards and patricides. This is an undoubtedly tragic position because love here necessarily implies suffering. I suffer and love, and this is what—not equality with you, which does not exist and cannot exist—makes me a free person.

---

<sup>1</sup> Let us say that such a perception of freedom does not make Lenin a conservative.

***The second concept.*** What vistas does liberalism open up for us? We have already said that liberalism reduces freedom to choice and this entails three unpleasant consequences. Firstly, *the definition of “freedom” becomes increasingly general and people become increasingly commensurable.* Ultimately, there is little difference between an Iroquois Indian and a Sorbonne professor. Equating an Iroquois with a professor creates great trouble because the Iroquois are rarely concerned with thick folios, and Sorbonne professors rarely run around the woods with tomahawks at the trail.

The second trouble hanging over freedom, understood as choice, is the ever-increasing formality of freedom itself. (We can recall the well-known Hegelian master-slave dialectic. Since the spirit, says the philosopher, is both free and alive, those who prefer freedom to life become masters, and those who prefer life to freedom become slaves.) Reduced to rights, the strictly formal essence of a human being eventually comes to the end: “a human means alive.” This implies both maximum generality and complete universality. So, it turns out that life is our common freedom, our only and last freedom. This is absurd, of course, but the COVID-19 epidemic proved quite vividly that this is today’s reality: our equality and freedom have turned out to be corporeal. The body has turned out to be a sacred object. Could anything be more godless than turning a body into a transcendent object?

Thirdly, the liberal idea tells us something else: you will definitely *feel better*. It tells a reasonable person, someone who makes the right choice, that there is a bonus in store for him. It cannot be otherwise: you are no different from an Iroquois, you have been reduced to your body, nothing else makes you a human being but your rights. Your equality comes down to the fact that you are corporeal. This destroys all definitions and self-determination of a person, all his ideas and everything left over from the past that was considered so important just recently. You may be a Bulgarian, a Russian, an Eskimo—it does not matter, because you can choose another fatherland for yourself. You are a man—that does not matter either, because you can choose another gender. You are a father, but your children can be taken away

from you and you will stop being a father. If you are a good father, then everything is fine, but children should be taken away from a bad father *because ultimately you have no essence, but just rights and obligations*. For this reason, those who understand everything the right way and are reasonable people are entitled to a good future, and *the residents of a liberal society are obliged to wish more, but not something different (because the ideal has already been determined and achieved)*.

Growth turns out to be not an additional, external definition of liberalism, but its irrevocable condition, its central characteristic.

***The third worldview states:*** freedom is a-nihil-ation and the world has a vector, which, as we saw, leads to the replacement of “freedom” with “liberation.” This was perfectly manifest in the early years of communism: in their drive for liberation, the liberators go as far as *depriving* themselves of freedom. Take a closer look at Lenin who calls on his adherents to create a party of a new type where you, the freest being sincerely wishing to bring freedom to the whole world, will lose your personal freedom and stop acting as an individual; instead, you will be instructed on what to do and how to act. The freest people turn into cogs consciously, of their own free will. Even such brilliant erudite persons as the utterly freedom-loving Lunacharsky become cogs. But he is so super-elitist that he intends to kill his own freedom in order to free humanity.

But when individuals sharing such views come to power, freedom is no longer addressed to people around them, but is redirected mainly to the so-called “new man.” “We will create new people.” We will create freedom for unborn people. Why? Because freedom has been reduced to liberation. Only heroes who sacrifice their lives are free.

Thus, we can see three irrevocable, in our opinion, fates of all three points of view. Some get entangled in essence and in the mechanism of debt, others get caught in increasingly growing formalism and universality: growth is necessary because if we grow, life will become better and more exciting. Still others plunge headlong into the idea of annihilation, with freedom being fully identified with liberation, and time getting a vector. But when considered all together, these three points of view represent a “meaningful whole” that functions perfectly

well and becomes similar to what Hegel defined as the “reason in history.” Speaking his way, we can say that all three parts are valid in their unity and are therefore reasonable.

### **IMPLICATIONS TO THE SOCIETIES OF CONTROL**

The disadvantage of this model is that it analyzes notions as if everything happens in the human head, without taking into account the real situation and especially real power. In reality, at every particular moment in history power infuses substance into our “leftism” and “rightism” and our three types of basic political definitions and destinies.

Over the centuries since the beginning of the modern era, the character of power in so-called Western societies<sup>2</sup> has hanged. New times were generated by the *Foucauldian situation, the situation of disciplinary spaces*, which is characterized by the presence of a government-tamer. As Michel Foucault showed in his ingenious analyses, it creates prisons, psychiatric hospitals, barracks, schools, factories, and the family. In the 1990s, shortly before his death, Giles Deleuze showed in his renowned *Postscript on the Societies of Control* that the time of disciplinary societies was over and that they had been replaced by societies of control. Naturally, there are still fragments of disciplinary societies, but the central spaces in modern societies are by no means disciplinary, Deleuze states.

This can be described by the following situation: a company of soldiers is marching on the parade ground, everyone is thirsty and wants to get a drink of cold lemonade, but they are forced to march. The soldiers will be allowed to have their lemonade in three hours, and just a little, so that they do not rebel. And then they will be loaded into horse trailers, packed, transported and enranged again. The most significant point in this situation (among other disgusting details described by Foucault) is that there is *a direct clash of interests between the authorities and the subordinates*: the latter want to drink lemonade but the former force them to march.

The situation is exactly the opposite as far as societies of control are concerned. A horse trailer has been replaced with an aircraft. A

<sup>2</sup> The term has long gone beyond the geographical framework.

person willingly comes to the airport, undresses and takes off his shoes, reports for interrogation/questioning, hurries up, smiles at the authorities and climbs up the stairs to the plane himself. Both he and the authorities are pursuing the same interest—take off as soon as possible. The contradiction between foot drilling and lemonade is removed, and everyone now pursues the same goal—take off as soon as possible. Mistakes are punished not by three days in the brig, but by a penalty loop as in biathlon. Everything is provided for, detailed and approved, even if you forgetfully have brought something forbidden with you. You yourself will throw it away into the container standing nearby.

This is a situation of control, that is, *the basic contradiction between power and subordination is eliminated; discipline is replaced with control and self-control*. Deleuze—probably out of his leftist contempt for the “brazen race” of our new masters—does not notice this basic coincidence of perceived interests.

The truth, however, is that there is a complete agreement between the authorities and subordinates who no longer consider the former an opposing force and who treat them as a waiter, imagining that politics has turned into something similar to a restaurant. “Big Brother” looks like “Big Mac”!

*The government in societies of control has become a servant, and resistance has become a whim.* Below, we will show how conservatism, liberalism, and revolutionism fit into this new situation. Authorities have turned into a waiter. Every fool knows that the media run the show. Few, however, see a more frightening picture: power has turned into media, politicians have become journalists, and journalists work as emcees. This is what is behind our smug self-deception and the reason for this is the basic coincidence of the interests of the authorities and those under their control, who equally want mainly two things: growth and peace.

On what issue have the authorities manage to get along with people? On the question of the future, that it will be better and more exciting. I work in your favor, and you vote for me. Gradually, authorities turn into a waiter, and those whom they control turn into a capricious client who will change his desires like socks—we do not

want Merkel, we want Sarkozy—and will always suspect the waiter of deception and theft.

However, it is noteworthy that this smug illusion allows the authorities to use a whole range of tricks to enhance their service. They make this “menu” possible, offering on the same page: “eavesdrop on me, operate on me, vaccinate me, give me the immortality gene, entertain me, treat me, rejuvenate me, serve out!”

Such an attitude towards the authorities was (and still is) impossible in societies where authorities do not depend on voters in any way. The formation of systemic dependence eventually leads to **goal congruence**, which creates a new situation, and thus we come to a government-waiter. (The waiter, in turn, hires people who can tell him what else “those over there” want. Which waiter would they like more than me, why would they “suddenly” prefer waiter Macron over waiter Hollande?) We can also see a competition of waiters. And there is no question of power in the classical sense. There is a struggle for who will cater, who will eavesdrop, and who will entertain, rejuvenate, and serve out.

### **REAL CULMINATION: GOALS AND CONSENSUSES**

This situation turns modern conservatism into the only, in our opinion, chance, but before we go further, it is necessary to introduce one more notion.

In principle, it is rather stupid and not so nice to get into the shoes of an orator who declares that the world has reached the end of the line. Since the time of Joachimus Florensis, someone has always been saying that the world has reached its climax, that something special is about to happen, and something completely new and exceptional will begin. This is not the idea of the end of the world, and this is not the Christian idea that time flows in a certain direction and has a pre-set end. It is an ugly illusion that we—today’s inhabitants of the planet Earth—have reached a culminating point. This creates an extremely primitive narrative situation: everything that was before me is the introduction, I am the culminating point, and the denouement is any moment ahead. For this reason, there were and still are hordes of storytellers, who tirelessly insist that the world is bad and nothing

could be done until now, but now we have come, and just look at what unprecedented things we will do.

We are saying all this because any minute we can find ourselves in exactly the same situation where we will argue that humanity has reached its culminating point.

But *this is, indeed*, a culminating point not because we are such outstanding storytellers, but because humanity for the first time has the *opportunity to self-determine itself* and has opened its own codes of self-determination. For example, humanity has been *able to annihilate itself* since August 6, 1945. This is the most radical of all possible forms of self-determination. This has never happened before. The wrath of Achilles, son of Peleus, could not annihilate all people, no matter how strong it was.

Since 1952, we have been learning to transform ourselves into a different species with the help of information about DNA.

We can create a partial model of intelligence because we know certain mathematical formulas.

We can determine the point of absolute power since it has already become possible to know more about a person than he knows about himself. (Ivan Krastev has shown quite well that over time any authoritarianism has always lost awareness of people's real life and behavior).

The common denominator for all of the above (these are not some horror stories about plastic bags and global warming) is that these are forms of *self-determination* that have become possible exactly today due to our level of technology. We are already *able to self-define ourselves*, which has never happened before as we could only define others. But there was no chance to stop being what we are. Now we have this opportunity for the first time ever.

It is dangerous not environmentally or politically. ***Today, for the first time in history, the authorities are able to engender their own subjects.*** It looks like in the spring of 2020 (having declared a pandemic), the authorities started doing this, albeit unconsciously by constructing a “new normality” through various forms of self-isolation and isolation of “others”.

We need to introduce another opposition here. It is an *opposition between a goal and a consensus*. It is very important to understand that these procedures are fundamentally different, diametrically different from each other. Their temporal structure is diametrically opposite, but we will not go into details and will only note the following:

***A goal always has the intention of “what is to be done,” while that of a consensus is “what is not to be done.”*** Climbing Mount Everest is a goal. Not eating human flesh is a consensus. Joining NATO is a goal. Consensus is in organizing a peaceful transition and abandoning repression against political opponents. Consensus is a special type of weapon. ***Consensuses create commonality and a very uncertain future.*** No one can say in advance what will happen if we do not eliminate our political enemies (peaceful transition). Conversely, *any goal describes the future very precisely, but creates very short-lived, fleeting commonalities.*

The very announcement of what people will not do turns them into commonality because they have a *common* future, which, however, is unknown to them. In one case, our future is known, but we are not together; in the other case, we do not know what the future will be like, but we are together simply because we do *not* commit certain actions. The Ten Commandments of God are a classical consensus because these are ten prohibitions.

Negative self-determination through self-restriction creates commonality with an unknown future. We know only one thing about this future: we will be together. It will be “us.” On the contrary, a future directed towards a certain goal creates (often illusorily) a known future.

However, this creates no commonality, and we, therefore, argue that in our modern situation, new and massively accepted *self-restrictions*, that is, consensuses will emerge.

These are not goals. After all, ***the real danger is not what will happen to us, but what we will do!***

In this sense, ***liberalism has exhausted itself. Not because it is bad, but for the simple reason that if liberal dominance continues, authorities will breed their own subjects. And so a person will turn into a pet for a superman, turn into his living toy.*** This can be stopped only through control over development, only by self-restrictions, or

simply put, by conservatism. (It must be emphasized that this is not about stopping development, but about controlling it.)

Therefore, whatever one may say, *humanity is on the verge of a new religious ethos.*

In order to say that it will not do certain things, humanity will have to indicate some kind of its own *essence*. “We are the ones who never ...” That is, we have an anti-liberal procedure, inherently religious and therefore conservative. Humanity will have to invent a god ala Voltaire, so to speak. But not in the sense that “Here is our God, we hand over authority to him,” but in the sense that “We are the ones who never...” This is the form of transcendent procedure performed in each of the known religions. (Woe is us, however, if we oppose annihilating procedures to liberalism. Such a revolutionary pose looks ridiculous in the modern world, and would cost too much. The best illustration of the latter would be, perhaps, annoying LGBT activists shouting that gender is immobilizing shackles, so gender must be annihilated. The last thing we need today is “vector time,” for we already have more than enough of it.)

It is necessary, no matter how scary it may sound, to stop living in an open society, but not in the sense that someone will have to command us, but in the sense of adopting consensus self-restrictions, which are undoubtedly a form of closure or half-closure of society. This does not imply a new form of government that should grant us such closed society. This means some new systems of mass communication, some new religions or other ways to move to a more closed—self-closed or semi-self-closed—society. This is certainly not a dictatorship that would subdue us and would not help at all. So there is still a chance; as Deleuze says: “There’s no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons.”

Forging such weapons without exiting the modern era is simply impossible (impossible within the framework of “scientific worldview”). In principle, a new religious ethos cannot be reduced to rational procedures and reason, because it is not about ends or means. Our sociality rests deeply on consensuses, on the fact that “we never...” The time of “good savages” is over. It is interesting, what will a “savage do-gooder” look like?