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A Case for Socialism:

On the Use of Philosophy in Political Theory¹

Opening

The Parliamentary elections in June 1987 in the United Kingdom, won by Margaret Thatcher for the third time in a row, completely confused our conception of politics. ‘Sir Isaiah Berlin marked the other day that this was the first time since the French Revolution that there is no project on the Left among the Parisian intelligentsia.’² Max Beloff noted that socialism in the strict sense has become unacceptable save to the very young or very naive. Various models of the ‘post-socialist era,’ of the ‘post socialist twenty first century’ were advanced.

¹ Authors in antiquity advised not to publish a manuscript before nine years had elapsed since its composition. Unfortunately, in the dynamic world of today, scarcely anyone takes this instruction seriously. Academic writers do all to publish their works right away—and I am hardly an exception in this.

The paper I present here is different. I wrote it in the winter of 1988/89, when I lived in a Soviet bloc country, Bulgaria. It so happens that shortly after I wrote it, I left Bulgaria for Germany, where I have lived and worked for nearly 12 years now. This led to changes in my theoretical interests, which were concentrated mainly in writing a history of Philosophy in England in the twentieth century in book form (see my Biographical note).

My objective in the paper, to return to it, was to disprove those authors who believed that after the third victory in a row of Margaret Thatcher in the 1987-Parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom, socialism had been well and truly vanquished. My thesis was confirmed in life. After 17 years of conservatism in politics, 1979–1996, a new perspective for social-democracy was opened five years ago. In France, Britain, and Germany, the Left awoke in a new form (see for theoretical discussion of this phenomenon Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999). These developments were convincingly demonstrated in Tony Blair’s second Parliamentary election victory for the Labour Party in a row this June (2001).

This political development confirmed the main thesis of this paper, which is that the three main political ideologies that have led the Western world since the beginning of the nineteenth century—socialism, liberalism, and conservatism—are nothing but expressions of three natural inclinations of the political mind. This means that despite these three ideologies often being badly defeated in their incarnations in political parties, they rear up again, transformed, in a new form.

It was exactly this predictive success of the paper’s thesis that motivated me to propose it for publication in *Labyrinth*.

² P. Jenkins, ‘The Politics of the Post-Socialist Era,’ *Encounter* 69 (Sept.–Oct. 1987), p. 6.

This end of socialism euphoria was so unanimous and its reasons so ‘clear’ that, I believe, it is now time for philosophers to show how problematic it was. The first aim of this paper is to make a philosophical analysis of the present political realities and on its bases, to give a defense of socialism, nowadays so much maligned.

1. Socialism on the Map of Political Life Today

(a) *Socialism as a Relational Concept.*

Although we tacitly accept that socialism is one thing, which is well-known to all, almost every political writer has his own definition of it. Four examples:

According to Paul Jenkins, ‘the distinctive idea of socialism is that economic organization is the key to liberty, equality, and human happiness.’³

In the eighth edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1968), socialism is described as defending ‘the idea of worldwide human brotherhood and liberty. So it is essentially a movement of the promotion of the well-being and happiness of individual men and women, akin to utilitarianism in that it seeks the “greatest happiness of the greatest number” and not only a metaphysical entity such as the state.’⁴

According to B. Russell, who strongly sympathized with socialism at the beginning of the twentieth century, ‘we shall come nearest to the essence of Socialism by defining it as the advocacy of communal ownership of land and capital.’⁵

Other writers laid stress on the fact that socialism was organized as a further development of the program of the Enlightenment philosophers to rationalize social life and to bring social spontaneity under control, much in the same way in which the nature was brought under control.

Here we have four different conceptions of socialism.

In an effort to find the most general characteristic to which all these four conceptions subscribe, we shall refer to socialism as a *relational concept*; as one among the three leading political ideologies, the other two being conservatism and liberalism; these form a real Hegelian triad. It is widely accepted that these three political doctrines take different places on one axis, where socialism is on the left, liberalism in the center, and conservatism on the right. Some political writers, however, have criticized this picture, and we agree with them here. So

3 *ibid.*, p. 7.

4 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 8th ed., London, 1968, vol. 12, p. 376.

5 B. Russell, *Roads to Freedom*, 2nd ed., London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966, p. 21.

Friedrich Hayek in *The Constitution of Liberty*: ‘If we want a diagram, it would be more appropriate to arrange them in a triangle with the conservatives occupying one corner, with the socialists pulling toward the second and the liberals toward the third.’⁶

(b) *Political Terminology*. Here we touch a problem that is of concern to many who deal with political issues: the terms used in the sphere of politics do not correctly describe the political reality they intend to describe. Some authors assert that this is so because ‘the world is now changing so fast that we all have a tendency to see it in terms that have been left behind by events and are therefore outmoded.’⁷ Others have stated that not only is the political vocabulary of *today* out of date, but no vocabulary can, as a matter of principle, rightly name political facts and events which are so complicated and interwoven one with another that it is an illusion to expect they can be adequately conveyed by a handful of terms. This is shown very well in some specific failures of political terminology to cope with phenomena of political life: ‘A Liberal in today’s England, for instance, has no more in common with a Liberal in Australia or the USA than with a Liberal in Italy.’⁸ Another problem is that it is difficult, on the basis of this, or some other similar classification, to give a reasonable definition of either reformists or conservatives in the East European countries of 1988–9.

In opposition to the latter argument, some political writers believe that the right antidote to these terminological problems is the creation of a new terminology that will depict the political life of today more correctly. In this connection it is stressed that the terms ‘conservatism’ and ‘socialism’ were introduced in English in one and the same year, in 1835, and the term ‘liberalism’ in 1819; so they were designed to describe the political life of the beginning of the industrial era. Today, however, when we are on the threshold of a new information revolution, riding on the crest of the ‘third wave’ of an over-all change in human life, to use Alvin Toffler’s apt expression, we badly need a new political terminology. As put by one writer recently, ‘what we are waiting for, in suspension, is the next great political philosopher’ who will introduce this terminology.⁹

2. Theoretical Philosophy as Method of Political Philosophy

6 F. A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960, p. 398.

7 B. Magee, ‘The Language of Politics,’ *Encounter* **66** (May 1986), p. 20.

8 M. Beloff, ‘Where Bryan Magee Goes Astray,’ *Encounter* **68** (Feb. 1987), p. 62.

9 B. Magee, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

(a) *The Problem.* The author of these words, Bryan Magee, is well-experienced both in politics—he has been a Member of Parliament in the UK, as well as in philosophy—he is the author of more than ten books on the subject, and has brought philosophy into people’s lives through popular television programs for the BBC. On reflection, the source of his criticism of the contemporary political vocabulary is not difficult to identify: the Oxford school of analysis of ordinary language.

Unfortunately, starting from the beginning of the 1960s, this latter school lost its influence; as a matter of fact, today it is only of historical importance. This point brings us to the fact that in their analyses of political life, political theorists often spontaneously (unconsciously) follow some philosophy of their preference. The effect of this practice is that they seldom make use of some well-established and widely discussed philosopher of the time. On the contrary, at the back of their mind, they seek support in philosophy which, as a rule, for contemporary theoretical philosophers of today, is obsolete and sterile. The reason for all this is the belief, widespread today, that the time when a philosophical theory could shape political philosophy, as was the case in the times of Plato, Hobbes, Locke, or Hegel, is gone.¹⁰ Instead of following a theoretical philosophy, political theory pursues projects in ‘piecemeal engineering’ (Popper).

The second aim of this paper is to demonstrate that, when properly applied, theoretical philosophy can be useful for political theory. In order to make this point clear, we shall try to clarify the present political reality with the help of a powerful and widely known philosophy, that of Wittgenstein, with the expressed stipulation that some other really great philosopher could equally well be used with the same success for this purpose.

(b) *What Is Philosophy?* In several places, Aristotle defines political knowledge as ‘the most excellent of all’ arts and sciences (*Pol.* 1282b15).¹¹ He writes further that ‘the knowledge of it must have great weight... It is the End of that which is most commanding and most inclusive’ (*Eth.Nic.*, 1094a25). In some other places, however, Aristotle specifies that political philosophy is most important only among the arts, among the practical disciplines; the sublime virtue, however, can be contemplated only by theoretical philosophers, not by

10 See P. H. Partridge, ‘Politics, Philosophy, Ideology,’ In: Anthony Quinton (ed.), *Political Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 33 ff.

11 The works of Aristotle are cited according to the editions: (i) Aristotle, *A Treatise on Government*, trans. W. Ellis, London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and E. P. Dutton, 1912; (ii) Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by D. P. Chase, London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and E. P. Dutton, 1911; (iii) Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. by H. G. Apostle, Bloomington and London: University of Indiana Press, 1966.

political scholars: ‘A master-artist is wiser than a manual worker, and theoretical sciences have a wisdom to a higher degree than productive sciences.’ (*Met.* 982e3) How is this discrepancy in Aristotle to be explained? In an effort to answer this question, I shall, first, ask what philosophy, as such, is.

There is hardly any other philosopher who has explored this question as persistently as Wittgenstein. As we know, however, the question: What does Wittgenstein understand under philosophy? has no unequivocal answer. Here I shall use an interpretation of his explicit conception of philosophy—that it is not a theory but an activity (see his *Tractatus*, 4.112)—according to which philosophy, or more precisely, philosophical training, teaches good taste in reasoning/judging, or what Descartes once called *bona mens*.¹² A philosopher is nothing more than a (wo)man who possesses such a taste. After all, it is well-known ‘that some people had an acuter sense of judgement, just as some people can judge a vintage port and others cannot.’¹³ This taste is just a kind of a skill—of intellectual skill or art. The philosopher’s *activity* is a skilled activity of assessing different forms of life, social forms, political forms, etc. with which we are confronted in our *vie quotidienne*. What the philosopher can do better than the layman is simply to reason—in the same way in which someone may be able to ski or swim better than others.’¹⁴

Equipped with this conception of philosophy, we can now see why politics, according to Aristotle, is the most difficult science—one which, in spite of the fact that, like every other science, it aims at predicting future developments, at its best only advances elucidation, comparisons, etc. The point is that philosophy differs from all other sciences—from physics, geography, or biology—in its being both a science, as long as it operates with truths, and an art, as long as it develops good *taste* for reasoning/judging (*bona mens*). Because it is an art, it does not have its own subject of investigation. And because it fixes truths, it develops in progress. At the same time, its progress develops not according to the linear model characteristic of progress in science, but has its specific, non-Euclidean, form, similar to that found in other arts.

12 I developed this understanding in N. Milkov, ‘Der “Echte” Wittgenstein über das Wesen der Philosophie,’ in Herta Nagl-Docekal (Hrsg.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein und die Philosophie des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Wien: Verein ‘Freunde des Hauses Wittgenstein,’ 1989, pp. 123–37.

13 J. M. Keynes, ‘My Early Beliefs,’ in *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*, 30 vols., London: Macmillan, and St. Martin’s Press; 3d ed., vol. 10, p. 437.

14 See also a something similar conception in philosophy in Todd Moody, ‘Progress in Philosophy,’ *American Philosophical Quarterly* 23 (Spring 1986), p. 35.

(c) *Political Theory and Theoretical Philosophy*. Political theory, on the other hand, is so difficult just because it is nothing but applied theoretical philosophy. At the same time, since in it the good taste in reasoning/judging is applied in its pure form—that is, unmixed with any particular subject—theoretical philosophy develops here much more successfully than in the ‘natural philosophy,’ once promoted by Schelling and Hegel, i.e., the good reasoning applied in sciences—astronomy, physics, etc.

The fact that political theory is nothing but applied theoretical philosophy explains, on the one hand, why the rapid development of so called ‘applied philosophy’ in recent years was connected mainly with political issues, or more precisely, with issues of policy. In this direction some programs for ‘progressing philosophy’ were advanced, say, that of Kay Nielsen, according to whom philosophy can progress only as a piecemeal social criticism.¹⁵

On the other hand, this point also explains why politics is repeatedly compared with art: it is compared with art since theoretical philosophy is an art. Here we can refer to Jacob Burckhardt, according to whom people of *rinascimento* Italy considered the state as a well-calculated and deliberately built construction—‘as a work of art.’¹⁶ Many political philosophers compare politics with the natural art of medicine, and often use metaphors of medicine. Thus Dante Alighieri once compared Florence with a sick man who ceaselessly changes his position in order to diminish his pains: in the same way this town permanently corrects its legislation. In more recent time, reflecting on politics, Ludwig von Mises also used metaphors from medicine.¹⁷

(d) *Comparing the Modernization in Theoretical Philosophy and Political Philosophy*. This understanding of the relation between theoretical philosophy and political theory can be supported by comparative analysis of their development in the last four centuries. In this we shall follow the discussion of the problem of modernity and post-modernity of Jean-François Lyotard and Richard Rorty.

The first thing that deserves notice here is that whereas the hallmark of modernity in social life is its secularization, the hallmark of theoretical philosophy is its discarding of tradition—Descartes was the first who did this in regard of medieval scholastics. We can describe post-modernity in philosophy in terms of a similar revolution that took place in it

15 See K. Nielsen, ‘Can There be Progress in Philosophy?’, *Metaphilosophy* **18** (1987), 1–30.

16 J. Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 13. Aufl., Leipzig: Reclam, 1922, p. 2.

17 See L. von Mises, *Free and Prosperous Commonwealth*, trans. R. Reice, Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1962, p. 6.

some 100 years ago in Britain; the case in point is the revolution in philosophy stirred up by Moore and Russell which set out the beginnings of what today is known as ‘analytic philosophy.’ It discarded—in a way rather similar to that in which Descartes had done this some 270 years before them—the old tradition in philosophy of ceaseless attempts to settle, with a quasi scientific precision, what exactly the relation between mind and matter is.

We see that both modernity and post-modernity in theoretical philosophy had gone through the same process of changing the paradigm of philosophy’s development. Both started a new type of philosophical investigation, realistic and sincere, thus trying to demonstrate that there was no real philosophy so far. Indeed, enmeshed in the ‘labyrinth of thought/language,’ the old philosophy had reached a dead-end.

Unfortunately, modernity and post-modernity in political theory haven’t the clear shape of modernity and post-modernity in theoretical philosophy. In addition, they began to develop considerably later. This can be explained with the peculiar complexity of political knowledge, as well as with the fact that its connection with theoretical philosophy remained unrealized thus far. Be this as it may, modernity in political philosophy only began in what can be called the ‘long eighteenth century’—with John Locke and David Hume, in Britain, and Charles de Montesquieu and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in France, and reached its peak with Karl Marx’s doctrine of socialism, which tried to envision public life under rational, ‘scientific’ control. In fact, the enrichment of our political vocabulary with the concepts of ‘conservatism,’ ‘liberalism,’ and ‘socialism’ was a result of just this development.

The beginning of post-modernity in the sphere of political theory was also delayed for a considerable period of time. Its beginning was marked by the publishing of John Rawls’s *Theory of Justice* (1972), with its renewed interest in justice; but was developed in its entirety only in the last ten years in the writings of the already-mentioned J.-F. Lyotard, R. Rorty, and K. Nielsen. Characteristic for it is a renewed interest in detailed political analyses; it developed towards criticism and distrust of metanarratives, such as the ‘Absolute Spirit of Proletariat’ (Karl Marx), or ‘Emancipation of Humanity’ (of the philosophers of the Enlightenment), which ‘are stories which purport to justify loyalty to, or breaks with, certain contemporary communities.’¹⁸ In this way the recent post-modern political theorists advanced political philosophy without entities—in the same way in which more than 90 years ago B. Russell, with his theory of descriptions, eliminated Meinong’s theory of ideal logical objects with the help of network of descriptions.

18 R. Rorty, ‘Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism,’ *The Journal of Philosophy* **80** (Oct. 1983), p. 585.

The misfortune of this movement was that whereas it, on the one hand, spontaneously (and unconsciously) follows the analytic tradition, especially Wittgenstein, this influence, on the other hand, remains unrecognized and unacknowledged. As a consequence, post-modern political philosophers failed to outline a powerful, and thus convincing, program for analyzing political realities.

3. The Axis/Triangle of Political Ideals/Ideologies and Its Logic

(a) *Political Metanarratives and Political Ideals*. From hoary antiquity up to present times, political moods crystallize in ideals for different forms of governing, around which different political ideologies were grouped. In contrast to the political metanarratives, such ideals are not spurious. What constitutes this difference between political metanarratives and ideals?

Roughly, metanarratives are important only as organizers of the political thinking of now. They are an expression of our resentment against the political states of affairs of today. This explains why they are ephemeral: they change over years, with the change of the politically relevant states of affairs.

Things are absolutely different with political ideals. These are products of the natural inclination of the political reason which, in modernity at least, was organized in the triangular form: socialism, conservatism, liberalism. They have some lofty connection with the metanarratives which connection, however, as already seen, is often misleading.

(b) *The Logic of Politics*. The problem of classification of all possible kinds of political ideals has been an object of investigation from the time of Plato and Aristotle until today. The latter, for example, listed six types of governing. Of them three are positive: monarchy, aristocracy, and *politeia*, with the other three, tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy, being only their negative counterparts (see *Pol.* 1279a33–b10).

Here we can easily recognize that the three-part classification of the modern political forms into conservatism, liberalism, and socialism roughly corresponds to the ancient classification of political forms in monarchy, aristocracy, and *politeia*, respectively. This state of affairs suggests that the three-part division of the political realities of today has roots that lie deep in the natural inclinations of the political mind as such; that the two classifications of the possible political forms—that of antiquity, and that of modernity—are only two examples of the *logical* taxonomy of the different kinds of political governing.

With the aim of testing this hypothesis, we are going now to discuss the logic of politics. Political life is, above all, based on a kind of dialog, on agonism between the natural inclinations of the political reason.¹⁹ The agonic character of political life is fixed logically on ‘yes’ and ‘no,’ creating in this way a united dialogical whole, with its own logical multiplicity. This point was already discerned by Aristotle, who wrote in *Politeia*:

There must therefore necessarily be as many different forms of governments, as there are different situations. And these seem chiefly to be two, as they say of the winds: namely, the north and the south; and all the others are declinations from these. And thus in politics, there is the government of the many and the government of the few or a democracy and an oligarchy.’
(1290a15)

In modern political life, its bi-polar logic finds expression in the division of political ideals and parties into left and right.

But what is that very characteristic of society which can serve as a criterion for its ‘positivity’ or ‘negativity’? Here we remember immediately that both Plato and Aristotle accepted justice as basic characteristic of social life. Recently, John Rawls gave it a felicitous definition: ‘Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought.’²⁰ We read this definition of Rawls’s so: In the same way in which ‘the proposition determines reality to this extent that one only needs to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to it to make it agree with reality’ (*Tractatus*, 4.023), political reality is fixed on left or right, on two poles by the attitude of the people towards the justice of any particular political states of affairs.

Ostensibly, the two types of classification of political states of affairs, the first resulting in triads, the second resulting in two poles, follows two different kinds of logic. Whereas the first uses an extensional syllogistic, the second makes use of the truth-functional logic. In the next sub-section we shall show how political life can be successfully described with the help of these two types of logic.

(b) *Political Ideologies as Agonistic Language-games.* We can conclude that modern political ideologies—conservatism, liberalism, and socialism—are build up not around political metanarratives but, as Lyotard put it, something like ‘language games.’ Historically, they were advanced in reaction to one another, creating in this way a

19 For the role of agonism in human culture see: J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 7th ed., Groningen: H. D. Tjeenk Willink bv., 1974, Ch. III.

20 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 3.

homogeneous whole²¹ with, as we have already said, its own ‘logical multiplicity’ and which can be described as the ‘form’ of this specific society.

Thus, the socialism of the nineteenth century, to take it first, was a mere continuation of the liberal program for the rationalization of the social life of the Enlightenment. The birth of the contemporary liberalism of L. von Mises and F. A. Hayek, the pupils of whom are now in fashion, was also reactionary. Indeed, it emerged not as a continuation of the old liberal tradition, but as a reaction against the overwhelming advance of socialism in the years after the World War II. The same with the New Wave conservatism of the 1970s and 1980s. It did not emerge as a rival of the old conservatism, but as a reaction to the liberal consensus of the 1960s.

In fact, what was reactionary *par excellence* was only conservatism, which, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, came into being not as a political movement with its own theory, but as an outright retort, at first to liberalism, and later, but especially nowadays, to socialism. In the apt expression of G. Watson, ‘the New-Right since 1975, has been an answer to the New-Left; anything the New-Left wanted, you may be sure the New-Right does not want. Neo-Conservatism is a classic case of the adversarial principle in politics... It is too eager to pay off old scores from the ’60s.’²²

Obviously, the single objective of this form of conservatism was only to be on the ‘right’ side of the agonal political whole. Following this ‘regulative idea,’ the conservatives of the 1960s–1980s embraced various, often controversial, political ideals. So ‘we are often told nowadays [in 1987] that private and competitive enterprise is conservative. But we are never told why.’²³ In fact, the concept of ‘competition’ is typical for liberalism, not for conservatism. Indeed, ‘the positivist nineteenth-century Conservatives were for centralized powers of Church and State. ... No wonder that Socialists like Sidney and Beatrice Webb, by the end of the century, saw the Tories as their natural allies.’²⁴ Conservatism, depending on the concrete political situation, identifies itself either with socialism, or with liberalism, with the intention of staying on the right of the political scale, devoted to its own standard of justice.

21 See J.-F. Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*, Paris: Minuit, pp. 20 ff.

22 G. Watson, ‘The Conservative Contradiction,’ *Encounter* 69 (Nov. 1987), p. 71.

23 Ibid., p. 67. On the political ambiguity of Thatcherism see also A. Gamble, *The Free Economy and Strong State*, London: Macmillan, 1988.

24 Ibid., p. 68.

In fact, this very agonistic character of political life is the reason why we cannot find some simple, linear, or even two-dimensional (triangular) scheme in which the conservatism occupies one place, liberalism the other, and socialism the third. Their places in the political triad are undetermined (in a Quinean manner, one might say), and any ‘reification’ of the scheme of their interrelation is doomed to failure.

4. The Dilemmas of Political Philosophy

We have already shown two philosophical approaches in drawing a more authentic map of political life. Now we shall advance a third one. Whereas the first two were negative—we have actually used them in order to demonstrate some hidden characteristics of contemporary political life, (i) revealing the logic of political life and (ii) revealing the agonism of political life—the third will be positive: with its help we shall try to advance means for resolving political controversies. Following this approach we again shall call on Wittgenstein and his friends for help.

This present approach to political reality is based on the assumption that the solution of some important political controversies is to be achieved in a way similar to that of some theoretical philosophical paradoxes: they are dissolved through analysis. A masterpiece in applying this approach is Ryle’s *Dilemmas*;²⁵ its vitality was recently demonstrated in Strawson’s *Skepticism and Naturalism*.²⁶ In both books it was shown that some political controversies, which are commonly considered ultimate dilemmas, in fact are not.

Now, since political life develops agonistically, in a struggle of quasi contradictory ideals, ideological dilemmas play a decisive role in it. Indeed, ideological dilemmas are, to paraphrase Karl Marx, the ‘locomotives of political life’; they shape every modern society. In each of them two political ideals compete.

The political dilemma we are going to discuss here, and which occupies a special place in the conservatism–liberalism–socialism contest is: liberty or justice. Usually, political ideologists embrace either the first or the second horn of this dilemma. A prominent example: Whereas I. Kant praises the ‘principle of liberty’ as the first principle of republican constitution,²⁷ according to Aristotle, ‘justice is [the ...] political virtue, by the rules of which the

25 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954.

26 London: Methuen, 1985. On the relatedness of Ryle’s *Dilemmas* and Strawson’s *Skepticism and Naturalism* see N. Milkov, ‘Philosophers and the Fashion,’ *Filosofska Misal*, 1988/2, pp. 112–18 (in Bulgarian).

27 See I. Kant, *Zum Ewigen Frieden*, Hrsg. von M. Buhr und S. Dietzsch, Leipzig: Reclam, 1984, S. 15.

state is regulated, and these rules are the criterion of what is right' (*Pol.* 1253a35). Different political ideologies usually pay attention, as already indicated, to one of the horns of this dilemma, neglecting the other. So, whereas socialism lays stress mainly on justice, liberalism lays stress on freedom.

Our point is that these two political notions are not as controversial as may appear at first glance. This is shown in the fact that whereas freedom is an ideal, justice is a principle. This means that freedom and justice are concepts of different logical types. Unfortunately, such confusion of the logical type of political concepts happens often in political discourse. Here we will recall Aristotle's remark that various types of government lay stress on different values. Thus, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy lay stress on, respectively, virtue, wealth, and freedom (see *Pol.* 1294a20). This means that these forms of government do not contradict one another; rather, they apply to public affairs alternative, mutually independent (and heterogeneous) principles.

In support of the thesis that in the litigation between freedom and justice, socialists and liberals operate with political concepts of different logical type, another argument from theoretical philosophy can be presented. It is a well-known fact from the history of philosophy that whereas Aristotle held on objectivism in philosophy, Descartes changed this objective paradigm, putting epistemology at the center of philosophical research. Similarly, whereas modern political philosophy paid attention, above all, to (subjective) liberty, post-modernity, which in theoretical philosophy came with the objectivism of Brentano and Frege, came into political philosophy with a renewed interest in (objective) justice: Here I refer to John Rawls's already mentioned seminal book *Theory of Justice* (1972), and the developments that followed it. From this example, it is easy to see that at different times, different horns of the justice–freedom dilemma came to the fore. In fact, there was no real encounter between them in history, although all people were always inclined to believe that there was.

Other dilemmas on whose horns political ideals are grouped can be named: that of rationalism–irrationalism, for example, with conservatism on the one horn and socialism and liberalism on the other, or the dilemma of private or public property. Our aim here, however, is not to advance a taxonomy of political dilemmas, or to point to their solution; it is rather to elucidate the structure of political life by philosophical means. For this purpose, we are now going to make another step in our politico-philosophical analysis.

5. Political Ideals and Metanarratives as Product of the Natural Inclinations of Political Reason

We have already mentioned that political ideals are a product of the natural inclination of the political reason which, in the last two centuries, at least, was organized in the triad of socialism–conservatism–liberalism. This point explains why socialism, liberalism, and conservatism were described and defined both by their adherents and critics as *tendencies*, as disposition of political mind, not as metanarrative. What ideologists typically do is to organize such a tendency around a metanarrative. Take for example these three authors:

- Bertrand Russell writes: ‘Socialism, like everything that is vital, is rather a tendency than a strictly definable body of doctrine.’²⁸
- Ludwig von Mises, on his part, wrote: ‘Liberalism is not a complete doctrine or a fixed dogma. On the contrary: it is the application of the teaching of science to the social life of man.’²⁹
- G. Watson: ‘Until just the other day, conservatism was a disposition of mind rather than an active and exploring idea.’³⁰

We have also seen that modern political life exists and develops on the basis of partial ideals that serve as its ‘regulative idea.’ These are one-sided in principle, just because they are specific *visions* of the political situation. Besides, as already seen, the very nature of social life requires it to be built in a dialogical form. This means that ideologies appear most often in the form of a contest: for example, conservatism or socialism, as was the case in Britain of the last decades, or socialism or liberalism, as was the case in Eastern Europe in the 1980s.

Now we shall turn our attention to something different: to the fact that the support of a horn of any political dilemma is accompanied by, or better, is immersed in, an emotional attitude which is rather difficult to bring under control. No wonder that in certain periods of human history, in Byzantium of the ninth and tenth centuries, for example, not the ideological differences between the political parties but their colors were in the foreground: in these cases political life ceased to be an art, and turned to a simple emotional group agonism, which is well-known to us nowadays from sport: we love one team, and its color, and hate the other, despite the fact that when asked the philosophical question why we do this, what are our grounds for this, we have no answer.

28 B. Russell, op. cit., p. 21.

29 L. von Mises, op. cit., p. 3.

30 G. Watson, op. cit., p. 69.

Now, our thesis is that however remote the political life of ninth and tenth-century Byzantium, and the *trecento* Florence of Guelphs and Ghibellines, on the one hand, and the total renunciation of socialism in Britain in 1987, on the other, seems to us today, they have one and the same epistemological roots: emotional group agonism.

Driven by emotional passions and partiality, on the one hand, and by its agonic character, on the other, no wonder that political life of today is guided more by the fashion of the political slogans (metanarratives) than by reason. In many cases, this fashion changes as if according to the dialectical law of ‘negation of negation’ of Hegel–Marx. So whereas ‘[t]he pre-socialist notion was that there were natural rights which could be advanced independently of economic condition ... [i]n the post-socialist age, liberty, equality and justice may come to be reinstated as intrinsic virtues.’³¹ Whereas the liberals of modernity insisted on the natural law, and later, on a theory that must gain a command over the ‘social spontaneity,’ now the New Wave Liberalism says: let things go their own way spontaneously; the things themselves will find their way; any interference in their progress can only destroy the web of political life—in the same way in which when we try to mend a spider web, we destroy it. The ‘cunning reason’ of history (Hegel) manifests itself here in the fact that some 15 years ago this slogan was the slogan of the New-Left (of the 1970s).

6. Reformulating the Task of Political Philosophy

This newly revealed characteristic of political life urges us to reformulate the task of the political philosopher. We shall define it now as, first of all, observing and criticizing the balance between political ideologies and ideals.

To be sure, that task is not an easy one. This can be seen again from the example of the theoretical philosophy of Wittgenstein, who often insisted that doing philosophy requires putting our intellectual emotions under control. The task of the theoretical philosopher is to divert, with the help of the will, the most convenient of the positions, attitudes, decisions—in everyday life, in science, in art. ‘Philosophy demands a renunciation, but a renunciation of feelings, not of understanding. Perhaps that is what makes it so hard.’ (Wittgenstein, MS 213, p. 406).³²

31 P. Jenkins, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

32 A. Kenny, ‘Wittgenstein on the Nature of Philosophy,’ In: B. F. McGuinness (ed.), *Wittgenstein and his Times*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, p. 16.

Another task of political philosophers is to show how political ideals are to be used as means for introducing better policies in political life, not as reified metanarratives. The advantages of this approach were pointed out already by Aristotle, as follows: ‘Those propose what is much better, who blend many kinds of government together.’ (*Pol.* 1266a1)

The so defined task of contemporary political philosophy is not thus difficult, since it goes together with a trend in political life of today. So according to N. O’Sullivan, the blending of the three main political conceptions in contemporary political life is ‘symptomatic of the consequence of a deep social consensus which naturally carries with it a blurring of traditional political identities and concepts.’³³

Epilogue

We, I believe, have already demonstrated the ineradicable character of socialism as a natural inclination of political reason. It is true that in recent years the third wave of the industrial revolution tipped the balance towards liberalism and conservatism; this however was only a new turn of the spiral of the political (triadic) agonism, not its death.³⁴ The latest success of the conservatives (in 1987) does not mean that socialism was overthrown, or refuted. Socialism merely needs a reconstruction (‘perestroika’, in Russian) of its ideology.

Indeed, if conservatism changes its face thus quickly, so that now [in 1988–9] it lays claim to a great part of liberalism’s main contentions, why should socialism not do the same? Indeed, it is often argued that, unlike the two other political attitudes, liberalism and conservatism, socialism alone originated as a theory.³⁵ (The opposite pole is conservatism, which ‘by its very nature cannot offer an alternative to the direction in which we are moving.’³⁶) In this paper, however, we have, I hope, advanced convincing arguments which demonstrate that irrespective of how everyone of these three political ideologies has originated—consciously, as a theory, or as an emotional answer to changes in political life—it is an ineradicable part of the political reason.

33 N. O’Sullivan, ‘Words Splurge, Ideas Urge,’ *Encounter* **68** (March 1987), p. 66.

34 For the cyclical character of human history see e.g. A. M. Schlesinger, *Cycles of American History*, New York: Pluto, 1986.

35 See J. Waldron, ‘Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism,’ *The Philosophical Quarterly* **37** (Apr. 1987), p. 127.

36 Hayek, *op. cit.*, p. 398.