Political Philosophies and Political Ideologies

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> Those who urge us to remember that our only clearly demonstrable task is simply to keep the ship [of state] afloat have a rather curious view of the purpose of ships.
>
> Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics*[1]

Introduction

Thinking about politics is hard. It is not just that political questions rarely allow for easy answers, it is that they also tend to involve our core values, the ones that make us who we are. It doesn't help that grasping them fully often requires taking into account a wide range of subjects, which is why those who study politics need to be at once specialists and generalists. And when you have to find your way around both the forest and the trees, it is easy to get lost.

I would like to propose a new approach to finding our way around. It is based on a distinction between political philosophies and political ideologies that, I argue, supports a conception of the political spectrum that is both more realistic and ultimately better for politics than are the received views. Before I say anything more, however, I need to explain what I mean by "politics."

If you look the word up in the dictionary, you will find references to struggles over power or to the management of, or decision-making by, governments or other such organizations. These are sound definitions, to be sure, but they all nevertheless fail to capture what I believe is politics' essence: *responding to conflict with dialogue*. Because when people's values conflict, if they are to deal with it politically they must strive to hear each other out rather than use force. After all, force is the basis of war, not politics.

Note that I'm referring here strictly to public conflicts, those that arise between many people or groups of people. The private realm is the locus of morals as distinct from politics (though morals, too, are dialogical). Ancient politics, which was usually conceived in "classical republican" terms, drew a sharp line between public and private: the household, a domain of inequality and force, was considered private, and the *agora*, where citizens (excluding women, metics, and slaves) were seen as equals, was public. Modernity, and so modern politics, has

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[1] (London: Bloomsbury, 2013, 6th ed.), p. 10.

witnessed the rise of civil society, with its subdivisions of the public sphere and the market economy; it's situated in between the home and the *agora* (now "the state"). Civil society can thus be said to straddle what has become a rather blurry public-private divide. Or, rather than "divide," it may make more sense to speak of a spectrum, with public and private at either pole and civil society spread over the centre. Regardless, modern politics distinguishes itself from premodern by taking the existence of civil society for granted. Because modern politics upholds, to varying but always significant degrees, a respect for the individual, which is the basis of civil society's integrity.

I will present five contemporary philosophies: neutralism, postmodernism, pluralism, patriotism, and anarchism.[2] Each comes with its own conception of politics at its best, and each relates in a different way to the various ideologies – including not only the "big three," liberalism, conservatism, and socialism, but also feminism, ecologism, and nationalism. And as we'll see, depending on the philosophy it's associated with, each of these ideologies can take an antipolitical – as distinct from political – form, which is to say one that obstructs dialogue. When it does, it should be grouped with the consistently antipolitical ideologies: fascism, communism, libertarianism, and populism.

Returning to the philosophies, I should point out that, in keeping with my definition of politics, I distinguish between them by their different conceptions of what exactly it means to engage in dialogue. Being philosophies, their conceptions are very general, yet the degree of generality varies: some are abstract and so claim universal relevance, while others are more relative to context. I should also mention that their different conceptions of dialogue are implicitly or explicitly connected to other philosophical questions, not least those concerned with the nature of the interlocutors and the medium of their speech, that is, language. Moreover, when it comes to what people say within these dialogues, in substance as distinct from form, we may identify three broad topics or types of political justification, namely governance, recognition, and welfare.

Finally, we must also recognize how the different philosophies affirm different conceptions of values. Regarding individual liberty, for example, philosophers have conceived of it in terms of negative liberty, authenticity, self-ownership, experiments in living, autonomy (in both Kant's sense of self-determination and in the one based on having cultural options to choose from), and non-domination. But however conceived, the way these values should be treated in different,

[2] I originally introduced the first four of these in *From Pluralist to Patriotic Politics: Putting Practice First* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

conflictual situations is not a philosophical matter. We can expect generalities from philosophers, of course, overarching principles or maxims, but we shouldn't look to them for specific positions on specific political matters.

Ideologists, by contrast, offer little else. Rather than advocating general accounts of dialogue (though they will always assume one, even if only implicitly), ideologists *do* aim to provide guidance for specific issues; they indeed tell us about what we should be saying when faced with a given political conflict. They do so, moreover, on the basis of claims about how the values in conflict should be ranked: for some, say, liberty is more important than equality, while for others it's the opposite. And so on.

Ideology, then, is the stuff of political culture – of mores, symbols, institutional design, and policymaking. By conceiving of it in this way, I evidently mean to avoid the pejorative connotations that Marx and others have given the term and return to the less polemical use found in the writings of Destutt de Tracy and his fellow *idéologues*, who coined it. Not that I'm uncritical of ideological thinking; on the contrary, as I argue below, it plays an important but not always helpful role in politics.

Neutralism: Pleading for Justice

This past century, there have been four basic kinds of neutralism advanced in anglophone political thought: utilitarian,[3] Kantian,[4] contractarian,[5] and analytical Marxist.[6] By calling all of these approaches "neutralist," I'm using the term in a much wider sense than is typical in the literature. Essentially, I meant to refer to the stance we are supposed to take when applying a theory of justice, which is understood as comprising either a single principle or a systematically unified set of

[3] See, for example, Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); R.M. Hare, "Ethical Theory and Utilitarianism," in Amartya Sen and Bernard Williams, eds., *Utilitarianism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); and John Harsanyi, "Rule Utilitarianism, Equality, and Justice," *Social Philosophy & Policy* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1985): 115–27.

[4] See, for example, Ronald Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999, 2nd ed.); Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, exp. ed.); Bruce Ackerman, *Social Justice in the Liberal State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); and, though not anglophone, Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 vols., trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984 and 1987).

[5] See, for example, Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974); James Buchanan, *The Limits of Liberty: Between Anarchy and Leviathan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); and David Gauthier, *Morals By Agreement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

[6] See, for example, G.A. Cohen, *History, Labour, and Freedom: Themes From Marx* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); and John Roemer, *Free to Lose: An Introduction to Marxist Economic Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

principles. The routes to neutralist theories vary, however. The best-known is surely John Rawls', according to which we should reformulate incommensurable (because contextual or "thick") everyday ethical maxims into commensurable (because abstract or "thin") principles. We arrive at the theory, then, when we've figured out how these principles should be interlocked.

However arrived at, all neutralists assume that it is essential to have such a theory, since it is only by applying one that we can respond to conflicts justly. Needless to say, we should also expect there to be differences over how a given theory ought to be applied. This is one reason why neutralists often make an analogy to games: just as players turn to a neutral referee or umpire to apply their game's rulebook, politicians, political parties, interest groups, and individual citizens should have recourse to a neutral authority such as a supreme court to decide questions of how their country's constitution should regulate practice.[7]

So when people advance their positions during the application process, they may be seen as *pleading* their case, just as captains of opposing teams do when there's disagreement over how their game's rulebook should be applied. However, pleading lacks the exchange of, and so change to, ideas that's essential to genuine dialogue. While both judges and referees may pose questions to those making their cases, when it comes time to decide they normally go off alone, returning only once they're ready to hand down their decisions. Implicit here is the idea that the rules will not be changed, merely applied, since everyone agrees that rulebooks should never be rewritten during play. So, while some neutralists (especially contractarians and many Kantians) model their theories on (imaginary) dialogues, all assert that their theories shouldn't themselves be subject to the dialogues of actual, everyday politics. Because the work of theory must be completed *before* that of its application.[8]

However, this means that pleading is a unidirectional mode of discourse, which is why I think we shouldn't see neutralism as dialogical. After all, one of the meanings of the ancient Greek prefix *dia* is "between," which implies the presence of at least two sides, both of which should be

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[7] On Rawls' "well-ordered" (i.e. theory-governed) society as being like a game, and those involved in politics as its players, see my "Taking Politics Seriously," *Philosophy* 94, no. 2 (Apr. 2019): 271–94. And for the older, related idea of the political theorist as comparable to an arbiter, see Plato, *Laws* 62d11–628a4; Plato, *Eighth Letter* 354a1–5; and Aristotle, *Politics* 1284b25–34, 1997a5–7.

[8] Whence, for example, Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 161: "Liberal principles meet the urgent political requirement to fix, once and for all, the content of certain political basic rights and liberties, and to assign them special priority. Doing this takes those guarantees off the political agenda and puts them beyond the calculus of social interests."

capable of undergoing change. And if politics is indeed a matter of responding to conflict with dialogue, then this means that neutralism should be considered an antipolitical philosophy.

To be sure, there are neutralist theorists, especially those that defend versions of "public reason" or "deliberative democracy," who claim to give dialogue an important role. But they also tend to distort it by requiring interlocutors to respect theoretical rules established in advance. These rules thus ensure that any exchange will be highly circumscribed, since the fundamental questions have presumably already been answered by the theory.[9] In fact, one of the things that gets decided beforehand is ideology. Because the ranking of values that I've suggested is strictly the purview of ideology is, in neutralism, something logically derived from philosophical tenets, that is, from the theory of justice. Indeed, neutralists tend to see philosophy and ideology as so closely linked that they often fail to distinguish between them at all. Think of the liberalisms defended by Kantians or utilitarians such as Bentham or Mill; the socialisms of analytical Marxists or utilitarians such as Beatrice and Sidney Webb; or the libertarianisms of most contractarians today. To all these thinkers, once you've got the correct theory, you've got the correct ideology.

Does this mean that there's a contradiction at the heart of the neutralist project? Because it seems that whoever is applying the theory must somehow be both neutral and in favour of one of the "teams." How else to explain that Ronald Dworkin, for example, has advocated political principles that he believes all Americans share – principles that "are sufficiently basic so that a liberal or conservative interpretation of them will ramify across the entire spectrum of political attitudes" – while at the same time asserting that the correct interpretation of those principles constitutes "a form of liberalism"?[10]

So neutralism neglects an important feature of ideology, namely, its relative autonomy from philosophy. To derive an ideology from a philosophy is to assume that the latter is systematically unified – that it can be, and indeed has been, articulated in a self-sufficient and wholly non-contradictory way, i.e. as a theory. "Self-sufficient" implies that you need not rely on anything outside the theory to apply it; and "wholly non-contradictory" means that all of its parts are fully interlocked, hence completely reconciled. Of course, it's for this reason that neutralists are able to claim that certain values – the most important ones according to their preferred ideology – can be awarded an absolute or uncompromisable status, and so transcend the vicissitudes of everyday politics. After all, it is only within the chaos and flux of the everyday that such values are

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[9] See my "Patriotic, Not Deliberative, Democracy," in *Patriotic Elaborations.*

[10] Dworkin, *Is Democracy Possible Here?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 7.

challenged. By incorporating them within a theory, then, neutralists believe they have sealed them off from the "corrosive waters" of political practice.

Belief in systematic unity is thus essential to neutralism; but it is unwarranted. Rather than argue the point here, however, I will merely say that it's been my experience that the incommensurability of values is not something that can be theorized away. To assume otherwise is, as Isaiah Berlin once put it, to hold "perhaps one of the least plausible beliefs ever entertained by profound and influential thinkers."[11] The attempt to subsume incommensurable values into a theory can easily distort them or, worse, deny some of them a place altogether. Think of the Kantians' neglect of very real consequentialist concerns; utilitarians' neglect of various formal duties; Marxists' neglect of the respect for the individual; and contractarians' neglect of pretty much everything *but* this respect. There seems to be something inherently Procrustean about the projects of neutralist theory, given their attempts to force an inherently messy – and sometimes dirty – world into the purity of a systematically unified order.[12] Indeed, this is why I would go so far as to suggest that there has never been, and never will be, a universally accepted political theory. And though many consider theory and reason synonymous, I would add that theorising when it's not appropriate – by which I mean outside of the natural sciences – is an aesthetic activity at best, the kind that, as Wittgenstein would put it, takes language "on holiday." At worst, it's simply irrational.

Postmodernism: Creative Openness to the Other

But should we even be trying to respond to conflicts rationally? Postmodernist political philosophers would say "no," or at least "not exactly." They have a paradoxical relationship with neutralism; we could even describe them as "anti-neutralist neutralists." In postmodernism, theoretical reason is both "totalizing" and yet, to a degree, escapable. Thus, when faced with a theory of justice, the first thing the postmodernist thinker will do is try to "deconstruct" it, that is, uncover its self-contradictions in order to demonstrate that it isn't systematically unified after all. Otherwise, the uninterrogated theory indeed totalizes, doing violence to all those "others" who don't fit in the system. By deflating the neutralist's pretensions to unity, the postmodernist strives

[11] Berlin, "From Hope and Fear Set Free," in *Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, 2nd ed.), p. 259.

[12] See my "Dirty Hands: The One and the Many," *The Monist* 101, no. 2 (Apr. 2018): 150–69.

to make room for "difference," and so protect those who would suffer from being fixed in a theory's sights (the ancient Greek word *thēoria* means both "viewing" and "contemplation"). Because as Emmanuel Levinas once asked: "How can the Other . . . appear, that is, be for someone, without already losing its alterity and exteriority by way of offering itself to view?"[13]

While clearly subversive of theoretical reason, postmodernists don't see their approach as completely free of it. For one thing, theories are what they tend to deconstruct, so much so that their approach may even be considered parasitic on them. For another, they believe that language depends on theory to fix its meanings, and since the deconstructing practice is itself linguistic, it cannot be wholly untheoretical. That is why, as Linda Hutcheon points out, we should see ourselves as left with a

> paradoxical postmodernism of complicity and critique, of reflexivity and historicity, that at once inscribes and subverts the conventions and ideologies of the dominant cultural and social forces of the twentieth-century western world . . . [Postmodernism is] a critique both of the view of representation as reflective (rather than as constitutive) of reality and of the accepted idea of "man" as the centred subject of representation; but it is also an exploitation of those same challenged foundations of representation. Postmodern texts paradoxically point to the opaque nature of their representational strategies and at the same time to their complicity with the notion of the transparency of representation – a complicity shared, of course, by anyone who pretends even to describe their "de-doxifying" tactics.[14]

Fragmentation and paradox, and the openness to difference that they bring – this is the heart of the postmodernist endeavour.

There are two main postmodernist currents: the poststructuralist, which originated in France, and the pragmatist, which first emerged in the United States. The former emphasizes the indeterminacy of all meaning and the role of (especially theory-wielding) power in fixing particular meanings, while the latter stresses how the rigidity of theoretical reason tends to interfere with "what works." Both would nevertheless sever the logical tie that, we've noted, neutralists

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[13] Levinas, "The Poet's Vision," in *Proper Names*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 130.

[14] Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2002, 2nd ed.), pp. 11, 17.

assume exists between philosophy and ideology. Because if theories are inherently contradictory, then it simply isn't possible to derive an ideology from them. Whence Richard Posner on the relation between pragmatism and liberalism: "The connection between the liberal-visionary and the pragmatic is purely historical and contingent."[15] Or here is Richard Rorty on pragmatism and feminism:

> Pragmatism – considered as a set of philosophical views about truth, knowledge, objectivity, and language – is neutral between feminism and masculinism . . . Neither pragmatists nor deconstructionists [a form of poststructuralism] can do more for feminism than help rebut attempts to ground these [masculinist] practices on something deeper than a contingent historical fact – the fact that the people with the slightly larger muscles have been bullying the people with the slightly smaller muscles for a very long time.[16]

The poststructuralist feminist Judith Butler would surely agree: "there are no necessary political consequences for [poststructuralism], but only a possible political deployment."[17] And so on.

Evidently, the relation between philosophy and ideology is as underdetermined in postmodernism as it is overdetermined in neutralism. Not that this has prevented postmodernists from advocating for their preferred ideologies. Posner and Rorty, for instance, have declared themselves to be pragmatic liberals, while among the poststructuralists we could place Butler's feminism alongside Hélène Cixous' and recognize William E. Connolly's liberalism or Slavoj Žižek's, Ernesto Laclau's, and Chantal Mouffe's socialisms.[18] Despite, or because of, these

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[15] Posner, *Law, Pragmatism, and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 46.

[16] Rorty, "Feminism, Ideology, and Deconstruction: A Pragmatist View," in Slavoj Žižek, ed., *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 232–33.

[17] Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism'," in Butler and Joan W. Scott, eds., *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 8.

[18] See Rorty, "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism," in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Connolly, "Identity and Difference in Liberalism," in R. Bruce Douglass, Gerald M. Mara, and Henry S. Richardson, eds., *Liberalism and the Good* (New York: Routledge, 1990); to which we could add Charles Anderson, *Pragmatic Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). See also Cixous, "Extreme Fidelity," trans. Ann Liddle and Susan Sellers, in *Writing Differences: Readings from the Seminar of Hélène Cixous*, ed. Sellers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988); Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* (London: Verso: 2002), ch. 5; and Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (New York: Verso, 1985).

differences, none of these thinkers will ever be found claiming that "philosophy itself" calls on us to support one particular ideology or other.

All of this is in keeping with the postmodernist concern for maintaining an openness to difference – something that, it's worth noting, goes beyond being sensitive to irreducibility and so to incommensurable values. What's called for instead is more like the openness that characterizes artists as distinct from critics, by which I mean those who engage in "creation" as distinct from "interpretation." This, I think, is what Žižek is getting at when he suggests that "Politics itself is, in the final analysis, always the politics of fantasy. It needs to imagine answers to antagonisms."[19] Or as Rorty puts it: because "'immanent' criticism of the old paradigm is relatively ineffective," we need to see how "the freer the imagination of the present, the likelier it is that future social practices will be different from past practices."[20] It is for this reason that, on the rare occasions when postmodernists do recommend dialogue or something like it, we should interpret it as a call not for exchanging interpretations, which is the essence of dialogue, but for something more like the kind of talk that artists sometimes engage in. Of course, this suggests that postmodernism should be seen as yet another form of antipolitics.

Even so, the main problem with it is quite different from that of neutralism. The question almost poses itself: Does the postmodernist have adequate resources to respond when, for instance, a fascist such as Benito Mussolini declares something like the following:

> From the fact that all ideologies are of equal value, that all ideologies are mere fictions, the modern relativist infers that everybody has the right to create for himself his own ideology and to attempt to enforce it with all the energy of which he is capable.[21]

To reply that it is a mistake to attempt to derive an ideology from philosophy doesn't say very much; indeed, Rorty himself has admitted that pragmatism "is as useful to fascists like Mussolini and conservatives like Oakeshott as it is to liberals like Dewey."[22] That said, it strikes me that the

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[19] Žižek and Noam Yuran, "Disaster Movies as the Last Remnants of Utopia [Interview with Žižek]," *Ha'aretz*, May 21, 2003.

[20] Rorty, "Feminism, Ideology, and Deconstruction," pp. 227, 231.

[21] Quoted in Henry B. Veatch, *Rational Man: A Modern Interpretation of Aristotelian Ethics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 41.

[22] Rorty, "Feminism and Pragmatism," in *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 213 n. 23. Elsewhere, Rorty tells us that "The frequent complaint that a philosopher who

concern with maintaining openness to difference is not really compatible with fascism, since the form of creativity it relies on can also be said to support a minimal global ethic that rules fascism out.[23]

Regardless, if creativity is indeed their primary concern, then postmodernists should accept that neutralist theories are also, in their own way, creative. The only complaint – though it's a serious one – that postmodernists can lodge against neutralist ideologies thus has to do with their self-proclaimed exclusivity. Then again, surely everyone who prefers one ideology over others hopes that their compatriots, at least, will favour it over all of the others as well.

To which I would add that the imagination, even when freewheeling and so productive of fantasy, cannot be simply equated with creativity. Imagining is, after all, a skill, and this makes it a form of technical reason. It's true that artists and artisans alike rely on it, but when the former create they also require something more, namely that mysterious thing sometimes called "inspiration." And isn't there something irrational about inspiration?

This leads me to want to make another point. Alongside the theoretical and technical forms of reason, there exists at least one other that people can invoke when responding to conflict: I call it "transformative reason." Aristotle described what I take to be its ancestor with his with his account of prudence or practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), though it is overly rigid since, metaphorically speaking, he sees it as like aiming an arrow at a fixed target – the target having been revealed by a theory.[24] And where theory is, as noted, best grasped in ocular terms, the transformation of meaning through reason is instead something aural, indeed dialogical, and it goes without saying that dialogue requires both speaking and hearing. Dialogue also strives to be so sensitive to the particulars of its context that it makes it possible for incommensurability not to entail incomparability – as long, that is, as we use our reason to "listen" rather than "look" for the truth.

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holds the pragmatic theory of knowledge cannot give you a good reason not to be a fascist is perfectly justified. But neither can she give you a reason to be one." So it "seems to me that I am just as provisional and contextualist as the Nazi teachers who made their students read *Der Stürmer*; the only difference is that I serve a better cause. I come from a better province." *Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), pp. 29, 80.

[23] See my "On the Minimal Global Ethic," in *Patriotic Elaborations*, pp. 180–83.

[24] For the metaphor of practical wisdom as like aiming an arrow, see Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999, 2nd ed.), 1094a24–25. Note that it's because the target is set by theory rather than by prudence that Aristotle claims "we deliberate about things that promote an end, not about the end." Ibid., 1112b34–1113a1.

All of which is to say that we *can* respond to a conflict between incommensurable values reasonably, though only if we're willing to engage in dialogue. Dialogue, and so politics.

Pluralism: Negotiating in Good Faith

This is precisely what value pluralist political philosophers advocate. And given their wariness of theoretical reason outside of the natural sciences, they can be said to share the postmodernist's opposition to attempts at deriving ideology directly from philosophy. Whence Berlin, for example, for whom "Pluralism and liberalism are not the same or even overlapping concepts . . . I believe in both liberalism and pluralism, but they are not logically connected."[25] This is also Stuart Hampshire's position, though he's a pluralist socialist.[26] Both Berlin and Hampshire nevertheless agree that there exist numerous often conflicting and incommensurable values in the world, and both insist that we respond neither by pleading before an authority responsible for applying a systematic theory of justice, nor by turning to a creativity that's open to the difference of the other. Rather, what we ought to do instead is negotiate in good faith.

Negotiation consists of making concessions in order to reach a balanced accommodation. To be sure, neutralists also speak of "balancing," but their belief that this can be guided by theory assumes, we might say, a single-beam balance, a metaphor which implies that the values in question are commensurable. That's why neutralists believe that any compromises made along the way can be seen to cancel each other out, allowing those who make them to keep their hands clean. Pluralists are not so untroubled; to them, compromise entails dirtiness and, in the worst cases, tragedy.[27]

The justice that's associated with negotiating in good faith should be distinguished from substantive justice, which the pluralist sees as embodied in the specific accommodations that people aim for when negotiating – accommodations that, we've seen, are strongly influenced by

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[25] Berlin and Ramin Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin* (London: Peter Halban, 1991), p. 44; see also Berlin and Bernard Williams, "Pluralism and Liberalism: A Reply," *Political Studies* 62, no. 2 (June 1994): 306–309, pp. 308–309.

[26] See Hampshire, "Epilogue," in Hampshire and Leszek Kolakowski, eds., *The Socialist Idea: A Reappraisal* (New York: Basic Books, 1975); and *Justice Is Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), ch. 3.

[27] See, for example, Berlin, "Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century," in *Liberty: Incorporating* Four Essays on Liberty, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), esp. p. 64; Hampshire, *Innocence and Experience* (London: Penguin, 1989), esp. pp. 170–77; and Bernard Williams, "Politics and Moral Character," in Hampshire, ed., *Public and Private Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978). For a recent study, see Edward Hall, *Value, Conflict, and Order: Berlin, Hampshire, Williams, and the Realist Revival in Political* Theory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

their preferred ideologies.[28] Good-faith negotiations should also be distinguished from realpolitik, where concessions are made strictly for strategic reasons. When people engage in realpolitik, it's essentially because they believe they have more to gain from it than from more unadulterated forms of force. That's why realpolitik is in no sense dialogical – it may be *dia*, but it has no place for *logos* ("reason/speech" from the Greek) – and so why it should never be confused with real politics. By contrast, one negotiates in good faith because one accepts the need for *toleration*, which we can identify as pluralism's central political virtue. Pluralists come to it by way of their recognition of the plurality of values in the world, since it means that while there will always be people in conflict with us, they are nevertheless following their own values and so are deserving of respect. They may be our adversaries, but it is still legitimate for them to pursue their distinct aims.

Think of the famous 1997 agreement between paramilitary groups to decommission arms that was part of the Northern Ireland peace process. It was important precisely because it suggested good faith between the parties. The same may be said of the September 1993 handshake between Palestine Liberation Organisation chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin on the White House lawn (even if that deal, of course, collapsed). The handshake nevertheless remains the most potent symbol of the willingness of adversaries to engage in dialogue and so politics: while shaking hands, people are not only in very close proximity to each other but that also they physically touch one another, making themselves especially vulnerable, and yet no physical harm is done.[29]

In advocating for good-faith negotiations, pluralists both rule out all of the inherently antipolitical ideologies while making room for a wide range of political ones. That said, the decision to favour one ideology over others will never be as indeterminate in pluralism as it is in postmodernism, since pluralists see it as based on an interpretation of one's political culture, what Berlin described as "the general pattern of life in which we believe."[30] And given that different contexts require different compromises when values conflict, we can readily see how different

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[28] See Hampshire, *Innocence and Experience*, pp. 27–37.

[29] See Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, trans. Peter Bing (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), p. 34. Apparently, it was only during modern times that the handshake also came to serve as a greeting.

[30] Berlin, "Introduction," in *Liberty*, p. 47; see also p. 42; as well as "Pursuit of the Ideal," in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, 2nd ed.), p. 19.

societies can be expected to develop different traditions of compromise, and so different "home" ideologies.

Evidently, pluralists would have us recognize a degree of independence between ideology and philosophy. For they come to their ideologies from neither theory nor a creative openness to the other but, as we've seen, from dialogue as negotiation. It's for this reason that we cannot turn to either philosophy or art to understand why, during the previous century, the Scandinavian countries were mainly home to democratic socialist political cultures; why the United States moved from a duality of liberalism and conservatism to the mosaic of liberalism, conservatism, and authoritarian nationalist and woke populisms that characterizes its politics today; and why Canada, despite powerful ideological winds blowing in from the south, has managed to remain largely liberal. All these are manifestations of how these countries' citizenries have tended to negotiate their differences over substantive justice.

So there is a great deal of room for change in pluralist politics. But not enough. Because any change seems limited to determining the balances that must be struck when we're faced with political conflict. And while balancing takes place within the contextual or thick dimension, where values clash and accommodations are reached when they do, pluralists also assume that there exists a universal or thin dimension of normative meaning, the one where a value's fixed and isolable core can be located. It is to this core, which constitutes the value's "soul" or "skeleton," that the "body" or "flesh" of a given thick context is fastened.

So it is this flesh that, as Joseph Schumpeter once put it, negotiators "maim and degrade" when they making concessions and so compromise.[31] This is why people tend to decry compromises as "shabby," especially when they feel they've made too many of them. It is also why it's so difficult to claim that the changes wrought are "for the best," that they contribute in some sense or other to progress, to improving the practices that express the values in question.[32] Progressive change is also ruled out because pluralism tends to portray society as a whole as fragmented, both between its values and between the ways of life containing them, and this leaves little room for the idea that citizens share a common good, not to mention the possibility that making concessions could contribute positively to it. Think of Bernard Williams' claim that ethical

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[31] Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1987, 6th ed.), p. 251.

[32] So while I wouldn't go as far as Paul Dumouchel, who claims that pluralism is inherently conservative, I do think it assumes a very limited conception of politics-led change. See Dumouchel, "La tolerance n'est pas le pluralisme," *Esprit*, no. 224 (Aug.-Sept. 1996): 165–81, p. 181.

life can never reflect "a satisfactorily functioning whole," since "some widely accepted parts of it may stand condemned in light of perfectly plausible extrapolations of other parts." Apparently, this is what it means to have a "realistic view of communities."[33]

Must realism always be so pessimistic? Yes, if we accept the idea that values have thin and isolable cores. Because it supports the popular misconception that whenever the ways of life that express these values conflict, they "clash," "collide," or "bang together," since that, after all, is what separate things do whenever they come into contact in an antagonistic way. The result, in consequence, is an inherently adversarial, zero-sum conception of conflict, one that makes it seem as if the best we can do is compromise. Because that is what comes from balancing values *against* each other.

What's missing from this picture is a place for a more reconciliatory approach, one that would allow us to integrate the values rather than balance them against each other. It assumes a holist – rather than atomist – conception of values and so of how they may conflict: values aren't separate, or even separable, entities that bang together, so much as integral parts of an organic whole. Instead of clashing or colliding atoms, then, we should their conflicts along the lines of disharmonies or disturbances having arisen within certain regions of a whole. This makes way for focusing on the whole instead of its parts, and so for entertaining the possibility that we might transform the whole in such a way that its parts can be reconciled, integrated with little or no compromise. Dissonance becomes consonance. Considered from a society-wide or even global perspective, whole groups or ways of life could thus be reconcilable and, in this way, contribute to the progressive development of the political communities associated with them.

Patriotism: Conversation About the Common Good

So aspires the patriot. Negotiation, the patriot knows, certainly entails compromise, but whatever is compromised can still be shared by the political community as a whole. More than this, the patriot's holistic conception of values (which, incidentally, draws on the philosophies of language developed by those such as Hans-Georg Gadamer and Charles Taylor[34]) allows for the possibility that conflict resolution could consist of not only negotiation but also conversation.

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[33] Williams, "Pluralism, Community and Left Wittgensteinianism," in *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument*, ed. Geoffrey Hawthorn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 37.

[34] See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989, 2nd ed.), esp. part 3; and Taylor, *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity*

When conversing, interlocutors aim for much more than the "damage control"[35] sought in negotiation. They hope to reach a shared understanding, not an accommodation, and this requires *genuinely listening* to each other rather than merely give a hearing to demands to be negotiated. One asks not *what* the other wants but *why* they want it; only this way could it become possible to determine not the minimum trade-offs or concessions for reaching an accommodation but whether one's opponent is saying something that has some truth, some justice to it. The central question becomes: Can we learn from them? We pose this question even though, given the conflict, we strongly suspect that they're wrong. But are they *completely* wrong? It is because it is often very difficult to say so with certainty that it makes sense to try and transform our position to incorporate, and so share in, whatever could be true in theirs. This is how we might reconcile with them and thereby contribute to our common good.

Modern patriots inherited this ideal from classical republicans, who were the first to praise people as "patriots," long before nationalists laid claim to the term. Another patriotic ideal comes from feminism: that we should try to avoid zero-sum, adversarial responses to conflict, since these are encouraged by macho cultures, the ones that love a good fight.[36] Instead, we should always distinguish between opponents who are enemies and must be engaged adversarially, on the one hand, and those who are (or could become) friends of a sort, and so fellow citizens, on the other.[37]

Not that this is going to be easy; after all, there are a number of ways in which conversation is even more challenging than negotiation. For one thing, as noted, transformation entails changing one's values as a whole, since they are all more or less integrated (as distinct from "interlocked," the term I used above for the systematic, rather than organic, kind of holism associated with neutralist theory). When making changes to one part necessarily affects all the others, transformation becomes a truly comprehensive phenomenon; whence its great difficulty. In fact, while conversation shouldn't be seen as maiming or degrading values, it can easily "break" them – though the hope is that, just like with broken bones, they will heal into something stronger, which is to say that the values will become truer, in their newly articulated and better understood form,

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(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[35] Nicholas Rescher, *Pluralism: Against the Demand for Consensus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 4.

[36] See Janice Moulton, "A Paradigm of Philosophy: The Adversary Method," in Susan Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka, eds., *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1983).

[37] See my "Opponents vs. Adversaries in Plato's *Phaedo*," in *Patriotic Elaborations*.

to the whole of which they're a part. So where pluralists could be said to reverse Clausewitz's famous dictum and see politics as still like war albeit carried on by other means, the work of patriots is best captured by paraphrasing a line from Yeats: "Labour is blossoming or dancing where / The body [*is*] bruised to pleasure soul."[38]

This is reconciliatory politics, and it is potentially progressive in a way unavailable to pluralists. Not that this potential is always realised. After all, if others are willing to negotiate at best, then no matter how much we may desire it, conversation will simply not be viable. *Everyone* must thus engage in the kind of speaking and listening that it requires. This is one reason why conversation is so fragile. And it is most probably why, today, our politics tends to be dominated by neutralism, postmodernism, and pluralism, making attempts to reconcile our conflicts often futile.[39] Still, patriots refuse to give up hope. For every once in a while one hears of incidents like the following, recounted by Susan Bickford:

> [This is] the story of a particular exemplary action that happened several years ago when, in the midst of feminism's "sex wars," I attended a protest on the campus where I was a graduate student. A feminist group at this public university had originally designed the action to protest the student union's sale of pornographic magazines like *Playboy*. News of this protest spawned a simultaneous counter demonstration by feminists supportive of anticensorship principles and alternative sexualities. So there we were, lines of feminists, both sides chanting and holding signs, one side with a bullhorn, the other without. I was not involved in organizing either protest, and frankly I do not remember being very thoughtful about my own participation; I had not done much representative thinking, let us say. That failure was made clear to me by the gutsy act of a woman on "the other side," who came over and spoke with several of us. I cannot remember her exact words, but what she said was something like "I want

[38] Yeats, "Among School Children," in *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989, 2nd ed.), p. 217.

[39] For a compelling account of the presence in the anglophone world of uncompromising stances (which, I would claim, are encouraged by neutralism), as well as those willing to do no more than negotiate (as advocated by pluralism – postmodernism paradoxically combines these with the former), see Deborah Tannen, *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue* (New York: Random House, 1998). Two qualifications to my praise of this wonderful book: there are times (e.g. ch. 4) when Tannen fails to appreciate that dialogues involving compromise necessarily have an adversarial dimension; as well as others (ch. 8) when she mistakenly equates "criticism" or "opposition" with zero-sum adversity (for one can criticize or oppose in the hopes of reconciling with others rather than pressuring them to make concessions).

> to hear what you have to say, I don't want us to just yell at each other. Tell me what you want, why you're doing what you're doing." It was not a loving or peaceful act. Her face was tight and pinched, her compadres were chanting in the background, and what she was doing was clearly difficult for her, perhaps more so because she was the only one, on either side, who made that effort. She must have felt acutely vulnerable, "appearing" in that particular way and place – not as someone who floated above the conflict, not as someone who stayed "at home," but as someone who, quite literally, travelled: from her group to ours and back.[40]

If she had only said "Tell me what you want," and left it at that, we might see her as a practitioner of pluralist politics, willing to do no more than negotiate with her adversaries. But in asking to hear their side, she was clearly announcing her willingness to listen, to try to understand and perhaps come to share in their position – or, failing that, to develop a new position that they could all endorse, together.

This suggests that patriotism should be situated somewhere between neutralism's belief in the possibility of a unified political society, on the one hand, and pluralism's fragmentation of it, on the other – all while striving to avoid the paradoxes of postmodernism. Patriots can also take up a position between the neutralist's unification of philosophy and ideology and the postmodernist's and pluralist's separation of them. For patriots accept that while philosophy may help us say certain things about politics in general, it cannot – on its own, outside of the context of a given political community – support any particular ideology. That said, because the common good can sometimes be fulfilled creatively as distinct from interpretively, we also must allow for an apolitical – though not antipolitical – patriotism. But since, in politics, creative solutions tend to be the exception, never the rule, and given the well-known dangers associated with the charismatic leaders who often advocate them, it (almost) always makes sense to begin instead with dialogue.[41]

Which brings us to patriotism's central political maxim: "conversation first, negotiation second, force third." It tells us that there can be no politics when a ruler is present, that is, when there is someone, or something, that is *sovereign* and so has the last word. Because the decision about when we should be moving between conversation, negotiation, and force must always be

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[40] Bickford, *The Dissonance of Democracy: Listening, Conflict, and Citizenship* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 172.

[41] See my "Good, Bad, Great, Evil," in *Patriotic Elaborations*.

made by citizens in dialogue with each other, and no one may impose their view as to when such dialogues have come to an end.

Anarchism: Creative Propaganda

This may sound like anarchism and, to a degree, it is. Indeed, where some anarchists are strictly non-violent, and others the opposite, most seem to think they could adopt something like the patriot's maxim – although they'll be quick to emphasize a greater optimism. Anarchists admit that force may be unavoidable right now, yet they don't consider this our permanent fate. On the contrary, they believe that if it weren't for the presence of unjustifiable forms of authority, as well as the coercive hierarchies associated with them, then force would never be necessary. This is why we should abolish the state along with its corrupt laws, since no other institution interferes as much with the spirit of voluntary cooperation, one that, if allowed to, comes to people naturally.

The patriot, by contrast, sees the world as "broken," and this means that there will always be times when reconciliation, and even accommodation, are impossible. Just think of when we're faced with people who would enthusiastically violate the laws that express the common good; at such times, it is usually wrong to negotiate, much less converse, with them. So while anarchists are right that politics can never be well-ordered, this doesn't mean we ought to tolerate actions that would upend the government. It is legitimate for the police to enforce the law.

Anarchists also disagree amongst themselves, of course, and as with the followers of other philosophies this will often be over ideology. For example, when it comes to the question of what an ideal anarchist society would look like, the answers have ranged from the extreme individualist and so libertarian to the collectivist and so socialist (including syndicalist and communist variants).

Yet there's also a deep, metaphysical disagreement that has arisen between some anarchists. Alongside the traditional forms of anarchist philosophy, which assume a monism that is consonant with neutralism (given its idea of a fully coherent rulebook), some more recent anarchists have come to adopt versions of the claim about the brokenness and so disunity of the world – albeit in a paradoxical way that recalls postmodernism rather than pluralism or patriotism.[42] Still, both sides in this disagreement can be said believe that all who reject anarchism need to be persuaded to

[42] For an example of the more traditional, because monistic, approach, one that draws on the Enlightenment, see Noam Chomsky, *On Anarchism* (New York: The New Press, 2013). As for those anarchists that share a paradoxical, because "pluramonist," metaphysics with postmodernists, see Todd May, "Anarchism from Foucault to Rancière" and Gabriel Kuhn, "Anarchism, Postmodernity, and Poststructuralism," both in Randall Amster *et al.*, eds., *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

change their minds via creative forms of propaganda (using the term in its original, non-pejorative because non-manipulative sense). These forms range from education by anarchist intellectuals to "propaganda of the deed," which once referred to armed local rebellions and even terrorism, but today tends to take the form of (albeit sometimes violent) demonstrations. And while their use of propaganda is driven by rage against injustice and the corrupting influences of the system, I can't help but point out that it is not at all dialogical. Yet this is only to be expected, since who can hear the other side when, as Irving Layton once put it, "Their fists are heavy with universal love"?[43]

Amongst themselves, however, anarchists do deliberate. Because where, if not within the collective, could they hope to approximate life as it will be lived once all of the authoritarian structures have been overthrown?[44] One nevertheless wonders if they ever really manage to hear each other – and not only for the common reason that it is hard, not to mention painful, to listen to someone close to you who nevertheless disagrees with you; there's also the fact that, while conversation is not a skill that can be mastered, it can take the form of a habit that will nonetheless be difficult to acquire should one believe in "the wisdom of the use of force."[45] It is for this reason that, in the end, "anarchist politics" strikes me as a contradiction in terms.

A New Political Spectrum

Of the five philosophies described above, I evidently favour patriotism. And as I suggested at the beginning, this patriotism invites us to conceive of the political spectrum in a new way. Here is why.

Especially since the fall of the Berlin Wall, many political thinkers have come to believe that the very idea of a political spectrum has lost relevance, since the terms "left" and "right" are no longer meaningful.[46] Others, however, assert that one or the other of the two classic conceptions of it remain valid. Each of these derives from an understanding of the way its sides were first invoked in post-revolutionary France, when those who sat on the left of the National Assembly

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[43] Layton, "With the Money I Spend," in *A Wild Peculiar Joy: The Selected Poems* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2012), p. 305.

[44] See, for example, Francis Dupuis-Déri, "The Black Blocs Ten Years after Seattle: Anarchism, Direct Action, and Deliberative Practices," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 4, no. 2 (2010): 45–82.

[45] Ibid., p. 54.

[46] See, for example, Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), esp. the introduction and chs. 1–2 (though note the qualification on p. 251); and Berlin and Steven Lukes, "Isaiah Berlin in Conversation with Steven Lukes," *Salmagundi*, no. 120 (Fall 1998): 52–133, esp. p. 124.

were said to be for progress and against reaction, and those on the right the reverse. To some, then, the spectrum is based on the notion of *attitudes toward the direction of change*: those on the left are progressive in the sense that they favour change from the status quo to something new, whereas those on the right are retrogressive because they hope to return to a previous state of affairs.[47] To others, by contrast, the spectrum should be seen as based on *attitudes toward equality*: those on the left favour it, while those on the right are more open to inequalities.[48]

The first approach, it must be said, has the problem that it would have us describe liberals in the United States today as right-wing, since they envision American public policy as approximating the country's New Deal past. But the second fails to explain why one particular value, equality, should be given special status over all of the others; nor can it account for the tendency to identify American neo-conservatives, or Russian communists, as right-wing even though each favours the forceful imposition of its preferred form of equality (democratic and economic, respectively).

To be sure, one could argue that the mistake lies with those who describe American liberals as left and their neo-conservative compatriots or Russian communists as right. But I think that there is something to these descriptions. And so I would like to propose an alternative conception – one that, I believe, makes better sense of both these descriptions and of the way the political spectrum as an idea has, or at least should have, been used throughout its history.

The alternative takes its cue from Gianni Vattimo's assertion that "nonviolence" is the central characteristic of the left.[49] Given it, as well as the idea that we may respond to conflict with either conversation, negotiation, or force, I'd like to suggest that we describe those optimistic "doves" who believe that progress through conversation is feasible as being on the left; those pessimistic "hawks" for whom force is unavoidable as being on the right; and those who are neither, hence favour negotiation, as being in the centre. Such as spectrum should thus be understood as based on the idea of *attitudes toward conflict*.

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[47] See, for example, Leon Baradat, *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact* (New York: Routledge, 2020, 13th ed.), ch. 2.

[48] See, for example, Norberto Bobbio, *Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction*, trans. Allan Cameron (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996). For their part, Alain Noël and Jean-Philippe Thérien argue that left and right disagree over the kind of economic equality government should promote, that of outcome or opportunity, respectively: *Left and Right in Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[49] As cited in Bobbio, p. 94; see also pp. 28–34 of Vattimo's *Beyond Interpretation: The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy*, trans. David Webb (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), a book that can be read as a polemic against fundamentalisms, especially those based on metaphysical (or as I would call them "theoretical") philosophies.

Since conflicts can, of course, be very different, not to mention change, it makes no sense to assume that people should situate themselves on this spectrum in any permanent sense. I've long thought it odd that people choose to declare themselves "lifelong members of the left" or "inherently right-wing" and so on, as if where they are and the situation they find themselves in is irrelevant to their politics. It may be that vastly overreaching conceptions of rationality or human nature are at work here, or perhaps people are simply letting their temperaments or personal sensibilities interfere with their judgment. Regardless, the basic point I wish to make is that deciding how best to respond to a given conflict should depend on the conflict and nothing else.

Ideology, then, ought to be excluded – at least at first, even though, or rather because, it's one of the main sources of people's temperaments or personal sensibilities. The problem, in other words, is that we tend to turn to our preferred ideologies for guidance too soon. Ideology is helpful – when it is helpful – only *after* the conversation has broken down; before this, we should try to listen to our political opponents with an open mind and transform ourselves on the basis of what we hear. Ideologies get in the way because, as the historian Lewis Namier once noted, there is a certain "fixity" to them: "the less, therefore, man clogs the free play of his mind with political doctrine and dogma, the better for his thinking."[50] Put yet another way, instead of travelling with an ideological map we should be willing to go off-road and explore – even, or especially, with people we disagree with.

That said, when the time for negotiation has indeed come, that is when patriots will turn to the ideology they believe best expresses the common good. And this ideology, it should be clear, is by no means necessarily conservatism. While conservatives are often said to exhibit the greatest love for their country, patriots are those who love what they believe to be the *true* identity of their country – or countries should they feel loyalty to more than one, or even of the world.[51] Whether current practice expresses that patriotic identity well must thus remain an open question. It's possible that radical reforms are required for citizens are to live up to their shared ideals. So we can understand why Hannah Arendt once declared that "intense discontent [is] the hallmark of true patriotism and true devotion to one's people."[52] True patriot love, in other words, often entails criticism.

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[50] Namier, "Human Nature in Politics," in *Personalities and Powers* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955), pp. 7, 5.

[51] See my "Patriotism, Local and Global," in Mitja Sardoč, ed., *Handbook of Patriotism* (Berlin: Springer, 2020).

[52] Hannah Arendt, "Herzl and Lazare," in *The Jewish Writings*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), p. 338; consider also the contrast that Theodor W. Adorno *et al*. assert between

Although it's not partial to any particular political ideology, patriotism does rule out the antipolitical ones – those that, again, consistently undermine political dialogue in favour of either nondialogical forms of talk or other, more blatant forms of force. This is obvious when it comes to fascism or revolutionary Marxism, implicit in the case of neutralist liberalism, and inevitable when it comes to such one-dimensional ideologies as populism or libertarianism. In fact, all of these are so far to the right on the spectrum as I've been defining it that we might even ask if they merit a place on it at all. Because we are, after all, talking about a *political* spectrum, one where we can expect to find positions which assume that there will be at least some occasions when dialogue can serve as a viable alternative to force.

That said, when it comes to the political ideologies, there's no call for situating them on the spectrum in any permanent sense. For instance, while conservatives will certainly tend to be found towards the right, there are times when even they will conclude that a given conflict can be negotiated in good faith and so they should be seen as having moved closer to the centre. Indeed, since each political community lays claim to its own political culture, each may, again, be said to have its own central home ideology or ideologies, the one(s) that will be shared by most citizens. Political parties whose foremost aim is electoral success can therefore be expected to compete over it or them. Think of how, in the 1970s, American Republicans and Democrats strove to represent right-wing and centrist conservatives, respectively; since the polarization instigated by Donald Trump, however, each now aims to install different home ideologies upon a fragmented country: authoritarian nationalist populism in the case of the Republicans, and liberalism and woke populism in the case of the Democrats. As for Canada, it still largely claims a single home ideology, which is why those of its political parties that genuinely wish to form the government, namely the Conservatives, Liberals, and New Democrats, have for some time worked to present themselves to the electorate as the best representative of Canadian liberalism.[53] Or think of Israel, a country which has faced numerous existential threats since it was reestablished in 1948; it should thus be seen as having given nationalism – that of its majority Jewish nation and that of its minority Palestinian Arab nation – a virtually overriding place in its politics. Only in more mature political

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"genuine" and "pseudo" patriotism in their *The Authoritarian Personality: Part One* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1950), pp. 107–108.

[53] See, for example, H.W. Brands, *The Strange Death of American Liberalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); and William Christian and Colin Campbell, *Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1990, 3rd ed.).

cultures can nationalism be present strictly as an adjunct to one of the other more sophisticated political ideologies.[54] Hopefully, the day will come when both Jewish and Palestinian Arab Israelis can see it in this way.

Conclusion

There are a number of benefits to approaching politics the way I've proposed. For one, it could help reconceive the inherently misleading terms of what, in anglophone political philosophy, has been known as the "liberal-communitarian debate."[55] Consider that Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer, two of the debate's major communitarian representatives, are actually liberals of a sort.[56] Even Alasdair MacIntyre, who clearly is a nonliberal participant (he advocates a premodern form of politics) has rejected the communitarian label.[57] It doesn't help that those such as Michael Sandel who accept it continue to equate liberalism with the various forms of neutralist liberalism,[58] thereby perpetuating the misrepresentation of an ideology that, as Michael Freeden has shown, has long exhibited much richer forms than are those compatible with a neutral framework.[59] Also relevant is the fact that Berlin, universally recognized as a liberal, is more open to compromising liberalism's core value of individual liberty than is a so-called communitarian such as Walzer.[60]

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[54] See Michael Freeden, "Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?" *Political Studies* 46, no. 4 (Sept. 1998): 748–65.

[55] See, for example, Adam Swift and Stephen Mulhall, *Liberals and Communitarians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, 2nd ed.); as well as my "Liberalism after Communitarianism," in Gerard Delanty and Stephen Turner, eds., *Handbook of Contemporary Social and Political Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2021, 2nd ed.).

[56] This is surely one reason why neither has been comfortable with the label "communitarian." Walzer lumps himself in with the liberals in "Liberalism and the Art of Separation" and "The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism," both in *Thinking Politically: Essays in Political Theory*, ed. David Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). And Taylor gives "one of the many reasons" why he's "unhappy with the term 'communitarian'" in "Charles Taylor Replies," in James Tully and Daniel Weinstock, eds., *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 250.

[57] Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Spectre of Communitarianism," *Radical Philosophy*, no. 70 (Mar.-Apr. 1995): 34–35, p. 34: "I have myself strenuously disowned this label, but to little effect." Daniel A. Bell is, to my knowledge, the only nonliberal who has embraced it: *Communitarianism and Its Critics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). Amitai Etzioni, who has also done so, seems to me better described as a pluralist liberal (though one who occasionally also voices patriotic concerns): *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

[58] See the following by Michael Sandel: *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 2nd ed.); "Introduction," in Sandel, ed., *Liberalism and its Critics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); and *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), esp. ch. 1.

[59] See Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), chs. 4–7; and his *Liberal Languages: Ideological Imaginations and Twentieth-Century Progressive Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[60] As we can gather from Walzer's declaration, in *Spheres of Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 279, that

As is the reality that ostensibly anti-communitarian neutralist liberals such as Rawls and Dworkin actually embrace a strong (though, I would claim, misconstrued) conception of the common good, as Taylor has acknowledged.[61]

Liberalism, moreover, should be seen as but one modern ideology among many – even if it remains the most popular among Western political thinkers today. This leads me to suggest that we eschew the misleading description of the West as the home of "liberal democracy," since it obfuscates the fact that democratic socialism, conservatism, feminism, nationalism, and ecologism all claim places as respectable ideologies among the diversity of Western democratic political cultures. The relevant distinction should be not between liberal democracies and other regimes, but between regimes that are political and those that are not.

The spectrum I've proposed could also help us account for the tendency of many on the left to exhibit a unique form of bitterness towards their opponents. This is something they do in addition to the natural aversion that all who take their politics seriously feel towards fellow citizens who are sympathetic to ideologies different from their own. The bitterness is only natural given the frustration people experience when they think that they've found a reconciliatory solution to a given political conflict, one that contributes to the common good, and yet it is rejected by those to their right. Think of the old proverb about leading a horse to water but not being able to make it drink; then imagine how disturbing it is to conclude that the horse's obstinacy is preventing others from drinking as well.

Yet there are also those who, while claiming to be members of the left, feel frustrated (or worse) for a reason that has little if anything to do with an interest in reconciliation. These are the "fascist left," as they are sometimes called, and they are not really on the left, as I have been defining it, at all. For them, words are not carriers of dialogue but weapons in disguise – arrows, tinged with self-righteousness and what Nietzsche called *ressentiment*, which they aim at those they perceive as self-serving enemies either of social justice or of some identity-based conception of equality. That is why, today, it's been acknowledged that to be "woke" often implies "an aggressive, performative take on progressive politics that only makes things worse."[62] Because

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the "autonomous person" is "the ideal subject of the theory of justice."

[61] See Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate," in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 195.

[62] Aja Romano, "A History of 'Wokeness'," *Vox*, 9 October 2020.

these "leftists" are, ultimately, no less antipolitical than are the soldiers of realpolitik; their place, therefore, is much further to right.

This is where they join the other, authoritarian populists. Unfortunately, both kinds of populists have nowadays become influential in the West, making the already-difficult politics of patriotism even more of a challenge. To this must be added the always persistent threat of technocracy, which has lately been kept in check only in the worst possible way, the one which has seen expertise politicized and so experts polarized – something that is almost as dangerous as when experts depoliticize politics. Nor should we overlook the ever-growing threat of "aestheticization," which is when people fail to take politics seriously because they affirm it for its own sake and so see it as a source of disinterested enjoyment.[63] It goes without saying that other looming threats, whether to the environment, our health, or our security, have also been seriously interfering with politics, even undermining it altogether.

Still, it is normally with none other than politics that we can properly respond to such challenges. That's why we have no choice but to invest our hopes in dialogue. While conversation is fragile, as we've seen, it can also be powerful: whenever a political discussion succeeds, there is no better way of realising and indeed developing our values. That is why even now – perhaps especially now, when an edifying politics of the common good seems a remote dream – we should be doing everything possible to inculcate its virtues, to defend and encourage it. Patriots of the world, converse!

[63] See my "Politics, Anyone?" *The Hedgehog Review* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2022): 12–14 (which contains a shorter, less academic version of the argument advanced in the paper on Rawls cited in fn. 7); as well as "Antisemitism and the Aesthetic," *The Philosophical Forum* 52, no. 3 (Fall 2021): 189–210.