

2. The next treason (betrayal) of the intellectualsⁱ

The old lament and complaints about the seducibility and “treason (betrayal) of the intellectuals”, that is, their compliance with, and yielding to, the temptations of dominance (as authority) and violence, must after the collapse of communism, be started in particularly shrill tones (*or*: must after the collapse of communism, be heard again with particular intensity, as should have been expected). These complaints are in our [[20th]] century at least as old as the renowned book by Julien Brenda (1927). Too often and for too long, many intellectuals in fact have, and not always the least significant, as apologists or – the more cowardly – as fellow travellers, connected their hopes and their own social claim of leadership (or their leadership claims), in one way or another, with the outcome or course of the communistic experiment. Most of those surviving, endeavour now through the ostentatious beating of their own breast or through foolhardy and at will re-interpretations of their old words, phrases and deeds to make what has happened, unhappened (what has been done, undone), in order to not lose (to maintain) contact with the flourishing business/ shop or bazaar of the spirit (spiritual(-intellectual) life). Across from the self-flagellations, self-accusations or alchemistic arts, stands the arrogance and conceit and the sometimes inquisitorial know-it-all attitude (or bulging stance) of those who had always stood on the – conclusively determined, i.e. adjudicated and decided in 1989 – right side (*or*: who had from the very beginning chosen the “right” (according to the judgement of 1989) camp). Amongst these are again often those who are the most brusque and insolent, who arrived on the scene and appeared publicly late enough to be able to decide free of risk in favour of the victorious cause, i.e. victor.

The difference between the remorseful and repentant communists or the philo-communists (friends of the communists), and triumphant Westerners is supposed to have been according to common, popular opinion (*or*: as is often said), that the former were prepared to overlook inhumanity or even to welcome it, if only it was committed in the name of Utopia, whereas the latter served through their anti-utopian pragmatism, the liberal cause of humane (philanthropic) tolerance. From another perspective, nevertheless, the subjectively perceived distinction is eclipsed (overshadowed) by an objective commonality. “Progressive” therefore intellectuals thinking in terms of the philosophy of history and accepting of the philosophy of historical progress, sided with militant Utopia in the belief that Utopia will in the future be reality, that is, History will prove them right (*or*: that Utopia will become, in the future, reality, that is, History will vindicate (justify) them). And pro-Western intellectuals can today blame the sins of the opposite side with such self-conviction because they opine that History proved them right by 1989 at the latest. In both cases, world History appears as, or is called – as Schiller said – the world court, in both cases the assumption is made that one’s own each and every respective self-understanding ideationally articulates the objective course of history. Just as the Marxist mythological dialectic equated the self-knowledge of the proletariat with the self-knowledge of History to its end (*or*: in its final phase), so the “liberal” party of intellectuals (*or*: “liberal” intellectuals) today opines/opine that the self-understanding of the West (that means its “values”) could make up the basis of a social blueprint or programme with, in practice, universal application, and really constitute, or felicitously finalise and consummate, History as universal History (*or*: the basis of a universally applicable social programme and drive universal History to a happy end).

The aforementioned self-understanding of the West therefore amounts to a claim of universalisation. Intellectuals, who embrace and espouse human rights or tolerance as Western values, are thinking of, and champion, not merely a reality in the present, but also a future project, namely, the realisation of the Western social blueprint or organisation on a world scale. And since in their mind or thoughts world, already for polemical reasons, the contrast and opposition of “totalitarianism and freedom” dominates, thus they are not conscious (do not take account) of either the origin or provenance of their vision from a certain philosophy of history, or the relationship and pertinence of their beloved/favourite panhuman society (*or*: the world society they have in mind) with regard to universalistic utopias – and first of all with regard to the Marxist universalistic utopia, which originally was a variation of the liberal dream of the political-ethical unification of the world under the aegis of an open economy.

However, since they (i.e. Western-thinking/minded intellectuals) have learnt to confuse the anti-utopistic and the anti-communistic positioning with each other, they will thus not and cannot perceive and admit to the utopian components (or dimension) of the Western promise, which is now meant to be kept (*or*: of the Western pledges, which now ought to be realised): six, eight or ten billion humans are supposed to consume per capita as much as the blissful and blessed in the highly industrialised continent[[s]] (*or*: advanced industrial countries), and can settle wherever they want. Because an ice-cold commercial sense or calculation, and a highly sensitive or tender consensual-communicative culture, will equally contribute, as is believed, to the abolition of borders and wars. Compared with such perspectives or prospects, the ideal states, i.e. utopias, of More and Bacon, but also in part the socialistic social representations and visions at the beginning of the 20th century, look like provincial Spartan work groups or communities. Today’s Western vision of, and pledge for, the future is, of its universal scope, and its material content hardly to be outbid or

outdone in its radicality (*or*: is infinitely more radical, both as to its universal extent, as well as to its material content). Whoever has accepted and prescribed it, has accepted and prescribed, whether he knows it or not, a new Utopia supported in terms of, and based on, a certain philosophy of History.

These interrelations are concealed by the ethicisation of the discourse (*or*: are usually covered up/cloaked by the one-sided orientation of interest in the ethical side of problems). Intellectuals were already always primarily proponents and promulgators of values, and that is why they welcome the utopian social blueprint (or utopian social pledge) of the West in a moral sense of a conclusive or final rejection of every “totalitarianism” by individualistically comprehended human rights, peaceful regulation and settlement of all conflicts and so forth. Thus, the engagement and commitment apply to the ethical such that (*or*: Since mobilisation is inspired by ethical perceptions,) the intellectuals themselves, who stand up for Western values, often otherwise turn away from this same West, since they consider its form of the economy (economic system) ecologically or humanly pernicious and disastrous. The dichotomy is psychologically understandable – one wants to have the meat without the bones –, but historically-sociologically untenable. Even at the risk of scandalising our ethicists, that is, the ideologues of *our own* society, one must ascertain that universalistic-human rights principles, which ascribe to all individuals *as individuals* equal autonomy and dignity, can only flourish in societies in which a highly differentiated division of labour atomises the collective (i.e. fragments and breaks up the totality into individuals), and mass production and mass consumption run at full speed. If these preconditions are lacking, then the free spaces must shrivel up, i.e. dwindle, in which individualistic self-realisation, tolerance, consensus unfold, develop and flower. Such principles or stances are in fact the concomitants of a secured prosperity and affluence, in which for no

individual is it existentially decisive and crucial what the person next to him believes or is up to (is doing/does).

Some intellectuals liken or comprehend the inner coherence (belonging together, common bond) of such an ethics with such a form of the economy (or economic organisation) – only they comprehend this under/with optimistic signs and symbolism. Precisely in the name of ethics, they therefore defend in principle and in a wholesale fashion the Western system – including the formerly frequently despised “Americanism” (which they today see far more forgivingly and indulgently) – and its future prospects in the name of panhuman ethical values; they condemn every “cultural pessimism” and every pessimistic prognosis regarding Western culture and civilisation, and behind the sallies against the “civilisation of money” they smell and sense nostalgic “blood-and-soil” rhetoric (*or*: and they condemn the rejection of the Western apotheosis of “money” as nostalgia for fascistic rhetoric, which also contradistinguished to “money”, “blood and soil”). They thus leave the traditional left-wing critique of culture and of capitalism as well as the sobering reminder of the “tragic in history” to the so-called “New Right”, without in the process noticing that they likewise are paying homage to and indulging in a hackneyed philosophy of history – the optimistic –, and this not out of insight, but out of (i.e. in) defiance (out of spite, just to be stubborn).

Piquantly, amongst them people are found who still yesterday were constantly babbling about or sucking on ideologem(e)s of “alienation and estrangement” and held under their armpits the “Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts” of the young Marx, but in the atmosphere of 1989 took the long ago due and specified final step towards reconciliation with the “system”, with the “free market” etc.. The source of ethical and political inspiration was also in this case the normative force/power of the actual (*or*: what is called by legal practitioners (lawyers and jurists) the “normative power of the real/actual”). After the

shipwreck of the Utopia of the East, the domesticated remnants of the “Left” made the Utopia of the West thoroughly its own, and without further ado, exchanged left-wing “anti-fascism” with liberal “anti-totalitarianism”. They will for the second time in succession be deceived should globalisation of the Western (form of the) economy and ethics not entail the realisation of the corresponding Utopia, but tremendous, colossal struggles for distribution and catastrophes of a planetary magnitude or range. Nonetheless, intellectuals were and are not, in relation to that, in a position to see clearly with a scientific mind and aim (or to scientifically comprehend) the mechanisms of the heterogony of ends in history, but simply yield and provide the ideological catchwords which set these mechanisms in motion (*or*: through which these mechanisms function). That is why they are predestined to treason (*or*: That is why betrayal is their fate/lot/destiny), if one with the word (term) “treason (betrayal)”, apart from the bowing (obedience) before the victorious cause, i.e. victor on each and every respective occasion, may/should denote (means) also the distance between the declared aims or goal of the engagement (commitment and mobilisation), and the long-term outcome of historical events and developments.

¹ The original German title was: „Blühende Geistesgeschäfte“ = “Blossoming (blooming, flourishing) transactions of the Spirit (intellectual(-spiritual) business)” [translator’s endnote].