

Presentation Oxford 2022

## Good Afternoon to Oxford from Salzburg

As an introduction and justification for my presentation entitled **Liberalism is Enlightenment misunderstood, or misled**, it would have been nice to begin with trivial definitions, because e.g. Google's explanation of what liberalism is, makes the stage setting of my critique: their definition expresses an opinion on the education platform number one worldwide for the average intellectual, i.e. those who look beyond the level of social media pribble-prabble:

**What is liberalism on Google?:** "willingness to respect or accept behaviour or opinions different from one's own" – the range of possible examples there is eye-watering and potentially dangerous. For the sake of time, though, I will not be able to go into a discussion there. - Instead, I am going to start by saying that I will **not** state that liberalism is obsolete, but I will argue, that it requires something like "an upgrade". - I will not primarily criticise the philosophy of liberalism and new liberalism, but the consequences that resulted from them, or better to say of the outcome, namely of the present condition of liberal social systems, in order to justify my statement, that liberalism needs a fundamental correction. - Finally, I will propose – like a number of today's authors – a New Enlightenment based on New Ethics, resulting in the development of a New Democracy, all of them based on intelligent education of the human social nature, instead of its stigmatisation, disapproval and incrimination. - All of that is a pretty short-cut version of my arguments – the original text is about 4-times the length of this presentation – whoever might be interested is welcome to ask for a copy via e-mail (the written paper for PhilSoc will be only a fraction of the volume of this presentation).

To start with the primary problems with liberalism, I will argue, that liberalism and new liberalism as socio-political systems are self-destructive ideologies because they lead to liberation of people from their own socio-ethical sources, towards liberation from each other, even from the educative ideas of liberalism, and from the knowledge, that political correctness in liberalistic societies is no less fundamentalist than the fundamentalists they doom, despite their claim to be tolerant:

From the beginning, liberalism has been caught in a tolerance-trap: **Liberalism's tolerance-trap**.

Radical tolerance – or whatever we might want to call it – leads us into Popper's discussion of **Plato's paradox of tolerance**, which he describes in "The open society and its enemies":<sup>i</sup> As an example from our present situation in Europe, I point to what I call the **Islam-Liberalism-trap**: free religious practice in a liberal democratic state, where muslims claim the promised freedom, however, point to the fact that religious practice in their case cannot be separated from their cultural practice in daily life, as well as to the fact, that islam does not allow them to accept democracy as their political system. This trap closes from the liberals' own side, when they come forward with their values and rules, as US-philosopher Tom Christiano stated: "*... one does not genuinely treat others as equals if one insists on imposing principles on them that they cannot reasonably accept ...*".<sup>ii</sup> Another example is western democracies' intolerance towards other political systems: democracy is declared the only acceptable system for civilised people. Islam's prompt reaction has been their so-called "Cairo declaration", a counter-declaration of human rights to the one of the UN. This new western universalism, represented by Francis Fukuyama<sup>iii</sup> at the end of the Cold War by his "The end of history", has been fiercely criticised by Samuel Huntington<sup>iv</sup> – the debate has been ongoing until more or less today.

Again for the sake of time, I will not touch yet another example: the contradictory development of libertinism versus new puritanism. - The absurdity of other examples such as the increase of social divide as a result of freedom, as well as the absolutism of "the law" in a liberal world, are more important: "The Law" has already been a sacred entity in ancient Rome, even a separate goddess – however, only one among quite a big family of gods – by contrast to today, where it has remained the only authority. - Finally, the absurdity confronts us, that we claim, in a liberal democratic society, to get our individual freedom protected by the law, while we ourselves claim the liberty, to refuse to be controlled by the law about whether we ourselves respect the liberal rights of the others – we call this

for example “data protection”. And as an example of the absurdity of “free speech”, we allow pro-russian demonstrations, while detesting Russia’s war in Ukraine and punishing Russia’s people by sanctions – a sad example in present Britain are anti-Monarchy demonstrations during the Queen’s funeral ceremonies. Or consider this: on occasion of the riots and islamistic attacks in Paris, a group of migrants in Berlin was allowed a demonstration, where a man wearing a mask with the face of Emmanuel Macron was dragged through the streets while protesters shouted „Allahu-Akbar“–

The revolutioneers, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on, but finally in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, liberated themselves from religious and aristocratic suppression, but lost orientation. Liberalisation turned away from Kant’s claim for maturity to unleash our animal creature into individualism, libertinism and hedonism. Liberalism has become the ideology of „non-dominance“, a wolf in sheepskin’s clothing with “the rule of law” as the hidden autocratic dominance. It bears the seed of individualism which itself is the seed of self-destruction. Politically correct opinion made liberalism’s justification for being intolerant towards some other opinions turn into their populism. It represents their ill-defined anxiety of a self-devouring power of liberalism in democracy, where it unleashes inimical forces against itself. Chaos at the end of liberalism and its democracy is enacted either by uprising (probably ending in autocracy) or luke-warm cultural decline in postmodernism:<sup>v vi vii</sup>

-Ever smaller causes lead to ever more aggressive and fierce battles between groups of those left behind - and police, or groups of contrary beliefs or interests. Just take real note of what happens: think of the protest and actions of opponents against vaccination against Corona. Towards the end, people are becoming each others’ enemies, because they want part of each others’ unlimited freedom, as US-philosopher Jason Brennan also writes.

-Cultural decline expresses itself in many ways: violence against teachers in schools, not to mention slander in social media, “conscience” becoming a loanword.

I will now present what I consider the major **negative consequences** of liberalism and new liberalism, in 5 categories, and state that

1- liberalism is an ideology widely ignoring the real, evolutionary nature of us human social beings – or in other words: Liberalism ignores to politically consider social human nature other than by creating a behavioural cage of laws:

The problem with Locke’s natural right for freedom was, that natural rights are misinterpreted as a quasi a priori, instead of being defined as part of a social contract. The only consequence that got through to people was liberation, from suppression by aristocracy and indoctrination by religious power, liberation which was pursued as freedom from social obligations, and finally from dependencies from each other altogether, straight into self-actualization and self-fulfillment, uncoupled from any social bindings – Considering the fact that a human does not even become a human without others, the claim for “natural freedom” needs a considerable amount of explanation and relativisation, ending in the question, to whom the individual actually belongs: to itself or to the society that made it a human. - In any case, enlightenment and its liberalism did not make people free in the sense of Kant’s maturity. Instead, it made them ever more slaves of individual wishes and desires . At best – and this leads us to point two,

2- Liberalism creates social hedonism, where groups of similar individual interests find and fight together, rather than to create a new stable social system to replace religious States, monarchies and other autocratic governments. In the US, the federalists tried to prevent the development of democracy, but it developed anyway, via factions and fractions into today’s cold war of political parties. In France, Rousseau’s claim to give oneself entirely up into society, was misunderstood by Robespierre and lead into the “terreur”, the terror regime of the revolution. Over time, and thanks to the industrial revolution, aristocracy was quickly replaced by a new ruling party: Capitalism. Which leads to point 3:

3 – that liberalism not only allowed - but literally invited – antisocial and anti-environment-capitalism in, with capitalism’s goals acting contrary to the ideology of the common good and tending to end

in anarcho-capitalism: Politics in liberal democratic systems are now held captive by capitalist market economy from the one side, and by the so-called **people's will** from the other side: widely held to inactivity, politicians are unable to manage even a certain level of equality – just think of the lies around the energy crisis-, and above all unable to prevent maximal incomes from going through the roof and resulting in a system of capitalistic autocracy or – frankly speaking, oligarchy discretely acting in anonymity – as “anarcho-capitalism”. Dangers pop through not only from the super-rich, but also from “free press”: look at the Murdoch-empire, or Berlusconi. - Taken together, we are confronted with open games like the Donald Trump-Story.

4- The problem resulting from an attitude of maximal possible freedom, at the core of this system, is, that it comes without a real so to say social contract with “equality”: the two, Freedom and equality, are competitors, not companions: the more freedom an individual takes, the more it takes away from the others and thereby reduces equality. Meanwhile, I think anyway, that the better title for my presentation would have been: “**equality vs. freedom: the dilemma of liberalism**”. The understanding of this essential circumstance is not only not part of education, it is also not part of social practice in daily life -- this brings us to point five about education into understanding anti-social effects in order to be able to control them:

5- Liberalism leaves education behind, and thereby civilisation and culture; it prefers laws and other rules to replace education, it mistrusts the capabilities of the human to become civilized. -

Undoubtedly, education is one of the most dangerous corners of modern liberal society, where education has literally become an imposition, where adults follow their dream of self-realisation while putting their offsprings into all-day-care – a behaviour which reminds of the reports of Claude Lévi- Strauss<sup>viii</sup> from his experience with people in the Amazone.

In summary, modern liberal democracy demonstrates that liberalism bears the seed of individualism which itself is the seed of self-destruction of this type of democratic society, liberalism thus allowing the corruption of its own values.

Seen from a perspective of liberalist ideology, the biological reality of spontaneous human behaviour is not allowed and therefore to be stigmatised and even to be legally persecuted: as an example, any xenophobia is distorted and converted in medially supported fundamentalism into immoral racism, irrespective of the fact that “racism” has originally been an expression reserved to describe the belief in superiority of one race over another. Thus, natural spontaneous human behaviour is turned into an allegation of extremism. – Right-oriented political parties could hardly believe the favour, liberalism has given them, by chasing people from center-oriented parties into their arms.

We will have to see and understand, that Rousseau's expectation will not come true, by which

*“ ... instead of destroying natural inequalities, the fundamental compact substitutes, for such physical inequality as nature may have set up between men, an equality that is moral and legitimate, and that men, who may be unequal in strength or intelligence, become every one equal by convention and legal right ...”*<sup>ix</sup> – it will not come true other than by education into the comprehension and insight, that freedom and equality are constantly not quite yet at war with each other, as Kant expressed it (as “*the state of peace between men, who are living side by side, is not a natural state*”, however, “*not quite yet at war with each other*”,<sup>x K17</sup>; thus, education into comprehension / insight and lenience would be required. By contrast, today, “The law” is the placeholder for social behaviour due to education, replacing moral rules taught by the behated religion, left behind on the way into freedom. – Instead of the allowance to do whatever is not forbidden, “freedom” could be defined as freeing from political suppression, however, **not** from social dependencies and obligations.

- Where is liberal society with improved vertical mobility in a world where the rich support universities with multi-millions and have their children enter the most prestigious universities through a side door? - I called the liberal kind of radical freedom and individualism the “terminator of liberal democracy”. Similarly, David Cameron had called this kind of society a “broken society”.<sup>xi</sup> Underprivileged young people who fall criminal have not been and are not properly educated, but

further incriminated, publicly insulted as sleaze of society to make sure they will never come back **into** society. The 10 percent or so of people left behind by society are securely left there - that nobody will be left behind, is a political lie. - The state, the political country, grows increasingly lonely, an undefended, open space. The tragedy for liberals in this development seems to be, that they are not aware of the fact, that States only exist, as long as they are populated by a human **culture**, a society held together by a feeling of common identity, the individuals of which understand that their “common good” is, what they themselves contribute. Individualism draws into the opposite direction, it represents a society breaking apart due to their lack of binding capacity <sup>xii, M&D A141</sup> The tragedy is: there is no human life without society - Claude Lévi-Strauss described the scenario in “Tristes Tropiques”.<sup>xiii</sup> - The individual emigrating from society into individual hedonism leaves offsprings behind without orientation – the dramatic increase in psychic problems – not only since, or due to Corona – is a shrill warning signal, which remains overheard just like the hazy clouding from environmental neglect, is hardly noticed. - In summary, we have to admit in view of this last dream of the French revolution: we are not free. The dream is over. We need to wake up into a new era of enlightenment .... I will address it in third part of my presentation:

## A New Enlightenment

If Enlightenment has been awareness, The New Enlightenment should be to see reason, to draw the consequences of the entities we got aware of, to take on and really execute them. There are, however, not only the entities discussed 250 years or so ago, not only to overcome Kant’s immaturity. New challenges have arisen since, which mankind became aware of only during **our** lifetime:

The three major issues in my view are:

- The damages we inflict on each other despite our interdependencies, and the environmental damages we do to the biosphere and earth as a whole – of the latter, we got officially aware in the mid-60ies. The New Enlightenment therefore needs us to step down from the pedestal of the masters of the world and get back in file amidst the other creatures of the biosphere – as well as each other -, considering the fact that we are part of, and dependent on, the so-called environment. The second, and equally important issue has made a similar timecourse:
- The deficient awareness of our actual nature, of us being conscious, potentially self-aware creatures, yet creatures derived from the evolution of animals. - The deficient awareness of our true nature and origin - not as children of God and creatures by mere immediate creation - but by evolution through all the living beings on earth, has seduced us over and over again to develop ideologies widely ignoring and stigmatising our animal nature, the physiological evolution of which has made us into creatures mostly living spontaneously, which means instinctively, automatically. There, the New Enlightenment’s goal will have to be to re-invent education of descendants into society, considering the introduction of strategies to trick out antisocial behavioural patterns.
- The deficient awareness of the conflict between freedom and equality, which needs to be solved by education into a deeper insight of our interdependencies as social beings, to make them understand the meaning and even opportunistic usefulness, not to say profitableness, of the New-Old-Ethics of all world religions and ethical systems such as the “Golden rule”, the christian altruism, i.e. reciprocal altruism as a common ethos: We need to finally consider the fact that there is a consequence to be taken from the awareness that it is necessary – especially in the long run – to leave the “Others” the same freedoms and accesses to options we demand for ourselves, if we want to get them realised in peace for ourselves, – to keep peace, we need to leave each other equal dignity, freedom and access to goods. Reciprocally altruistic citizens as a result of this fundamental change will result in themselves being representatives of these ethical principles, by having understood that their freedom is halved by their awareness of equal freedom, rights and dignity of all the others, as an incarnation of equal rights for the reason of self-interest, i.e. self-defense of their equal rights.

And here are some of my ideas for an “upgrade” of liberalism summarised in 5 points:

- 1- To state that any right is part of a social contract. New Enlightenment needs to convey the insight that the limit to liberty is the equal right and dignity of the others. Equality thus defines the limitations of liberty; and, equal rights halve individual liberty.
- 2- One could, in Locke’s work, replace „natural rights“ as a quasi a priori - by „equal rights“ as a social contract.
- 3- Liberty as a right is therefore one, but not the fundamental principle to order social life besides the law; freedom comes at an equal rank with social responsibility, obligations and equality.
- 4- Equal rights can only become reality by every individual limiting its freedom by half, giving the other half away to the others - by contrast to Rousseau, in order to guarantee equality of rights.
- 5- A New Enlightenment therefore aims at developing the awareness of dependencies not only from each other but from the environment as a whole. A New Enlightenment is needed to amend present liberalism by this new understanding of “freedom”.

Thank you

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