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**INTRODUCTION:
CULTURE WAR, MODERNITY AND LIBERAL MONISM**

The idea that the United States found itself in the situation of “culture wars” or “culture war” was identified and popularised by the sociologist James Davison Hunter at the beginning of the 1990s,¹ but the term was already being used in the 1970s. Hunter simply gave it a certain sociological framework which began to be used in analytical terms. The very word “culture war” was not, of course, of American origin. It referred more or less consciously to a German term *Kulturkampf*, which described a conflict of Otto Bismarck with the Catholic Church between 1871–1878.² Since the beginning of its creation the term “culture war” or “culture wars” touched in the deepest sense a question of cultural, in a narrower sense also religious identity of a political community. In this sense, the term described one of the most laden with conflict categories of self-definition of groups and individuals in modernity visible in the public language of liberal democracy by discussions about such terms as “exclusion”, “justice”, “equality”, “charity”, and “rights” or relations between the public and the private sphere. Around such issues revolved the most important conflicts within modernity and thus liberal democracy since the 18th century, but they were essentially political, economic and social conflicts fought within the perimeters of the

¹ J. D. Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, New York 1991.

² Precisely it referred to a bitter Protestant-Catholic conflict related to teaching religion in schools. But, from the very beginning, the very term denoted a much wider conflict concerning the right to a public professing of the truth, and by implication the right of the Catholic Church to be independent from the state. M. B. Gross, *The War Against Catholicism: Liberalism and the Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-century Germany*, University of Michigan Press 2004.

same anthropology, openly contested, in fact, only by philosophers and some public intellectuals.

The “culture war” today is characterised by a much more visible cultural conflict stemming from a profound and widespread disintegration of a shared traditional cultural code, essentially based on the Judeo-Christian anthropology of the West and an attempt to substitute for it a liberal-left anthropology of the autonomous imperial self with moral auto-creation as its basis. A denial that this anthropology assumes a moral auto-creation by the proponents of this new anthropology, and attempts by them to create a universal and inescapably accepted by all moral code within liberalism, turned out to be woefully unconvincing, exactly by the inability to convince others why such a code should be accepted.³ This breakdown of a common cultural code and a language of its articulation means that particular words ceased to mean the same thing for many who are becoming more and more violent, even if only verbally. Culture has become a province of an incessant shouting match with the inability to create any shared framework of moral axioms and an equally helpless inability to create any convincing hierarchy of moral goods.⁴

Such a situation was already known in the ancient world. In Thukydides’s “Peloponesian War” such ideas as equality, justice, liberty in a situation of a lack of a cohesive incognitant cultural vision taken for granted, gave rise to a confusion of language, the very essence of the biblical Tower of Babel, a wrong recognition of reality, the other word for a rebellion against *Yahveh*. Such words allegedly denoting a shared meaning of moral goods were subjected to pressures of particular interests, and they did not refer any more to anything in a cultural code which would give them metaphysical cohesiveness. This is a situation of the entire liberal-democratic world today. But in a still decentralised, financially even more decentralised, with a grass roots political culture of organisation in the United States, this situation seems to be much more visible than in the traditional state – the European Union, with its oligarchy trying to impose such cultural cohesion from the top down on extremely pliant populations.⁵

³ See a most thorough investigation of this problem by M. J. Perry, *Toward a Theory of Human Rights: Religion, Law, Courts*, Cambridge 2007; L. Kołakowski, *Kant i zagrożenie cywilizacji*, [in:] idem, *Czy diabeł może być zbawiony i 27 innych kazań*, Kraków 2006, p. 185–197.

⁴ Everything within such a disintegrated cultural code has thus to be thus of the same worth, people ceased to have morality, they can only have their own “values”, except the “value” of pretending that there is a universal standard of judgement ordering the hierarchy of goods. This is essentially an anthropology which is an obverse side of the liberal-left countercultural revolution of a doctrine of “emancipation” from all “oppressions” when morality was taken over by good “social causes” which are to build a “good society”. Bad “social causes” have thus to be eliminated and the “good” ones promoted without any ability to form a hierarchy of goods. Thus, for instance, a murder is on the same moral plane as smoking or “hate” crimes.

⁵ In the European Union such a “culture war” conflict became exacerbated, for many reasons, after the East-Central post-communist states joined it. A. Bryk, *The United States, the European Union, Eastern Europe: Challenges and Different Responses to Modernity*, “Krakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe” 2008, No. 1, p. 119–169. A model document of the Tower of Babel language is the

What Hunter meant in case of the United States was actually a common sense observation that Americans were divided fundamentally on the meaning and purpose of human life. In particular, religious and moral issues were looked upon differently and generally termed as the cultural issues they had become so important that they began to determine the way Americans vote in a much more important way than their traditional economic interests. According to Hunter the culture war

is rooted in an ongoing realignment of American public culture and has been institutionalized chiefly through special purpose organizations, political parties, and branches of government. The fundamental disagreements that characterize the culture war have become ever further aggravated by virtue of the technology of public discourse, the means by which disagreements are voiced in public. In the end, however, the opposing moral visions become, as one would say in the jargon of social science, a reality *sui generis*: a reality much larger than, and indeed autonomous from, the sum total of individuals and organizations that give expression to the conflict. These competing visions, and the rhetoric that sustains them, become the defining forces of public life.⁶

The “culture war” idea which quickly caught on as a shortcut for a description of an increasingly bitter contentious character of social and cultural debates over issues so far taken by nearly all for granted, was as commonsensical as it was, indeed, narrowly delineated, if not shallow.⁷ For some there is one foundational basis

Charter of Basic Rights of the European Union. It is very imprecise, mixing anthropological orders and thus giving the judges incredible room for free interpretations of its provisions according to their own anthropologies relating to a definition of man and his dignity. A. Bryk, *Karta Praw Podstawowych Unii Europejskiej*, “Międzynarodowy Przegląd Polityczny” 2008, No. 21, p. 239–243.

⁶ J. D. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 290–291.

⁷ Hunter seems to use terms “culture wars” and “culture war” interchangeably, although one may point out that these terms are not necessarily synonymous, even if a semantic precision is not always necessary. The term “culture war” can mean a situation in which particular people encounter different interpretations, sometimes being in bitter conflict, of an existing common culture, but with all sharing more or less the same basic ontological and anthropological assumptions about reality. In other words the conflict is within the same language of discourse and within the same foundational, meta-political principles defining an identity of a particular community. Such a situation does not exclude the possibility that one side in this conflict would not like to impose on the other its own interpretation of reality, or it would not succeed in it. Such a situation has happened a couple of times in American history, for instance the victory of the Federalists over the Anti-federalists, of the progressive interventionists at the beginning of the 20th century over *laissez faire* supporters, or in foreign policy terms, interventionists over isolationists right before the Second World War. The term “culture wars” would, in turn, mean that we encounter a conflict between two separate cultural worlds not sharing the same ontological, anthropological, meta-political assumptions, having no common foundational basis, no language of designating the same aspects of reality. Today, the proponents of such a view seem to be represented from a liberal side, in the American sense of this word, by Hunter himself, from a different neoconservative or conservative perspective, in the American sense of the word by, for instance, G. Himmelfarb, *One Nation, Two Cultures* (New York 1999), P. A. Lawler, *Aliens in America: The Strange Truth about Our Souls* (Wilmington 2002), R. Bork, *Coercing Virtue: A Worldwide Rule of the Judges* (Washington DC 2003). The term “culture wars” in this sense would be close to a conflict over culture understanding it as a structure of sense about which a battle is being waged. See: K. Koehler, *Wojna w kulturze – list z Ameryki*, “Fronda”, zima [Winter] 1999, p. 295–305. Such a conflict, for instance, exploded in the United States with the Civil War over slavery in 1861–1865

of American culture still intact, and “culture war” represents more a typical political commotion within a common American framework than a fundamental split.⁸

According to Hunter the most immediate cultural conflict is visible between the “orthodox” people and the “progressive” people, that is between the religious and the secularists”. The conflict was to revolve around fundamental world outlooks that is “different and competing attitudes about good and evil”.⁹ Such a thesis is not new, because such a conflict has been visible in the United States since the beginning of the 20th century. Some scholars, recognising a legitimacy of the new changes reject the term “culture war” and the simple division of society which it is meant to denote. For instance, Jeremy Rabkin claimed that if “culture war” was to be understood as a clash between the “orthodox” and the “progressive” forces, then it was too simple. Americans were in the middle of many overlapping and interacting social conflicts, and although divisions concerning, for instance, the public role of religion or a definition of “family values” really existed, they did not resemble just a simple cultural division between religious conservatives and secularist progressives.¹⁰ Others thought that Rabkin’s view represented wishful thinking, and a wrong definition of the reality around him. Thomas Sowell, a leading black conservative economist and social critic pointed out that Rabkin misunderstood the very reasons why such a conflict existed in the first place. For Sowell

all across the country, counter-cultural values are being relentlessly promoted in schools, libraries, museums, and even in corporations where diversity consultants harague the employees with a counter-cultural interpretation of race and sex differences. We are not talking about mere differences of opinions or media biases or academic political correctness. We are talking about very well-thought out and systematic institutional efforts, including indoctrination that begins on campus with freshmen orientation and includes whole departments of victimhood studies, coed bathrooms, and the portraying of paedophilia as just another lifestyle.¹¹

defined by Abraham Lincoln as a conflict over the proper metaphysics of the Declaration of Independence. See, for instance, G. Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, New York 1992.

⁸ This view is visible again among the liberal-left scholars as A. Wolfe, *One Nation, After All: What Middle Class Americans Really Think about God, Country, Family, Racism, Welfare, Homosexuality, Work, the Right, the Left and Each Other*, New York 1998.

⁹ J. D. Hunter, *Reflections on the Culture War Hypothesis*, [in:] *The American Culture Wars: Current Contests and Future Prospects*, ed. J. L. Nolan jr., Charlottesville 1996, p. 253; idem, *Culture Wars...*, p. 42–43; idem, *The American Culture War*, [in:] *The Limits of Social Cohesion: Conflict and Meditation in Pluralist Societies*, ed. P. L. Berger, Boulder 1998, p. 3.

¹⁰ J. Rabkin, *The Culture War That isn't*, “Policy Review” 1999, No. 96, p. 3. One can often discern in all such observations some unreflexive assumptions about different meanings of the term “culture wars”.

¹¹ T. Sowell, *The Question of “Culture War”*, “Policy Review” 2000, No. 98, p. 89. Rabkin responded that one should not be depressed because the students of a contemporary generation “are far more likely to be involved in prayer or Bible study groups (than in the 1970’s). They are far more respectful to fellow students in military uniforms (as ROTC Cadets). They display far more understanding and appreciation for the benefits of free markets. In a lot of ways, students are much more conservative than they used to be. I expect that, eventually, the faculty will improve, too.” Quoted in: N. Podhoretz, *My Love Affair with America*, San Francisco 2000, p. 220. In turn the neoconservatives

Without a doubt, culture war conflicts in America were politically significant when they became politically instrumental, which happened in the 1960s and the 1970s.

The politicians then decided to construct a real, politically defined conflict which ceased to be rooted in traditional, mainly economic considerations, and felt confident that they could use and manage such a conflict. The publicly waged culture war gained an adequate language clearly defining the lines of divisions, ending conceptual chaos existing as a consequence of mass dislocations in the wake of the 1960s.¹² Although the social and cultural sources for a political polarisation had been present for a long time, the most important impulse was given at the Democratic Party convention of 1972 when the party, captured by the liberal-left faction, made its platform overtly ideological. As a consequence the conservative politicians grouped in the Republican Party sensed a chance to polarise the conflict along such lines so as to break the electoral hegemony of the Democrats established by F.D. Roosevelt in the 1930s, and regain control over the political system which seemed to drift beyond any control in the 1970s. Such a drifting in the conditions of an international conflict with communism and the Vietnam debacle threatening a delegitimisation of the American global power, looked dangerous.

But the “culture war” term contained more in it than just a simple observation that there was a conflict of values between different groups of people manifested in political choices. This was also a growing conflict between the “elites”, a large part of them liberal-left in its social and cultural outlook. They looked at themselves as not representing their own society but as educators of recalcitrant, “backward” people, a phenomenon which Christopher Lasch termed a revolt of the elites.¹³ Several years after publishing his famous essay and Lasche’s book, Hunter discerned this conflict himself writing that this culture war was a clash of two visions

one moral vision ... predicated upon the assurance that the achievements and traditions of the past should serve as the foundation of communal life and guide us in negotiating today’s and tomorrow’s challenges. Though often tinged with nostalgia, this vision is misunderstood by those who label it as reactionary. In fact this vision is neither regressive nor static, but rather is both syncretic and dynamic. Nevertheless, the order of life sustained by this vision does seek deliberate continuity with the guiding principles inherited from the past. The goal of this vision is the reinvigoration and realization in our society of what traditionalists consider to be the noblest ideals and achievements of civilization. Against this tradition is a moral vision that is ambivalent about the legacy of the past – it regards the past in part as a curiosity, in part as irrelevance, in part a useful point of reference, and in part a source of oppression. Its aim is the further emancipation of the human spirit.¹⁴

of the old generation were more prone to think that the culture war would end with some kind of *modus vivendi*, probably a sign of the old-age wisdom. One of the leading early neoconservatives Norman Podhoretz wrote in 2002 that “as a longtime warrior against political leftism I embraced in my thirties and liberationism in which it expressed itself culturally, and as a more recent soldier in the fight against the anti-Americanism of the Right I think that some kind of peace was at hand”. *Ibidem*, p. 220.

¹² On a scale of these dislocations see, for instance, D. Frum, *The 70s: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life*, New York 2000.

¹³ Ch. Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, New York 1995.

¹⁴ J. D. Hunter, *The American Culture War*, [in:] *The Limits of Social Cohesion...*, p. 2–3.

But this “emancipation of the human spirit” was an euphemism and it needed to be properly defined. It was just another name applied to the New Left phrase of “liberation” or “emancipation” from any “oppression” of a bourgeois, capitalist society, and its social and cultural arrangements. This method was accepted as part of transforming liberalism itself, which abandoned the traditional limits of political liberalism and changed it into a doctrine of transformation of a society by the new elite, the doctrine which was defined in America as liberal – left or socialism. Hunter’s “emancipation of the human spirit” is in fact, as one conservative critic wrote, a

code for cultural revolution that seeks to change [American] values. The culture war ... is also a class war [between] the New Class ... call[ed] often the “intellectual class”, the “intelligentsia”, the “elite”, the “knowledge class”, or, dismissively, the “chattering class”. Most of these names have the unfortunate connotation of superiority to the general public. That implication is not justified. Individual members of the intellectual class are not necessarily, or even commonly, adept at intellectual work. Rather, their defining characteristic is that they traffic, at wholesale or retail, in ideas, words, or images and have at best meager practical experience of the subjects on which they expound. Intellectuals are, as Frederick Hayek put it “secondhand dealers in ideas” ... These intellectuals as the “New Class” ... a term suggest[ing] a common class outlook and indicat[ing] the group’s relatively recent rise to power and influence ... characteristically display a strong desire for meaning in life, and for them meaning requires transcendent principles and universalistic ideals. These qualities were once conferred by religion, but religion is not an option for intellectuals; the only alternative is the utopian outlook of the [liberal] Left. Once the hard-core varieties of the Left were put out of favour by the Second World War and the Cold War, the intelligentsia turned to the softer and eclectic socialism of modern liberalism [liberal-left]. The various attitudes expressed in modern liberalism add up to an overreaching sentiment that must, for the time being, make for a more utopian vision. Socialism [liberal-left] is the only available secular utopian vision of our time. As a political and cultural philosophy or impulse, conservatism or traditionalism offers no comparable transcendentalism, no prospect for utopia. What these rival philosophies all add up to is a revolution or war within the culture. In its overt form the culture war is fought by “elites”, the large majority of them liberal [left]. The New Class’s problem in most nations is that its attitudes command only a political minority. It is, therefore, essential that the cultural left find a way to avoid the verdict of the ballot box so to outflank majorities and nullify their votes. The judiciary is the liberals’ weapon of choice. Democracy and the rule of law are undermined while the culture is altered in ways the electorate would never choose.¹⁵

The New Class in such a view suspects the people as inherently saddled with the possibility of committing a mistake within the democratic process of finding a way towards a progressive future. This constitutes a rebellion of the liberal-

¹⁵ R. Bork, *Coercing Virtue*, Washington DC 2003, p. 2–6. For Bork this “New Class consists of print and electronic media; academics at all levels; denizens of Hollywood; mainline clergy and church bureaucracies; personnel of museums, galleries, and philanthropic foundations; radical environmentalists; and activist groups for a multiplicity of single causes, clusters of people of like-minded folk and [the people] not like themselves about whom they have little knowledge or appreciation. There is a certain embarrassment in choosing a name for this cultural left group. The New Class despises the few conservatives to be found in its ranks more than it does those whom it regards as the retrograde ‘unwashed’, the general public. Conservative pragmatism, especially its concern with particularity – respect for difference, circumstance, tradition, history, and the irreducible complexity of human beings and human societies – does not qualify as a universal principle, but competes with and holds absurd the idea of a [progressive] utopia in this world.” *Ibidem*.

-left, progressive elites coming from a generation of the 1960s against a large part of their own society considered not so much as a political adversary, but ignorant of the moral “evil”, because of not accepting the non-negotiable and treated as a litmus test of moral virtue progressive causes and values. This phenomenon can of course be considered as an instance of a traditional populist revolt of the “ignorant” against elites, as old as American history with the unique specifics stemming from the 1960s breakthrough.¹⁶

Both sides in the culture war have a fundamental different understanding of politics. For liberal-left politics is a tool of shaping an ideal world. Law and state are treated as tools of social amelioration according to a progressive ideal. Until the time of the arrival of this ideal, *la lotta continua* has to last and it will last indefinitely since the bureaucracies created for its realisation immediately become lobbying groups justifying their own interests, which is why the problems that brought them to existence can never end and that is why they have to supervise a recalcitrant society.¹⁷ Thus politics is a method through which society’s institutions, culture, and mores are to be transformed as seats of “oppression” defined, and one leading value arbitrarily defines as a desired “good”, society.¹⁸ The aim is an enforcement by state power of

¹⁶ The meaning of populism in America is different than in Europe. In the European tradition of *noblesse oblige* the elites, beginning with the nobility, through absolutism, welfare state to the European Union took upon itself a paternalistic responsibility for the direction of their societies. The populist revolts from the bottom up have nearly always had revolutionary, negative, anti-systemic connotations, a sign that the system ceased to function properly. In America, populism constituted an essence of American politics, even if often tainted with xenophobic, for instance anti-Catholic or anti-Semitic, features. But the sources of American populism lay in a radicalism of 17th-century English puritanism, its tradition of Covenant and the Protestant biblical rhetoric with its personal responsibility for oneself and the world around, a tradition of democratic, grass roots organisation, a deep distrust towards the state as organising political and social life. Populism was another name for a distrust and disdain towards “know-better” elites and their attempts to reform top down autonomous localities with a strategy requiring the centralisation of power disregarding those whom allegedly they pretended to help. American politics has been mainly local and the political or cultural-religious populist revolts have been common in America. There has never been a successful formula in the United States for a conservative consensus of a country organized within the state structure as in Disraeli’s England or Bismarck’s Germany in the 19th century, or a liberal-left consensus of a country as in England, Scandinavia, Germany after 1945, or the contemporary European Union. Irrespective of how strong the parties were, they were acting within the framework of the state. In the United States, the polarisations have always been deeper, local confederate politics strong, but could be organised by a deft politician just for a while. That is why “a centralisation of one proper idea” in the United States, to use Mao’s words, has always been difficult and temporary.

¹⁷ This is a liberal version of Stalin’s dogma that “the class war intensifies” in proportion to the advances of socialism. The liberal version of this situation is visible in the so called “defining deviancy up” phenomenon in which more and more facts of life are defined as problematic, so different bureaucracies can deal with them and populations can be controlled. It was described in Ch. Krauthammer, *Defining Deviancy Up*, “The New Republic”, November 22, 1993; it starts with a language change. One example of such a “criminalisation” of so far normal behaviour as problematic, is a category of “hetero-normative” defined “exclusionary” when defining, for instance, marriage or bringing up children.

¹⁸ For a fallacy of such a policy see: J. Kekes, *The Illusions of Egalitarianism*, Ithaca 2003, esp. p. 117–149.

the new morality as a final liquidation of human alienation.¹⁹ We have a situation in which war is declared on an existing, real world and social community, which, by the way the facties which fundamentally differentiates the modern cultural Left from a traditional left professing solidarity and social community.²⁰ The liberal-left does not treat society as a living organism in which it called the majority, in the name of this community, to a solidarity in misfortune, but uses and calls minorities to rebellion and fight with this majority defined as a structure of oppression, an obstacle to a just, equal society. The individualistic liberalism easily accepted this New Left postulate in the 1960s forming a natural alliance with it. The adversaries of such a liberal-left perspective have a different vision of politics. It is just one of the important instruments of creating political order, forming compromises, negotiating interests with a political process recognising a simple truth that the existing world is not reducible to a single, simplistic ideological vision. The creation of a political order has

¹⁹ The aim is “telos of social harmony which will perfect the human condition [which] is the substratum of many varied movements [and] they advance under the banner of ethics”. K. Minogue, *Alien Powers: A Pure Theory of Ideology*, New Brunswick 2007, p. XXXIII.

²⁰ The liberal left onslaught on reality embodies the essence of modern ideological thinking. See K. Minogue, *op. cit.*, p. 33–34. Modernity took over here a hatred of scholastic rationality from Protestantism which became a bridge to modernity by its acceptance of nominalism and a rejection of general categories of metaphysics and natural law with a corresponding helplessness of combining the earth with heaven. Luther tried, of course, to liquidate this helplessness with grace. The Enlightenment took over this Lutheran disdain for reason as understood by classical philosophy and scholasticism. For its philosophers, reason ceased to be a human power. It turned out to be “Reason, an autonomous part of Cosmos, an idea permeating everything, a helmsman of progress, or even Progress itself. Reason liberated itself from the human mind and became an independent deity, it became deified and mystified. Modernity fully accepted this solution. Another modern myth is an alleged belief in man. In fact the founding fathers of the Reformation clearing the way for the Lord, rejected everything which was human. If redemption comes only “by grace” than everything which is human is alien to it. This lack of recognition for things human was shared by the Enlightenment fathers. It is enough to see how much space they devoted to the mob question. The Mob was to be disciplined and trained like a wild animal. Little was said about individual man. But ‘no one saw [humanity] walking along the road’ as Joseph de Maistre said. Its dehumanising character comes from the fact that this is a project of society and the man of the future, the man of today is not real. He will become one. What is then his worth? Nothing. But he is beloved as a material for the New Man [of the future]. That is his real worth. As Luther remarked, the modern mitology did not believe in the possibilities of Man, his transformation was to be done by transcendental Reason, Demiurge, Progress. No power had ever come from Man himself. The Reformation also contributed to this [Enlightenment] “deposit of faith” of modernity with a desire for Total Solutions. A total solution required building of the new world and new humanity, even challenging God. Since the Reformation the moderns have never accepted any half-means. If we change the world lets do it quickly and to the end. Let us built communism, a One Thousand Years Reich, an open society [civil society]. The end of the world becomes a common aim, its only and exclusive eschatology gives direction t social activities. [This is] a bankruptcy of human reason. The first to understand this was Schopenhauer, who wanting to save man, rejected reason for will. When deprived of reason, humanity turned against man. For Luther, a fall in *ratio* did not mean the fall of man, because God saved him [with His grace]. Kant removed God to the metaphysical margin, so a critique of reason turned out to be a critique of man.” N. Bończa-Tomaszewski, *Apokalipsa rozumu*, “Frona” 1999, No. 17–18, p. 49–56.

to recognise a non-reducible character of plural reality and autonomous worlds, in other words, the world, as T.S. Eliot said, in which “There are no finally won causes because there are no finally lost causes.”

The 1960s polarised these two camps. The liberal-left defined American society as an object of its incessant work on consciousness and public institutions. The state began to be seen as a tool of destroying allegedly “oppressive” culture in the name of an ideal of justice understood in simplistic categories of equality in all spheres of life. A resistance to this social and moral engineering soon began, truly a culture war. At stake was a definition of a dominant narrative of a “good” life. Political correctness, at the beginning an innocent idea eliminating offensive language towards “negroes”, or “fags”, turned into an institutionally and legal imposed language defining a “moral friend” and a delegitimised “evil foe” excluded from the public discussion. Different legitimate views ceased to function in public. “The enemy” had no right to possess different views. By definition he was marred by an intellectual and moral mistake, his institutions were redefined as “oppressive”.²¹ The culture war has thus been waged at a meta-political level, deeper than immediate politics, with intellectual elites considering ideas to be tools of consciousness transformation.²² The battle in this sphere of ideas turned out to be decisive, since capturing power now depended on capturing the language, destroying the old and imposing the new. In other words it depended on an imposition of a particular narrative.

The culture war has thus always been in the first place a war of ideas. Its aim was the imposition of a new language so to model an unreflexive response to particular social and moral propositions. Ultimately, a debate was to be shaped in such a way so mere administration was to be substituted for political confrontation, based on the taken for granted meta-political and unreflexively accepted axioms. Language becomes here a tool of manipulation.²³ Some spheres of discussion were to be eliminated as “politically incorrect”. Language as a battle terrain was recognised long time ago by modern linguistics and cultural anthropology which discovered that the proper use of words was always an instrument of establishing social domination. In the language structures there were coded power structures. This observation was especially useful for the New Left constructs incorporated by

²¹ Thus, the traditional family was nearly always pathological, patriotism turned to nationalism, religion ceased to be the most important cultural form of human rootedness, greater than the human contingent of earthly existence. It just became a “fundamentalist” danger. A division began to be formed at the pre-political, cultural level translated into political language.

²² Hayek called them the “professional traders of used ideas”.

²³ As Ludwig Wittgenstein famously said in his *Philosophical Investigations*, “Language is more than blood.” Wittgenstein rejected the referentialist view of language of St. Augustine, believing that it is far more complex. Language was an activity, or connected to a number of activities. Wittgenstein called them language-games for different purposes, not necessarily centred around referring. There are many contexts for using words and many kinds of speech acts. Wittgenstein rejected the logical positivists’ belief that the meaning of a statement depended on the method of verification. Meaning is use. To understand a language is to master its use, including the techniques to impose a narrative. Language is thus behaviour and words are given sense by practice.

individualistic liberalism. The New Left dusted off Gramsci's insight about culture guiding politics. This observation was to be an antidote for the breakdown of a classical Marxist paradigm. The liberal-left began to treat culture as a structure of power, of "oppression" in need of "liberation" in a totalitarian way. The traditional category of "oppression" used by the left in economics and politics was spread over culture, including language itself.

The aim of this operation was yet wider: a creation of the new anthropology as a condition of a true "liberation", the end station of human history. "Emancipation" from any "oppression" required an overreaching analytical subject and was a category of the "minority" used for it. Any minority, including a minority of "one". So a traditional liberal category of individual right, not necessarily entailing a definite anthropology, had to be shaped into an individual right understood as the right of an autonomous, imperial self. Traditional liberalism took for granted existing Christian anthropology assuming that it would sustain radical liberal individualism, thus it did not reject the overtly classical concept of truth. Also, a traditional anthropology or linguistics did not necessarily, as was a case with Wittgenstein, Gadamer and Rene Girard, annihilate a concept of an objective truth. It only made it more difficult to discover showing intellectual structural traps. But for them culture was not a structure of "oppression", but a fundamental universal code of sense, enabling an insight into the true ontological and anthropological structure of human existence, including, especially in Girard and Otto, metaphysics and the sacred.

Culture was a method of deciphering the hidden language of God, that is, the truth.²⁴ But for the liberal-left culture turned out to be a site of "oppression" because categories such as non-discrimination, equality, tolerance, human rights did not have any ontological basis. After post-modernism, it took over the idea that truth does not exist apart from the one created by an autonomous, purified from "oppression", liberated, authentic subject. Ultimately, in a process of moral auto-creation he is ready to endlessly negotiate conditions of equality and non-discrimination, so to create a new world. A precondition of progress towards it is yet a destruction of "oppressive" culture. Yet, this was a fallacy. If a moral subject creates its action on the basis of a moral auto-creation, this means that a moral sense, as such, is created as a sheer act of will, de facto, power against others, since nothing prevents this subject from defining his own desire as his "authenticity", "equality", and "non-discrimination".

It is here that the liberal-left's new concept of toleration comes in. Toleration is a general concept which has to exactly encompass equality and authenticity of all views treated in a non-discriminatory, that is also in liberal parlance, non-judgmental way. Toleration becomes here not a means allowing different people convinced that their views are true and others are in error, but a value in itself, a moral good, a sum of positive feelings towards all other people whatever views or behaviour they may have. This is a new liberal version of the Christian notion of charity, love of one's brother, but without the Christian morality, especially the crucial di-

²⁴ For more on this see R. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, Baltimore 1977; T. A. Gooch, *The Numinous and Modernity: An Interpretation of Rudolf Otto's Philosophy of Religion*, New York 2000.

distinction between a person and his deed, with charity unconditionally extended to a person and always the possibility of condemnation of the morally wrong action. But liberal tolerance as a moral good is totally imprecise, it becomes just a benign sentiment of acceptance. There are two consequences stemming from a situation where tolerance becomes a moral good identified with charity irrespective of any judgement. Its opposition becomes non-love but understood as hatred, not-understanding, the refusal to accept a particular person unconditionally with all their deeds and judgements without the right to challenge them. First, the classical concept of moral truth is annihilated; second, all such judgements are treated as hatred, a potential hate speech.

The classical notion of toleration was necessary as a tool of social accommodation of different people holding different views deemed by them as true and the views of others considered to be wrong. Tolerance was an important social method of accommodation coming out of the wisdom of recognition that people are not perfect, and an understanding that engaging them in a dialogue about truth is both possible and necessary to create a peaceful political order. Tolerance was extended to views with which we did not agree, since otherwise a conflict would ensue, a situation excluding realisation of any public values of another sort. The liberal-left notion of toleration is different from the classical one, since it demands acceptance and benevolence towards all views and all actions, that is all life choices, except those which are foundational, that is, which lay claim to an exclusive truth. In a situation where everybody should accept and understand everybody, where self-realisation of ones potential according to the liberal notion of the authentic imperial self is not negotiable, there exist no source of a potential conflict. Judgementalism, that is moral hierarchy, creates conflict, and thus it has to be eliminated.

This liberal-left notion of tolerance demands from everybody an acceptance of everything and everybody which amounts to a demand to treat ones identity and moral views as a hobby, as an inconsequential choice of a particular lifestyle, the very demand – and here a paradox is obvious – which is intolerant per se, since it requires guardians with power to eliminate and prevent any judgementalism in the future, the one which would claim to a pretension that it might morally be true. Such a demand to identify with all and a demand to understand them unconditionally makes sense when such a dialogue assumes a common humanity in truth which is bigger than the sum of just desires, opinions and impulses. In other words, that the real world and human existence have a moral value transcending the immediate choices of ours which are just opinions. If not, if the liberal-left tolerance excludes this, it forces people to treat themselves in an unserious way and their moral demands, including, for instance, religious ones, as just inconsequential hobbies, thus hitting the most intimate aspects of human personality, forcing it to be totally accepting of everything and nothing. But instead of creating a decent society of moral people, such a liberal-left demand creates people who are totally indifferent to others if they want to retain their moral sanity. This nullifies the very concept of moral education and produces

morally numb zombies not moral people. They become increasingly indifferent to anything but social causes defined as moral by those in power, who define the proper environment of a tolerant, non-judgemental society mobilising it just for good social causes – the only essence of morality of liberal society, because of the lack of moral grounds. These social causes are of course defined by those in power according to their image of a good society, from the vantage point of their new morality which, in fact, excludes tolerance.²⁵

This new notion of liberal tolerance tries desperately to create moral life while rejecting morality as grounded in any metaphysical sources, including a rejection of any concept of moral evil coming from human nature per se. Moral evil comes not from an individual person but from “oppressions” of society. It is thus necessary to reorganise this society, to create conditions when the true, devoid of evil human nature, can shine. Intolerance, lack of education are direct causes of evil. Properly informed people about the “oppressions” of society, then properly organised can become moral by social engineering, which reveals a rational perfect side of a permissive, tolerant society, beyond good or evil. Tolerance is the greatest virtue and moral value itself, and it is the greatest virtue and moral value because it is a deification of moral choice as the mother of all of morality, the Promethean deification of a human being as a subject of moral auto-creation on the basis of sheer want, a free choice. Thus the liberal notion of tolerance puts an absolute value of the automatic moral gravity of rational choices which, decoupled from reason understood as a tool of God or natural law, become what they have to become, rationalisations of desires defined as morality. Such a liberal tolerance becomes a form of para-religion.

But it does not defend reason against the irrationality of religion and other “oppressions”. In fact, it destroys the classic Augustinian religious neutrality of politics and turns politics into an arbiter of truth, that is becoming para-religion itself. And it is a para-religion since it wants to create a total world-view project, which has to provide all answers to metaphysical questions in this world, not only questions of political order, but questions concerning the existential sense of individuals. It becomes a para-religion and a total culture, a new paradigm wildly intolerant towards all competitors, not only at the political level, but as well as the personal level, which has incessantly to be watched over so a new thinking and moral error can never be born again.²⁶

²⁵ Mass mobilisation for such causes as non-smoking, against global warming etc., etc., reminding war campaigns to “end all wars”, or the war campaigns so to finally “secure peace” is an instance of such behaviour. For more on that see K. Minogue, *The New Epicureans: Permanent Values in a Virtual Age*, Chicago 2002, p. 24–25; on the liberal-left notion of the New Tolerance as a menace to freedom see J. Kekes, *The Illusions of Egalitarianism*, Ithaca 2003, esp. p. 169–186; on the issue of tolerance towards any sexual behaviour as a way to a total moral numbness see W. Shalit, *A Return to Modesty: Discovering the Lost Virtue*, New York 1999.

²⁶ See an excellent article on this totalitarian aspect of the liberal-left culture of tolerance: D. Gawin, *Milosierdzie liberala*, [in:] *W obronie zdrowego rozsądku*, eds. M. A. Cichocki, T. Merta, Kraków 2000, p. 49–60.

We have here a classical instance of Nietzschean nihilism, which requires incessant administrative regulations by those who command power. On the one hand they guarantee this drive to tolerance, non-judgementalism, non-discrimination and equality, while on the other they search for instances of inequality. In such a situation, it is not only “bourgeois” society and its culture which should be an object of emancipation, but any society which tries to construct any culturally solidified patterns of behaviour which may, by definition, harbour oppression. Constant fluidity of identities rooted in an authentic self, deciding by choice a new course of life is the essence of this true personality, always ready to try something new, defining any allegiances and hierarchies as limiting, that is “oppressing” him and dangerous to others.²⁷ This category of “oppression” is delineated so widely that it becomes self-contradictory. On the one hand, it demands from an autonomous subject its own definition of authenticity, while on the other, it demands from it an utter tolerance towards reality which needs to be steered by those who define “good” social causes as a point around which social cohesion can coalesce.²⁸ *La lotta continua* against an oppressive society in the past and present, and against a threat of it in the future must continue. A paradox of such a *lotta continua* is that it must be constantly defined anew by those who nominate themselves as the class of “experts”, as guardians of “political correctness” having an insight into a just society, a totalitarian impulse to build, control, oversee, punish or administer psychotherapy so to ensure that no error can be born. What has to continue is the incessant “work” on the society and relationships so that no “error” can ever happen.²⁹ As such, a conflict goes international and tries to subject democracy into world governance in the name of justice. This additional culture war front cuts across countries, also affecting the European Union. Here America’s

main competitor in ordering and dominating the world is not some other great power but something quite different: the project of internationalism. A new world is being built by international organisations, with the Olympians as the officer class and an army of moralising non-governmental organisations as its voluntary foot soldiers. The Olympian project cannot, therefore, be anything other than a bid for power by a new class of power holders.³⁰

This international conflict is at the very same time a culture war conflict, extension of internal conflicts, between secularists, pretending to represent liberal rational, human rights civilisations and religious people. At the popular and at the elite level, this secularist culture is increasingly hostile to the religious people, especially to Christians, subsuming them under a rubric of religious fundamentalism.³¹ Such a pressure

²⁷ K. Minogue, *The New Epicureans...*, p. 26.

²⁸ “Oppression” means not only improper language masking the oppression of institutions defining it, for instance family, or churches, but any moral hierarchy or assessments which must be done on a basis of this new anthropology as an arbitrary act of moral auto-creation, and thus by definition do not have any compelling universal legitimacy.

²⁹ For a good analysis of this *la lotta continua* mentality of modern liberalism see the last chapter of K. Minogue, *Politics*, Oxford 1995.

³⁰ Idem, *Transnational Interest*, “American Outlook”, Spring 2000, p. 54.

³¹ For an excellent study showing the gross manipulations and lies of such thinking see W. T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, Oxford 2009, esp. p. 15–56, 181–230.

for delegitimation on the part of the secularists is usually formulated with a feeling that they have already “won the argument” with no turning back the clock. A resistance of the religious people, legitimate and done in self-defence, is treated as an utter arrogance of people which have been defeated on rational grounds by the secularists, a sheer liberal-left superstition itself. The marriage of the American liberalism with secularism after the incorporation of New Left “liberation” ideology into its orthodoxy gave the religious people no chance to be part of such a worldview, unless by inertia. Secularism’s claim to victory as a rational and the only legitimate way of civilised behaviour in the public sphere, makes resistance to ghettoisation and the will to present public religious argument treated as a scandal offending a secularist.³² Hatred for the defeated enemy no doubt religion on the defensive has ceased to move culture is more intense but puzzling only partially. This is because

secular rationalists in the West believe that their enviable rationality has emerged only after a long struggle with superstition, prejudice, obscurantism and all of the intolerance and oppression and violence they have caused. Building on the rationality of the Greeks, the modern world has created the empirical viewpoint of modern science in a long struggle against the repressive authority [or so they think] of Christian church. As rationality, it is believed to be – and I use “believe” very deliberately – the expression of pure human intelligence, owing nothing to culture. Whereas religious and social mores are cultural products, reason is presumed to transcend culture to become the bridge by which humanity finally achieves the unity previously frustrated by religious and nationalist conflict. One might say, ironically, that secular rationalists see themselves as being on the side of the angels. Secular rationalism (incorporating the politics of liberalism) thus becomes the appropriate meta-religion for humanity as a whole. It is for this reason that the triumph of secular rationalism, in its long march through international institutions, has been based upon treating Christianity quite differently from other religions. Christianity has been pitted against science as an answer to scientific questions, and inevitably [so they think] has been found wanting; for this reason it can be discarded as outmoded. Other religions, however are treated as a part of culture rather than intellectuality, and thus benefit from the tenets of multiculturalism.³³

Religions must be respected on condition that they fit into the new world order of human rights as defined by the new secularists. This world order must be based on reason if it wants to commend itself to the wider world. Pure intelligence and secular rationality must be a language of communication, a language allegedly neutral. In such a perspective Christianity, the inherited religion of the West, has constituted a situationist cultural imperialism, and its history of proselytising was a history, the secularists think, of imperialism conflicting with other cultures, a form of domination.³⁴ Secular rationalists think they are capable of bringing order and progress as a transnational ideology of justice and equality to the world, but they trade in superstition. They can bring such a transnational ideology to the world

³² On this self-defence attitude of Christians see: *Disciples and Democracy: Religious Conservatives and the Future of American Politics*, ed. M. Cromartie, Michigan 1994, esp. p. VIII–XI.

³³ K. Minogue, *Religion, Reason and Conflict in the 21st Century*, “The National Interest”, Summer 2003, p. 131.

³⁴ This was the reason the liberal-left was so panicky over George W. Bush’s religiosity and references to it made in connection with foreign policy measures.

only so long as it can be understood as the bubbling into consciousness of pure reason. For this reason it must liberate itself from any connection with Christianity. The real situation, however, is not merely that religion is alive and kicking, and that Christianity itself is far from dead, but that there is a Western, secular, post-Christian version of redemption also seeking to dominate the world. Christianity thus finds itself assailed not only by competing religions in the wider world, but from secular rationalism arisen within its own camp.³⁵

This secular rationalism is in itself a form of false “religion” defining itself as a transcultural and transnational pure rationality disseminated by the new class of secularists.³⁶

In general, one might just say that the culture war since the 1960s is truly about culture, since the capitalist economy and parliamentary politics were directly resistant to utopia. The utopia was to be introduced, as the New Left slogan indicated by “liberating” people’s consciousness from all “oppressive” cultural restraints, a tactic taken from Antonio Gramsci’s plan for a successful revolution, a reversal of the obsolete Marxist slogan that the basis influences the superstructure to which culture belonged. Now it was culture which was to be changed first, and after “the long march through the institutions” the cultural revolutionaries were to impose their own language and definition of reality in an imperceptible way on the properly shaped consciousnesses of the general public. What was needed was a change of meanings of all political, and social terms, that is cultural revolution.³⁷ Economy and the institutions of the liberal state were left alone, but what

has not changed is the deep passions of reformers and idealists in our civilisation to take over governments and use their authority to enforce a single right way of life. This impulse now focuses on social issues like sex, drugs, education, culture and other areas where a beneficent government aims to help what they patronisingly call “ordinary people”.³⁸

One of the most important institutions of such incessant reforms in America has been the Supreme Court promoting rights with an anthropology of the imperial self. The Court took upon itself a role of implementing justice and reconstructing society putting itself into the culture war fray. As Robert Nisbet noticed,

the crusading and coercing roles of the Supreme Court and the federal judiciary, which have been increasing in size almost exponentially this century, have created a new and important model for all those whose primary aim is the wholesale reconstruction of American society. There are more and more judges, more and more lawyers, and more and more law students and professors who have entered easily into a state of mind which sees in the Supreme Court precisely what Rousseau saw in his archetypal legislators and Bentham in his omnipotent magistrate sovereign forces for permanent revolution.³⁹

³⁵ K. Minogue, *Religion, Reason...*, p. 131–132.

³⁶ See: A. MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, Tradition*, Indiana 1990; E. Thompson, *Czy potrafimy się porozumiewać? Uwagi o współczesnym dyskursie*, “Rzeczy Wspólne” 2012, No. 4.

³⁷ In the course of it, natural law was to be transformed into natural rights, and then into modern human rights, as an embodiment of progressive vision of the world beyond any meddling by the democratic process.

³⁸ K. Minogue, *The Escape from Freedom*, “Times Literary Supplement”, January 2000, p. 13.

³⁹ R. Nisbet, *Prejudices: A Philosophical Dictionary*, Cambridge Mass. 1982, p. 210.

Part of this “progressive” reconstruction is a politically correct language. Its aim is not to explain anything, or engage the other side in an argument of morally equal partners, but to stigmatise, to criminalise by association. Anyone not agreeing with the progressive liberal-left becomes “radical Right”, “reactionary”, “fascist”, at best “anachronistic”. Any protests and attempts to engage the other side in an argument are treated as a corroboration of an intellectual and moral error. Progress of history not only has to go in one direction decided by the ones who monopolise the discussion, but this progress makes suspect the set ways of life and institutions supporting and organising them, that is culture as such, a declaration of war on ordinary people incapable of understanding the great advantages of “emancipation”. Civilisation has to be “liberated”, a massive act of detachment from culture treated as a “house of slavery”, not of meaning and archetypical sense.

This progress has to be material and organisational, but first of all moral. But moral progress is not possible when the foundational basis of morality, God’s law, natural law, or even, if it were true, the universalistic ethic of a reasoned Kantian argument, are by definition rejected. Morality means here an achievement of an authentic self, the essence of freedom and happiness not curtailed by “oppressions” of culture. Morality is taken over by authenticity, and moral causes are redefined as progressive, “good” social causes of the day, defined by these “experts” who define a progressive direction of history. This constitutes an implementation of Rousseau’s dream of combining a true life, liberated from the shackles of civilisation, and at the same time guided properly in a course of this liberation towards the state of nature of authentic innocence and thus true identity, the “general will”. No custom, no cultural pattern, no arrangement is allowed if not freely chosen. Human authenticity is the alpha and omega of existential truth.⁴⁰ Thus, the aim of life is “liberation” from culture and a corresponding idea that the world, the civilisation

is basically evil because it is restrictive, and hence that the business of life is to detach oneself from it. For we live in a world that suppresses our authenticity by forcing upon us all kinds of pretences, responsibilities, duties. In the rhetoric of the modern revolutionary, this alienating world is referred to as oppressive, and unequal. Abstract [authentic] individualists have [to] detach their loyalties from state, Church and family only to attach them to a range of abstract causes expected through political action to achieve the perfection of human life. The consequence is a transformation of our moral world. Morality has modulated into a kind of sociality and [it] becomes swallowed up in desirable public policy. Evil is identified as failure to support righteousness and, especially, with espousal of the wrong causes. The measure of this moral transformation is the way in which our moral vocabulary is nervous about using “right” and “wrong”. It prefers to talk of the “acceptable” and “unacceptable”. To fail the test of opinionated high mindedness is to reveal oneself not as a cad or a thief, but as racist, sexist, elitist, and so on. Morality which used to be concerned with motive and with doing the right thing, has been politicised as orthodoxy of attitude. Moral relativism of our time is merely a recognition that public policy has replaced morality, and that public policy is essentially circumstantial.⁴¹

⁴⁰ For more see R. Scruton, *Rousseau and the Origins of Liberalism*, [in:] *The Betrayal of Liberalism*, eds. H. Kramer, R. Kimball, Chicago 1999, p. 39–40.

⁴¹ K. Minogue, *The New Epicureans*, [in:] *The Survival of Culture: Permanent Values in a Virtual Age*, eds. H. Kramer, R. Kimball, Chicago 2002, p. 24–25.

Individuals are expected and pushed to detach themselves from any cultural attachment, any allegiances justified by anything else but a free choice of the authentic self. Otherwise they are thought to be limited, “oppressed” in their capability of experiencing authenticity, the true existential humanness. A person has to be always ready to experience everything at once, a race to authenticity from “oppressions” of his or her station in life, an endless multiplication of spurious tolerant diversity when everybody can become everything, but in fact becomes nothing. This is a forced diversity by intellectual schemes implemented by government public policy beyond democratic control, with human rights defined as a reflex of human imperial self, the essence of modern liberal-left freedom. Such diversity in the authenticity of experiencing everything at once and thus radically detached from culture is yet a diversity of homogenised individuals in a process of incessant kaleidoscopic transformations of identity points.

At a time when everybody is expected to experience everything, institutions must change not to limit this new form of authentic, free floating personality. Society is expected to consist of the detached individuals as detached intellectuals are. They are the new “priests” of modernity, free floating and grasping for any ideology which will give them semblance of stability, distributing the ethics of suspicion and relativity, the sophisticated intellect without intelligence and wisdom. Such a war on culture to end all wars of liberation from “oppressions” aims at a new social and moral order, at

the perfecting of community. Yet these rather flimsy creatures with their passions for choice [as a precondition of authentic, liberated Self] and their tiny capacity for facing challenges without choosing the easier option seem hopelessly material for any kind of community at all. Community entails limitation, and the communities of the past were not only restrictive, but also ordered by rules with which people complied. The new [free floating individuals] are not very good at rules, but they are very sensitive to messages, role models, public education programmes, advertising, fictional heroes, and everything else that imitation and fashion feed up. The ideal perfection dreamed of in utopian literature depended upon a community in which everyone shared the same attitude to things. Such unanimity is a condition for a society without moral and political conflict. We live in a world busy constructing the pattern of right attitudes that will orchestrate such a terrifying harmony.⁴²

The ultimate source of culture war in modern liberal society is thus an attempt by the rootless intellectuals to create a perfect world with an anthropology concocted out of their existential misery and public policies implemented by the state with them as advisers of the Prince. They want to ensure that no one else can experience real authenticity but the artificial authenticity of individuals coming from nowhere and going to a society created by them in this limited point in time and place in history. This is a tune of a jammed record sent to the future as the sound of the universe, in fact just an echo of their own hubristic ego.

⁴² These free floating individuals are those who have unwittingly volunteered to be the materials for whatever is the next stage in the West’s search for a perfect society. K. Minogue, *The New Epicureans...*, p. 26–27.

The reason the term “culture war” was coined in the 1990s seemed obvious. This was the first decade when the countercultural consequences of the revolution of the 1960s began to be felt, with a large section of the educated people imbibing its idea of “liberation” from all established political, social, cultural and religious institutions entering positions of public significance and influence, with the foreseeable declaration of war on traditional America.⁴³ Political consequences followed. The political parties’ platforms included morally dividing issues, becoming increasingly ideological ones away from their pragmatic traditions.⁴⁴ A natural tendency to interpret human interactions solely in terms of power followed suit. The culture war has begun to be looked upon in that way, as a substitute for power grab, a Marxist fallacy. In fact it is exactly the other way round. Politics is a power – reflected function of culture, and at the root of culture lie the deepest commitments to what people hold to be true conditions of their identity.

Politicians noticed the culture war phenomenon and tried to interpret it differently. When in 1972 the Democratic Party badly split over the Vietnam War and adopted a radically left programme of abortion on demand, the war overt culture began. Republican president R. Nixon fighting for re-election immediately understood the potential of this ideologisation of the Democratic Party and its rebellion against America as a “good” civilisation.⁴⁵ He decided to polarise the conflict to make the traditional Democratic Party’s electoral base aware that its party was betraying them by betraying America. Nixon appealed to the “silent majority”, America of the interior, blue collar workers, traditional immigrant groups, women against radical feminism, or white men accused of all possible crimes, all representing values the radical wing of the Democratic Party despised and wanted to change. With all his subtlety he called the Democratic Party a party of three “A”: “abortion, amphetamine and anti-Americanism”.

This was simplification but it had a charming political potential organising emotions of the electorate. The Republican Party strategists decided to use cultural issues as polarising tactics since traditional economic issues, the basis of Roosevelt’s

⁴³ A good account of this process see H. Hecló, *Christianity and American Democracy*, Cambridge Mass. 2007, p. 1–145; D. Frum, *How We Got Here: The 70’s: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life – For Better or Worse*, New York 2000. Cultural critic and neoconservative Midge Decter described this attack of the new elites on the traditional American society in the 70’s in: M. Decter, *The Liberated Woman and Other Americans*, New York 1975, p. 244–245.

⁴⁴ The Democratic Party platform of 1972 was a stepping stone in this direction. After being taken over by its New Left liberal wing, the Party declared, among other issues, abortion to be its goal preparing the way for the Supreme Court decision of “Roe vs Wade” of 1973, declaring abortion a constitutional right and opening a never ending cultural and moral battle in America. See: G. McKenna, *Democrats, Republicans, and Abortion*, “The Human Life Review”, Summer–Fall 2006, p. 57–79; for the legal and historical manipulations creating false arguments for an abortion debate see: F. J. Beckwith, *Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case Against Abortion Choice*, Cambridge 2007; A. Hendershott, *The Politics of Abortion*, San Francisco 2007.

⁴⁵ The rebellion was not so much concerning the Vietnam War which Nixon was closing down, let alone civil rights which after the acts of 1964 and 1965 were considered to be a bipartisan affair.

Democratic Party' coalition from the 1930s, ceased to have the electorate's priority. The cultural issues took priority.⁴⁶ If as the feminists argued the "private was political", meaning there were no neutral spheres where the unequal relations of power could not be found, it meant that what was at stake was not the traditional distribution of wealth but culture issues such as racial relations, affirmative action, anti-Americanism, feminism, the definition of America and patriotism, family, marriage, and sexual ethics. Such matters defined American identity in the most fundamental sense.⁴⁷ A new era began in the United States which is still developing in unpredictable directions.⁴⁸

Nixon wanted to turn a gamut of little cultural conflicts into the big one of "we-them", more politically useful than economic matters. But the mastermind behind the plan was Nixon's vice president Spiro Agnew, a man of great intelligence and public arrogance, the villain of the liberal-left.⁴⁹ Agnew did not have mercy for the egotistical moral hubris of his liberal-left critics whom he called a "bunch of sycophants", as well as the radical bourgeois youth pretending to be revolutionaries, individuals "who were taking their tactics from Fidel Castro but their money from daddy", talking to them the way they were not used to and which horrified them. He challenged the media claiming that the

time in which TV commentators as well as gentlemen from the New York Times enjoyed diplomatic immunity protecting them from commentary and critique of what they said belonged to the past. When their critique begins to be excessive or unjust, we will call them from their ivory towers so as to subject them to a ritual of sharp and animated public debate. The time of the blind acceptance of their opinions is over. And a time of a naive faith in their neutrality has passed. They [just] represent shallow, allegedly refined opinions.⁵⁰

Agnew did not just think about winning the next election. At a time of a total paralysis of power, civil disobedience and suicidal attack on all public institutions, he

⁴⁶ J. T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States 1945–1974*, Oxford 1996, p. 710–742.

⁴⁷ Midge Decter, a journalist, traditional liberal and later in life a neoconservative understood immediately that this cultural conflict was total and accelerating. See: M. Decter, *op. cit.*, p. 244–245.

⁴⁸ G. Weigel, *The Sixties: Again And Again*, "First Things", April 2008, p. 32–40.

⁴⁹ J. Witcover, *Very Strange Bedfellows: The Short and Unhappy Marriage of Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew*, Washington DC 2007.

⁵⁰ M. Scully, *Not Made in Heaven*, "National Review", June 25, 2007, p. 48. Agnew was a politician of great humour and intelligence, and assumed the intelligence of his interlocutor airing his analyses in a language both of emotions and logic, destroying the spurious objectivity of the public discourse of the liberal media and showing their manipulations. The conservatives loved him, the liberal-left hated him. The latter understood that he defined a moment of crisis in an unmasking way, even if in a brutal way to which he was challenged. In one of his speeches he stated that "there was a time when the liberalism of the old elite was courageous and lighting philosophy – the avanguard of political dogma of Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman and John Kennedy. But you know, and I know this too, that the old war horses are long gone. Today's race of radical-liberal buffoonery in the Senate has as much to do with Harry Truman as the prairie dog with the wolf". Nixon who used Agnew as every intelligent president uses his vice-president, to attack his political opponents without mercy in a situation politically too dangerous for him remarked: "Do you know why they yell at him? Because he hits them where it hurts". M. Scully, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

wanted to regain a minimum field of a free political manoeuvre by the political elites, breaking the stalemate and chaos so the president could take decisive decisions with a clear mandate to govern. Facing the chance to finish the war with communism in Vietnam, putting in order the welfare state, Agnew, the “Great Polariser” concluded that

It’s high time to destroy this mushy rhetoric and divide along the authentic lines [hitting] this castrated masses of impudent snobs in the media, universities and culture.⁵¹

The real brain behind Nixon’s strategy of polarisation was Patrick J. Buchanan, one of his youngest and closest advisers, the author of a large part of Nixon’s and Agnew’s speeches. Buchanan was a brilliant, pugnacious conservative journalist and a cultural critic. As a Catholic he understood that it is culture which constitutes the key to political success and that liberal-left tactics are dangerous, not just a passing fad. First of all, it was necessary not to let it capture the language and impose its own alternative narrative. Buchanan coined Nixon’s phrase the “Great Silent Majority” and began to build a cultural front. He understood, as other conservative intellectuals still in their elitist enclaves did not, that the Republican Party winning an election and establishing its long range success required an abandonment by the American conservative politicians of a distrust towards democratic masses, and a real turning around from a plutocratic America. It was the majority, the vast American middle class which was attacked in the first place by the New Class of the liberal-left cognoscenti, full of disdain towards poorer citizens, thinking differently and living in their autonomous worlds, treated as an obstacle towards progress as represented and defined by these cognoscenti.⁵² Here, the American conservatism began to be the conservatism of the “little guy”, as American liberalism became during F.D. Roosevelt’s coalition. American modern conservatives like Buchanan, Goldwater and Reagan ceased to be elitist and went populist. They understood that in the culture war, American society was, in the majority, on the same side of the culture war. It was not the old “aristocratic” conservatism of Hamilton or John Adams, nor the libertarian conservatism of Nock, Babitt or Santayana, but a modern one. American populism took a stance in the name of freedom of the pluralistic, autonomous worlds, the essence of America and also conservatism, at a time when the liberal-left began to champion an anthropology of the imperial self against any “oppressive” institutions. Thus began an anti-elitist aspect of American conservatism, turning to the American *demos*,

from the Appalachians to the Rocky Mountains” as in the 60’s such a program was described by Willmore Kendall. With the creation of the modern interventionist liberal state and its progressive elites

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² This was a phenomenon which Buchanan understood well before Christopher Lasch gave it the catchy name “The Revolt of the Elites” against their own societies in 1995. Norman Podhoretz, a neoconservative critic and a contender in the culture war stated that elites became liberal in a new sense, that is manipulative and mendacious, a colossal transformation of the ruling elite acting against their own society. N. Podhoretz, *My Love Affair with America...*, p. 210.

treating it as a tool of transforming society in the name of justice, there began a radical turning around. It was not the masses which rebelled against plutocratic elites, the new liberal-left elites rebelled against its own society and its values. Such elites located in the interventionist's governmental agendas, the media and in the universities created a multi-current phenomenon, although one of the most important driving aspects of it was a feeling of "white guilt" for a society which suddenly seemed to be totally racist, sexist, imperialist and justifying injustices.⁵³

This was connected with a rise of the huge mass of social science college-educated students thinking that they possessed the tools to ameliorate all ills of society in a process of mass social engineering. The New Left provided these new elites, which considered themselves to be "the best and the brightest" of the liberal America, with intellectual tools of treating society as a province of incessant reforms. This was a category of "emancipation" from "oppressions".⁵⁴ "Oppression" was defined as contrary to the ideal of equality in every sphere of life with an autonomous, "liberated" from any hierarchies self, which essentially meant a declaration of war on the whole of society and culture as such.

Buchanan polarised the conflict in cultural terms defining the battle as waged between a nihilistic liberal-left, which in its passion to "liberate" America from all "oppressions" wanted to build a new utopia in the name of its truth. In 1975 he wrote the strategy of such a polarisation.⁵⁵ As a catalyst of cultural polarisation he chose an issue which from a moral point of view seemed to be suicidal, a nomination for the Supreme Court by Richard Nixon of a judge who used to be a segregationist from the South. When challenged that such a move was morally unacceptable and could backfire within the Republican Party camp, Buchanan argued that he did not care about loyal Republicans who would vote for their party anyway. His aim was to tear with one swift move the South from the Democratic Party, to which it traditionally belonged. Buchanan understood well that the Supreme Court was becoming a terrain of culture war, with liberal judges taking up issues belonging to Congress and engaging in social engineering in the name of justice, especially racial justice. Such a conflict over nomination would be then looked upon, argued Buchanan, as a conflict not over the professionalism of a judiciary nomination, but over matters which engaged a growing number of the electorate worrying about the activist Court. That is why the black

⁵³ For this process of forming new elites and their rebellion against society in the name of the minorities see an influential book from 1991, E. J. Dionne, *Why American Hate Politics?*, new edition New York 2004; also see the best recent synthesis of conservatism in the 20th century, D. T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the Republican Right Rose to Power in Modern America*, Kansas 2011, esp. p. 153–183.

⁵⁴ If American society was corrupted, imperialist, racist, sexist then nothing short of a total transformation of consciousness could do real work on culture. Thus, the liberal-left began total work over "wrong" consciousness, and as part of this "liberation" all intermediate, autonomous institutions breeding this "bad" consciousness, such as family or churches, had to be defined as suspicious and transformed. John Lennon's song "Imagine" expressing such a utopian dream of creating "good" behaviour outside of culture was a fitting symbol of it. See: A. Kolakowska's chapter *Imagine* in her: *Wojna kultur i inne wojny*, Warszawa 2010.

⁵⁵ P. Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories: Why the Right Has Failed*, New York 1975.

issue in the South and the way in which racial justice had been realised there by judicial fiat, alienated a large number of the white population there. The understanding of race justice in the South became

a bitterly divisive issue for Democratic candidates. Either they kick their black friends in the teeth, or they kick the South in the teeth. De facto divisive.⁵⁶

Buchanan pressed Nixon to accept this strategy since it would “split the Democratic Party and the entire country in half. I believe that we get a bigger slice”,⁵⁷ Buchanan argued here both from the depth of American populism and its resistance to the interventions of the federal government, and against the New Class which tried to utilise it to implement its progressive ideology in the name of “liberation from oppression”. Buchanan was not racist. He knew the legacy of the segregationists’ policies was dramatic. At the same time he realised that the way the Supreme Court and other branches of government tried to rectify them was wrong, divisive and manipulative, as a consequence hitting the very blacks whom they allegedly were to help. The idealistic and impatient governmental programmes to fight residues of racism and poverty disregarded the cultural matrix, alienated the majority of whites in the South, caused unintended consequences and generated bitter conflicts weakening federalism and the states’ autonomy. But they gave a chance to bring the alienated voters of the traditionally Democratic South to the Republican Party.

Buchanan was one of the first to discern a political potential of culture as a field of battle, devising its strategy and realising that it was generated by the very logic of the post-1960s liberalism, increasingly taking over the programme and rhetoric of the New Left with its “emancipation from oppressions” ideology. Buchanan was convinced that it was not him who chose this war, but that it was imposed on him and the majority of American society. This liberal-left ideology rejected a dividing line between the federal and state governments and autonomous worlds of ordinary pluralistic people.

Moreover, the interventions of the former came to be executed in the name of many lobbying “minority” groups, which tried to redefine cultural paradigm and convert it into a political programme, a truly countercultural revolution first changing the language, then forming a political programme on its basis, then attacking traditional institutions, finally branding them illegitimate and pushing them outside of civilised politics. Buchanan realised that the conflict was a “war of all against all”, since it was a cultural conflict. What was at stake was a total change of the anthropological, not merely political or social, cultural paradigm. Who would be the first to define

⁵⁶ In: M. Lind, *Up from Conservatism: Why the Right is Wrong for America*, New York 1996, p. 138.

⁵⁷ In: K. O’Reilly, *Nixon’s Piano: Presidents and Racial Politics From Washington to Clinton*, New York 1995, p. 308–310.

the language of this battle, define the contours of public debate with a legitimate and illegitimate activity, separate a foe from a friend, would win the war. This battle, Buchanan knew, had already been raging for a while and dividing every American family, nearly every marriage, local community and church.

But the conflict lacked an identifiable language to define it and convert it into political action. Many, even conservative politicians, were afraid of such a devastating conflict. But Buchanan realised that what was at stake was a redefinition of the American political scene for generations, as F.D. Roosevelt did it in the 1930s, regaining political field of manoeuvre for the American elites. He wanted the Republican Party to be a catalyst of this new conflict, mobilising the electorate to win over a large chunk of the traditional Democratic coalition formed by Roosevelt. Buchanan acted by instinct, with his elitist Catholic education helping him understand the decisive role of culture in public debates. Although he was too close to the events at hand to read it impassionately and rationally, he nevertheless was younger than Nixon and the Republican establishment and realized that it was not enough to yell at hippies and be against drugs.

What was needed was a long term strategy and a new language. But Buchanan lost because he did not have enough influence within the Republican establishment. Nixon was not sure how to delineate the front lines after the 1972 landslide. He also knew that from the point of view of gaining a grip of the political system, the most devastating was the Vietnam War conflict, and he managed to end this conflict, even if he alienated his base with the China opening.

As a consequence, Nixon accepted nearly all the progressive causes of the liberals of the 1960s, focusing on waging culture war only on the international scene in a limited sense. His policies did not effectively touch any myths of progressive liberalism from the times of Theodore Roosevelt and Herbert Croly. He continued active state involvement, including some points of the New Left's orthodoxy incorporated into a liberal doctrine. What he was appealing to was rather a traditional "law and order" dream of the Middle America. Nixon no doubt, mastered the "war of culture" politics, but in a reactive, not conceptual sense, a way of drawing political advantage from a situation of the breakdown of the liberal order. Nixon's politics was statist, in an almost orthodox way, and liberal-progressive, but his rhetoric appealed to the emotions and public wrath of the majority.⁵⁸

It was Reagan's revolution which polarised the conflict again, but Buchanan's strategy was used here marginally. Reagan was successful not because the "Great Silent Majority" became mad seeing what was happening in the streets and on the TV screens, but because the liberal-left programmes were hopelessly wrong. Nixon's cultural politics was based on sheer wrath and moral indignation, while Reagan put forth intellectual reasons why the liberal-left had to be stopped.⁵⁹ Buchanan became

⁵⁸ N. Bjerre-Poulsen, *Right Face: Organizing the American Conservative Movement*, Copenhagen 2002, p. 21–37.

⁵⁹ There are yet interpretations which show Nixon as a real warrior in the culture war who prepared the ground for Reagan. See: R. Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing*

his a director of communications between 1985–1987. Buchanan then threw his support behind George Bush in 1988 and during re-election in 1992, when he delivered a keynote address during the Republican National Convention, known as the “culture war” speech, in which he described “a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America”. In the speech, he said of Bill and Hillary Clinton:

The agenda Clinton & Clinton would impose on America – abortion on demand, a litmus test for the Supreme Court, homosexual rights, discrimination against religious schools, women in combat units – that’s change, all right. But it is not the kind of change America needs. It is not the kind of change America wants. And it is not the kind of change we can abide in a nation we still call God’s country.⁶⁰

After Clinton’s victory in 1992 with his victorious slogan “It’s the economy, stupid”, it seemed that economic problems again dominated, but such cultural issues as abortion financed from the federal taxes or homosexuals in the army were soon dividing America again. Clinton, taken by surprise, asked James D. Hunter how one could solve the culture war. Hunter responded “one cannot”, explaining that Clinton did not understand the essence of the culture war in America. Cultural conflicts concern fundamental beliefs and axioms which exclude any compromise. When someone did not share, argued Hunter the same language, had a different description of the world and expectations, this was an impossibility.⁶¹ A common understanding in America of America had broken down.⁶²

At the same time that Hunter conversed with Clinton, the most venerable member of the neoconservatives Irving Kristol published his manifesto locating the culture war in an antinomian character of contemporary progressive liberalism, its incessant aggression against culture, wrong anthropology and metaphysical blindness preventing it from understanding a legitimate place of institutions professing non-liberal values. Kristol, after Reinhold Niebuhr and Lionel Trilling, showed a metaphysical disability of liberalism. He shared their disdain towards the hege-

of America, New York 2008. Reagan’s cultural as well as economic programme was prepared mainly by former Democrats who escaped their party, called the neo-conservatives. For the best account of modern conservatism in America see: J. Mickletwait, A. Wooldridge, *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America*, New Yor 2004, p. 71–76; M. Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy*, Cambridge 2005, p. 139–160.

⁶⁰ 1992 Republican National Convention Speech, Houston, Texas, August 17, 1992. The enthusiastic applause he received prompted his detractors to claim that the speech alienated moderates from the Bush-Quayle ticket, which lost the election. After that Buchanan tried to run for presidency himself without success and became a conservative political commentator.

⁶¹ J. D. Hunter, *Reflections...*, p. 253; idem, *Before the Shooting Begins: Searching for Democracy in America’s Culture War*, New York 1994, p. 8. Hunter described the Tower of Babel in which the Americans had already been living for some time.

⁶² In 1980, one of mothers of a child in a primary school, threw in the face of the members of the state school board in New Jersey, during a discussion about introducing sex education in a particular shape famous, the widely-known words: “What have you been reading? I don’t understand you. I can’t even hold a conversation with you.” J. Zimmerman, *Whose America: Culture Wars in the Public Schools*, Harvard UP 2002, p. 8.

monic position of American liberalism which blinded people to its anthropological limitations, while claiming to be a fully-fledged philosophy. It was impossible to be politically liberal if one rejected liberal metaphysics, because liberal metaphysics destroyed the professed political values which liberalism allegedly wanted to retain. For Kristol liberalism

shaped an utterly false view of the world. This was the beginning of my cold war – a persistent critical inquiry into liberalism, trying to figure out ... the phenomenon of left-wing political romanticism and utopianism that infected the intellectual classes of the West. I was indeed a “Cold Warrior”. ... “Cold War Liberal” ... but I was not engaged in any kind of crusade against communism. It was the fundamental assumptions of contemporary liberalism that were my enemy. What began to concern me more and more were the clear signs of rot and decadence germinating within American society – a rot and decadence that was no longer the consequence of liberalism, but was the actual agenda of contemporary liberalism. And the more contemporary, the more candid and radical was this agenda. I [could] not pretend any more ... that liberals were wrong, because they are liberals. What is wrong with liberalism is liberalism – a metaphysics and mythology that is woefully blind to the human and political reality. It [was] a cold war that, for the last twenty five years, has engaged my attention and energy... [But] there is no ‘after the Cold War’ for me. So far from having ended, my cold war has increased in intensity, as sector after sector of American life has been ruthlessly corrupted by the liberal ethos. It is an ethos that aims simultaneously at political and social collectivism on the one hand, and moral anarchy on the other. It cannot win, but it can make us all losers. We have ... reached a critical turning point in the history of the American democracy. Now that the other “Cold War” is over, the real cold war has begun. We are far less prepared for this cold war, far more vulnerable to our enemy, than was the case with our victorious war against a global communist threat. We are starting from ground zero and it is a conflict I shall be passing to my children and grandchildren. But it is a far more interesting cold war – intellectually interesting, spiritually interesting – than the war we have so recently won and I rather envy those young enough for the opportunities they will have to participate in it.⁶³

Kristol pointed out that the assumptions of liberalism had to be thought through if freedom was to be retained. Liberalism was absolutely incapable of providing reasons why should anyone defend it, it had wrong anthropology and a metaphysical deftness. It was incapable of giving reasons why it fought communism. The Cold War was reduced to a primitive conflict about power between a totalitarian tyranny and a constitutional democracy. But the liberal ethos was aiming at romantic progress. It considered Communism just one of the stages, even if brutal and wasteful, although it was not so for the progressive decadence of America after the Cold War. Yet for Kristol, cultural and moral decadence was not an unintended consequence of liberal policies, but the very essence of the liberal message.

This liberalism had no difficulty, in fact it did it naturally, accepting the New Left progressive programme of “liberation” from all “oppressions”. Liberalism’s accommodation with the radicalism of the New Left made liberalism’s cultural radicalisation against the real world, defined as problematic, natural.⁶⁴ From a doctrine of freedom, liberalism turned to a revolutionary doctrine of enslavement so to create

⁶³ I. Kristol, *My Cold War*, [in:] idem, *Neoconservatism: An Autobiography of an Idea*, New York 1995, p. 484–486.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 485.

a “liberated” world, a perfect realisation of progress, the essence of the modern liberalism. This change was inherent in liberalism’s assumptions, not a betrayal of them. It found in the New Left’s message of “liberation” its logical fulfillment, engaging in a massive culture war against the existing world in the name of the new utopia.⁶⁵

Hunter who tried to describe culture war in academic language defining the warring camps as liberal-left and orthodox-religious, defined a conflict between progressive liberalism and its opponents fighting to retain autonomy, that is freedom. Kristol, writing after Hunter, was more precise. But they differ fundamentally. Hunter does not state who began this war and recognises justifications of both sides as equal, even if not subject to compromise. For Kristol, it was liberalism which began this conflict since aggression against culture and tradition lies in its very nature. The “religious” side simply defends itself against the attack. Hunter does not assess the normative values of both sides. Kristol definitely does so, stressing an inherent totalitarian temptation in liberalism’s normative assumptions, wrong metaphysics and anthropology leading human mind into an arid land, promising something which it can never deliver, and considering this shortage as a proof of its not yet fully applied cultural assumptions.

Kristol, an orthodox Jew until the end of his life, acknowledged Judeo-Christian anthropology as a necessary ingredient of freedom in the West, even for non-religious people, and was in fact an optimist. Others on the non-liberal side were less so. In “An Open Letter to Conservatives” in 1991, Paul Weyrich lamented over the conservative’s failure to address cultural issues.⁶⁶ He argued that it was time for religious conservatives to withdraw from national politics and concentrate on their own communities because the culture war was lost. He did not want to abandon politics completely, but advised the religious conservatives to focus on the real issues of community, family, faith, matters of culture and its nurturing. Politics was just one of the many and not necessarily most important vehicle of change, since

politics itself has failed. And politics has failed because of the collapse of culture. The culture we are living in is becoming an ever-wider sewer. I think we are caught up in a cultural collapse of historical proportions, a collapse so great that it simply overwhelms politics. That’s why I am in a process of rethinking what it is that we, who still believe in our traditional, Western, Judeo-Christian culture, can and should do under the circumstances.⁶⁷

Weyrich made an important observation that it was

⁶⁵ This liberal transformation is semantically difficult to capture, yet that is why the phrase liberal-left is used, or in American vocabulary liberal-left, left, or socialism. On this inherent continuity of liberal assumptions with the modern culture left see: R. Scruton, *Rousseau and the Origins of Liberalism...*, p. 19–42, 43–70; J. Kalb, *The Tyranny of Liberalism: Understanding and Overcoming Administered Freedom, Inquisitorial Tolerance and Equality by Command*, Wilmington 2008, esp. p. 3–44.

⁶⁶ Weyrich is the head of the Free Congress Foundation and one of the most important conservative political organisers, and helped create the Heritage Foundation.

⁶⁷ P. Weyrich, *An Open Letter to Conservatives*, [in:] *Conservatism in America in 1930*, ed. G. R. Schneider, New York 2003, p. 428–429.

impossible to ignore the fact that the United States is becoming an ideological state. The ideology of Political Correctness, which openly calls for the destruction of our traditional culture, has so gripped the body politic our institutions are even affecting the Church. It has completely taken over the academic community. It is now pervasive in the entertainment industry, and it threatens to control literally every aspect of our lives. Those who came up with Political Correctness, which we more accurately call “Cultural Marxism” did so in a deliberate fashion. The United States is very close to becoming a state totally dominated by an alien ideology, an ideology bitterly hostile to Western culture. Even now, for the first time in their lives, people have to be afraid of what they say. This has never been true in the history of [America]. Yet today, if you can say the “wrong thing”, you suddenly have legal problems, political problems, you might lose your job or be expelled from college. Certain topics are forbidden. You can’t approach the truth about a lot of different subjects. If you do, you are immediately branded as “racist”, “sexist”, “homophobic”, “insensitive”, or “judgmental”.⁶⁸

Weyrich claimed that cultural Marxism was succeeding in its war against American culture. If so and if it was impossible to escape the cultural decomposition of society, what was to be the strategy for conservatives. The situation was new in the sense that the majority of Americans became susceptible to this decomposition, corrupted by this MTV, as Weyrich called it, culture. No more was there any moral majority in America which believed in values not imposed by the cultural left. For the conservatives it was a depressing time, stated Weyrich, because

we probably lost the culture war. That does not mean the war is not going to continue, that it isn’t going to be fought on other fronts. But in terms of society in general, we have lost. Even if we win, our victories fail to translate into the kind of policies we believe are important. Therefore, what seems to me a legitimate strategy for us to follow is to look at ways of separating ourselves from the institutions that have been captured by the ideology of Political Correctness or by other enemies of our traditional culture. I would point out that the word “holy” means “set apart”, and that it is not against our tradition to be in fact “set apart”. There were times when those who had our beliefs were definitely in the minority, and it was a band of hardy monks who preserved the culture while the surrounding society disintegrated.⁶⁹

Weyrich pointed out that by separatism he meant, for instance, an activity of the homeschoolers, who realising that the public school system ceased to educate their children but began to “condition” them in the ideology of Political Correctness, separated themselves from the public schools and set up new educational institutions and schools in their homes. People were also getting rid of the TV sets, and setting up private courts, when they realised that official justice is permeated with ideology and greed.⁷⁰ What was necessary was a search for institutions which could bypass official institutions “that are controlled by the enemy”. The energies spent on fighting it on its own turf which they control was useless, would exhaust energy and eventually would amount to fighting battles, the language and the terms of which were to be dictated by adversaries. The strategy of separation in Weyrich’s view had to do more with

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 429.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 430.

⁷⁰ The good account of such separate institutions especially homeschooling is in J. Mickletwait, A. Wooldridge, *The Right Nation...*, p. 189–194.

who we are, and what we have become, than it does with what the other side is doing and what we are going to do about it. Young people have absorbed ... much of the decadent culture without understanding that they are part of it. I am not suggesting that we all become Amish [but] I do think that we have to look at what we can do to separate ourselves from this hostile culture. What steps can we take to make sure that we and our children are not infected? We need some sort of quarantine. The radicals of the 60s had three slogans: turn on, tune in, drop out. I suggest that we adopt a modern version. First, turn off the television and some of the garbage that's on the computers, the means by which you and your family are being infected with cultural decadence. Tune out. Create a little stillness. Finally, we need to drop out of this culture, and find places where we can live godly, righteous, and sober lives. I don't have all the answers or even all the questions. But ... what we have been doing for thirty years hasn't worked, that while we have been fighting and winning in politics, our culture has decayed into something approaching barbarism. We need to take another tack, find a different strategy. If you agree, and are willing to help wrestle with what strategy should be, let me know.⁷¹

In 2006 another contestant in the culture war, the conservative Richard A. Viguerie, criticised the Republican George Bush administration for expanding the government's intervention, also for conducting the imperial foreign policy and betraying the cause of conservatism.⁷² He considered the contemporary culture war as the most decisive front line of Americans' history since they

are engaged in a struggle between traditional values and moral relativism; between morality and humanism; between a belief that the universe is built by God on absolute truth, and the belief that life is meaningless, accidental and random. This war – and it is a war, make no mistake – is far greater than any of its individual battles. This is not just an argument about what kinds of TV shows we will have and how important the family will be in American life. It is a struggle between a world of perpetual conflict (the liberal vision) and a world of cooperation based on tradition (the conservative vision). In the liberal view, life is viewed as a constant struggle for power between oppressors and the oppressed. By this light, you can easily see why liberals always speak in terms of victims and refuse to concede even the slightest progress against poverty and racism. In the conservative world, life is often viewed as unfair, but ultimately as a series of opportunities. By representing immutable definitions of right and wrong, men and women are able to support their families and not be dependent on others, but they know the community will help if they face unforeseen hardship. The idea of self-determination is balanced with the idea of compassion, and competition is tempered by caring. For liberals to win this battle of world views, they cannot simply promote their own. For the idea that “the world is struggle” to make sense, liberals must inculcate in people the idea that they are oppressed. If there is no oppression there is no fight. More than ever before, American politics is based on a struggle between two philosophies of life. This struggle has become known as “the culture wars” pitting privileged elites against regular Americans on issues ranging from abortion to gun control; from funding of government – approved art, to the mixing of politics and science in schools' from “pulling the plug” on disabled people, to the public celebrating of Christmas.⁷³

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 430–431.

⁷² Viguerie, called the “Funding Father of the conservative movement”, transformed American politics in the 1960's and 1970's by the use of direct mail fundraising. He computerised it to help form a conservative coalition which then elected Ronald Reagan. Viguerie motivated millions of Americans to participate in politics expanding the conservative base exponentially. He was cited by the *Washington Times* in 1999 as one of 13 “Conservatives of the Century”.

⁷³ R. A. Viguerie, *Conservatives Betrayed: How George W. Bush and Other Big Government Republicans Hijacked the Conservative Cause*, Los Angeles 2006, p. 101–102.

Viguerie showed how American politics was once based on factors determined at birth, such as the status of one's parents' economics, education, region, religion and ethnicity, as well as the durability of one's stay in the United States, with political party allegiances fairly stable once chosen during the first voting. But by the end of the 20th century, such factors declined somehow in significance and

the crucial division in [American] society is based more on culture. We are divided between liberals (who would use the power of government to overturn traditional values) and conservatives (who support the right of families and individuals to live accordingly to traditional values). The original culture war – Germany's *Kulturkampf* against Catholics – was based on religion, and so it is with today's culture wars, in which radical secularists would deny religion and religious-based values any place in public life. [But] if conservatives want to change culture, we have to begin by speaking up for our own point of view.⁷⁴

In fact, Weyrich postulated the creation of an alternative society to move culture and then influence politics, a kind of tactics the fundamentalists decided to take up in the aftermath of the “Scopes Trial in 1925. But at the same time this was a much more active tactics of self-organisation. He realised that the sides to this culture war may turn out to be uneven and that pushing, in this instance, the religious people into a ghetto might be a possibility, with the rest accepting the point of view of the cultural Left, which aims at a change of a cultural paradigm, a great change of human consciousness. This project, which Weyrich calls by its popular term Political Correctness, has gained popularity but is imprecise. It denotes a massive distortion of ideas, riddled with mendacities, supported by half-baked pseudo-scientific theories with pervasive irrationalism and violence disguised as rationality and tolerance, but first of all using language as a tool of battle to take power. Public life then becomes a battlefield with new superstitions dressed up as theory which, in fact, is radical and totalitarian, not tolerating any other thinking people and considering a “naked public square” to be an ideal. Cultural Marxism is here the twin brother of postmodernistic thinking, which claims that there is no truth and that this claim represents the truth, a self-contradictory statement. But postmodernism is here an ally of a totalitarian cultural liberal-left, since it claims that there is no objective truth, which it calls meta-narrative, and historical truth, that all our convictions are just conditioned by social and historical circumstances. There is nothing neutral, no objective measure of reality which would not be marred by some axioms, and which by definition falsify it. All are just “languages” which need to be decoded and exposed as “power tools”, as “symbolic violence” and “subjective narratives”. True, language is not neutral as Wittgenstein pointed out. But a claim that language cannot build a common humanity and culture, and that there is no nature, no truth, is tantamount to a statement that the weakest have no chance of survival, because the strongest will always decode their appeal as a sham while realising their sinister interests. The post-modernist theory is a theory which the cultural liberal-left may use as a tool of “liberation”.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 102, 112.

The contemporary culture war in America has been a phenomenon of a much deeper cultural development, with Modernity which began in the sixteenth century and got its full exposition in the Enlightenment in the eighteenth.⁷⁵ This modern project was to reconcile humanity with itself, liquidating the alienation of human existence, creating an alternative to the Christian narrative, a new self-explaining and self-justifying “metaphysics” of liberal monism masquerading as political philosophy. Its essence was the idea that this inhabited world is a world which can be described and explained by a new comprehensive progressive narrative self-explaining itself by and autonomous reason and that it is true, that it can be comprehended without provoking self-contradictory methodological issues, in other words that the world as such has a meaning, derived from its materialistic nature by means of reason alone. Within such a perspective, history becomes just a matter shaped by independent, autonomous reason. The rejected Judeo-Christian narrative contradicting such a modern project claimed that the world in history is congruent with the narrative of God participating at the same time in its creation. It entailed an idea, that there exists a true history of the universe and of human existence, because there exists an eternal universal narrator, who created this history.

Modernity defined itself as a heroic attempt to create a universal narrative independent from God, rejecting this universal author of Christian narrative. The most heroic modern effort to do this and conscious of its gravity was taken up by Immanuel Kant. Kant began with the idea that if God was rejected as the universal Creator imposing his meaning on Being, the modern moral narrative could only be derived from autonomous reason, but could only be legitimate if it could be universally binding in a compelling way, in other words that the cohesive narrative of the world and the human existence within it was meaningful per se. At the very same time he was aware that this task had to be done in conditions in which human self-awareness and reason are self-explanatory, providing solutions out of their limited means. They were purely arbitrary, which makes any coherent history of the Whole doubtful, causing despair. Kant was clearly aware what his project was all about and aware of its inherent limitations.⁷⁶

Within such a modern narrative the world loses its moral meaning, reason pushes humanity to simply justify its autonomous impulses and claim that they are reasonable per se and moral. This is also a modern notion of freedom pursuing its inner choices defined as congruent with universally acclaimed moral precepts.⁷⁷ If there

⁷⁵ For more see: A. Bryk, *The Transatlantic Civilisation and Modernity Today*, “Krakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe” 2008, No. 8, p. 9–60.

⁷⁶ For more see: L. Kołakowski, *Kant i zagrożenie cywilizacji*, [in:] idem, *Czy diabeł może być zbawiony i 27 innych kazań*, Kraków 2006, p. 189–194.

⁷⁷ The modern notion of freedom is essentially “nihilistic”. The tendency of modern thought is to situate liberty in an individual subjects’ power of choice, rather than in the ends that subjects might actually choose. Freedom is the power of choosing as such. Eventually, not only God is reject-

is no God, a human being becomes a creature eternally taking care of its own material being against others trying to tame this inherent communal conflict by means of all kinds of provisional and, in fact, utilitarian administrative rules, defined at the very same time as moral rules. Such a civilisation can be prosperous, powerful and victorious, but it is becoming morally anarchic, infused with a growing “metaphysical boredom”, with a multitude of idolatrous gods and quasi theories of how to tame and explain the inexplicability of death.⁷⁸

Such theories combined with “good” social causes are declared to be the new morality, inherently incapable of providing universal and compelling reasons why it should be obeyed. They create a world no longer morally comprehensive. The situation resembles that of the late Roman empire in which there were so many gods to worship that it was impossible not to offend at least some of them.

This metaphysical and philosophical modern situation, the lack of the compelling moral narrative constitutes ultimately the fundamental root of the modern culture war. This culture war consists of endless petty wars between different individual and group narratives. Liberal monism declared such a situation as a natural, and the only, legitimate one, demanding from all an abandonment of any pretences that there is a common moral anthropological and ontological point of reference outside of choice. This is the ultimate meaning of the modern liberal notion of tolerance and non-discrimination. Such a common point of reference – whether religious, philosophical, national, educational, domestic – is looked upon in a perspective of liberal monism as a threat to social peace, since the anti-metaphysical perspective taken for granted and nullifying the Christian metaphysical perspective treated as an obstacle to human liberation might be subverted.⁷⁹

ed, pretences of nature and reason are also rejected. They cease to provide “the measure of an act’s true liberty, for an act is free only because it might be done in defiance of all three”. D. Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies*, New Haven 2009, p. 224.

⁷⁸ The phrase “metaphysical boredom” is taken from David Bentley Hart, *Religion in America: Ancient and Modern*, “The New Criterion”, March 2004, p. 8.

⁷⁹ Christianity with its universal narrative is thus treated as a throwback to the past. It can be accepted as a tamed Christianity, a psychotherapeutic device, part of the welfare, liberal monistic state. Philip Rieff, a sociologist and cultural critic, was one of the first in America to analyse this attack on culture and religion of radical emancipators. The language, ideology and methods of this attack by the modern liberal-left he considered to be barbarian, not as an alleged fulfillment of the individual freedom but converting it into absolute moral freedom ending with self-adulation. See: P. Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud*, New York 1966; idem, *The Feeling Intellect: Select Writings*, ed. J. Imber, Chicago 1990, p. 223. Rieff argued that modern psychoanalysis and the culture of psychotherapy forms a substitute religion, the way to anti-culture. This psychotherapeutic culture attempts to eliminate all limitations, with the counterculture of the 60s completing the anarchy of moral freedom. A source of egalitarian emotivism stems from it. This culture of psychotherapy ubiquitously institutionalised, aided by all kinds of “spirituality”, New Age philosophy, has become a religion of a mind gazing intently at itself, a cultural narcissism supported by a paternalistic state and business corporations. Such a culture liquidates moral hierarchy, bans judgement and eliminates repression which would have to follow, since “the essence of repression lies in an inescapable abandonment of immediate and conscious expression of everything, which precedes approval and rebuke. Any culture deprived of repression, if

The modern project was to create a moral universal narrative by autonomous reason, but instead it required a recognition of disjointed moral narratives of individuals or groups led by autonomous imperial selfs with rights defined increasingly as “demands” administered by a state. Freedom and human dignity have a precarious ontological status, a precondition for full humanity. Freedom ceases to be a gift imposed from outside of absolute autonomous reason, by a universal narrator who distinguishes humans by His will from the material world. It is obvious that a dominant, monistic liberal post-Christian narrative clashes with religious perspectives putting an issue of religious freedom, the first freedom, at the very centre of the culture war. Once the post-Christian narrative has been declared irrelevant, nothing is left but the imperial mind turning political as a means of adjusting this world in the image of the liberated, thus enlightened reason. Reason becomes in such a situation inexorably a province of politics, of naked power. This is the essence of secularism, when a rootless and memoryless radical individualism of a particular point in time and place claims to know how to shape history and claims power for doing it, today essentially the power of the state. Secularisation becoming an explicit political and cultural project throughout the world uses this progressive vision to transform it without, at the same time, any new moral concepts. The way to secular morality, a substitute for an allegedly obsolete Christian narrative, turns out to be a way to omnipotent power.⁸⁰

The concept of classical politics has been overturned, and politics ceased to be a province of moral life and deliberation, as Aristotle said, over a political order within which people were to organise their common life together. In modernity, politics ceased to be a moral enterprise, turning into an enterprise of power operated by the most efficient reason of the most cunning and sophisticated with technical means to control it. Liberalism has become its natural ally, making an individual a carrier of rights, the essence of modern liberty directed against the feudal structures, then, rejecting metaphysical dimension turning rights to the province of human desire.⁸¹ The chief aim of liberal modernity was to unburden humans, to release them from tyranny, not only political tyranny, but also tyranny of any orthodoxy, mainly religious, and finally of nature, denying that it existed at all as a structure setting the limits of human predicament.

A human being without nature and orthodoxy has become an individual with “self-consciousness” of its freedom and technical mastery by means of reason. But reason, next to nature, has also been subverted. It has to operate on categories created

it could ever exist, would commit suicide by eliminating the distance which separates desire from its object; whatever conceived of or felt would be acted upon immediately. Culture constitutes a heritage of such unconscious instruments, which helps create and sustain such a distance, and which are conscious and reveal themselves, even if not directly, in the entirety of visual, auditory and artistic artifacts. Thus, culture is a repression”. P. Rieff, quoted after L. Kołakowski, *Jeśli Boga nie ma...*, p. 131; Ch. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, New York 1978.

⁸⁰ D. Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions...*, p. 222.

⁸¹ L. Straus, *Natural Right in History*, Chicago 1950.

by itself becoming essentially a self-explicating machine decoupled from its Creator imposing a coherent narrative on its sphere of operation. This makes a human being a master of just the present moment, the modern experience epitomised in such notions as liberty, rights, commerce escaping from any metaphysical or cultural orthodoxy of the past, even if living off it. This new Age of Enlightenment, is treated as a liberation of unburdened reason and nature. But in fact this liberation constitutes

a decisive deathblow to both. Its active principle, its sovereign notion, is neither Reason nor Nature, but ‘the present moment. The authority of the New is still too recent to have found an appropriate and commonly accepted conceptual expression, and so it enlists in its service the remarkable words Reason and Nature easily appropriated since they have lost their place as principles in the world of the emerging new authority. They no longer guarantee the synthesis of the human world since they are incapable of giving an account of both the ancient world and the new authority; the authority of the New Reason itself cannot give an account of the New since, in the Enlightenment’s polemic against prejudice, it puts itself on an equal plane with the New and merges with it. Nature, Reason, and the New together constitute an essentially flimsy world that has never before appeared in human history, that is neither anchored in the one nor attracted to it. Hence the eighteenth century’s incomparable charm, in our eyes as in its own. This state of grace [could] not last. The French Revolution sought to reinstate the unifying principle with arrogance and a cruelty honed by the displacement that preceded it. Thinkers both before the revolution and urgency after it, sensed this fundamental weakness of the Enlightenment and undertook to overcome it in the realm of speculation. [But] reason cannot bring together under any unifying principle this agglomeration of events and effects [of the New]. Without being able to give a rational account of what satisfied it, Enlightenment reason believes more things than it actually understands. One has to ask whether modern reason has ever overcome this contradiction. [As as consequence] we do not know what man is.⁸²

The conceptual and moral world began to be disjointed as a consequence of this “unburdening”, desire crept in as a basis of action and autonomous thinking. The modern project tried to ridicule any, orthodoxy including religious, as not immanent in human history, but its successful refutation would require proof that human life and the world were intelligible without an assumption of natural law, God, or some philosophical system, as Kant understood it, a *sine qua non* condition of forming any moral system at all.⁸³ Modern rejection of orthodoxy required that

man has to show himself theoretically and practically as the master of the world and the master of his life; the merely given world must be replaced by a world created by man theoretically and practically [but] as a consequence, its cognitive status is not different from that of the orthodox account [which means to reject revelation]. [Thus, modernity] cannot legitimately deny the possibility of revelation. But to grant that revelation is possible means to grant that the philosophic account and the philosophic way of life are not necessarily, not evidently, the true account and the right way of life. Philosophy, the quest for evident and necessary knowledge, rests itself on an unevident decision, on an act of will. Liberated from the religious delusion, awakened to the sober awareness of his real situation, taught by bad experience that he is threatened by a stingy, hostile nature, man recognises his sole salvation and duty not so much “to cultivate his garden” as in the first place to plant a garden by making himself the master and owner of nature. But this whole enterprise requires, above all, political action, revolution,

⁸² P. Manent, *The City of Man*, Princeton 1998, p. 16–17, 124, VII.

⁸³ L. Kołakowski, *Kant i zagrożenie cywilizacji...*, p. 187–193.

a life and death struggle. But in proportion to the systematic effort to liberate man completely from all non-human bonds seems to succeed, the doubt increases whether the goal is not fantastic – whether man has not become smaller and more miserable in proportion as the systematic civilisation progresses. Eventually, the belief that by pushing ever farther back the “natural limits” man will advance to ever greater freedom, that he can subjugate nature and prescribe to it his laws, begins to wither.⁸⁴

Life becomes not only disjointed but senseless, since any true metaphysical sense can only come from causes not immanent in human history.⁸⁵ Modernity rejected such an option. It answered a question *what is*, of *why is* man and what his ends are, his sense of existence and happiness at the level of the human private world, of human desire as expressed by the autonomous, liberated imperial self, the process which was the final humanisation, that is the final disenchantment of his existence, both at the consciousness or community, of social action, level. This meant

the active removal by politics of what was not derived from an exclusively human source. The description of what was being “formed” in the modern project could be aptly called “Gnostic” because it implied a conception of man presupposed to nothing normative except man himself, such “alternative” descriptions of man could be thought as with the ancient Gnostics. Such was the reality of modern power put into physical and political existence as a living statement of what man is in his individual and corporate existence. The sort of [such] “freedom” envisioned in the modern project was a freedom which presupposed no ends in man or substitute intelligence in nature, which persuaded the human intellect by its discovered truth. It turned out in practice to be an effort to remove any “limits” or “moderation” associated with the classical endeavour to keep politics as politics, or the Judeo-Christian effort not to locate the Kingdom of God in this world. No metaphysical or Revelation input could limit what could be “imagined” or finally put into experimental reality as possible and as theoretically good. The truth of politics was, consequently, to be like truth in art, something whose validity depended solely on the polity’s conformity with what the maker of the political order – one, few, or many – wanted to be. Political existence came to refer only to the truth of the mind presupposed to no being, but still creative of the civil order by its own calculations [of will]. The Gnostic project, in this sense, was a claim to formulate an entirely man-made kingdom. It remove[d] from politics the hope that it might be remade into an instrument for transcendent goals.⁸⁶

Existentially and politically, man thus lowered the sight, and released his will, justifying it by rights, basing on them citizens’ decisions and the pursuit of commercial interests. Sophisticated means were devised to tame desires, but in fact they elevated them. Modern liberalism is the political form this philosophy took. But the modern liberal world has consciously, out of default, become disjointed, unable to form any theory of morality and moral coherence accepted by all.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ L. Strauss, *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion*, Chicago 1997, p. 29–30.

⁸⁵ L. Kołakowski, *Odwet sacrum w kulturze świeckiej*, [in:] idem, *Czy diabeł może być zbawiony...*, p. 245.

⁸⁶ J. V. Schall, *Reason, Revelation and the Foundations of Political Philosophy*, Baton Rouge 1987, p. 189–192.

⁸⁷ M. Diamond, *Ethics and Politics: the American Way*, [in:] R. R. Horwitz, *The Moral Foundations of the American Republic*, Charlottesville 1986, p. 75–108; L. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*; C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: From Hobbes to Locke*, Oxford 1962.

Contemporary liberalism seems inherently saddled with wrong assumptions about human nature and because of this the liberal project has shown signs of utter exhaustion. The culture war is one symptom of it. As an attempt to develop accounts of morality in the name of standards derived from reason in response to the loss of shared practices necessary for the discovery of moral goods in common liberalism, it has failed. Morality searched for by an autonomous moral subject to create any common moral bond cannot sustain itself. The rational rules of the social contract coming from Hobbes through John Rawls cannot create morally sustainable obligations, especially obligations of justice. They merely constitute a particular form of utilitarian self-rationality of an autonomous subject. This self-rationality is incapable of overcoming the problem of why such a state should be obeyed in the first place and not be treated as an object of constant demands for goods fulfilling a desire of the moment, a modern definition of the pursuit of happiness. Such a society has constantly to face a dilemma of why it is more reasonable to fulfill a contract, than to pretend that one does it.⁸⁸

Liberalism of the modern welfare state based on a social contract cannot create non-egotistical social motives. Human emotions are often more wise than reason, superstitions express human moral predispositions better than rational constructions of justice created by social planners which tend to corrupt souls, rather than induce them to it. The mills of justice, as William Blackstone observed, are fuelled by emotions; in fact, strictly speaking by love, the inculcated disposition to do good, that is to be virtuous. The elimination of social processes which create moral passions from the bottom up in autonomous institutions, the only place where one can teach people how to love, can never be substituted by rational plans of elites.⁸⁹ To think that people can be induced to behave justly on a basis of a rational, general plan of social behaviour is the fallacy. People cannot be convinced why they should think first of all about others. The need for sentiments, caritas, magnanimity, sympathy and other virtues can only be explained on a basis of unreflexive moral impulses. It was for this reason that William Shakespeare in *King Lear* understood well that love and sympathy precede justice, otherwise reason will find ways to justify injustice.

Because the liberal project lowers the sight and disregards the perennial question how to explain the conditionality of humanity, the drama which Kant recognised in a modern predicament, it cannot solve the problem of the common good because it is incapable of providing a compelling justification of it. No common standards can be sustained when abstracted from the practices and justifications that render our lives meaningful. Modern liberalism stressing autonomy with ethics derived from utilitarian history creates people incapable of living lives which have any narrative coherence.⁹⁰ They become essentially a response to constant impulses wor-

⁸⁸ R. Scruton, *Modern Philosophy*, New York 1996, p. 39.

⁸⁹ For more see: H. C. Mansfield, *Pride and Justice in Affirmative Action in America's Constitutional Soul*, Baltimore 1991, p. 95–97.

⁹⁰ For the most sophisticated approach to Kant in this context see: G. Kruger, *Philosophie und Moral in der Kantischen Kritik*, Tübingen 1931, p. 236; T. L. Pangle, *The Ennobling of Democracy: The Challenge of the Postmodern Age*, Baltimore 1992, p. 13.

ked out by autonomous consciousnesses, a string of events which cannot be tied to any overreaching meaning, making individual life understandable to itself. At the beginning of liberal moral philosophy the traditional moral agent disappeared. The character of the moral subject, the question of virtue, the content and structure of his desires and dispositions became peripheral. All moral philosophers, from Socrates on considered the question of character formation the most important educational postulate. The modern liberal mind replaced it by choice.⁹¹ In the 20th century, choice was defined as a condition of sheer authenticity, self-realisation. Choice began to replace character formation in public education and an ideology of the new “tolerance” became a substitute with a corresponding blurring of the contours of human rights, the new “religion” of liberal modernity increasingly tantamount to individual choice.⁹²

This replacement of character in moral formation by moral choice, to put it bluntly, moral freedom, has turned out to be the end station of modern liberalism. Liberalism’s descriptions of reality have become totally inadequate for individuals unable to act in a manner which would be intelligible to others as well as to them.⁹³ Human life can be lived meaningfully only when those, who are engaged in community formation are focused on goods without which such an endeavour is futile. Modern liberalism has rejected the view that there is an ultimate human good towards which humans should strive, a project devised already by Machiavelli, Hobbes or Locke. What is new, is a growing disillusion that this methodological, epistemological and ontological stance might form a community of mutual obligations sustained by other means than the minute rules of an administrative state, a situation which creates conditions for incessant culture war.

Liberalism persists in claiming that such rules are the right foundational assumption and course of action visible in public policy measures; for instance, a rigid separation of religion from public life, the New Tolerance as an ideology of censorship, or public education turning itself into a tool of accommodation to the liberal public policy measures, which must mean a subversion of autonomous institutions such as churches or families by, for instance, gender feminism and gay movements, so they conform to the liberal state’s image of the monistic good.⁹⁴ Government in such a case „attempt[s] perfection by overriding prejudice, but when it does so it can develop a self-serving tyrannical – or bureaucratic – definition of perfection.”⁹⁵

This liberal harbours an inherently totalitarian impulse since it gives rise to a psychological and educational industry to guard the recalcitrant minds from committing a mistake of being not modern, not progressive enough, and especially not to-

⁹¹ S. Hauerwas, *The Virtues of Alisdair MacIntyre*, “First Things”, October 2007, p. 36–37.

⁹² This was already intimated by some conservative Enlightenment thinkers, such as Burke or John Adams. See: A. Bryk, *Liberalism, Constitutionalism and Judicial Review*, [in:] *Historia Integra*, eds. D. Janicka, B. Łoszewski, Toruń 2001, p. 318–325.

⁹³ This was shown by Alisdair MacIntyre in his seminal books: *A Short History of Ethics*, the most important *After Virtue* and *Against the Self-Images of the Age*. See also S. Hauerwas, *op. cit.*

⁹⁴ H. C. Mansfield, *Manliness*, New Haven 2006.

⁹⁵ H. C. Mansfield, *Pride and Justice in Affirmative Action...*, p. 97.

lerant enough. To be non-tolerant is the highest crime, meaning that one is judgemental, thus making moral distinctions and creating hierarchy of norms, without which morality is impossible to be attained. Such a process is branded as “discriminatory”. Contemporary culture war raging inside liberal societies is a phenomenon signifying a failure of such liberal monistic pretences.

Modern liberal moral theory has no end towards which people want to be moral, which makes them morality incapable of justifying a human good beyond the sheer desire of moral freedom, the utilitarian morality of pleasure and the war of all against all, guarded by the administrative, psychotherapeutic state as a kind of modern exorcism technique. Thus, liberalism produces shallow people unable to create moral obligations, thus solidarity. This requires virtues requiring a certain level of community which makes the ordering of goods possible. Moral communities, in turn, must order goods of various practices so an individual can find a narrative story connecting them. Liberalism has great problems with creating such communities.⁹⁶

The 1960s revolution constituted liberalism’s logical conclusion, by accepting the New Left idea of “emancipation” radicalising the autonomous self. It waged war on culture and any authority as oppression to create an authentic society of equal citizens. But as with every utopia, we only know a project of destruction, the positive project is a dream thwarted by the sheer resistance of the matter, battled by laws and administrative rules. This destructive anti-authority drive has subverted culture as a structure of language, meaning and morality as a hierarchical category introducing moral differentiations, for which substitutes of new tolerance, multiculturalism and a primacy of moral auto-creation, also subverting intermediary social institutions. Politics ceases to be an argument about a good community, and gets converted to a smooth administration of utilitarian adjustments.

Such a policy causes resistance against the better-knowing liberal-left elites which aim at unburdening citizens from all kinds of allegiances so to liberate them from any natural ties, a conflict between populism and the liberal meritocracy of knowledge, money and influence in the service of a monistic thinking. If, as Marx once said, religion is the opiate of the people, utopia is a pseudo-religion of the intellectual, his amphetamine. It offers a perfect world of the future and guarantees such a world in a present in which intellectuals are omniscient and omnipotent, advisers to the Prince, to whom they want to sell their world without poverty, suffering, guilt and forgiveness. No wonder that at the very centre of such a utopian vision there is a liberal-left intellectuals obsession with education, called sometimes a deficit of education, to implement their programme at the earliest stages of life. One of the most important culture war fronts is the fight over a child’s upbringing by parents. But this obsession to educate into proper knowledge, attitudes, values, subconscious impulses of moral indignation and acceptance shows not so much a concern for education but proper indoctrination.

⁹⁶ S. Hauerwas, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

The general consensus of the knowledgeable elites is not necessarily the proof that they think wisely and morally. It may be proof that they had been programmed this way, increasingly the aim of modern education. Modern educational debates today constitute one of the fronts of the culture war. They are debates over human will, human freedom with liberal educational monism's conviction that truth does not exist and that a connection between morality and truth is nonsensical. The anthropology of the autonomous imperial self, and moral auto-creation forms morality and thus there is no reason not to let people realise their desires.⁹⁷

Modern populism does not openly question the meritocratic principle, but it's conversion into a moral superiority, a desire to control people's lives so to realise political aims, with education as a means of indoctrination. One may consider such populist revolts to be just blind uprisings against modernity, where this threat to liberty comes more from the impersonal forces operating beyond a control of any individual or group. Meritocracy provided modern competence also bringing civilisation's comfort, but the new meritocracy turned to the ruling elite convinced that advancements in sciences, as well as social sciences, created the conditions for a comprehensive ordering of a society for the first time. This elite treats people clinging to their ways of life, values and traditions as obstacles. Defenders of the modern meritocratic elite misjudge populist revolts. Convinced that this elite has an insight into history it does not realise that such revolts are also directed against the growth of government, connected with the growth of this meritocracy.⁹⁸ This revolt is not against modern civilisation, but against elites who make things complicated so they can be trusted with solving them while leaving a toll for solving them, which they at the same time exacerbate. Meritocracy can thus be considered not as a class of specialists, but of ideologues treating people as tools of their utopia. If so, this culture war is not a conflict between competence and ignorance, but a conflict of visions of what kind of civilisation we want to live in. The new meritocratic elite operates on an idea that it is in possession of reason realising progress. But this reason is of its own making, with progress not related to any outward moral point of reference, whether God or natural law, except this point in time and history.⁹⁹

This meritocratic reason creates its sense in a process of a gigantic auto-mythification. Such progress is against culture as a repository of irrational sense, or saving Great Myths. Progressive reason is blind in its choices not relating to anything morally bigger and universal outside of itself; it's an instance of hubristic auto-creation, against which the Great Myths defend us. Culture, even nature are defined as obstacles to a perfect moral order coming out of progressive reason. Great Myths and

⁹⁷ K. Minogue, *Polityka...*

⁹⁸ For instance, in today's America, the government disposes directly of nearly 40% of the GDP, and compels or directs 20–30% more via regulatory activity. The meritocrats are more "nest featherers rather than defenders of civilization". In: J. DeLong, *Culture Clash*, "National Review", August 2, 2010, p. 43.

⁹⁹ P. A. Lawler, *End of History 2000*, [in:] *Faith, Reason and Political Life Today*, eds. P. A. Lawler, D. McConkey, New York 2001, p. 102.

Memory, the very essence of culture, do not represent the melancholic story about what has been irrevocably lost, but constitute powerful and meaningful means of reading the present and the future through a prism of time as a depository of wisdom, a safety valve against the hubris of self-explaining reason.¹⁰⁰

The culture war, or culture wars in America definitely reflect this general modern transformation of consciousness. But the American culture war conflict has its specific features and has had many historical transformation points which, again, reflected specific American encounters with modernity, first among the elites, creators of many different currents of the American Humanism movement beginning with the turn of the 20th century, and then exploding into mass culture since the 1960s. Since then Americans have divided themselves on many moral and cultural issues touching the meaning and purpose of life determining American politics in equally important ways as their traditional economic interests.

The 1960s countercultural revolution began massive bitter conflicts over the meaning of common culture. One may say that the causes of this culture war go deep into history and are connected with two distinctive sources of American identity which have generated bitter conflicts. One was connected with the biblical covenantal tradition. Attempts at transformations, because of this tradition, have thus been marred by radicalism and messianistic overtones beginning with the religious revival in 1750s and ending with today's war with all forms of discrimination. Their language has often been prophetic, millenarist coming out of the American Protestant biblical mentality of a "betrayed Covenant of America with God."¹⁰¹

Another source of American identity is modern, ideological, a nation arguing over interpretations of their intellectual, contractual experiment formulated in the "Declaration of Independence in 1776, reading the American future in the light of its founding principles."¹⁰² For some such conflicts have signified instances of culture war. But this is a simplification. These reforms at transformation, whether coming from the covenantal tradition or from the contractual tradition of the Declaration of Independence, wild and messianic on many occasion, have been conducted, with a possible exception of the Civil War, within the contours of one common cultural and religious anthropological paradigm, even if differently interpreted and sometimes leading to violent police and military clashes.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ W. McClay, *The Founding of Nations*, "First Things", March 2006.

¹⁰¹ For more on this messianistic character of Americans' interpretation of themselves see: E. Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role*, Chicago 1980; S. Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*, New Haven 1975, p. 136–186; A. Bryk, *Covenant, the Fear of Failure and Revivals as the Contemporary Sources of American Identity*, [in:] *Amerykomania*, eds. W. Bernacki, A. Walaszek, Kraków 2012, p. 51–110.

¹⁰² D. S. Lutz, *The Origins of American Constitutionalism*, Baton Rouge 1988, p. 13–34.

¹⁰³ Such was, for instance, the initial feud between the "liberals" and "republicans", the Federalists and the Anti-federalists. G. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic 1776–1787*, Chap-

A destruction of this common paradigm in the twentieth century created conditions for the contemporary cultural divisions in America, the one which Europe, in different degrees of intensity, have experienced since the French Revolution and which still rages in the European Union.¹⁰⁴ It can be treated as an instance of an acceptance of the European, post-1789 type ideological politics divided into a conflict of two cultures, a “revolutionary and “reactionary one. The destruction of this common American paradigm was long in the making. The first step was prepared by the destruction of the Protestant unity and a corresponding rise of several interrelated intellectual developments which transformed America. The first, apart from the rise of Progressive Christianity, was an incorporation into a corpus of American liberalism of the Hegelian version of it worked out by the Oxford Hegelians in England, which transformed classical liberalism from a negative into a positive force of change executed by government, the beginning of the welfare state justification in Europe.¹⁰⁵

The American welfare state was inspired by Oxford Hegelians, but its shape took the form of a progressive liberalism and its myth of the unrealised potential of the American dream, a manifesto of Progressivism put forth by Herbert Croly in his 1909 book *The Promise of American Life*, a programme of the federal government’s involvement in all aspects of American life.¹⁰⁶ The second development destroying the traditional American cultural paradigm was connected with the rise of progressive education associated with a name of John Dewey, who considered democracy as a secular religion with education as a means of attaining it, and secular humanism as its sacrament, with a stress on human reason to create a self-compelling ethical universal standard. Dewey’s public schools educational programme, which was based on spiritual individualism as contrasted to religion, in fact a solipsistic spiritual auto-creation, constituted a preparation for a development of the anthropology of the imperial self and moral auto-creation.

The third development destroying the unity of American culture was modern anthropology with its idea of culture as relativist and accidental to a place and time construct, with the corresponding recognition of sexual revolution as a useful tool of destroying the traditional society.¹⁰⁷ This development had its great works as well

el Hill 1969, p. 46–90; J. Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination*, Cambridge Mass. 1992, p. 1–33. But even the Civil War could be considered to be just an argument, finally irreconcilable and settled by war, over the meaning of the Declaration of independence. See, for instance, G. Annastaplo, *American Constitutionalism and the Virtue of Prudence: Philadelphia, Paris, Washington, Gettysburg*, [in:] *Abraham Lincoln, the Gettysburg Address and American Constitutionalism*, ed. L. P. S. de Alvarez, Texas 1976, p. 112–126.

¹⁰⁴ A. Bryk, *The United States, the European Union, Eastern Europe: Different Approaches to Modernity*, “Krakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe” 2008, No. 1, p. 179–194.

¹⁰⁵ R. Hudelson, *Modern Political Philosophy*, New York 1999, p. 59–70; K. Windschuttle, *Liberalism and Imperialism*, [in:] *The Betrayal of Liberalism...*, p. 71–92.

¹⁰⁶ S. M. Milkis, *Theodore Roosevelt, the Progressive Party, and the Transformation of American Democracy*, Lawrence KA 2010; R. M. Gamble, *The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Rise of the Messianic Nation*, Wilmington 2003, p. 76.

¹⁰⁷ For a good introduction to Dewey’s thought as a countercultural education against religion implemented by the public education see: H. T. Edmondson, *John Dewey and the Decline of Ameri-*

as the works of ideological charlatans of which Margaret Mead was unfortunately one. A final development subverting the traditional American cultural paradigm, the religious one especially, was modern psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, the answer to the crisis of the industrial society and an alternative to Christianity, especially Protestantism. Psychoanalysis was to be a great modern exorcism dispelling religious superstitions. Coming from Europe, in Freud's version it rejected Christianity as a form of false consciousness. Its popular street wise American optimistic version went back to Rousseau's assumption that man was good and society bad, and that it was possible to create a better, possibly perfect world by human means.

Culture alone, not Christian anthropology, was a means of human self-understanding, including a psychological one with a psychotherapeutic culture disenchanting religious language and imagination. Psychotherapy also constituted a subtle transformation of both the Christian and the Enlightenment rational narrative. An individual narrative of salvation, so prominent in Protestantism, was not any more a road to truth and salvation, but was turned into a limited and impossible to cross individual experience, just rooted in subjectivity. Liberal civilisation was finally creating its prominent cultural tool with its battle cry, which in the 1960s was given the form of the narcissistic adage "let's talk about me". Psychotherapy began to be treated as a "liberation science" from ossified mental structures, one of the tools of individual, self-applied salvation. All these developments represented the rise of so called American humanism in contradistinction to a religious paradigm.¹⁰⁸

Such cultural changes coinciding with the Great Crisis and the New Deal gave the federal government a chance to enter economy on a massive scale. Liberalism became synonymous with the ideology of progressive reforms guaranteed by government and the new economic, educational, religious and psychotherapeutic professionals. The second world war and then the Cold War made this massive federal entrance into all walks of life inevitable. The 1960s made culture war in America open, divisive and affecting not only the elites. Many long-term social and cultural currents merged with immediate events, causing a massive change of consciousness, splitting society and establishing a new dominant anthropology recognised as the only legitimate by the government apparatus, with the media, the universities, and law schools, all slowly being staffed by a generation mesmerised with it. In the 1960s, America was torn apart with such transformative events as the civil rights revolution and the Vietnam War waged not so much in the rice paddy fields, but on the university campuses and home TV screens.¹⁰⁹

can Education: How the Patron Saint of Schools Has Corrupted Teaching and Learning, Wilmington 2006; the best known critic of Dewey's education was A. Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, New York 1987.

¹⁰⁸ See: P. Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud*, New York 1966; idem, *My Life Among the Deathworks: Illustrations of the Aesthetics of Authority*, Charlottesville 2005.

¹⁰⁹ The rebellion is large part justified. The civil rights revolution was one of the most morally crystal clear experiences in American history, even if later corrupted by the civil rights establishment. The Vietnam War was ill-executed, with an unjust draft system, even if fighting communism was a noble cause. Deadening consumerism and dislocations of the capitalist and industrial society were also real.

Another transformative event was the massive public entrance of the well-educated and affluent youth generation not troubled by the traumas of the Great Crisis and the war, convinced that history had given them a chance, intellectual tools, and moral insight to execute a comprehensive economic, social and cultural revolution in the name of a just, not imperialistic America.¹¹⁰ The 1960s revolution was truly anthropologically countercultural even if observed only at the level of the anarchical clash of the young generation with traditional institutions, morality and conformity of the post-war generation of their parents allegedly blind to the scandal of injustice around them and the moral corruption inside them.

But this youth rebellion turned into a hubristic, gnostic conviction that the end of the unjust history in America and the West was just at hand, and it searched for a philosophical formula to justify this rebellion. This was provided by the New Left idea of “liberation from all “oppressions of the bourgeois society. But this idea of “liberation” from any “oppressions” whether family, churches, traditional sexual morality, “patriarchal” relations between men and women, children and parents had been gestating and circulating in the humanistic secular elites for a long time, the great rebellion of disenchantment against bourgeois society in need of a final fix, with a long list of „secular demonisations” and „secular canonisations”. This mentality dovetailed with the modern concept of a sovereign state eliminating all competitors from its jealous reach and a progressive ideology treated as a duty of the state.

American liberalism, transformed intellectually by Hegelian European liberalism and the Progressive movement of the beginning of the twentieth century, in the 1960s changed again, due to the tumultuous social changes accepting the New Left slogan of “liberation” to deepen its progressive bent. It abandoned limitations, also of federalism, and prudence, becoming an ideology of the new educated class treating society and culture as a problem to be rectified. An imprecise name given to it was the liberal-left.¹¹¹ This caused a resistance of people whose freedom was threatened, with their morals and way of life defined as in need of “liberation from “oppressions in which they unconsciously lived with a “false consciousness, and with a large section of the intellectual elite declaring war on traditional America.

This split of American society into warring camps was not necessarily clear cut, many different coalitions, many not lasting, were being formed. But it gave rise to the modern American conserva-

¹¹⁰ For more on this see the combination of a belief in social science as an objective tool of deciphering the social matrix with the unrealised promise of America as expressed by the Declaration of Independence: W. A. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and American Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism 1938–1987*, Chapel Hill 1990.

¹¹¹ The labels liberal-left, or progressive liberalism seemed to be the most appropriate, so as to distinguish it from traditional liberalism even if it can be treated as a logical intellectual and anthropological extension of it. It also could not be termed socialist, since this term was reserved for traditional socialist doctrine focusing on economic matters and which was used as a shortcut for statism, that is a mass intervention by the federal government in the economy. Liberal-left ideology was also statist and interventionist, but this time it wanted to transform the entire society and culture by means of public policy programmes executed by the government.

tive movement which coalesced around the Republican Party, bringing Ronald Reagan to power in the 80's; American politics became culturally polarised, also due to the massive rise to positions of power of a highly-educated cohort of the new intellectual elite. It defined America as a problem in need of "liberation" from war, racism, poverty, religious bigotry, that is from everything which did not fit their image of a good society.¹¹²

It began to implement public policies often beyond democratic control with the courts adjudicating increasingly in the name of "justice."¹¹³ The conservative coalition coalesced around a fight with communism, economic decline, and social and cultural issues, an alliance resisting the countercultural rebellion with parties abandoning their pragmatic traditions and a breakdown of the common cultural paradigm of American society.¹¹⁴ The progressive liberal-left ideology had its mantra words of "tolerance", "non-discrimination", "non-judgmentalism", "multiculturalism", "equality", and "diversity", but in fact it masked an onslaught on Western culture, traditional morality, autonomous institutions defined as harbouring "oppressions and essentially suspect, with a new solipsistic anthropology, non-metaphysical and in part irrational, which was inimical to the traditional Judeo-Christian anthropology. Its end station was the morality of the imperial self with choices as desires to be met for a lack of reasons, except utilitarian ones of social peace, of why this should not be so. Thus, the culture war situation reflects a profound change of a cultural paradigm, its anthropological and ontological assumptions with liberalism understood not as a technique of practical governance, but as a closed existential system, a consequence already inherent in classical liberalism. The 1960s breakthrough was just a completion of liberalism's assumptions, its radical individualism.¹¹⁵

¹¹² This intellectual elite professing liberal-left ideology was convinced that a "liberal government cannot give the self-directed individual the absolutely safety, financial security and freedom to which he was entitled. It cannot even maintain public order because individuals do not believe it legitimately can direct them to curb their appetites and desires. The dissatisfied, ambitious individual remains the center of concern but cannot be controlled. So public life breaks down into a chaos of 'competing rights' asserted by competing interests groups in the legislative process, competing legal pressure groups in the judiciary process, and competing lawyers in the 'process' of private life. Local culture – the institutions, beliefs, and practices that make up a community's way of life – no longer serves as the spontaneous, self-perpetuating source of virtuous citizens. Instead the moral vacuum of liberal politics invades our communities, replacing the moral and institutional ties that bind a people together with a destructive glorification of selfishness." B. Frohnen, *The New Communitarians and the Crisis of Modern Liberalism*, Lawrence Ka 1996, p. 36.

¹¹³ This elite is also egalitarian convinced of possessing a moral insight "to re-educate all of society". B. Frohnen, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

¹¹⁴ R. Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture in the Reagan Years*, New York 2007, p. 171–191; H. Hecló, *Christianity and American Democracy*, Cambridge Mass. 2007, p. 1–145; D. Frum, *How We Got Here: The 70's...*; M. Decter, *The Liberated Woman and Other Americans...*, p. 244–245.

¹¹⁵ For the best short introduction of liberalism's evolution see: P. Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, New Jersey 1994; for a more radical exposition of the internal logic of liberalism's assumptions see: J. Kalb, *The Tyranny of Liberalism*, Wilmington 2008.

This is a society which lives, to use the words of Alisdair MacIntyre “After Virtue, that is after a breakdown of the common language of describing reality. In a contemporary liberal society, all moral judgments become nothing more than just preferences, an expression of an opinion or a feeling.¹¹⁶ Since everyone has some feelings and opinions and since they usually differ, such a society is characterised by extreme arguments, exactly a culture war situation. Arguments about the proper and improper way of living become endless. There is no rational way to reconcile them on issues such as abortion, religious presence in public life, the content of sexual education, understanding of patriotism or a necessity of taking up military action.¹¹⁷

Breaking up a Judeo-Christian paradigm has given rise to moral auto-creation and subjective judgements without any criteria of differentiation. Liberalism once coped with this great disenchantment of the Western mind and gradual cultural dissolution honouring a division between the public and the private sphere. Accepting the New Left postulate of “liberation” from all “oppressions”, with “private becoming political”, it grounded moral judgements in the imperial “liberated” autonomous self, with a massive onslaught on all private institutions like families or churches, the essence of the culture war and the post-modern, monistic liberalism.¹¹⁸

The 1960s breakthrough had millenarian hopes, but this time they were to be realised not by God’s grace, but social science and economics and wealth generated by it, sufficient to liquidate poverty.¹¹⁹ Social sciences were to be substituted for religion in explaining the complexities of life in conjunction with the allegedly efficient liberal government implementing public policy. America has waged modern cultural battles since the 1960s. They define nearly every political conflict. The question is whether there is enough common culture capable of sustaining self-governing institutions not subject to a monistic onslaught of the post-modern liberalism with its monistic anthropology of the imperial self, and politics decoupled from a morality rooted in justifications capable of giving compelling reasons why tolerance, civilised life and persuasion are more important and elevated in public life than naked power.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ This situation is best described as far as students’ way of articulating their ideas in: A. Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, New York 1987. The words “After Virtue” are, of course, of A. MacIntyre from his book *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Notre Dame Press 1984.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 6, 12.

¹¹⁸ Liberalism tried to formulate in vain a moral minimum on a basis of a just economic distribution of goods as a unifying system of morality. One of such attempts is John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge Mass. 1971; for criticism of such attempts see: J. Kekes, *The Illusions of Egalitarianism*, New York 2003, p. 168–186.

¹¹⁹ In economics, it was a Keynesian orthodoxy according to which Keynes did not solve all the problems of growth, wealth and crises only because he did not have enough time. To finish his plan it was necessary to apply proper economic techniques. One has yet to remember that the civil rights revolution originated in the South out of Christian inspiration.

¹²⁰ G. Weigel, *The Sixties Again and Again...*, p. 32, 39.

The articles contained in this volume deal with many aspects of this phenomenon of culture war, or culture wars in America. They treat this problem from different perspectives and also from different methodological as well as philosophical and moral points of view. In this sense they are truly ecumenical, which might be another way of saying that they themselves are written by authors who are warriors in this culture war. This war does not seem to abate, to the contrary, it seems to be a permanent feature of Western society for the foreseeable future, which short of a massive use of power and indoctrination cannot be eliminated. On the other hand this phenomenon might also be interpreted as an instance of this wonderful value of freedom on which the West is still based, and its enormous flexibility to adopt to different challenges and absorb them.