HUNGARIAN SCRUTON HUB

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Foreword

Conservative. A term often used in the political arena, spoken by many of us with a positive connotation, while others utter it with a more pejorative tone. Many people, in many ways, try to define and enrich the term with scholarly depth, but in everyday life, it is practically *undefinable*. As our namesake, Sir Roger Scruton, famously said: "Conservatism is more an instinct than an idea."

An instinct that celebrates life. An instinct that gives thanks for the past, for the values inherited to us by our ancestors. An instinct that recognizes that just because something is new, it does not necessarily mean it is good. An instinct that believes in the existence of truth—truth that sometimes transcends our limited earthly existence. An instinct that whispers: there is hope and a future, there are people to work for, and there are reasons to pray.

This life-affirming instinct is what Sir Roger's intellectual legacy highlights. Through his works, we come to know a philosopher who did not search for the answers to life's greatest questions behind a desk, detached from the world. His works had been created in community, surrounded by his students and friends, constantly inspiring others. In the second period of his life, he moved to the countryside, where the beauty of nature became a part of his ordinary days. When facing the world's great challenges, he saw the solution in local communities—communities that respect tradition, family, and nation, and are not afraid to stand up for the truth.

Here, in the heart of Central Europe, we owe a great deal to this approach, as Sir Roger took a keen interest in the fate of the region even before the political transition. His underground activities fostered the formation of an intelligentsia, which, in turn, initiated influential opposition movements.

Later, in the 2000s, he had to speak out against a different kind of challenge, and he did so courageously—even when his views did not make him popular in the mainstream political sphere. He remained firm in his opinions and spoke out for those who were also seeking the truth.

The spirit of Sir Roger's legacy is a rich inheritance. It provides direction and sets an example on many issues, without attempting to create an ideology. He recognized that every nation has its own characteristics, which are worth building upon.

We aim to reflect Sir Roger's way of thinking and his insights in the daily activities of the Hungarian Scruton Hub. Our goal is to create an inspiring community where conservative values can be freely lived. A place where we not only search for truth but also openly engage it in our conversations.

Through this volume, we wish to present some highlights of our work over the past year to our readers. This collection clearly demonstrates that Sir Roger's works are more relevant today than ever, and his writings are not meant to gather dust on a shelf. They inspire conversations and debates that can foster the emergence of a true community.

Noémi Genda

Head of Hungarian Scruton Hub

Essays on Scruton

We work closely with several well-known local researchers who are well acquainted with Roger Scruton's intellectual legacy. Their essays are published below.

Ákos Windhager: Why is Roger Scruton Important?

Desmond Tutu's quote—"Don't raise your voice, improve your argument!"—perfectly encapsulates Roger Scruton's philosophical creed, even though they were unknown to each other. Tutu added, „Good sense does not always lie with the loudest shouters, nor can we say that a large, unruly crowd is always the best arbiter of what is right"—an observation that the English philosopher often emphasized himself.

Since Scruton's philosophy considered dialogue as the only valid platform for discourse, we find few dogmatic, definition-like statements in his work, and even fewer claims that could be reduced to slogans. This is precisely why his writings are an inspiration for the renewal of Central European public debate culture. His frequently quoted and often misquoted or truncated statement that the essence of democracy is the mutual acceptance of our disagreement with others ("Compromise as Agreement to Disagree") remains one of the most difficult principles to learn for our Cartesian Central European mindset. As he originally wrote in *The Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Political Thought*: "Tolerance: The habit of permitting disagreement and not disapproving of opinions that you do not share or lifestyles that are other than yours."

Moreover, in the English conservative tradition, logical discussion and fair argumentation are skills that also possess artistic value. Thus, conservative public discourse not only initiates and sustains dialogue but, through its very linguistic nature, transcends mere grammatical performance, aiming at rhetorical and genuine social action.

Hungary has always been too distant from the United Kingdom. In the nineteenth century, the English constitution (Common Law) served as a model for Hungarian reformers, but it is unclear how well they understood it. For nearly two centuries, the English bourgeois lifestyle has served as a model for various strata of Hungarian society, particularly in terms of what it means to be a citizen, to belong to the bourgeoisie, and which elements of the *Lebenswelt* define a bourgeois way of life. The Hungarian 'cívis' bourgeoisie, present in towns since the late medieval era, fundamentally differed from the German-style 'Bürger', which had been gaining strength in Hungary's large cities since the eighteenth century, as well as from the fashionable 'citoyen' character that emerged in the capital at the dawn of the twentieth century. The English 'gentleman', however, was something entirely different, which Hungarian society came to know primarily through four novel characters: Phileas Fogg (from Jules Verne*'s Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours*, in English *Around the World in Eighty Days*), Mr. Banks (Pamela Lyndon Travers' *Mary Poppins*), Mr. Higgins (from G. B. Shaw's *Pygmalion*), and Jane Austen's Mr. Darcy (from *Pride and Prejudice*). Consequently, we are not intimately familiar with the authentic middle-class lifestyle that Scruton wrote extensively about and sought to defend—a lifestyle that includes accepting the monarchy, the title of 'Sir,' and moving to a country manor.

Another characteristic element of the English *Lebenswelt*, as we perceive it from Hungary, is the café or coffeehouse. In the pre-communist era, Hungarian cafés shared numerous similarities with their English counterparts. These coffeehouses were not mere establishments for consuming coffee and pastries; they served as microcosms of society and vibrant social hubs where people from various walks of life congregated: primarily artists, journalists, and politicians, but also businesspeople and ordinary citizens. Thus, the café functioned as a centre for debate, an informal national assembly, a primary information agency, a cultural institution that cultivated erudition, and a social space that fostered a sense of community, in addition to its obvious economic activity. Briefly, it was a place where people could recharge mentally, socially, and physically. The communist party-state immediately destroyed all of this culture because it considered any form of public sphere to be dangerous.

In the post-communist period, Hungarians created their own unique version of cafés, blending elements from Italian *gelateria*s, upscale English taverns, and French gourmet restaurants. This fusion gave birth to a new café concept that evokes and aims to recreate the second phase of the publicity (and public life curve) described by Jürgen Habermas in his *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (1962). The Scruton Café, which follows this new approach, provides an environment that encourages intellectual and culinary coexistence. It combines nostalgia for the former Hungarian coffeehouses with the authentic middle-class lifestyle idealized by Roger Scruton. Back then, he also believed that no nation could survive for long without living communities gathering in real time and real space. Today, the former traditions and customs have become instrumentalized (turned into school curricula, museum exhibits, worn-out buildings, etc.), which is why there is a need for small communities that use language and customs in a contemporary way. The small groups (couples, friends, colleagues, program audiences, etc.) gathering in the café constitute precisely these living contemporary communities.

The United Kingdom was also culturally distant from Hungary. The Hungarian cultural landscape, despite its rich and diverse heritage, has been notably lacking in its exposure to

English music and literature. This scarcity can be illustrated through a few examples. If one desires to immerse oneself in the melodic compositions of Edgar Elgar, Ralph Vaughan Williams, or Frederick Delius (or closer to our period, Benjamin Britten, David Matthews, or James MacMillan), they may find themselves waiting for up to a decade for the opportunity to experience their works performed live. A similar situation can be observed in the realm of English literature. Beyond the well-known and widely celebrated works of J. R. R. Tolkien and George Orwell, only a select few in Hungary possess a deep understanding and appreciation of modern English literature (excluding T. S. Elliot, who was a hero in Scruton's literary canon).

But Hungary was also too distant from the United Kingdom. Although there is a rumour that Roger Bacon was Hungarian and his original name was "Bakony" (a mountain near Lake Balaton), this is merely a game of transliteration. Several genuine Hungarian philosophers resided in the United Kingdom, including Karl Mannheim (originally Mannheim Károly), Michael Polanyi (originally Polányi Mihály), and Arthur Koestler (originally Köstler Artúr). Unfortunately, we can continue this list with more Hungarian emigrants, like the humourist, journalist and writer George Mikes (originally Mikes György), the Nobel awarded physicist Dennis Gabor (originally Gábor Dénes), or the economist and member of the House of Lords Thomas Balogh (Baron Balogh, originally Balog Tamás), and so on. However, the most renowned Hungarian philosophers of the twentieth century, Thomas Molnár (originally Molnár Tamás) and John Lukacs (originally Lukács János), resided in the United States. In Hungary, they are held in higher regard than Ludwig Wittgenstein; however, this is not how British philosophical history views them.

Thus, why should we deal with Scruton in Budapest? The answer is complex and includes of the topics of the contemporary national, conservative and *Lebenswelt* issues. For nearly two hundred years, German was the dominant language in Hungarian public thought, including philosophy, aesthetics, and art theory, due to Hungary's membership in the Habsburg Empire. Even after the empire's dissolution, the German-speaking era persisted until the communist takeover. As a result, many Hungarian scientists, philosophers, and intellectuals wrote in a German style, even when their texts were in Hungarian. Thus, reading Scruton (and his colleagues like Michael Oakeshott, Maurice Cowling and John Gray) today connects us to the universal (and global) metaculture, providing a broad perspective.

Another compelling reason to engage with Scruton's work is his emphasis on national identity, or what he terms 'land-nationalism' or 'oikophilia.' The Hungarian national thought has been

dominated by a tragic (sometimes apocalyptic) narrative for more than two hundred years. The dialogue about the national threat recognized by Hungarian political and cultural public life switched to a tragic tone (and mythology) following Johann Gottfried Herder's historical essay. In his work *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1791), Herder ominously predicted the disappearance of the Hungarian people: *"Das einzige Volk, das aus diesem Stamm sich unter die Eroberer gedrängt hat, sind die Ungern oder Madscharen. Aber mitten unter Slawen, Deutschen, Wlachen und anderen Völkern der geringern Zahl nach, und nach Jahrhunderten wird man vielleicht ihre Sprache kaum finden."* In English:

> "The only people from this tribe who have pushed themselves among the conquerors are the Hungarians or Magyars. But in the midst of Slavs, Germans, Vlachs, and other peoples, they are fewer in number, and after centuries, one will perhaps hardly find their language."

Scruton's philosophy, which underscores the importance of national identity, resonates deeply with a nation that has long grappled with the fear of losing its unique cultural heritage. Herder's vision inspired the revival of Hungarian culture, serving as a warning and a call for the construction and reconstruction of Hungarian culture, nation, and state during the nineteenth century. The objective today is similar: to preserve the traditions of the mother tongue while adopting modern ideas and developing the economy. Scruton emphasised in his essay entitled "The Need for Nations" that nations are natural and necessary forms of human association, providing individuals with a sense of belonging, shared history, and common culture.

He emphasized the nation-state as the most effective means of protecting individual rights, maintaining the rule of law, and ensuring democratic accountability. He was criticised because he called internationalism and globalization as threats to national sovereignty and the ability of nations to control their own affairs, forming the basis of his thoughts on the European Union. He also believed—and was blamed for it—that mass immigration could disrupt the social cohesion and cultural integrity of nations, leading to fragmentation and conflict. Scruton argued that preserving national identity and the nation-state is essential for maintaining a stable and harmonious world order, based on mutual respect and cooperation between distinct peoples. Scruton's philosophy, based on global phenomenon, universal concepts but primarily concerned with European traditions and nations, allows the Hungarian philosophical tradition to interact with and draw inspiration from modern thought without succumbing to Herder's doomsday scenario of dissolution.

Beyond the national question, Scruton's writings on the nature of community existence provide a starting point for seeking answers to many of our current inquiries. His academic approach displays a remarkable similarity to a unique tradition in twentieth-century Hungarian philosophy, known as the "sociologizing philosophical tradition," which drew inspiration from the works of Max Weber. Weber's influence was already prominent in the early 1900s, with Georg Lukács (originally Lukács György) being one of his earliest disciples. Unsurprisingly, as was the case in other parts of the world, Weber's two seminal works, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) and *Economy and Society* (1922), had a profound impact on Hungarian cultural movements. The existence or fictionality of the sociologizing philosophical tradition is currently the subject of significant debate. The key early figures of the real or perceived movement, Arnold Hauser, Béla von Brandenstein and Károly Mannheim, treated community, culture, and public life as a common system, like Scruton, but did not consider politics or economics to be dominant within it.

It is no coincidence that the social approach to culture became a popular mode of analysis, although its post-sacred character was consistently noted by Scruton and numerous Hungarian thinkers, such as Antal Molnár, Béla von Brandenstein, and István Bibó. The other Scrutonian paradigm, the *Lebenswelt*, also enjoys a strong reception in Hungary. Edmund Husserl, who had a deep affection for the Hungarian city of Esztergom, while lamenting the tragically rapid destruction of the bourgeois milieu, recognized that through the study of the *Lebenswelt*, he could liberate philosophical thought (or at least phenomenology) from abstraction and make it human-centred once again. He first articulated this concept during the most significant intellectual and political crisis of the twentieth century in his volume with the telling title *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (1936).

We have seen that Scruton's system of ideas elaborated on both of Husserl's realizations: as we wrote earlier, he had a passion for bourgeois culture, and subjected the philosophical object to a combined metaphysical, social, and personal reading. Just as his rewriting of Hegel, Scruton's acceptance of Husserl also ties him to continental philosophy, which facilitates his reading in Hungary and makes the interpretation of his texts organic. Surprisingly, he encapsulates the ideal balance of community, culture, and public life—the ideal life-world—not in his political essays, but in his three major Wagner studies written toward the end of his life.

While Scruton's philosophy has parallels in Hungary's intellectual history, it also possesses qualities that Hungary no longer possesses. Prior to state socialism, Hungarian culture had a robust tradition that included also vibrant and fertile conservatism (among other movements) with deep foundations in aesthetics, art theory, and philosophy. During the party-state era, this influence waned, and the tradition was discontinued. In the last three decades, conservatism has been attempting to find its position in public thought, culture, and the history of ideas while grappling with the challenges of postmodernism. Scruton's *oeuvre* exemplifies modern, unbroken conservatism, providing a perspective for rereading Hungary's own heritage of conservative thought without the need to borrow or invent a tradition.

Another reason to read Scruton is that he was familiar with our region; he did not merely pass through Central Europe but regularly returned, as if he were coming home, even if just a little. Scruton's vision extended beyond national borders, viewing Eastern Europe as interconnected communities with shared destinies. His efforts helped recognize common concerns and foster a sense of collective purpose in the region. As we delve into the results of his clandestine activities in Poland and Czechoslovakia, we see not only the adventurous Westerner, the man disappointed in his marriage and finding love again, but also the humanist who empathizes with historical traumas and the compassionate humanist who risked his own safety for the chosen cause. Through his secret efforts in the 1980s, he supported Czech, Polish, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Hungarian intellectuals and brought real news about the region to the Western press. He understood that Eastern Europe is a group of countries that, due to their shared as well as own history, form a state-level community despite their currently differing political leaderships. For the region's thinkers, it was a refreshing experience that he came to them not with a normative system, but with a readiness for dialogue.

In conclusion, Roger Scruton's philosophy holds relevant significance for the Hungarian context, inspiring the intellectual horizon, providing principles for understanding the importance of nationhood; perceiving sacrality, aesthetics, and morality as a unity; and enabling the comprehension of living conservatism.

Gergely Egedy: Democracy or the Rule of Law? Scruton on Democracy

How does democracy and the rule of law relate to each other? This is a very important and interesting question both from a political and a theoretical perspective and the recently deceased Sir Roger Scruton's work offers crucial insights into this dilemma.[1]

Scruton wrote on a great number of important topics but none of his major work was expressly dedicated to the analysis of democracy. This is not to say, of course, that he did not express his views on democracy; rather, it means that his thoughts shall be reconstructed from his foundational works on conservatism and Western civilization in general. This study wishes to present a rough survey of the views of Roger Scruton on the issues of democracy, representative government, and the rule of law—and the intricate relationship among them.

A conditional defence of democracy

The author of the present paper starts from the assumption that Scruton's position on democracy can be characterized as a markedly restricted defence. What we mean by this is that, in keeping with time-tested conservative tradition, he was, on the one hand, far from being a committed devotee of democracy, but, on the other hand, a staunch defender of the rule of law, sharply distinguishing between the two concepts. He was willing to support democracy, stating that we can sympathise with it because "democracies do not, in general, go to war with each other and do not in general experience civil war within their borders".[2]

However, he pointed out that democracy is made only possible by other factors, by more deeply hidden institutions. Consequently, these institutions providing, among others, for the protection of human rights and personal freedom cannot be equated with democracy: it is only under certain specific historical conditions that they coincide. In other words Scruton alleges that democracy, freedom, and the defence of human rights are "three things, not one". He acknowledges that the championship of democracy has become a settled feature of Western foreign policy but he warns that the idea according to which "there is a single, one-size-fits-all solution to social and political conflict around the world and that democracy is the name of it" is not correct.[3]

How does he support his thesis? Before going into details we should stress at the beginning that Scruton's highly critical attitude to democracy cannot be traced to any defence of some kind of authoritarian rule. On the contrary, he is anxious to shield the conservative institutions, including those that serve the rule of law from the workings of both autocracy and democracy.

The foundations: authority, allegiance, and tradition

His starting point is that democracy is a heavily disputed concept and in fact nobody knows what it really stands for. But his scepticism toward democracy goes even further; in his view the essence of democracy lies in nothing else than the periodic collective choice. Thus we can conclude that he interprets democracy primarily in electoral terms – similarly to the approach of Joseph Schumpeter, who—in his extremely influential book *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*" (1942)—defined democracy in the "minimalist terms" alleging that democracy is simply a method by which people elect representatives (democracy as a process; *Demokratie als Verfahren*).[4] In Scruton's view people are inclined to appreciate democracy due to the fact that they attribute certain political virtues to it and do not perceive that these same virtues existed even before the establishment of democracy. So why should we be impressed by democracy? Scruton poses the eloquent question:

> "For what is so estimable in the fact that the ignorant majority every now and then chooses to be guided by a new party toward goals that it understands no better than it understood the goals of the previous one?"[5]

Now what kind of society can sustain the political virtues associated with democracy? Prior to having a look at these virtues, let us turn our attention to their social preconditions. For Scruton the conservative view of society is based on three key concepts: authority, allegiance, and tradition.

As for authority, his conviction is that it is distinct from power, although it does create power and—in favourable circumstances—also arises from it. It is a remarkable fact, says Scruton,

[1] "This analysis is based on the lecture at the international conference on Roger Scruton, organized by the MMA MMKI in April 2022, and its subsequent publication in the journal Hungarian Review, September 2022."
[2] Scruton, Roger: *Is Democracy Overrated?*, https://roger-scruton.com/articles/274-isdemocracy-overrated (last accessed: December 8, 2024), p. 1. (The author of the present paper does not agree with the former statement but fully agrees with the latter.)
[3] Ibid., p. 1.
[4] Schumpeter, Joseph Alois: *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 3rd ed., Harper, New York, 1962.
[5] Scruton, Roger: How to be a Non-liberal, Anti-Socialist Conservative? ,*The Intercollegiate Review*, Spring 1993, pp. 17–23, here: p. 21.

that people recognise authority in persons and social arrangements, including the state, and "this authority can command their allegiance". We can say that in his approach authority means the right to exercise power; to be even more precise, it primarily means recognised legitimate power.[6] In the words of the noted Italian expert on democracy, Giovanni Sartori, authority belongs not to the realm of legality but to the realm of legitimacy.[7] Power lacking authority is an "unhappy power", thus it breeds only violence without generating respect—Scruton points out. As a consequence, in this train of thought, power and authority seek each other and their search constitutes the core of politics, "while establishment is the condition which their meeting creates".[8]

The recognition of authority leads us to recognise the need for allegiance. In Scruton's view it is allegiance that "constitutes society as something greater than the 'aggregate of individuals' that the liberal mind perceives". Individuals can act in an autonomous way only because they identify themselves as members of something greater—as members of a society, of a state or nation, "which they instinctively recognize as home". [9] This generates the bond of allegiance and according to Scruton the primary object of this allegiance is the above-outlined authority. He mentions patriotism as a crucial example of allegiance, declaring that it has been the most important obstacle to civil war, "the worst of human misfortunes". He also adds that patriotism as a form of allegiance must not be confused with nationalism, which is not a form of loyalty but "an ideology and a call to arms on behalf of it".[10]

The third key concept is tradition. Scruton makes it clear that tradition "makes history into reason, and therefore the past into a present aim". Tradition reflects an intention that is directed not towards the future but to the past. In other words: a real tradition is not an invention as is often claimed by liberal and leftist thinkers, rather it is the unintended by-product of invention.[11] A tradition is not, emphasizes Scruton, some kind of custom or a religious ritual but a form of social knowledge. To strengthen the argument, he quotes Burke, who stressed

[6] Scruton, Roger: *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 3rd ed., Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2001, p. 18.
[7] Sartori, Giovanni: *Demokrácia*, Osiris, Budapest, 1999, p. 102.
[8] Scruton: 2001, p. 148.
[9] Scruton: 2001, p. 24.
[10] Scruton: 2001, pp. 25–26.
[11] Scruton: 2001, p. 31. Scruton is characterized as a „traditionalist" conservative by the noted writers of the book on post-war British conservative thinkers: Garnett, Mark – Hickson, Kevin: *Conservative Thinkers. The Key Contributors to the Political Thought of the Modern Conservative Party*, Manchester University Press, 2009, pp. 113–115.

that the stock of knowledge of each man is small, and "the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages".[12]

Property rights also constitute an institution which by all means must be defended by conservatives. However, the question of ownership gains its importance not from the fact that conservatism is defined by it, points out Scruton; its role is based on the connection between private property and self-realization; "ownership is the primary relation through which man and nature come together".[13] It follows from this that conservatives must also insist on defending private property.

Legitimacy and the democratic process

Can democracy provide legitimacy? Is there legitimacy in democracy? Scruton's response to these questions is quite sophisticated. He concedes that the supposed legitimacy of democracy enjoys "a permanent and vivid appeal". In searching for the roots of this appeal he points out that the popular commitment to democracy rests on the assumption that in the electoral process parties give promises to the people and their election success represents a contractual undertaking which has to be honoured. However, from a conservative point of view, this cannot be accepted: looking upon electoral success as creating a quasi-contractual obligation is nonsense, says Scruton.[14]

In the third edition of *The Meaning of Conservatism*, he illustrates this mistaken belief with the example of the artificial transformation of the British House of Lords. As is well-known, the Labour government of Tony Blair reformed the Upper House in 1999 on the understanding that it needed reform due to its undemocratic processes. The underlying idea was that legitimacy can be provided only by contractual or quasi-contractual agreements. It would follow from this that a government can only be considered as legitimate if it is "chosen" by the people.

However, this attitude, reminds us Scruton, would necessarily result in the subversion of practically any institution—even schools and hospitals. The endless democratization of authority will inevitably transfer power to those who can evade responsibility. As a consequence, those who hold this view are forgetting about an important aspect of democratic

[12] Burke, Edmund: *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1973, p. 183.
[13] Scruton: 2001, p. 92.
[14] Scruton: 2001, pp. 46–47.

choice, namely that it "presupposes in its turn that the citizens should recognize some prior legitimacy in that they do not and cannot choose".[15] The citizens' obligations to the state, like their obligations to their families, do not arise from a free undertaking but through a slow process; "we acquire obligations long before we can freely answer to their claim on us".[16]

In *What is Conservatism?*, Scruton expressly states that democratic election is "neither necessary nor sufficient for representation". In his words, representation is "a property of institutions and requires a background of stable authority if it is to achieve its political purpose". Consequently, the democratic process must depend on a continuity that it cannot itself generate.[17] Scruton's conclusion is very important and therefore worth quoting: "democracy requires a constitution, and a constitution must be set beyond the reach of democratic change".[18] In other words, even electoral victories do not make it possible for the parties to change to their liking a genuine constitution.

Jacob Burckhardt, the famous conservative Swiss historian called the idea that a constitution can be *made* "a great modern fallacy". Scruton considers it an even greater fallacy to think that "a constitution can be endlessly and in every particular reformed".[19] To automatically adjust policy to the wishes of the actual majority can be extremely counterproductive: in such a case democracy may become a threat to human rights instead of being a framework to protect them. The author of the present paper formulated this condition in his article on conservatism and mass democracy as the requirement that conservatives can only accept a democracy which is not predicated on the principle of sheer majority but on the principle of a majority limited with guarantees for minorities.[20]

Is universal suffrage necessary?

Now, in connection with Scruton's view on the House of Lords, a question arises which we cannot avoid: should the mere accident of birth confer a right to take part in political decision-making? There can be no doubt that this question is justified. But we could equally ask: why should democratic election provide a right to legislate? Scruton gives an answer which reflects

[15] Scruton: 2001, p. 47.
[16] Scruton, Roger: What is Conservatism?, in: Scruton, Roger: *Conservative Texts. An Anthology, Edited with an Introduction by Roger Scruton*, Macmillan, London, 1991, p. 10.
[17] Scruton: 1991, p. 14.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Scruton, Roger: The Meaning of Conservatism, in: Scruton, Roger: *Conservative Texts. An Anthology, Edited with an Introduction by Roger Scruton*, Macmillan, London, 1991, p. 38.
[20] Egedy, Gergely: Conservatism and Mass Democracy, *Hungarian Conservative*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2021.

his deeply conservative way of thinking when he points out: in fact there is simply no adequate answer to this question because there is no *ab ovo* given right to legislate. In his words, "legislation is not a right but a privilege, conferred differently under different political systems."[21] This approach is manifestly not compatible with the modern liberal view, adopted even by most present-day conservative parties. The privilege to be able to actively influence the political decisions can be abused, of course, and it often does happen. One of the main reasons of why we may appreciate democracy is that its framework offers the possibility of correcting the abuses.

How does Scruton evaluate universal suffrage, i.e., the right of all adult citizens to vote in an election? In giving his own answer to this question, he reminds us that when Edmund Burke wanted to locate the basis of the constitution, he did not consider the total franchise as a necessary element; in his view it did not contribute at all to the legitimacy of rule.[22] The opinion of Burke is shared by him. He calls attention to the fact that when Benjamin Disraeli, the great nineteenth-century Tory statesman carried the electoral reform of 1867 into execution, universal suffrage was not regarded by him as a conservative principle; he only wished to outpace the Liberals and snatch the banner of the political reform from them. Scruton even adds the provocative statement which is repudiated by most modern political scientists, but which is not far from the view of the present writer:

> "It is quite possible that even now the constitutional essence of our country would remain unaffected were the franchise to be confined to people of position, education, wealth or power..."[23]

Democracy and the "primeval contract"

In his major work entitled *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke address the "primeval contract" among the living, the dead, and the unborn—the "eternal society". According to the conservative writer Stephen Wolfe, Scruton "has made this the cornerstone of his political philosophy", attempting to philosophically ground this concept.[24] Wolfe is right that this

[21] Scruton: 1991, p. 50.
[22] Burke: 1973, pp. 141–142. ("It is said that twenty-four millions ought to prevail over two hundred thousand. True; if the constituion of a kingdom be a problem of arithmetic. This sort of discourse does well enought with the lamp-post for its second: to men who may reason calmly, it is ridiculous.")
[23] Scruton: 1991, p. 46.
[24] Wolfe, Stephen: Edmund Burke's Eternal Society: A Philosophical Reflection, *The Imaginative Conservative*, December 2016, https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2016/12/edmund-burke-eternal-society-stephen-wolfe.html (last accessed: December 8, 2024).

'Burkean' concept of intergenerational solidarity is crucial for Scruton; he perceives in it a very cogent reason for having doubts about the merits of the democratic process. Why? The main problem is, in his own words, that democratic election "will always give precedence to the needs and desires of those who are choosing now, regardless of the needs and desires of those who are not yet with us and those who are already dead".[25]

This danger was already highlighted by the great French thinker, Alexis de Tocqueville, who pointed out that democracy "not only makes each man forget his forefathers, but it conceals from him his descendants and separates him from his contemporaries". To put is shortly, the workings of democracy privilege the living and their interests over the generations of the past and the future. Owing to this fact, democracy may directly threaten the cohesion of the long-term community, primarily of the nation. Scruton is convinced that an institution like the pre-Blair House of Lords, representing the "hereditary principle", "consisted largely of people whose interests were not the short-term interests of a living human being but the long-term interests of a family".[26] The most significant of these interests is "a deep-seated desire for social and political continuity". The "hereditary principle" strengthening the solidarity among generations is a strong brake on the democratic process.

Scruton also calls attention to the fact that respect for the dead has always formed the basis of institution-building. Schools, universities, hospitals and churches were originally private foundations, dependent on property bequeathed by persons no longer living. By honouring the dead, Scruton says, the living are safeguarding the interests of their successors. The operation of "unmoderated" democracy undermines this very process.[27]

This train of thought leads Scruton to praise the monarchy. He stresses: if democratic choice is to be rational, then it must give voice to those generations that are absent. The institution which is the most suitable for this purpose is the monarchy due to the fact that it can act as a trustee, moderating the instant demands of the living. Thus its main merit lies in limiting the excesses of the democratic process. Since the monarchy is not elected in a democratic process, it is not expected to defend only the interests of the present generation. "Monarchs are, in a very real sense, the voice of history", stresses Scruton.[28] The authority of the monarch can be traced back

[25] Scruton: 1991, p. 47.
[26] Ibid., p. 49.
[27] Ibid., p. 48.
[28] Ibid.

to being able to "speak for something other than the present desires of the present voters". This property of the monarchy greatly helps the survival of the community.

Democracy as the society of strangers

A recurring idea in Scruton's writings is that democracy is necessarily a society of strangers. As citizens of the same country, we accept a common obedience which binds strangers in a web of rights and duties. Good citizens recognize obligations, writes Scruton, towards people who are not known to them: "Citizenship involves the disposition to recognize and act upon obligations to those whom we do not know".[29] Therefore the idea of citizenship is crucial for democracy. A successful democracy requires that strangers should be included in the web of obligations. He goes on to explain that it was not the Western democracies that created the virtue of citizenship; on the contrary, they were created by it. To illustrate this point he reminds his readers that the American *Federalist* pointed out: democratic elections in themselves do not suffice "to instill a true sense of public answerability into the hearts of those who are elected". The Constitution of the United State has proved to be successful because its creators wanted to deliberately found such a political community "in which the obligation to strangers would find concrete embodiment"; "in which factions would have only social, rather than political power."[30]

In this process, democracy came to be adopted as a means to this end, but Scruton warns that the success of this political framework depends on maintaining the public spirit of the citizens. Otherwise, the system will degenerate into a constant struggle for particular interests. The philosopher draws the unavoidable conclusion: in our time people regularly commit the mistake of identifying the virtue of citizenship with the spirit of democracy. This mistake creates the impression that the right behaviour of the citizen is to put all kinds of questions to the vote. However, says Scruton, the reality is the opposite: the good citizen knows "when voting is the wrong way to decide a question, as well as when voting is the right way."[31]

This is where "public spirit" comes into play: according to Scruton, this feature of citizenship is especially characteristic of Anglo-Saxon societies where public-spirited persons readily give time and energy for the benefit of others.[32] Consequently, the good citizen knows that his or

[29] Scruton, Roger: *The West and the Rest. Globalization and the Terrorist Threat*, Continuum, London, 2002, p. 53.
[30] Scruton: 2002, p. 54.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., p. 56.

her obligations to strangers are often violated when majority voting alone decides the issue. This may lead to the tyranny of the majority, an unwanted but debilitating consequence emphasized already by Tocqueville. The conclusion drawn from this line of reasoning is that a genuine conservative constitution is founded not on the concept of democracy, but on the principle of representation. Conflicts can be managed only if the interests of the citizens are duly represented before the state; "the political process must be permeable to representation through parliamentary institutions, administrative courts and rights of appeal".[33]

Nation and democracy

A surprisingly large number of studies do not take into consideration the connection between democracy and its attachment to a nation. In Scruton's approach this relationship is given a marked emphasis. In his monograph entitled *England and the Need for Nations*, he makes it clear that "democracies owe their existence to national loyalties."[34] We are ready to make sacrifices for strangers only if we have a strong sense of who we are, so the first-person plural is the precondition of democratic politics. Losing this condition unavoidably leads to complete social disintegration, leaving no place for democracy.

Scruton explains in detail that nationality is not the only form of social membership, but it is the only one that has proven capable of sustaining a democratic system and the rule of law. People need to identify themselves "through a first-person plural if they are to accept the sacrifices required by society". In contrast with other—tribal or religious types of membership—it is only the nation that is tolerant of differences. Thus the "clash of civilisations" lies, in Scruton's view, in the conflict between the two most important kinds of membership—the national, which can tolerate differences, and the religious, which abhors differences. Nations are defined not by religion or tribal kinship but by a homeland. Nationalism, of course, must be separated from this type of attachment: in the words of the noted philosopher, "it is not a national loyalty but a religious loyalty dressed up in territorial clothes".[35]

Limited government and judicial independence

[33] Scruton: 1991, p. 13.
[34] Scruton, Roger: *England and the Need for Nations*, The Institute for the Study of Civil Society, London, 2004, p. 1.
[35] Scruton: 2004, p. 17.

As mentioned above, there are crucial political virtues that, in Scruton's view, can exist even without democracy. Let us take a closer look at them. In his famous essay, entitled *How to be a Non-Liberal Anti-Socialist Conservative?*, Scruton outlines six fundamental values that can be cultivated outside of a democratic system. They are as follows:

1) limited power,
2) constitutional government,
3) justification by consent,
4) autonomous institutions,
5) rule of law,
6) legitimate opposition, including the right to publish opinion opposing the government.[36]

The central message is that no one is allowed to exercise unlimited power. A real constitution limits the power of the government "in definite and predictable ways". If it cannot do this, if it can be overridden by so-called "necessities", then it is not a genuine constitution at all but only, using Scruton's own expression, "a sham". Conservatives are interested in both limiting the power of the state and in supporting a unified sovereignty.

Scruton recalls that Locke and Montesquieu suggested a very effective method to limit power: the often-mentioned division of powers. Though this theory is not without its internal contradictions, a crucial principle emerged from it in the past centuries, namely judicial independence. Scruton considers it as a *sine qua non* of the constitutionality of the state, declaring that "without it limited government will never be better than a fiction". If the judiciary is not independent of the government, it cannot serve as an effective barrier between the state and the citizen. On the other hand, if the judges are independent, they can use "the full force of the law on behalf of the citizen against the state".[37] It is only in this way that the power of the state can be limited—and Scruton is right in adding that such conditions do not generally prevail in the modern world.

What is the social and historical background of judicial independence? Scruton declares that it is "the outcome of a profoundly un-liberal history", sustained by such conventions and traditions which have been "cooperatively engendered." He is convinced that liberal politics is

[36] Scruton: 1993, p. 21. See also: Scruton, Roger: Limits to Democracy (January 2006), *The New Criterion*, Vol. 40, No. 9, May 2022, https://newcriterion.com/issues/2006/1/limits-to-democracy (last accessed: December 8, 2024).
[37] Scruton: 1991, p. 15.

"parasitic" on conservative traditions and institutions.[38] His crucial conclusion is that judicial independence is "a delicate constitutional artefact" based not only on explicit rules but also on a "certain public spirit", or with the German expression, *Rechtsgefühl*.

The rule of law and human rights

Limited government is inseparable from the rule of law. While the latter is an important concept, it may not require a detailed explication here. Scruton means by it, in keeping with the mainstream approach, that the connection between the state and the citizens must be mediated by law and conflicts should always be resolved by adjudication. He adds emphatically that anything less than this "is a derogation from the conservative idea of sovereignty". Of course, one must not forget, that it is difficult to separate the actual approach to the rule of law from its historical circumstances.[39] Anyhow, Scruton emphasises that the basis of Western civilization, the Roman conception of law is "the most important force in the emergence of European forms of sovereignty".[40]

The protection of human rights is also a necessary condition for a constitutional state, but much depends on how we define human rights. Scruton explains his own standpoint in the following words:

> "For the conservative, the demand for human rights owes its power and precision not to the idea expressed in it, but to the circumstances in which it is made".[41]

In this vein the British people, for example, are the fortunate inheritors of such a social and political tradition that has provided them with a uniquely large number of rights. In Scruton's reading, the demand for rights cannot be interpreted as an appeal for abstract justice, but as a demand for the restoration of legitimacy and the rule of law. If we can speak of natural rights at all, he says, the right to adjudication is certainly such a right.

Though Scruton thinks it important to stress that the rights against the state serve to limit the power of the government, he also points out that the constant demands for new rights may easily create a situation which conservatives wish to avoid. Why? These rights can more often

[38] Ibid.
[39] Scruton: 1991, p. 16.
[40] Scruton: 2002, p. 22.
[41] Scruton: 1991, p. 16.

than not be satisfied only by increasing the scope of state intervention in the economy and the society. Thus Scruton concludes that "the language which seemed to justify the limitation of the state, now justifies its expansion."[42] It has been a common view held by conservatives since Burke that the demand for more and more "rights of man" without accepting the resulting duties can only lead to tyranny. Rights without duties are politically and morally equally repugnant—Scruton adds.

The personal state and the opposition

Scruton's interpretation of democracy cannot be separated from his concept of the "personal state". He is convinced that the state must be viewed as a corporate person—this is why he evaluates so highly the nineteenth-century German legal scholar and historian, Otto von Gierke, who worked out the idea of corporate persons.[43] But the state is not only a corporate person, it is even "endowed with the distinctive virtues of a person". This property of the state is crucial because it is owing to this that the state can sustain a personal relation with its citizens. In contrast to the impersonal bureaucratic dictatorships, the conservative state bears direct responsibility to its subjects. This kind of state presupposes that its subjects willingly accept its authority and that the government, in return, does not want to place itself above the law.

Scruton concedes that even the conservative state is far from perfect, adding that "it is no more perfect than any other person".[44] In his view the personal state is not a means to an end, but an end in itself—like other persons. Treating the state as an end, instead of as means, is to regard the aims of the state "as arising internally, out of its own life". According to his conviction, the state as means "is not one to which citizens can belong in a way that they can belong to a family, a marriage, a regiment or a club".[45] In Scruton's argumentation the best realisation of the personal state—"the archetype from which it has developed"—is the constitutional monarchy.

Now we can turn to another fundamental requirement of a genuinely constitutional state: the role of the (legal) opposition. Scruton declares in no uncertain terms that "the personal state cannot exist without legal opposition". When the opposition is eliminated, the first component

[42] Scruton: 1991, p. 17. The conservative reservations concerning the overly expanded and bureaucratized welfare state find their explanation in this insight. See: Dorey, Peter: *British Conservatism. The Politics and Philosophy of Inequality*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2011, pp. 132–133.
[43] Scruton, Roger: Corporate Persons, in: Scruton, Roger – Finnis, John: *Corporate Persons, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volumes, Vol. 63, Blackwell Publishing, 1989, pp. 239–266.
[44] Scruton: 1991, p. 18.
[45] Ibid., p. 39.

of rational decision-making is destroyed—he says, adding significantly: without an opposition we cannot speak of a personal state, since nothing compels the state to accept responsibility for its crimes. It is not even bound by law, because it may change the law whenever the law offers protection to the opposition.[46] Scruton, who was well acquainted with the workings of the pre-89 East-Central European states rightly recalls that it was not by chance that the greatest casualty of the communist regimes was the elimination of the legitimate opposition.[47] Rejecting the acceptance of legal opposition is "the opposite of civilised government". In his short essay entitled *Is Democracy overrated?*, Scruton reminds his readers that long before the establishment of democracy the British parliament "divided into government and opposition".[48] The British decision-makers recognised that "government without opposition is without any corrective when things go wrong". What is valuable in democracy, stresses Scruton, is that mistakes can be corrected and this is impossible without an opposition.

In connection with the role of the opposition, Scruton emphasises the importance of the freedom of the press. He writes that freedom to express opinion has been regarded since Locke as "the pre-condition of a political society". This freedom is taken so much for granted, says Scruton, that it is often regarded as the "default position of humanity". However, his personal experiences of communist Europe convinced him that this view was mistaken; in fact, orthodoxy, conformity, and the persecution of the dissidents define the default position of mankind—and democracies are not so much different in this respect.[49]

Are conservative institutions separable from democracy?

The most cogent criticism aimed at Scruton's conception of democracy can be summed up in the statement that there is little chance of securing the afore-mentioned institutions if the political framework of democracy is not secured. Consequently, a society simply cannot have such institutions without democracy. "The inseparability runs both ways"— says, for example,

[46] Scruton: 1991, p. 19.
[47] Scruton's view of totalitarianism is well summarised in the following essay: Scruton, Roger: The Totalitarian Temptation. In: Scruton, Roger: *A Political Philosophy. Arguements for Conservatism*, Continuum, London–New York, 2006, pp. 146–160.
[48] Scruton, Roger: *Is Democracy Overrated?*, https://roger-scruton.com/articles/274-isdemocracy-overrated (last accessed: December 8, 2024), p. 3.
[49] Ibid., pp. 2–3.

Philip Pettit of Princeton University while criticising the English philosopher's approach to democracy.[50]

In proof of his argument, Scruton cites the example of Britain, where, in his words, "human rights were protected long before the emergence of anything that we would call democracy".[51] He contrasts the development of Britain and of the West with those new democracies which were established without any adequate protection of human rights. He calls attention to the fact that in the Middle East one finds parties which regard an electoral victory as an opportunity to crush dissent. How could we then say that democracies safeguard limited government and human rights?[52] The author of the present study is inclined to accept Scruton's basic argument: without duly constituted authority and civic allegiance based on public spirit, democracy can be made a tool to serve the opposite of the rule of law. However, this is not to call into question that counter-arguments may be also well-founded. But one thing is certain: we need not more, but better democracy.

[50] Pettit, Philip: A response to Roger Scruton: no, democracy is not overrated, *Democratic Audit (The UK's Changing Democracy)*, 2013, https://www.democraticaudit.com/2013/08/23/a-response-to-roger-scruton-democracy-is-anything-but-overrated/ (last accessed: December 8, 2024).
[51] Scruton: *Is Democracy Overrated?*, https://roger-scruton.com/articles/274-isdemocracy-overrated (last accessed: December 8, 2024), p. 1.
[52] Scruton, Roger: *Democracy and Islamic Law*, https://www.roger-scruton.com/articles/271-democracy-and-islamic-law (last accessed: December 8, 2024).

Márton Falusi: The Concept of Nation According to Scruton, and the Central European Perspective

1.

Although the concept of 'nation' carries different meanings in Central Europe and Great Britain, it is fundamental for understanding the interpretive framework referred to by conservatism. In his influential book *England and the Need for Nations*, Scruton provides the basic reason why the concept of 'nation' is so crucial in the community-building process, particularly when "trust between strangers" must be established: "Accountability to strangers is a rare gift, and in the history of the modern world only the nation state, and the empire centred on a nation state, have really achieved it". There are more conditions of the first-person plural—tribal or creed communities—that can minimise the risk of social disintegration, but nation is the only one which meets the requirements of the modern body politic. As Scruton states: "Nationality is not the only kind of social membership, but nor is it an exclusive tie. However, it is the only kind of membership that has so far shown itself able to sustain a democratic process and a liberal rule of law."

According to Scruton's arguments, which are convincing, the 'Panglossian universalism' and the supporters of the transnational organizations, or the compulsive thinkers of the world state suffer from 'oikophobia', by which he means "the repudiation of inheritance and home". We must ascertain that not just the British political identity "has entered a state of crisis". What Scruton declares can be perceived worldwide:

> "This crisis has come about because the loyalty that people need in their daily lives, and which they affirm in their unconsidered and spontaneous social actions, is constantly ridiculed or even demonized by the dominant media and the education system. National history is taught (if it is taught at all) as a tale of shame and degradation. The art, literature and music of our nation have been more or less excised from the curriculum, and folkways, local traditions and national ceremonies are routinely rubbished."

In Scruton's philosophy, which he elaborates in other books too, for example in *Fools, Frauds and Firebrand – Thinkers of the New Left*, the social practice of legislation and jurisdiction could not be realized out of the national framework, because—regardless to their origins—the interpretation and the enforcement of the set of legal rules and moral duties, even human rights, are bound to the nation states: "When embedded in the law of nation states, therefore, rights become realities; when declared by transnational committees they remain in the realm of dreams […]".

The cultural pattern of the common law is regarded as a main component of conservative thinking. Russel Kirk describes Blackstone's *Commentaries of the Laws of England* in his book entitled *America's British Culture* as one of the four pillars of the British cultural heritage that have shaped American culture. In Kirk's grasp, while referring to Burke, T. S. Eliot and Thomas Molnar, 'culture' is a whole tradition that involves customs, taste, and spirit. Nation, in this point of view, is the community which is carrying on this tradition. Surprisingly, famous intellectuals in Hungarian history repeatedly mentioned common law as an ideal way of thinking about the continuous, uninterrupted operation of cultural tradition.

However, it may be surprising for foreign researchers that the distinction between pro-national and anti-national attitudes is more relevant in Hungarian intellectual history than the distinction between right-wing and left-wing ideologies. There are a number of left-wing thinkers, such as László Németh, who advocate a pro-national attitude and can be considered allies of a Christian pro-national intellectual. The question of the viability of national thought has been on the agenda since the term first emerged. There is an extensive body of literature addressing the issue, particularly the argument that the concept of a cultural nation—understood in a cultural, rather than ethnocentric or legal sense—does not equate to the definitions of a political nation, the body politic, or society and the state (rather government in English terminology).

Indeed, a nation is a uniquely developed cultural community that can be characterised in various ways. Stanley Fish's term, the authority of interpretive community is described in *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* as the following: "sketched out an argument by which meanings are the property neither of fixed and stable texts nor of free and independent readers, but of interpretive communities that are responsible both for the shape of a reader's activities and for the texts those activities produce". Fish's literary theory—contrary to the formalism New Criticism—assumed that "it is not that the presence of poetic qualities compels a certain kind of attention, but that the paying of a certain kind of attention results in the emergence of poetic qualities".

This approach affected by the speech act theory prefers the reader's accustomed pursuit, "the acts of recognition" or "the commonsense intuition" instead of the self-referential aesthetic

object. Literary texts are as social and conventional productions as legal texts. The approach of Stanley Fish is very similar to that of Herbert Hart, who introduced the 'rule of recognition', a master meta-rule, which, among other functions, establishes a test for valid law in the applicable legal system, tells us what counts as law. This 'secondary rule' is mostly not written down, but it is deduced from the deed of official lawyers (see: *The Concept of Law*). According to this, meaning is a "culturally derived interpretive category", therefore it is true that "readers make meanings", but its opposite is also true, "meanings make readers".

Looking for the specific conditions of such a community, we may turn to the Thomist moral philosopher, John Finnis. He examines the types of 'unifying communities', such as family, friendship, play or business communities, and identifies the so-called 'complete community' among them (see: *Natural Law and Natural Rights*). Over family, economic, cultural, sporting associations, and friendship, "there emerges the desirability of a 'complete community', an all-around association in which would be co-ordinated the initiatives and activities of individuals, of families, and of the vast network of intermediate associations". Finnis adds to that given definition that "there is no aspect of human affairs that is outside the range of such a complete community", whose paradigmatic form, for Aristotle, was the Greek polis. This community implies politics and legal systems, the latter "claim authority to regulate all forms of human behaviour".

However, the complete community as a modern state is not complete at all, hence the order of the international community is indispensable. Finnis, contemplating from a universal religious horizon, concludes that "the claim of the national state to be a complete community is unwarranted and the postulate of the national legal order, that is supreme and comprehensive and an exclusive source of legal obligation, is increasingly what lawyers would call a 'legal fiction". Although it is unquestionable that the increasing interdependence and the intercommunication justify the need for an international community (e.g., in a Kantian way, see: *Zum ewigen Frieden*), hence during the realization of that the nation state is not a self-sufficient system of values, the elimination or invalidation of nation does not entail with this circumstance. Only the good orders of nations are able to create the good international order which is named by Kant as 'ius cosmopoliticum'.

2.

It is crucial to emphasise that the concept of human dignity, as we understand it, can only be protected within the here and now of a nation's cultural framework. Many of the values that define our European character were not originally conceived within this national framework. The Greek *polis*, the Roman Empire, the medieval Christian kingdoms, and the *Regnum Italicum*—which collectively contributed to our understanding of the European individual, religion, art, history, freedom, or the organization of the state—did not embrace the modern concept of nationalism in their soul-cultivating endeavours. Furthermore, we must not forget that national culture should never be isolated from other national cultures; its intrinsic attributes are openness and curiosity.

The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, the great scrutiny of Quentin Skinner, shows us how the conquering, rivalling and reconciling ideas of 'regnum' and 'sacerdotium' formed the conception of temporal and ecclesiastical power in Europe in the Renaissance and in the age of Reformation. The humanist universalism and critical way of thinking has remained as a common heritage. Against "the underlying idea of a separate and privileged clerical estate"—according to the earlier doctrine of Marsiglio of Padua—a kind of 'nationalist hostility' are to be found in England in the fifteenth century. The cause of this legal interference is the history of England, "where the Roman code of law was never in force, and where the claims of the Papacy and the canon lawyers tended in consequence to conflict most radically with the demands of common law and the enactments of Parliament".

The development of nations has been a long process, one that has unfolded from a European perspective in which the Christian philosophies and the Enlightenment, as a system of ideas, are intertwined. As a guarantee of its life, the nation should never turn inwards, as it should be ready to absorb and assimilate foreign influences. We must therefore emphasise that the European Union—even in the given and current circumstances, or especially due to them—is the primary prerequisite for the preservation of our specific cultural codes. There are no viable alternatives—neither supranational organizations, transnational institutions, nor multinational corporations—that could prevent the global degradation of values. Otherwise, the devastating forces of mass culture and the global uniformity of commercial exchange will lead to the collapse of European political identities.

Most believe that nation is the enemy of the strongly appreciated practical reasonableness, dialectical or topical debates. In their opinion the national framework is inconsistent with the operation of democratic publicity. Based on this premise, truth can be constituted by scientific means or by deducing from a set of arguments derived from the rationality of the lifeworld, in the sphere of a universal moral philosophy. While it is absurd to expect national commitment from the scientific method, as we detect now, trust in logical argumentation, scientific worldview, and reliability in research are being eroded in proportion to the decline of statutory control and national traditions. If the state's bureaucratic leftovers deteriorated into the status of advancing dissemination of mass culture, having been promoted group interests without national commitment, freedom of research and academic autonomy would not be guaranteed at all. While artwork is not beautiful or authentic because its artist is a member of a specific nation, and political argument is not convincing because it comes from the mouth of a member of a specific nation, an artwork seeking universal validity by breakaway from national traditions can only be described as a mass product, and a political argument not serving a specific community is at best a matter of indifference, or at worst means of exceeding usual profit rates.

I would not conceal the fact that this image of nation is fundamentally aristocratic; it imagines nation-favoring quality, realising the 'revolution of quality', as Hungarian writer László Németh puts, which is not obvious at all. Today the essentially quality-oriented national principle is often mistaken with the quantitative principle of democratic majority, which is crucial for some cases, but they are not the same. While it is not true that beauty is what the majority of mankind loves, it is also not true the beauty is what the majority of a nation's members adore. The post-Marxist approach of culture, which converts the political community into an arena of emancipatory battles, and heralds, in Roger Scruton's phrase, the arrival of the 'culture of repudiation', has its national equivalent when certain popular topics and issues supersede qualitative critical examination. The point is that young generations nowadays are susceptible to cyber-Leviathan chaos without strait connectedness to a national identity.

3.

The progressive concept of nation, which is admittedly an oxymoron, is the prerequisite for common good in the worldview of political identity. Jan Patočka—and citing a Czech philosopher is no coincidence—construes the concept of human development as an alternation of organic and critical period. This distinction goes back to Auguste Comte's positivism (see: *Plato and Europe*). Comte was not the first to make the distinction, although Patočka mentions

him. Since his appearance, Western civilisation's community-forming mission—or, as István Bibó puts it, "the meaning of European social development" (see: *Az európai társadalomfejlődés értelme*)—has been regarded as a transition from the organic to the critical era, and we endeavour to discover the new or restore the organic period that has been lost. The schism evolved between those who see the loss of the organic community as a tragic rupture in tradition and those who see the assumption of the ancient organic way of being as a false consciousness that is a fatal setback of progress: it can be referred to either in the realm of fantasy or in the distant future.

Those taking up position at one end of the imaginary axis portray an archaic or patriarchal ancestral state, a time of grandeur remembered as a golden era which was wiped out anytime, maybe at the start of the shift to modernity. On the other hand, the organic period's ideology is deemed a repressive power formation may be driven by class (communism) or gender (feminism or radical LGBTQIA-activism), among other factors. On the one hand, someone believes in the organic naturalness and righteousness; others assume that the history's teleology is the elimination of the organic's oppressive tendencies, such as feudal vestiges, commodity fetishism in capitalism, or the phallogocentric worldview that subjugates women in the struggle for institutional dominance. Utopian social engineering may one day result in a genuine organic time when the state goes away, an ideal society is created without class differences, or an ideal community that transcends conventional binary gender norms.

Returning to his train of thought, Patočka associated the organic with a condition of balance, albeit he did not specify whether this was one of natural or artificial origin; 'organic' was rather identical with the status quo for him. He offers Masaryk as an example who, following the fall of theocratic governments—as a consequence of the First World War—recognized the victory of democracy as a new condition of balance. On the contrary, and almost simultaneously, Max Scheler identified democratic equalization as the source of decline, the reason for disequilibrium; nevertheless, he eventually amended his position to find equilibrium in the harmony of ancient metaphysical heritage and the current democratic status. In this framework nation as a substantive category is a sheer anachronism with which the current democratic public opinion cannot deal. This is undoubtedly the Achilles' heel of social theories using nationalism as a key notion today.

Nation is an overwhelmed concept in and of itself, but it is just as overloaded as, for example, democracy, capitalism, or the rule of law. Those theorists who believe it is an organic entity

rooted back to the medieval history or anthropological considerations—this belief became widespread in our country by the impact of German idealism (Fichte and Herder)—perceives external criticism of their own vision as a kick against Providence, and therefore a metaphysical sin. Those who believe that nation is a construction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' elites, on the other hand, urge that the new contemporary state and social order transcend its antiquated value systems and move outside of its intellectual frame of reference. This is the conclusion that Habermas draws conceptualizing the ordinary trajectory of history as moving from 'ethnos' to 'demos', from blood alliance to 'constitutional patriotism' (see: *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*).

In other words, the organic period of nation has finished, and democracy is the new settlement, to use Patočka's terminology. Aside from the fact that Habermas' social philosophy has become increasingly difficult to justify in many ways, the description and normative substance of the nation's existence is not self-evident anymore in the twenty-first century than it used to be. We must not claim to speak on the basis of a discovered truth as if preconceived value conflicts were to be solved. Although it is an intriguing historical-philosophical problem whether nation is a kind of organic order, a form of community complying with natural law, human nature, fitting into the divine history of redemption, or a modern, arbitrary construction; the beginning of its formation is even not clear; I myself would not make any strong statements about it. It is apparent that nation is based on biblical, ancient, and medieval myths, concepts of theology, and law philosophy, and its intellectual outputs have been heavily criticized in the history of ideas since its theoretical elaboration and political success emerged.

When János Erdélyi, a Hegelian philosopher in Hungary, limited national thought to emotionally constrained literature and contrasted it with the cognition of universal cosmopolitan philosophy (see: *A hazai bölcsészet jelene*), he narrowed the scope of its achievement in the same way as Bernát Alexander, another philosopher, in the last decade of the nineteenth century separating the defence of national spirit from the aesthetic intensity (see: *Irodalmi bajok*). The country chosen as a sample in Yoram Hazony's book, *The Virtue of Nationalism*, is still anchored in the Old Testament and tribal foundations. In his theory many issues are raised; he proposed nation as the only viable option to avoid two types of danger: anarchy and empire.

However, our Central European way of life necessitates a different idea of nation than his image which warns us that our task cannot be done by anyone else. "To be Hungarian is a question of

commitment, not of origin", wrote Hungarian writer Gyula Illyés. The ideology of liberal nationalism in the nineteenth century is said to be the climax in the Hungarian intellectual history. István Széchenyi, József Eötvös, Ferenc Deák or Zsigmond Kemény were able to reconcile the ethnical pursuit of the minorities and the Hungarian national modernisation. Nation and modernisation, 'Homeland' and 'Progression' seemed to have been incompatible with the exhaustion of that ideology, symbolically from the time of the poet Endre Ady's appearance. Although more and more people—both in political philosophy and literary history—argued that the dichotomy of 'nation and modernisation' cannot be fitted in one single programme, the most outstanding thinkers insisted on doing that. These discussions erupted during the regime transition in 1989; they put the nation on fire, then consumed it, and we have been waiting for the political community to emerge like phoenixes from the ashes ever since.

4.

We owe it to ourselves to define our national image, rearticulate its notion and preserve our modern political identity in our century. But how could we start it, or, more precisely, this project how could it have been started? In his famous book *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, Jacob Burckhardt assumes that the developments of art and state are related. High-profile artistic value entails political requirements, and the state itself is a piece of art. Similarly, Stephen Greenblatt notices that "we can fruitfully grasp the 'recursive character' of social life and of language", that of history and discourse. There appears to be a 'single realm' that ensures "the oscillation between totalization and difference, uniformity and the diversity of names, unitary truth and a proliferation of distinct entities", which "is built into the poetics of everyday behavior in America" (see: *Towards a Poetics of Culture*).

Hungary lost its sovereignty in 1944 occupied by the Nazi Germany. After the following Soviet occupation, having acquired constitutional self-determination, the country faced not just economic or legal problems, but also a more essential one about self-knowledge. Consequently, the establishment of the sovereign Hungarian state, or, as researchers frequently refer to it, 'the third wave of democratization,' was also a cultural project initiated and codified in the literary art world as much as in the field of law.

From my point of view, and it is the standpoint of a conservative, the problem is adverse to the procedural approach of 'transitology' which ignores the different social contexts, and shares the normative belief concerning the matter, which is of a neoliberal nature. In my opinion, the

political switch included mental stimuli generated by 'formal justice' called rule of law and 'material justice' (or substantive justice) which is constituted mainly in the realm of literature. These two spheres may have been cooperating in order to maintain the political identity not only of the Hungarian, but also of all Central-European bodies politic. We may conceptualize the Hungarian democratization using categories adaptable both in the realms of politics and art, relying on such cultural phenomena as elite participation strategies, 'collective memory' (by this, I mean the Halbwachsian collective memory), customs, attitudes, behaviours and habits. This is the method how we can recognize the nation's political identity. I use the term 'formal justice' with the meaning of a set of rules that stand for the doctrine of legality, an ultimate reference for general, clear and durable prescriptions.

However, the determination of the principles of political morality must be extended beyond the limits of law and order without jeopardizing its validity. In this sense, 'material justice' is a complete programme for social justice that does not restrain the doctrine of rule of law, but operates as an amendment for the predictable interpretation of its provisions. Hungary as a political community had to bear the burden of freedom and needed to find out the meaning of nation in the postmodern era. Hungary should have been tackled with this problem rooted in the modernity, when western countries were affected by postmodern political thoughts, and the project of European integration was in progress.

In 1989, the Hungarian body politic could have recognized a double-faced problem. First, the legal framework of freedom was created by the new constitution in the sphere of legislation. In addition to this, a coherent interpretive (or textual) community should have been recaptured in order to concede shared epistemology, cultural code, system of beliefs and narrative structures about the memorable events of the past and the future plans. Both challenging tasks are interdependent, being parts—or subsystems—of the 'normative universe'. These two spheres together construe the so-called 'nomos'. The idiom of *Nomos*, formulated by Robert M. Cover, means "a present world constituted by a system of tension between reality and vision" (see: *The Supreme Court, 1982 Term – Foreword: Nomos and Narrative*). According to this concept, law is merely a social construction, its meaning is created not only by professional lawyers, but also by the practice of those particular groups, movements and intellectuals who reveal the inhabited social order of *right and wrong*, predominating or deteriorating continuously.

Cover's famous proposition is the following: "For every constitution there is an epic, for each Decalogue a scripture". The oscillating motion between the sphere of *valid* and *void* describes

a core image that is shared by both literature and law. Genuine community involves an interpretive community of law and literature. Historically, every spiritual movement or atelier which have effected contemporary reception and cultural codes of literature, characterized itself as 'counter-cultural'. The coherent and elevating vision about 'nation' and 'modernisation'. Jan Assmann introduced the terms 'counterpresentic myth' and 'counterpresentic narrative' in which collective memory opposes to the present and resists the prevailing cultural authority by fabricating counter-narratives (see: *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*). We may conclude that the narratives that appeared in the Hungarian literary artworld in the twentieth century were vehemently and permanently challenging the officially codified ones. Literary narratives followed the same pattern after the uprising in 1956. Later on, the Prague Spring in 1968 and the Polish Solidarity in 1980 gave a boost again for their formation.

After the revolution of 1956 was put down, it became a taboo. The regime considered it the most dangerous one besides two others: e.g. the social status of the Hungarian minorities living in the neighbouring countries and the issue of Hungarians living in exile. It is notable that the revolutionary atmosphere emerged from the revolutionary innovation of the poetic language (e.g., László Nagy), plays (e.g., Gyula Illyés), novels and films. The new dictatorial rule took various measures in order to repress it: some writers, especially those who had formerly been considered 'loyal' and who later became 'traitors', were arrested; others were discredited.

Consequently, many strategies were established in the belletristical artworld that facilitated to speak about the so-called 'sorrowful events' without mentioning them explicitly. Moreover, 1956 was put into the centre of collective memory. It was the main goal of the dictatorship to twist the truth and falsify the common narrative about *Zeitgeschichte*, while writers obviously committed to constitute a counter-present narrative and create an alternative normative universe in the shadows of intimidation and censorship. The memory of 1956 played a central role later on, in the democratization period and the body politic's new constitution as well, with judgments and debates over the credibility of all opposition strategies that tackled with the 'unspeakable'.

In default of civil society, writers, mainly poets (Ágnes Nemes Nagy, János Pilinszky), novelists (Géza Ottlik, Miklós Mészöly) and essayists (Sándor Csoóri, György Konrád), as well as filmmakers (Miklós Jancsó, Sándor Sára), painters ('Zuglói kör') and actors (Zoltán Latinovits) and so on, were maintaining the continuity of the collective memory of national culture in the public domain. Given that there was not any officially permitted institution,

groups of writers were competing for the determination of dominant opposition doctrine and narrative. Without elaborating on historical backgrounds or excavating their spiritual roots, I just claim that there were two distinctive opposition groups preparing and later executing the democratization process.

5.

The common features of the opposition groups were manifested in the insistent claim for political pluralism, trans-contextuality and teleologicity. By trans-contextuality I mean that the context of a writing or a speech incorporates multiple discourses, views and disciplines. Writers played a prominent role in 'social engineering' through their essays, poems and novels in a teleogical way. However, they had no choice in that matter. Writers seemed to have influence on the formation of the new interpretive community and political agenda. New narratives, values, scenarios, ideas were scrutinized in the dictatorship's tolerated or forbidden spiritual forums. Both originated in the thoughts and moral resistance of István Bibó, Hungarian philosopher and essayist, the only revolutionary leader who stayed in the Parliament building when occupant soviet troops were to arrive. Bibó's philosophy synthesizes two components: as a law philosopher, his reasoning is embedded in the universalist character of formal justice; and as an intellectual, his essays explain the peculiarity and particularity of Central-European social development which concerns material justice.

This is also the point that Milan Kundera explores in his famous essay *A Kidnapped West: The Tragedy of Central Europe*. According to him, this region is lost for the 'Kidnapped West', hence in its special development the word 'culture' means a more traditional, *horribile dictu* heroic form of life. Civil participation emerged from elite cultural practices instead of free mass media, which is a phenomenon that had been strongly effecting cultural codes until recently. Bibó's emblematic figure initiated the famous *Bibó-emlékkönyv* (*István Bibó's Memorial Book,* released as samizdat in 1980), an anthology in which prominent writers and sociologists wrote about their spiritual and moral relation to the great ancestor who died in 1979.

Authors in the literary artworld can be categorized according to whether they concentrate on the success of institutional standards or they emphasize the substantive implications of material justice. Differences might be identified in three fields: (1) the usage of publicity; (2) epistemological premises; (3) the preferred poetic devices and genres. Universalists who mainly rely on universal social institutions interpreted the revolution as a combat for human

rights. This is the reason why they withdrew into internal exile, and chose to publish in samizdat forums urging the recognition of individual moral rights and the constructivist theory of modern constitutionalism during the '80-s. They referred to the so-called 'Helsinki Declaration' (1975), the liberal theories of John Rawls (*A Theory of Justice*) and Ronald Dworkin (*Taking Rights Seriously*), and—after the transition—Arthur Danto's postmodern aesthetics (*The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*). Moreover, the famous member of the Polish opposition, Adam Michnik was also an idol for them.

On the other hand, particularists believed merely in the determination of the special features of the Hungarian body politic, and they—similarly to the representatives of the theory of communitarianism, but traditionally insisting on the discourse of the given Hungarian intellectual history—postulated that the national community inevitably mediates between individual freedom and human rights. Consequently, writers of that atelier sought to make the most out of possibilities given in the restricted publicity that was controlled from above, trying to push limits further and further. They often participated in open debates with the representatives of the dictatorship, provoked the arrogance of the power; and as a consequence, issues of journals were banned because of their writings. Instead of publishing in samizdat forums, they chose to dispute with editors appointed by the regime, fighting for free publication; or gave speeches at general meetings of the Hungarian Writers' Association. This is the reason why they comprehended the revolution as the manifestation of the joint effort of the body politic, when the particular community identified itself and woke up self-awareness. The revolution was the specific event for them when the genuine nation was constituted.

Essentially the two wings of the alternative Establishment that derived from the character of the Hungarian history were contesting to justify the political authority of the newly founded community. Since cultural identity and political legitimacy are related to one another, the epistemological considerations of writers, such as their language and philosophical standpoint, were correlative with the adoption of the new political system and constitutional order. By the latter phrase, not only a textual-based jurisprudence is meant, but also a social practice.

Hungarian democratization, the development of pluralism and political identities may be described in this framework as the discourse of the writers about the question *how to tell the history of the twentieth century focusing on 1956*. Universalists typically preferred deconstructive criticism in literature and formal justice-based, but constructivist interpretation of law in politics, the authoritative aspirations of logocentrism and material justice having been

undermined. This phenomenon may have been a direct consequence of the given epoch, in which western nation-states carried out the switch from 'ethnocentric hegemony' to 'postcolonial discourse'.

However, post-communist republics, having attained liberty, had to constitute the collective identity of the new body politic, which was actually relatively undisputed in the West. These intellectuals treated reality with radical scepticism on the level of metaphysical principles in their art. Their epistemological standpoint did not rely on hermeneutics nor on the mimetic function of literature, and, above all, not on a stable 'self'. Identity is merely 'moving' and just an 'option' for them. They would not continue the endeavour of previous centuries in favour of one's stable identity, be it the identity of a person, or of a community. According to this vision, the act of traditional storytelling has become outdated, in case of persons as well as in case of communities. Every narrative is a kind of suppression; every identity is pressure. History is also a type of storytelling, a system of narratives and counter-narratives, and it is impossible to find the 'master narrative' among them.

Beyond this epistemological consideration, there are recognizable poetic consequences. Universalists further diminish the appreciation of the *poetic ego*, arguing that it has an essentialist character, in favour of the *novel's democracy* without any particular point of view. Consequently, they advocate for an ironic utterance rather than a pathetic voice. The expression of personal convictions is a rather naive and unreasonable strategy in their view. This is the reason why representatives of such a vision declined the offer of the historical moment, refrained from ascertaining common values—except for the neutral principle of pluralism—and the major components of the community's self-determination. The customary rhetoric says that the poetic ego of the works of many poets, taken at the very heart of the sensual world is invalid in 'lyric democracy' and contradicts to the concept of Umberto Eco's 'open work'.

On the other hand, postmodern novels such as the works of Péter Esterházy introduce a poly-perspective world with multiple centres. Novel is the demonstration of Kundera's implications in the theory of art and of Richard Rorty's pragmatism, irony and 'democratic hermeneutics' (see: *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*). In an ontological sense, for writers 'things of reality' are regarded as a set of textual signs, the connections built up among them deemed intertextual relations, without any moral consequences for everyday actions. If a constitution even has a 'moral reading', it is determined in the human rights-based jurisdiction. If novels or poems

even have any identity-forming capacity, it is not more than the deconstruction of stable identity. Derrida is a frequent reference for that standpoint (see: *Of Grammatology*).

The other group of intellectuals did not engage in such radical criticism of language; instead, they focused on social criticism. For them, general doctrines of human rights are necessary, but not sufficient criteria in democracy. Rooting back to a merely traditional attitude of Hungarian literature, they have been reinterpreting the idiom of 'nation' as a metaphysical reality which has its own history beyond individual lives. In this broader philosophical sense, nation is not discriminatory; it does not postulate a sort of ethnocentric features, and it is not even equal to a couple of unique abilities. Nation is a relatively uncertain system of values that operate as a cohesive power of a community. Thus the fact must be emphasised that nation does not transcend elemental oppositions or binary codes, because it is not an enemy of either discourse or pluralism.

However, it has an undisputable essential character that implies moral findings and socially committed ambitions. 'Ethnos' means neither a genealogical exclusion, nor an uncriticised, imagined profile of ancestry. In this sense, modern 'demos' can be transformed into a democratic body politic if a given cultural tradition is internalized and criticized by political agents. Nation ensures a framework of actions; it does not imply prescriptions or obligatory decisions. This alternative intellectual strategy is striving to find out common narratives for the new body politic. History as the origin or ontological background of constitution must be elaborated on by writers and other artists. Key figures of that political participation were, for example, Zoltán Kodály, Gyula Illyés, László Németh and Sándor Csoóri.

I must emphasise that every political action is derived from *Zeitgeist* that is, in Hungarian history, manifested in the realm of art, principally in literature. The constitutional order and practice of 1989 fundamentally based on the concept of formal justice. In the same manner, Hungarian literary criticism implemented the so-called 'linguistic turn' as an obligatory rule that belletrist materials, or the so-called 'republic of letters' do not affect the reality and the republic of men. The first philosophical trend originally refrains from giving positive answers to essential questions, so the decisions made in its internal system are difficult to be undermined or simply criticised.

However, insisting on the postulations of the latter trend, failures can easily be made. Albeit in the first case, writers are regarded as 'literary professionals', closed in their own language, separated from 'politics', in the latter case they are so much involved in political system that

makes it difficult for them to preserve their autonomous critical sense. The first strategy, the one of non-committal attitude has failed historically, while the second, the one of committed intellectuals who feel responsibility for the community, should stand the test of time, although it is the matter of a single person's moral courage. This is one of the Central European models that Scruton would accept in the sense of his formula:

> "The art and literature of the nation is an art and literature of settlement, a celebration of all that attaches the place to the people and the people to the place".

This statement has a specific connotation in the Hungarian intellectual history due to the fact that we used to live without a real legal order and authority for a long time. The disequilibrium today is the outcome of the state's declaration about secularism and value neutrality of the post-ideological age. However, this phenomenon entails a reversion to historical 'ressentiment' and other old patterns, masked not by ignorance but by constitutional preferences. Law spirits away the limits between private autonomy and public arena, and tends to provide the coherence of the many layers of law. It has become the only sphere that guarantees common good, commonwealth and common sense in the absence of religious norms and the moral reading of cultural texts. In the new communication platforms the ability to foster practical reasonableness and grounded judgements of taste is being deteriorated.

Our debates are mostly legalised or manipulated instead of topics being substantially discussed. Legalised debates result in litigation, and do not create tranquillity. The procedural and the substantive conceptions of rule of law used to collide within liberalism. Having experienced the weaknesses of liberalism our dilemma is to avoid sheer decisionism and not to become doctrinaire. We have no choice but to assume joint responsibility of self-conscious intellectuals. Literary gentlemen, or the man of letters should perceive and play their role not in the sense as Karl Mannheim's theory did postulating 'free floating intelligentsia' (see: *Ideology and Utopia*), but in a mere classical variant, let us put it in this way: obeying conservative instinct.

Balázs Mezei: Jan Patočka and Roger Scruton on Europe

Introduction

Europe today is undergoing an even more radical transformation than it did thirty-four years ago. Before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Europe existed in a state of political and cultural schizophrenia: the West, dominated by NATO and the European Union, was entering its post-classical period, during which the contours of a new civilization were being shaped. The East existed under Soviet rule, where official Marxism barely masked the disorientation of both the population and its intelligentsia. The West was confident in its technological superiority and cultural diversity; the East almost completely lost its self-respect as a result of the revolts in Berlin, Prague, Budapest, and Warsaw, revolts and revolutions that failed to achieve their desired goals.

The historical dynamic of the West can be compared to a centrifugal movement; it spread, its culture gradually gained global influence, and the ideas of freedom, democracy, and liberal culture seemed to be the only desirable path for humanity. In contrast, the East followed a centripetal movement: it gradually abandoned the original Marxist ideas and began to copy Western patterns, but at a primitive level and without real success. Not only was the world schizophrenic, but the East was particularly so: behind the scenes of ideology, the everyday reality of Soviet-impregnated societies was bleak, hopeless, unable to find a way out of its depressing stagnation.

In this situation, the historical and geographical importance of Central Europe almost completely disappeared. The old centres of Central European culture—Vienna, Prague, Budapest—lived a shadowy existence in which the memory of past achievements was perhaps alive in the minds of some, but their continuation was hardly followed. The schizophrenia of the West-East split left no room for a true revival of the Central European spirit that had produced the highest accomplishments in music, literature, science, and philosophy. In this situation, those who represented the lost Central European spirit had a hard time. Bibó in Budapest, Patočka in Prague, Tischner in Cracow, Bretter in Cluj, and many others were representatives of this spirituality; and those who understood the importance of the centre, such as Roger Scruton, were naturally interested in the traditions of Central Europe.

Scruton's approach to Central Europe was shaped by his interest in classical music. The most important composers of the Centre, such as Liszt, Dvořák, Janáček, Bartók, Kodály, and others, created something that continued the classical traditions in a new way that was neither anti-traditionalist nor anti-modernist: in their own way, they created a balance between the old and the new, where true creativity was able to find new ways for real achievement. In other fields it was more difficult to find similar avenues. In philosophy, for example, the exclusivity of Marxism did not allow scholars and thinkers to develop independent philosophical forms. Even Georg Lukács, who broke with his earlier cultural past, was suspect in the eyes of the party rulers for his attempts to renew Marxism; and a similar fate awaited Adam Schaff or Leszek Kołakowski in Poland. After 1945, Patočka had only a few years to teach at a university; as a translator and librarian, his philosophical ideas could hardly be published in his homeland. He was not allowed to develop independent and creative philosophical ideas; instead, he could study the writings of Aristotle and Comenius, still a good way to understand history, but less so when one is called to think in new ways.

In the following, I will reflect on the understanding of Europe in the thought of Patočka and Scruton on the basis of their writings. I will try to interpret their ideas in our contemporary situation, when the shape of Europe is radically changing, and the role and importance of Central Europe seems to be forgotten again.

Patočka on Europe

Jan Patočka's approach to the meaning and importance of Europe can be described as classicist. This means that the classical authors, such as Plato and Aristotle, play a decisive role in his understanding. He views the idea of Europe from the perspective of the enduring importance of the classical authors, first and foremost Plato, and interprets the subsequent development of the idea of Europe as the unfolding of their legacy. The 'care of the soul' (*Sorge für die Seele*, *peče o duši*) appears here as the decisive expression. Patočka understands this concept as the care of the integrity of the human person in the sense of his or her total devotion to the truth.

To understand this point properly, we must see that truth took on a mythical dimension in Soviet-occupied Central Europe. Since the Soviet oppression was based on a complex structure of lies, on the distortion of historical, intellectual and spiritual facts, on the banning of past and present authors, the thirst for truth became suffocating. Like someone who runs out of water in the middle of the Sahara and begins to see the mirage of freshwater wells, intellectuals under Soviet rule developed an attitude of almost religious worship of Truth, with a capital T.

Patočka interpreted European history on this basis. He made a sharp distinction between the internalist, truth-seeking attitude and the externalist, power-obsessed attitude. This truth-oriented philosophical attitude stands in sharp contrast to the externalist attitude, which tries to replace the need for the Care of the Soul with an external, hegemonic drive. Europe has existed in the tension between the externalist and the internalist attitudes, but it has always been the devotion to truth and its application in the Care of the Soul that has supported positive developments in this history. For Patočka, it was the practice of the Care of the Soul that constituted the true identity of Europe.

From this perspective, Europe is like a double helix. One helix is represented by Socrates and his commitment to truth. The other helix is represented by Thrasymachus, who sees truth as the right of the strong and powerful. For Plato, the dialogue between Socrates and Thrasymachus in the Republic leads to the defeat of Thrasymachus, so that by the end of the dialogue—by a true 'metanoia'—he becomes a supporter of Socrates. However, this dramatic development does not mean that Thrasymachus is not needed in the dialogue—or in the history of Europe. On the contrary, Socrates defines himself in terms of the Thrasymachian principle, i.e., in opposition to the principle of the violence of the powerful, and outlines the path of the philosopher in terms of such an opposition. It is in this opposition that total devotion to truth becomes possible. The genome of Europe is constituted by this double spiral, but it is always the pure devotion to truth that creates the possibility of true progress.

This progress cannot be realized without the highest forms of self-giving of the philosopher. This devotion can take the form of death, or perhaps it always does, as described by Plato and the authors of the Gospels. Socrates faced three accusers in the Apology; Jesus faced Judas; and Patočka faced some unnamed traitors who informed the secret police about his deeds and thoughts. Patočka, like Socrates, gave his life for the truth, proving "the power of the powerless," the strength of the righteous soul against the power of unjust oppression.

Scruton on Europe

Roger Scruton saw Europe somewhat differently. As an Englishman, he viewed Europe from an Atlanticist perspective in which many developments on the continent seemed dubious, if not dangerous. He lived in Paris when the student revolts broke out in 1968 and witnessed the

dissolution of order and morality. This shocking experience turned him against Marxist and liberal ideologies that supported such dissolution, revolt, and even revolution, and sought to implement extremist ideas and practices in the tradition of the bloody French revolutions of centuries past. This experience and his subsequent study of ideologies made Scruton a standard-bearer for a different understanding of Europe, one in which reasonable traditions are not destroyed but understood and cultivated. Scruton's musical and literary talents contributed to such an attitude: in many of his research papers, but especially as editor of T*he Salisbury Review*, he became convinced that the preservation of sound traditions was important for the further development of Europe, a Europe more or less free from the destructive influence of anarchistic barbarism.

What helped Scruton overcome a merely Oxford-based English conservatism was not only his broader philosophical studies, but even more his connections with Soviet-occupied Central Europe from the late 1970s onward. Scruton's visits to Prague, Warsaw, and Budapest helped establish underground networks of intellectuals, including Jan Patočka. He was surprised to find that the small apartments of intellectuals living in poverty were filled with books by classical authors, and that knowledge of Plato, Kant, and Heidegger was almost a matter of course. Conversely, his growing acquaintance with the artistic, literary, and philosophical traditions of Central European countries enriched his understanding of Central Europe as an essential part of Europe. This Europe, for Scruton, was a free federation of independent countries with their own cultures and languages, countries contributing to the common European home (even the common European house from Lisbon to Vladivostok). His opposition to oppressive multinational ideologies and pressure groups made him a public enemy in the United Kingdom, as we know from the events of the last years of his life.

Scruton saw the European Union as a kind of Moloch, a legally, economically, and politically absurd creation of postwar intellectuals with Marxist influences. As he writes:

> "The unaccountable nature of the European institutions, their ability to spend money on themselves and to clutter the continent with their fantasy projects, their endless production of absurd and malicious regulations—all these things have deprived the EU of legitimacy in the eyes of the European people. But the Union remains, immune to any action that its 'citizens' can take, cushioned from all popular resentment by the national governments that shield it from the people. If proof were needed for the proposition that the nation state is the friend of democracy, and transnational government the foe, then the European Union is it." (Dooley, p. 79.)

It should be noted that Scruton's growing acquaintance with 'Eastern Europe', as he repeatedly calls it in his writings, led to his understanding of the importance of a continental Europe that is not France, Germany, or Italy. This second continental Europe is actually Central Europe, where Scruton was able to discover a rich culture of literature, philosophy, and music that helped him understand the nature of Europe as a multifaceted historical creation, even an achievement. This discovery strengthened his opposition to the "unaccountable" European Union and made him aware of the importance of what is "quintessentially European".

Indeed, Scruton was "quintessentially European", someone that "served a full apprenticeship in atheism", but who, having pondered his loss of faith against the backdrop of advancing secularism, has "steadily regained it, though in a form that stands at a distance from the old religion". Scruton is a man who not only thinks, but gives substance to this thinking. A public intellectual who has taken risks for freedom and who has never sought popularity when truth was at stake. To think with Roger Scruton is, thus, to think with someone who has spent a lifetime seeking "comfort in uncomfortable truths". (Bryson, p. 4.)

Europe Today

Jan Patočka lived in an oppressed country where the classical European traditions were more or less forbidden, even persecuted. This explains his view of Europe as the matrix of the classical tradition, as the bearer of the legacy of the care of the soul. It should be noted that Patočka was certainly a classicist, but his attitude towards religion was that of a sceptic. He acknowledged the importance of pre-Protestant and Protestant movements in the formation of the Czech nation, but he confessed to a certain neutrality in religious matters. What he considered more important was the practice of continuous philosophical inquiry with a certain influence on the problems of the political community. The latter was the main reason why he initiated and signed the Charta '77 declaration, after which he died as a result of police interrogation. It is also important to note that in principle Patočka was not against the pan-Slavic integration of the Soviet Union. His idea of Europe included the further development of classical traditions, healthy cultural traditions, and peaceful political and cultural coexistence between the Western and Eastern powers, which would allow the rule of law and political freedom to be restored in the communist countries.

Nevertheless, Patočka was a personal student of Edmund Husserl and followed many of the Austrian philosopher's important insights. His *Habilitationsschrift* entitled "The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem" reflected the last period of his mentor's work, when Husserl developed the concept of the lifeworld as the basic layer of our experienced reality. Patočka, like many other followers of Husserl, did not accept the transcendental reduction of the natural world, but offered a philosophical analysis that focused on the meaning of this world in our knowledge. That is, Patočka was not only a follower of the classical traditions, but also their interpreter in the context of contemporary philosophy.

Similarly, Scruton appreciated modern philosophy, that is, the great thinkers of the European traditions. He published introductions to the work of Spinoza and Kant, and at the same time offered various critiques of more contemporary authors such as Husserl, Heidegger, or Habermas. The study of Patočka helped him discover the meaning of the concept of the lifeworld; and the study of Husserl led him to realize the importance of the concept of intentionality. Scruton appreciated Patočka's attempt to restore meaning to human life through philosophy, especially the philosophy of the natural world. In Scruton's eyes, Patočka was one of the representatives of an approach that sought to restore the old values of European existence-he repeatedly mentioned Patočka's Platonic notion of the care of the soul.

Of course, Patočka's central theme had a context in Central European philosophy: Husserl's *Epoche*, Max Scheler's *Aufschwung*, Heidegger's *Sorge*, Viktor Frankl's 'logotherapy' are just a few examples of the common effort of some twentieth-century thinkers to return to the human person in order to raise him or her to a higher level of existence. Scruton tried to achieve something similar with a very strong line of criticism of thinkers who, in his view, mislead humanity. The French postmodernists belong to this group, and Scruton's sharp criticism of Badiou, Deleuze, or Foucault seems fully legitimate even today.

Scruton repeatedly uses the term 'Eastern Europe' in his writings. This shows the Atlanticist perspective I mentioned earlier. In *Understanding Music*, however, Scruton begins to use the term 'Central Europe' throughout the book. This is easily explained by the fact that the discovery of Central European music, especially the work of Janáček, made Scruton realise the unique importance of Central European culture. It is in music that this culture appears so clearly, as in the works of the most important composers, from Liszt and Dvorak to Ligeti and Penderecki. Nevertheless, it is clear that Scruton's favourite composer was Janáček. Indeed, Janáček can stand for the entire Central European culture—not only in music, but in attitude, in perception, in vision, and in imaginative richness. Once Scruton understood the importance of Central Europe, it also became clear to him that the musical richness was only one aspect of a more complex cultural richness that originated primarily in the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy.

The Redefinition of Europe

Originally, the difference between Patočka's and Scruton's conceptions of Europe was quite significant. Patočka lived in the vision of Central Europe; for Scruton, Central Europe was only Eastern Europe, a periphery of unknown territories. Slowly, Scruton discovered this terra incognita and realized the importance of the Between connecting West and East, a matrix in which new ideas are conceived and developed, a territory that Friedrich Naumann saw as essentially embryonic.

Subsequently, Scruton and Patočka became closer in their interpretation of Europe. Although Scruton was still able to speak of Heidegger's 'dark metaphysics,' he gradually understood that in Central Europe philosophy is based on music, music on philosophy, and both are placed in the context of 'Ineinandersein', the intertwining of existence. Thus, Patočka's greater emphasis on Plato is in no way opposed to Scruton's emphasis on Kant. Both saw the preservation and development of the classical traditions as important for the future of Europe, where harmony would reign, and any kind of war would be eliminated as far as possible. Both saw Central Europe as the source of such a vision of Europe. Both Patočka's Charta '77 movement and Scruton's support for the underground organizations of intellectuals aimed at the revival of Central Europe as the cultural centre of the continent, a centre not absorbed by the extremist ideologies of Marxism and post-Marxist anarchism.

In light of this, we can ask the important question: where does this ideal vision of Central Europe stand today? The answer seems very simple. Because of the terrible war in Ukraine, the vision of a peaceful and culturally flourishing Europe with an emphasis on Central European traditions seems to have disappeared. However, the situation is more complex. Patočka certainly knew this, as he published writings on the terrible experience of war in the vein of Ernst Jünger. And he was aware of the prospect of a 'Nach-Europa', a post-Europe, in which the classical traditions must be revived and relearned. In our current situation, we hear again and again declarations about the resetting of Europe in Ukraine, a reconstruction aimed at saving Ukraine and at the same time destroying the aggressor. If this is realised, Europe can be redefined and rebuilt in the form of a confederation, a union from Lisbon to Kharkiv.

Is this the Europe that Patočka and Scruton would find desirable? As my old mentor Rocco Buttiglione would say: Jein, i.e., yes and no. Of course, if we can end this war and save Ukraine from the aggressor, Europe will have to be redefined. In this case, the meaning of Central Europe will change: it will contain not only Lviv or Lvov or Lemberg, but also Kyiv and Kharkiv; not only Western Christianity, but also a good part of Eastern Orthodox Christianity (which is already present in some Southern European countries). In this case, Prague, Vienna and Budapest will lose their significance as Central European cities; Warsaw and Bucharest, Lviv and Kyiv will become much more important. This could lead to a cultural change, given the differences between the old and new parts of Central Europe. However, this scenario will certainly strengthen a new form of Central Europe with new prospects.

If this scenario is realised, Europe will have to reorganise itself as a bulwark against the remaining Russian Federation. This undoubtedly means constant military preparation for an even greater victory over the aggressor. This option involves significant cultural changes in which a new ideology with a strong emphasis on militarism will emerge. This ideology does not promise much for the strengthening of classical European culture and its balanced development. Of course, wars must end at some point and culture will rise again—if and only if it is not devoured by an ideology even more extremist, cynical, more genocidal as some of the past ideologies of European history.

If we look at the ideological background of current European efforts, we cannot be entirely optimistic. It seems that after the renaissance of conservative and modernizing tendencies, we are now witnessing the rise of authoritarian extremism as a continuation of the ideologies of the French revolts that shocked Scruton many decades ago. It seems that even beyond the level of past abuses there is today a rise of power-drunk demagoguery that Jan Patočka would call ‘Thrasymachianism’. We may call it by the more common name of Machiavellianism, but it is not the names that matter. Rather, it is what we see here and now, namely the inconsistent militaristic ideologies that run counter to the traditional values of cooperation, respect, dignity, law, and justice. It is Habermas’ language of power or Derrida’s intellectual violence that has become our daily encounter. There is no room for argument, counter-argument, debate and discussion; we are not in a win-win communicative situation, but in a win-lose trap. One party must be absolutely right and believes it has the absolute right over everything. This is not the talk of culture, but the talk of tanks.

It should be added, however, that this is only a temporary situation. As soon as the war is over and the aggressor withdraws, we will be in a position not only to rebuild Europe, but also to revive generosity, tolerance, listening to others, and thus to expect a cultural revival. With Jan Patočka and Roger Scruton, I have to express some scepticism about this scenario. First, it is obvious that with the current situation we have returned to the schizophrenic situation before the Berlin Wall. Second, the demagoguery accompanying the current military events in Europe is reminiscent of the worst days of the last century, when entire populations were systematically misled by lie-generating ideologies. Third, the current situation definitely involves the loss of mesotes, balance and soil from which a constructive culture can grow. If we really want to rebuild Europe, we cannot do without these features: the position of mesotes, a balanced approach to various positions, and the real support of a humanistic culture based on our dedication to truth.

At this point I would like to refer to the three-volume work entitled *Europa Aeterna*, initiated and published in 1957 by Max S. Metz of Zurich. This work is an overview of the classical heritage of Europe with its local cultures, peoples, languages and countries. The vision of the editor, supported by leading politicians of the time, is that after the terrible destruction of the Second World War it was high time to take stock of our cherished traditions and heritage, to summarize it in a grand synopsis, and to support the young generation in continuing this heritage in new ways. The underlying idea of the editor is that Europe is “eternal”; its culture is so rich and significant that we cannot risk losing it. Today, we must recall the idea of Europa *aeterna*; we must understand its eternal significance and continue the work of our predecessors from Plato to Heidegger and from Pergolesi to Gergely Bogányi. We cannot wait for another decade with the work of understanding, interpreting and opening the perspective of the new—a newness that is not against the old, but the continuation of it, as a child is the continuation of the parent, or the fruit of the flower. It is our task to reembrace the legacy of Jan Patočka and Roger Scruton in terms of the complete renewal of European culture here in Central Europe.

It is our task here and now to realize Central Europe as our spiritual, moral and practical ideal. The idea of mesotes, so central to Plato and Aristotle, must be recaptured on the basis of further developments in Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger and others. *Das Wahre ist das Ganze*, as Hegel formulated it; and it is precisely in the context of Central Europe, understood as an embryonic ideal, that this whole can be recognized, understood, and pursued. Of course we are weak at the

moment, but with Jan Patočka and Roger Scruton we must believe in "the power of the powerless".[53]

[53] Václav Havel: The Power of the Powerless – To the memory of Jan Patocka, translated by Paul Wilson, in: *Living in Truth*: *22 Essays Published on the Occasion of the Award of the Erasmus Prize to Václav Havel*, Faber &Faber, London, 1989.

Scruton Seminar

"I envision a new kind of education where children are taught to march up and down shouting Socratic slogans and cursing the enemies of philosophy."
(Roger Scruton)

The graduate module of the Hungarian Scruton Hub's training programme, designed for participants aged 18 to 25 who are participating in bachelor's or master's programmes, offers Hungarian university students opportunities integrated into their university studies. In this context, students can attend a two-semester, six-month course, during which they will explore Roger Scruton's multifaceted work.

The first semester consists of lectures, where students are introduced to Scruton's thinking and Anglo-Saxon political philosophy. The second semester is organised as a reading seminar, building significantly on the knowledge gained in the first semester.

This chapter presents one of the lectures from the *Scruton Seminar*, delivered by Peter Kurti, on the topic of identity politics and moral choices.

Peter Kurti: Defending the Common Culture

Identity Politics and Moral Choices in the Thought of Roger Scruton

I am grateful to András Jancsó for his invitation to speak to you this evening about the thought of Roger Scruton, and to contribute to your series of discussions about his work. In my remarks about identity politics and moral choices, I shall do four things:

1. I shall talk about identity politics and to argue that the demands it makes upon a society can seldom be met.
2. I would also talk about culture as the environmental context in which we make moral choices and to argue that the exercise of moral choice is contingent upon culture.
3. I intend to talk about the conservative conception of the human being as a socially constructed entity and to consider some of the challenges this conception presents.
4. And fourthly, while conservative thinkers, such as Roger Scruton, are certainly aware of these challenges, I would like to assess the extent to which they are able to meet them.

1) Identity and recognition

What do you think when you hear the phrase 'identity politics'? It is a phrase used so widely these days that it seems to mean whatever the person using it wants it to mean. Some people think that identity politics is simply another way of talking about 'tolerance' or 'inclusion'. I call this a 'soft' understanding of identity politics. In other words, they think it is a way of saying that those who identify with one group or another should be left alone and be free to express that identity in private without pressure from the state to conform to what we might call the 'dominant' culture. According to this 'soft' understanding of identity politics, members of a particular group are to be treated as equals by other citizens without regard to their identity, whether it is race, sexuality or ethnicity. However, this 'soft' account of identity politics does not get to the heart of what identity politics is about.

Advocates of identity politics actually want more than permission for private expression or to be treated as equals by other citizens. Neither tolerance nor inclusion requires citizens to value one another's lifestyles. But the politics of identity demands such a positive valuation.

Their version of identity politics is a 'hard' one which makes two important demands:

1. The first demand is for public recognition and endorsement of their distinct identities. Another way of describing identity politics is as 'the politics of recognition'. Recognition is more than tolerance.

   After all, tolerance leaves in place the dominant culture. And while that culture may be perceived by others as neutral, it is regarded by the advocates of identity politics as repressive and exclusionary.

2. This leads to the second demand that advocates of identity politics make. For if the prevailing culture is merely 'tolerant', all it does is put up with groups that it nonetheless considers deviant.

   But advocates of 'hard' identity politics do not settle for tolerance of deviancy. They say it denies them the kind of legitimacy enjoyed by the dominant culture.

   The demand for public recognition leads to means that identity politics is also about a concerted challenge to the prevailing cultural, political and social norms that determine who is and who is not a good citizen.

So, what advocates of identity politics want is recognition, acceptance and positive valuation of group members as public bearers of a particular identity. And, of course, this demand for positive valuation carries with it the risk that such valuation will be denied. Denial of a positive valuation would serve to *devalue* the identity of the group and threaten to compound the dissatisfaction and alienation members of the group claim to experience. Identity politics makes demands for recognition that go well beyond acceptance and tolerance. In doing so, it seeks much more than inclusion in the mainstream for the mainstream comprises the very structures that identity politics seeks to challenge and change.

Therefore, identity politics—the politics of recognition—is about pursuing a series of political strategies for the confirmation of identity and cultural change. It is a battle for power. But it also is a *high-risk strategy*. Toleration may be possible; but recognition, as demanded by the advocates of identity politics, may well not be possible. The risk, of course, is that by exposing groups to outright rejections and rebuffs which they would not experience under a less politically charged regime of toleration, the politics of recognition is liable to backfire.[54] After

[54] Miller, David: *Citizenship and National Identity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 75.

all, there is no political settlement where the kind of recognition demanded by advocates of 'hard' identity politics—in terms of positive evaluation and endorsement—can be guaranteed in advance. Yet this is what identity politics demands, looking to politics to provide something that the political sphere, by its very nature, simply cannot provide.

2) Making moral choices

It is because identity politics makes demands that can be difficult, if not impossible, to meet, that an unavoidable consequence of identity politics is division:

a. Sections of the community are divided one from another;

b. Law is used to enforce those divisions; and

c. The conception of a shared culture, or a common form of life, is attacked and eroded in the name of equality and liberty.

Identity politics segments society and institutionalises difference. This, in turn, leads to the subversion of the principle of a common culture—a shared 'form of life'—which provides the context within which moral choices are made. As Francis Fukuyama has noted, this is because identity politics sees: The lived experience of different groups as fundamentally incommensurate; it denies the possibility of universally valid modes of cognition; and it elevates the value of group experience over what diverse individuals hold in common.[55]

What we hold in common – or what we *need* to hold in common – is a way of thinking about the way we act, the way we evaluate reasons for acting, and the way we consider the duties and responsibilities we owe to ourselves and to one another. We can describe what we have in common as our shared moral imagination which, to adapt a phrase of Roger Scruton's, *offers not truth but notions of the right and valuable; a sense of who and what people are.*

"Our shared moral imagination is dependent on our shared culture. By the term 'culture', I mean to refer to the broad social and moral context within which a society functions. It is about a whole way of ordering life that we can easily take for granted because it is all around us.

But we ignore the health of the culture at our peril, and therefore we need to be vigilant about safeguarding it. The danger inherent in identity politics is that by segmenting society it subverts the common culture that informs our moral imagination. Liberals have long called into question

[55] Fukuyama, Francis: *Liberalism and its Discontents*, London: Profile Books, 2022, p. 97.

the value of this common bond. They take a culture which is 'dominant' to be a culture that is 'oppressive' because it makes no provision for the individual *as* an individual. The liberal Enlightenment ideal was of the abstract individual divested of locality and history and released from contingency. This is what the philosopher, John Gray, calls "the hyper-liberal goal" which has been "to enable human beings to define their own identities".

From one point of view, [he continues] this is the logical endpoint of individualism: each human being is sovereign in deciding who or what they want to be. From another, it is the project of forging new collectives, and the prelude to a state of chronic warfare among the identities they embody.[56]

For conservatives, like John Gray and Roger Scruton, human beings can never be wholly self-defined. The individual cannot be conceived without reference to culture—to the cultural environment of which they are a part. Human being is always socially constructed.

According to the great eighteenth-century statesman and political thinker, Edmund Burke, culture is more fundamental than law or politics: it is, he says, "the matrix of all power, contract, authority, and legality. Culture is the sediment in which power settles and takes root."

This account of culture as 'sediment' affords a priority to culture as the sphere of life within which all other forms of life and activity are pursued. We might even think of culture as a manifestation of the social unconscious. The contingency of our human condition cannot be separated from the contingency of the social arrangements which form us and which give meaning to our conceptions of liberty, dignity and morality. This means that when we use our moral compass, we take our bearings from the cultural and social context in which we find ourselves. Morality is never private. Culture is important. It is not an encumbrance on individuality but its prerequisite. There can be neither private meaning nor private morality without reference to the society to which we belong.

3) The social construction of the self

We have seen that conservatives take issue with the liberal Enlightenment ideal of the individual as an abstract, free-floating, sovereign entity existing in a pre-social, pre-historical context. For conservative thinkers like Edmund Burke, Michael Oakeshott, John Gray and Roger Scruton, human beings only exist as part of a particular society that shapes what it means

[56] Gray, John: *The New Leviathans*, Allen Lane, London, 2023, p. 109.

to be a human being. "The human world is a social world," says Scruton in his book, *Modern Philosophy*, "which is not to say", he goes on, "that it must be constructed in only one way."

Different societies inevitably produce different people with different natures formed by a complex of different relations. If we accept this conception of human individuality as a cultural and social accomplishment, it follows that there will be implications for the way we think about the moral choices that people make. For one thing, if your views and mine are shaped by our circumstances, those circumstances will, in turn, shape what you and I consider to be good, moral and true. But this is an uncomfortable position for conservatives, such as Scruton, who want to assert the authority of a society's accepted truths.

Scruton understood this. He conceded that at times conservatives would need to resort to what, following Plato, he called the "Noble Lie" about the ideas that sustain a society. For Scruton, restoring to the Noble Lie means cultivating "the ideology which sustains the social order, whether or not there is a reality that corresponds to it."[57] Scruton held that the historical and social location of the individual is inseparable from the forms of life of a single moral community in which the individual is situated. These forms of life shape the ways in which the individual responds to the world around him or her. But in modern Western societies there are many different cultural traditions which co-exist, along with the varied complex social networks in which we move and live. Take the example of a child born to immigrant parents in a new country but whose family breaks apart with divorce.

By means of migration and divorce alone, this child will be exposed to a multitude of cultural, social and moral influences. On these terms, it is difficult to see how Scruton can appeal to the cultural homogeneity of a single national community. Surely Scruton's yearning has been overtaken by history: we now live in societies marked by diverging cultural and moral conceptions of the 'good life'. Surely this is just the way it is and to pretend otherwise is to ignore what is going on around us.

Either the self is socially constructed, or it is not. You cannot have it both ways. After all, consider: you are Hungarian, I am not. You have been shaped by influences that have not shaped me. You have a distinct identity that is not my identity. If we take seriously the conservative argument for the socially constructed self, it means we must reject the liberal Enlightenment idea that our identities express the essence of the species. What I mean by that

[57] Roger Scruton, quoted in Ireland, Paddy: "Endarkening the Mind: Roger Scruton and the Power of Law", *Social & Legal Studies*, Vol. 6(1), 1997, pp. 51–77, here: p. 53.

is that we must reject the idea that our identity amounts to no more and no less than the essence you and I share as members of the human race.

What we reject, in other words, is the idea that we are, in Michael Sandel's phrase, "unencumbered selves." We are encumbered. We are exposed to different forms of life. Our identity is shaped, determined, even, by our circumstances. And if we follow the social fact of cultural diversity to its reasoned conclusion, then we must follow the conservative thinker, John Gray, and accept that our identities are the product of chance as much as of choice. As one writer has remarked, "to try to renew old traditions by deliberate contrivance is, in Wittgenstein's evocative phrase, like trying to repair a broken spider's web with one's bare hands."[58] In other words, it is an impossible task and cannot be done.

4) Scruton and the 'myth' of a common culture

The social constructionist view of the self means that the exercise of moral choice always requires a social setting. That social setting, in turn, influences the kind of intentions I form which guide my moral decision-making. However, I think Scruton's argument for the social construction of the self is problematic, but not because it is wrong. Rather, it is problematic because Scruton appears to appeal, at the same time, to the authority of a single, over-arching moral community by which the individual is shaped. As we have seen, the dangers posed by postmodern identity politics to what I called the 'dominant' culture cannot be ignored. There is a danger that conservative arguments for the social construction of the self can lead us down the same slippery slope towards relativism.

Scruton was alert to this, and to the dangers of relativism, in particular: "politically speaking," he remarked, "it is better that few men believe it."[59] He saw that social constructionism could lead to nihilist postmodernism and the destruction of meaning. But of course, Scruton does not seek the destruction of meaning; he wants to recover and defend an understanding of the value of meaning. For Scruton, it is a common culture, a shared culture, that endows the world with meaning by impressing "the matter of experience with a moral form."[60]

A common culture goes beyond notions of truth and falsehood to notions of what is 'right' and what is 'wrong'. I think the notion of a common culture is the device deployed by Scruton to

[58] Ireland, Paddy: "Reflections on a Rampage Through the Barriers of Shame: Law, Community and the New Conservatism", *Journal of Law and Society*, Vol. 22. No. 2, June 1995, pp. 189–211, here: p. 203.
[59] Ibid., p. 193.
[60] Roger Scruton, quoted in Ireland: 1995, p. 200.

check the risk of sliding down the slippery slope of deconstructionism and loss of meaning. But that is the very risk to which conservative arguments for the social construction of the self give rise. To that extent, we might agree with John Gray's view that Scruton's political project is *essentially that of preserving a mythic, organic, national community*.[61] The notion of a 'common culture' is an important part of that myth because it is device for conferring order where there would otherwise be none.

Of course, to call the notion of 'common culture' a myth is not to say that it is not true. On the contrary, a myth is a device or structure for conveying truth. It is a structure that points to truth, albeit it in non-empirical way. While what a myth proposes cannot be proven empirically, empiricism is not the only standard of truth. How does this mythic 'common culture' fulfil its role of conferring order? It does so by both establishing and demanding widespread acceptance of certain fundamental norms and conventions of behaviour that ought to prevail in a society.

Conclusion

For Scruton, to talk about a 'common culture' is to talk about forms of participation that locate the individual in a web of public meaning. Each one of us stands in relation to something. We cannot make sense of the world in isolation from others.

One of the things the notion of a 'common culture' can also help convey is a shared sense of nationality. But in some Western countries, some European countries and countries such as Australia, the idea that a common culture sets common norms is now particularly contentious.

There is scant agreement about what the norms of civil society actually are, let along how they are to be enforced. The significance of the 'myth' of a common culture is hinted at by John Gray when he remarks that while a great deal of cultural diversity can be "contained within the curtilage of a common way of life, *pluralism must have its limits* or else Beirut will be the likely fate."[62]

The myth of a common culture can impose limits on diversity, creating "commonality in moral outlook across a decent range of issues."[63] In their account of how we make moral choices, conservatives, such as Roger Scruton, argue that we always do so in a public way informed by the social context in which we live. But the social context can, and does, change from time to

[61] Ireland: 1995, p. 200.
[62] Ibid., p. 204.
[63] John Gray, in Ireland: 1995, p. 204.

time and from place to place. Therefore, the success of an argument for the social construction of the self must avoid sliding into the subjectivity and relativism that social constructionism almost certainly entails. The question is whether the myth—or 'Noble Lie', if you like—of a 'common culture' can serve to prevent that slide. For it is on this question that the cogency of Scruton's conservative account of moral decision-making ultimately must depend.

“A Dove Descending” – Roger Scruton in Eastern Europe for 40 years

Memorial Workshop

April 3, 2024

At our conference held on the 3rd of April 2024, we remembered Roger Scruton’s life’s work and his influence on Eastern Europe. At the event a number of distinguished speakers shared their memories, impressions and research findings on our namesake.

The British philosopher’s writings, interest and support contributed to the renewal of political thought in the Eastern European region and the dismantling of the Iron Curtain. The conference paid special attention to Scruton’s valuable intellectual legacy and his influential writings, which have shaped the political and intellectual life of the region for decades.

The event was also attended by Sophie Scruton, widow of Roger Scruton, Zsolt Németh, Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Mihály Rosonczy-Kovács, Director of Foreign Affairs at the Nézőpont Institute.

Below we publish three speeches from the conference.

Keynote Lecture by Sophie Scruton

A Dove Descending by Roger Scruton was a book of short stories published in 1991. That was two years before I met Roger, and I enjoyed many years of hearing about his time in Central Europe and meeting his friends what follows is my interpretation of how you might see his connection with Eastern Europe contributing to his life and work.

One of the stories in the book is called ‘The Seminar’. There is an atmospheric description of the city of Prague—the bland suburbs, the crumbling beauty of the centre and the secretive existence of the citizens. The hushed atmosphere is conveyed, and through the quietness, the sense of listening created. In addition, the meaningless propaganda of the communist authorities is held up for scrutiny. The dissidents who assembled for the seminar waited as if hiding from an air raid. In a later autobiographical book, *Gentle Regrets*, the image is repeated and Roger Scruton writes: ‘and the air raid was me’.

From my conversations with Roger, I learnt about the dangers of Marxist thought when promulgated through Communism of the lives of real people. I learnt to feel what it must be like to be cut off from your past and the consequent destruction of loyalties.

For this event I am going to suggest ways in which other areas of Roger’s work and life was affected by his visits to Central Europe.

1. Conservatism as a philosophy: the experience of Central Europe enabled Roger Scruton to ground his philosophical principles in real experience. He knew a society where groups motivated by conservative instincts found it imperative to meet and nurture their beliefs. These were beliefs that were not allowed, but nevertheless were strongly felt. Where conservative groups could not freely associate, he saw how bereft people felt. This gave him more conviction in his books about conservatism and he could write in a way that drew on real experience, as well as a theoretical approach. Books such as *The Meaning of Conservatism* and *How to be a Conservative* were the result. These books are still important for people, as they articulate the instincts and principles that many people feel.

   In addition the visits to Central Europe and the experience of the seminar made Roger protective of free thinking and free speech in Western universities and media. Knowledge gleaned from Central Europe on the use of propaganda, made him alert to

it creeping into use in the UK. Essays in the *Salisbury Review* and *The Times* highlight movements that Roger saw as Soviet manipulated such as the peace movement.

2. The City: The cities of Central Europe have everything Roger needed to draw on in his own writings about the urban and civic environment. In *A Dove Descending* he describes the soulless Soviet-imposed housing along with evocative descriptions of 'sleeping cities' and the crumbling beauty of the old towns. Roger's ideal would have been for these sleeping cities to regain their souls and be places of dwelling and free association, which in the last thirty years, they appear to have done. On our visits, he was very happy when he saw the destruction of an old communist era building in the city centre and very happy to see restoration projects in Warsaw, Prague and Budapest.

   An element of City life that combines conservative political principles and the strengthening of civic life is the urban market. The repression of the market under communism and its re-emergence post-1989 was again a factor for Roger to draw upon in his writings about both conservatism and the city. The market is a place of free exchange of both goods and cultures where the goods represent another culture, such as rural culture, or foreign culture and the imported commodities. The gathering of people in a market environment and the social interaction associated, is an important building bloc for a mixed cultural environment in cities.

3. The Central European countryside post 1989 provided Roger and me with some very restful holidays particularly in Moravia. We enjoyed the quietness and enjoyed seeing productive small gardens and orchards. We saw the difference in productivity and beauty between the small areas of land that were cultivated privately and the vast swathes of land in collective agricultural production. We admired and copied the ways in which produce could be preserved for the winter months, and our larder is full of beetroot in dill vinegar and plumb jam. From these holidays, we also enjoyed the good rye bread of Central Europe, which is thankfully now available in England. The atmosphere of these rural holidays returns to me when I think of Karel Capek's beautiful little book, *The Gardener's Year*, or when I hear the music of Mahler, Dvořák and Janáček.

4. The secret aspect of people living under Communist Central Europe left a great deal to be imagined, and for Roger, the work of the imagination is paramount. Imagination is an important human ability that can lead us to peaceful and loving relations with one another and an appreciation of aesthetic values. In 'The Seminar' Roger writes of the imagination, "we owe to it what is most precious, including love". The theme of 'truth in love' underlies the short stories in *A Dove Descending* and subsequent works such as *Notes from Underground* or the opera, *Anna*.

5. The length of time Roger stayed connected to Central Europe led to a sense of belonging. Many friendships and love developed between him and his Central European friends. This would have contributed to his use of the word 'oikophilia' and the value it contained. He knew he was well loved in Central Europe and in the same way that family love is, it was always encouraging and always supporting him. Whenever his luck was down at home, people in Central Europe were ready to send messages of support and I think they played a huge part in giving him the love and security he needed to do his work and express his views.

I hope to have outlined a few of the many ways in which Roger's connection with Central Europe played a role in supporting his thinking and work. He hoped Central Europe would have the chance to thrive according to its own distinctive identity and would hope that his philosophy and writing can contribute to that process. In a diary entry from 2010, recording a conversation with his friend, Marek Matraszek, he writes: "In the evening we discussed what we hoped a revived European Society in Eastern Europe would look like—of real families, pious observance and little platoons."

Zsolt Németh: Scruton and Hungary

What brought us together?

It was the age of fighting communism, the regime change in Eastern Europe. In 1988–89, with the help of a Soros scholarship, I studied in Oxford. It was there that I met Marek Matraszek, who introduced me to Roger Scruton and to some of the members of the British Helsinki Human Rights Group: Jessica Douglas Home, the Stones, Christine and Norman, Mark Almond. I got to know *The Salisbury Review* (established in 1982), a key organ of conservative thought, established and edited by Scruton. There were other Hungarian Soros scholars at the Oxford University during those crucial years: Ferenc Hörcher, József Szájer, Viktor Orbán; it is a great paradox that the scholarship played such an important role in our friendship with Roger Scruton! George Soros played a definitive positive role in those years in the process of preparation for political transition in Central Europe. Who knows if without that we would have this conference and the entire Scruton renaissance in Hungary?

Roger Scruton and the Eastern European opposition

Between 1984 and 1990, Roger Scruton found in Eastern Europe something he had not found in the West since his conversion to conservative thinking in Paris in 1968—the New Right. In Czechoslovakia it was the martyr philosopher Jan Patočka, Pavel Bratinka and Václav Benda, in Poland Karol Wojtyla, later Pope John Paul II. and Adam Michnik, in Hungary the circle around the samizdat journal *Beszélő*, János Kis, Mihály Vajda and Gáspár Miklós Tamás, but at the same time the Christian-national opposition gathered around the legacy of István Bibó also raised his attention. Good account of this is given in his essay New Right in Central Europe published in Hungarian in the volume *Mi a konzervativizmus* (Századvég, 1995), Scruton's first book published in Hungarian.

The debate on Central Europe

The famous debate on Central Europe played a decisive role in raising Roger Scruton's interest towards us. Milan Kundera's writing *The Kidnapped West or the Tragedy of Central Europe* (originally published in *Le Débat*, in 1983). This debate focused on the historical comparison of the Russian and European socio-historical developments. Reactions mushroomed in the entire region, from the Slovak Šimecka to the Polish Miłosz. In Hungary István Bibó and historian Jenő Szűcs prepared the intellectual public to respond profoundly to the search for the meaning of being Central European. Scruton was deeply interested in the independent thinking of all three countries, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary. He also encouraged the cooperation among them in all his life. What a clear justification of this effort was the creation of the Visegrad 4 cooperation in 1991!

What brought Roger Scruton here?

Was it Lukács György, the Hungarian philosopher, the apostle of international neo-Marxism? Or was it his genuine interest in the *modus operandi* of Real Socialism? Did he want to study the relationship between the left Marxist ideology and the practice of communist dictatorship? Or was it purely his adventurous character and his personal non-conformism? All of this may have had a role to play: because Scruton was not only a theorist of conservatism, but also a theorist of real communism and left-wing ideologies! Nevertheless, I think, he was attracted to Central Europe mainly by the credibility of the New Right and the potential he saw in it, and probably the intensity and depth of intellectual life here. To put it bluntly, he felt at home with us. For Scruton, the years of transition between 1988 and 1990 were a kind of compensation for the years of witch-hunting he had to endure in the UK academic world. The miracle of peaceful and democratic transition was a major life experience for him as it was for us, the kidnapped nations of the West! Thus, justice was made to Roger Scruton in the realm of political philosophy and simultaneously to our nations in geopolitical sense.

History, however, was not over

The real struggle was actually just beginning. In the coming period of 1990–1998 his interest did not vanish; on the contrary, Scruton paid great attention to us in both intellectual and practical sense. An example of this was his lecture in 1993 at the Corvinus University on liberal conservatism in Central Europe. This was largely motivated by fears of a political comeback of the left and was a call for Hungarian liberals and conservatives to stand together against it. His warning turned out to be visionary as after the 1994 catastrophic electoral defeat a Civic Cooperation emerged reuniting the Hungarian conservative, Christian democratic and national liberal forces under one umbrella resulting in a victory at the next national elections.

The Windsor Club

Scruton's role in this process was establishing and sponsoring the Windsor Club, a regional think tank in 1993. The Budapest linchpin was Jonathan Sunley (journalist of *East European Reporter*, *The Budapest Sun*, founder of Budapest Business Club, Central European Consulting, CEC). Besides Roger Scruton, Marek Matraszek, and myself, participants included Iván Bába, Csaba Varga, and Tibor Kovács. The WK's mission was: 1) popularizing conservatism; 2) building bridges between political parties; 3) organizing conferences in the region and Britain (1994 Conference on the future of the right in Hungary with Viktor Orbán, Iván Bába and others); 4) publishing books (e.g., the first ever Scruton volume in Hungarian entitled *Mi a konzervativizmus*). The political identity of the Windsor Klub turned out to be "civic" but it was conservative in content. Scruton's heritage and commitment became a cementing component in the Civic Cooperation coming to power in 1998, resulting in the creation of the first Orbán Government!

The age of cultural war and conservative revolution

The second period of Scruton's coming together with Hungary was between 2010 and 2020. These years were burdened by several serious challenges: 1) migration crises; 2) Brexit; 3) the birth of coercive, ruling EU against Hungary and later Poland. Roger Scruton became a regular guest in our countries again. Milestones of this period were his lectures *On the Need for Nations* at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, *On Open Society* at the CEU, *On Music* at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music. His books gradually started to appear in Hungarian. European conservative hubs and organs, like the Vanenburg Society or *The European Conservative*, recognized and reached out to Hungary. Leaving behind the problems of communism and post-communism, we have turned our attention to fundamental civilizational challenges of the West. The questions of the European integration have also featured high on our agenda. The cultural self-defence against "wokeism" has become the major intellectual front to fight. I remember Roger at our last meeting at his home reading in his wheelchair the book of Douglas Murray, *The Madness of Crowds*. "I will have to write a book review on this," he said. It was important to him, as they were very close brothers in arms in this intellectual war. Not surprisingly, Douglas Murray regards Roger Scruton "the most important conservative thinker of our time".

What about Scruton's recognition?

I would like to mention two rare events of genuine recognition of Roger Scruton. Both took place in Warsaw and had broader, regional and European character. He was awarded the Lech Kaczyński Prize in June 2016. President Duda was the keynote speaker and I had the privilege to speak in the name of Hungary. (The award ceremony was followed by a fabulous dinner at Marek Matraszek's place.) The other event was the East European Opposition Memorial conference at the Sejm, the Polish Parliament, on the invitation of Marshall Marek Kuchciński. The Hungarian guests were Mária Wittner, a freedom fighter, participant of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, Attila Szalai, a Hungarian opposition activist, and myself. Roger Scruton delivered the keynote address at the event. Who could have addressed the Central European past, present and future better than him?

Character assassination

These recognitions did not shield him from continuous character assassinations. Spring 2019: *The New Statesman* published an interview with Roger Scruton. The cultural warriors of the progressive circles took advantage of the opportunity and targeted him with their total weaponry! Racism and his friendship with Viktor Orbán were among the key accusations. The British conservative (!) government quickly removed him from his position as government commissioner for the protection of London's architectural heritage without giving him a chance to answer the accusations. This form of murderous character destruction must have played a role in the arrival of his serious, fatal illness.

Scruton's testimony

In 2019, around Easter time, we had lunch together in London! "I had a trip to Hell, I went through the Passion of Christ—now I understand much better his sacrifice and my personal faith in him has become much stronger," he told me. This experience and his regular service as church organist at his local church were decisive steps in forming his relation to religion and to God. God's ways are inscrutable!

The decoration

In December 2019 Prime Minister Orbán decorated Sir Roger Scruton with The Middle Cross with the Star of the Order of Merit of Hungary at the Hungarian Embassy in London. The Prime Minister underlined that "conservativism is anything but an ideology. Actually it is just the opposite". Roger Scruton was never an ideologue but a person with a distinct tory mentality and attitude that was reflected in all spheres of life, be it music, architecture, art, wine, hunting or political thinking!

And finally, today

There is a visible Scruton renaissance in Hungary. Books are published, conferences organized, cafés bear his name. MCC Press plays a crucial role in publishing Scruton's whole oeuvre in Hungarian. Sophie Scruton also understands this phenomenon and helps MCC, we thank her for this! Conservative revolution may be an oxymoron, but in our lives it is real. If it exists then it is possible. Elsewhere as well. That is our hope, and that was the hope of Roger Scruton!

Thus Central Europe and Hungary in it has become the intellectual and spiritual home of Roger Scruton. Our region played a special role in his life and work. Thanks to the organisers of today's conference! Thanks to the Scruton Legacy Foundation for supporting it! The topic of Scruton and Central Europe is often marginalized, even in conservative circles. Let us not let this happen! One important message from heaven, from him: we must go together! Especially the V4 countries! With constant attention to West and East, politics and culture! Sir Roger Scruton is an honorary citizen of Hungary. Let us respect him as such! And let us study his legacy!

Titus Techera: Notes from the Underground

I believe what I have to say will dovetail very well with some of the remarks made in the first panel about Scruton's activity behind the Iron Curtain. But I would like to insist on this paradox, that he found more freedom of thought and, in private life, even freedom of speech among people who lived in fear of the political police than he did in his native England.

That is a very strange thing indeed and of course it is no different now. The news of hate speech legislation in Britain has reached us, in this moment, we have a shocking confrontation: It seems like the Scottish police have to arrest the Harry Potter lady, J. K. Rowling, for exercising her rights to freedom of speech. A new law there in favour of transgender rights criminalizes activity such as calling a man a man and a woman a woman. Rowling has reacted to it by engaging in civil disobedience. We now wait on events to learn the fate of freedom in Britain. Nor is this celebrity v. police a mere accident. Harry Potter is the last English identity, suitably exported to America. And now it is creating an international embarrassment over some transgender ideology problem—there is a conflict with a new identity imported from America. So things that were legal to say the day before yesterday might land you in jail now. It is going to be a big public relations disaster for Scotland and possibly for Britain. Why is there no freedom of speech there?

I think it has something to do with that statement on the wall there, the Scruton quote we find in all the Scruton Cafes: *Conservatism is more an instinct than an idea*. Ideas lend themselves to ideology. The natural home of the ideas is the university, but it is also the press and it is the modern state. The modern state runs on ideas because it runs on ideologies, it runs on propaganda, it runs on educated people, on the college class, on the kinds of people, as we have heard earlier, who reviled Roger Scruton because of his daring, because of his freedom of mind.

And so it might not be such a strange thing that he was attracted to Central Europe, to Europe east of the Iron Curtain, because daring here came at a premium. In the West, philosophy means pretty much nothing. It is a joke. It is a job. It has nothing to do with the sorts of things that people live for. In the East, people were attracted, as Sophie Scruton has said this morning—as this remark that Roger made in *Gentle Regrets*, his autobiography, reminds us, and it appears in other places, too, it reveals something about his character. He was like an "air raid" coming into people's lives. It is a wonderful phrase. He was a shy man and it speaks to his shyness, interrupting these people, causing trouble in a way—because he showed up in Prague or Brno

and all of a sudden the political police was interested. Eventually, of course, the Communists kicked him out for subversion of the regime. And they were right. He was subverting the regime. It's important to say that. But it was also an air raid that people were interested in, longing for. He was not an embarrassment. The Communist tyranny was trying to kick him out precisely because so many among the oppressed elites were trying to welcome him in. In that context, daring counted for something, and the love of truth counted for something.

It might be why, in a certain way, Europe East of the Iron Curtain is more interesting now than Europe West of it. There is something sad, if you look at the old empires of Europe, the old great nations like England or France, it is embarrassing. Culturally and spiritually, these places seem dead, stuck importing odd ideologies, in this case from America. It is not a life fit for human beings because there is no impressive aspiration, it is not a way of life since the people are disinherited, and it's not the pursuit of the truth either.

What makes those of us East of the Iron Curtain more interesting has to do with the most interesting thing there is in politics, foundations. Roger's work in East Europe helped set the foundation in some places for democracy, as we say, for a decent way of life, and perhaps, as he hoped, for the rebirth or the restoration of ways of life that were older even than modernity. Prague, Budapest—they show us a world older than modernity, a world older than Enlightenment, always in tension with the Enlightenment transformations of the state, of politics, of education, yet also always immediately attractive to all and somehow claiming a right to our affection at the same time.

And often, this tension has been fruitful, it has made us active, sent us searching for self-understanding and self-government. And sometimes it has been, of course, terrifying—we cannot forget the tyrannies of the twentieth century, such as the one that ended in '89, the Communist Enlightenment Project, which turned out to be nothing but brutality, naked brutality.

Conservatism is more an instinct than an idea. The instinct in Scruton's quote, unlike ideas, somehow points to our deeper nature, something that maybe will not lend itself to ideology, something that Roger always tried to find in his trips to the East: What is the way of life? Who do people believe in?

The Catholics he found in Poland in Lublin, as we were talking about earlier in the conference, or the deep need for an intellectual dissidence that he found in Prague and Brno in Czechoslovakia. He found there traditions that he thought spoke to who these peoples really

were, just like the cities, "the sleeping cities" of Central Europe. Here, he saw a way of life that people might gather into and in such a way that they will be free perhaps of some of the worst transformations of modernization. Ultimately, free of ideology. Maybe they could put experience above ideology, was the hope that he always articulated.

Now, perhaps the most interesting thing about Scruton's activity underground is how it changed him, giving him an experience apparently unavailable in a democracy like Britain. A man who had such a love of the truth, Scruton said, every time he went beyond the Iron Curtain, he felt the oppression, he felt the misery that people were suffering, and he suffered along with them. He became more interesting through suffering. He acquired the depth that maybe he did not have before, that he had not articulated before. His love of truth became much more interesting once it became paradoxical, once he had to learn tradecraft, that is to say, one he became a bit of a spy.

As we said in the earlier panel, Roger and his friends had to organize charities that were in fact intended to subvert Communist regimes. Organizations that required smuggling, that required couriers, that required all sorts of lies and double dealing and false identities, and of course, precaution, deception, avoidance of the political police, avoidance of the Communist authorities that eventually arrested and threw out quite a number of his collaborators from Czechoslovakia, Poland, and so on. How could a man who loves truth involve himself in such natural deceptions? How could a man of peace involve himself in dangers, violence, the threat of life and death? There is something in that paradox that I found interesting and I think speaks again to the man's daring and speaks, in a way, to this fundamental moment that is not taken seriously enough: In the East, we have some experience that no one in the West possesses, the experience of what it means to found a political order.

In other places, the political order is old, but it is certainly not scrutinized. And it was not prepared usually by people who had a serious concern and an intelligent concern with political science, with higher education, with ideas, often Enlightenment ideas, which is what Roger Scruton offered people through his educational endeavours in Central Europe.

He was dedicated to freedom in a comprehensive sense, but worked specifically for that aspect of freedom we call education. And to judge by the results: As we have said before, every honour that states in Central Europe could bestow, they have bestowed on him pretty much. And partly that is because a number of the people who have been important politicians, Prime Ministers running these various countries, had some connection with the seminars he helped organize,

with the organizations through which he funnelled money, technology, teachings, lecturers, and every manner of public international support and moral support for the cause of freedom in the subjugated half of Europe. This is all involved in the conquest of Communism.

Judging by that success, what it means to create a regime, to be there at the founding, to prepare indeed the founders of a regime, that could be said to be the highest task of philosophy, to be in a sense an educator of legislators, an educator of politicians, an educator of the people who have to take responsibility in each generation for the way of life that they are elected, appointed, etc., to care for. That, I think, is what made him at home behind the Iron Curtain, because here foundational questions were taken seriously, they were experienced, and they were understood in their existential development—people took personal and collective risks, they acted on the strength of their belief in their leaders, and faced the uncertainty of events without delusions of Progress or of a system supplanting human activity.

Here, people would look at Scruton, listen to him, and wonder what they're doing with their lives and what might be possible for them given a certain help, given a certain inspiration, and given the trust that came from the evidence that, year after year, Scruton would come back—year after year, the interest in the West, because of him, partly, would grow. And therefore that the two halves of Europe, so to speak, were not permanently separated.

That gave people, as I say, not just hope, but experience and education and ambition. That, I think, gets to the core of the man, the daring, the daring of thought and the willingness, even eagerness to risk his safety, risk his career, and perhaps even his life. Communism, indeed, was not so dangerous in Czechoslovakia or Poland in the '80s, but people still died, and one didn't know when something terrible was about to happen. The risk, therefore, was real.

The need for courage was real, but it is not merely physical or moral courage, it is also intellectual courage. It is an attempt to reflect on what is foundational to a community. Roger's book *The Meaning of Conservatism*, published in 1980, when he had just begun his activity as a spy behind the Iron Curtain, is a reflection on what community and therefore law, which makes the community what it is, are. These are not themes that are treated in the Faculties of Law in any democracy in the world, they are taken for granted. But in Scruton's writing, he took the question seriously, as one would find it, for example, in the speeches of the statesman Kleinias in Plato's *Laws*.

And in Central Europe, the question did become urgent and practical, and not merely something one would write or have an academic conference about. Scruton was a man of action, not just

a man of letters. I think he was a man of action because he was a man of letters. I think he took this concern seriously and he acted on his thoughts in a way that most people do not. I think that is why he is admired and important as an intellectual in a way in which most academics just are not—they simply do not matter, that is, nothing that they say or do ever matters. And to some extent their activity is suffused with that irrelevance.

It is a strange and dangerous thing to try to break out of that institutional safety, however. It can lead to career suicide, and it can lead to worse things. It is a sad and dishonourable thing that Roger is not properly respected in his own country. That is worth thinking about, given his great love for and his dedication of himself to his country. But his thought and deed taken together show a love of freedom—he did not merely help us in Central Europe, but in a way we helped him escape the stifling mindlessness of academia.

I am coming around to my conclusion. My exhortation is simple—excuse my pathos: Let us not imprison Scruton posthumously in mere wars of words or playing with words, since he spent his life escaping precisely such nonsense. Let us take it as our duty to learn from him first of all to be daring, to imitate him in his love of freedom and love of truth, to connect words to deeds again, to reflect on education in light of experience, on experience in light of the greatest tasks to which we are called as free men.

The risks, I would say, are real, personally, existentially, even when there is not a danger to life in them. And I believe Scruton was aware of that, because after the *annus mirabilis*, 1989, along many other things he tried to do in the newly free Central Europe was to encourage the peoples here to take each their nation seriously, to take their ways of life seriously, to take their political and cultural and spiritual activities seriously, and not simply to be steamrolled by globalization. He was not simply preaching economics to people in the East. He was not even simply preaching democracy. The freedom of the market and the political freedom of democracy, of citizenship, voting, and representative institutions, were always connected in his mind and in his activity with deeper concerns. The way of life that is reflected in a historical continuity and, therefore, the resources that a people might call on in their times of trouble.

At the core of this are spiritual questions about what it means to be human, how nature becomes property when one considers the economic side of things, or, on the religious side, the divine foundation of all law. This includes the belief that as human beings, we are ensouled and thus involved in providence—that our actions are not merely like the movements of the weather or the path of asteroids in the night sky. There is something special about being human, he called

it with modesty and daring, in the old way, soul. That is to say, for us, the questions are always what to live and what to die for. We have compelling evidence that that is what he dedicated himself to, and that is what he encouraged in others. And in the fundamental sense, as I said, and I will close here, this means worrying about what is a foundation, what is the foundational political order, the way of life, the community? What will people believe and what will they know?

Thank you very much for your attention.

The Need for Nations – Scruton Salon on Europe as a Civilisation of Nations

"The nation state provides us with the surest model for peace, prosperity, and the defence of human rights. Is spite of this, the idea of the nation state is under attack, derided as a cause of conflict, and destined to be replaced by more 'enlightened' forms of jurisdiction. This is in spite of the fact that all recent attempts to transcend the nation state into some kind of transnational political order have ended up either as totalitarian dictatorships like the former Soviet Union or as unaccountable bureaucracies like the European Union."[64]

In his famous essay *The Need for Nations*, Sir Roger Scruton sums up well the dangers that threaten nations and why a European Union that does not take into account national specificities and traditions is unworkable. At our event on 30 May 2024, we explored the question of the "necessity of nations" with renowned national and international scholars, historians and experts with close knowledge of the European Union. Below we publish two speeches from the conference.

[64] Scruton, Roger: *The Need for Nations*, https://www.roger-scruton.com/articles/276-the-need-for-nations (last accessed: December 8, 2024).

Daniel Pitt: Defenders of the Nation-State: Scruton and Hazony

Beauty is an ordinary and everyday kind of thing. It lies all around us. And that is why it is so great to be back in Budapest, because that is absolutely true right here.

So, we're going to look at Scruton and Hazony. I am going to try and take you through their concepts of the nation in brief. Scruton wrote, "I am not alone in believing the greatest political decisions are now confronting us, are the nation and its future." And Hazony also goes along the line of that. Arguing that you either believe in the principle of the nation state or you do not. Hazony draws very much from the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament in his thinking.

Scruton rarely uses the word nationalism. It is very rare. He normally uses the term nationality or nation state in his work. He does use the term 'nationalism' in *How to Be a Conservative*, a chapter called "The Truth in Nationalism". But in that chapter he only actually uses the word once. So he is reluctant to use the *ism* in his work. Why? Well, he argues that nationalism has been or can be perverted. It can be dangerous. Why can it be dangerous? Just like any ideology can be dangerous. He is thinking of both fascism and Marxism, these ideologies that can be dangerous in this sense. He does not want to endorse the concept of nationalism in Nazi Germany or revolutionary France, where the nation is put above the individual and the nation is not made up of individuals. That is a key for Scruton. The nation is made up of individuals. It does not sit above the individuals.

He argues that the nation is the ordinary day-to-day life of European people, which is viewed historically in identity, historical identity and continuing allegiances and of the body politic. It is in the everyday interaction of people this is where the nation grows. Thus, it is not an ideology; it is the idea of neighbourliness. Yes, he calls the term 'neighbourliness'. Both Scruton and Hazony refer to the golden rule, which is love thy neighbour as thyself in their conception of the nation. And Scruton puts this at the very heart of his idea of the nation. In other words, it is the idea that you are connected to others through living with people, sharing the same language, and normally historical ties. Nationalism is only dangerous when it is a perversion. Scruton rejects the 'simplistic narrative' that it caused two World Wars and the Holocaust. Of course. There are some people who wanted to differentiate between patriotism and nation state, they tried to divorce the two.

You can be a patriot, but do not believe in the nation state. They say. Well, of course, the love of country, but how do you answer what the country is? What is the country? Scruton argues

that this cannot be a religious tie. It is not a religious tie. Tribes, clans, you can have imperial states, empires, or you can have nation states. What is key is that the nation is a social membership. This is key in Hazony's and Scruton's thoughts. Membership, as Scruton called it, is in territorial terms. There are territorial boundaries.

Hazony gets criticised for saying that he does not have an idea of place in his thoughts. Well, actually he does in Virtue of Nationalism he explicitly says that nations need boundaries. Extending beyond your boundaries is actually a negative for Hazony. Hazony and Scruton both draw the nation state within a boundary. Why? Because the nation state, according to Scruton, needs a 'we', a first person plural. That is what binds you together.

That is what makes democracy work. It is a collective. Why, when in a democracy, do you accept to lose? Why is there loser's consent? Well, it is because we hold something that is greater or more fundamental than our party political identities, and that is our national identity, be it British, French, Hungarian, et cetera. That binds people together and also allows democracy to flourish. Hazony also talks about membership in the collective; that is, family, tribes, and the bond of mutual loyalty. This is really key.

It is in both Hazony and Scruton's thought, that a nation state is the bond of mutual loyalty. What I find very fascinating from Hazony is that he's got this concept of extended self. You start to think of other people as part of yourself, your neighbour as part of yourself, your family as part of yourself, and when they are succeeding, you are succeeding. When your children hurt, you hurt. When your country does well, you do well. It is interesting, Margaret Thatcher said: "A man climbs Everest, but he plants his country's flag". That is exactly what they mean, that your success is your country's success. Why, because Hazony would say it is an extended version of yourself.

So anyway, nation states, how do they come about? Are they spontaneous, or do we agree on a contract? Well, this is where they differ slightly. They both reject social contract theories, Locke and Hobbes and so on, which is great. Scruton uses more of Adam Smith.

He says it is an invisible hand. There is no guiding structure where nations come about. It is the everyday interactions. It is spontaneity. It is a naturalness. It is a natural process, what will happen. It is not abnormal, abstract thing, top-down. It is part of the cultural inheritance from one generation to the next.

Hazony talks about clans, tribes, these sort of things. It is very interesting. Hazony has got this theory, you have a family, and then the head of family, then is loyal to another head of family, which creates a clan or a community. That clan has then loyalty to other clans or communities, becoming a tribe, and then tribes come together to form a nation. You can see the Jewish, Hebrew influence on that.

Where Scruton does not really have that in his work, it is much more of this invisible hand—interactions between groups, and then the growing of this national loyalty. Right, virtues then.

Is this a good thing? Well, both thinkers say yes, but they are absolutely not equivocal. So, it is not an ideological position. Let us just look at some of them, and you can see that there is huge overlap between the two thinkers. Defence of territory, aid and reconciliation, democracy and accountability, which I have already talked about, the rule of law.

We have got, provides collective self-determination. This is really interesting in Hazony's work. He talks about the extended self-image, but also a collective self-determination, a collective freedom, freedom as a group, not only as an individual, but freedom as a group. Diverse way of life, mutual loyalty. So you can see that there is lots of overlap. Actually, being part of a nation, being part of that first person plural, that 'we', actually allows institutions and individual liberties to flourish. Not just the country, to flourish.

What are the threats then? What are the threats as they see? Well, Scruton sees internal and external threats to the nation state. His concept of oikophobia, rejection of your country, your heritage, your language, to be something else, like global citizen, for example. But he also thinks transnational bodies, such the EU, the UN, WTO, he thinks that free trade is a treat, so does Hazony, it has huge impact, negative impact on the nation state. Free trade, elites, so-called educated elites, are huge threats and imperialism. Hazony takes this at the intellectual level also liberalism and the lack of empirical thinking. So how do they think that these threats should be overcome? Well, Scruton wants us to have bilateral agreements. He thinks that we should maximise trade, but through our neighbours, to protect local customs, so there should be some protection there. Immigration control and withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights.

Hazony, he wants to take the intellectual battle to them, and he says that students need to see the empirical reality, instead of staying in a sort of abstract rationalist position. And there needs to be a conservative, realist argument against both liberalism and Marxism, in particular. Right, some differences, which I have already mentioned, Scruton puts a lot of emphasis on place. He

detaches the nation with ethnicity, he does not think nationality is an ethnicity. He does not think that, he absolutely rejects that, it is not an ethnicity. It is an attachment to a land. This is a key concept, he takes it out, and attaches it to the land. You are attached to the land, the territory, the law, and the people that you live with. This is a big.

As I said, Hazony does have an idea about territory, and he does have boundaries in mind, but Scruton is very, very much emphasising land. This is very important.

How the nation grows, either groups or individuals interacting with each other is also a big difference between Hazony and Scruton. The role of religion, Hazony much more places it at the front of his political thinking, and you could say that Scruton puts it in the background. He says things like religious services, bells, ringing of bells, church architecture, these things, but it won't actually bind the nation as a whole.

Édouard Husson: Why the French Vision of the Nation-State is Fit for the 21st Century?

Ladies and gentlemen, I am very happy to be here for many reasons. First, because I was a senior fellow at MCC for one year in 2022. I am very happy to be back here. Also because of the opportunity you offered me to think about my own country. It is always important and I will try to share with you some views about the French national identity, its connection with Europe, and the problems we are confronted with today. You know, the French are certainly convinced from childhood that everybody thinks like they do, that the French universalism is shared by everybody. The more I think about my own country, the more I travel the world, the less I am convinced about that. I think there are very characteristic aspects of French history which are somewhat difficult to explain to other people. And I will try to think with you about the current crisis of French politics. This political crisis is due to the challenging of the French national state model.

There is a deep crisis nowadays of the French political identity, no question. And I already had the opportunity to speak about it in different panels here at MCC. It is very striking to notice that the French politicians do not believe any longer, with exceptions, naturally, in the superiority of the French national model for French people.

You know, the question is not the superiority of your model, political model, over other models, but is it the best one for you and your people? And it is very striking to see that since the 1980s, most French politicians have given up. The nation, well, it is over. François Mitterrand, President Mitterrand, said at the end of the 1980s, France is my country, Europe is my future. Just think of Emmanuel Macron, he only speaks of European sovereignty. French sovereignty? I never heard it in his mouth. Maybe I am wrong. I do not advise going through his speeches because they are very, very long, sometimes not so interesting. But anyway, I do not think he ever spoke as a president of French sovereignty, which is challenging. You know, he's a French president.

He is the heir to Gaullism, to the French Gaullist Republic. But let us take another president a few years ago, President Sarkozy. Sarkozy was certainly a patriot in his way, on one side. On the other hand, he was convinced that France had to come back to the integrated command of NATO. It was the opposite view of General de Gaulle a few decades ago. So what has happened? What happened in the 1970s, 1980s, which led to the fact that most French politicians do not believe in the superiority of the French national state model, a model which had even been proposed as a universal one. Just remember the nineteenth century.

It should be the universal model, the national state and the democracy should be developed inside sovereign borders, inside national borders. So giving up this model is a major shift. But before answering this question, I would like to look at the parties, the political movements, who try to think another way.

You have a few political parties, let us say on the right, some say in France, the extreme right. I do not know if it makes sense, like Rassemblement Nationale, like Reconquête, who will speak about French identity. But what is French identity? When you are looking for what they mean with that, it's very difficult to grasp if it has any political value at all.

I mean, what is it to have a French identity? Is it to be opposed to immigration? Is it to rescind the fact that there are too many Muslims living nowadays in France? So, is it cultural? Is it ethnic? Or is it just defending a French way of life, which would mean just defending French cooking and a few other very interesting peculiarities of my country? Well, maybe, but what is the political efficiency of that? Because if you look, for instance, at this whole political speech about identity, you will be surprised. Most of the politicians defending what they call "THE French identity" would tell you, if you push them in a corner, that they had rather a non-sovereign France keeping a French identity than having a sovereign France made of people coming from all over the world. They would rather see France in a Western. European community that would remain "ethnically pure" than living in a neo-Gaullian independent French state with many immigrants. And this really challenges the traditional view of the French identity. If you say that identity is more important than sovereignty, that's really challenging the French classical view of statehood and nationality. I sincerely think that the French are very special in their political history. And if we try to define a French identity, I would say that we, politically speaking, are Romans. We are political heirs to Rome.

Rome conquered us. We are Gallic tribes, which have been politicised, civilised by the Romans 2,000 years ago. The founding father of France, politically speaking, was the Roman Emperor Claudius: in 48 AD he asked the Roman Senate to welcome members of the Gallic elite into their ranks. The Senators were reluctant to do so, but the Emperor imposed his will and a famous stele, the 'Claudian table', can be seen today in the Gallo-Roman Museum in Lyon, which reproduces a large part of the Emperor's speech. This was the moment when the reality which would be called later France became part of the 'respublica romana'. Later, when the

Empire collapsed, France remained, through the efforts of our bishops, emperors, kings and republican statesmen, a ‘respublica romana’ within the borders of Gaul. It’s very important for many reasons.

First, because it means that the classical French model, and it is common to the French monarchy and to the republic, is a model of assimilation. You may come from all over the world. If you want to become a French citizen, it means you have to abide by the laws of the French State, a kingdom or republic. And then you can become a French citizen. And it is a very Roman way to see things, you know. What does it mean to be Roman? Let us ask the French philosopher Rémi Brague about what he calls “the Roman way”. According to the him, the Romans never thought they were the best in everything. On the contrary, when they encountered Greek culture, they thought the Greeks had a higher culture than they had. They learned it, they assimilated it, it means that they transformed it in their own way.

Rémi Brague says in his book, to be Roman means to be open to everything that would be coming to you, but having the strength to transform it in your own way. And I think this defines very well what happened with the French monarchy. There is a characteristic of the French monarchy, which makes it different from other monarchies in Europe, in the Middle Ages and in modern history, is that there was a drive towards assimilation, centralisation, harmonisation of living conditions, which was stronger than in many other European kingdoms. You certainly know the formula, “The king of France is an emperor in his kingdom”. It was a formula already in the Middle Ages, in the thirteenth century. It means that the French king saw himself as an heir to the Roman emperors, but he was a Christian king, so it had to be limited.

There was no spirit of eternal conquest, eternal war to integrate more and more territories. It was limited as a Christian king, but it was very Roman in the spirit. And the French Revolution, well, they just said: “ We want to go back to the Roman Republic as a model. Our Roman ancestors got rid of their kings. We are doing the same. We want to forget the kings or the emperors, we want to go back to the Republic”. So they played with the memories of ancient history, just to tell each other we are better Romans than you are. You see, the French are very strange people. Anyway, this model worked for a long time. And it is all the more striking because in the nineteenth century, you had a weakening of French demography. French population growth was less than in other countries. And because of the industrialisation, you had the necessity to welcome more and more immigrants to get manpower for the developing

industry. But in the late nineteenth century, it was not a problem. This was seen as something positive.

Why? Because of these people, they would become French Republican citizens, French citizens in a Roman way. Some will say: nowadays it is different because we have people coming from other continents, people who are not Christians but Muslims. It makes the assimilation more difficult. Maybe it is part of the story. But another part of the story is that our politicians, our high civil servants, have given up the concept of assimilation. They do not want to assimilate any longer. They want to live in a multicultural society. It would be much nicer than trying to make French citizens out of people coming from everywhere. So I think that the crisis we have is not only a crisis of mass migration, it is not only a crisis due to globalisation, it is also the French crisis, also due to the fact that the French are a political nation and the French elites do not believe in this model any longer. And this is the last point I will develop. We are confronted with a very paradoxical situation nowadays. We have a massive immigration because our politicians did not react the way yours did ten years ago. And because it has been a fact for 40-50 years that we had migrants coming from our former empire, a mass of people coming to France. These people and above all their children or their grandchildren, are living in France.

And let us take the second or the third generation. When they are in France, they do not feel totally French for the reasons I just mentioned to you, that they are not being assimilated. For instance, at school in France, they are not taught any longer French history. I remember high civil servants of the education ministry telling me twenty years ago, no, we should not teach French history. This is almost fascist to try to impose French history on these young people. Yes, but what will you teach them? Oh, global history. Oh, wonderful. So they are coming from a country they do not know any longer to a country they do not know yet. And they have no identity, no reason to love the country they are living in. If they ever go back to their own country of origin or the country of their parents? People would tell them, but you are not belonging to us any longer. You are French. Which would not be totally accurate.

As a citizen, yes, on their passport, it is true. But culturally speaking, it is not totally true. So I think there is a paradox, because we have more and more people who have to be assimilated first. Secondly, the Roman model I define, and I apologise for being very simplistic in my analysis of it, this Roman model was in the past very efficient. There is this deep belief that wherever you come from, you can become a citizen. And there is also this heritage, not only of

pagan Rome, but also of Christian Rome, that you have to separate the question of religion and the political question. It is essential in the dialogue with French citizens of Muslim origin.

So this, we should, in any case, come back to such a model for France. Because this is the only way history teaches us to integrate people and to make French citizens. But we have a generation of politicians who do not believe in it any longer. And this is where the crisis is rooted. This is the major challenge for the next generation. As a conclusion, I would say, it is obvious that comparing a political entity to the Roman Empire is something people like to do.

And I mean, there have been very often comparisons between the European Union and Rome or between different empires and Rome. Or between the US and Roman expansion. I would just stress the last aspect, which is very important. There is something in the history of Rome, which was the deep belief that all people are equal. The French are not only proud to be free citizens like the Athenians or the Romans were. But they are longing for equality: not just a social one but also an equality between nations. The Americans or the English can be fascinated by Roman history. But they will never be full heirs to the Romans because they are indifferent to the question of equality between nations. They have even been defending for the last decades a view of the West as a legitimate defender of privileges, as a natural global leader. But this would be another presentation. Let us stay in France, with the motto 'liberté, égalité, fraternité' ("liberty, equality, fraternity"). I am French. I was very French in my way of depicting national identity. I hope you are not too estranged by this, but nevertheless, I will be happy to discuss with you about this very strange nation of ours, a few hundred kilometres in the West.

Central European Conservatism

"Conservatism is more an instinct than an idea."
(Roger Scruton)

The term 'conservatism' has many different meanings, and its concept varies across the West, the East, and Central Europe. On October 7th, the Hungarian Scruton Hub organised an event to explore what conservatism means in our region: its characteristics and how it has developed over the past few decades. The following article is a written version of a lecture delivered by Andrej Lokar, philosopher and journalist, before a panel discussion with him and Attila Károly Molnár, a conservative historian of ideas. The discussion was moderated by Sébastien Meuwissen, Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Fundamental Rights.

Andrej Lokar: A Synthesis of Traditional Conservatism

At the outset, I would like to say a few words about what I call 'traditional conservatism' or 'the traditional New Right'. In this regard, it seems appropriate to highlight some facts that are becoming more and more blurred nowadays. One form of right-wing/conservatism, for example, has now taken power in Latin America, in Argentina. Mr. Milei and his PR staff offer a kind of syncretism between conservative tendencies in understanding the world and liberal practices both in politics and, above all, in the economy. On the other hand, we also encountered similar (but not the same) tendencies at the NAT CON conference in Brussels this spring. This movement can quite rightly be called the New Right/*nueva derecha*, which is also the term used by one of its main theorists, Agustín Laje. I myself am convinced that we need a New Right and that the New Right must accept its location in a socio-economic and socio-political world that was not created by conservatism, quite the opposite: it is the extreme consequence of the movement that launched conservatism as a reaction to itself.

And yet I also think that we should be a bit more "conservative" in our conservatism. It should be emphasised here that we need *new syntheses more than syncretisms*. A fruitful synthesis, however, is possible only when the core elements of the individual entities that merge are discussed, since syncretism is always the result of the union of the apparent compatibility of surface phenomena, without taking into account the incompatibilities of the cores from which they originate. In a word: conservatism must seek a synthesis or at least a dialogue with non-conservative elements, which now dominate the world, but at the same time keep its cores intact.

It is therefore necessary to define what they are. Regardless of the individual areas of its application, where it is possible to trace the essential conceptual units from which the conservative theory emerges, I believe that the true ontological essence of conservatism is contained in the definition: *conservatism is the making present of actuality*. In this way, conservatism is bound both to the particularities of specific belonging cultures and to the wider belonging civilization. Both culture and civilization contain something that always addresses them and from which they always speak, regardless of time or space limitations. Conservatism as a political philosophy arises when the address of the aforementioned actuality is threatened. When actuality is unmistakably present, there is no need for conservatism. Its task becomes necessary when actuality is obscured and it is necessary to retrace it and create the conditions

for it to speak again. This could be called the 'ontology of conservatism'. This is also the task of the new conservatism or the New Right, as it is basically emerging everywhere in the world. It is a phenomenon that changes the sign of conservatism and transforms it from a reactionary force into a positive creative force. The New Right, such as we encounter it in the theorists of the Argentine government and in movements such as NAT CON, with its criticism of the modern world, which is such that we conservatives completely agree with it, must take another step towards defining its ontological essence, because only this can enable it to have a synthetic relationship to the modern world.

Differences with respect to liberalism

The importance of the ontology of conservatism in all clarity shows itself in its relation to liberalism. I myself note that there is considerable confusion among the New Right regarding this phenomenon. This is particularly true of the relationship between conservatism and liberalism. In this, the English thinkers are leading the way, and this, in my opinion, for two reasons:

a) because they try to build on the non-revolutionary tradition of liberal philosophy;
b) because they associate the greatest achievement of their conservatism, the common law, with Hayek.

Confusion arises especially when concepts such as freedom, rule of law, market economy, etc. are used. In this case too, it is necessary to go to the roots, namely to *anthropology*. The conservative understanding of man is diametrically opposed to the liberal one: conservatism understands man as a *zoon politikon*, while liberalism sees him as an optional individuality that freely chooses its relationship with the surrounding environment. This fundamental difference manifests itself across various areas, including the understanding of individual freedom, which is regarded as the greatest achievement of liberalism. However, this concept of freedom, along with the political systems liberalism builds around it, tends to attract the contemporary New Right (and even the New Left).

In reality, the concept of freedom, as soon as we implement it from the aforementioned opposing anthropologies, turns out to be completely different and incompatible. Emblematic of this is the work of a broad-minded liberal such as Isaiah Berlin, titled *Two Concepts of Freedom*. Conservative anthropology understands man as a *completely religious being* (more on this below) and therefore cannot agree to an understanding of freedom that includes only

two types. The same applies to almost all areas occupied by liberalism in modern reality, including and especially regarding the issue of the economy, where it seems that all surviving worldviews must adopt a liberal model. We must be absolutely clear about this. Conservatism defends the inviolability of private property, which it understands even existentially, defends the market economy, primarily as a competitive exchange of goods, but rejects the idea of self-regulation of the free market, because all this is not in accordance with its anthropology.

Conservatism is also not a supporter of capitalism, but it does not understand capital as the source of all evil, which is true of socialism. Conservatism advocates *a market economy regulated by entities that form an organic society whose, the state is the highest ideal achievement*. In the context of the aforementioned New Right, tendencies that even try to unify conservatism and so-called "classical liberalism", saying that they have the same or at least similar origins, and above all, similar views on many social phenomena, are appearing more and more clearly.

I myself believe that this is only an appearance and that such attitudes sooner or later lead to confusion and serious disagreements, or at least to contradictions. However we look at it, this question is extremely important, because we all, liberals and illiberals, live in a world created by liberalism. Therefore, instead of wasting its energy trying to establish a dialogue with liberalism, the New Right should try to assert its views within a liberal framework, and before that, of course, go to its own roots. That is to say that it should establish a selective attitude towards the liberal framework in which we live.

Differences with respect to socialism

Even with regard to the relationship between conservatism and socialism, it is necessary to look at individual anthropologies. The differences between conservatism and socialism are arguably more obvious than those between conservatism and liberalism. Moreover, conservatism and socialism, especially in an age of culture wars like ours, are in near-permanent conflict, so the differences are more pronounced. However, anthropologically speaking, conservatism and socialism are somewhat more alike than conservatism and liberalism, since both understand man as a *zoon politikon*. In any case, their differences in many regards are profound. For instance: what does politics mean, what does community mean, what is sociogenesis, etc.? The differences are of course too numerous to cover here. Above all, there is almost no desire to create a synthesis between conservatism and socialism in the contemporary New Right. We

conservatives see socialism as a completely failed experiment with no future. This has not always been the case in the past, and this has created perhaps the greatest humanitarian tragedy in human history.

And yet, there is an area in which conservatism not only meets, but more or less openly clashes with socialism: these are the already mentioned *culture wars*, where it is primarily a question *of values*. In this regard, the New Right must confront not only the results, but also the content of the cultural wars it is fighting with socialism in as much detail and quality as possible. All forms of progressivism, ranging from neo-Marxism to wokeism and liberation theology, etc., must be understood as forms of socialism. If it wants to be politically successful, that is to say: to offer an alternative to the prevailing system in the modern world, which consists of various combinations of progressivism and liberalism (we could call it libertarianism), *the new right must create its own counterculture*, and this presupposes first a conflict, and then a victory in the culture war, for two reasons:

a) because the condition for the creation of a conservative counterculture is the creation of a spiritual space within the space in which progressivism/liberalism currently rules;
b) because the purpose of the counterculture is to create a social atmosphere and mood that will enable the establishment of conservative ideas on a "common sense" level.

This whole process, of course, presupposes first a confrontation, then an attempt to create a synthesis between the approaches of social engineering used by progressivism and the already mentioned core principles of conservatism. In this area, conservatism has always been terribly deficient, and this also shows its blindness to the liberal principles that seduced it: somehow, from the 1970s onwards, the belief was that the control of economic levers was the only decisive factor in social management, and so it left all other areas to its opponents (whereby it most likely counted on securing social peace for itself). Leaving culture to the opponents (despite the large number of excellent conservative intellectuals) was, of course, a fatal mistake, because with this it left to the opponents not only the creation of the public sphere, but above all the construction of the mental/emotional structure of modern man and created moral automatisms that are already at the level of the unconscious in favour of the progressive agenda, and not only at the level of the individual, but of the broadest masses.

Conservatism and Christianity

Since conservatism is *by definition* bound to its cultural and civilizational particularity, even in relation to religion, Western conservatism must be bound to the metaphysics that shaped Western civilization in all respects: to Christianity. Even in the field of religion understood in this way, a phenomenon reminiscent of the already mentioned ideological syncretism appears. In the circles of the New Right (with honourable exceptions, of course) the tendencies are the following ones: a) *trans-confessionalism*; b) *cultural Christianity*; c) *positivist atheism*.

In the first case, it concerns certain tendencies that are introduced either by Jewish intellectuals or by intellectuals who are connected to Israel in one way or another. If it is irrefutably true that Western civilization is inextricably linked to Judaism, since Christianity itself was born from Judaism and forms the substantive core of Western civilization, on the other hand it is also irrefutably true that both Christianity and the synthesis of Jewish and non-Jewish elements in Western civilization mean both the metaphysical as well as the political transcendence of Judaism as manifested in the Torah and the Jewish state. Judaism's main contribution to Western civilization was the soteriology of human time understood as a redemptive project, but this also led to the greatest spiritual tragedy in human history when the redemption was separated from the Church, understood as a mystical Body of the Redeemer. Therefore, I believe that the idea of Israel as the paradigm of the nation-state must be discussed within conservative philosophy circles. While we are not opposed to this idea and plan to translate Yoram Hazony's books into Slovenian, I believe the idea itself requires further philosophical supplementation. The spiritual core of Western civilization is not multi-religious, but mono-religious, with Judaism playing a key role as one of its fundamental components.

In the second case, it is a question of the influence of secularism on all forms of thinking in modern times, including conservatism. Merely cultural Christianity is a doctrinal delusion that introduces relativism into the very foundation of Western civilization, as it robs it of its metaphysical dimensions and thereby automatically devalues all the achievements of the mentioned civilization, which were created precisely because of the energy that radiated from that spiritual foundation.

In the third case, it is an absurdity that only speaks of the fact that the ideological confusion of modern times has also penetrated conservatism. An atheist can be a conservative only in so far as it is in line with his own secularism: he can at most resemble a leisurely lover of antiquities or a museum curator. Of course, this is far from a worldview that can reverse the main trend of

the modern world. A Western civilizational and Western cultural conservative must be a confessional Christian, a practitioner and a believer, the only question being asked is whether it is better to be a Catholic or a Protestant and whether a Western civilizational conservative can be an Orthodox. Western civilizational conservatism is inseparable from confessional Christianity, referring to the entire range of Christian spiritual history: from the Gospels and patristics to contemporary theology and practices.

Here, however, it is worth noting this: regarding modern theology and practices – some of them are incompatible with Christianity as understood by conservatism. Especially those who strive to be attuned to the modern world and allow themselves to be seduced by liberalism, socialism and secularism to the point of questioning, if not denying, the very foundations of Christian doctrine.

Conservatism and the Europe of Nations

One of the key and seminal ideas of the entire right, from extremists to moderates, is the Europe of Nations. At this point, we are mainly interested in trying to shed light on the attitude of conservatism and then the New Right towards the idea of the Europe of Nations. A few months ago, a friend and recognized conservative thinker told me that the future of Europe could be twofold: either the United States of Europe or the Europe of Nations. The idea of the Europe of Nations is tempting, but it raises a number of questions.

In the case of modern Europe, which built its geopolitical image based on the type of nationality that was formed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and which is now experiencing its own identity crisis, when we talk about the Europe of Nations it is probably necessary to somewhat predefine the concept of nationality and the principle of integration that could form the Europe of Nations. First of all, the New Right must therefore face the fact that, just as for everything we have mentioned so far, for the concept of the nation, it is also necessary to go to the roots and try to outline the morphology of this identitarian pattern. In my opinion, cultural anthropology can help us with this, as it shows us diachronically and synchronically the elements that make up this social structure. This is the key that allows us to extract from the concept of nationality the elements that can be used in the aforementioned synthesis, which is urgently needed in our time.

Above all, these elements will show us the differences between the identity of an individual ethnic member and the modern atomized individual. In this case, it is a comparative research

work that also has a practical purpose that can be included in the political theory of the European New Right. The second aspect is related to the fact that, in fact, Europe does not need the theory of the Europe of Nations in a certain sense, since it has always been so since prehistoric times. European history is literally teeming with attempts to create a synthesis, but we must admit that so far they have all failed.

The question is the following: how to create a synthesis that would be built from the bottom up and would allow individual entities as much sovereignty as possible. In this context, the question of the nation-state, which is supposed to represent the opposite of the idea of an European federation (perhaps also a confederation), is raised with a great degree of relevance by most of the most recognizable modern conservatives for the nation-state (some go so far as to look for its allegedly non-European origin). In the face of all this, the question arises as to whether the nation-state really paves the most appropriate path for the establishment of the Europe of Nations, since Europe has many European peoples who do not have a nation-state, others who have one, but have large minorities in other countries, etc.

The question is, then, where to find the cohesive or centripetal force that would redirect all these centrifugal tendencies to a higher synthesis. Or in other words: the European nations need some higher common metaphysics that would connect them and also indicate common goals to them. The creation of nation states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was not initiated by the idea of the Europe of Nations, so we need a new concept that would enable freedom, sovereignty and a commitment to common design and creativity. We therefore urgently need a redefinition of the concept of nation and also of the nation-state.

Conservatism and the European Union

In regard to all that has been said, it is quite clear that conservatism and the New Right cannot be in favour of an institution formation such as the European Union. If we proceed purely from theory, we can see that the European Union was successful in elements that are marginal in conservative political philosophy, if not opposed to it—in breaking down borders and in regulating economic relations. As for everything else, the European Union as an idea of unification is a completely failed project. Of course, it is not possible to discuss all aspects here, so I will limit myself to the following: the European Union is primarily a product of what conservatism rejects the most: *selective reductionism*. Perhaps because it was conceived by the historical optimism of the Christian democrats and social democrats in an era defined by the

Italian philosopher Augusto Del Noce as the "second Enlightenment", the European Union was created on the basis of *the absolutization of only one current of European spiritual history*, namely by trying to erase and destroy all other dimensions of the European experience.

This current could be called *progressive secular positivism*. All of this makes it essentially one dimensional. Because of all this, essentially the only dimension on which the European Union rests is the set of values created by the Enlightenment. This is a consequence of the fact that the EU was not created on the basis of a synthesis of the entire European experience, but on the basis of a special blindness that dictated that the horrors of the Second World War should be prevented at all costs from being repeated. Because of all this, the EU openly acts against individual European identities, uses autocratic methods and imposes lifeless abstract patterns on the entire continent.

The EU is dominated and actually ruled by an ideology whose goal is the destruction of all aspects of the European specificity: from its memory to its efficiency, ultimately also to the environment because the measures of the EU are also disastrous in this respect. Therefore, the New Right must reject the EU as it is now in its entirety. The only question that arises is related to the measure and methodology of this rejection, since there is no turning back in history. Not only is it impossible to return to the pre-Union era, to the period of the Cold War, but all of us, including members of the New Right, must admit that living together in a common loose super-homeland is desirable and alluring in its own way. The New Right must therefore advocate for the path of reforms (but at the same time not rule out the possibility of exiting or abolishing the EU, if reforms could not take place). The New Right believes that the most appropriate thing would be to dissolve the EU and rewrite the rules, thereby starting the process of new association. The new Europe should, above all, give up its secular progressive, utopian soteriological dreams and focus on three aspects: on the European man, on the European cultural heritage, on the protection of the European environment.

Conservatism and Central Europe

After we have defined the new right, after we have defined its anthropology, after we have defined the community and finally the wider geopolitical framework, it remains for us to define the specifics of the narrower particularity that connects us: *Central Europe*. The concept of Central Europe is usually associated with the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy and the synthesis created in this area by the Habsburgs. However, we cannot forget that this entity was also

destroyed or at least wasted by the Habsburgs. It may be that, as many conservative thinkers point out, the idea of empire and the idea of nation are incompatible. That is why the question of the possibilities of connection is all the more relevant when there is no longer an empire and the very idea of a nation is in need of revision. This is irrefutable: around the middle of the nineteenth century, all the nations that belonged to the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy felt that they could not flourish as nations in that formation, and therefore worked more or less actively in favour of subversion, but that nevertheless, after its disintegration this formation bind many properties that we acquired precisely in it. It is probably a special law of historical becoming that when someone emerges from a certain context, he clings to the very elements that that context offered him, in order to form his new identity based on them. At the same time, there are a number of elements, for example in our spiritual engagement (for instance, the expressionism in painting and art or secession in architecture), which in some way, are an expression of the being of all of us and also affect us in return.

Also in relation to this issue, the New Right advocates the position that it is necessary to go to the roots and find common starting elements (for example, the type of family, which is key in the conservative understanding of sociogenesis), on the basis of which it is possible, taking into account the totality of our common and individual traditions, to design a paradigm of unification that will take place from below, which would be inclusive in the true sense of the word and which would offer a model for the Europe of Nations, which the Habsburg Monarchy was in some severely flawed respect. This political definition could be used as a counterweight to the centralist, despotist and absolutist, often totalitarian tendencies of the EU. Such an effort could assert a fundamental conservative disposition: the preference for the concrete over the abstract, which could also be called political realism. This may also be the key problem of the EU: that it is led by people who are, so to speak, empirical foreigners in Europe. This is an area in which the Central European New Right can make a decisive contribution.

Scrutopia 2024

The Hungarian Scruton Hub is deeply committed to fostering the development of young conservatives. To this end, we not only organise courses and seminars but also strive to offer international opportunities for our students. One such opportunity is the *Scrutopia Summer School*, a unique philosophical retreat that offers various lectures, tours, and cultural programmes for its participants. The article below provides an excellent report from Scrutopia 2024.

Benedek Tőczik: Living Conservatism – Visiting ‘Scrutopia’

The *Scrutopia Summer School*, held between 19 and 26 July 2024 in the picturesque town of Cirencester in the United Kingdom, was a deeply enriching experience. With the support of the Hungarian Scruton Hub, two participants, Borbála Láng and myself, had the honour of attending this prestigious programme. Established in 2017 by the renowned philosopher Sir Roger Scruton, the school has since been overseen by his widow, Sophie Scruton, continuing to offer a profound exploration of conservative thought across various disciplines, including philosophy, aesthetics, politics, and moral philosophy.

The programme took place in the idyllic settings of the Royal Agricultural University in the Cotswolds and Sundey Hill Farm, where Sir Roger lived and worked for three decades. The week’s agenda was filled with intellectually stimulating lectures, vibrant discussions, and culturally rich activities that provided insight into Sir Roger’s life and work as well as into broader conservative values. The week commenced with a thought-provoking lecture by Professor Ralph Weir of the University of Lincoln, a disciple of Sir Roger.

We delved into the complexities of moral realism, tracing its roots from classical Greek philosophy to contemporary thinkers. Professor Weir emphasized the importance of the ‘I–You encounter’ and reciprocity in moral realism, following Scruton’s ideas. The discourse also touched upon animal ethics, discussing Scruton’s views as presented in his book Animal Rights and Wrongs, where the distinction between humans and animals in the moral community was thoroughly examined. A standout presentation by former Director of the Royal Institute of Philosophy Professor Anthony O’Hear explored the intersection of beauty and politics through the lens of Edmund Burke. He articulated Burke’s vision of society as a “partnership between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born”, stressing the responsibility that binds society’s members.

Beyond the lectures, the programme offered a rich variety of experiences. We visited Cirencester, Sundey Hill Farm, and the historic town of Malmesbury. At Sundey Hill Farm, we walked the very grounds where some of Sir Roger’s most influential works were conceived, an experience that felt both historical and intellectually invigorating. We also participated in an Anglican service at All Saints Church, where Scruton used to play the organ. This was followed by a delightful wine and cheese tasting at a nearby vineyard, embodying Scruton’s concept of ‘oikophilia’, or love of place.

Music played a significant role during the week, highlighted by a concert at Scruton’s own library featuring pianist Stephen Marquiss and soprano Angela Good. Their performance centred around the theme of English Song, with a touch of American influence. Another musical experience was provided by Marquiss, who later in the week introduced us to various approaches to music interpretation, enhancing our understanding of formalist, subjectivist, and historicist narratives.

The academic journey continued with a visit to Oxford, where we explored The Ashmolean Museum and had lunch at the university, followed by lectures on the architecture of Christ Church and the relationship between beauty and the divine. These sessions provided a deepened appreciation for the interconnection between art, history, and philosophy. A highlight of the week was the gala dinner, where we were joined by Michael Gove, a prominent British conservative politician. His reflections on the intersection of theoretical and practical politics were both enlightening and inspiring. Gove’s adherence to the guiding principle ‘What Would Roger Do?’ underscored the enduring influence of Scruton’s thought in contemporary conservative circles.

Throughout the week, we engaged in lively debates and heartfelt conversations, fostering a sense of community across borders. The diversity of participants—hailing from various countries and backgrounds—enriched the discussions, offering new vantage points on global conservative thought. This diversity was not just in nationality but in the perspectives and interpretations of conservative values, making the programme a truly global dialogue on the issues of our time. In conclusion, the *Scrutopia Summer School* was more than just an educational programme; it was a transformative experience that brought conservative philosophy to life. The knowledge gained, the friendships formed, and the experiences shared have left an indelible mark on all who attended. The legacy of Sir Roger Scruton was not only honoured but actively lived, making the programme a powerful testament to the enduring relevance of his ideas in today’s world.

The programme took place in the idyllic settings of the Royal Agricultural University in the Cotswolds and Sundey Hill Farm, where Sir Roger lived and worked for three decades. The week’s agenda was filled with intellectually stimulating lectures, vibrant discussions, and culturally rich activities that provided insight into Sir Roger’s life and work as well as into broader conservative values.

Scruton Ambassador Programme

Through the Scruton Ambassador Programme, participants gain insight into the operations of the Hungarian Scruton Hub, engage in its political, social, and cultural programmes, contribute to the organisation of our events, and have the opportunity to explore Scruton's oeuvre more deeply. Our goal is to provide our ambassadors with the chance to develop their critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills, while also encouraging them to become active creators and participants in the Scruton community. On a monthly basis, we organise thematic discussions, dinner talks, exhibitions, intellectual programmes, wine-tasting dinners, and musical events, where our ambassadors can build a vibrant community.

As we close this yearbook, the following chapter features an essay on 'oikophilia', written by our ambassador, Róbert Papp.

Róbert Papp: "There is No Place Like Home". Observations on the Idea of 'Oikophilia'

Introduction

"There is no place like home", holds the well-known proverb. The idea of 'oikophilia', meaning the "love of home" is one of the most compelling ideas of British philosopher, Roger Scruton.

> He explains 'oikophilia' as the love of oikos (*οίκος*), the latter being "not only the home but the people contained in it, and the surrounding settlements that endow that home with lasting contours and an enduring smile", the place that "shape(s) us as stewards and guardians of our common inheritance—arise through our growth as persons, by creating islands of value in the sea of price".[65]

'Oikophilia' is a kind of yearning in a person, for a place of peace, beauty and order in which one is most profoundly connected to oneself. This „oneself" can be understood as everything that makes a person what he or she is. The rolling hills and endless plains, the misty forests and little creeks that dot the landscape, as well as the culture that paints it to its distinct colour. It is also the people, who shaped and defined one's character. In one word, this „oneself" is one's subjective essence.[66] All these things constitute our subjective essence, the persons that we are.

'Oikophilia' is, thus a constructive relationship between all these things and ourselves. Yet, this experience is more than a mere connection with a given segment of nature, it is a profoundly personal relationship, for it always involves other beings (humans). This understanding permeated ancient Greek philosophy, which held that the city (*πόλις*) is the highest manifestation of human relations, but which is ultimately only part art (human-made), and part nature. Meaning that even though "every city (…) exists by nature",[67] for it comes into being naturally, it later, however, adopts arts or conventions (laws, commerce, etc.)[68] for a variety of

[65] Scruton, Roger: *How to be a Conservative*, London, Bloomsbury Continuum, 2014, pp. 34–35.
[66] Here I make a distinction between a so-called objective and subjective essence. The former being, in the case of humans, the universal defining feature that makes humans, humans. This feature is inherent in every human, and without which a given thing cannot be considered human. The latter meaning of essence is the notion of personality, that is the first person singular. If Socrates is Socrates and not Glaucon, there is something that makes Socrates, Socrates and not Glaucon. This "Socratesness" is the subjective essence of Socrates.
[67] Aristotle: *Politics*, 1252b30.
[68] Aristotle: *Politics*, 1257a18–30.

reasons, most notably, necessity and stability. It is in this nurturing relationship that we can define ourselves, this rich soil provides the basis for one's own roots.

Oikodualism

Scruton, however, explores this idea only in the material plane, so to speak. This deep yearning albeit universal, is only material for in the unqualified sense it only considers the physical world.[69] Indeed, his idea of 'oikophilia' is very much acceptable by non-religious people, for the experiences of home is perceivable by the senses most adequately. The religious disposition, however, considers the soul, and the transcendent as well. This outlook presents us with a kind of substantive dualism, which we will here denote as 'oikodualism'. By substance, I mean in a qualified sense,[70] a thing that is suitable for existing in itself.[71] On the one hand we have the "material oikos", which is described by Roger Scruton, and on the other the so-called "immaterial oikos". This immaterial home at first glance may seem rather elusive, yet one can easily understand it, when he contemplates the nature of the five senses, namely that they are useful for the perception of the material world and further realizing that the home is much more than what we might perceive by such instruments.

Dealing with the immaterial, a different tool of inquiry is required. Without getting into the question as to whether the immaterial exists, or whether this or that tool is adequate, we suppose that conscience, soul and the mind are tools that can perceive and to a certain extent understand the immaterial. The mere experiences of the immaterial are not yet sufficient to arrive at the conclusion that there is such a thing as an "immaterial oikos". The Epicurean understanding of the transcendent is perhaps most illustrative of this issue. It supposes that gods exist, yet they do not interact with the material world, moreover they are not interested in it, and play no role in its functions. The oikos, however, in its essence, supposes a connection between two actors (at the very least). In the material, it is the connection between a person and that person's surroundings (other persons, nature), whilst in the immaterial, it is the fundamental connection between God and man. The connection is the result of an initiative and the maintenance of said connection on the side of both parties. This inclination is fuelled by a 'philia', a love, an

[69] Of course the physical experiences of the oikos do necessitate certain transcendental changes in the mind.
[70] Disregarding the utter dependence of every created thing on God.
[71] A book is a substance for it does not depend on other things for its continued existence, whereas the colour of that given book, say red, is not a substance, for it cannot exist without said book. For more on the meaning of substances and their importance see: Weir, Ralph: Bring Back Substances!, *Review of Metaphysics* 2 (75), 2021, pp. 265–308.

attraction. It is most aptly explained by Saint Augustine: "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You."[72] In other words, our souls are at home in God alone.

This restlessness, which the Saint of Hippo writes about is the yearning Scruton ties to his understanding of 'oikophilia'. It is a relation towards something, a burning desire, but not of passion, but of love. A gaping pit waiting to be filled, this being the immaterial experience of homesickness. This is the experience of the absence of God or at the very least an experience of the imperfect presence of God, for we are not perfectly with God or in God, both of these feelings, in essence, are the same—being lost, being alone. This absence of our other part is a returning theme in philosophy, it stems from our realization of ourselves as imperfect beings, compare this with Pascal's ideas of 'Man's disproportion'[73] or Plato's 'Symposium'. In the latter, the story of Aristophanes illustrates it most distinctly. Aristophanes argues (or jokes) that man was originally androgynous, possessing both genitals and thus a whole on its own. Nevertheless, Ephilates and Otus decided to climb the heavens and attack the gods. Zeus in answer split mankind in two, thus creating the two distinct genders.

The playwright originates the desire of the genders for each other from this story: "[…] that's how, long ago, the innate desire of human beings for each other started. It draws the two halves of our original nature back together and tries to make one out of two and to heal the wound in human nature".[74] Our lack of unity with God or imperfect unity with Him calls us back to the immaterial oikos. Even the latter state is like standing in the doorway, we are pulled by ethereal threads towards our perfection. The material oikos is the root that firmly places us on the great map of the world, geographically, culturally as well as mentally. Nevertheless, the immaterial oikos is the only root that can provide meaning to all that, it alone can orient us in all our endeavours.

The moral aspect of the home

Saint Augustine's words allude to an underlying implication regarding this restlessness and the subsequent rest of our souls: an end. In physics, bodies move towards a given direction because X and Y forces are acting on them. It is an action–reaction description of a natural phenomenon.

[72] Saint Augustine: *Confessions* (transl. by István Városi), Szeged, Lazi Könyvkiadó, 2022, p. 5. (For general purposes: St. Augustine of Hippo, Confessions, 1,1.5)
[73] Pascal, Blaise (1660): *Pensées* (transl. by W. F. Trotter), Grand Rapids, MI, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2002, p. 10.
[74] Plato 191d

It is the force that defines movement and enjoys dominance. The "immaterial oikos", however, follows the classical understanding of human nature, the teleological understanding. This view claims that everything is aimed towards something, every "nature" has its own end towards which it is oriented or ought to be oriented. This end is the ontological reason (*telos*) of its existence.[75] Thus, just as when bodies reach their "physical end" once they are at rest, so do humans reach their "ontological end" once they are with God.

If the final end of humans is to be with God, and supposing humans possess free agency (free will), it means that his or her actions could be either conducive to this end or not. Thus, we find that there is a moral dimension to 'oikophilia'. This in turn gives further credence to Scruton's claims that we have a responsibility towards others around us, both alive, deceased, and in-animate (abstract objects like the nation). This responsibility, from the point of view of the immaterial oikos is most well-articulated in Genesis 1:28: "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the Earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"

Yet it also points out that Scruton is only partially right, when he quotes and reaffirms Karen Joisten saying "man, unlike other animals, is a home-ish being: 'der Mensch ist ein heimatliches Wesen.' Not just 'Heimlich' but 'heimatlich', in need of, in search of, and fulfilled through an oikos, which he sees not simply as mine or yours, but as ours"[76], for as she later notes on the "material oikos": "the home lies in the past, a place of unrecoverable safety and protection, the yearning for it can never be fulfilled, and the image of it serves as a magic talisman, with which available compromises can be waved away and condemned. The home, treated in this way, becomes the place where one is not, and the only real 'Heimatgefühl' is 'Heimweh', the longing for home that Novalis describes as the perennial theme of philosophy".[77] He recognises that this "Paradise Lost" cannot be recovered, this is indeed the case in the material oikos, but not in the immaterial one. It is only in the immaterial oikos that one can be at rest, it is only there that a person can recover what was lost. This can be achieved (in the Christian tradition) through divine salvation. The original home that we yearn for is like the Garden of Eden, an innocence

[75] It is to be noted that in the views of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the divine law, which permeates everything, has a plan, which is incapsulated in God himself as the ultimate beginning and final end of everything. On this, see: János Frivaldszky: *Természetjog*. Budapest, Szent István Társulat, 2001, p. 114. In this sense, we can distinguish between a subjective and objective end (*telos*). The subjective end is the "direct" end of a given thing. The objective end being the final end, the end of everything, God.
[76] Scruton, Roger: *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously about the Planet*, London, Atlantic Books Ltd., 2013, p. 137.
[77] Scruton: 2013, p. 139. Compare this to the concept of *ἔγερσις* ('egersis').

lost, that can only be recovered through salvation, where both man and Creation stained by the Original Sin are absolved through a kind a transubstantiation.

Even though one cannot bring about salvation for oneself, one nonetheless must adhere to the moral law set forth in Genesis 1:28, which commands one to govern and protect Creation as a 'bonus pater familias' ("good family father"). Environmental protection is especially important in this aspect. The reason being that it is aimed at the maintenance of order, fighting against the corruption and deterioration of the world. Roger Scruton states the following:

> "In general environments are best maintained where 'oikophilia' is strong, as it is in the Scandinavian countries, in Switzerland, and in the English-speaking world."[78]

The opposite end of this is the communist, or ex-communist countries, where 'oikophilia' has been systematically wiped out. A 'philia' begins with a recognition of the actors involved and a sense of connection. The communist approach has been to obliterate every non-universal connection that might bring about a sense of particular identity. 'Oikophilia', thus, stems from said recognition of home and oneself, and the connection between.

The nature of this connection, however, has to be understood properly, for it is not mere ownership. In fact, there is no ownership involved. We are mere provisional custodians of a given place and culture. Governors called forth to give due respect to those before us and provide for those coming after. This is the transgenerational understanding of 'oikophilia' that Scruton talks about in connection with Burke's ideas of "little platoons". It is indeed a moral duty of mankind, but it is not just a duty owed to animals or to our fellow humans, but also a duty towards God, hence it is of significant importance. Here we see that the material oikos has to be made and sustained in the image of the immaterial oikos by striving towards the good, beautiful and just. This is in stark contrast with the Hobbesian approach that sees humans as evil beings that have to be chained and dominated by the State. Instead, this transgenerational disposition is the *ἀρχή* ('arkhé') or guiding principle of a country dominated by the notion of oikophilia –this disposition is most excellently encapsulated in the Golden Rule, "Do to others what you want them to do to you".[79]

[78] Scruton: 2013, p. 142.
[79] Matthew 7:12

Regarding substantive dualism

Now, we will provide some further explanation of 'oikodualism' in a summarized fashion. 'Oikodualism' claims that what we call oikos is in fact two distinct substances. The first is the so-called "material oikos" explained by Roger Scruton:

> It is "not only the home but the people contained in it, and the surrounding settlements that endow that home with lasting contours and an enduring smile", the place that "shape(s) us as stewards and guardians of our common inheritance—arise through our growth as persons, by creating islands of value in the sea of price".[80]

The "immaterial oikos" is not a physical place or something that is in connection with other people, it is rather a state of being. While in the material oikos we live in our homes, when it comes to the immaterial oikos we live with God. We do the latter in the material world as well, that, however, is inherently insufficient, incomplete.

We only get to live with God completely in this "immaterial oikos", this special state of being is therefore beyond the material world. The imperfection of the material condition and the lack of our salvation prevents us from this complete union with God. It is to be noted that the difference between an imperfect and perfect being with God is not a difference of degree but of nature. For the human condition is that of a limited being, we might work to develop our connection with God through prayer and following the Commandments, "this gradual increase is itself a most certain proof of imperfection", [81] for perfection means that nothing more can be added onto the thing itself. The "material oikos" is limited and possesses properties such as extension, size, temporality, while the "immaterial oikos" is that of perfection in its nature, it possesses none of those accidents. They also exist independently from one another, in an ontological sense.

They are both the result of divine ordinance; thus, they are distinct substances in the above-mentioned qualified sense. We can, however, realise that there is a connection between these substances not in respect of their unity and identity of nature, but in respect of unity of composition. French philosopher, René Descartes explains the difference between these two unities such that a substance might have different properties that are called different (like shape and capacity of motion), yet they are the same in respect of unity of nature, whereas just because a substance has different properties that do exist together most of the time (like bone and flesh) does not necessarily mean that the two are the same in nature but only united in respect of composition.[82] Thus, the essences of the two *oikos*es are distinct, nevertheless in terms of their composition, they are tied to the human condition.

Conclusion

Regardless of our limited nature, we nonetheless ought to prepare for such a state of being with God, the immaterial oikos, the amplest forum for which beings in the material oikos. We organize, govern and tend to our homes. We do this with the recognition of the moral righteousness of such an act. This love that we nurture in regard to our homes can thus be made universal through the recognition of the caring intent of Creation, whilst keeping to our natural tendency to cherish more, that which is closest to us. Trying to willingly adhere to the conditions of good, beauty and justice in our homes is tantamount to following in the footsteps of Christ. The highest value here, perhaps, being order. Order is the fundamental recognition of relationships, be it between animals, humans, or with God. This recognition is aimed at not how we want these relationships to look like, but how they ought to be. The city or the nation as a home is not an end in itself. If we take it as such, it means merely a group of people ruling a given parch of land. If we understand it to be a steppingstone, a means towards God, and thus, the Good, then it is transformed into a congregation of 'boni patris familias'.

[80] Scurton, Roger: *How to be a Conservative*, London, Bloomsbury Continuum, 2014, pp. 34–35.
[81] Descartes, René (1641): *Meditations on First Philosophy in Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* (4th ed., transl. by Dounald A. Cress), Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company, 1998, p. 77.
[82] Descartes, René (1641): *Replies to the Sixth Objection in Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies* (Oxford World's Classics; transl. by Michael Moriarty), New York, Oxford University Press Inc., 2008, p. 202.

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Dr. Daniel Pitt

Daniel Pitt's PhD is from the University of Hull where he focused on the British Constitution, conservatism and the Conservative Party. Previously, he read for an MA in political philosophy at the University of Buckingham under the supervision of Sir Roger Scruton and Dr Samuel Hughes. He has written for publications such as *Conservative Home*, *The Critic*, *The University Bookman*, and many others. He was a member of Erewash Borough Council representing the residents of Derby Road West from 2019 to 2023 and held a Lead Member for Town Centres role.

Sophie Scruton

Lady Sophie Scruton worked with Sir Roger Scruton from 1999 to establish Horsell's Farm Enterprises, a firm that brought together all their interests. While Roger gave lectures around the world building a network of followers, Sophie built strong links with farmers, conservationists, and local historians. The small farms surrounding Sundey Hill Farm, the Scruton family home, were struggling in the business of turning grass into meat and milk. The solution, they felt, was to turn grass into ideas, and bring profit to the farm and the neighbourhood. Their project culminated in the *Scrutopia Summer School* programme where philosophy and friendship are cultivated.

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