

Carlsbad 1819

Like another Chouannerie

The left-right spectrum put in its proper meaning and context

June 14, 2018 by Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur

We're talking about left versus right? Is there anything more to really add to this subject?

I think so, and the basic problem was stated by the poet Robert M. Beum — whom you might recognize as the compiler of an English bibliography on French ultra-royalism — back in a 1972 essay for the Georgia Review entitled “Modernity and the Left: An Equivalence”:

Wherever one looks, one is more likely than not to discover that: fascism is “the Right” or “rightist,” yet somehow the capitalist enterprise is also “the Right,” as distinguished from “the Left” of socialism and Communism; socialism, viewed from the Communist standpoint, is part of “the Right,” of “reaction”; but there are “leftist” capitalists (Cyrus Eaton, for example) and there are leftists who, like Mussolini, found “rightist” parties — and without discarding their leftist aims and practices; in France the Gaullists, one of the many variants of “bourgeois socialism” (i.e., of “the Left”), are “the Right” against which the leftist Coalition and the socialist “centrist” parties contend; the monarchists are of course “the Right,” although they have often denounced and fought the “Right” of fascism, and are at times clearly the ultra-liberal or leftist victims of such “rightist” coups as occurred not long ago in Greece and Cambodia. In a column that appeared during the Nixon-McGovern presidential campaign, Max Lerner, who is perhaps too old to learn new tricks, dismissed in a single sentence Eric Voegelin’s thesis that modern liberalism tends to create conditions whose logical final stage is leftist dictatorship. By the same reasoning, exclaimed the incredulous Lerner, conservatism would prepare the way for a Hitler! This sort of performance, in which journalists reveal in a stroke their ignorance of both the scholars and the Hitlers of this world, is pandemic. And only slightly below the columnists’ level, and often still on the level of the college-educated, we find bracketed together as “rightists” or (in an argot indigenously American) “right-wing extremists” mad godless brutes (Julius Streicher) and compassionate, elegant Catholic republicans (Phyllis Schlafly); journalist tycoons (Henry Luce) and despisers of all the press (Balzac); pragmatic shopkeepers (Poujade) and shopkeeper-hating exoticists (Baudelaire); arch-nationalist militarists (Maurras) and anti-militarists (Nietzsche).

The overwhelming and widespread approach to the left-right spectrum is to shoehorn the two poles (but particularly the right, since its character has always been more oppositional than of stating a positive proposition) into timeless and ahistorical essences, to create a definition of “right” that unites Carlists and volkisch populists, Bonapartists and regional separatists, libertarians and Christian integralists, etc. etc.

This is a fruitless endeavor, but it is sustained by both sides for obvious reasons. The left is interested in having this timeless definition so that it can look back and say “Look at all the enemies I have vanquished, and that still need to be eradicated.” This is the siege mentality of a career revolutionary, whose job is never done.

The right is interested in this so that it feels itself the torch-bearer of a long tradition. “Look at my ancestors whose work I am continuing.” The stated mission is that we are preserving Western civilization, the European gene pool, the Church, something or other — knocking down this pretense crashes morale.

A workable definition of the right needs three characteristics, in my estimate it:

- a) has to completely and totally exclude populism (more on this in a bit);
- b) has to acknowledge historicity of the spectrum (is 10th-century Frisian communalism leftist or rightist? — a completely anachronistic and meaningless question);
- c) has to provide clear historical metanarrative and boundaries, serve as a useful discriminatory tool and elucidate otherwise unclear patterns.

I think c) is crucial here. We don’t want to make the right a giant blob of heterogeneous components and pretend it’s all interconnected on a fundamental level. On the contrary, we want a historically grounded ideal type that can give us a straightforward tool to analyze transitions and deviations from it. Current operative definitions don’t do this; they’re designed to be so abstract and general that they obscure more than they make clear.

Beum himself doesn’t resolve the problem, he just introduces his own layer of indirection and continues the typical method of making “right” mean “not-left,” and here “left” is defined as gnostic millennialism, or “modernism” more broadly. Actually Beum’s resolution is to simply get rid of a coherent definition of “right” by positing that there are no pure rightist movements as such; they’re all intertwined with modernism in some way. This is entirely true and it’s a valid approach, but it’s basically a more erudite way of saying “we are all leftists now.” We can do better. We can both recognize that we are all leftists now but actually supply a reasonable “rightist” type as well.

Let’s look at some definitions that we often see in the wild:

1. The left is about equality, and the right is about hierarchy.

The basic problem with this is that “equality” has many dimensions, ranging from civic equality to a moral proposition on “equal dignity” or “equal humanity,” to racial and ethnic equality, equality of the sexes, equal opportunity, equal outcomes, equality of arms-bearing freemen, equality of white voters within a racially exclusive republic, etc. etc. Contrary to popular belief, there can be no such thing as a general anti-egalitarianism. At a low enough level of subsidiarity and social interaction, a basic face-to-face equality ends up existing between people with similar status, ethnic and other markers. Equality “of” and equality “within” are distinct. There’s also countless ways of mixing certain equalities and rejecting others, many of which have been considered “rightist.” See e.g. [Swiss communalism](#)

(<https://carlsbad1819.wordpress.com/2017/10/15/communalists-and-constitutionalists/>), or the meritocracy and equality-of-the-body-politic in national socialisms of all sorts (<https://carlsbad1819.wordpress.com/2017/03/24/reading-some-actual-nazis/>), extending up to acceptance of feminism (<https://carlsbad1819.wordpress.com/2017/06/20/lothrop-stoddard-on-nazi-feminism/>). Absolutisms, populisms and Caesarisms of all sorts have this basic model of people being unequal relative to a leader or big-man sort of figure, but with “the people” themselves an undifferentiated mass – at best differentiated by some rank order of how well they serve the “welfare of the people’s community” or some such qualifier. “The politically aware girl knows that any work, whether in a factory or in the home, is of equal value,” said the leader of the female youth wing of the NSDAP.

The definition is too gratuitous and too loose at the same time.

“Hierarchy” is even worse. What does this mean? Any complex organization is going to have vertical rankings in at least vaguely superior-inferior relationships. The left are not against “hierarchy,” the Leninist model of democratic centralism being a prime example. Nor is the left any less prone to hero-worship, or veneration of great men than any other human being is. The leftist argument isn’t so much that hierarchies will disappear, but that they will lose their social meaning and be reduced simply to organizational details. And of course less hard-left ideologies such as social democracy are more comfortable with it on a deeper level than that.

2. The left is about outgroup favoritism/minorities trampling on majorities, the right is about ingroup favoritism/majority rights.

Minority rule is the norm. This is sufficient to cripple the utility of this definition, but there’s more.

These types of definitions almost invariably rely on demagogically overloading the meaning of who your “ingroup” is supposed to be. You thought that your ingroup were your friends at Davos, the press and the think tanks but ACTUALLY, interjects our rightist, your ingroup is *really* the white race as a whole, and any policy that is against the predefined interests of the white race or whoever automatically means that its proponent isn’t sincere, but an unwitting pawn of the (((you-know-who))) or whoever.

Hence in practice this is just an accusation of having false consciousness – an indispensable tool for delegitimizing opponents, but not for drawing meaningful distinctions.

Finally, the definition is ahistorical to absurd degrees. Is the Yanomamo tribesman going to war displaying his ingroup loyalty therefore a *rightist*? Hint: if your definition for left-right is used for primitive groups that have no concept of a state, then it’s useless. The basic prerequisites for a useful taxonomy don’t exist.

The reductio ad absurdum here is very obvious: the person who wants to kill everyone except the minimum viable population of his closest ancestors, is the most right-wing man on the planet.

3. The left is about universalism, the right is about particularism.

This one can also be short-circuited by the same absurdum as 2, but actually in some sense it’s even worse, since we don’t even have the requirement of a “group” here. It would seem that under this definition, the most right-wing man on the planet is the egoist anarcho-individualist — as that’s about the furthest you can decompose particularities.

Another implication is that both imperialism and forceful conversions of non-believers are leftist, so this one fails the “historicity” department quite terribly as well.

It also means that minority grievance politics are rightist. This is because it’s a general case for nationalism (but actually that’s too high-level and “universal” itself), and can’t discriminate between historical and non-historical nations. So you inevitably have to add qualifiers: universalism “within,” etc.

Universalism is a basic aspect of European history.

(<https://carlsbad1819.wordpress.com/2018/04/03/prince-ludwig-windischgraetz-predictions-of-european-economic-community/>). Once upon a time clerics used to write universal histories (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_history), and the genre actually dates to antiquity.

Actually, it’s even more fundamental than that: universalism is a basic consequence of the existence of objective truths. Currently Darwinism is very popular in rightist circles, though, so you get this kindergarten relativism disguised as iconoclastic anti-egalitarianism. Though Darwinists aren’t afraid to say that some genotypically-rooted relativisms are better than others, which is the root of their exclusion from mainstream punditry — not being consistently relativistic enough.

In fact, the boomer conservadads have a trope of their own that differs in style but is similar in substance. The left is about BIG GUMMINT and AUTHORITARIANISM, the right is about SMALL GUMMINT and BEING LEFT ALONE.

The observant reader will recognize that this is just the right-wing spin on “anti-hegemonic” critical theory. Indeed, some schmuck named Philip W. Gray published a paper in the March 2018 edition of the Journal of Political Ideologies entitled “‘The fire rises’: identity, the alt-right and intersectionality” that makes this explicit comparison. He quotes Greg Johnson: “We envision a kind of classical liberalism for all nations, in which each people has a place of its own, whose legitimate rights need not conflict with the legitimate rights of all other nations” — which I think says it all.

4. The left is about chaos (antinomianism), the right is about order (pronomianism).

This is a definition Moldbug used. He extrapolated from it a general classification of any resistance to authority as leftist, in typical *politique* style. This means that e.g. Saint Ambrose was wrong to bar Theodosius I from the Milan Cathedral after the latter’s perpetrating a massacre in Thessaloniki. By design, resistance is barred even if you are ruled by existential enemies.

“Order” is even more nebulous than “hierarchy.” One of Moldbug’s essential prerequisites for order was a Weberian monopoly of violence — which certainly would have been news when seigneurial justice was normal, or the paterfamilias for that matter.

By this definition, “right-wing insurgency” is oxymoronic, and it seems that so is any form of right-wing coup d’état since it’s necessarily extralegal/extracostitutional. On the other hand, sovereigns (however defined) have no commitment to enforcing consistent laws; they can change things on a whim (see: American constitutional law, same-sex “marriage,” etc.), because above the sovereign there is no judge. This is all of course based on the vulgar Westphalian assumption that justice ends at a given territorial unit. The papacy would have disagreed, for instance.

Both per-capita homicide rates and legal polyarchy (“muh insecure power”) were higher before early modernity, so it seems that pronomianism is a novelty.

This is ultimately a tactical question and not a core left-right division. Complicating things is that many systems do not appear “antinomian” until observed post facto.

5. The left is about social constructionism and nurture, the right is about heredity and nature.

It is, except when it isn't. Indeed, eugenics has always been an excuse for advocating sexual licentiousness and non-traditional mating but under a veneer of scientific respectability, or since eugenics is no longer respectable (maybe again soon?), under a veneer of right-wing street cred. “I'm pro-abortion because it gets rid of the blacks” is probably the classical example. Going even further, though thankfully less common: “Have Lebensborn breeding camps because parental contributions to child outcomes through shared environment are minimal, anyway.”

I'll simply repost here what I've written previously: The three countries that adopted eugenics most enthusiastically were Sweden, the United States, and Germany. Today, these are probably the three most pozzed countries in the world. What an inconvenient coincidence. Examples of contemporary loony left eugenicism are plentiful: check out Scott Nearing's [“The super race: an American problem”](https://archive.org/stream/superraceamerica00near#page/24/mode/2up) (<https://archive.org/stream/superraceamerica00near#page/24/mode/2up>). (1912); Herbert Brewer's article in the April 1932 edition of the *Eugenics Review* entitled [“Eugenics and socialism: their common ground and how it should be sought](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2985135/) (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2985135/>); the English eugenicist Caleb Saleeby and his book [Woman and womanhood](https://archive.org/details/womanwomanhoods00sale) (<https://archive.org/details/womanwomanhoods00sale>) (1911) where he says that women's suffrage will be eugenic: “I believe in the vote because I believe it will be eugenic, will reform the conditions of marriage and divorce in the eugenic sense, and will serve the cause of what I have elsewhere called “preventive eugenics,” which strives to protect healthy stocks from the “racial poisons,” such as venereal disease, alcohol, and, in a relatively infinitesimal degree, lead” (p.24). The historical essay collection [Eugenics and the Welfare State](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/40871) (<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/40871>) is also a good second-hand source.

I will also add Richard Weikart's [Socialist Darwinism](https://www.csustan.edu/history/socialist-darwinism) (<https://www.csustan.edu/history/socialist-darwinism>) (1994), and [an article on](https://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/788552) (<https://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/788552>). Polish eugenics and progressivism.

On the other hand, we have G.K. Chesterton in 1922 penning *Eugenics and Other Evils*.

Hence, there is no relationship. As to why left-wing eugenicism is basically dead, this isn't the post to answer this question.

Related: social constructionism is often a form of determinism that is indistinguishable in its implications from heredity, except that the former nominally has an escape hatch in that perhaps some improbable revolution *could* abolish the otherwise determining factor of “structural X-ism.” But then hereditarianism has the same escape hatch with eugenics and social selection.

6. The left is a power grabbing strategy via accentuating ideological contradictions, the right is undefined.

A shout-out to Spandrell's [post on this subject](https://bloodyshovel.wordpress.com/2015/03/01/leftism-is-just-an-easy-excuse/) (<https://bloodyshovel.wordpress.com/2015/03/01/leftism-is-just-an-easy-excuse/>), of leftism as “just an easy excuse.”

Similar to Beum in the beginning, the right has no meaning here except as an oppositional “not-left.” Leftism is a general technique for breaking up ruling coalitions by taking aspects of a predominant social consensus, exaggerating them far beyond their golden mean, and through this way provide a screen for

defectors to organize around while making it an awkward situation for the authorities to clamp down on them.

Hence it has the same problem as Beum, but it seems to be a valid empirical observation. With the important caveat that the end result cannot always be inferred from the starting point, nor vice versa.

Alright, then. Here is my definition:

Right-wing movements seek the preservation of fixed, hereditary and stratified class distinctions in society with the concomitant privileges attached to them. Left-wing movements seek to abolish these distinctions or reform them to the point of becoming negligible.

“But isn’t this the Marxist definition?”

No, but before I get to this, some comments on the strength of this definition.

First, it supplies an ideal “ur-conservative” type that to varying but reasonable extents fit the first modern conservative movements — Carlism, ultra-royalism, legitimism, capital-T Traditionalism as ruled out by Vatican I (not to be confused with Guenon/Evola/etc.), Prussian pietist conservatism, Hallerian restorationism, the Metternichian system and its advocates, etc.

This ur-conservative type begins to water down significantly after the social dislocations of the belle epoque, with the rise of e.g. Boulangisme and the Ligue des patriotes, the anti-Dreyfusard elements in the Action Francaise, the Freikonservativen (high/patrician, but themselves negations of the higher restorationism of the Kreuzzeitung, as anticipated by the reformist Wochenblattpartei, or by liberal cameralists, see also “Alter und neuer Konservatismus” (<https://carlsbad1819.wordpress.com/2018/06/08/old-and-new-conservatism-1852/>), etc.) and the volkisch movements (low/plebeian) in Germany, “one-nation conservatism” in England, etc.

With the Conservative Revolution, fascism and the myriad of yellow socialisms and third positionisms afterward, the bastardization becomes acute to the point of losing most reference to the origin point. The Nouvelle Droite, Neue Rechte and the various so-called “neo-fascist” movements have been beating this dead horse ever since, and today the European right consists of awkward coalitions of small-n national socialists with what are basically New Liberals (think Mill, not Gladstone) with centre-right social views.

This dynamic is at the forefront of our definition rather than being obscured by tangled up accommodations.

This definition doesn’t strive to posit a universal divide in human psychology, as that would be too overloaded.

As a beneficial side effect of our implicit ur-conservatism being linked specifically to *high* conservatism, we totally exclude all forms of populism. This has two desirable properties: a) we avoid the fragile apologetics needed to “traditionalize” right-wing populism which we discussed above, and instead identify it as the deviation it is, b) we acknowledge that all modern political formations are tainted by leftism without throwing our hands in despair about the impossibility of figuring out what “right” is beyond “non-left.”

Note I am not saying populism is necessarily *bad*. In normal circumstances it is, but we don’t live in normal circumstances. Too many people are emotionally invested in carrying the “right-wing” label that they take any questioning of this to be an insult. Now, on the political arena, the left-right spectrum is

taken for granted to segregate positions and smear opponents — this is an unavoidable part of the game. But in a more intellectual setting, I don't need to consider you right-wing to agree with say, your immigration-restrictionist platform, nor do I need derive any emotional unease from voting for people I don't consider right-wing if I consider their policies worthwhile.

But back to the question of whether this is the Marxist definition restated. It is not. Economic "classes" are not really classes. Income brackets are not classes. Income sources (rentier, profiteer, wage-earner, etc.) are not class distinctions, especially not in advanced capitalism where the so-called "middle classes" can serve several roles simultaneously. Making more money than someone else does not make you of a different class from them. Let me recount an exchange from a Transylvanian travelogue from the 1840s that I've mentioned previously (<https://carlsbad1819.wordpress.com/2017/10/04/old-school-cuckservatism/>):

One day [one of these] gentlemen came to complain to a neighboring magnate. He took off his hat, which he held in his hand while the lord listened to him. The latter induced the gentleman to cover himself, for the weather was cold.

"I will not do it," said the gentleman. "I know what respect I owe you."

"What?," replied the smiling man, who was a man of wit, "Are we not both equal, both nobles?"

"No doubt, but I am a simple gentleman, and you are a powerful lord."

"I can not be more powerful than you, we have the same privileges. I am only rich."

"This is true."

"So you're bowing to my purse?"

"In fact, you are right. You are rich, and I am not. There is no other difference."
And he proudly put on his hat.

The way political economy uses "class" is quite separate from the way an older jurist like Charles Loyseau (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Loyseau) (1564-1627), who spoke of "ordres et simples dignites." Here, excerpting in detail, is what an order (or traditional class) is, as opposed to how it is used now:

Because we cannot live together in equality of condition, it is necessary that some command and others obey. Those who command have several orders, ranks, or degrees. Sovereign lords command all within their state, addressing their commands to the great; the great [address their commands] to the middling, the middling to the small, and the small to the people. And the people, who obey all of the others, are themselves separated into several orders and ranks, so that over each of them there are superiors responsible for the whole order before the magistrates, and the magistrates to the sovereigns. Thus by means of these multiple divisions and subdivisions, the several orders make up a general order, and the several Estates a state well ruled, in which there is a good harmony and consonance, and a correspondence and interconnectedness from the highest to the lowest, in such a way that through order a numberless variety is led to unity.

The order to which this book is dedicated is a species of dignity, or honorable quality, which pertains to a number of persons in the same manner and under the same name. It does not in itself confer upon them any particular public power. But besides the rank that it gives them, it also brings a particular aptitude and capacity to attain either offices or seigneuries... In French it is particularly called Estate, as being the dignity and the quality which is the most stable and the most inseparable from a man...

As for its definition, order may be defined as dignity with aptitude for public power. For as I have said [elsewhere], there are three kinds of dignity: office, seigneurie, and order. They are related not only in terms of what they have in common, namely dignity, but also in terms of what makes them different, namely public power, in which they each participate differently. For office implies the exercise of public power, which is why I have defined it as dignity with public function; seigneurie implies ownership of public power, which is why I have defined it as dignity with possession of public power; and, finally, order implies only aptitude for public power, which is why I have defined it as dignity with aptitude for public power.

For example, membership in the order of the clergy does not in itself confer any public power, but it nevertheless renders those who are honored by it capable of benefices and ecclesiastical offices. Similarly, nobility is an order which is not in itself a public charge, but which gives its members a fitness for several high offices and seigneuries assigned to the nobility. Similarly, to be a doctor or licentiate in the law is not an office, but it is an order necessary to attain offices in the judiciary. Hence the office follows the order, and is conferred upon those who are of the order to which it is assigned.

It should therefore follow clearly that modern societies do not have classes as such. They are classless societies, and liberalism is the means by which classless societies are governed.

We do have social networks, clubs, professional associations and subcultures, but these aren't classes. The "power elite" is not passed on as a station, it is an ever-shifting network of meritocratic entrants. I still use the term "class" myself in a new-school sense out of convention, but they should by no means be conflated.

August Wilhelm Rehberg (1757-1836), a contemporary critic of Kant and a corporatist conservative (though a reform-minded one), once defended birthright like this: "Human beings in civil society must be compelled to honor what their parents promised and began. No state could exist for long if children and other heirs were not made to take the place where the deceased once stood. Who would want to enter into commitments when the uncertain death of one of the committed parties released them of all obligations?"

Such an ethic is nonexistent in liberal societies, and it shows the classless nature of them.

Rehberg himself wanted to reform the nobility, and he was definitely in the camp of relaxing class distinctions. However, even though with hindsight these things end up becoming slippery slopes, he by no means wanted to dilute orders and dignities to the point of making them purely decorative, and so is still in the "right." But here's an example of his grievances, from the opening chapters of *Über den deutschen Adel* (1803):

The original authority of all free Germans to pay only the taxes they have granted themselves, and to combine with each other, in order to protect this and other rights, by which the princes have been compelled to appoint state assemblies, has in the course of time been limited to those who sit on provincial assemblies, and form closed corporations.

Through these knighthoods, all other landowners and mere peasants are excluded from consultation on a common diet. Since every one who was personally dependent on one gentleman had to be represented by him against the higher and against the stronger, he could not be asked to vote at the same time as his patron. It is therefore a general principle that destitute peasants can not appear at the Diet; and the example of the old custom in the Duchy of Wurttemberg can not be cited against it. For there were appointed from the sovereign prince of his own landlords only: and not the captives of knightly landlords, which did not exist in the land. Even in the few other German provinces, where the landowners, who are not knighted, they are not interest-bearing peasants, but freeholders.

If the right of estate is necessarily bound up with such temporary possession of property, there must be a pernicious indifference to the affairs of the common man, and even of the corporation in which new members enter and leave. Restrictions of that right can therefore have a beneficial effect also in the new state rights of our day, in which ownership is more important than in the personality of the owners. The Statutes, on the other hand, which have been erected now and then by the old families, in order to deny entry into their association to all owners of land-ready goods, who are not of the knightly sort, are just as unfair, as harmful. A knightly way of life could have been demanded in the spirit of those times, but instead of this a noble domestic art is often demanded: and this happened just in time, when the descendants of the chivalrous families began to escape the duties on which their privileges rested.

All aristocratic corporations have a natural tendency to constrict. A clear policy should persuade them to reinforce themselves by including those who might be dangerous to them as a competitor. But arrogance and obstinacy are contrary. The interest of the individual members increases as their numbers diminish: and they blind themselves to the consequences. Thus, in some knightly associations, noble origin, four ancestors, sixteen, are made a condition under which alone the right of statehood can be exercised.

From a purely chronological perspective, Rehberg might be called a reactionary — he wants a return to an earlier rustic communalism, and he does not object to rule by proprietors (freely admitting also that proprietorship by itself does not confer office), but by what he sees as an arbitrary ahistorical title enforced by exclusive extraconstitutional (in his view) ritterschaften. This has some similarities to Boulainvilliers' republicanism of the warrior nobility. (<https://carlsbad1819.wordpress.com/2018/04/20/boulainvilliers-project-for-aristocratic-rejuvenation/>).

Though in effect being a loosening of class boundaries ("include competitors"), the perspective is not "leftist" in any real way, but also notice that the things he's complaining about have absolutely no applicability to today's world. The phenomena he is describing are totally esoteric to the current year.

The enigmatic jurist Karl Friedrich Vollgraff (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Friedrich_Vollgraff). (1794-1863), sometimes identified as a proto-Spenglerian, wrote several treatises and commentaries on nobility, being their staunch defender despite his bourgeois and Masonic background. "The supremacy of the nobility rests chiefly on the fixity of its economic condition, its reputation with the peasant, and the value of the jurisdiction and police power left to it in the Federal Act" is how he summarized their standing circa 1837, and in the same work went as far as to say that legally "their property and property rights are wholly withdrawn from the legislation of the sovereign."

Now, I was speaking to Benjamin Welton, and he made an objection. Does a rightist have to defend class distinctions if they are *arbitrary*?

My response to him was that there could be no other. Though, more substantially, any pathological configuration of “class hegemony,” such as say Bioleninism (I’m not sure if I agree with that theory, but regardless) isn’t “classful” in any traditional sense as I just described. All of these things require some form of civic equality, liberalism and other class-liquidating mechanisms.

But I also think such objections are rooted in this dumb feel-good theory of a “natural aristocracy.” That there exist some sort of well-defined social prerequisites by which people will assume the “true,” “fair,” and “organic” ranks and orders in a society on basis of their hereditary endowments without some “arbitrary” impediment. And that any ranks achieved through other means are parasitic. This is a populist and producerist rhetorical technique. Natural aristocracy is codeword for meritocracy, and all it does is overproduce elites.

That’s about it. I’d suggest that if you can avoid using the left-right spectrum in favor of something more expressive, go for it, but it’s useful to have this “hochkonservative” definition at hand as an analytical device that I think addresses the deficiencies of other meanings. And as far as I can tell, it *is* the original definition to begin with...

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9 thoughts on “The left-right spectrum put in its proper meaning and context”

1. Pingback: [The left-right spectrum put in its proper meaning and context | Reaction Times](#)

2. wiseguy says:

[June 15, 2018 at 1:18 am](#)

I’m surprised you didn’t go with something like this: the right is in favor of Christendom, and the left is in favor of the Revolution.

Of course, as a one sentence definition, it’s quite simplified, but an essay would be able to further elaborate it. For example, the essence of the Revolution, how ancillary legacy institutions and norms of Christendom are defended by imperfect rightists, when and where this spectrum is applicable, analogous labels in non-Western settings, the nature of syncretic ideologies, and so on.

[Reply](#).

3. marcusmontisursinensis says:

[June 19, 2018 at 5:55 pm](#)

What did you mean by a “Traditionalism ruled out by Vatican I” ?

[Reply](#).

◦ [Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur](#) says:

[June 19, 2018 at 7:20 pm](#)

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15013a.htm>

Reply.

- o Michael Rothblatt says:

June 19, 2018 at 9:20 pm

Paradoxically, his heterodoxy may even have helped his popularity with French Catholics. According to Triomphe, many were attracted to Maistre's works because they could find there "under a false tag, the counterband ideology which their consciences would have rejected if it had been more truthfully labelled 'Protestant heresy' or 'Germanic mysticism'.

— from How Catholic a Reaction? by Richard Lebrun

Reply.

4. slumlord says:

June 23, 2018 at 1:11 pm

This is a good post. I started writing a reply but it ended up being too long so I put a post over at my blog instead.

Beyond Left and Right: A Reply to Carlsbad 1819

Reply.

5. Zenit says:

July 7, 2018 at 8:18 am

>Right-wing movements seek the preservation of fixed, hereditary and stratified class distinctions in society with the concomitant privileges attached to them.

Then, North Korea with its hereditary caste system is the most right wing country in the world, according to your definition.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Songbun>

Reply.

- o Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur says:

July 7, 2018 at 9:59 am

Part of historicizing the definition means mostly excluding non-Western societies. Marxist-Leninist (and by extension Juche) countries don't have estates and formally adhere to civic equality; the stratification mechanism is an artifact of their system of economic distribution. But this does illustrate a limitation with the term "reactionary" for instance — a communist hardliner resisting liberalization would qualify as a reactionary in a literal sense.

Reply.

6. Pingback: Temptations of right-wing socialism | Carlsbad 1819

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