



CONSERVATISM AS A HISTORICAL PHENOMENON*

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THE PROGRAMMATIC AND EXCLUSIVE putting in order (inclusion, incorporation, classification) of conservatism as a social-political and ideological phenomenon in the overall (total) spectrum of the New Times means two things: first, that this (conservatism) does not constitute a historical or anthropological constant, but a concrete (specific) historical phenomenon,

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which is connected with a certain epoch (era, age) and a certain place, and which passes (goes, slips) by and ends or expires with this epoch, or also even before its (this epoch's) end; and secondly, that it (conservatism) cannot be understood with a starting point of its (conservatism's) enmity towards the French Revolution, but that the better (best) thing is to start from its (conservatism's) contrast(ing) with certain distinctive (distinguishing) features (differentiae specifica) of the New Times in general, which conservatives regarded as revolutionary. Even, however, if agreement prevailed on (with regard to) this double (dual, twin) position – crudely (grossly) formulated and expressed in this way – and again, we would not have gained (won) many things from the point of view of content, since the crucial, for our examination of the problem (problem examination), characteristics of the epoch, inside of which conservatism is formed, is, or is made, active, and finally decomposes, have not been determined and defined with the requisite (necessary) clarity (lucidity) –and moreover, since a satisfactory answer to the question of which are the ultimate sources of conservative thought inside the history of society and of ideas has not [[yet]] been given. Because the ascertainment that only from inside of the contrasting with, and opposition to, certain features of the New Times, certain ideological positions were condensed in order to constitute whatever ex post facto (in retrospect) was called/named “conservatism”, does not insinuate (imply) or connote (signify) eo ipso that these (ideological positions) came into being (were born/begotten/engendered) ex nihilo and necessarily inside of (within), and on account of, this contrast and opposition. In actual fact, the intensity of the struggle in the foreground made the backstage (background) of social history and of the history of ideas be forgotten, such that the optical illusion could be easily created that conservatism –not simply as the coherently (cohesively) rationalised and modernised social-political stance, but already as the elementarily structured circle of ideas– does not constitute anything other than the reversal of (ideological and political) revolution, hence,

something in the end, derivative, or a spin-off. Let us say, nonetheless, in advance that the in itself welcome and – in accordance with the phenomena – already predominant and prevailing tendency (trend) for the very beginning(s) of conservatism to be chronologically placed (put, posited), not in [[its]] enmity vis-à-vis the French Revolution, but already in the rejection of the rationalism of the Enlightenment, does not suffice – of or on its own – at all if we want to exhaust its (conservatism’s) historical and ideological content; because, on the one hand, the period of time (time period, temporal distance/interval), about which we are talking, is much greater (larger, longer) than what usually is thought, and on the other hand, in this way (i.e. of the aforesaid prevailing tendency), the perspective (prospect) of social history thus narrows in a manner disastrous, pernicious and destructive –in particular in relation to this problem [[of when conservatism came into being and unfolded]]–.¹ Conversely, attempts

¹ Already E. Kaufmann (»Über die konservative Partei« (1922) = *Gesammelte Schriften*, III, Göttingen 1960, pp. 133-175, here: p. 137) placed/posited the “very beginning of conservatism inside the history of ideas in its (conservatism’s) rivalry against the whole thought of rationalism”. For K. Mannheim, again, the cause of the appearance of conservatism as a conscious and a “conceptionally or notionally oriented current (stream)” was the fact “that the modern world had become dynamic” (»Das konservative Denken« = *Wissenssoziologie*. Auswahl aus dem Werk, eingel. u. herausg. v. K. Wolff, Berlin-Neuwied 1964, pp. 408-508, here: p. 423). This, of course, entails something more than the simple reduction of conservatism to the concrete (specific) event of 1789, although Mannheim tends to dissolve the content of conservative thought before the French Revolution inside the unclear concept of the “worship or cult (adoration) of tradition” or of “primaeval (primordial or primitive) conservatism” (cf. (foot)note 3 below). More consistent than anyone else, F. Valjavec tried to prove (demonstrate) that conservatism must “initially, be understood not as a reaction to the French Revolution..., but as a force against the rational Enlightenment and –to a smaller degree– against the attacks of authoritarianism (absolutism, autocracy, despotism)” (»Die Entstehung des europäischen Konservativismus« = H.-G. Schumann (Hg.), *Konservativismus*, Köln 1974, pp. 138-155, here: p. 141; cf. *Die Entstehung der politischen Strömungen in Deutschland 1770-1815*, München 1951, p. 5). Of course, Valjavec does not only consider conservatism as a reaction against the Enlightenment, but also every reaction against the Enlightenment as conservatism (see e.g. the second of his works above, p. 255ff.), so that in the end he loses sight of the distinctive (distinguishing) features of conservative thought. Moreover, he has no familiarity with the examination of problems of previous centuries, in regard to what concerns social history and the history of ideas. The study by M. Greiffenhagen, who adopts and further carries forward or promotes Valjavec’s basic thesis/position regarding conservatism as a reaction against the Enlightenment and its (the Enlightenment’s) rationalism, presents the same weaknesses. His intimations (allusions, hints) as to the existence of conservative tendencies or trends already before the 18th century, do not surpass (outreach, outdo, outgrow, transcend), nevertheless, the amateur –as we must characterise it– mention of the (well-)known/familiar poem by John Donne regarding the New Philosophy and its (New Philosophy’s) allegedly destructive influence (*Das Dilemma des Konservativismus in Deutschland*, München 1971, p. 41); the central problem of the concept of sovereignty (domination, authority, predominance) and its world-theoretical framework, as well as the structure of the (pre)dominant (or authoritative) (sovereign) ideology of *societas civilis* entirely escape (elude) him, as they escape and elude all the researchers above. His (Greiffenhagen’s) one-sided (unilateral), as he confesses (admits), orientation towards the history of ideas (which H. Gerstenberger already justly found fault with, »Konservativismus in der Weimarer Republik« = G.-K. Kaltenbrunner (Hg.), *Rekonstruktion des Konservativismus*, Freiburg 1972, pp. 331-348, here: p. 332), not only itself (i.e. the said orientation) has gaps and lacunae, since the development (evolution) of *political* theory in the

and endeavours at tracing or tracking down the pre-revolutionary (inter/cor)relations (nexuses) of conservatism did not surpass the level of elementary ascertainments and moreover, also like the previous attempts, remained closed within, or in regard to, the horizon of the 18th century.² And in

New Times is not followed almost at all, but also carries or lures him away in his futile attempt and effort at the reconstruction of one and only one conservative theory, by simply sticking together quotes/citations from authors as completely different as e.g. Möser and Gehlen. Greiffenhagen knows himself that that could cost him “reproach and censure (reproof) in the historical part”, however, thus, he simply makes things worse for himself. Conversely, W. Ribhegge correctly stresses that conservatism is not a simple ideological phenomenon, but a “composite social process”. Furthermore, he considers it (conservatism), and again correctly, as a process determined as to content and temporally determined; the use of this concept beyond its historical limits (confines) would make it useless (incapacitate it) (»Konservatismus. Versuch zu einer kritischen-historischen Theorie« = H. G. Schumann (Hg.), *Konservatismus*, Köln 1974, pp. 112-136, here: pp. 122, 123). Nonetheless, he (Ribhegge) himself lapses into this mistake (of considering conservatism a simple ideological phenomenon) when he talks of/about conservatism not only in relation to the counter-revolutionary movement after 1789 (there he puts (posits), erroneously, the temporal beginning/commencement of conservatism), but also in relation to the bourgeoisie (bourgeois class) after 1848, and indeed also in relation to the not-in-the-least revolutionary working class of our contemporaneous mass society. Because he knows that something like that makes impossible the “material definition” of conservatism, as he himself demands (p. 125), he has recourse to an extremely rushed use of cybernetic models, and presents conservatism as an auto-regulating system, capable of adapting to historical changes thanks to its all the more functional feed-back (pp. 126/7). However, this perception or view necessarily leads to a supra-historical hypostatisation of conservatism; moreover, it is contradictory for (the) resistance to (against) the thesis (position) that society is constructed at will (as desired or in accordance with one’s volition) to be regarded as the beginning of conservatism, and immediately after, there is talk of conservatism inside/within contemporary mass society, which is characterised precisely by the prevailing and predominance of this thesis/position (of society being constructed at will [[translator adds: when conservatism is supposed to have been tied to time and place, and when in modern mass society the at-will construction of society predominates, and hence there can be no effective resistance]]). From all that I know, out of all the notable (distinguished or meritorious) investigations of our problem, only S. Huntington’s study doubts the connection of conservatism to a certain epoch (era, age). For him, conservatism is simply the legalising or legitimate ideology of the threatened social system on each and every respective occasion, irrespective of time and place; thus, the content of conservatism changes continually, and the formation of a conservative tradition becomes impossible (»Conservatism as an Ideology«, *The American Political Science Review* 51 (1957) pp. 454-473, esp. pp. 455, 468/9). Apart from the fact that this perception or view has no heuristic (investigative) value, it is disproved (proven wrong, refuted, confuted) with the empirical proof that from certain medieval writers up to the final representatives of conservatism in the 19th century, there exists a continuity of contents and thought structures, which we must consider to be an intellectual(-spiritual) tradition *stricto sensu*. Something similar had never existed ever before and nowhere else. Incidentally, also Huntington himself does not try or endeavour to adduce examples of conservative ideology from Antiquity or the East, but rather places/posits/puts the “first phase” of conservatism in the 16th century.

² Very superficial is the exposition of conservative political theory of the 18th century as we find it in R. Palmer (*Das Zeitalter der demokratischen Revolution. Eine vergleichende Geschichte Europas und Amerikas von 1760 bis zur französischen Revolution*, Germ. tr., Frankfurt a. M. 1970, p. 66 ff.), even though the author, whilst invoking Valjavec, Égret and Lefebvre, adopts the noteworthy (notable, remarkable) ascertainment that conservatism is not simply a reaction to and against the Revolution, but a self-contained (independent or autonomous) current (stream) of the 18th century, in relation to which the Revolution itself must be regarded as a reaction (p. 35). Lost in a multitude of details is K. Epstein, who, of course, consciously makes good use of (or exploits) some small texts hitherto not recognised or underestimated, however, from a conceptual and structural point of view, he frequently remains (lags) behind the achievements of previous (anterior) research. Although, he (Epstein) follows all the authors who pursued a historically functional (usable) definition of conservatism and, correspondingly, apprehends or perceives it (conservatism) as an answer to the challenge of the Enlightenment and of the Revolution (*Die Ursprünge des Konservatismus in Deutschland. Der Ausgangspunkt: die Herausforderung durch die Französische Revolution 1770-1806*, Germ. transl. Frankfurt a. M.-Berlin-Wien 1973, p. 17ff.), nonetheless, whilst he starts from three different ideal types of the conservative character (defender of the status quo, conservative reformer, reactionary), he dangerously comes close to or approaches

both cases, the dimension of those perceptions or views – originating already from the early or germinal New Times – which later were called “conservative”, became perceived ever so slightly (hardly became apprehended at all), and, thus, the conservative phenomenon could not be comprehended to all its extent – precisely because each and every respective picture or image of the New Times was not full and perspicuous (clear, specific, lucid, articulate, distinct), both from the point of view of social history, as well as from the point of view of the history of ideas. The verification (confirmation, calibration) of the above-mentioned dimension (of conservatism originating from/in the early New Times) in the framework of the stricto sensu (inter)related world-theoretical features of the New Times, constitutes one of the basic aims of our research.

The historically determined character of the conservative phenomenon in practice is admitted to (confessed) even also by those who contend that conservatism has anthropological roots.³ Of course, they (those who contend

the psychological-anthropological way of looking at the problem, not being able, thus, to explain the historically attested to and most frequent case in accordance with which the same person plays in alternation (or interchangeably) the three roles, as well, according to his tactical and polemical needs, i.e. in obeying or heeding (sticking to) simply the supreme (highest) law of power.

³ Thus, H. Cecil accepts a “natural conservatism”, however, he regards the French Revolution as a catalytic factor of conservative theory and politics, notwithstanding the appearance of conservative tendencies in the times or age of the Reformation etc. (*Conservatism*, London 1912, esp. pp. 24/5, 29). In an anthropological, rather than historical, treatise, J. Romein supported the view that since the Renaissance and the Reformation, especially however from the 18th century, the European nations were detached (severed, cut away) from the “General Human Type” in entering onto a destructive (disastrous) path; conservatism is thus nostalgia for lost naturalness and humanity (»Über den Konservativismus als historische Kategorie« = *Wesen und Wirklichkeit des Menschen. Festschrift für H. Plessner*, hg. v. K. Ziegler, Göttingen 1957, pp. 215-244, esp. pp. 229, 237). Romein does not explain why only certain people, with certain interests and convictions, felt this nostalgia, nor how it was possible for so many other people to have wanted and to have been able to deny with such insistence their own nature. Mannheim expressly uses the accusation of “natural conservatism”, as it is found in Cecil, in order to found the distinction between the simply “reflexive (reflective, reflectional)” worship or cult (adoration) of tradition, and conscious, “conceptionally oriented” conservatism, *loc. cit.*, (note 1), pp. 412/3. Despite its exceptionally problematic character (cf. Valjavec, »Entstehung« [note 1], p. 141), this distinction is made with the correct intention of conservatism being comprehended not as a psychological, but as a historical category. Nonetheless, the question is posed as to why the worship or cult of tradition must be regarded as the necessary preliminary tier (step, grade, rung) of conservatism, if Mannheim’s ascertainment holds true that conservatives exist who do not behave in terms of the worship or cult of tradition, as well as the reverse (*loc. cit.*, p. 413). Let it be noted that the distinction between the worship or cult of tradition and conservatism, which is usually attributed to Mannheim, comes (emanates) from P. Rohden, and fulfils, in (regard to)/for him, apologetic functions: “healthy man is of his nature conservative... This kind of conservatism is of its nature mute (silent)”, even though it constitutes the “initial core (nucleus) of theoretical conservatism”. “Tradition can become a conscious value only when it’s existence is threatened”, as rationalism and the Revolution threatened it (»Deutscher und französischer Konservativismus«, *Die Dioskuren* 3 (1924), pp. 90-138, here: pp. 94, 96).

that conservatism has anthropological roots) never ((ever) themselves) managed (and, from what I know, did not even undertake or attempt) to give a coherent (cohesive) interpretation of history by being supported (propped up) by, or based on, the conviction that the conservation of an existing state of affairs (situation of things/matters) constitutes the natural predisposition or origin (layout, structure, system, arrangement, design) of “man”. Despite the most deficient exposition (account) of the psychological-anthropological theory regarding conservatism, we shall examine it here rapidly (quickly, tersely), because we are interested in being opposed from the very outset to the influence of conservative ideology on the scientific analysis of conservatism. It is worthwhile, indeed, for it to be pointed out that central common topoi of the manner (way, mode) with which conservatives themselves understand and present themselves, have infiltrated even also the perception or view of non-conservatives regarding conservatism. Thus, in the almost axiomatically expressed (uttered, reported) position/thesis of all sides, that is to say, that conservatism arose or came into being (was born/begotten/engendered) as a reaction against the French Revolution, or already against the Enlightenment, the conservative perception or view regarding the character of conservative man, – in accordance with which this (conservative man) here neither seeks nor commences (starts, begins) first, conflicts and clashes, but rather on the contrary, is the pre-eminently peace-loving (pacifistic) and peace-making (conciliatory) man, because he lives as (i.e. in the way) the natural or divine (godly) command of the pious conservatism of what has been handed down has ordered (requested, commissioned) –, is indirectly or distortedly reflected (mirrored); only the active violation (infringement) of this command (of the said pious conservatism of what has been handed down) on the part of others reignites in him (conservative man) the (i.e. his) drive (urge, impulse)

for/towards action.⁴ Nonetheless –if we leave aside axiological (value) preferences– no-one understands why this (reignition of the drive towards action) constitutes the distinctive (distinguishing) feature (differentia specifica) of conservative behaviour. No man reacts inimically to the stimulations (arousal(s)) of the environment for all the period of time (for as long as) nothing obstructs or gets in the way of (impedes) his self-preservation or the pursuit of power on his behalf; revolutionaries would have behaved themselves, as well, absolutely peacefully, if others (other people/men) did not put up resistance to them, but rather fulfilled most politely and nobly all their (the revolutionaries’) desires and wishes. Here, no psychological-anthropological predisposition or origin (layout, structure, system, arrangement, design) given from the very outset, but rather the relative position of all the respective subjects, i.e. their concrete and specific power in relation to all respective other people (others), remains determinative and decisive. Only from this perspective do we understand why the revolutionary, after he has already won, changes or transforms suddenly into the fervent defender of the existing order of things, and why the conservative, who is defeated (vanquished) or apprehensive (afraid, fearful) of defeat, flirts with violence and or exercises it (violence) overtly (blatantly). There is no reason to presume that this reorientation of political behaviour psychically troubles (torments, afflicts, inconveniences) conservative groupings (group formations) more than whatever [[is the case with]] other social forces. The feudal right of resistance and “tyrannicide”, the uprising and rebellion of aristocrats against the throne, in accordance with the example of the Fronde [[translator’s note: the Fronde was a series of civil wars in France between 1648 and 1653 (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fronde>)]], and dictatorship, constitute, as we shall see, historically documented and indeed typical forms of conservative activism. Conservatism and activism do not constitute, therefore, an unbridgeable

⁴ Cf. Rohden’s phrases which we quote[[d]]/cite[[d]] in the previous notation (footnote).

opposition, if we see the data/facts of historical reality, and we do not have the disposition to take at face value the ex post facto/in retrospect – and for polemical reasons – constructed self-portraiture of conservatives. The human type, who allegedly or supposedly is piously dedicated and, as it were, contemplatively (in terms of gazing with devotion towards the divine, tradition etc.) – to supra-individual tradition and to the superior (higher) forces which govern the Universe, whilst accordingly regulating his behaviour, has never existed to a historically notable extent. Long before being threatened by the Revolution, the most significant members of the higher/superior strata of feudal society, or of the society of the ancien régime, lived by developing an intense activity with their primary goal/end or purpose being to improve (better) their social position of power through the obtainment of offices and wealth. If these strata did not ever undertake or attempt some revolution with the subsequent radical social meaning of the term, the reason was not that they were lacking the psychological properties (qualities or characteristics) for something like that, but most simply that they could not, nor did they want to, overturn (upend or overthrow) themselves (their own selves). This commonplace means: the psychological-anthropological theory regarding conservatism cannot hold true if it does not prove that whoever supports the existing order of things, does it exclusively or primarily because it is psychically impossible for him to conduct himself or behave other than peacefully and philanthropically. Such a perception or view would entail, incidentally, the absurdity (absurdness, paralogism) that all respective rulers, who precisely are opposed to revolutionary overthrows (subversion(s), overturning(s)), are much less in a position to cope with (pull through, ride out) the harsh (hard, cruel) demands of ruling and domination than those who are ruled, dominated or are uprising and rebelling. However, social history shows by way of proof and documentation that at least most of those nobles, who against revolutionary Reason proclaimed calm love and the cultivation of tradition inside the eternal bosom (embrace,

hug, womb) of God and of Nature, nurtured (nourished) a most lively and in actual fact demonstrative sense of superiority vis-à-vis their subordinates, whilst drawing from this superiority (a) legitimation for their rule and dominance (sovereignty, authority). Against the psychological-anthropological theory regarding conservatism, it can be observed generally that neither the drive (impulse, urge) of preservation, nor the drive (impulse, urge) of overthrowing/ overturning or subversion characterises human behaviour in its totality, but rather the pursuit of self-preservation or of the extension of one's own (familiar) power; at times, conservation, at other times, subversion (overthrowing and overturning) serves this uppermost/ topmost, i.e. paramount (supreme) goal (end or purpose). Moreover, the acceptance of a conservative inclination (propensity, proclivity) of/in man has no value for the consideration and the understanding of historical phenomena. In this sector, concepts are only fertile which allow us to conclude the specific, concrete content of a certain stance and behaviour even also when its bearer is not named. However, the psychological-anthropological concept of conservatism is summoned (mobilised, called upon, conscripted) by current language use/usage to characterise both communist leaders, who support the primacy and priority of heavy industry and of armaments (equipment, armoury) and re-arming in the framework of a strictly planned economy, as well as American politicians, who are proponents of the principles of laissez-faire against home-grown (local, native, indigenous) "liberals".

A comprehension or grasping of the conservative phenomenon corresponding to things (i.e. reality), demands moreover the putting aside of a second serious and widespread fallacy (delusion, errancy), which also passed/went/got into scientific research whilst coming and emanating from the self-understanding and the self-presentation of conservatives. We are talking about the perception or view that conservatives abhor (detest) thought (intellectual) construct(ion)s in themselves, and that they have recourse to theory only in resisting theoreticising

opponents.⁵ This perception or view matches the idealised image or picture of the conservative, who, by following his own natural predispositions, lives with certainty and faith (belief) inside tradition and does not think (cogitate) nor plan outside of its (tradition's) framework – however, this has hardly any (the slightest) relationship with historical data (facts). This (perception/view of the conservative) gives rise to or begets, thus, the erroneous impression that pre-revolutionary *societas civilis* did not know of ideas and ideologies, both as systematic thought (intellectual) construct(ion)s, as well as weapons. However, something like that was impossible because sovereignty and domination (dominance, authority) in this society, also just like every other domination/sovereignty at the latest from the epoch of the formation of developed cultures (civilisations), had a need for legitimation, and moreover because every conflict or clash between groups of the ruling and dominant upper/higher stratum sought and found its own ideological justification, even if it did not surpass the framework of the basic convictions which generally predominated inside *societas civilis*. The theological, but also the political systems, which were formulated in the Middle Ages inside such conflicts and clashes and attempts/efforts at legitimation, do not lag behind the corresponding thought (intellectual) construct(ion)s of the New Times, neither as to argumentative refinement, nor as to systematic multilateralism and as to the claim of catholic (i.e. general or universal) force (power or validity). The world-theoretical core (nucleus), but also many central ideas of the ruling or dominant (authoritative, sovereign) and legitimising ideology of *societas civilis* were rescued (saved, salvaged) by moving onto (transitioning across to) conservative theory, which was formulated/expressed as an answer to the Enlightenment and the Revolution – and indeed not marginally, but by carrying out/executing the

⁵ In lieu of many other conservatives, who represent this perception or concept, see typically H.-J Schoeps, *Konservative Erneuerung. Ideen zur deutschen Politik*, Stuttgart 1958, p. 22. Schoeps also shares (in) or identifies and sympathises with the anthropological interpretation of conservatism, and hence talks of “man’s essence (substance)” etc. (p. 20).

function of the ideational axis, around which conservative thought revolved henceforth. The demonstration of this uninterrupted continuity, as we shall undertake it in this work, contains eo ipso the confutation (refutation, negation, disproof) of the reflexive, as it were, involuntary or unintended character of conservative theory. An essential difference exists between the view that conservative thought was *created* inside the (i.e. its) defence against the Enlightenment or against the Revolution, and the view that inside this defence of theirs, conservatives of the 18th and of the 19th century used the much older circle of ideas of *societas civilis*, and they *reformulated* them by taking into consideration the polemical needs of the then concrete (specific) situation. If, however, this updating/modernisation (revitalisation) of motifs of traditional thought took place in the form of reaction to, and against, ideological positions (theses) of a foe, the formulation/expression of ideas pertaining to natural law etc. of revolutionary rationalism, also constituted itself equally a reaction to, and against, the ruling and dominant (authoritative, sovereign) ideology of *societas civilis*, indeed it existed from the very outset as the conscious and expedient (purposeful) argumentative reversal of it (the ruling ideology of *societas civilis*), and, in this sense, had a character much more intensively reflexive than the modernised version of conservatism: because *every* position or thesis comes into being (arises, is born/begotten/engendered) as an opposite (opposition or counter-position) or anti-thesis, and not only or mainly the conservative position or thesis, as the apologists for the conservative position/thesis want to contend, and together with them, all those who do not know how to make clear distinctions.

On the other hand, the fact that the foes of the social domination (authority, sovereignty, dominance) of the hereditary aristocracy developed a particularly lively ideological activity, especially from the 17th century, was not due to their particular anthropological texture (composition or nature), but to their concrete

(specific) situation, where the lack of weighty social power had to be counterbalanced with their predominance on the front of the intellect(-spirit). The rich production of conservative works, [[nevertheless,]] which began without delay, proved that the theoretical charismata or gifts of the conservatives were not at all smaller than those of their foes, since they slipped, wormed or entered thoroughly and in great detail into all the contentious and controversial matters (issues), making in fact (indeed) certain general findings (ascertainments), which constituted a permanent gain for modern social science being formed [[at that time]]. Their (The conservatives') proclaimed abhorrence (odium, repulsion) for ([[shown]] against) the abstractions of theoretical thought has absolutely no relation(ship) with the matter/issue of their theoretical talent and with the concrete/specific, on their part, handling of theory's weapons; it was a purely polemical abhorrence, i.e. it emanated (sprung) from the particular eminence (high standing/status) of theory in the foe's armoury. In other words, the struggle against abstract theoreticisation neither ought to be taken at (its) face value, nor be regarded as the expression of a firm or established/consolidated – having taken root psychologically-anthropologically – need of “conservative man”, but becomes perceived and apprehended in its specific/concrete function(ing), that is, in the function(ing) of an intensely symbolic act(ion) (acting), which gives away (unveils, takes the wraps off, divulges, discloses) and stamps enmity; if the revolutionaries appeared in the foreground (had come to the fore) by/whilst rejecting every theory, the conservatives would have been forced to take Reason and theory under their protection⁶ – in any case, they (the conservatives) defended the concept of culture (civilisation) and the out of/from nature (i.e. the natural) existence of society, whereupon the revolutionary ideology wore the veil or cloak (cover) of Rousseauism etc.. The

⁶ This analysis can be understood simply only (with)in the framework/context of a general theory regarding the polemical character and the corresponding symbolic functions of the intellect(-spirit); see P. Kondylis, *Macht und Entscheidung. Die Herausbildung der Weltbilder und die Wertfrage (= Power and Decision. The formation of world images and the question/problem of values (value question/problem)*, Stuttgart 1984, ch. III.

necessary enmity of conservatives vis-à-vis theory had to –precisely because it was understood polemically and not literally– be convincingly articulated in order to exercise public influence, whereupon it itself took theoretical form; incidentally, only theoretically could the idealised description of a “healthy” and “organic” society be undertaken, which is [[purportedly]] not created by abstract theories, nor does it also need them.

This wavering (fluctuation, vacillation) and indecisiveness – (which also manifests itself in the persistence (perseverance) with regard to rational argumentation, even though simultaneously rationalism is repelled (repulsed, beaten off, rebuffed), and the domination of Reason (Logos) is rejected inside the human soul) –,⁷ can be considered or be criticised (censured) as contradictory only if we overlook the polemical meaning of litigation (a quarrel or dispute), if we take the declarations of the litigants (or disputants) at (their) face value, and if we moreover forget that the phenomenon (of wavering (fluctuation, vacillation) and indecisiveness) has its analogies (correspondence(s)) inside the history of ideas (e.g. the rational argumentation of theologians in order to prove the limits (confines) of man’s cognitive possibilities and the necessity of revelation, or, the elaborate and masterly (skillful, ornate) syllogistic reasoning of the Enlightenment philosophers of sentiment (feeling, emotion), and the subsequent (posterior) “philosophy of life” against the intellect (understanding) and in favour of the elemental force of the pulsating feeling (sense, emotion, sentiment) etc.), and consequently is not due to a particular enmity towards theory, or to some theoretical destitution (indigence, penury, want, neediness), but to the complicated dialectics of the unconscious relations between “rationalism” and “irrationalism”.⁸ Equally

⁷ Rohden makes this ascertainment in referring to the French worshippers and cultists of tradition around 1800, *loc. cit.* (note 3), p. 128. Greiffenhagen generalises it (the said ascertainment of repelling rationalism and rejecting Reason etc.) and places it at the (epi)centre of his thoughts on the dilemma of conservatism (see (foot)note 1 [[above]]).

⁸ Regarding this most significant point, see the work which is referred to in (foot)note 6 [[above]], and also, P. Kondylis, *Die Aufklärung*, Stuttgart, 1981, p. 36 ff..

flippant or frivolous is the view/perception that that the allegedly innate enmity of conservatism towards theory is automatically echoed in the (not at all reproachable (reprehensible, blameworthy), from a conservative standpoint) weakness of conservatism to develop a systematic and united theory. However, it is not possible for us to deny the systematic character of conservative theory if with that we mean (as also we must mean) that it starts from certain general premises accepted by all conservatives, from which (general premises), positionings are drawn vis-à-vis individual matters, or to which (general premises), these latter (individual matters) can be reduced. The lack of absolute theoretical coherence (cohesion) and the almost unlimited multiformity (great variety/diversity of form) in regard to individual points, in accordance with time and place (place and time), do not constitute the characteristic feature of conservative theory, but rather the natural (normal, physiological) concomitant of the historical life of all the great political –and not only political– ideologies. For the knower of the international history of liberalism and of democracy or of socialism, the multitudinous variety or diversity of their forms from country to country, and we can say, from decade to decade, does not constitute a secret. Inside all of that, however, certain fundamental perceptions, views and stances, which justify the unified comprehension and presentation of each and every respective ideological phenomenon, remain discernible (conspicuous, distinct, distinguishable). Thus, are things, also as to conservatism, however, this can become apparent and manifest (overt, obvious) only when its (conservatism's) historical content is determined and defined clearly, and in this way an end is put to the arbitrary use of the concept, at least in scientific analyses.

And still other commonplaces of conservative self-understanding and self-presentation have crept – not without a detrimental influence – into the scientific discussion, and indeed such, with which conservatives themselves connect certain advantages or redeeming features of their positioning. It is,

therefore, necessary to examine more carefully certain central entries of/in the conservative vocabulary and wordbook in order to trace (track down) their – determinative – polemical dimension, and hence so we can become conscious/aware of their historical dependencies. With the coquettish (dandy, vain) enmity of conservatives towards/vis-à-vis theory (coquettish because it claims for itself an intellectual(-spiritual) superiority), their (conservatives’) declared preference for the “empirically given” and the “specific/concrete”, correlates or interrelates.⁹ Beyond the fact that advocacy in favour of experience (empirical reality) does not constitute itself an empirical judgement [[translator adds: because empirically, people can and do advocate in favour of the spirit (as in the Spirit of the Holy Trinity) or equality and human rights universally, or that races “don’t exist”, but “racism” does, and all sorts of other Phantasms and Outlandish Inanities (= Products of Deep-Level Psycho-Lobotomisation (ZIO and or NOT) etc.)], it is incumbent (to be imposed) that serious gnosis-theoretical (i.e. epistemological and pertaining-to-the-theory-of-knowledge) reservations be formulated and expressed against/vis-à-vis the conservative prioritising (putting first) of the “specific and concrete” in its contrasting with and opposition to the “abstract”. We must, first of all stress that the contrast(ing)/opposition itself of specific-concrete, and, abstract, constitutes an abstraction. Every comprehension and grasping of the specific and concrete, and every definition of that which is regarded as specific and concrete, is carried out always in the framework of a general perception or view of reality or of a world-theoretical positioning, which also provides the criteria, on the basis of which something (whatever) ought to be apprehended as abstract or as specific and concrete – and the perception of reality never emerges from the simple sum(mation) (addition, adding) of specific and concrete details or of individual forms of the specific and concrete, but precisely through an abstraction from this latter (specific and

⁹ In lieu of many others see Schoeps, loc. cit. (note 5), p. 22, and F. Wilson, “The Anatomy of Conservatives” = W. Stankiewicz (ed.), *Political Thought since World War II*, Clencoe 1964, pp. 337-355, esp. pp. 341/2. This commonplace is regarded as Burke’s great intellectual(-spiritual) last will and testament, however, it was formulated, expressed and used with polemical intent much earlier, see below ch. II, 4d [[Translator’s note: obviously I have to translate all of *Konservativismus* first (for readers to “see below” ...), say by about c. 2040 (!), if alive etc.]].

concrete), even though frequently it (the perception of reality) is obliged to seek inside the “specific and concrete” its positive or negative confirmation and representational explication (explanation, clarification, illustration). Precisely inside this search, it (the perception of reality) defines and or invents the “specific and concrete”, and in this sense, a world-theoretical abstraction does not constitute a lifting or removal of the specific and concrete, but their (the specific and concrete’s) presupposition (precondition, prerequisite);¹⁰ be that as it may, in the end, the abstract, and, the specific and concrete, are mixed (and blended with one another), until one does not stand out from the other. If things are thus, then the crucial question is this: who decides what must be considered specific and concrete, and, what abstract? The decision on/in regard to this matter, and indeed in politics [= Latin = in the political/civil/state/polity], is the correlation of power claims, and not one overall perception about “reality” lying beyond every subjective perspective. This, incidentally, is confirmed wonderfully if we examine what conservatives presented from time to time as “the specific and concrete”, and if we ascertain that this did not constitute anything other than the constituent element (part) of a construct(ion) destined to legitimise and champion (defend or shield) certain interests. If advocacy in favour of the specific and concrete in principle lures (entices) and disarms, the consequent, subsequent and inevitable determination and definition – according to content – of the specific and concrete, brings more or less clearly to light, the deeper wishes and intentions of all the respective “foes of every abstraction”.

The general principle of conservatism, that “healthy” politics ought to start from (the) real circumstances and conditions, and as far as possible, adapt itself to these (circumstances and conditions), is basically equally empty (from a logical point of view) and polemical (if we see it (the said general principle of

¹⁰ The (f)actual submission or subordination of the “specific and concrete” to the general perception of/ regarding reality is stated –perhaps not entirely involuntarily– in the Marxist-Leninist terminology, where that consideration, – which does not isolate things, but comprehends them in their mutual and reciprocal relationship and in their totality, that is to say, from the point of view of totality –, is characterised as specific and concrete.

conservatism) functionally), as much as the related advocacy in favour of experience (empirical reality), and of the specific and concrete too. Because every politics – both revolutionary as well as conservative – must know (i.e. be familiar with) exactly the [[at the time]] given circumstances, and be oriented to this knowledge, if it wants to have success. In this elementary sense, realism does not constitute a conservative monopoly (otherwise, conservatives would not have lost any great political fight (battle)), but belongs to the self-evident properties (qualities or characteristics) of the politically endowed and gifted individual or collective body of every tendency, precisely as in all factions the airy-fairy, deluded fantasists, and all those who rush, charge and pounce blindly (without seeing, without thinking, without understanding) exist. When, therefore, conservatives formulate and express the above principle, they do not mean it at (its) face value, but in reality they charge and load it (the above principle) tacitly (silently) with certain normative extensions and from that side road or detour try to draw or extract from the (political) command of the realistic weighing up of the existing circumstances and conditions and practical possibilities, the (ethical) command of respect for the given reality, by – in this way – attributing the virtue, asset or necessity of sober realism exclusively to a certain politics, i.e. to their own politics. However, the decisive matter *inside* politics is not if the real circumstances and conditions ought to be taken into account or not (since the first job or task of every politics, if it wants to be regarded as serious in practice, is to do precisely this), but the following: with what goal (end or purpose) in mind, are they (the real circumstances and conditions) taken into account? Conservatives commit the logical error/mistake (which, nonetheless has its ideological advantages) that they confuse their own goals (ends or purposes) with realism in general. To the extent where a conservative realism exists, i.e. a realism in/at the service of the conservative cause, it does not constitute the product of a natural conservative predisposition or origin (layout, structure, system, arrangement, design), as conservatives

themselves gladly interpret it (the said conservative realism), but rather the negative influence of external constraints. Prudent and sagacious adaptation to (the) (new) circumstances and conditions, of which conservatives are so proud, is carried out as a rule under the foe's pressure, who, at least in part, managed to push conservatives to the adoption of a defensive or good-natured and easy-going stance, precisely because, initially, that prudence and caution in respect of realistic adaptation was lacking in relation to them (conservatives), about which (prudence and caution in respect of realistic adaptation) they (conservatives) boast ex post facto (after the fact, in retrospect) – if they have survived.

Incidentally, an equally involuntary or unintentional, as well as usual (common), result of revolutions is that (some or many) conservatives discover their sympathy for “true” progress, and feel the need to take into consideration the “new situation”, whereupon they talk of the dynamic organic development (not only simply of the static organic constitution) of society and of history.

The above examples show that behind conservative commonplaces, self-evident and unshakeable truths do not exist, but matters/issues of interpretation, which – out of/because of their very own nature – are matters and issues of power. This is equally true also as to those basic conservative concepts, which upon being looked at the first time, appear to draw or extract their content from history itself, without in any other mediation or intervention. To these, “tradition” belongs, first of all. As a concept, “tradition” would automatically be perspicuous (at the price (with the price to be paid), of course, of being colourless and ideologically useless) if it included, without exception and choice, all (the) historical data. However, inside history nothing appears without being accompanied or being followed by its opposite – neither obedience without uprising (rebellion), nor continuity without radical rupture, nor orthodoxy and blessing without heresy and the curse. The historical testimonies are unfalse (non-false), and precisely because history as a whole closes inside

itself every manifestation, antinomy and possibility of man, traditions cannot but be constituted selectively, whereupon selection belongs to the competencies (areas of responsibility, jurisdiction(s)) of the (current or sometime also up-and-coming) ruler (sovereign, dominant person or group)).¹¹ For this reason, “tradition” does not mean definitely whatever conservatives mean with/by the term; (recti)linear and uninterrupted “revolutionary” or “democratic” traditions are stitched up or patched together, these too, in a jiffy, if this seems expedient (purposeful) to, or to a weighty (great) portion of, society. Similarly, it can be demonstrated that especially conservative “tradition” constitutes a construct(ion), regardless of whether the data (facts) which it invokes are historically attested to and genuine or not; because, if we take the ideal case, forgery (imitation, misrepresentation) rests or is based on the inevitable generalisation and absolutisation of sectorial (segmental) aspects and facets of historical data (facts).

Institutional orders (organisation(s), rules) come into being and succeed one another inside history like traditions; for that reason, also the concept of order in itself is likewise unable to justify conservatism, just as also the concept of tradition on its own. For the conservatives who appear as the true guard(ian)s of the institutional order indispensable for social life, the fact that their (the conservatives’) successful foes – after more or less (i.e. a longer or a shorter period of) time – managed to erect and set up a more or less functional institutional order, always constituted a tragic irony. This here [[fact]] of course is never recognised by conservatives as “genuine” and natural, and its (the said functional institutional order set up by the conservatives’ foes’) real existence is interpreted with the argument that also conservatism’s foes – since they want to institute and establish, or do institute and establish, a fixed (firm, stable, steady) institutional order –, in practice, embrace and espouse (adopt) the conservative

¹¹ Very instructive from this point of view is the volume by E. Hobsbawm – T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983.

view in regard to a crucial point.¹² However, from the historically attested-to ability of non-conservatives as regards the constitution of institutional orders (organisation(s), rules), one can also draw the opposite conclusion, that is to say, that life continues also without conservatives and conservatism. Whatever usually conservatives connect with the concept of order flourishes also when, or especially when, the conservatives themselves get out of the way or out of the centre of attention, because their foe, by struggling for the consolidation of his or its own domination (sovereignty, authority, dominance), cares for, or is concerned about/with, compliance with law, with hierarchy (with inequality) and with (legally or in actual reality safeguarded and protected) (property) ownership (proprietorship) – of course, with different signs (i.e. symbolism) and with different content. This precisely seems unbelievable to conservatives: that someone/something else, and indeed their foe, takes on the job or task of creating and safeguarding (protecting) the necessary – as they themselves contend – for social life, order, since he or it (the foe) has put aside (sidelined) and or annihilated the conservative faction. We are not dealing with, therefore, order in itself and in general, as the conservatives assume and contend, but with a specific/concrete matter or issue of interpretation and power: who embodies order, who dictates its (order's) rules, and who is its guard? The logically precarious (dangerous, risky), as well as ideologically indispensable, identification and equating of a certain order with order in itself becomes manifest also when the perception (view) regarding order is extended beyond the social-political field, by taking on anthropological and or cosmic dimensions. The proclaimed enmity of conservatives towards theories never stopped them (conservatives) from studying intensely (indulging in) construct(ion)s regarding the eternal laws of the world, eternal order etc., as

¹² See e.g. H.-J. v. Merkatz, *Die konservative Funktion. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des politischen Denkens*, München 1957, p. 72. Regarding order as a fundamental conservative value see e.g. G.-K. Kaltenbrunner, »Der schwierige Konservatismus« = G.-K. Kaltenbrunner (Hg.), *loc. cit.*, (note 1), pp. 19-54, esp. p. 36.

well as in regard to man's destination deduced or inferred from these magnitudes (of the eternal laws of the world, eternal order etc.). But precisely because behind such construct(ion)s, matters and issues of interpretation are found, the conservatives' foes rushed, for their part, to adopt concepts like for instance "eternal order" and to charge and load them (such concepts) with the normative content likable to themselves [[translator adds (specifically out of context as regards P.K.'s specific text here): in our day and age, e.g. "anti-racist/anti-sexist, human rights" etc. forms of ideological deceit, propaganda, brainwashing and psycholobotomisation, etc.]]. Thus, conservatives and revolutionaries equally proclaim their faith and belief in "natural law/right", even if they connect with it (the said faith in "natural law"), radically different representations, and this common confession of faith puts or posits both sides/factions (i.e. conservatives and revolutionaries) before similar, albeit reverse(d), theoretical difficulties: just as conservatives could never satisfactorily explain how the revolutionaries managed to overturn an entirely "natural" and or "divine (godly)" order, and thus appear to be more powerful than this (said "natural" and or "divine" order), hence too the revolutionary supporters (followers) of natural law/right have not given until now a convincing answer to the question of how it was (has stood) possible that the commands of nature be violated and infringed to such an extent and duration (for so long) through oppression, violence and alienation or estrangement.

What we (have) said did not purport or intend to "disprove, confute or reconstruct/ rephrase" conservatism from the point of view of some competitive ideology, since indeed we believe that – since long ago it (conservatism) is dead [[translator's note: say since approx. the late 19th century, to the final remnants of "(superficial) conservative politicking" c. WW1 at the very latest, but probably not even that far into the 20th century]]. However, without the full reduction of conservative commonplaces to their polemical content and their polemical functioning, the road cannot open for the *historical* comprehension (grasping) of the conservative phenomenon. In other words, conservatism becomes visible as a historical phenomenon, tied to time and

place, only when those magnitudes, which in its (conservatism's) self-understanding appear as ontological or anthropological categories, are understood and analysed in their specific and concrete function(ing) during the pursuit of political power. As scientists, we have to learn to talk about conservatism as a more or less cohesive and – characterised by distinctive (distinguishing) features (*differentiae specificae*) – unity inside the history of politics and of ideas, precisely as we do today when there is talk about the “Reformation” or the “Enlightenment”. In its strictly historical meaning (significance), conservatism is defined as that ideological and social-political current (stream), whose goal and purpose (end) was the maintenance of *societas civilis* and of the dominant (ruling, authoritative, sovereign) position (status, standing) of its higher (upper) strata. Particularly, as to its ideological aspect or facet, conservatism draws the basic corpus of its theories from the theological and social-philosophical circle of ideas of *societas civilis*, and consequently is chronologically preceded by the rationalism of the New Times and indeed of the Enlightenment, even though the contrast with and opposition to the latter (Enlightenment) constitutes a significant –and until today the better known, if not the only known– phase of its (conservatism's) development or evolution (unfolding). From the social-political point of view, again, conservatism means the resistance (of the higher strata) of *societas civilis* against its own decomposition, which commenced in the form of the newer (i.e. modern) separation of state and society [[translator's note: say tentatively from the 16th century, but especially in the 17th to 19th centuries]], and later was supplemented with the putting aside or sidelining/eliminating of the primacy of agriculture, by the primacy of industry. The completion (bringing to a close) of this long and complicated process means also the end of conservatism; the historical content of conservatism is exhausted, in other words, in the positionings justified and given reasons/causes for – in terms of world view, the philosophy of society or anthropology – vis-à-vis this process (of conservatism's completion and coming

to its end), and the concrete and specific social-political activity of the dominant (ruling, authoritative, sovereign) strata of *societas civilis* in order to confront and deal with it (this process of conservatism's completion and coming to its end). Outside of this framework of social history and of the history of ideas, there can be talk of conservatism only metaphorically or with polemical-apologetic intent. Together with liberalism and (radical or social) democracy, conservatism belongs to the great slogans and movements of a long epoch, which the above-mentioned process characterises. Whilst conservatism had, in practical terms, become redundant or had expired when all along the line (down the line) the separation of state and society was imposed (i.e. of the modern centralising and unitedly/unifiedly administrated or managed (commanded) state, and, of dominated-by-the-bourgeoisie, rapidly/quickly industrialising society), liberalism and social democracy (socialism) began to approach and near their end [[translator's note: say c. 1900-1920-1940 when mass democracy (as a kind of fusion of liberalism and social democracy/socialism) starts to "kick in" (with fascism/national socialism and communism at mass democracy's extremes)]] and lose their meaning as political concepts, since the separation of state and society is lifted, i.e. removed (cancelled, nullified) anew – not, however, because the return of pre-industrial *societas civilis* commenced (began), but on account of the state's victory (i.e. of all those social groups which consider the state as their most important tool or protector of their own interests) over society (authoritatively dominated and ruled by the bourgeoisie).ⁱ The excessive (overabundant, plethoric) and extremely confused use (usage) of all these concepts in our day(s), such that every one of them passes over for or into, or merges with, another (concept) (the other concepts) and none of them are precise, constitutes a most distinct and perspicuous point of the fact that the end of that historical epoch, from whose social-political and intellectual(-spiritual) life they (the aforesaid political concepts of conservatism, liberalism and social democracy/socialism) partially or wholly drew their content, in part is near and approaching, and in part, has already come.ⁱⁱ



ENDNOTES (NOT BY P.K.) [[DON'T READ. GO AWAY!]]

ⁱ (Translator's endnote – **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING to do with P.K. (DON'T READ THIS!)**): apart from the labour movement, and later women, the feminofaggotising mentally ill, aliens (invaders), et al., we all know which group in particular has been “very good” at – through PRIMITIVE SECRET SOCIETY NETWORKING – and also because of historically acquired wealth and power in International Banking and Finance and Trade, etc., – and has been particularly adept at getting into – like a DEVIL-SATAN-ZIO-JOO-JUDAS PARASITE-FLEA-VULTURE-CANCER – GROSSLY DISPROPORTIONATELY – the Higher Courts, the Federal Bank(s), Mass Media and Mass Entertainment, Elite Academia and Elite Universities, Public Policy Formation, Big Donor Political Party (Interest Group) Lobbying, the DEEP State(s), etc., etc., etc. of certain countries.

ⁱⁱ (Translator's endnote – nothing to do with P.K.): it is absolutely astonishing (or maybe it isn't, because we are talking about P.K.), that P.K. “felt and or saw” that the macro-historical phase of planetary politics (and the concomitant end of Cold War “capitalism vs. communism”, “Right vs. Left” (understood with reference to tangible social-political-ideological realities as distinctive features/differentiae specificae, etc.), was on the horizon in 1986 *before* the collapse of the Soviet Union.