2H. Is there a Culture War, and, If So,
Who Might Win and Who Might Lose??

The Pursuit of Philosophy as a Discipline

Volume III

The Prescience of Philosophy as a Discipline:

Beyond Criticism:

How Should Philosophy
Progressively Perfect an Ongoing Critique of its Discipline,
And,
Through Such Constructive Insight,
Perceptively Appreciate the Nature of the Human Condition??
A Critique of Theory *versus* A Theory of Critique:

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2H. Is there a Culture War, and, If So, Who Might Win and Who Might Lose??*[1]

0. Preamble

The following forms a brief Keynote Address to an open forum that is workshopping the topic of 'culture wars' as primarily presented in the Politico(.com) article titled: How the 'Culture War' Could Break Democracy'.[2] It was written by Jack Stanton, and was published 20 May 2021. The article is in the form of an interview with the sociologist James Davison Hunter who popularized the concept of 'culture war in his book with the title *Culture Wars*, *The Struggle to Define America*, published in 1991. Those two cultures being the 'progressives' versus the 'orthodox' (primarily systems of moral understanding where values, respectively, are changing and contextually dependent *versus* unchanging and universal in scope). In interviewing this sociologist, concerns are expressed about both the current state of US politics and the future of their democratic 'experiment'. (0)

1. Introduction

Although this section is titled an 'introduction' it is more attempting to create a context for this discussion by posing a series of questions. (1)

But, first, from the perspective of a transcendental phenomenologist, or, from the viewpoint of a critical philosopher, when we see what appears to be similar phenomena, we need to ask ourselves if such similarities are merely coincidental and superficial, or, more representative of a common phenomenological occurrence? A number of years ago I opined prematurely that the Left-Right spectrum in politics seemed to be disappearing.[3] But, in the last decade, while the Left seems to have self-deconstructed or been sidelined the Right appears to have taken a similar, more strident appearance in a number of democratic countries from the US to the United Kingdom, from Hungry to Brazil, and some might add to this list, Australia as well? At the same time, this democratic experiment, that was praised as the new world order after the symbolic tearing down of the Berlin Wall, is starting to look somewhat shaky and shabby, if not also flabby and rather unfit for purpose. Although I am reluctant to anthropomorphize what 'drives' nations and 'motivates' their politics by intentionally 'translating' the imputed 'intent' behind the transformations of such emergent entities, in order to understand the factors that could be 'driving' such phenomena, we should at least attempt to understand what seems to be shifting and changing such phenomena, in effect, asking if the same pre-conditions and

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* For latest version of text: www.homestead.com/noelshomepage/noels homepage5.html

1 Refer to the essay in the form of a Commentary and Meta-Commentary in III.2E.

2 Please refer to III.2E for the text, etc., of this article.

3 *In the Advent of the Contemporary Era Will We Find Forms of Political Pluralism*? *With the Deconstruction of the Left Will There Also Be the Deconstruction of the Right*? (21.1.05). Also, *Where Does the World of Democracy Stand*? (24.12.05).

conditions are actually driving the post-conditional formation of the same phenomenon or same type of phenomena world-wide? Is the so-called ‘Right’ in one country synonymous with the ‘Right’ in some other country? That, in the light of such discernment we might then be able to better address where such miscellaneous trends are heading, evaluate the same, and, perhaps, proffer alternative trajectories toward a more rewarding sense of a future if that were at all possible and something that could be accomplished? I would like to think that the very trends that affect political change in a certain direction can also work in the opposite directions. Indeed, the tides of history appear to do just that? (2)

Hopefully, therefore, we should ask can we be instrumental in a re(-)engineering of a political future that is more fit for purpose lest we lose those democratic freedoms fought and won to date, or, instead, are we prepared to be ‘more swept aside in a mad rush of people chasing populist chimeras and nonsensical conspiracies that I am sure are being monetized as we speak?’ Are we doomed to forget and lose what we have, or, can we make a stand against an ‘enemy’ that currently has no name? Indeed, is there a culture war, and if so, who will win and who will lose, and, what are the political-economic consequences of one side or the other either winning or losing this sometimes ugly contestment of ideas??? (3)

Now, to get this open forum up and running let me propose some rhetorical questions that we might wish to return to, from time to time, in the course of these proceedings? (4)

2. A Series of Rhetorical Questions

1. What does the Right appear to stand for? What does the Left still stand for? What drives them apart and hollows out both a Center-Right and a Center-Left?
2. Is the Right populist or is it merely using that platform for its own ends?
3. Are all parties on the political spectrum equally beholden to so-called ‘donations’?
4. Who does the Right represent - certain monied elites or the populace, conservatives or something else??
5. Why is it the case that politicians with no overt policy formation appear to win against politicians with policies (formulated, usually, for the betterment of the demos?)?
6. Is the culture war, and its more visible preoccupations ‘code’ for what..? E.g., abortion, trans-gendered rights, immigration, so called ‘wokeness’ and ‘cancel culture’, etc?
7. Does the Right have a covert policy that is ‘white-racist, nationalist, something else’? Then, to what extent and in what manner, is James Hunter right or wrong on how he has answered this question?)?
8. Is there a war, and if so, then a war over what?? Who wins what in this metaphorical ‘war’, and who loses what??
9. Where does philosophy figure in this, if at all, and, how might it re(-)configure this debate?
10. How might philosophers relate and integrate those others debates, seemingly allied to this topic? E.g., neo-liberalism, state-individual relations, environmentalism, unionism, globalization, availability of affordable health care, the future of work, and so on? (5)

3. A Brief Overview

Obviously, we have had, are having and will have a vigorous contest over the perceived value of such cultural ideas. But, then, apparently, this concern is something more than just dealing and debating with mere ideas? Rather, systems of attitudes and aspirations formulated along different tracks and heading in differing directions?? (6)

Hopefully, we will find ourselves working towards some form of consensus in such matters? Either understanding where we are heading, and, perhaps, where we should be heading, or, then again, in reflecting our political-economic cultures, find out that this current political conundrum has no immediate resolution as currently expressed until one side or the other has more political power to either outvote the other or paralyze all relevant voting whatsoever… and, in the aftermath, have to find a new consensus on how 'to pick up the pieces.??' (7)

Noël Tointon, Penrith, 11.6.21.