

Gheorghe Dănișor, *Filosofia drepturilor omului*, Bucharest, Editura Universul Juridic, 2011, 254 p.

This work deserves a more attentive consideration as a useful instrument for students in various domains: political philosophy, juridical philosophy, ethics, international relations and philosophy of governance.

Under the circumstances described by contemporary world the philosophy of human rights is nowadays re-evaluated from multiple perspectives. For instance, the topic of current interest proposed by terrorism brings to the fore as a principal value security, associated with specific public policies, sometimes, to the detriment of the value represented by the human rights and the political liberties associated with the former. Another example is occasioned by the situations created by the contemporary waves of migration, which exacerbate xenophobia in many European nations, casting a shadow on the irreducible value of the human being found as a core substantial philosophy at the basis of the very idea of human rights. As shown in the introductory study “where politics intervenes, things get always more complicated”. (p. 5)

The aim of the research is to emphasize the philosophical foundations of the human rights, namely liberalism and freedom, as well as the individualism that does not destroys but strengthens political community, a community that even since Plato attributes with necessity courage and moderation to the free men, in order to preserve the social “fabric”. The author considers that human rights should not challenge this “fabric” of the good social relations, granting an exaggerate consideration to the individual, observing the phrase “freedom for each and justice for all”. (p. 8)

The book is constituted in three parts: „Human rights in modern thought”, “The critique of the foundations of the human rights of the first generation” and “The effectiveness of the human rights”.

The first part realizes an incursion in the problems of the political and juridical modern philosophy of the human rights, investigating modern individualism in comparison with what the author identifies as individualism in the Ancient Greece (but as one can argue the introduction of a modern concept in an analysis of a period of time characterized by other central features), relating the theme to the theories of the state of nature, with the theories of the natural law and the role of reason, with juridical security and with the elements that convey the substance of the human rights in modernity. In this respect, in the book are identified three “generations” of the human rights. The first is marked by the struggle against the despotic power of the monarch (the 17th and the 18th centuries) finalized with the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*. “The rights of the second generation are justified by the fact that those of the first generation should be extended to all the citizens and not only the favored categories and they engage the state in their application”. (p. 86) The third generation of rights introduces in modern political thought concepts such as “the people”, “humanity” or “future generations”, a perspective on a well-balanced individualism, as well as theoretizations of law which in the name of social harmony and future social development, tend to bring nuance and limitations regarding the substance of the human rights.

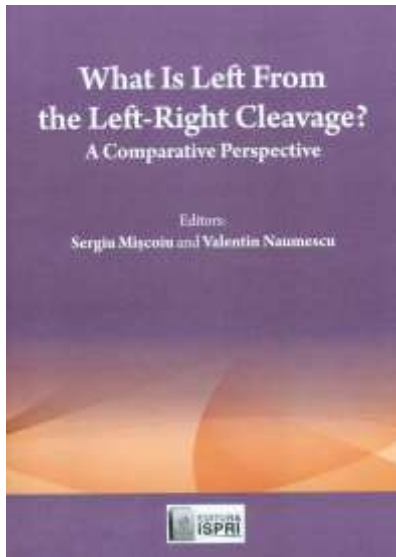
Part II of the work treats the subject in the perspective of philosophical and political pre-modern and modern relativism, discussing the relation between law and rights and the new dimensions of individualism in Charles Taylor and Jean-François Petit perspectives. Thus, the author shows: “Although there is yet an unbalance between individualism and communitarianism, in favor of the former, nevertheless, the tendency of balance exists. It seems to take shape ever more in the international regulations and in the constitutions of the states. A contribution in this respect has the jurisprudence”. (p. 125)

The third part analyzes through a juridical and normative philosophy the problem of the modern human rights, including interesting assessments of alterity, the contextuality of law and the universality of the human rights.

In conclusion, the author states: “This book pleas (...) for the rediscovery of the ontological Good and, implicitly, of the *zoon politikon* as a transposition at the human level of good. Only starting from this perspective moral and law could vindicate their foundations”. (p. 240)

This work accomplishes a critique of the juridical formalism from the positions of the juridical philosophy, with accents of political ethics and proposes a nuanced and relevant approach.

Henrieta Anișoara Șerban



Sergiu Mișcoiu, Valentin Naumescu,
*What Is Left From the Left-Right
 Cleavage? A Comparative Perspective*,
 Editura ISPRI, Bucharest, 2015, 236 pp.

Is the vanishing left-right cleavage a symptom of post-politics? The present collective volume approaches the complementary instances proposed by the realities of political rivalry. Not only the tremendous political competition, but the complexities of the items displayed by the public agenda determine political actions to be more complex and less homogeneously oriented toward either left or right. Nevertheless, the necessity of political referential remains, although the importance of this left-right divide, appears somewhat obsolete.

The book is structured in two parts: “Theorising the left-right cleavage” and “Beyond the left-right cleavage”. In the opening, “Introductory Remarks: The Left-Right Cleavage Revisited”, Sergiu Mișcoiu originates the left-right differentiation in the heritage of the French Revolution, where the left is related to republicanism and the State-Church separation, while right is linked to Monarchy and Church influence. With all the historical and political avatars of this left-right differentiation it is still “useful not only for the voters’ and sympathizers’ orientation but also for the parties’ and candidates’ own understanding of their set of political beliefs and practices”. (p.11)

In the chapter entitled “Politics but not too Much. Neoliberalism as Infra-Ideology” Ciprian Bogdan depicts neoliberal socio-economic as the representative of democratic politics and this way the author interprets it as a sort of anti-politics that impoverishes the public debate. Among the symptoms of the contemporary neoliberal consensus the author identifies also “depoliticisation” and the interest for the “post-ideology debate”. In conclusion this investigation indicates that “neoliberalism is an example of such an infra-ideological consensus that might

also explain the ‘*relative* death of ideologies’ in contemporary society, namely that neoliberalism accepts politics, but *not too much* politics for that might challenge its dominance”. (p. 39)

“Enlightenment, Counter-Enlightenment, Post-Enlightenment – A Framework of Understanding the Differences between the Left and Right” by Bogdan Constantin Mihăilescu follows the criteria that position parties and actions on the political axis and the perspective they compose, against which one understands the modifications occasioned by late-modernity. The starting point of the analysis is the cultural and political Enlightenment project, and the developments identify the modifications, mixtures, innovations that mark contemporary politics. “So, the left-right axis remains relevant in this Post-Enlightenment horizon. We can meet here political views that are trying to continue the political propositions of the Enlightenment type, specific especially to the left, but with the help of a discourse adapted to postmodernity, as are the theories of the minimal Post-Enlightenment sustained by Rawls and his late work, or those of moderate Post-Enlightenment, present in the Rortyan political thought”. (p. 59) Yet, this is not the complete picture: “ However, there is also a genre of radical Post- Enlightenment, as that pledged by Gray, where the breakup from the Enlightenment is much more pronounced, and which is, this way, more closely to the zone of the political right”. (p. 59)

Adrian-Gabriel Corpădean signs “the Role of the Greek-Catholic Church in Revigorating the Romanian Right after the 1989 Revolution”. After the communist marginalization and persecutions the Greek-Catholic intellectuals played an important role in conveying a coherent and anti-communist democratic discourse that was relevant also for the identity of the centre-right following the 1989 revolution. “The significant number of dissidents belonging to this Church, both inside the country and in exile, contributed to the struggle aiming to restore their cult both in social life and in legal order and, in some distinct cases, turned to the values of Christian-democracy to rebuild a political wing that had long been prohibited in Romania. Moderately successful in terms of political echo in the long term, the activity of the Christian Democratic National Peasants’ Party, the main output of Greek-Catholic political doctrine, did indicate the existence of an alternative to the domineering left and the message of personalities such as Ion Rațiu, Corneliu Coposu and Doina Cornea remains of actuality in this depth and democratic feeling”. (p.78)

“Present European Liberalism(s) and the Left-Right Cleavage” by Valentin Naumescu is a study of the debate around liberalism in terms of state-market dimension, on the one hand, and in terms of individual rights and freedoms as trumps against religious tradition, hierarchy and social order, on the other. The author shows: “Moreover, the left centre parties have also absorbed much of the liberal ideology in the post-war era. Equality access to opportunities, equality of

racism and gender, welfare state and progressive policies, liberal multiculturalism, feminism and environmentalism assumed in fact parts of the essence of liberalism and then developed their own discourses and specific solutions". (p.95) The paper explores another important aspect: "The quasi-general assumption of the decline of liberalism in Europe, beyond the real ascension of populism and far right nationalism, is not necessarily sustained by statistics and electoral results and also not by the political framework in which most of the centre-leftist, centre and centrist and centre-rightist parties and actors are conducting their theses and discourses". (p. 95) Approaching theoretical and pragmatic aspects concerning European liberalism the study emphasizes the interest for economic pragmatism. Answering to the question regarding the relation between liberalism and the left-right division, the author shows: "From all major ideologies, liberalism is probably mostly affected by this division. First, because what we generally name liberalism is a mix of right wing economic perspective and left wing political vision. Secondly, because it is the only doctrine which allows affiliated parties to conduct either as right of centre or as left of centre political forces. In the case of socialism or conservatism, things are quite clear with regard to the left-right cleavage and only nuances may differ". (p. 97)

Approaching the topic of contemporary extreme right in Europe and the legacy of fascism, Raluca Moldovan starts from the observation of the European political sphere during the past five years looking at the European Parliament's elections and at the government coalitions in France, Italy, Austria, Denmark, Switzerland. Extreme right parties and populists behave as if reviving a fascist legacy, the author underlines. "Extreme right populists claim to represent the true will of the people, which all the other parties ignore, because of the corruption and ignorance of the establishment. They also use 'low' or 'high' concepts, language and style and their charismatic leaders depict themselves as the embodiment of what people really think. Populism, both in Europe and the United States, should be considered a style, rather than a specific body of thought and the political left, as well as the right (and the extreme right) use it to claim genuinely democratic credentials". (p.113) Paying attention as well to the impact of extreme right politics in media, the author quotes John Palmer from *Guardian* who identified in the extreme right politics the most serious threat posed to the European Project itself. The antidote to the rise of the extreme right is identified in the realist and democratic left and right mainstream parties that fight economic stagnation, the welfare gap and the degradation of democratic liberties and rights.

Gabriel C. Gherasim investigates the topic of ideological syncretism and metamorphosis as they developed in the United States. The author shows: "Many scholars and researchers have not agreed yet on the existence of a genuine conservative tradition in America: some political thinkers and intellectual historians (such as Louis Hartz or Lionel Trilling) epitomized the development of

the entire political tradition in America in strict liberal terms; others, (such as Richard Hofstadter, who coined the term ‘pseudo-conservatism’) were rather skeptical about giving recognition to a conservative strain of thought, while some intellectuals, remarking the manifestation of more and more conservative ‘impulses and passions’, concluded indecisively about the impossibility and ineffectiveness of asserting a singular mainstream ideological tradition and culture across the Atlantic”. (p.140) The myriad of diverse ideological considerations are always a more flexible and more adequate tool in answering to complex situations in order to secure consensus and alleviate conflicts. Nowadays also, the doctrine of neoconservatism in the United States is subject to pragmatic lively discussions which seem to entertain more theoretical confusions than clarify the contradictions between the conservative and neoconservative doctrines.

“The Sartrian Bad Faith of the Georgian Politics and the Democratic Missing Element. From the Lack of Ideology to the Neoliberal Project in Georgia”, by Alexandra Sabou, evaluates the void of ideological traits in Georgian party politics since 1991. Concrete and important problems of society, such as the social cleavages, fail to be addressed, while the parties seem interested in sustaining a strong presidentialism and a wide interest for charismatic leaders. In this respect, the author shows: “Paradoxically, the revolutionary moment that occurred at the end of Shevardnaze’s second mandate didn’t bring any ideological renewal or deep social transformation. The rose revolution was not a social revolution in the sense used by Theda Skopol, ‘rapid, basic transformation of a society’s state and class structures; and they’re accompanied and in part carried through by class revolts from below’, but corresponded to a conjectural moment of presidential elections and split within the elite in power. The revolutionary forces didn’t propose a new socio-economic agenda or political objectives, but stood up against the bankruptcy of Shevardnaze’s regime. By attacking the *ancient régime* the new elite in power was declaring its pro-democratic struggle. However, the struggle turned to be less about democracy than about a new regime strengthening its grip on power”. (p.169) The fact that the politician tend to present themselves as libertarians or neoliberals with the support for actions leading to economic development, but without true democratic results.

Emanuel Copilaş presents in “Right-wing Nationalism in Post-Communist Romania: Ideological Implications and Political Impact” two varieties of contemporary Romanian active nationalism – right-wing and left-wing nationalism – placing the accent on the first type. “It analyses two main sources of this kind of nationalism, the Prison Saints Movement and the Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance, aiming to prove that, as an ideology, Romanian nationalism has a powerful social impact and numerous ideological implications, while it lacks an important political dimension”. (p.187) The author explains that “banal nationalism” (as understood by Michael Billig)

has a noticeable impact in Romania across the entire ideological spectrum, while this finds no expression in political programs, remaining an element of official discourse for both right-wing and left-wing public interventions. This way, in Romania, the appeal to and of nationalism does not represent a threat to political stability.

Last but not least, Oana Albescu and Mircea Maniu assess the concept of social entrepreneurship, while interpreting the left-right cleavage in economic terms. “Marking the progress of socialization of the capitalist economy in the mid 20th century, the convergence theory seduced many prominent researchers of the contemporary political and economic phenomena. While history dramatically penalized the wrongdoings of the institutionalized leftist policies in Europe, it also blueprinted the pattern of evolution of capitalism towards more social exposure, culminating with the gradual distancing of the term entrepreneurship from its very grounds of individualism”. (p. 207) Noticing the transcendence of the traditional divide registered between the right inclined to favor business and the left which places the accent on social protection the study emphasizes the interest for added value, work productivity collective and communitarian processes of decision that characterize social entrepreneurship nowadays. The conclusion of the study highlights the idea that “it makes a lot of sense to say that today issues such as social entrepreneurship, bridging apparently irreconcilable positions, should be tackled along the lines of common EU policy and not let to *ad hoc*-ratic domestic initiatives” (p. 227)

The volume investigates the contemporary characteristics of the right-left differentiation of the political spectrum with interesting case studies offering a scientific account of the vanishing fascination with left and right in the contemporary political realm.

Henrieta Anișoara Șerban