The Demon In Democracy by Ryszard Legutko

notes by David Alexander

Introduction

Ryszard Legutko writes that his book is about the similarities which exist between communism and democracy. He noticed, on the part of liberal democrats, an extraordinary meekness and empathy toward communism. He had thought that their visceral reaction should be one of condemnation. He had thought at first that the failure to do so was out of fear of Soviet power, but then he began to discern behind the rage against anti-anti-communists a deeper relatedness, some shared principles and ideals. Legutko observed that being anti-anti-communist even became a kind of political test for admission into leadership in the new democratic liberal reality. He noted that the assimilation of communists to the "liberal democratic game" was surprisingly easy. Legutko and others questioned the moral and political credibility of these co-opted ex-communists and they were met with a rage whose vehemence he came to believe was due to a kind of sacredness with respect to an epoch-making contract which existed with the coopted partners.

Legutko defines a system as an institutional structure and everything which makes this structure function as it does: ideas, social practices, mores, and people's attitudes. He notes that the belief still lingers regarding the system of liberal democracy that it is one of breathtaking diversity, but the opposite now seems closer to the truth: it is a powerful unifying mechanism which blurs differences between people and which imposes a uniformity of views, behavior, and language. It deracinates and it significantly narrows the area of what is permissible. It brought with it a new rhetoric of necessity.

If the European Parliament is supposed to be the emanation of the spirit of today's liberal democracy, then this spirit is certainly neither good nor beautiful. It shares many ugly features in common with communism. One witnesses there "*the destruction of language* turning into a new form of Newspeak" in order to bolster a surreality that obfuscates the real world and, at the same time too, an uncompromising hostility toward dissidents. Legutko asks if the Soviet-like similarities that are half-jokingly acknowledged even by EU devotees are not more core than has been realized and whether they will intensify rather than disappear.

Despite the fundamental differences, it is perfectly legitimate to ask about what similarities exist between the Communist and the liberal-democratic systems. He asks why liberal democrats are given to sounding the alarm about dangers such as xenophobia, nationalism, intolerance, and bigotry, which are often suspected and felt rather than perceived while, at the same time, they ignore dangers that are easy to spot: namely, the increase of developments similar to those that had existed in communist countries. Legutko believes that this is because there is an interplay between these systems and he says that this book explains this interplay in detail.

One obvious shared trait that belongs to the two systems is the being of modernization projects whose intents are to change reality for the better. The language of modernization derives from technology and it compels us to see the world as an object of engineering and innovative activity. Modernity made Prometheus a hero and *techne* was believed to be the best thing that has happened to man because it was believed to be a vehicle of infinite progress. The creators of modernity - Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Bacon - saw themselves as pioneers who boldly turned their backs on the past. They bore a contempt for the past as something that was both foolish and harmful, mixed with condescension, thinking that perhaps it once had nobility and charm. Some like Descartes took advantage of the past but, at the same time, they strove to obliterate any trace of their debt. (See the MacIntyre essay on Descartes's debt). A "conscious detachment" is inevitably entailed. There is a "proud sense of individual independence and

sovereignty." Affirming individual independence and sovereignty itself becomes a kind of therapy, and the modernist derives a deep-seated belief in his participation in the march to the future from this conflation of detachment with progress.

In both systems, a "cult of technology" translates itself into an acceptance of social engineering as a proper approach to reforming society (and so a debased human anthropology is the price of self-superior progress). In both systems, society and the world are considered as being under constant reconstruction. In one system, this meant reversing the current of Siberia's rivers; in the other, a formation of alternative family models. In both, it is the constant remolding nature which is conceived to be "barely a substrate to be modeled into a desired form."

Both regimes distance themselves from the past and embrace the idea of progress that is based on a belief in the power of *techne*. In the consequent psychological and moral stance, the old becomes "suspect" and the "modern" becomes an adulatory term. Becoming a devoted member of a communist and a liberal-democratic society generates a sense of liberation from old bonds and it entails rejecting a vast share of loyalties and commitments, especially those that had been inculcated in him by religion, social morality, and tradition. Communism, which was supposed to have started history anew, is in essence and practice "against memory." Memory again is one of the main enemies for the liberal-democratic order.

[One thing I notice about Legutko's critique is how much he analyses attitudes and psychological dispositions. It is very virtue centered and one can tend to make out the man beneath the politics that is writ large in the politics].

Chapter 1

1

Legutko examines the similar perceptions of history that are shared by liberal democracy and communism. The description of the historical process leading to communism has three main versions according to communism. According to the first, socialism/communism was the final stage of social development, illuminated by the discovery of Marx's laws of history. This was a culmination that is to be attributed to the inherent logic of history. Liberals, notably Karl Popper, later attacked this view, rejecting the idea that history could be an object of scientific inquiry by which laws of historical development could be discovered. Popper believed that this even opened the field to political violence. The Soviet Union's historical development was treated as the ideal pattern for all other Communist countries, but eventually unofficial space was made for national particularities. The second version of the transition from capitalism to communism held that society would be pushed forward by the group that was most aware of its historical role, either the proletariat, the Communist Party, the peasants in China, or students and intellectuals. The third idea of the transition was based in specific anthropological assumptions according to which the historical development of humanity was toward full self-consciousness. This humanistic-anthropological theory played an important role in the history of Marxism. It was dug up after communism transformed into regimes of crime and terror to rehabilitate the movement's human face and to contrast it with Bolshevik socialism. Karl Marx did not separate these three scenarios but combined them. In communist practice, however, the unity of the three aspects did not matter because the current party line determined the historicist interpretation that was adopted.

From the perspective of historicism, any opposition to the all embracing process of historical

development was extremely harmful to humanity and inconceivably stupid. What the enemies of progress stood for was "by definition hopelessly parochial, limited to one class, decadent, anachronistic, historically outdated, and degenerate."

Over time the ardent belief in historical inevitability and the prospect of the advent of socialism for the entire human race became so remote that it ceased to be taken seriously. The failure to spread the flame of the Bolshevik revolution closed a chapter in the communist narrative. However, a kind of habit remained of opposing all that was deemed capitalist and bourgeois, and it was monotonously repeated that communism was the people's destiny.

2

Liberal democracy does not have an official concept of history that can be attributed to a particular author like communism did. Nevertheless, it follows a similar pattern. According to the popular view, the history of the world is a history of the struggle for freedom against enemies who were different at various stages of history but who perpetually fought against the idea of freedom itself, forces that kept them submissive for centuries. The history of England in this view was portrayed as a narrative of the emergence of Parliament and the creation of a constitutional monarchy, with a particular legal system sanctioning it. The question arose about what was supposed to happen at the end of history, when freedom would claim victory over tyranny. In the case of liberalism, the impetus was in its cooperative feature which was supposed to bring the race to a higher stage of development. Part of the claim was that the era of conflicts, wars and violence, was coming to an end. (Note how Steven Pinker argues in a sense for this worldview by describing a decrease in violence but in such a way as to equate death in a Inuit village from a fist fight with the extermination of millions each year in Nazi Germany based on a mere numerical argument). The liberal era was regarded as the era of peace, cooperation, prosperity and progress. Writers like Adam Smith and Frederic Bastiat predicted peace at a time when wars were ubiquitous.

There is a commonality of argument between communists and liberal-democrats in a belief in the unilateralism of history, leading inevitably to the era of perpetual peace. Also there is a belief in deliberate human action by a distinguished minority who will prepare humanity, now apathetic, enslaved and ignorant, for the new reality. There is also the notion that mankind will achieve maturity and intellectual independence and a promised modern society that is liberated from ignorance and superstition.

3

The beliefs that history has a unilateral pattern and that a better world is shaped by conscious human activity are still very much present in the modern political mind. Communists and liberal democrats have always upheld the view that history is on their side. Despite the collapse of the Soviet system, the past practices of socialism are appreciated as having represented the correct direction of social change. Both communists and liberal democrats speak fondly of "the people" while at the same time having no qualms in ruthlessly breaking social spontaneity in order to accelerate social reconstruction. Though the idea of liberal democracy presupposes freedom of action, the letter, the spirit and the practice of liberal-democratic doctrine are far more restrictive: everything that exits in society must become liberal-democratic over time and be imbued with the spirit of the system.

With the emergence from communism into liberal-democracy in eastern European countries, a self-proclaimed group of eloquent spokesmen for the new system took upon themselves the duty to delineate the direction of change and to infuse a new liberal-democratic awareness into anachronistic minds. They saw themselves as pioneers of the enlightened future.

In the schema adopted by the systems, once one sends one's opponents into the dustbin of history, any debate with them becomes superfluous. In liberal democracy, it is believed that only a fool or a fanatic would deny that a family must liberalize or democratize, which means that the parental authority has to crumble, that the children will quickly liberate themselves from parental tutelage, and that family relationships will increasingly become more negotiatory and less authoritarian. The traditional family is considered indefensible, a part of the old despotism. With the demise of the traditional family, the imagined despotic system loses its base. Democratization of the family is supported by appropriate legislation that will give children more power, such as laws allowing very young girls to have abortions without parental consent. Similar treatment is directed at educational institutions and churches and communities and associations.

Liberal-democracy has become an all-permeating system. Just as in socialism, in liberal democracy it is difficult to find some non-doctrinal slice of the world, a non-doctrinal image, a narrative, a tone or a thought. In a way liberal democracy is a more insidious ideological mystification than communism because official guardians of constitutional doctrine do not exist, making the overarching system less tangible but more profound and difficult to reverse. "It is the people themselves who have eventually come to accept, often on a pre-intellectual level, that eliminating the institutions incompatible with liberal-democratic principles constitutes a wise and necessary step."

4

"The Hegelian sting," or the veneration of historical necessity, has been well described by Czeslaw Milosz in *The Captive Mind*, which analyzes the mechanism of the communist servility of Polish intellectuals. Milosz himself never entirely abandoned historicism. Nevertheless, he ably encapsulated in his descriptions the treason of the intelligentsia in totalitarian systems. It appears now in hindsight that the mental enslavement described by Milosz was not a single occurrence that was occasioned by a short-lived infatuation with communism, but it is recurrent within the idolatry of liberal democracy and seems to be an inherent handicap of the modern mind. Looking at the modern mind in terms of the dichotomy between the old and young, it resembles the youngster more than the old man. It is more likely to reject institutions and communities (families, schools, churches) when it sees occurrences of human weaknesses in them. The socialist and liberal-democratic interpretation of history is typical of a youngster's take on things: it is bold, absolute, simplistic, and easily stimulated by optimistic projects.

Moving with the socialist and liberal-democratic flow gives an intellectual more power, or at least an illusion of it. He feels like a part of a powerful global machine of transformation. Despite liberal democracy's impressive accomplishments, the youngster fails to notice that at some point the system, or the arrangement of systems, becomes haughty, dogmatic, and dedicated not so much to facilitating the resolution of political conflicts as to transforming society and human nature. It has lost its prior restraint and caution and it has created powerful tools to influence every aspect of life. It has fallen into a trap of self-glorification.

The third narrative regarding the transition to the new system was that mankind would reach and develop its full creative potential. This virtually disappeared when socialism was faced with gigantic practical problems. Achieving self-knowledge was subordinated to the problems of chronic scarcity. Though it had begun with a great humanistic message, it quickly lowered its aspirations to successes that were accomplished by its main competitor, capitalism. The model communist man shrunk to being defined by ideology, work, and leisure.

Liberal democratic thought also, from the very beginning, was minimalist when it came to the image of the human being. It was supposed to be emancipatory, setting man free from the excessive demands of unrealistic metaphysics that had been invented by an aristocratic culture in antiquity and the Middle Ages.

So an important part of the message of modernity was to legitimize a lowering of our human aspirations. The main principle behind minimalism was equality since, from the point of view of a liberal order, one cannot prioritize human objectives. (Caldecott notes, in contrast, that one of the main tasks in restoring education has to become the restoration of an ontological hierarchy).

"Once people become used to disqualifying certain standards as too high, impractical, or unnecessary, it is only a matter of time before natural inertia takes its course and even the new lowered standards are deemed unacceptable. One can look at the history of liberal democracy as a gradual sliding down from the high to the low, from the refined to the coarse. Quite often a step down has been welcomed as refreshing, natural, and healthy, and indeed it sometimes was. But whatever the merits of this process of simplification, it too often brought vulgarity to language, behavior, education, and moral rules. A liberal-democratic man refused to learn these artificial and awkward arrangements, the usefulness of which seemed to him at first doubtful, and soon null." (pp. 29-30).

Many blamed this vulgarity and shallowness on mercantile civilization but commerce and capitalism were blamed too hastily. The success of technology, productivity, and industry were themselves conducive to the sterility of imagination and to self-satisfied pettiness.

In liberal democracy, especially recently, there is a generally acknowledged moral directive that forbids people from looking down on people's moral priorities, because in the present society, equality is the norm, not hierarchy. The Socratic model has lost its appeal for the democratic mainstream as being too aristocratic and elitist. Legutko notes the downward trend of human nature if it is not met with strong resistance or attractive inspiration. He also notes the change in the meaning of the word "dignity" in common parlance. Before it used to denote obligation and was something to be earned, deserved, and confirmed by acting in accordance with the higher standards imposed by community or religion. It could be lost by acting in an undignified way. In contrast, Legutko takes exception to using the term "inalienable" to refer to rights. He says the concept of dignity was invoked but in such a way as to imply it meant more than it did. The careless use of the term allowed for a self-exemption from the need to present an explicit and serious philosophical interpretation of human nature and to explain the grounds and conditions on which one could conceive of dignity. (Again, a failure to achieve an adequate human anthropology).

The new dignity did not oblige people to strive for any moral merits or desserts. Legutko asks if a dignity that is inborn and which constitutes the essence of humanness can generate anything that would

be essentially undignified and nonhuman. He says this dignity-based notion of human rights was a powerful factor in legitimizing a minimalist concept of human nature.

<div align="center">6</div>

As Max Weber has described it, under Protestantism man had an unbearable awareness of the sinfulness of human nature and men turned their minds to work initially as an expression of piety, imposing on human sinfulness some form of discipline. The fruits of the work could not be enjoyed because that would be sinful, so they had to be invested. Disciplined work became its own proper reward. Hence, a new approach to consumption as being separated from pleasure and postponed to an indefinite future was born. A minimalist view of human nature, initially driven by religious doctrine which precluded moral and spiritual perfectibility, set the aspirations lower, but still noble and heroic. However, when Protestant doctrine was liberalized, this nobility completely disappeared.

The natural downward pull of minimalism turned out to be too strong. Eventually the old capitalism was transformed into a new system in which consumption was not only accepted but took control of the entire economic mechanism. It became the single most powerful source of motivation. Mr. Gradgrind in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* - a fanatically discipline man who mercilessly attempts to eradicate human weakness - is a despicable figure who illustrates the negative perception of a classical capitalist by the humanist critics of modern society. Liberal-democratic society abandoned this old time rigor. While the discipline of work and high requirements of productivity persisted, it was combined with an ever-increasing indulgence in entertainment.

For centuries, entertainment, while constituting a strong inclination of our human existence, was rigorously separated from the serious component of man's life. When the minimalistic anthropology took hold, however, the barriers separating one from the other weakened and the temptation to give entertainment more and more prominence became irresistible, particularly in societies where the fear of sin had lost its deterring power. Today, entertainment imposes itself psychologically, intellectually, socially, and also, strange as it might sound, spiritually. A failure to provide human endeavors with an entertaining wrapping is today unthinkable and it borders on sin. (That is a reason why we need to revive ascetical practices).

The modern sense of entertainment increasingly resembles what Pascal long ago called *divertissement* - activity which separates us from the seriousness of existence and which fills this existence with false content. We use *divertissement* to turn away from fundamental existential matters and to suppress primal questions. Our minds slowly get used to this fictitious reality which we take for the real one. "Having neutralized all musings about objectivity, the modern man takes pride in his deep involvement in entertainment, which in the absence of other objective references he considers natural." (37)

Both conservatives defending a classic human anthropology and some of the socialists of the Frankfurt School expressed alarm at the ubiquity of entertainment as a dilution of seriousness in thought and action. For the first time in the entire history of mankind there appeared a human being who thought that not having been surrounded by entertainment from the cradle to the grave in all areas of life was an anomaly. In contrast, liberal democracy and entertainment found enthusiastic allies in each other. The omnipresence of entertainment was something by which democratic man became easily recognized. (It seems to me that a very important task for Christians in the West today is to regain a more worshipful posture toward the Lord by a greater spiritual detachment from their democracies).

Anthropological minimalism is a key to understanding today's liberal democracy. Liberal democrats embraced the Enlightenment faith in progress even more that the socialists, and since liberal-democratic civilization brought a spectacular development of technology and succeeded in providing millions of people with the benefits of modernity, their belief in inexorable progress seemed to have a basis. A remarkable correlation exists between the regime and man, more so than under communists. The relationship between liberal democracy and liberal-democratic man seems perfectly suited, the one for the other. Alternative models have not been seriously drawn so, for the near future, the expansion of liberal democracy will probably continue. Poland, like other countries in the former Soviet bloc, despite the Solidarity movement, quickly adopted a minimalist perspective in order to conform to the atmosphere and the practice of western liberal democracy. Once big ideas were gone, work and entertainment seized the imagination of the people. Poland's exotic religious defiance of Communism was quickly abandoned under the liberal-democratic pressure to conform. What became esteemed as wisdom deeper than innovation and inventiveness was to try to catch up to the "West" by imitating the United States and sometimes the European Union.

Chapter 2

1

Communism and liberal democracy were believed to be the ultimate stages of the history of political transformation. From an inside perspective, communism and democracy are perceived to have no alternative. Within the milieu of either, it is extremely difficult to imagine something that might follow it as a later stage of development.

Both systems identify existing structures with human ideals. Both were sanctioned in moralistic terms that were essential to the system.

Over time, the mind of the liberal democrat began to resemble that of a socialist, exhibiting the same tendency to combine the language of morality and politics. The language permeates every aspect of life and every topic of conversation.

The assertions about the unity of institutions and ideals by both communism and liberal democracy are unfounded. Liberal democracy is portrayed as a realization of the eternal desire for freedom but liberalism was certainly not the only orientation expressing the desire for freedom, nor has it been consistent and pure in its devotion to freedom. Other supporters of freedom include republicanism, conservatism, romanticism, and Christianity. The contribution of liberalism to freedom in concrete shape that is well-grounded in institutions is one of many.

Liberal democrats dodge the above objection by attributing the term liberal to everything they think had succeeded in making a break through the walls of oppression and authority.

Liberals have been dogmatic on the issue of freedom on a theoretical level, but very opportunistic in practice. Even the most liberal of liberals displayed extraordinary softness against the Soviet Union and Soviet communism.

Q: What does Legutko mean when he says both systems identify existing structures with human ideals? How does this relate to liberal democracy's dismantlement of mediating institutions?

Q: What lessons ought we to draw, if any, from the liberal romance with the Soviet Union? Is there a similar dynamic between liberalism, Islam, and freedom today? Or not.

2

Both systems meet the criteria of utopia, and in fact are utopias. None of the great utopians created their blueprints for a good society with the assumption that those plans were devoid of practical value. They all believed in their practical value and their intention was to put them into practice. The first utopias, written in the time of the Renaissance, had a simple message that man can achieve greatness and be equal to God because he has unlimited creative potential. It was thought that man ought to be able to create extraordinary works of genius in politics, as he had in painting, music, literature, architecture, mathematics, philosophy, and physics. In communism, it was the movement's utopian and not scientific nature that made the Marxist version of communism so phenomenally popular.

The utopianism of liberal democracy is not as obvious as the utopianism of communism, and liberalism and democracy are related to utopian thinking in a different way. Liberal utopianism can be envisioned by imagining the liberal order in its simplicity - free-market without any state intervention, and individual rights unregulated by the state except for the general rules of cooperation - and to realize that the simple mechanisms have never been realized.

The popularity of socialism caused its enemy, liberalism, to reassess the previous methods that free markets used to try to win popular support. To win the popularity contest with socialism, free market economic liberals entered into an ideological race with it in which they deliberately and consciously used the term 'utopia' for what they were advocating. Hayek, von Mises, Ayn Rand, and Nozick were among those who openly spoke of a liberal utopia.

Since antiquity, democracy has been considered one of the defective systems; not better but certainly not worse than oligarchy or monarchy. It is extremely difficult to find a classical philosopher who would be its defender. Their primary question was what makes the best regime. They thought democracy did not qualify because it was a messy system, systematically undermining the rule of law, profoundly partisan, often hostile to the most prominent leaders and citizens.

In early modernity, there was no challenge to the view that democracy was a defective system. The Founding Fathers of the American republic devised a complex political mechanism to alleviate the weaknesses they viewed democracy as having. Nevertheless, democracy within decades had become the sole ruler of the American mind. Tocqueville saw its democracy as more a problem than a solution, with new despotism at the end of the road.

John Rawls, "the greatest of the great authorities of all the supporters, advocates and analysts of the system, and the maker of what might be called today's liberal democratic orthodoxy," called the liberal democratic political system a utopia.

Q: What does it mean to call the liberal democratic political system a utopia?

3

Churchill's famous quote about democracy being the worst form of government except all the others took on a life of its own. One version was, "Democracy is the worst political system, except for all the

rest." This contained a suggestion of moderate skepticism, a view of democracy as a highly imperfect system which requires great vigilance and implementation of corrective measures. This version is not the one that won the hearts of millions of supporters.

Another version treated the second piece of information as the basic one - that all other regimes are more defective - and it ignored the first part - that democracy has many faults. In this notion, democracy is by definition superior to the alternatives and is therefore removed from the field of criticism. From a critical view, we have passed to an uncritical affirmation of everything democratic in which it is believed that the remedy of the weaknesses of democracy is more democracy.

Q: What at this point would a critical detachment from democracy look like?

4

Some hold that no better system has been invented than democracy but this is untrue. A better system was invented in antiquity as a result of a long debate about the best political regime. Plato and Aristotle discuss it. They argued that most regimes are defective by being one-sided. The ancient thinkers distinguished three types of regimes: monarchy (one-man rule), oligarchy or aristocracy (minority rule), and democracy (majority rule). Each they regarded as good in some aspects and deficient in others. A possible solution of the problem of one-sidedness was to mix the three types in such a way that each would foster the advantages and neutralize the disadvantages of the others. Cicero referred to this regime as *res republica*.

Even the American system, which today is regarded as the exemplary embodiment of representative democracy, was established as a hybrid construction. Even in the twentieth century, approximately up to the Thirties, this hybrid view of political regimes was still quite widespread.

However, "democracy" soon became not just a description but also the norm. This meant moving away from thinking about political regimes in terms of pros and cons to the idolatry of democracy. Prior to this idolatry, the hybrid system had played a creative role in political thought, preventing politicians from falling into utopianism. Attempts today, however, to use the term "republic" in its former scope provoke the irritation of political scientists. A republic has a higher internal diversity than a democracy but politicians have come to associate the term wrongly with freedom, openness, and diversity.

Liberal democracy is more restrictive, being strongly correlated with egalitarian principles that are quite wrongly believed to generate diversity. On the contrary, egalitarianism does not tolerate aristocratic and monarchial tendencies. Liberal democracy, the single most homogenizing force in the modern world, creates the illusion that it alone stands for social differentiation.

Q: What do you think of the ancient view that the three types of regimes each had strengths and weaknesses?

5

For a long time, until recently, liberalism and democracy seemed to obviously point in two opposite directions and were considered incompatible attitudes. Tocqueville and Ortega y Gasset observed that democracy is something more than a mechanism for the peaceful transfer of power in that it has also the ability to change the whole mindset of society by depriving it of all intellectual and psychological impulses and all social habits and aspirations that do not conform to democratic practices. The aridity

of the democratic mind could be discerned and deplored in Tocqueville's time because classical education was still in force, providing an outside non-democratic perspective of evaluation. From this outside perspective, people were able to observe that rampant democratization was accompanied by an anti-hierarchical conformity. [Note the parallel to Stratford Caldecott's stress on the urgent task in education of regaining an ontological hierarchy. As Christians, we must more explicitly define ourselves with spiritual detachment from democracy. It is effecting everything in our society and we must show a different perspective].

Putting democracy and liberalism together began to seem promising. Democracy would ensure the overall balance of the entire political order and liberalism was responsible for enriching the society with individual inspirations to improve things, supporting a human desire for creativity and change. Liberal democracy is usually explained by contrasting it with totalitarian democracy. Liberal democrats quite rightly observed that freedom and coercion are exclusive.

Q: Is liberal democracy a reliable safeguard of freedom?

6

When we look at the changes in liberal-democratic societies over time, we see not so much the introduction of liberalism into democracy but the democratization of liberalism. The effect proved to be the opposite of what was expected. Liberalism did not diversify democracy because it was a different kind of liberalism than what the American Founding Fathers and others hoped for, an egalitarian liberalism rather than an aristocratic liberalism. As such, it reinforced what it was hoped it would have moderated. This should not have been a surprise because the original idea of liberalism was egalitarianism.

Democratization turned liberalism into a doctrine in which the primary agents were no longer individuals but groups and institutions of the democratic state. In the final outcome, the state in liberal democracy ceased to be an institution pursuing the common good and became instead a hostage of groups that treated it solely as an instrument of change securing their interests.

The state lost its general republican character and turned into a conglomerate of the social, economic, cultural, and other policy programs enacted and imposed through democratic procedures. This meant the state had to take over more and more specific responsibilities far beyond the normal operations of the state apparatus. Intervention deeply into the social substance was deemed necessary because that was where the roots of status and recognition lay.

The democratic-mechanism itself was created not to limit political activity but to keep it going at an ever higher speed. Everyone feels the urge to act, even if the activity is phony.

It is noteworthy that the state has at the same time ceased to be associated with great hopes and is no longer viewed as a political object of worship. It seems rather to have lost the respect of the citizenry. "It can be considered a paradox that a liberal-democratic man expects more and more from the state that he values less and less." Nevertheless, the faith in the absolute superiority of liberal democracy remains unshaken.

Q: What does Legutko mean by the democratization of liberalism versus the introduction of liberalism into democracy?

Liberal democracy was said to differ from totalitarian democracy in one crucial respect: in the former, the citizens could not be "coerced to be free." In the last decades, however, we have been witnessing the emergence of a kind of liberal-democratic general will. This general will does not recognize geographical or political borders and reaches even into language, gestures, and thoughts. All in all, the liberal democrats, the socialists, and the conservatives are unanimous in their condemnations: they condemn racism, sexism, homophobia, discrimination, intolerance and all other sins listed in the liberal-democratic catechism while also participating in an unimaginable stretching of the meaning of these concepts and depriving them of explanatory power. "The groups which managed to capture...liberal phraseology and the logic that underlies it - such as homosexuals and feminists - have exerted a disproportionate influence on the government to the extent that the state institutions, including the courts, have taken upon themselves the test of breaking the resistance of less conscious and more stubborn groups."

Those who write and speak now face more limitations than they used to and institutions and communities that traditionally stood in the way of "coercion to freedom" are being dismantled. A similar pressure is exerted on education in general. Teachers can do less and less while supposedly they are being empowered more and more. The power is shifting to government official who are ceded the power to subvert the influence of teachers and parents. "Coercion and spontaneity overlap in an almost perfect symbiosis." The universities are also undergoing the same process and it is tragic considering for centuries they were regarded as free industries of the human mind. Freedom is in retreat.

Consider the disappearance of the academic eccentric, a well-known personality, for centuries almost inseparably associated with the academic tradition and its peculiar atmosphere of the freedom of inquiry. (p. 69)

The coercion to freedom also occurs in the supranational institutions, especially the European Union. The EU believes itself a vanguard in relation to the rest of the population, acting on behalf of a society that has yet to emerge into existence. We have a parallel to communism in which there was the party which identified completely with the ultimate goal of socialism and the real people who were supposedly not fully aware of what is good for them. The EU mind has generated such a mental habit that every dissent is considered a blasphemous assault on the very idea of the European Union and the noble principles that constitute it.

Q: Why is the academic eccentric vanishing?