

From Failed Utopias to the Rediscovery of the Common Good

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*Care for the Other brings about the common good as does the care for
institutions that care for the Other.*

A. Introduction

The experience of the 20th century, vivid even now, attests to the fact that utopias, idealised visions that are at the same time imaginative, elegant and intellectually coherent ‘perfect societies’, do not last long when confronted with the real world. Recent decades witnessed the turbulent breakdown of the communist utopia and of the political project of ‘real socialism’. Closer to us, liberal utopia and the political project of democracy are decreasingly persuasive as they failing to gain support and, by doing so, to deliver their promises in a more complex and globalised world. Collapse of utopias is a fact: completed in one case, not impossible in the other as that liberal utopia may go the same way as communism.

The notion of ‘the common good’, long ignored by social philosophers because of an alleged contamination by scholastic and Christian overtones, ought to be brought back to the agenda in the light of altered times. At a time when utopias are collapsing, the notion of the common good brings to societies founded on human rights renewed hope as it is not yet another utopia, but the dimension that stresses the awareness of the Other. Albeit one of the foundations of the democratic and market model and of the corresponding utopia, the awareness of the Other is vanishing from today’s societies. The rediscovery of these foundations is the only way to give new momentum to the liberal project and help societies based on it to rapidly meet the needs and aspirations of communities and the people make up these communities.

This paper has two distinct objectives. The first is scientific, examining the interface between utopian ideal and historical reality. The aim is to fully grasp the fleeting and disordering moment when the utopia on the ideal model, collapses in the face of a social reality that it is no longer capable of either transforming or disguising. Once this moment is reached, utopia’s demise is complete. Then the only open question it to know whether its occurrence has been properly grasped by the observer before the demise of a utopia becomes

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overtly manifest when the social system that lives by its light falls apart. The demise of communist utopia went unnoticed for a long time; today the liberal utopia is coming dangerously close to this very point.

The second objective of the paper is political in nature. It attempts to show that human rights as the primary foundation and accomplishment of the democratic project can only be preserved and enhanced if the project can shake off the grip of the liberal utopia and make awareness of the Other its foundation and cornerstone. This idea presupposes the rediscovery of the notion of common good and of the underlying anthropology.

This twofold objective explains the structure of this article. Part B examines the question of coherence of social systems, while Part C analyses the principles or canons from which each of the two utopias (the communist and liberal one) derive their coherence. It compares the principles of coherence that underpin liberal utopia to those that give to the communist 'ideal society' its consistency. This part concludes by identifying the key consequences that may follow when these principles are used as the source of coherency for real social systems. Part D continues with an analysis of the actual operation of social systems springing from liberal and communist utopias. This section looks at several symptoms that lead to the conclusion that current centrifugal forces are seriously threatening the coherence of liberal social systems, thus placing their survival under threat. Part E draws political conclusions from these conceptual developments, namely concerning the underlying anthropology and the political role that the notion 'common good' should play in the quest for rediscovered coherence of liberal societies. The aim is to help the democratic and market project to find new foundations for its internal consistence and to provide the corresponding societies with a modified 'organising principle' that would be mobilizing enough so as to prevent its collapse to which it otherwise aims. It is only in this final part that the notion of the common good is awarded its full value as the notion that may enrich and strengthen the organising principles of Western societies. Such a change would place these societies on a steady course towards a new consistency that better takes into account the requirements of the human nature and those of 21st century technologies.

B. Coherence under Threat

Contrary to a mechanism, which can either function or rest, a system is in its essence dynamic, existing exclusively through the agency of the interactions it encompasses. The ability of a system to survive is therefore a function of its capacity to resist the disturbances in its environment, namely the external pressures and interferences that at any moment threaten system's internal coherence. As soon as the level of internal coherence falls below that of the surrounding environment, the system falls apart and therefore ceases to exist as such. Thus, coherence is a relative notion, one that makes sense only when related to the working of a principle and of its underlying logic within a specific

environment. Any social system can exist only for as long as its specific organising principle (sometimes also referred to as principle of coherence) is strong enough to maintain a sufficient level of consistency in the interactions between system's elements. In other words, the survival of a system is contingent upon the capacity of its organising principle, leveraged by interactions and behaviours of the acting element, to resist the propagation of entropy from outside to the inside of the system.

When a system crumbles, its 'released' elements either incorporate themselves into other neighbouring systems or else they organise themselves around another organising principle so as to form a 'new' system. The latter situation is often described as 'systemic change' or 'transition'.

In any real social system, two sets of forces (intellectual and social) are simultaneously at work: on one side those amplifying the action of the organising principle, on the other side those weakening it. The same dichotomy is to be found in the system's environment. In consequence, the medium-term survival of any social system is never definitively assured, depending upon the balance of power between these two sets of opposing forces. Systems internal coherence is therefore constantly either augmented or, conversely, diminished by the agency of actors. It is augmented every time that through their spontaneous actions actors reinforce the system's organising principle. Such a situation puts in motion a positive feedback loop between the micro level and macro one. This in consequence increases the convergence between what the system 'delivers' and the values and expectations of its constituents. Such patterns of behaviour bring into being the true 'centripetal forces' that strengthen the coherence of the system and lead to an ever reinforcing spiral.

At the other end of the spectrum, when the behaviour of actors diverges from, or goes against, the organising principle the results are 'centrifugal forces' possibly leading to an ever weakening spiral. The gap between what the system delivers and its promises, values and expectations of its members cannot be overcome in the long run only by alchemist trickery performed at the macro-level alone. A social system can only survive in the medium-term when, on the balance, forces that bring about harmony between the system's results and the aspirations of the people within it are stronger than the opposing ones.

The primary concern of this argument is the worrying future of the social system having democracy and market as organising principle. The overriding impression is that such a system is losing consistency under the double weight of ever more radicalised centripetal and centrifugal forces. Such heightening tension endangers the very foundations of the system such as human rights and its organising principle: democracy and the market, which are only extensions of the fundamental values of human rights.

Recent history offers an example how an eroded internal coherence resulted in the implosion of the communist system and of its – unduly called – planned economy. Although this analogy has to be approached with great caution, the communist collapse highlights the risks that any social system – including democracy and market – may face when its organising principle loses grasp on its elements and when expectations and deliveries diverge. The difficulties

currently encountered by the transition in post-communism countries illustrate the laboriousness and pain of restructuring a system around another organising principle, whilst the outcome of the process still remains unclear fifteen years after the upheaval.

The core systemic tenets of the planned economy and the process which caused its downfall are discussed here only in order to help identify, albeit tentatively, vulnerabilities in the liberal system. This discussion is meant to encourage reflection on measures to prevent the organising principle around which coherence has been progressively strengthened since the industrial revolution from being shattered by an outburst of centrifugal forces. Today the systemic tension sufficiently pronounced and deeply rooted to justify reflection, before it is too late.

C. The Two Utopias Compared

Democratic market societies, like communist societies in their time, are not wholly independent from the philosophical and ethical concepts and ideas from which they claim their justification. This interdependence between the world of ideas and social reality conceals both a normative dimension (where idea criticises reality and thus seeks to modify it), and a positive dimension (in which concepts are adjusted in order to better reflect a reality seen as objective).

This part acknowledges only the normative dimension of this interdependence as it aims to bring to light the underlying ‘ideal vision’ or the ‘constructed perfection’ as Frédéric Rouvillois calls utopias. In any utopian vision two aspects are interwoven: the ideal dimension in which perfection is extended to the whole of social order, and the real dimension which shows how the ideal state may be achieved by the motion of an organising principle¹ itself sustained by the deeds of living men and women.

Neither communism nor the democratic market society refers explicitly to a precisely defined vision of its ‘constructed perfections’. If these are to be made explicit, the writings of the founding fathers have to be called upon but they are strewn with inconsistencies and contradictions. In consequence, it is not easy to document either of these ideal visions although, by contrast, they are omnipresent in latent and popularised forms.

The two utopias have three common features from the point of view of their internal construction:

- both are rooted in a vision of human nature, of humankind’s mission and of its place in the world. In this sense, they are both anthropocentric;²
- the two visions set out broad outlines and sketches for the key features of the ‘perfect’, ‘good’ or ‘just’ society, i.e. a society offering human beings complete fulfilment and the possibility of realising their mission, although the two views disagree on their content;

¹ F. Rouvillois, *L’utopie: textes choisis et commentés* (1998), ‘Introduction’, at 11-43.

² *Id.*, at 24.

- both culminate in practical (political) recommendations concerning types of action to be undertaken for the utopia to become a reality. In this regard, both utopias may be inspirations for action by those that subscribe to them.

Aside from these three structural similarities, the two visions are utterly different in every way, starting with the content that they ascribe to human nature.

I. The Anthropological Vision

Especially for the founding fathers of communism, the human nature is essentially generic. Human being is perceived as fundamentally lacking individuality, aspiring only to melt and disappear in communion with the group or society. Marx stated that if, in his own time, individuality became explicit, this was only because genuine human nature was crushed and oppressed by the restrictions of capitalist organisation. To set man free, the oppressing organizing principle must be swept away and be replaced by the liberating communist principle, the only one capable of ensuring fulfilment of man's true nature. Even if, during the transitional period the 'new' organising principle has to be imposed by proletariat's dictatorship, over time man's longing to melt with one's peers would triumph. The communist utopia maintains that from this fusion the society will emerge as organic whole, the members having abdicated their individuality. In the final analysis, the organic society is the only legitimate economic and political actor. Paradoxically, in this context the concept of 'common good' loses its sense, as the 'common' dimension is overwhelmed by a 'social' one that is both organic and irreversible. Thus, in this utopia monolithic social good replaces the notions of both the common good, and of individual good.

Human nature at the epicentre of liberal utopia has not only nothing in common with the generic vision of man; but opposes it in many ways. Liberal utopia is inhabited by individuals, every one representative of a species with infinite variations. Such individuals as sketched by Locke, Hobbes or Smith, accomplish their nature and calling through an autonomous relationship with their peers and an unfettered enjoyment of the goods they own. According to the liberal utopia it is within the impenetrable redoubt of the 'private sphere' that individuals accomplish themselves, protected from the gaze and envy of others.

Outside the 'private sphere', individual ties to their peers are limited to those strictly necessary for the satisfaction of needs that cannot be met in isolation. In this utopia, the only *raison d'être* for the 'social sphere' lies in the incapacity of individuals to meet all of their needs in isolation. In this system, the 'social' dimension is a mere aggregation of the individuals, the whole is strictly equal to the sum of its parts. Society rests on a voluntary act of association between free individuals who forge a 'pact' designed not simply to provide protection from external aggression, but also to guard against the possibility of members attacking each other. Mutual recognition of fundamental and inalienable rights vested in the members of society constitutes the best guarantee for the survival

of all. Thus, the most valued achievement of the liberal society is the universal recognition of individual's rights by virtue of "the inherent dignity and [...] the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."³

II. The Organising Principle

From the two very divergent premises about human nature derive two distinct utopian visions of the perfect society. Placing the two 'perfect societies' in juxtaposition, allows to illustrate some of their key differences concerning their economic dimension.

The primary difference focuses on their respective ultimate *raison d'être*. For communism, the achievement of its historic ideal is the ultimate goal because only this will bring eternal happiness to the generic society, whereas, more prosaically, the goal of the liberal utopia is simply to provide the greatest possible happiness for the greatest possible number of people.

Another fundamental difference concerns the role of the economic sphere. The autonomy of economic activity within liberal utopia is asserted by Mandeville and later Smith. Emancipated from the political, the economic sphere is governed by its own laws, notably those of the market. As the means for achieving individual happiness, private property, ownership and possibility of acquisition are the prime motives of economic activity in which man is guided by the infallible spur that is his own utility. The liberal utopia underwent a process of considerable refinement during the 19th century as it embraced a finely-worked vision of the operation of the market economy, within which *homo economicus* is the sole actor. None of this is found in the communist utopia, within which the economic aspect of social life is totally subservient to the political, in the same manner as individual economic aspirations are subordinate to their desire to merge with other in an unique social whole. Whereas the liberal *homo economicus* uses economic activity to maximise satisfaction and its insatiable appetite for possession, the communist generic man lacking the appropriative instinct spares no effort for the well-being and happiness of the collective. Whilst liberal utopia is established on a distinction between the political and the economic spheres, each operating according to its own logic, communism asserts the oneness of the two spheres. Thus in the communist vision there is no need or justification for a distinction between the two spheres, everything is therefore political. So, in the liberal utopia economic autonomy is constrained by the political sphere, whilst in the communist one reverse applies: the political is, at least potentially, constrained by the economic.

Logically the differences in visions of human nature result in different modalities governing ties between members of society. In liberal utopia people compete for power against each other; they are mistrustful of each other. For this reason it is vital that the few relationships that members are obliged to maintain are impersonal, fleeting and governed by precise rules. Moreover, the

³ Preamble to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

principal role of the political dimension is to monitor the strict application of these rules of communal life. It follows that in the liberal vision, co-existence is governed by three cold and impersonal mechanisms: market, rule of law, and democracy. Each of these expresses, in its own manner, liberal utopia's founding sentiment: mistrust of all, by all. In order to limit the risk of harm, liberal utopia is built upon the concept of checks and balances designed to preserve the organising principle from perversion. Thus, the market, counterbalanced by competition, ensures the most efficient possible allocation of resources and riches, and, at the individual level, the equivalence of every transaction. Law provides the equality of treatment and allows for the settlement of disputes with rigour and impartiality. Finally, democracy justifies the exercise of power that is not the exclusive domain of any one group and provides everybody with the wherewithal to hold the others at bay. Through rules and procedures against the risk of corruption of the organising principle, which can be summarised as respect for human rights, liberal utopia protects itself against the worst, but at the same time also renders the best impossible.

The reverse applies to the communist utopia, which is built upon a blind faith in the spontaneous fraternity of all. Relations centred on sharing and mutual trust are envisaged to lead to warm, open and durable relationships between everybody, the great fraternity of peoples. No need to issue rules, to formalise procedures or erect safeguards, as all are expected to share a vision of the same, single end. As good will is supposed to prevail whatever the content of the relations, there is no need for any general constraining regulatory or legal framework. Minor problems can be solved on the spot. As a consequence the relations are arbitrary in the fullest sense of that word. In placing its faith in the best of human being, the communist utopia at the same time opens itself to the worst.

III. Cold Transactions and Fusional Relations

In a somewhat simplified view, the social life in the liberal utopia is made of ties that are cold, impersonal and instantaneous transactions, whereas in the communism utopia society is a fabric of warm, personal relationships, in each case different, durable and forward-looking. This distinction has at least three far-reaching consequences.

In liberal utopia the distinction between public space and the private sphere is fundamental. The former is the venue for cold, impersonal, utilitarian and specific transactions whereas the latter – especially the family unit – is the venue for warm relationships that are a form of wealth in themselves. Such a distinction is absent from the communist utopia where no boundary exists between the two domains. In the communist society, everyone is standing naked in the middle of the public sphere as he or she is deprived either of a “private” where to preserve ones integrity of “roles” or “functions” one may play provided there is a backyard to escape from the public eye.

Liberal utopia's separation of the private sphere from the public space highlights the importance of reason, of the indispensable discursive and deliberative capacities required for the conduct of cold transactions that belong in the public space. In its essence, the liberal utopia is rational and provides a level playing field for those willing to play according to such rules. The others, those that are simply not equipped to play that game, they better stay in the private sphere. In consequence, not all members of society are equal and, like the citizens of ancient Rome, genuine members of the liberal society are only those who (a) occupy a place in the commercial system (who possess goods to exchange), under threat of being excluded from the trading system and thereby from the right to autonomous survival; (b) are capable of reason and (c) are informed. This being the case, liberal utopia offers no place in the public sphere to the young and the weak (infants, the elderly, sick and mentally disabled), whom it prefers to relegate to the domestic and private sphere in which they can be 'cared' for. On the other hand, in communist utopia, the problem of marginalisation and exclusion is simply not acknowledged, as life lived in common is nourished on emotions and the shared realities of happiness and sorrow. Whereas in the liberal society all is reason, conceptualisation and deliberation, in the communist society spontaneous fusion provides a place for everybody.

Amongst instruments used to objectify and depersonalise relations of exchange, money is worthy of special mention. It is the vehicle *par excellence* for cold transactions in a society where the law guarantees equality of treatment for all who have it. The only condition for participating in trade is to dispose of sufficient quantity of means of payment. Purchasing power determines a person's capacity to forge and break transactions, to enter into and to terminate contracts. This is somewhat similar to a casino, where sufficient gambling chips is all that is required to take a seat at a gaming table. This image, and the role played by money, underline the nature of a liberal society in which places are never definitively acquired but rather change in relation to the ebb and flow of means of payment. This needs to be related to Tönnies' distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, mirrored by the Popperian distinction between 'open society' and 'closed society'. The liberal ideal is close to the market, a society fully open to all who can flash the requisite monies. In this vision, the means of payment may be viewed as an entry ticket to the public trading space, and consequently as an instrument providing freedom from the restraints of the private sphere. The communist utopia works thanks to a widespread chain of face-to-face relations which, at the end is supposed to deliver 'to each according to his or her needs'. This ideal view recognises the legitimate needs of everyone independent of his or her ability to pay. On one side the liberal society is an acquisitive one, while on the other side, the communist society is a distributive one. This distinction is directly related to the difference in the method of allocation of goods: on one side is the market and on the other discretionary allocation (wrongly called planned) driven, according to the ideal hypothesis, by the concern for the social interest.

Two aspects, where the differences could not be more profound, must be highlighted before concluding this comparison between the two utopias. The first concerns the place accorded to morality within each of these logical constructs, whilst the second concerns the attitude of these two societies to history.

IV. Actor Responsibilities

In an ideal society characterised by precise and restrictive rules, social morality amounts to no more than obeying the laws and, where necessary, working politically to change them. This leaves the zone of what is permitted open, giving free rein to individual actions intended to maximise satisfaction. In such a context the question of responsibility does not even arise, as every possible effect of an act or transaction is, hypothetically, accounted for either in the price (absence of externalities) or in a legal verdict. In the liberal utopia the private sphere, that of warm and personal relationships, is the sole venue for the exercise of personal ethics. Once outside the private domain, ethical concerns are taken over by regulation, the precision of which ensures that it covers the entire public space. Things are, however, ordered differently in the communist society, where everybody is responsible for everything in the face of a History that will, in a kind of a Last Judgement, judge every thought and deed. In waiting for this moment there is a great risk either to see usurpers judging the others on arbitrary criteria or see general irresponsibility prevail.

The contrast in the role of social morality and responsibility is even harsher when related to the temporal dimension underlying both utopias. The communist society is one that is, by definition, on the march towards the radiant future of The Perfect Society. Consequently, the way in which society operates and the decisions taken matters solely in the light of the historical point of arrival. In contrast, in liberal utopia it is only the present that counts, as history has no more meaning than a succession of pages on a calendar. Whilst liberal society does not project itself into the future, communist society attempts to ignore the present.

Juxtaposing these few salient characteristics of the two ideal visions allows an appreciation of the fundamental differences between the criteria necessary for internal stability of the real societies that draw their inspiration from these two visions. In fact, perfection embedded in the communist utopia spreads into reality when its founding premise concerning the true human nature becomes reality in the concrete world. Thus, the striking feature of this utopia is the contiguity of generic human nature and the tangible perfection of society that results from it. If human nature were proven not to correspond to the vision inscribed upon the cornerstone of communist utopia, the edifice of the perfect society would find itself irremediably condemned to non-reality. The fact that the communist utopia provides no intermediation mechanism between human nature and the form of society social dimension has had its own practical consequence. Those who were attempting to turn the utopia into social reality,

certain of their historical mission, allowed themselves almost limitless freedom of manoeuvre, of which the sadly celebrated ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ is but a manifestation.⁴

In the liberal utopia rules and procedures (market, law and democracy) are the interfaces between the perfect society and human nature, allowing it to thrive principally within the private sphere. The rules and procedures governing the public space restrict the freedom of manoeuvre accorded to the builders of the perfect society to marginal modifications made to these procedures. Rather than true builders, they are no more than simple administrators and as such they are endlessly replaceable. Thus, procedures and rules limit the ascendancy of individuals over the social and, in practice, serve only to entrench the mistrust that remains one of the pillars of liberal utopia. Whereas the communist utopia requires heroes and behavioural models in order to become a reality, the liberal utopia deals with mediocrities, people who are neither downright good nor downright bad, people who can act as efficient cogs in an ever more complex machine. Some even consider that liberal utopia is tailor-made for a mankind that is mediocre, rational and calculating.⁵

⁴ On this question of a utopia on the brink of creating a reality, there is special poignancy in the exchanges between young communist converts and workers in Kiev during the period 1902-1903. Nicolas Valentinov, a follower of Lenin during his time in Switzerland, refers to this in his memoirs (N. Valentinov, *Encounters With Lenin* (1953), translated from the French edition, at 231-234):

This faith in the socialist paradise, which for us essentially consisted in the socialisation of all means of production and the abolition of private property, was strengthened in us by a faith in the engine of the new regime, by that I mean the working class, to which we attributed superior moral qualities that differentiated it from the other classes: sense of justice, sacrifice for the common good, solidarity with all the oppressed, absence of egoism and nationalism, profound sense of the human self, hunger for equality, liberty, and knowledge. These intrinsic qualities of the working class should manifest themselves and increase tenfold upon the construction of socialism. In addition, Semyon Petrovich’s anxieties about the domination of the ‘malicious’ in a regime that had abolished private property, seemed to us to be a sign of a lack of confidence in progress and the mission of the working class. Such were the topics that we debated passionately over-and-over. By ‘we’, I mean two students from the Kiev Polytechnic, the joiner Semyon Petrovich, a restaurant cook, a low ranking employee in a wine warehouse and two workers. Like all socialists, Victor and I never for a moment considered that a society entailing the abolition of private property and the socialisation of all means of production might come under the influence of ‘malicious’ men, capable of making an infernal nightmare from a theoretical paradise. However, those that betrayed Lenin determined to prove that this was wholly feasible. In this regard, the joiner from Kiev saw things more clearly than we.

⁵ R. Alvira, *The Moral and Spiritual Foundations of Economics and Politics*, in Annual Meeting of the International Association for Christian Social Teaching (2003), at 6: “Smith’s economy makes some fairly evident ethico-anthropological presuppositions that are in the final analysis to a large extent responsible for the current situation. Smith’s principle hypothesis is the idea of the ‘average man’ (which is not coincident with either the ‘moderate man’, nor the ‘simple’ man) and is inspired by the Jansenist tradition, although radicalised by his Anglican-Protestant background.

The personal qualities of the leaders of a liberal society are of little importance, as their margin of freedom and action is circumscribed by the procedures within which they operate whereas history is ‘open’ and yet to be written. The reverse is true in the communist society; its leaders are History’s servants, and they are required to interpret and obey to its rules.

D. Cracks in the Liberal Edifice

The collapse of communism caught the world unaware, although the causes underlying this implosion had been at work for several decades. The final nail in the coffin was the economic distress experienced by the populations and the lamentable performance of the military technologies, though these superficial observations are by no means the whole story. The communist regime had in fact manifested from its very inception, a profoundly inhumane character, one contrary to human nature. Owing to the use of tremendous resources devoted to coercion, terror and indoctrination and allied to the blind faith of the first generations of communists, it took the economic failure of the system and its ideological exhaustion to allow the population to regain a sense of hope and gradually regain its courage. Pope John-Paul II’s harsh words and unambiguous statements acted as an unexpected catalyst. By attacking the foundations of the system head-on and denouncing to the world not merely the real system’s visceral inhumanity but also that of the project and the communist utopia, the Pope opened a fatal breach. Taken up and amplified by communication technologies, this message launched a tidal wave at the same time as the Western media was carrying real-time images of another society, free and prosperous, into their bleak dwellings. Against a particularly propitious international backdrop, it took just a few years for this surge to sweep the system away without any loss of blood. The system’s organising principle had lost all grips on reality from the moment that its accompanying terror disappeared, braking up under the weight of its internal contradictions, the most important of which was a misunderstanding of human nature. The system fell like a house of cards because of a congenital error in the utopia it proclaimed, an error that was anthropological in nature. The fact is that the communist utopia is based on the idea that human beings are communal, and, in reality, it allowed its builders absolute freedom of action – as witnessed by the long history of violence seen throughout the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat. Once the powerful ceased to believe and the rest ceased to fear, the levers of arbitrary power – which was the sole coherent force – disappeared. This vacuum was not compensated for by intermediary structures or procedures

The average man is neither hero nor lout, he does not seek to commit harm, neither does he have the strength to concern himself with matters other than himself. As a result, (according to Smith, PhD) attempts need to be made to limit as far as possible the number of institutions premised upon virtue, as it is reasonable to doubt that they would be posses it.”

because they were, by definition, absent. Nothing could therefore slow the systemic dislocation, which immediately became total.

The extreme harshness of the conditions required for survival under communism, both material and psychological, forced populations living under this regime to adapt. Observers thus spoke of *homo systemicus* and *homo sovieticus*. Such people lived permanently on the threshold of schizophrenia, trapped between a private sphere whose existence and, more importantly, whose legitimacy was repudiated by the system and a public space permanently at the mercy of the absurd and the arbitrary. These people survived only by dint of a thick carapace that allowed them to preserve a minimum of individuality, thereby protecting them from fusing with the social. The difficulties of post-communist transition highlight the extent to which scars left by forced adaptations run deep.

In 1989, Francis Fukuyama astounded the world with his claim that the fall of the Berlin Wall provided proof that the liberal utopia, on the verge of becoming reality, marked the culmination of humankind's ideological and historical evolution. With liberal utopia, history in the Hegelian sense had reached its end point, because perfection had been attained and human truth was finally incarnated in reality.⁶ Even if Fukuyama's reasoning did not carry the day, the liberal world found it welcome and reassuring, as it found itself somewhat dazed by a victory over communism that was both complete and unexpected. Today, fifteen years after *The End of History*, circumstances have changed and the liberal utopia has lost much of its seductive power.

The fact is that these fifteen years have shown that the application of the liberal utopia-inspired social model is far more problematic than anticipated, and that it has difficulty in winning over populations; tangible results consequently fail to live up to expectations. Furthermore, unexpected occurrences have served to shine a light on profound cracks in the edifice that, at least potentially, risk endangering the coherency of the social system claiming to represent this utopia.

I. Pressure from the Economic Sphere Discharges the Private Sphere

Within liberal utopia, the economic sphere benefits from a wide degree of autonomy. In fact, within this distinctive sphere of social life, ties between members of society are limited to trading transactions governed by market mechanisms. Since the era of Mandeville, Smith and later Pareto, the market has been the mechanism best able to regulate the distribution of wealth within society. By bringing together those who offer goods and those who seek them, the market protects protagonists from abuse by forcing them to compete, allowing all of them – so long as they have the means – to best satisfy their needs or desires. Trade – an instant, impersonal and balanced transaction –

⁶ F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* 415 (1992).

provides markets with a shelter from friction and conflicts, whose origins lie, at times, in interpersonal relationships. The emblematic image of the *homo economicus* – the person whose nature is limited to an instinct for peaceful maximisation of his or her utility to the exclusion of all other considerations – provides a very convincing vision of the society in which the economic occupies the foreground.

The liberal utopia leaves it up to the real actors – in the exercise of their freedom – to define the space that the market will occupy within their society. While this doctrine states that the market is the most effective means of ensuring happiness for society's members, the market's natural tendency is to expand and occupy a larger space. This is certainly true in reality: keeping step with the specialisation of needs and technological progress, whole swaths of human activities switch from the private sphere to the public space where they are required to submit to the regulating action either of the market or of public institutions. The very rapid growth of the service sector is symptomatic of this evolution: generations of *homo economicus* tended to favour market-governed trade exchanges for the performance of tasks (education, healthcare, leisure) freighted with, at times, complex relationships that naturally belong within the purview of the private sphere. Consequently, the private sphere is progressively emptied of its content in favour of the public space, especially the market.

The truth is that the extension of the market's role is fuelled by a very powerful self-justification, according to which the only remedy envisageable for possible imperfections in the market economy consists of expanding the market. The liberal society, consequent to this justification, tends towards a market society in which the individual – an increasingly isolated figure – only ever leaves the public space in order to sleep (and yet, what of Big Brother and other forms of flagrant display and voyeurism?), and this public space becomes a forum in which aspirations for self-realisation are played out. The draw exerted upon individuals by the public space with its market, its cameras and its dreams of riches leads to intense pressure upon the private sphere, which in turn dwindles and disintegrates on a large scale. This process is all the more pronounced by being fully coherent with the vision of human beings, of 'average', ordinary people who have no other aspirations than the satisfaction of their individual needs, and, as a result, it encounters only very limited moral resistance that is easily discredited.

In such a context, the idea of efficiency becomes all-important. In fact the 'efficiency ethos', which makes the relationship between means employed and results obtained the primary criteria at both individual and social levels, became widespread within the 19th century bourgeois society. The extension of the economic sphere into the heart of liberal societies was made possible by the triumph of rationalism, of which economic efficiency became the most immediate manifestation. It is *homo economicus* utter rationality that caused them to develop the market society and to use it efficiently for the benefit of his happiness. The accent on rationality as the common ground between individuals is perfectly compatible with the individualist vision of human nature upon which the liberal utopia rests. However, reliance on cold calculation, of which

the economic represents the ideal sphere of application, leads to transactions being favoured above other forms of interaction, notably relationships. This only serves to exacerbate the pressure on the private sphere referred to above, emptying it of its traditional content.

The economic has been on the rise for the past fifty or more years, whilst at the same time social connection at the heart of Western societies has dimmed. This observation allows us to posit the hypothesis that the economic exerts an irresistible attraction over individuals, who, seduced, extricate themselves from traditional social links and in doing so empty the private sphere of an important element of its content. Thus, it may be that this extension of the domain governed by impersonal relations and procedures (market and administration) culminates in the appropriation of content that, until very recently, was the manner for interpersonal relationships. Such a change increases the importance of functional communities – companies and institutions – based upon the interchangeability of actors and the depersonalisation of their relations, which are ephemeral by definition. At the same time, the importance of living communities, especially the family, based on long-lasting and personal relationships among members, dwindles. Were this hypothesis to be validated, the structure of private life, whose protection is the *raison d'être* of the liberal utopia and the social systems it inspires, would be in the process of being emptied of content that would at the same time enter the purview of the public space. Thus, paradoxically, the growth of the market would result in its *raison d'être* being denied the most precious of all treasures – that which the liberal utopia claimed it would protect against external threats. The transfer of private life's essential content into the public space and the market would have drained, in the truest sense, the liberal utopia of its justification. At the centre of this augmented public space we find a fusalional individual acting according to the dictates of modishness as interpreted and delivered via marketing campaigns. Marshall McLuhan recognised this possibility as early as the late 1960s, when he stated that modern humans were going to wear their brains outside their skulls instead of inside.

The spread of the market's domain brings our societies closer to the abstract society already described and desiderated by Karl Popper. In this vision the cold, strictly functional, transaction governed by procedures occupies the entire space of interaction to the extent that no space is left for relationships. One may ask whether, if such a stage were reached, society would still exist, or would it rather be a social mayfly, such as is seen rapidly forming then equally rapidly disappearing in airport concourses. It is the result of random coincidences of time and place with no past and no future, like the coming together of quarks in a nuclear experiment. The question of the very existence of the social must be addressed in the face of such atomisation. It is a similar question to that examined above, concerning the sustainability – at the heart of Western social systems – of the private sphere.

Let us conclude with this quotation from Albert Tevoedjre:

The ills of the industrial civilisation have their origins in the principles applied at grassroots level in order to increase production and profit: concentration and specialisation. It is through concentration and specialisation that the structures of society alter, sometimes dangerously. To this increasing frustration in industrialised societies one might point to the profound riches of many African and Asian societies, where the family comprises individuals from several generations and associates all living under the same roof. The insane live in the village and are accepted and feel recognised. However, from the moment industrialisation 'specialises' the individual, every time the economy switches from use-based to exchange-based, one sees the family reduced to its most simple expression. The accumulative society certainly enjoys an extraordinary ability to take things over. But can the society itself be said to truly exist?⁷

In a world where societies of varying degrees of openness exist in parallel, it is logical that the most liberal will draw towards them members of more closed societies who have something to offer. These new arrivals, providers of a measurable economic contribution, will have no trouble in finding a role within an open society. At the same time, this market-driven pseudosociety will tend to eject (marginalise and exclude) those who fail to find a role. This has a twofold effect: (1) traditional societies that implode as they find their most dynamic elements constantly drawn away from them, and (2) open (Western) societies that become the venue for the marginalisation and exclusion of useless and isolated atoms of humankind whose survival is permanently under threat. This process is made possible by the far-reaching demutualisation of shared destinies, and thus of protecting measures against existential risks.

II. Inequalities Open the Door to Exploitation

The all-embracing rush towards the economic increases inequalities as it tends to crush the protected spaces that often contain living communities, and forces every one of their members into the role of an economic actor. In this way the sources of inequalities multiply in relation to the same cold procedures that govern economic and political life in an open, democratic market society. This is, above all, true of inequalities in their ability to fully participate: illiteracy, lack of understanding of complex mechanisms, lack of information. This *de facto* inequality in the face of 'objective and universal rules of the game has consequences that are not merely purely economic but are also political and social. These inequalities are as glaring within each national society as they are in North-South terms.

Against the background of a race for tangible economic results, these inequalities in the ability to follow the rules of the game lead to massive exploitation of some people by others. For the sake of brevity we shall examine two forms of exploitation here: that which explicitly targets consumers of goods and services and that which occurs through financial markets.

⁷ A. Tevoedjre, *La pauvreté richesse des peuples*, (Poverty, Wealth of Mankind) 33 (1978).

Every manner of marketing effort aims exclusively at consumers' wallets. These efforts are intended to influence consumers' behaviour by acting sometimes upon their judgement and willpower, and at other times, on emotion and instinct. In the latter case, exploitation is all the more markedly pronounced, attempting as it does to undermine the calculating and rational creature known as *homo economicus*. Brands' ultimate objectives are the instinctive purchase, consumer loyalty, and the establishment of a genuine emotional relationship between consumer and brand or manufacturer. The undeniable success of modern marketing methods confirms that there are hidden depths to human nature that the cold rationality of *homo economicus* cannot plumb. Furthermore, the resources devoted by businesses to unravelling the secrets of human psychology – the better to manipulate it – demonstrate the degree to which the core premise of the liberal society – the reasoning individual, conscious of his or her needs and desires – is perceived by economic actors as an obstacle to be circumvented, mobilising the emotional in order to provide for the continued growth of the market society.⁸ This is the purest expression of the willingness to use emotion as a vector for exploitation.

The phenomenal growth in the volume of financial transactions has profoundly altered the manner in which Western societies view their future. Increasingly, it is the sum of capital accumulated during a working life, not intergenerational solidarity that is the depository of individual destiny of every member of Western society. However, financial savings have to be invested prior to being consumed once the age of retirement is reached. The stock-market growth of the past quarter century is accounted for by both the considerable injection of liquidity and by the invention of a service – risk coverage – by financial operators; a service they have learnt to provide. The invention of quantifiable risk provides financial innovation with an inexhaustible supply of new services. Playing on fear of the future with consummate skill, financial products have generated a demand for a sense of security in a climate marked by the financialization of mentalities. In the final analysis, the financial euphoria of the past twenty years was caused by the highly sophisticated exploitation of savers by financial experts who were in a position to profit from the manna thus generated.

III. Loss of Bearings: the Conflict of Interest Example

In a society where the private sphere is at the point of dissolving into a public space ruled by cold and impersonal procedures, questions of meaning and ethical boundaries have lost all point of reference. Furthermore, the question remains as to whether they are a matter for the inner life of the individual or whether they can be summarised as conformity to prevailing procedures. The long list of financial scandals that has rocked liberal society highlights the frailty of its own anthropological presuppositions.

⁸ J.B. Twitchell, *Lead Us Into Temptation* (1999).

It has been a little over two years since the notion of conflict of interest took root in the public space, keeping pace with the lengthening list of financial and economic scandals. At the same time, our societies are progressively waking up to the devastating potential of conflicts of interest and of their own unpreparedness in the face of a sickness that threatens to corrupt the very heart of the market economy. Is not this the very market economy that is founded on an act of faith, according to which the rule of the free market transforms ‘private vices’, notably the selfish pursuit of personal interests, into ‘public virtues’? However, recent scandals show that the market is derailed by conflicts of interest, and, unable to initiate the usual virtuous circle, the market instead amplifies a vicious circle that threatens its very foundations. Conflicts of interest are at the centre of a paradox that, although by no means new, is currently reaching alarming proportions. The fact is that the damage runs deeper than we care to admit, and it is high time that the process of offering a diagnosis begins.

Modern society is ever more complex and knowledge-based and thus offers an especially propitious framework for the spread of situations known as ‘conflicts of interest’. It is very easy for a medical doctor, armoured in authority and knowledge, to prescribe medicines that are at best unnecessary and at worst harmful. In so doing, doctors betray patients’ trust in the name of incentives offered by drug companies. In societies where two-thirds of the national income derives from services and is generated by manipulation, if not by knowledge, at least of information, reliance on proxies and experts is omnipresent. The expert – lawyer, vehicle mechanic, banker, accountant or doctor – often acts as prescriber, especially in respect of his or her own services. The same applies to proxies, who are agents for the interests of third parties for the purpose of a service or transaction. The conflicting motivations between respect of the client’s mandate and concern for ones’ own turnover is as old as the profession itself.

The conflict of interest is not only a matter that affects individuals, it concerns businesses too: the bank that generates additional commission income by ‘churning’ client portfolios more than is necessary; the manufacturer of cars or other products that artificially limits the lifespan of a product in order to force clients to make a further purchase when the time comes; the food or cigarette manufacturer whose products, unbeknownst to customers, include an dependency-creating ingredient.

The truth is that conflicts of interest comprise situations where one and the same actor (person or business) is caught between conflicting loyalties: loyalty to a function or mission and loyalty to personal and or corporate pecuniary interests. Looked at in greater detail, the issue is in fact one of a conflict of motivations – one material, the other not – rather than a strict conflict of interest in the pecuniary sense. Thus, the notion of the conflict of interest is revealed as a euphemism used to disguise an ethical dilemma that lies at the true heart of the problem. The contemporary malaise has its origins in the fact that by relying on ethics to suppress ever more widespread conflicts of interest, we are recognising, although not wanting to admit, the limits of the market project.

This project would have us believe that it can do without ethics, proposing that they be replaced by the arithmetic of self-interest, which alone is sufficient to ensure the social optimum.

The agency theory, the cornerstone of modern economy, views remuneration as a function of results as the only way in which the interests of principal and agent can be made to coincide. A large portion of the current debate surrounding corporate governance takes its inspiration from agency theory. However, all these solutions rely on self-interest, and, as such, they reduce the individual to a utility-maximizing servomechanism devoid of all ethical scruples. Such a person becomes easy to manipulate because all that is required is to set up appropriate structures for remuneration. In such a context, it is the paying body that commands and that holds all the rights. The agent, following the example of the head of a major multinational, will simply take a bow and hasten to pocket the check – perhaps for a huge sum – offered in return for blind loyalty. When applied to politics, the logic of self-interest can justify every corrupt practice. In the economic sphere, the recent scandals have shown that when left to its own devices the economy can become a devastating force, not only against itself but against society as a whole.

The considerations above tend to suggest that the liberal society's organising principle is not as autonomous as the utopian ideal would have us believe. Taken to extremes, this principle could release the seeds of destruction capable of sapping the foundation of the social system. There comes a point in the system's evolution where the primacy of procedure over substance ceases to be the source from which the system derives its coherency, becoming instead the entrance through which entropy dislocates the selfsame system.

E. Disenchantment With Cold Procedures

I. Learning From Failures

The communist experiment came to an end because its project imagined that all shared an identical vision of human nature, whereas the liberal system is shaking because, as Auguste Comte tells us, it is based upon a rational premise of the superiority of cold, impersonal, market procedures and of the deliberative democracy. Where communism banked on the organic unity of the human race, liberalism, on the other hand, posits the absolute autonomy of every individual.

There are structural similarities between the two utopias discussed in this paper, the most important being their anthropocentric character. Logically, it is to these respective anthropological premises that we should look for the causes of failure. In the words of Russian philosopher Julij Szrejder, we are witnessing a double 'anthropological catastrophe'. This catastrophe is caused by the fact that both systems attempted to denature mankind - with varying degrees of wholly ephemeral success. The systems falter because once a certain stage is reached, human nature strikes back. The communist system collapsed because it

failed to spring the lock of a private sphere whose existence it denied. As for the liberal system, it is faltering because the private sphere, whose defence was its purpose, has dissolved at the same time as the public space, governed by its cold and impersonal procedures, fails to meet the needs of individuals who are isolated and utterly unequal

II. The Emergence of a New Organising Principle – Concern for the Other

The dissatisfaction that emerges as a result of the over-proceduralisation of western societies leads to the emergence of initiatives seeking to harness such procedures to the quest for meaning and substance. At both the personal and regulatory levels, initiatives aiming to limit the spread of the economic can emerge when the discussion moves on to political terrain. Whether the initiatives concern ethical investment or corporate social responsibility, these are approaches that attempt to use procedures from the liberal economy to address fundamental questions, questions of substance. In the interests of brevity we shall only look at the solidarity-based economy here.⁹

It is no easy task to categorise the loose conglomeration that is the solidarity-based economy, encompassing as it does long-established initiatives such as fair trade and microfinance, and extending all the way to attempts to set up a LETS (Local Exchange Trading Scheme). What these have in common is a desire to create an alternative to the economism issuing from the liberal utopia. In substance, the solidarity-based economy perceives the economic act (purchase, sale, loan, etc.) as inseparable from its social consequence – known to economists as externalities. Consequently, the objective of the solidarity-based economy is to promote acts and modalities of action that give rise to societally positive externalities. For some, this involves cultivating a just price, irrespective of the market. This means a price that provides the main players – notably small-scale farmers from the Southern Hemisphere – with the wherewithal to live a life in dignity. For others, the objective is to seek to include those excluded from access to credit and other financial measures. Awareness of the Other as persons, with personal needs, weaknesses and possibilities, constitutes the fundamental characteristic of the solidarity-based economy and allows an easy contrast to be made with the impersonal desires of the liberal market economy. Whereas the liberal utopia proposes that every externality be subsumed into an *ad hoc* market, the solidarity-based economy offers a wholly different vision, affirming that it is the transaction itself that is required to take the externalities into account.

Unlike the traditional market economy, for which procedure is all, the solidarity-based economy introduces the substantial into the heart of economic activity. Solidarity-based economy initiatives seek to modify rules and

⁹ For Ethical Investment, see P.H. Dembinski, J.-M. Bonvin, E. Dommen & F.-M. Monnet, *The Ethical Foundations of Responsible Investment*, 48 *Journal of Business Ethics* 203-213 (2003).

mechanisms because of the effects a transaction exerts upon its protagonists. This represents a radical inversion of the uncompromising proceduralist approach. Through its desire to use economic transactions as a seedbed in which to nurture relationships, the solidarity-based economy enriches and humanises the premises of the liberal utopia.

III. The Common Good in the Modern World

The term common good includes the word 'good'. The expression is, therefore, directly connected to the ultimate moral category, that of 'good', the human nature's stimulus and spur, at least according to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Good is sometimes synonymous with 'happiness', in the sense where the achievement crowns the fulfilment and accomplishment of human nature or purpose. The use of the word 'good' in the expression 'common good' is a way of making explicit the premise according to which its precise content cannot be described, nor socially constructed, without fundamental consideration of human beings, of that which they seek to accomplish during their existence and of the true sources of their ultimate happiness. Good, in this sense, is an all-encompassing notion that cannot be divided into specific elements. A further difficulty arises from the fact that 'good' can only be understood in reference to 'evil'. However, 'evil' dropped off social scientists' radar screens at approximately the same time as triumphant rationalism was banishing references to 'good'.¹⁰

In qualifying good by the addition of the adjective 'common', the expression is focused on the fact that mankind is unable to attain good in total solitude and isolation and that, for an individual and personal being, good of necessity involves the social and the community.

Whatever the precise definition and institutional arrangement, the notion of the common good expresses the desire of a group of people to lead a happy life. It hints at the tension that is possible between the two poles: that of the group, and that of each individual member. From its inception, political philosophy has always set out plans for the perfect society although without ever offering a definitive solution. Approaches to the subject have varied down the centuries, as Garcia Estebanez tells us:

The traditional method [he says referring to Aristotle, Plato and St. Thomas] started from the idea of a perfect society and defined individual interests according to this idea. The modern method (Habermas, Nozick or Rawls) adopts the opposite perspective, taking individual interests as the starting point in its conception of the perfect society. Individuals may then present, compare and reconcile these interests by projecting them onto a social model upon which they are agreed.¹¹

¹⁰ In this regard, see the work of J.-P. Dupuy, *Avons-nous envoyé le mal?* (2003), and more recently, that of J.-C. Guillebaud, *Le goût de l'avenir* (2003).

¹¹ E. Garcia Estebanez, *Le bien commun dans une perspective thomiste, in Le bien commun: approches philosophiques et politiques* (1997), cahier 2, at 24.

No matter the exact definition, writers who have considered the subject agree, implicitly at least, that communal living is a necessity from both the material stance (to guard against poverty) and the social stance (to guard against solitude). Furthermore, is community life already a good in itself, as Hollenbach tell us?

One of the key elements in the common good of a community or society, therefore, is the good of being a community or society. This shared good is imminent within the relationships that bring this community or society into being.¹²

Community life, and by extension the common good, can be grounded in many different things. Modern thinkers emphasise the deliberative procedure that allows community members to reach a consensus. Taking the actual operation of American society as an example, Hollenbach shows that in reality the public sphere for debate and confrontation has been emptied of its content, leaving in its place a widespread indifference that is barely hidden by the principle of tolerance. Tolerance is therefore the atrophied, modern version of the common good, one that threatens the very existence of American society. The fact is, as Hollenbach goes on to state, that tolerance is not enough to meet contemporary social challenges, such as those posed by the urban poor in the United States or by globalisation. This situation has come to pass because lying at the centre of these phenomena are relationships of economic and social interdependence established over decades. However, tolerance, 'an ethos whose primary values are independence and autonomy, is not adequate to address this new interdependence.'¹³

A common good that restricts itself to endurance alone therefore demands not merely that the rich and socialised unblinkingly 'tolerate' the poverty and solitude of the excluded, something that is made all the easier because they do not rub shoulders together, but additionally that the excluded 'tolerate' the opulence of the rich that the media displays for all the world to see. Thus if the common good resides only in the institution of tolerance and the procedures that render it operational, community life – and thus society – is exposed to the risk of breakdown occurring at the point where the tolerance of some becomes intolerable to others. Put another way, and mindful of the modern world, the procedure for guaranteeing patience alone, no matter how sophisticated, is an inadequate basis for the common good. It has to be supported and complemented by solidarity in daily life.

One of the most important meanings of the concept of common good, therefore, is that it is the good that comes into existence in a community of solidarity among active and equal agents. The common good, understood in this way, is not extrinsic to the relationships that prevail among members and sub-communities of a society. When these relationships form reciprocal ties among equals, solidarity achieved is in itself a good that cannot otherwise exist. (...) When society not only

¹² D. Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, *New Studies in Christian Ethics* 9 (2002).

¹³ *Id.*, at 42.

falls short of the level of solidarity it could reasonably aspire to but is shaped by institutions that exclude some members from agency altogether, the resulting interdependence becomes a ‘common bad’ that affects the quality of life of all members, especially those who are excluded.’¹⁴

The common good therefore supposes both interpersonal interactions, a good in itself – in the pattern of Aristotelian political friendship – and a reasonable measure of material solidarity, a quality that fellowship in any case requires. The good is not thus a precise institutional project, it is rather a set of principles for life within society. These principles relate to two spheres of need common to all human beings: material needs and relational needs.

The common good demands the involvement of all, in the respect of individual freedom, and in establishing institutions capable of regulating social life (contributory justice) in accordance with the principles of justice and solidarity. Nevertheless, in societies organised like ours, there can be no question of limiting the quest for the common good to the establishment of an institutional architecture capable of a degree of material solidarity through the distribution of wealth (distributive justice). The common good also requires that a space be provided within all interpersonal ties, including economic, for reciprocated fellowship and concern for the Other (commutative justice). The fact is that the common good, to use the terms of Etienne Perrot’s elegant definition,¹⁵ lies in the relationship between individual good and community good; it cannot be reduced to the economists’ concept of general interest (the sum of individual goods) nor to a ‘social good’. It is therefore not simply yet another utopia predicated on a precise societal project, it is instead a horizon, a call to embrace new ideas and above all to go beyond the cold procedures of liberalism.¹⁶

In their separate fashions, both utopian visions discussed in this article have distorted the notion of the common good. The liberal utopia fixates on the ‘common’ element, based on the idea that the ‘good’ will emerge naturally once the public space has been reordered. Communism never really came to grips with the ‘common’, starting as it did from the idea that it would naturally prevail once the ‘good’ had been attained. Today, at a time when the ruins of an inhumane system are of interest to but a very few, it is vital for us to learn the lessons of communism’s unprecedented collapse so that we may enrich the liberal society’s organising principle by changing its emphasis to take better account of the common good. Without a change of emphasis, the superficial cracks in the system that are already apparent today risk becoming the fatal fractures of tomorrow.

¹⁴ *Id.*, at 189.

¹⁵ E. Perrot, *La séduction de l’argent* (1996).

¹⁶ J.-C. Lavigne, *Le bien commun revisité* in *Le bien commun: dialogue entre les religions* (1997), notebook 2b, at 59.

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