Raymond Aron and *la fin de l'age ideologique*

By the time *L'Opium des intellectuels* was published in 1955, Raymond Aron was already a prominent figure in French intellectual life. Apart from being a well-known academic, who would soon enter the chair of sociology at the Sorbonne, he was also an influential journalist and columnist for conservative newspaper *Le Figaro*. At a time when the Parisian intelligentsia tended to celebrate communism and follow Jean-Paul Sartre in his existentialist readings of Marx, Aron represented a quite different political line. A self-proclaimed liberal, he defended parliamentary democracy and criticized what he perceived to be ideological dogmatism among French intellectuals. According to Aron, dichotomies like capitalism versus socialism, or private property versus public ownership, had lost their ability to describe the essential features of post-war industrial societies. Communism, he maintained, was basically a violent method of triggering industrialization and economic growth. Deeply pessimistic to the prospects of Soviet communism, Aron supported Atlanticism and actively promoted a political alliance between United States and Western Europe. As his long-time friend Henry Kissinger described him, he was “deeply committed to liberty, to Western culture, and to democratic ideals.”¹

Born in 1905 in a wealthy Jewish family from Paris, Aron got his education at École Normale Supérieure, where he became friends with fellow students Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Paul Nizan.² He took the *agrégation* in philosophy in 1928 and continued his studies in Cologne and Berlin, where he became interested in the sociology of Max Weber. In his dissertation from 1938, *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire*, he analyzed a handful of German philosophers’ theories on history, and emphasized the impossibility of a definite knowledge on the historical process. Criticizing historical positivism and its notions of objectivity, but also deterministic theories of history which ignore individual subjectivity, Aron emphasized the plurality of possible interpretations of the past.³ Shortly after the German occupation of France, he went to London and spent the war years editing the resistance movement’s periodical *La France libre*. After his return to Paris by the end of the war, he pursued his journalistic career and began contributing to publications like *Combat* and *Le Figaro*. In 1945, he was also one of the co-founders of *Les Temps modernes*. After increasing

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² In his memoirs from 1983, Aron spends several pages discussing his friendship with Sartre and Nizan at École Normale but does not recall any relation with concurrent student Simone de Beauvoir.
conflicts with Sartre, however, he soon left the editorial board and grew increasingly skeptical to the Marxist and revolutionary sentiments in French post-war intellectual life.

From the early 1950s and onward, Aron was an adherent of moderate social democracy informed by the teachings of social science. Like the rest of his peers in Congress for Cultural Freedom—an organization he became associated with in the early 1950s—Aron was antagonistic to ideological thinking beyond the scope of liberalism. Having witnessed the rise of Hitler during his days in Germany, he would remain critical to all political movements which prescribed fundamental transformations of society. After the dawn of the Cold War, however, Aron’s polemics was almost exclusively directed against Marxism. In the words of his colleague and friend Edward Shils, he was “the most persistent, the most severe, and the most learned critic of Marxism and of the socialist—or more precisely Communist—order of society”. In Shils’ opinion, Aron was ”too much an heir of the Enlightenment to think about transcendental realities”—hence his disregard for political visions outside the framework of liberal democracy.\(^4\)

**The Opium of the Intellectuals**

*L’Opium des Intellectuels* (or *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, as it is called in the English translation from 1957) signals Aron’s definite intellectual break with his former friends from École Normale. As Aron would recall later, he was “arguing neither with fascists nor with reactionaries but with the Left—that is, with the spiritual family I had sprung from and which I was accusing of betrayal.” An attempt to “bring the poetry of ideology down to the level of the prose of reality,” *The Opium* might be described as an effort to counter the radicalism of the French intelligentsia with a moderate common-sense approach to politics.\(^6\) Aron’s main argument is that the major function of political ideologies—and Marxism in particular—is to provide disenchanted intellectuals with quasi-religious stimuli. In the book’s epigraph, Marx’ critique of religion as the opium of the people is juxtaposed with a quote from Simone Weill describing Marxism itself as a religion, “in the lowest sense of the word.”\(^7\) In line with Weill’s critique, Aron argues that Marxism is a “secular religion” without clear connections to objective social conflicts or injustices. The persistence of political ideologies in the West, he explains, is a result of the intellectuals’ desire for universal truths and

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\(^6\) Raymond Aron: *Memoirs*, p. 221.
transcendental meanings. Ideologies respond to their “longing for a purpose, for a communion with the people, for something controlled by an idea and a will.” Having nothing to do with material reality, ideology is thus approached as a strictly psychological phenomenon. “The feeling of belonging to the elect,” Aron writes, “the security provided by a closed system in which the whole of history as well as one’s own person find their place and their meaning, the pride in joining the past to the future in present action—all this inspires and sustains the true believer, the man who is not repelled by the scholasticism, who is not disillusioned by the twists in the party line, the man who lives entirely for the cause and no longer recognizes the humanity of his fellow-creatures outside the party.”

Although Aron does never really define what he means by ideology, he spends several passages in *The Opium* discussing it. Early on, ideology is described as a “synthesis of an interpretation of history and of a program of action toward a future predicted or hoped for.” Ideology, Aron writes, “presupposes an apparently systematic formalisation of facts, interpretations, desires and predictions, or—as he would explain after the book was published—it is “a certain allegedly total form of comprehensive and systematic interpretation of world history.” In other words, ideology seems to be a way of organizing human temporality by connecting a particular interpretation of the past and a certain expectation for the future with a political agenda for the present. Echoing some of Arendt’s arguments in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, ideology is conceived as a pseudo-scientific framework for comprehending the historical process as the unfolding of a particular social conflict (like class struggle or clashes between nations). Unlike Arendt, however, Aron consistently emphasizes the irrational, dogmatic and quasi-religious features of ideology. In line with the points made in his 1938 dissertation, he claims that history can never be predicted and that the future will always remain open. Instead of clarifying social conditions, political ideologies distort reality and violate the complexities of human life by forcing them into simplistic schemas. Fooled by the “myths” of the proletariat and the revolution, intellectuals try in vain to take control over the future and guide political action in accordance with their deterministic philosophies of history. They speak about communism and capitalism, concepts that cannot grasp the

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8 *The Opium*, p. 277.
9 *The Opium*, p. 323.
10 *NOTA*
conditions in modern societies where a state managed economy, ranging from the Keynesianism of the European welfare states to the five-year plans of the Soviet Union, has transcended old ideological categories.

It should be noted that Aron almost exclusively uses the term ideology to designate Marxism and communism. Rarely mentioned in *The Opium*, political creeds like liberalism or conservatism are never described as ideologies. Marxism, on the other hand, seems to be the ideology par excellence, a deterministic philosophy of history which reproduces the central themes of Christian eschatology:

The Marxism prophetism (...) conforms to the typical pattern of the Judeo-Christian prophetism. Every prophetism condemns what is and sketches an outline of what should or will be; it chooses an individual or a group to cleave a path across the no-man’s land which separates the unworthy present from the radiant future. The classless society which will bring social progress without political revolution is comparable to the dreams of the millennium. The misery of the proletariat proves its vocation and the Communist Party becomes the Church which is opposed by the bourgeois/pagans who stop their ears against the good tidings and by the socialist/Jews who have failed to recognize the Revolution which they themselves had been heralding for years.\(^{12}\)

Seen in this way, Marxism is a secular religion which has replaced the pillars of Christianity with materialist analogies. Out of touch with reality, it fails to understand how contemporary society works. Most importantly, Marxism’s notion of the inevitable collapse of capitalism has proved wrong. Revolutions during the 20\(^{th}\) century, Aron explains, has actually occurred anywhere where the ruling class has failed to implement a market economy along the lines of Western industrialized society. As far as the Soviet Union is concerned, instead of creating a genuine alternative to this industrial system, the Bolsheviks have merely reproduced it in a more totalitarian form. While the Soviet Union and the Western democracies may differ in terms of political programs, their ends are more or less the same: both aspire for industrialization, raised productivity and stable economic growth. As a result, the old Marxist idea of an anti-capitalist revolution is getting increasingly out of date. Nowadays, Aron explains, economists do not expect “the apocalyptic collapse of capitalism or the inevitability of total planning, but simply the necessity of government intervention in the shape of the

lowering of the rate of interest or State investments.”\textsuperscript{13} In modern welfare societies where workers have been politically enfranchised and wealthy enough to buy television sets and washing machines, there is “no decisive reason why the functioning of the system should (…) become impossible or essentially different.”\textsuperscript{14} The “normal thing,” Aron notes, is a mixed economy directed by different degrees of state intervention.\textsuperscript{15} 

In this way, the emergence of modern welfare states has falsified the Marxist claim about the inherent contradictions of capitalism. “Wherever democratic socialism has been successful,” Aron writes, “the factory workers, having become petty bourgeoisie, no longer interest the intellectuals and are themselves no longer interested in ideologies. The improvement of their lot has both deprived of them of the prestige of misfortune and withdrawn them from the temptation to violence.”\textsuperscript{16} It is the Western welfare state, not communism, which has liberated the workers:

\begin{quote}
[T]he remuneration of the workers rises as productivity rises, social legislation protects families and the old, trade unions freely discuss conditions of work with the employers, and the extension of education increases the chances of promotion. This form of emancipation can be called real emancipation: it is characterized by concrete improvements in the condition of the proletariat, it leaves certain grievances (…) and it cannot entirely eliminate opposition on the part of a minority, big or small, to the principles of the régime itself.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Aron’s concept of history}

It is somewhere around here that it seems appropriate to call Aron’s theories in \textit{The Opium} a legitimizing narrative which effectively justifies the prevailing liberal democracy of the West against the political threat of communism. First, the major political doctrine that opposes this society is rejected as incorrect and out of touch with reality. From Aron’s perspective, Marxism is neither a science nor an adequate critique of bourgeois society, but nonsensical metaphysics for disenchanted intellectuals. Second, those states which claim to represent an alternative to Western capitalism have merely reproduced the same system, albeit in a more ruthless form. If the Soviet Union is essentially an advanced industrialized society just like the United States or Sweden, it is actually not an alternative at all. Third, and most important, if

\begin{footnotes}
13 \textit{The Opium}, p. 173.
14 \textit{The Opium}, p. 173.
15 \textit{The Opium}, p. 311.
16 \textit{The Opium}, p. 66.
17 \textit{The Opium}, p. 75.
\end{footnotes}
the workers in Western democracies are already emancipated, as Aron suggests in the quote above, there is no reason to expect radical political changes in their societies. (It should be pointed out that Aron remains indifferent to other forms of social injustice: the situation for women or non-white groups in Western countries is ignored throughout The Opium. Sexist subordination is never mentioned in the book, and the lack of civil rights for the United States’ Afro-American population is only acknowledged in passing as a minor “Colour prejudice”.) While some minority groups may keep struggling for social justice, liberal democracy is after all the best of political orders. It is, as Aron puts it, “the normal thing”: every other political system, he seems to suggest, is a deviation from the norm.

Written during the great wave of decolonization of the 1950’s, the political message of Aron’s legitimizing narrative seems to take two different directions. On the one hand, it asserts workers in Western democracies that they live in benevolent societies of steadily increasing equality, and that calls for radical changes are nothing but romantic dreams of eggheaded armchair intellectuals. If increasing productivity and democratic enfranchisement within the welfare state will emancipate the lesser fortunate, dreams of fundamentally different orders seem both irrational and unwarranted. On the other hand, it warns people of Third World countries that communism will not lead to any genuine alternative to Western modernity, but rather to a hideous version of it drained of all individual freedom. The correct way of entering the postcolonial era, then, is not by struggling against liberal democracy and the capitalist market economy, but by accepting it. If this advice is followed, the implicit message seems to be, Third World countries might also end up as successful welfare states.

These political prescriptions are perfectly in line with the progressivist concept of history that tacitly underpins The Opium. While Aron denounces Marxist historical determinism, and emphasizes that economic factors do not determine politics or culture, he still clings to a notion of history where economic improvements gradually reduce the space for ideological thought. As productivity rises, he suggests, as the proletariat transforms into petty bourgeoisie washing machine possessors, as technology and science make production more efficient, social conflicts are alleviated and political ideologies redundant. In the United States, described on the verge of getting beyond material scarcity, political controversies are “more often technical than ideological”. In Great Britain, where economic differences are allegedly smaller than anywhere on the European continent, politics are “related to immediate and practical

18 The Opium, p. 307.
19 The Opium, p. 33.
problems,” and all parties share liberal values like respect for individual freedom and commitment to “moderate government”. Even in the Soviet Union, where ideology still determines politics, industrialization might in the long run undermine Marxist orthodoxy.

In other words, Aron seems to posit a dialectical relation between material wealth and political ideology: industrialization, increased productivity and technical progress suspend the ideological basis of politics and give rise to a more rational organization of society. And, conversely, for those countries which have not yet acquired the prosperity of the West, ideologies will continue to shape the realm of politics. “Nowhere, in Asia or in Africa, has the Welfare State spread enough believes to stifle the impulse towards irrational and foolish hope,” Aron argues. Since the “big commercial and industrial firms established in Malaya or Hongkong or India appear to have more in common with the capitalism observed by Marx than with the modern industry of Detroit, Coventry or Billancourt,” communism and anti-capitalist visions will still appeal to the restless masses of less developed countries. In the long run, however, even poor countries in the periphery may break free from ideologies and follow the course of Western welfare states. If the “nations of Europe preceded the others on the road to industrial civilization,” as Aron puts it, and if it is true that parliamentary democracy was “destined for the same triumphal progress across the globe as motor-cars or electricity,” the progress of history may gradually transform Third World countries into harmonious, post-ideological welfare states. While Aron does not give any definite answer to this question, sensitive as he is to deterministic philosophies of history, it is clear that he touches on a familiar theme of modernization theory: if the industrialization process of Western countries is universal, all countries are likely to proceed toward the same telos. As Aron would recall later, he was convinced at the time that there indeed existed “a great wave of world industrialism” which reshaped societies all over the world. Unlike die-hard modernization theorists, however, he was more reserved about the prospects for Third World countries and the Soviet Union: he did not subscribe to convergence theory (which he found deterministic),

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20 The Opium, s. 25f.
21 The Opium, p. 289.
22 The Opium, p. 305.
23 The Opium, p. 328.
24 The Opium, p. 305, 315. (Italics added.)
and he carefully pointed out that recently decolonized countries could not model themselves after contemporary Western democracies.26

Leaving the question of Third World future somewhat open, it is clear that Aron does not see any place for political ideologies in modern welfare states of the West. As he keeps emphasizing throughout *The Opium*, there is no such thing as an “ideology of the West” or an “American ideology”. “[T]he true ‘Westerner’,” he writes, “is the man who accepts nothing unreservedly in our civilization except the liberty it allows him to criticise it and the chance it offers him to improve it.”27 While there certainly exists an “essence of Western culture”, namely freedom of research and criticism, limitation of state power, and autonomy of universities, Aron claims that the Western world “would be guilty of a fatal error if it thought that it possessed a unique ideology comparable to Marxism-Leninism.”28 In other words, the individual freedoms of speech, criticism and absence of state oppression—values that are fundamental for all Western liberal democracies—are not ideological. Whereas it could be argued that concept of such freedoms stem from a particular ideological tradition—European liberalism from Locke, Hume and Smith via the French and American revolutions and onwards—Aron does not discuss them in relation to any historical contexts or circumstances. (If communism is consistently refered to the writings of Marx, liberal philosophers are virtually never mentioned in *The Opium.*) The freedoms that Aron associates with Western liberal democracy thus appear as values beyond time and space; they are as he once puts it, “at the heart and soul of the unending human adventure”.29 Unlike the values of Marxism, which Aron ascribes to disenchanted intellectuals and totalitarian dictators, the freedoms attached to liberal democracy are not bound to particular social groups or political struggles, but rather, it seems, to humanity per se.

*La fin de l’age ideologique*

It therefore seems quite natural that Aron concludes *The Opium* by asking if the “age of ideology”—the period that began with the French revolution and the Enlightenment’s philosophies of history—is finally coming to an end. As he had already put it in the preface of

26 *Memoirs*, p. 277; *The Opium*, p. 315.
27 *The Opium*, p. 57.
28 *The Opium*, p. 258f, p. 316.
29 *The Opium*, p. 319.
the book:

[D]idn’t Stalin carry off with him in death not only Stalinism, but also the age of ideology? That which characterizes the present period is no longer an excess of faith, but of skepticism. In a sense, the systems of ideas and beliefs which separated the camps and spiritual families are in the process of disintegration. The affluent society banks the fire of indignation. Imperfect and unjust as Western society is in many respects, it has progressed sufficiently in the course of the last half-century so that reforms appear more promising than violence and unpredictable disorder. The condition of the masses is improving. The standard of living depends on productivity—therefore, the rational organization of labor, of technical skills, and of investments. Finally, the economic system of the West no longer corresponds to any of the pure doctrines; it is neither liberal nor planned, it is neither individualist nor collectivist. How could the ideologies resist these changes [...]?

In this passage, Aron seems to suggest that the present marks a historical break between a past afflicted by poverty, social conflicts and rivaling political doctrines, and a future of increased productivity, social harmony and political consensus. If the age of ideology is coming to an end, it is because visions of radically different futures appear excessive in a society of material plenty and political freedom. Grand ideas of more egalitarian social orders may make sense in societies struck by inequality and exploitation, but in modern welfare states guided by social science (which Aron regards as “the only political universality which is accessible in our time”) and a rational organization of political economy, there is no need to imagine a society fundamentally divergent from the prevailing one. Although this might not be the “end of history” announced some forty years later, there are certainly similarities between Aron’s and Francis Fukuyama’s conception of a society where the gap between the present and the future is shrinking. In the affluent welfare state where social engineering and Keynesian techniques guarantee everyone a slice of the philosophies of history or grand programs of political reform are essentially irrational. What is instead needed, Aron suggests, is a humanity capable of interrogating all ideological dogmas and false prophecies. “If tolerance is born of doubt, let us teach everyone to doubt all the models and utopias, to challenge all the prophets of redemption and the heralds of catastrophe,” he writes in the last

30 *The Opium*, p. xv.
31 *The Opium*, p. 318.
lines of *The Opium*. “If they alone can abolish fanaticism, let us pray for the advent of the skeptics.”

In this closing scene, the underlying contradictions of *The Opium* are revealed. The man who staunchly denounces utopias ends up describing the coming of a society of material plenty and economic justice, rationally ruled by science, technology and freedoms of speech and criticism. The man who denounces deterministic theories of history ends up revealing his own philosophy of progress, according to which economic development and increased productivity eliminates the possibility of fundamentally different futures. And the man who questions the validity of dogmas and absolutistic intellectual systems ends up vindicating the untouchable political ideals of individual freedom and universal criticism. Setting out to demonstrate the inadequacy of Marxism’s allegedly dogmatism, Aron ends up reproducing the very ideas he sought to criticize—but now forged into a narrative that legitimizes the prevailing order of Western liberal democracy.

**Aron’s theory of modernization**

While Aron was never considered a modernization theorist (which probably stemmed from the fact that he had no direct contact with the American scholars in the field), he did give a series of lectures on modernization and industrialization at Sorbonne between 1955 and 1958. These courses were also published in books *Dix-huit leçons sur la société industrielle* (1963), *La Lutte des classes* (1964) and *Démocratie et totalitarisme* (1965). Along with *Trois essais sur l’âge industriel* from 1966, these works compile Aron’s theories on the relation between modernization, industrialization and ideology, which I will now briefly consider.

[ett avsnitt om Arons moderniseringsteori ska in här.]

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32 *The Opium*, p. 324.
Edward Shils and the (post-)politics of civility

In 1958, Edward Shils published “Ideology and Civility”, an essay based on his readings of Aron’s *The Opium* and British historian Norman Cohn’s *The Pursuit of the Millennium* from 1957. While this essay reflected the basic arguments of *The Opium*, as well as Shils own “Letter from Milan” from 1955, it also added some new elements to the end of ideology theory. If Aron had remained ambiguous on the question whether the historical movement towards the post-ideological welfare state was universal—i.e. whether modernization would make Third World countries converge with the “advanced” countries of the West—Shils attached the end of ideology theory to a historical narrative in line with the presumptions of modernization theory. And if Aron had not offered any alternative to ideology, other than his insistence on philosophical skepticism, Shils argued that ideologies would be succeeded by what he called “civil politics”.

In spite of being one of the biggest names of American 20th century sociology, no comprehensive biography on Edward Shils has been published to date. Born in 1910 in Philadelphia in a family of immigrated Russian Jews, Shils graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1931 after studies in French literature, and German, Italian and Swedish language. After a brief period as a social worker in New York, and extensive reading of German sociologists like Max Weber, Werner Sombart and George Simmel, Shils relocated to Chicago in 1933 to get a degree in sociology. He became employed at the University of Chicago as a research assistant to Louis Wirth, with whom he translated Karl Mannheim’s *Ideologie und Utopie*—a book which would be seminal for the coming debate on the end of ideology. Shils spent the war years in London, where he interviewed German ex-soldiers for the American Office for Strategic Service. Through his affiliation to the London School of Economics, and subsequent friendship with European academic exiles like Michael Polanyi and Karl Popper, he became increasingly interested in questions about science and intellectual freedom. He joined the Congress for Cultural Freedom in 1953, and founded the Congress’ journal *Minerva*, a periodical concerned with Cold War politicization of science and

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scholarship. Shils would divide his academic career between the University of Chicago, where he was a permanent member of the Committee on Social Thought, and English universities like the London School of Economics and Kings College. He kept teaching in Chicago until his death in 1995.

As a person, Shils seems to have been formal and old-fashioned, at times even caustic. Describing their first meeting in 1973, his friend Joseph Epstein recalls a man who “carried, but did not really use, a walking stick, and (...) wore a tweedy getup of various shades of brown with a green wool tie and an Irish hat.” Shils, Epstein writes, “never went out of the house without a suit or a sport coat,” and spoke with “a mid-Atlantic accent” which he had picked up during his time in England. Known as “Professor Shils” by most people around him, he preferred using titles rather than calling his friends by their first names. Epstein also remembers that Shils could be merciless toward intellectuals which he found unworthy of his intellect—and these included Hannah Arendt, Isaiah Berlin, Michel Foucault, Allan Bloom, the Frankfurt School, and Christopher Lasch. In 1969, he denounced Jean-Paul Sartre and Herbert Marcuse as “middle-aged courtiers” to the student movement which he strongly opposed.

Unlike other scholars involved in the end of ideology debate, Edward Shils was never drawn to political radicalism. As historian Jefferson Pooley puts it, Shils “chose the West from the beginning, without any of the Cold War agonizing of ex-radicals.” In Shils’ own words, he “witnessed with revulsion the rush of the Gadarene intellectuals in the United States and

34 Interested in the “governmentalisation of science and scholarship,” Shils devoted Minerva’s first issues to a debate about “big science” and the possibilities for “scientific autonomy” in a time when governments played an increasing role for planning and funding science. Assuming that scientists had historically enjoyed a relative independence towards the state, Shils warned against the current “intrusion of political or governmental beliefs into the substance of intellectual work,” and criticized how “the politics of demagogy and of ideology” threatened scholars’ quest for truth. While Minerva’s credibility in such questions was undermined after its CIA-links were revealed in the 1960s, Shils kept editing the journal until his death in 1995. See Edward Shils: “Editorial”, Minerva, 1:1 (1962), p. 15, p. 10, p.12. For a recent discussion about Minerva’s “big science debate” during 1962-1964, see Elena Aronova: ”The Congress for Cultural Freedom, Minerva, and the Quest for Instituting ‘Science Studies’ in the Age of Cold War”, Minerva, 50:3 (2012).

35 Epstein: ”My friend Edward”, p. 103, 105.

36 Epstein: ”My friend Edward”, p. 108-109. In his autobiography, Shils writes that he “read nearly all the publications in sociology in English, French and German” during a couple of years in the 1950s, and adds that he “learned little from that reading”. Shils: A Fragment, p. 49-50.


Europe into the arms and snares of their respective communist parties.” Whether it came from the left or the right, he regarded political dissent as hatred towards society—a vice that he found particularly widespread among intellectuals. Consistently stressing the importance of moral consensus, social stability and respect for tradition, Shils espoused a “pluralistic society” where political affect was reduced to a minimum and the prevailing political institutions were universally accepted. Against the ideological radicalism which threatened the “sense of affinity of which the cohesion of civil society (…) depends,” he argued that democracy required a “lukewarm ‘ politicization’ ” and “moderation in political involvement”. In *The Torment of Secrecy* from 1956, Shils wrote that the “pluralistic society keeps men’s sentiments from flying outwards towards fixation on those remote objects which unsettle equanimity and disturb the pluralistic equilibrium. A well working pluralistic society,” he continued, “absorbs sufficient of the attention and affection of its members into a wide range of more proximate concerns—workshop, neighborhood, club, church, team, family, friends, trade union, school, etc.” What Shils called for, in other words, was a democratic society where people were more engaged in civil institutions than politics—a position that reflected Herbert Tingsten’s theories on the successful welfare state a couple of years before. Intense political affects, he argued in *The Torment of Secrecy*, were only acceptable during election time.

The antidote to the ideological passion of intellectuals and revolutionaries was the political ideal which Shils had dubbed “civil politics”. Based on an adherence to the “common good” of society, and a “sense of affinity” towards all fellow citizens, civil politics resisted the partisanship of ideologies. Democratic institutions, Shils wrote in 1960, required “a widely dispersed civility” which entailed a moderate attachment to the nation-state, an affirmation of the existing political order, and a social consensus on the basic rules of politics.

Shils’ advocacy of civil politics went hand in hand with his categorical defense of Western modernity. In the beginning of his career, he had been somewhat sympathetic to Karl Mannheim’s gloomy account of modern Western society as being on the verge of disintegration and implosion—a leading theme in Mannheim’s *Mensch und Gesellschaft*, which

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41 Edward Shils: *The Torment of Secrecy*, p. 159.


Shils translated to English in 1940. But during his war years in London, and through acquaintances like Polanyi and Popper, he became increasingly skeptical towards Mannheim, eventually turning against him altogether.\footnote{For a discussion on Shils' critique and eventual dismissal of Mannheim's work, see Pooley: "Edward Shils' Turn Against Karl Mannheim". While this article is interesting and persuasive in many respects, Pooley's attempts to depict Shils as an anti-technocratic social theorist seems less convincing, given the strong belief in technology and scientifically informed politics that he expressed during the 1950s. For Shils' own account of his gradual dismissal of Mannheim, see Shils: \textit{A Fragment of a Sociological Autobiography}, p. 33-39.} In opposition to the traditional sociological theories of a dissolution of modern society due to withering \textit{Gemeinschaft} bonds, Shils refused to see any signs of such a crisis. "[M]odern society," he wrote in 1957, "is no lonely crowd, no horde of refugees fleeing for freedom. It is no \textit{Gesellschaft}, soulless, egotistical, loveless, faithless, utterly impersonal and lacking any integrative forces than interest or coercion."\footnote{Edward Shils: \textit{Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties. Some Particular Observations on the Relationships of Sociological Research and Theory}, \textit{The British Journal of Sociology}, 8:2 (June, 1957), p. 131.} On the contrary, he argued, it was effectively held together by personal attachments, civil institutions, moral obligations, and a widespread sense of civility.

These arguments were not merely directed towards an older generation of European sociologists like Ferdinand Tönnies and Mannheim, but, perhaps more importantly, contemporary Marxists or leftists like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Dwight MacDonald. Against their critique of modern capitalism as a streamlined mass society where cultural devaluation and social alienation stripped human beings of creativity and political imagination—an account that Shils later dismissed as made up by "snobbish radicals (...) with a hypocritical egalitarianism of Marxist inspiration"—he maintained that modern mass culture of a country like the United States was a benign phenomenon.\footnote{Edward Shils: \textit{The Constitution of Society} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982 [1972], p. xiv.} Not only was it a demonstration of historical progress, since it provided a wide range of cultural products to social classes whose cultural allocation had historically been delimited to cock-fights and \textit{littérature de colportage}. More importantly, mass culture bound large amounts of individuals together, created an attachment towards society, and reduced the risks of moral or political dissent. The very uniformity and homogenization which repelled the Frankfurt School was, in other words, celebrated by Shils.\footnote{For Shils' defense of mass culture, see his "Daydreams and Nightmares: Reflections on the Criticism of Mass Culture", \textit{Sewanee Review}, 65:4 (October – December, 1958); "Mass Society and Its Culture", \textit{Daedalus}, 89:2 (Spring, 1960).}

Shils' affirmation of Western modernity was arguably most clear in his contributions to modernization theory during the end of the 1950s. Already in 1951, he and Talcott Parsons had outlined the so-called pattern variables, which formed the base for the subsequent
distinction between “traditional” and “modern” societies. When Shils a couple of years later co-founded the Chicago University's Committee on the Comparative Study of New Nations and turned his attention towards the postcolonial world, his thoughts on modernity attained a more distinctly historical character. Comparing contemporary United States with what he called the “new states”—particularly India, where he spent a year in 1955—Shils drew the conclusion that modernity was primarily a Western phenomenon. “Modern’ means Western without the onus of dependence on the West,” he wrote in 1960. “The model of modernity is a picture of the West detached in some way from its geographical origins and locus”. Consequently, the liberal democracies in Europe and Northern America “need not aspire to modernity”—they were already there.48 As Shils explained in a keynote speech at a modernization theory conference in 1959:

In the new states “modern” means democratic and equalitarian, scientific, economically advanced and sovereign. “Modern” states are “welfare states,” proclaiming the welfare of all the people and especially the lower classes as their primary concern. […] [Modernity] involves universal suffrage. Modernity involves universal public education. Modernity is scientific. It believes the progress of the country rests on rational technology, and ultimately on scientific knowledge. To be advanced economically means to have an economy based on modern technology, to be industrialized and to have a high standard of living.49

Shils’ definition of modernity was, in other words, an idealized version of the contemporary liberal democracy of the West. This was contrasted to the “states which are not yet ‘modern’”, that is, “traditional” societies characterized by unstable democratic institutions, pervasive kinship or caste structures, social inequalities, widespread religious sentiments, and a particularistic approach to the outside world.50 But as the “yet” in Shils’ formulation implied, he assumed that such societies were already in the process of becoming modern. “The leaders of nearly every state,” he explained in an essay on development, “feel a pressing necessity of espousing policies which will bring them well within the circle of modernity.”51 Their ideal was “not the image of a future in which no one has as yet lived or fragments of a still living and accepted past, but rather an image of their own future profoundly different from their

own past, to be lived along the lines of already existent modern states”.

Like most modernization theorists, Shils’ political thought was marked by an implicit determinism which postulated a historical movement towards modernity in the guise of Western liberal democracy. Although Shils pointed out that there were different political methods of becoming modern—decolonized countries could, for instance, follow the Soviet way and become “modernizing tyrannies”—he was certain that the end point of the process would be the modernity of Western democracies. As we will see, this would also have important consequences for the persistence of political ideologies.

“Ideology and Civility”

Shils’ intervention in the end of ideology debate should be read against his skepticism of intellectual radicalism, his support for consensus, and his belief in Western modernity as the prototype of a universal modernization. Published only a year after his trip to India, “Ideology and Civility” is the first contribution to the end of ideology debate where the declining importance of ideologies is explicitly discussed in a West/Third World context.

Shils had sketched the outlines of the end of ideology theory already in 1950 when he, in the preface to the American edition of Georges Sorel’s *Reflexions sur la violence*, argued that the political radicalism which had captivated Western intellectuals during the mid-war period was now on the wane. As social democratic welfare programs seemed to have become the dominant mode of politics in Western democracies, he wrote, Marxist demands for radical transformations of society had been replaced by more modest suggestions about further nationalization or improved public services. In “Letter from Milan” five years later, Shils returned to these ideas by claiming that Western intellectuals had lost interest in ideologies and begun reaching a moderately progressive consensus on political matters. In the “new nations” of Asia and Africa, however, ideologies like nationalism and communism would continue to stir up political sentiments and conflict. Since the Third World had not reached the stage of Europe and North America, Shils concluded, Western intellectuals had to accept the situation and relate to the new nations as “partners” in shaping the future.

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53 The main reasons to read Sorel in the 1950s, Shils concluded, were not only to get a grip of “the state of mind of the revolutionary sect,” but, more importantly, to realize the futility of ideological distinctions in institutionalized politics.) Edward Shils: "Georges Sorel. Introduction to the American Edition", Georges Sorel: *Reflections on Violence* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950 [1908]), p. 14-15, 21, 28-29.
In “Ideology and Civility,” these ideas are developed further. Assuming that political ideologies have played a major role in Western politics since the end of the nineteenth century, at times even threatening “to achieve universal dominion”, Shils argues that there are now apparent signs of a subsidence in the influence of ideologies.54 While political doctrines like fascism, Nazism and American McCarthyism are briefly mentioned in terms of ideologies, the bulk of “Ideology and Civility” deals with the alleged decline of Marxism. Described as the “very heart which has sustained ideological politics among intellectuals over the past century,” Marxism is now in a state of acute dissolution.55 Not only has political events like the uprisings in East Germany and Budapest discredited its claim of representing the people, but, equally important, Marxism has proved being intellectually impotent. “In every sphere of intellectual life, in economic theory, in history, and in sociology, Marxism has lost its power to attract because it is too simplistic, too threadybare intellectually and morally, and too often just wrong or irrelevant to the problems of the contemporary mind,” Shils writes. “The emergence of the social sciences as major subjects of university teaching (…) constitutes a major factor in the tarnishing of Marxism.”56 Yet another reason for Marxism's failure is that its promises of social justice have become more or less fulfilled in Western capitalist countries. With the economic boom in the United States and Western Europe, the ideological conflicts between socialist and capitalist perspectives are far less relevant than during the mid-war years.

In his definition of ideology, Shils follows Raymond Aron. Ideologies are creeds based on “the assumption that politics should be conducted from the standpoint of a coherent, comprehensive set of beliefs which must override every other consideration,” he writes. Instead of confining themselves to the formal political sphere, ideologies penetrate every corner of society, including religion, science, aesthetics, and sexuality. As all ideologies express “a violent hatred of the existing cosmic order, and especially of its earthly beneficiaries, governmental, economic, and ecclesiastical authorities,” their ultimate goal is to destroy society and replace it with an entirely new order.57

Shils argues that this characteristic hostility towards the prevailing social order ultimately has to do with the ideologies’ self-proclaimed affinity with history. Ideological politicians must see “their actions in the context of the totality of history,” he writes, and thereby see

56 Shils: “Ideology and Civility”, p. 454
their political programs as “moving towards a culmination of the totality of history, either a new epoch, totally new in every important respect, or bringing to glorious fulfillment a condition which has long been lost from human life.” In line with Aron’s critique, Shils argues that political ideologies, while alleging to be secular, in fact continue the old tradition of Judeo-Christian millenarianism:

The ideological outlook expressed by millenarianism asserts (...) that the reign of evil on the earth is of finite duration. There will come a moment when time and history as we know them shall come to an end. The present period of history will be undone by a cosmic act of judgment which will do justice to the wronged and virtuous by elevating them to eternal bliss, and equal justice to the powerful and wicked by degrading and destroying them for all time to come. By defining ideology in these eschatological terms, Shils seems to equate radical politics with Christian metaphysics: to call for a thorough transformation of society is tantamount to believe in a divine act of salvation. If the millenarian tradition in the West used to be sustained by the believers’ constant return to the Bible, political ideologies have made it “available in an idiom more acceptable to the contemporary mind.” In other words, there is no longer any need to go back to the Book of Revelations—people might as well read The Communist Manifesto or Mein Kampf.

Without using Aron’s term “secular religion,” Shils makes a similar point by claiming that political ideologies thrive in religious settings, and that their social function has been to provide the lesser fortunate with spiritual consolation. “Every society has its outcasts, its wretched, and its damned, who cannot fit into the routine requirements of social life at any level of authority and achievement,” he writes. “Those who are constricted, who find life as it is lived too hard, are prone to the acceptance of the ideological outlook on life.”

The age of ideology

While the utopianism of ideologies reflects religious ideas stretching back thousands of years, Shils claims that the “age of ideology” only dates back to the French revolution. Before this,

59 Shils: "Ideology and Civility", p. 461. As with Raymond Aron and his discussion on the affinities between ideology and millenarianism, it seems clear that Shils', at least partly, draws on Karl Mannheim’s discussion of utopia and chiliasm. See Mannheim: Ideology and Utopia, p. 216-220.
he writes, politics were the exclusive concern of small elites who merely aspired to maintain
the existing social order. But from the sixteenth century and onwards, and especially with the
invention of printing, a class of relatively independent intellectuals emerged in European
societies. No longer completely reliant on the patronage of religious, political or feudal
authorities, these intellectuals were independent enough to transcend the cultural discourses
of the ruling classes, and develop ideas that challenged and opposed existing political
institutions. “The steady growth in the scale and importance of this stratum of the population
in Modern European societies is perhaps the decisive factor in the ‘ideologization’ which, on
its better side, has been called the ‘spiritualization of politics’,” Shils writes. The intellectuals,
he continues, “have lived in a permanent tension between earthly power and the idea, which
derives from their nature as intellectuals.”

More specifically, Shils identifies four intellectual traditions which have triggered the
ideological outlook to politics: scientism, bohemianism, romanticism and populism. While
these currents have had different characteristics and goals—scientism advocated breaking
down all inherited traditions in order to build a society ruled by reason and empirical
knowledge, romanticism called for the spontaneous and unmediated expression of the
individual soul or a particular people, bohemianism drew on an anarchistic uproar against all
authorities and moral codes, populism believed in the moral and political superiority of
ordinary people—Shils claims that each tradition bolstered the ideological age by demanding
a revolt against the existing social order. Instead of supporting their societies, he explains,
intellectuals, writers and scholars belonging to these traditions deliberately turned against
them. While Shils does not go into the exact relation between intellectuals and the rise of
twentieth century totalitarianism, it seems clear that he considers intellectuals as partly
responsible for the emergence of antidemocratic ideologies like Nazism and communism.

After the Second World War, however, the age of ideology seems to be coming to an end.
Having earlier been the most influential ideologies in Western politics, Marxism and
nationalism are now losing their grip on intellectual life. With increasing prosperity, efficient
welfare institutions, and the knowledge provided by social science, grand millenarian
doctrines which oppose liberal democracy do not seem attractive anymore. “The ideals of the
European Enlightenment have quietly reasserted their validity without arousing intellectuals
to passion on their behalf,” Shils writes. “It seems almost as if what was sound in the older

62 Shils: "Ideology and Civility", p. 459. For another perspective on the “spiritualization of politics,” see
ideologies has been realized and what was unsound has demonstrated its unsoundness so obviously that enthusiasm can no longer be summoned." While particular social issues like the “woman question” or the “Negro problem” might remain in Western countries, they cannot be solved by grand doctrines which advocate fundamental transformations of society.

But if the age of ideology is gradually coming to an end, this is only the case in the Western world. Returning to the arguments from “Letter from Milan,” Shils claims that ideologies will continue to play an important role in recently decolonized countries without functioning democratic institutions or efficient welfare systems:

Of course, ideological politics, Marxist, Islamic, Arabic, Hindu, Pan-African, and other, still exist in the new states outside the West in a vehement, irreconcilable form and often with great influence. But many in the West (...) believe that they too will pass when the new states in which they flourish become more settled and mature. Looking back from the standpoint of a newly-achieved moderation, Western intellectuals view the ideological politics of Asia and Africa, and particularly nationalism and tribalism, as a sort of measles which afflicts a people in its childhood, but to which adults are practically immune.

In Third World countries plagued by social conflicts, ideologies will therefore continue to mobilize people against prevailing authorities and institutions. But as these countries modernize and mature, they will probably experience the same transformations that are currently occurring in the West. Assuming that the Third World is slowly progressing towards the liberal-democratic system of the West, it seems, as Shils puts it, “reasonable to think that the age of ideological politics is gradually coming to its end.”

Civil politics

But if this is the case, Shils argues, there must be some kind of alternative ground on which politics can be based. Returning to earlier discussions in books like The Torment of Secrecy, he suggests that ideologies should be replaced with what he calls “civil politics”. In a way the negation of Shils’ definition of ideology, civil politics “do not stir the passions; they do not reveal man at the more easily apprehensible extremes of heroism and saintliness.” Concerned with “the common good” of society rather than abstract political imperatives, the civil

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politician “must maintain a sense of affinity with his society and share with his fellow citizens their membership in a single transpersonal entity”.  

Quite surprisingly, “Ideology and Civility” does not provide any clear definition of ideology. In the 1960 article “Political Development in the New States,” however, Shils came back to the concept, and argued that civility boils down to:

(i) a sense of nationality, i.e., a firm but not intense attachment to the total community and its symbols; (ii) a degree of interest in public affairs sufficient to impel most adults to participate in elections and to follow in a very general way what is going on in the country as a whole, with a reasonable and temperate judgment of the quality of the candidates and the issues; (iii) (...) a general acceptance and even affirmation of the illegitimacy of the existing political order; (iv) a sense of their own dignity and rights, as well as their obligations, on which must rest their interest in maintaining their own private spheres, free from the arbitrary intrusions of authority, and (v) a sufficient degree of consensus regarding values, institutions and practices to accept limits on their own tendencies.

To sum this up, civility entails an acceptance of the existing political order and its institutions, a firm—but not too radical—attachment to the nation, a non-passionate and moderate interest in political affairs, and respect for the individual’s autonomy towards the state. Civil politics refute the idea of conducting politics in accordance with doctrines or systems, and instead approach social problems as particular issues to be solved on their own terms. Unlike the political ideologies’ obsession with a heavenly future to come, civil politics demand respect for traditions, and an appreciation of the knowledge provided by the past.

By taking all citizens of society into account rather than particular groups or classes, the aim of civil politics is to overcome the social disruptions caused by ideologies. As Shils puts it, a “concern for the more general and for what transcends the immediate advantages of particular ‘interests’ would infuse a most precious ingredient into political life.” At the same time, he warns, civil politics should not jettison the ideological heritage altogether. Values like equality and justice are not inherently malign just because of their historical connection to totalitarian movements. “It has not been the substantive values sought by ideological politics which have done such damage,“ Shils writes, but “the elevation of one value, such as equality

or national or ethnic solidarity, to supremacy over all others”.

Rather than eliminating everything associated with ideologies, civil politics should try to incorporate the progressive values of older doctrines, but pursue them in a moderate way without pretentions of fully achieving them.

But is “civil politics,” then, simply a euphemism for Western liberal democracy? Shils remains somewhat ambiguous on this question. In “Political Development in the New States,” on the one hand, he claims that modern democracy must necessarily rest on “a widely dispersed civility,” and that this is one of the reasons why African and Asian countries where “[t]ribe, religion, language and traditions of parochial hierarchy have stood in the way of the emergence of a civil order” have faced such problems in establishing democratic institutions. In “Ideology and Civility,” on the other, he argues that democracy per se poses a threat to civility by permitting political conflict in the form of struggles between parties. Rather than institutionalizing conflict by encouraging different parties, Shils explains, civil politics insist on a “partial transcendence of partisanship” in order to reach a broad social consensus on political matters.

While remaining vague on the relation between civil politics and modern liberal democracy, Shils is relatively clear on three points. First, the main goal of civil politics is to transcend the ideologies’ partisan approach to politics. By demanding an acceptance of existing institutions and traditions, as well as promoting a social affinity between all citizens, civil politics seek to replace the partisanship of ideologies with the pursuit of the common good of society. Second, civil politics is attached to modernity, or at least incompatible with traditional societies where kinship structures and organic solidarities disturb the establishment of a sovereign state. Third, civil politics should not be seen as an objective or necessary historical outcome of modernization, but rather a normative political ideal for the post-ideological age.

Shils’ concept of history
In line with Arendt’s and Aron’s critique, Shils’ argues that the main issue with ideologies is their self-proclaimed affinity with history. By insisting that their political doctrines resonate with the forces of history, politicians and intellectuals can present their programs as the mere realization of tendencies already existing beyond the scope of individual agency. From this perspective, a consistent alignment with a particular value or imperative—like the

socialization of the productive forces, the absolute freedom of the individual, or the superiority of a particular ethnic group—is the only way to approach the eventual coming of a new, and more righteous, society. From the ideological perspective, Shils writes, human time is just a “waiting and preparation” for the remote historical occasion when humanity will be emancipated.\(^72\) In opposition to this fatalism, Shils calls for a political outlook that recognizes the autonomy of individuals and takes the present, rather than the historical process in its totality, as the point of departure.

With this said, it seems quite clear that “Ideology and Civility” itself entails important assumptions about the development and course of history. Most obviously, Shils arguments are based on the notion of the age of ideology which roughly dates between the French Revolution and the Second World War. With the rise of an autonomous class of European intellectuals, and the development of countercultural currents like romanticism and bohemianism, the ruling classes of Western societies were challenged by subversive groups aiming for violent rebellion against the prevailing social order. By translating old religious ideas about the impending heaven on earth into the quasi-secular language of political ideology, the intellectuals created a forceful weapon against prevailing institutions and authorities. While their ideologies played a crucial role in the popular uprisings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, it was not until the emergence of totalitarian mass movements in Europe, the brutal utopianism of Nazism and Communism, and the Second World War that the age of ideology reached its historical climax. But in the 1950s, Shils argues, Western countries are characterized by a widespread exhaustion with the devastating consequences of ideological politics. Undermined intellectually by the empirical social science, and institutionally by the rise of democratic welfare states, ideologies are rapidly losing their force of attraction. All of this signal a historical shift in the political consciousness in Western countries—or, to put it differently, a decline of the ideological age. But the end of ideology, it should be emphasized, is not a universal phenomenon. While ideologies might be on the wane in European and American democracies, Marxism and nationalism will continue to trigger political conflict in poor and unstable Third World countries. As these countries modernize and create democratic institutions similar to those already established in the West, however, the age of ideology is likely to end there as well.

\(^{72}\) Shils: "Ideology and Civility", p. 453.
Shils’ account on the end of ideology is, in other words, marked by a notion of a temporal distance: if the West has now reached the end of the ideological age, less developed countries in the Third World are still stuck in it. But while this idea was already present in Shils’ letter from Milan in 1955, “Ideology and Civility” is also underpinned by the notion of an imminent historical transition from tradition to modernity. In line with what would later be known as modernization theory, Shils assumes (in a seemingly axiomatic way) that all decolonized countries will necessarily begin to resemble, and eventually converge with, the liberal democracies of the West. This evolutionism is particularly clear in the article’s coming-of-age metaphor, where Western intellectuals are said to see the “ideological politics of Asia and Africa” as “a sort of measles” which afflict children, but not adults. Explicitly putting the adults of the West in relation to the ideologically afflicted children of Africa, Shils seems to envision development as a cultural process of growing up: if Third World countries are still in the grip of ideologies, it is only because they have not yet achieved the maturity of their parents.

The idea that the ideological disposition of politics in the Third World will attenuate as these countries modernize can be discerned in other texts written by Shils around the same time. In the 1960 article “Intellectuals in the Political Development of the New States,” for instance, he claims that the modernization process will gradually make Third World intellectuals “much less political” in their outlook. When their countries become “more differentiated occupationally, and when they have developed a sufficiently large and self-esteeming corps of professional intellectuals,” Shils writes, "the passionate sentiment and energy [will] flow into channels other than the political."³³

The historical implications in such assumptions seem to be clear: what Shils does is to take for granted that the historical development which brought Western countries to the end of the ideological age will eventually occur in Asia and Africa as well. To put it bluntly, there does not seem to be any alternative to the post-ideological democracy of the West—only different methods of achieving it.

**Civil politics as the post-political successor to ideology**

But if the end of the ideological age ultimately appears to be a historical necessity, Shils carefully points out that the question of a successor to ideological politics remains open. And

this is, in fact, precisely where Shils’ theory of civil politics comes in. Reflecting his overall position on politics, civil politics aspire to transcend ideology by refuting conflict and radicalism, promoting moral consensus, and advocating a fundamental affinity with, and acceptance of, the prevailing social order and its institutions. By pursuing politics on these bases, the goal of civil politics is to overcome all particularistic social interests, and in the end reach the “common good” of a society—that is, values that benefit all citizens in society regardless of their class, ethnicity, nationality, or sex.

Based on the explicit ambition to eliminate conflict and antagonism in order to achieve consensus and stability, Shils’ civil politics can be seen as an archetypal example of what I have earlier called the post-political vision. From Shils’ perspective, conflict—or even fundamentally different opinions on how to organize society—is inherently malign, and therefore something which should be excluded from the political realm. Civil politics do not only oppose the partisanship of political ideologies—even liberal democracy is criticized for recognizing political conflict by tolerating the opposition between parties or political organizations. To put it in Chantal Mouffe’s terms, what is at stake here is a post-political denial of accepting conflict as the ontological foundation of the political.

Indeed, Shils’ ambition with civil politics seems to be the elimination of conflict altogether. There is now, as he writes in the very last passage of the article, “a higher civil sense than earlier phases of Western society have ever manifested—and this despite class conflicts and ideological separatism and irreconcilability. Even ethnic barriers seem slowly to be yielding to the rising tide of civility.”74 The promise of civil politics is, to put things differently, to create a political realm cleansed of conflict and antagonism, and a social order where all members of society are bound together by a fundamental affinity with each other. And that promise is, I think, a strictly post-political one.

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