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DEMOCRATIC POLITICS AND AGONISTIC PLURALISM

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Chantal Mouffe é unha das pensadoras máis influíntes no eido da filosofía política actual. Compiladora de obras como *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, *Dimensions of Radical Democracy*, *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, ou *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*; é tamén coautora (con Ernesto Laclau) de *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985). Asemade, ten publicadas *The Return of the Political* (1993), *The Democratic Paradox* (2000) ou *On the Political* (2005), ademais de numerosos artigos sobre pensamento político (Carl Scmitt) e teoría política (Paixóns e política).

Na actualidade, Mouffe está a elaborar unha aproximación non racionalista á teoría política, fundamentada na súa formulación do concepto de 'democracia agónica', e participa en diferentes proxectos de investigación sobre a emerxencia do populismo de dereitas en Europa e sobre o lugar de Europa na orde global multipolar.

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Advanced liberal democratic societies are characterized by a growing incapacity of envisaging the problems facing them in political terms, that is as requiring not simply technical but properly political decisions, decisions which are made between real alternatives which imply the availability of conflicting but legitimate projects of how to organize their common life. This is not surprising since the message that, albeit in different ways, the more recent trends in political theory and sociology are conveying – not to mention the dominant practices of mainstream political parties – is that the adversarial model of politics has become obsolete and that we have entered a new stage of reflexive modernity where an inclusive consensus can be built around a ‘radical centre’. All those who disagree with this consensus are dismissed as being archaic or condemned as ‘evil’ or ‘enemies of civilization’.

There are many reasons for the disappearance of a properly political vision. Some have to do with the predominance of a neo-liberal regime of globalization, others with the type of individualistic consumer’s culture which now pervades most advanced industrial societies. From a more strictly political perspective, it is clear that the collapse of communism and the disappearance of the political frontiers that have structured the political imaginary during most of the 20th century have led to the crumbling of the political markers of society. The blurring of the frontiers between right and left that we have steadily witnessed and which so many are celebrating as a progress, constitutes no doubt a danger for democratic politics. Indeed, the democratic political public sphere has been seriously weakened by the lack of a properly ‘agonistic’ debate around possible alternatives to the existing hegemonic order. This is at the origin of the increasing disaffection with liberal democratic institutions which manifests itself through declining electoral participation or the attraction exerted by right-wing populist parties which challenge the political establishment.

The shortcomings of liberal democratic theory

As a political theorist I am particularly concerned with the responsibility of political theory in the current incapacity of thinking politically and of the role it has played in the demise of a properly political vision and this is the first point that I will examine.

In recent years the traditional understanding of democracy as aggregation of interests, the 'aggregative' model, has been increasingly displaced by a new paradigm which under the name of 'deliberative democracy' is fast imposing the terms of the discussion; one of its main tenets is that political questions are of a moral nature and therefore susceptible of a rational treatment. The objective of a democratic society is, according to such a view, the creation of a rational consensus reached through appropriate deliberative procedures whose aim is to produce decisions which represent an impartial standpoint, equally in the interests of all. All those who put into question the very possibility of such a rational consensus and who affirm that the political is a domain in which one should always rationally expect to find discord, are accused of undermining the very possibility of democracy. As Habermas for instance puts it: "If questions of justice cannot transcend the ethical self-understanding of competing forms of life, and existentially relevant value conflicts and oppositions must penetrate all controversial questions, then in the final analysis we will end up with something resembling Carl Schmitt's understanding of politics" (Habermas 1996, 1493)

The most fashionable theoretical approach nowadays is to envisage the nature of the political as akin to morality, understood in rationalistic and universalistic terms. The discourse of morality has nowadays been promoted to the place of master narrative, the one which is replacing discredited political and social discourses in providing the guiding lines of collective action. It is rapidly becoming the only legitimate vocabulary as instead of thinking in terms of right and left, we are now urged to think in terms of right and wrong.

This has led to erasing the dimension of antagonism which is ineradicable in politics and to the displacement of the political by the juridical and the moral which are perceived as particularly adequate terrains for reaching impartial decisions. This displacement of the political by the juridical is very clear in the work of

John Rawls for instance who gives the supreme court as the best example of what he calls the 'free exercise of public reason', in his view the very model of democratic deliberation. Another example can be found in the work of Ronald Dworkin who in many of his essays gives primacy to the independent judiciary seen as the interpreter of the political morality of a community. According to him all the fundamental questions facing a political community in the field of employment, education, censorship, freedom of association, etc. are better resolved by the judges, providing that they interpret the constitution by reference to the principle of political equality. Very little is left for discussion in the political arena.

Even pragmatists like Richard Rorty, despite carrying out a far-reaching and important critique of the rationalist approach fail to provide an adequate alternative. The problem with Rorty is that, albeit in a different way, he also ends up by privileging consensus and missing the dimension of the political. The consensus that he advocates is of course to be reached through persuasion and 'sentimental education' not through rational argumentation, but he nevertheless believes in the possibility of an all encompassing consensus and therefore in the elimination of antagonism.

In fact the current situation can be seen as the fulfillment of a tendency which, as Carl Schmitt has argued, is inscribed at the very core of liberalism, whose constitutive incapacity to think in truly political terms, explains why it has always to resort to another type of discourse: economic, moral or juridical. The force of Schmitt's critique is that it brings to the fore what constitutes the main shortcoming of liberal thought, its incapacity to apprehend the specificity of the political. In *The Concept of the Political* he writes: A In a very systematic fashion liberal thought evades or ignores state and politics and moves instead in a typical recurring polarity of two heterogeneous spheres, namely ethics and economics, intellect and trade, education and property. The critical distrust of state and politics is easily explained by the principles of a system whereby the individual must *remain terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* (Schmitt 1976, 70).

Liberal thought must necessarily be blind to the political because of its individualism which makes it unable to understand the formation of collective identities. Yet the political is from the outset concerned with collective forms of identifications since in this field we are always dealing with the formation of 'us' as opposed to 'them'. The political has to do with conflict and antagonism, its *differentia specifica*, as Schmitt puts it, is the

friend and enemy distinction. It is no wonder then that liberal rationalism cannot grasp its nature given that rationalism requires the very negation of the ineradicability of antagonism. Liberalism has to negate antagonism since, by bringing to the fore the inescapable moment of decision – in the strong sense of having to decide in an undecidable terrain – what antagonism reveals is the very limit of any rational consensus.

This denial of antagonism is what impedes liberal theory to envisage democratic politics in an adequate way. The political in its antagonistic dimension cannot be made to disappear by simply denying it, by wishing it away, which is the typical liberal gesture; such a negation only leads to impotence, impotence which characterizes liberal thought when confronted with the emergence of antagonisms which according to its theory should belong to a bygone age when reason had not yet managed to control the supposedly archaic passions. This is at the root of the current incapacity of grasping the nature and the causes of the new antagonisms which have emerged after the end of the cold war. It is therefore of the utmost importance to listen to Schmitt when he states that the political can be understood “only in the context of the ever present possibility of the friend-and -enemy groupings, regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for morality, aesthetics, and economics” (Schmitt 1976, 35). Schmitt is right to bring to our attention the fact that the political is linked to the existence of a dimension of hostility in human societies, hostility which can take many forms and manifest itself in very diverse types of social relations. This recognition, I contend, should constitute the starting point for an adequate reflection on the aims of democratic politics.

To be sure, Schmitt never developed those insights in a theoretical way and it is necessary to formulate them more rigorously. I would like to suggest that this can be done with the help of the critique of essentialism developed by several currents of contemporary thought. This critique shows that one of the main problems with liberalism is that it deploys a logic of the social based on a conception of being as presence and that it conceives objectivity as being inherent to the things themselves. This is why it cannot apprehend the process of construction of political identities. It is unable to recognize that there can only be an identity when it is constructed as ‘difference’ and that any social objectivity is constituted through acts of power. What it refuses to admit is that any form of social objectivity is ultimately political and that it must bear the traces of the acts of exclusions which govern its constitution.

The notion of 'constitutive outside' can be helpful here to make this argument more explicit. This term has been proposed by Henry Staten to refer to a number of themes developed by Jacques Derrida through notions like 'supplement', 'trace' and 'difference'. Its aim is to highlight the fact that the creation of an identity implies the establishment of a difference, difference which is often constructed on the basis of a hierarchy: for example between form and matter, black and white, man and women, etc. Once we have understood that every identity is relational and that the affirmation of a difference – i.e., the perception of something 'other' that constitutes its 'exterior' – is a precondition for the existence of any identity, then Schmitt's point about the ever present possibility of the friend/enemy relation can be better formulated; or to put it in another way, we can begin to envisage how a social relation can become the breeding ground for antagonism.

When dealing with political identities which are always collective identities, we are dealing with the creation of an 'us' than can only exist by the demarcation of a 'them'. This does not mean of course that such a relation is by necessity an antagonistic one. But it means that there is always the possibility of this relation us/them becoming one of friend/enemy. This happens when the others, who up to now had been considered as simply different, start to be perceived as putting into question our identity and threatening our existence. From that moment on, any form of us/them relation, be it religious, ethnic or economic becomes the locus of an antagonism.

What is important here is to acknowledge that the very condition of possibility of formation of political identities is at the same time the condition of impossibility of a society from which antagonism would have been eliminated. Antagonism is therefore an ever present possibility as Schmitt repeatedly stressed. This antagonistic dimension is what I have proposed to call the 'the political' and to distinguish it from 'politics' which refers to the set of practices and institutions whose aim is to create an order, to organize human coexistence in conditions which are always conflictual because they are traversed by 'the political'. To use a Heideggerian terminology we could say that 'the political' is situated at the level of the ontological, while politics belongs to the ontic.

Agonistic pluralism.

It is my contention that in order to understand the nature of democratic politics and the challenge to which it is confronted, we need an alternative to the two main approaches in democratic political theory. One of those approaches, the aggregative model sees political actors as being moved by the pursuit of their interests, the other model, the deliberative one stresses the role of reason and moral considerations. What both of these models leave aside is the central role played by 'passions' in the creation of collective political identities. One cannot understand democratic politics without acknowledging passions as the moving force in the field of politics. It is precisely this deficiency that the agonistic model of democracy is trying to remedy by tackling all the issues which cannot be properly addressed by the two other models because their rationalist individualistic framework.

In a nutshell, the argument goes as follows. Once we acknowledge the dimension of 'the political' we begin to realize that one of the main challenges for democratic politics consists in domesticating hostility and in trying to defuse the potential antagonism that exists in human relations. Indeed, the fundamental question for democratic politics is not how to arrive at a rational consensus, a consensus reached without exclusion; this would require the construction of an 'us' that would not have a corresponding 'them'. Yet this is impossible because as I have argued, the very condition for the constitution of an 'us' is the demarcation of a 'them'. The crucial issue for democratic politics then is how to establish this us/them distinction which is constitutive of politics in a way which is compatible with the recognition of pluralism. Conflict in democratic societies cannot and should not be eradicated since the specificity of modern democracy is precisely the recognition and the legitimation of conflict. What democratic politics requires is that the others are not seen as enemies to be destroyed but as adversaries whose ideas would be fought, even fiercely, but whose right to defend those ideas will never be put into question. To put it in another way, what is important is that conflict does not take the form of an 'antagonism' (struggle between enemies) but the form of an 'agonism' (struggle between adversaries). We could say that the aim of democratic politics is to transform potential antagonism into an agonism.

According to the agonistic perspective, the central category of democratic politics is the category of the 'adversary', the opponent with whom we share a common allegiance to the democratic principles of 'liberty and equality for all' while disagreeing about their interpretation. Adversaries fight against each other because they want their interpretation to become hegemonic, but they do not put into question the legitimacy of their opponents to fight for the victory of their position. This confrontation between adversaries is what constitutes the 'agonistic struggle' which is the very condition of a vibrant democracy (for a development of this argument, see Mouffe 2000). For the agonistic model the prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions or to relegate them to the private sphere in order to establish a rational consensus in the public sphere, it is to 'tame' so to speak those passions by mobilizing them towards democratic designs, by creating collective forms of identification around democratic objectives.

In order to avoid any misunderstanding let me stress that this notion of the adversary needs to be distinguished sharply from the understanding of that term that we find in liberal discourse. According to the understanding of 'adversary' proposed here, and contrary to the liberal view, the presence of antagonism is not eliminated, but 'sublimated'. In fact what liberals call 'adversary' is simply a 'competitor'. They envisage the field of politics as a neutral terrain in which different groups compete to occupy the positions of power, their objective is simply to dislodge others in order to occupy their place, without putting into question the dominant hegemony and profoundly transforming the relations of power. It is simply a competition among elites. In an agonistic politics, however, the antagonistic dimension is always present since what is at stake is the struggle between opposing hegemonic projects which can never be reconciled rationally, one of them need to be defeated. It is a real confrontation but one that is played out under conditions regulated by a set of democratic procedures accepted by the adversaries.

Liberal theorists are unable to acknowledge, not only the primary reality of strife in social life, and the impossibility of finding rational, impartial solutions to political issues but also the integrative role that conflict plays in modern democracy. A well-functioning democracy calls for a confrontation of democratic political positions. If this is missing there is always the danger that this democratic confrontation will be replaced by a confrontation between non-negotiable moral values or essentialist forms of identifications. Too much emphasis

on consensus, together with aversion towards confrontations leads to apathy and to disaffection with political participation. This is why a democratic society requires a debate about possible alternatives. It must provide political forms of identifications around clearly differentiated democratic positions, or to put it in Niklas Luhmann's terms there must be a clear 'splitting' of the summit, a real choice between the policies put forward by the government and those of the opposition. While consensus is no doubt necessary, it must be accompanied by dissent. Consensus is needed on the institutions which are constitutive of democracy and on the ethico-political values that should inform the political association, but there will always be disagreement concerning the meaning of those values and the way they should be implemented. In a pluralist democracy such disagreements are not only legitimate but also necessary. They allow for different forms of citizenship identification and are the stuff of democratic politics. When the agonistic dynamics of pluralism is hindered because of a lack of democratic forms of identifications, passions cannot be given a democratic outlet and the ground is laid for various forms of politics articulated around essentialist identities of nationalist, religious or ethnic type and for the multiplication of confrontations over non-negotiable moral values.

Beyond left and right

We should therefore be suspicious of the current tendency to celebrate the blurring of the frontiers between left and right and of those who are advocating a politics 'beyond left and right'. A well functioning democracy calls for a vibrant clash of democratic political positions. Antagonisms can take many forms and it is illusory to believe that they could be eradicated. In order to allow for the possibility of transforming them into agonistic relations it is necessary to provide a political outlet for the expression of conflict within a pluralistic democratic system offering possibilities of identification around democratic political alternatives.

It is in this context that we can grasp the very pernicious consequences of the fashionable thesis which has been put forward by Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens who both argue that the adversarial model of politics has become obsolete. In their view the friend/enemy model of politics is characteristic of classical industrial modernity, the 'first modernity' but they claim that we now live in a different, 'second' modernity, a

'reflexive' one, in which the emphasis should be put on 'sub-politics', on the issues of 'life and death'.

As in the case of deliberative democracy which I have criticized at the beginning, albeit in a different way, what is at the basis of this conception of reflexive modernity is the possibility of elimination of the political in its antagonistic dimension and the belief that relations of friend/enemy have been eradicated. The claim is that in post-traditional societies we do not find any more collective identities constructed in term of us/them, which means that political frontiers have evaporated and that politics must therefore be 'reinvented' to use Beck's expression. Indeed Beck pretends that the generalized skepticism and the centrality of doubt which are prevalent today preclude the emergence of antagonistic relations. We have entered an era of ambivalence in which nobody can believe any more to possess the truth- belief which was precisely where antagonisms were stemming from- therefore there is no more reason for their emergence. Any attempt to organize collective identities in terms of left and right and to define an adversary is thereby discredited as being 'archaic'.

Politics in its conflictual dimension is deemed to be something of the past and the type of democracy which is commended is a consensual, completely depoliticized democracy. Nowadays the key terms of political discourse are 'good governance' and 'partisan free democracy'. In my view it is the incapacity of traditional parties to provide distinctive forms of identifications around possible alternatives which has created the terrain for the current flourishing of right-wing populism. Indeed right-wing populist parties are often the only ones which attempt to mobilize passions and to create collective forms of identifications. Against all those who believe that politics can be reduced to individual motivations, they are well aware that politics always consists in the creation of an 'us' versus a 'them' and that it implies the creation of collective identities. Hence the powerful appeal of their discourse because it provides collective forms of identification around 'the people'.

If we add to that the fact that under the banner of 'modernization' social-democratic parties have in many countries identified themselves more or less exclusively with the middle-classes and that they have stopped addressing the concerns of the popular sectors – whose demands are considered as 'archaic' or 'retrograde' – we should not be surprised by the growing alienation of all those groups who feel excluded from the effective exercise of citizenship by what they perceive as the 'establishment elites'. In a context where the dominant discourse proclaims that there is no alternative to the current neo-liberal form of globalization and

that we have to accept its diktats, small wonder that more and more people are keen to listen to those who claim that alternatives do exist and that they will give back to the people the power to decide. When democratic politics has lost its capacity to shape the discussion about how we should organize our common life and when it is limited to securing the necessary conditions for the smooth working of the market, the conditions are ripe for talented demagogues to articulate popular frustration. It is important to realize that to a great extent the success of right-wing populist parties comes from the fact that they provide people with some form of hope, with the belief that things could be different. Of course this is an illusory hope, founded on false premises and on unacceptable mechanisms of exclusion where xenophobia usually plays a central role. But when they are the only ones to offer an outlet for political passions, their pretence to offer an alternative is seductive and their appeal is likely to grow. To be able to envisage an adequate response, it is necessary to grasp the economic, social and political conditions which explain their emergence. And this supposes a theoretical approach that does not deny the antagonistic dimension of the political.

Politics in the moral register

I think that it is also crucial to understand that it is not through moral condemnation that the rise of right-wing populism can be stopped and this is why the dominant answer has so far been completely inadequate. Of course a moralistic reaction chimes with the dominant post-political perspective and it had to be expected. It is worth examining it closely because this will bring us some insights about the form under which political antagonisms manifest themselves today.

As we have seen, the dominant discourse asserts the end of the adversarial model of politics and the advent of a consensual society beyond left and right. However I have also argued that politics always entails a us/ them distinction. This is why the consensus advocated by the defenders of the partisan free democracy cannot exist without drawing a political frontier and defining an exterior, a 'them' which assures the identity of the consensus and the coherence of the 'us'. In domestic politics, this 'them' is nowadays often conveniently designated as 'extreme right', term which refers to an amalgam of groups and parties which covers a wide

spectrum, from fringe groups of extremists and neo-nazi to the authoritarian right and up to the variety of new right-wing populist parties. Of course such a heterogeneous construct is useless to grasp the nature and the causes of this new right wing populism. But it is very useful to secure the identity of the 'good democrats'. Since politics has supposedly become non-adversarial, the 'them' necessary to secure the 'us' of the good democrats cannot be envisaged as a political adversary. So the extreme right comes very handy because it allows drawing the frontier at the moral level, between 'the good democrats' and the 'evil extreme right', which can be condemned morally instead of being fought politically. This is why moral condemnation and the establishment of a *cordon sanitaire* have become the dominant answer to the rise of right-wing populist movements.

In fact what is happening is very different from what the advocates of the post-political approach would want us to believe. It is not that politics with its supposedly old-fashioned antagonisms has been superseded by moral concerns about 'life issues' and 'human rights'. Politics in its antagonistic dimension is still very much alive, except that it is now played out in the register of morality. Frontiers between us and them, far from having disappeared, are constantly being established, but since the 'them' cannot be defined in political terms any more, those frontiers are drawn in moral categories, between 'us the good' and 'them the evil ones'.

One of the main shortcomings of this type of politics played out in the moral register is that it is not conducive to the creation of the 'agonistic public sphere' which is the requisite of a robust democratic life. When the opponent is not defined in political but in moral terms, he cannot be envisaged as an adversary but only as an enemy. With the >evil them= no agonistic debate is possible, they have to be eradicated.

The approach which claims that the friend/enemy model of politics has been superseded in fact ends up reinforcing the antagonistic model of politics that they have declared obsolete. By constructing the 'them' as a moral, i.e an 'absolute' enemy, they make it impossible to transform it into an 'adversary.' Instead of helping to create a vibrant agonistic public sphere thanks to which democracy can be kept alive and deepened, all those who proclaim the end of antagonism and the arrival of a consensual society are actually jeopardizing democracy, creating the conditions for the emergence of antagonisms that will not be manageable by democratic institutions.

Without a profound transformation in the way democratic politics is envisaged and a serious attempt to address the lack of forms of identifications which would allow for a democratic mobilization of passions, the challenge posed by right-wing populist parties will remain. New political frontiers are being drawn in European politics which carry the danger that the old left/right distinction could soon be replaced by another one much less conducive to a pluralistic democratic debate. It is therefore urgent to relinquish the illusions of the consensual model of politics and to create the bases of an agonistic public sphere.

By limiting themselves to calls for reason, moderation and consensus, democratic parties are showing their lack of understanding of the working of political logics. They do not understand the need to counter right-wing populism by mobilizing affects and passions in a democratic direction. What they do not grasp is that democratic politics needs to have a real purchase on people=s desires and fantasies and that, instead of opposing interests to sentiments and reason to passions, it should offer forms of identifications which represent a real challenge to the ones promoted by the right. This is not to say that reason and rational argument should disappear from politics but that their place needs to be rethought.

Toward a multipolar world order

To end let's me present some reflections concerning the international situation and enquire about possible scenarios for the future of democracy at the world level. We can broadly envisage two main possibilities. There are those who call for the establishment of a 'cosmopolitan democracy' and a 'cosmopolitan citizenship' resulting from the universalization of the Western interpretation of democratic values and the implementation of the Western version of human rights. According to such an approach, this is how a democratic global order should come about. There are different variants of this approach, but all of them share a common premise: that the Western form of life is the best one and that moral progress requires its worldwide implementation. This is the liberal universalism which aims at imposing its institutions to the rest of the world with the argument that they are the only rational and legitimate ones. I believe that, even if it is very far from the intentions of those who advocate the cosmopolitan model, such a view is bound to justify the hegemony of the West and the

imposition of its particular values.

Those who argue for the advent of a 'World Republic' with a homogeneous body of cosmopolitan citizens with the same rights and obligations, a constituency that would coincide with 'humanity', are denying the dimension of the political which is inherent to human societies. They overlook the fact that power relations are constitutive of the social and that conflicts and antagonisms cannot be eradicated. This is why, if such a World Republic was ever established, it could only signify the world hegemony of a dominant power which would have been able to erase all differences and impose its own conception of the world on the entire planet. This would have dire consequences and we are already witnessing how current attempts to homogenize the world are provoking violent adverse reactions from those societies whose specific values and cultures are rendered illegitimate by the enforced universalization of the Western model.

I suggest that we relinquish the flawed models of 'cosmopolitan citizenship' and that we promote a different conception of the world order, a conception that acknowledges value pluralism in its strong Weberian and Nietzschean sense, with all its implications for politics. Discarding the claims of the universalists, it is urgent to become aware of the dangers implied in the illusions of a globalist-universalist discourse which envisages human progress as the establishment of world unity based on the acceptance of the Western model. By imagining the possibility of a unification of the world that could be achieved by transcending the political, conflict and negativity, such a discourse risks to bring about the clash of civilizations that it claims to be avoiding. At the moment where the United States are – under the pretence of a 'true universalism' – trying to force the rest of the world to adopt their system, the need for a multipolar world order is more pressing than ever. What is at stake is the establishment of a pluralist world order where a number of big regional units would coexist and where a plurality of forms of democracy would be considered legitimate.

At this stage in the process of globalization, I do not want to deny the need for a set of institutions to regulate international relations, but those institutions should allow for a significant degree of pluralism and they should not require the existence of a single unified power structure. Such a structure would necessarily entail the presence of a centre which would be the only locus of sovereignty. It is vain to imagine the possibility of a world system ruled by Reason and where power relations would have been neutralized. This supposed 'Reign

of Reason' could only be the screen concealing the rule of a dominant power which, identifying its interests with those of humanity, would treat any disagreement as an illegitimate challenge to its 'rational' leadership.

By attempting to impose the Western conception of democracy, deemed to be the only legitimate one on reluctant societies, the universalist approach it is bound to present those who do not accept this conception as 'enemies of civilization', thereby denying their rights to maintain their cultures and creating the conditions for an antagonistic confrontation between different civilizations. It is only by acknowledging the legitimacy of a plurality of just forms of society, and the fact that liberal democracy is only one form of democracy among others, that conditions could be created for an 'agonistic' coexistence between different regional poles with their specific institutions. Such a multipolar order will of course not eliminate conflict but this conflict is less likely to take antagonistic forms than in a world that does not make room for pluralism.

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