

Counter-Enlightenment, Communitarianism and Postmodernism

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Abstract

Although different phenomena, having dissimilar messages and horizons, between counter-enlightenment, communitarianism and postmodernism there is a consistent common ground. It's about the critical reaction towards modernity, especially concerning its major cultural ethos, the enlightenment. Counter-enlightenment, commonly interpreted in the history of the political thought as one of the main intellectual sources of conservatism, is even more than that. Its influence constantly reverberates on the entire social reflection proper to modernity, inclusively on some important contemporary orientations, as communitarianism or postmodernism. Without giving to this counter-enlightenment influence careful consideration, the social philosophy of communitarianism or of postmodernism may be seen only as an integrant part of the contemporary political left. Nevertheless, beside the emancipatory discourse, aiming to give an equal respect to all cultures, or beside the critical, liberating view, which intends to carry on the progressive ideals, surpassing all dogmas specific to enlightenment universalist rationalism, there is, within communitarianism and postmodernism, a conservative line, which can be understood by knowing their common counter-enlightenment origins.

Keywords: enlightenment, counter-enlightenment, communitarianism, conservatism, language.

Although different phenomena, having dissimilar messages and horizons, between counter-enlightenment, communitarianism and postmodernism there is a consistent common ground. It's about the critical reaction towards modernity, especially concerning its major cultural ethos, the enlightenment. The claim to discover, by the help of the reason, some doubtless, universal, unhistorical and transcultural bases of the just social organization is contested by the initial counter-enlightenment,

this critique being revealed, into a very consistent manner, within communitarianism and postmodernism. Counter-enlightenment is a concept which, once entered and adopted in the social philosophy by several decades, still remains unused and unexploited at its maximum explanatory potential (Garrard 2006, 2-5). It's a term which, although leads to a plurality – sometimes difficult to compatibilize – of perspectives and critiques, it still includes an entire major cultural orientation, which has continuity and representatives till nowadays (Garrard 2006). Hereby, the study of counter-enlightenment contributes to a better knowledge of the social and political European modernity, to the understanding of those who are rejecting it, and also to the understanding of the most important existing ideological cleavages, which are going through the last two centuries (Mihailescu 2015).

As cultural movement, counter-enlightenment manifests itself, even from the XVIII-th century, in the form of a powerful critical discourse against the enlightenment social philosophy and its desiderata. The ideas of the enlightenment social philosophy are continuing the theses of humanism, containing, among their major features, rationalism, progressivism, universalism or secularism (Ball, Dagger, and O'Neill 2016, 201-202). These ideas are contested by the counter-enlightenment reaction. Universalism is considered incompatible with the human condition, and rationalism is seen as abstract and fade. Universalistic rationalism is perceived as inapplicable and even harmful for the identity binding necessary to every community. For enlightenment, the progress is the result of releasing from prejudices and from irrational approaches. But the exaggerated fight of enlightenment with the prejudices is accused of ending into a war against naturalness of different traditions, creators of sense. Counter-enlightenment, conservatism and the European political right will always insist on this aspect. The fight against traditions is accompanied by the fight for the inoculation of the new ideologies – liberalism and socialism – and also by the internal war between the two great political currents of enlightenment origin. The victory of liberalism means the victory of individualism. Communitarianism, taking up the counter-enlightenment discourse, is highlighting

the illusory and deformative dimension of total individual autonomization and of promised de-positioning. Liberal modernity is also a product of a particular culture. The force of the reason – glorified by enlightenment – of establishing the social order of the objective justice, is a myth. Liberal modernity, consider the defenders of communitarianism, not only doesn't succeed to create the right society, of proceduralism, of neutrality and of equity, but it destructures and disorientates the communities and the persons, depriving them of the necessary narrations and superindividual benchmarks (Sandel 1998, 175-183). On its turn, postmodernism confirms the counter-enlightenment message, regarding the inexistence of the social universals and of the great certainties of the reason, situated above the cultural particularities. Thus, the fight of enlightenment for freeing from traditions, for installing ideological universalism and cosmopolitanism is considered to be foredoomed to failure. The foundations of the social and institutional macro-arrangements cannot be legitimated in an absolute manner, as a consequence of the objective reason (Rorty 1989, 44-69). The cultural, political, institutional, civilizational, valorical plurality is unavoidable (Gray 2002, 131-143). So are ambiguity, imperfection, error, irrationality, unreliability, uncertainty (Bauman 1993, 32-36; 245-250). Thereby, the counter-enlightenment message related to the domination of the history over the reason, or to the illusory character of the redemptive progress promised by the enlightenment rationalism, will be renewed by postmodernism.

Counter-enlightenment is the term used by Isaiah Berlin (2013a), to describe the resistance, as old as the contested ideas, to the central premises of the enlightenment (1). Starting from the analysis made by Berlin (2013b), the major authors of the initial counter-enlightenment are Giambattista Vico, Johann Georg Hamann and Johann Gottfried Herder.

The Cartesian rationalism and the project of a *mathesis universalis* are considered erroneous by Vico, for not understanding their limits. Even if deductive reason is applicable, with best results, only to phenomena created by people, it must not be used in an exclusivist or procrustean manner, being unjustifiable both the elimination of those that cannot be explained by it, and also the deformation of the

researched aspects, in order to force them to fit in the cinches of the reason (Costelloe 2014). As Vico shows, “the human mind, because of its indefinite nature, wherever it is lost in ignorance makes itself the rule of the universe in respect of everything it does not know” (Vico 1948, 63, §181), so “man makes himself the measure of all things” (Vico 1948, 54, §120). The relativity of human appreciations, considers Vico, is consubstantial to knowledge – “it is another property of the human mind that whenever men can form no idea of distant and unknown things, they judge them by what is familiar and at hand” (Vico 1948, 54, §122). There is, emphasizes Vico, a genuine naturalness of all phenomena, and, when it disappears, things are degenerating – “things do not settle or endure out of their natural order” (Vico 1948, 56, §134). For knowing things, this naturalness has to be understood, because the truth reveals itself mainly by following the origins. “The nature of things is nothing but their coming into being (nascimento) at certain times and in certain fashions” (Vico 1948, 58, §147). Therefore, studying history, traditions and language is essentially, because these are the ones which talk about the identity and the particular naturalness of a community, while offering it durability. “Vulgar traditions must have had public grounds of truth, by virtue of which they came into being and were preserved by entire peoples over long periods of time” (Vico 1948, 58, §149), and “the vulgar tongues should be the most weighty witnesses concerning those ancient customs of the peoples that were observed at the time when the languages were being formed” (Vico 1948, 58, §151). The understanding of things in their naturalness is nothing but wisdom (Vico 1948, 84, §326), and it cannot be obtained by the mathematization dreamed by Cartesian rationalism (Berlin 2013b, 35-37). Mathematization looks for uniformity, linearity, regularity. Instead, the wisdom described by Vico leads to the understanding of the irremediably plural and relative character of the cultures, fact which flagrantly contradicts the enlightenment foundationalist, universalist and rationalistic imaginary, marked by the search of the perfect social order, corresponding to the unchangeable and perennial human nature (Berlin 2013a, 6-8). At the social level, this wisdom leads to the understanding of the fact that “governments must

conform to the nature of the men governed. This axiom shows that in the nature of human civil things the public school of princes is the morality of the peoples” (Vico 1948, 71, §246-247). Hence morality, and, in a more general sense, culture, cannot be otherwise understood than by knowing the origins and the historical evolution of a community, in its entire peculiarity and contextuality (Berlin 2013b, 72), and not by ignoring, repudiating or destroying the traditions, seen by the enlightenment philosophy as sources of prejudices, irrationality and ignorance.

By the works of Hamann, the counter-enlightenment of the XVIII-th century is radicalizing (Berlin 2013a, 8), and by those of Herder it acquires a clearer contour (Berlin 2013a, 13). Hamann (2007) is a virulent enemy of rationalistic sterility, of the abstract research philosophical methods and of the style imposed by French enlightenment (Haynes 2007, xi-xii). In an ironical manner, Hamann rejects Kantian attempts of legitimating pure reason –

but should it not be possible to derive from the concept of reason the form of its empirical intuition in the word, the form by virtue of which one of the two syllables stands *a priori* and the other *a posteriori* and the seven letters are intuited in a definite ordered relation? Here the Homer of pure reason snores as loud a Yes! as Jack and Jill at the altar, presumably because he has dreamed that the universal character of a philosophical language, hitherto sought, is already found. (Hamann 2007, 216-217)

Reason cannot desituate itself historically and linguistically, human thought being impossible in the absence of these dimensions (Hamann 2007, 215-217). Hamann underlines, in a firm way, the limits of the reason. Reason is considered incapable of providing an adequate understanding of the world, because it schematizes, impoverishes, exhausts or obnubilates different aspects of the approached phenomena, Hamann preferring sentiment and love, as more powerful instruments of knowledge (Berlin 2013a, 9). Language has an order which imposes itself, and which can be accessed by experience, and not by scientific rationality (Berlin 2013a, 13).

The critique of enlightenment is systematized by Herder. Continuing the thesis of the dependence of thought on language, and emphasizing the crucial role that language has for humanity (Spencer 2012, 26-42), Herder deepens the perspective

on the differences between human communities, considering them not only natural and irreducible, but also necessary and beneficent.

Nature has *divided* peoples through language, ethics, customs, often through mountains, seas, rivers, and deserts; it, so to speak, did everything in order that they should for a long time remain separated from each other and become rooted in themselves. ... The diversity of language, ethics, inclinations, and ways of life was destined to become a bar against the presumptuous *linking together* of the peoples, a dam against foreign inundations – for the steward of the world was concerned that for the security of the whole each people and race preserved *its* impress, *its* character; peoples should live *beside* each other, not mixed up with and top of each other oppressing each other. (Herder 2003, 384-385)

History and the distinct cultural features of a community are considered by the German philosopher to be the skeleton which sustains the existence of a nation, Herder being placed, in the history of political thought, among the most influential advocates of cultural nationalism (Berlin 2013a, 15; White 2005). Nations, in their plurality and diversity, shows Herder, are the natural framework of the historical course. Paying no respect to this fact has fatal consequences.

The most natural state is, therefore, one nation, an extended family with one national character. This it retains for ages and develops most naturally if the leaders come from the people and wholly dedicated to it. For a nation is as natural a plant as a family, only with more branches. Nothing, therefore, is more manifestly contrary to the purpose of political government than the unnatural enlargement of states, the wild mixing of various races and nationalities under one sceptre. (Herder 1969, 324)

Starting from the ideas held by Vico, Hamann or Herder, counter-enlightenment appears as a movement of rejecting the enlightenment theses, as those which: place on a secondary level the particular aspects of culture; don't pay the proper importance to the understanding of origins and of history; militate for the enthronement of reason, as the only instrument of finding and validating the answers; consider cosmopolitanism as being superior to national organization; orientate the view quasi-exclusively on the future, associating it to the ineluctable progress.

Many of the enlightenment's ideas have been developed within the romanticism, have contributed to the antipositivist reaction from the XIX-th century and to the development of philosophical hermeneutics. The romanticism of some authors as W.A. Schlegel (1965) or Fichte (2013) carries forward Herderian nationalism, giving it a more pronounced Germanocentric tint (Kohn 1950). The critique of positivism, made by Dilthey (2002) from the hermeneutics points of view, interlaces with the conservative options derived from the counter-enlightenment tradition (Bulhof 1980, 12-15). In his studies, Gadamer (1993; 2004), one of the most important representatives of postwar hermeneutics, points out the importance of authors as Vico, Hamann or Herder. Vico is seen as one of the major defenders of the humanistic rhetoric tradition against the reductionist attack of modern rationalism, tradition from which hermeneutics has consistently taken over (Gadamer 2004, 21; Gadamer 1993, 498-500). Vico is appreciated for the way he – together with Hamann and Herder – manages to offer a more profound manner of understanding the language, in contrast to the usual, instrumental one (Gadamer 1993, 432). Herderian view on the importance of history greatly influences Gadamerian conceptual construction. The concept of *consciousness of the effects of history* is centered on the idea that we, human beings, cannot obtain a radical detachment from history –

we do not detach from the historical process itself and we do not place ourselves, so to speak, in front of it. ... We are already and always in the middle of history. We ourselves are not only a link of this chain which is still unrolling, speaking in the terms of Herder, but we have every moment the possibility to reconcile to this fact which is coming to us and which is transmitted by tradition from the past. I name this fact *consciousness of the effects of history* ... on the one side ... our consciousness is determined ... by a real historical process ... on the other side ... we have to engender in us, again and again, a consciousness of this fact of being influenced. (Gadamer 1993, 142-143)

At the same time, Gadamerian critique of the way the enlightenment tried to discredit traditions and prejudices, carries a lot of counter-enlightenment and romantic tonality (Gadamer 2004, 278-285).

The critique of the universalistic, rationalistic and progressive desiderata has been taken over, even from the end of the XVIII-th century, by political conservatism. Thus, from the history of the political ideas view, the counter-enlightenment philosophical positions are seen as important part of the intellectual genesis of the European political right (Mihailescu 2015) – from its moderate hypostases to the radical ones, of fascist type (Ball, Dagger, and O’Neill 2016, 201-202; Adamson, Carlbom and Ouis 2014). Contemporary with the French Revolution, Edmund Burke (1951) was denouncing, in 1790, the same abstract rationalism, to which Vico or Hamann had been shown its limits, and which at that moment was changing and shaking the European politics. For Burke, abstractions, even when are presented as mobilizing ideals, legitimated by universal reason, cannot have the social or the political value that the defenders of the revolutionary enlightenment claim, because, in the political sphere, important is what it can be done, and not the illusions –

what is the use of discussing a man's abstract right to food or medicine? The question is upon the method of procuring and administering them. In that deliberation I shall always advise to call in the aid of the farmer and the physician, rather than the professor of metaphysics. (Burke 1951, 58)

Circumstances are the decisive aspects in the political life, they decide the beneficent character, or not, of the actions, and not the abstract principle (Burke 1951, 6). Burke's counter-enlightenment is marked by a strong realistic discourse (Compagnon 2008, 60-64). For Burke, politics is a practical activity. Here desiderata must be prudence, wisdom, moderation, the understanding of history, of tradition, of habits and of context, and not the inflexible principles, given by a reason with claims of purity and universality, but which in reality is faded, inapplicable and a sure victim of phantasies with destructive potential (Burke 1951, 56-60). Prejudices, validated by the historical practice of the community, must not be disregarded, but, on the contrary, cultivated and respected as source of wisdom (Burke 1951, 82-84). Progress doesn't mean sacrificing, or forcing reality, in view of making it to fit with the phantasms of the blown up reason, but it is achieved

through a permanent struggle for keeping the moral standards and benchmarks, legitimated by the authority of tradition, according to which it must be tried the gradual improvement of the society (Burke 1951, 93-98; 164-167). Simultaneously, it is also constituted in the French space a powerful conservative, counter-enlightenment movement, which sets, in the center of its message, the contestation of the Revolution (Compagnon 2008, 32-35; 54-60). At the end of the XVIII-th century, Joseph de Maistre was emphasizing the destructive character of the Revolution, the major errors and the abominable crimes committed in the name of the reason, the delusive aspect of the universals proposed by the enlightenment political thought, the gap between the abstractions of rationalistic type, included in the revolutionary political constitutions, and the particular realities or traditions (de Maistre 1994). Furthermore, this reticence towards the rationalistic type approaches will remain, till now, one of the most important feature of conservative political philosophy (Oakeshott 1991).

Rationalism, enlightenment and the ideologies inspired by them are definable elements of modern European politics. The classical liberal speech, of enlightenment inspiration – centered on the guarantee and protection of the natural individual rights, through the rule of law and the constitutional order (Sartori 1987, 380), on the promise of instituting a minimal state, valorically neutral, where citizens, free and equal in rights and dignity, choose their own way in life and their preferred cultural practices – comes to identify itself with political normality. In the current political theory, this liberalism is retaken, reinvigorated and absolutized by libertarianism, critically radiographed and contested by communitarianism. Within communitarianism, the counter-enlightenment rhetoric is visible, and the influence of authors as Vico or Herder is recognized (MacIntyre 1998, 223; 268; Taylor 1995, 79-99; Taylor 2003, 28-29).

Within the communitarian approach, on the one side, the claims of liberalism, of identifying a right, culturally neutral society, capable of integrating the whole humanity, or those of fully autonomizing the individual, are considered only some deforming illusions, and, on the other side, maintaining

and defending the cultural traditions of the communities is seen as vital, because the particular culture and history of a community are defining elements for the values, the goals and the becoming of a person (Bell 2016). These ideas frame in the tradition of criticizing and rejecting the enlightenment modernity, they becoming, through the agency of the works of authors as MacIntyre or Taylor, central parts of the communitarian message (Bell 2016).

As Vico, MacIntyre considers that without the knowledge of the exemplary narrative imaginary, specific to a community tradition, we cannot understand neither the society, nor the behaviour or the decisions of people, and without registration into a horizon of traditions and narrations, practicing the virtues and finding a sense of the existence are becoming impossible (MacIntyre 1998, 223). Vico, believes MacIntyre (1998) is the first who understood

that at least the objects of moral philosophy – the evaluative and normative concepts, the maxims, arguments and judgments handled by moral philosophy – don't appear otherwise than embodied in the historical lives of some particular social groups, and acquire this way the distinctive characteristics of historical existence ... A morality which is not the morality of a particular society doesn't exist. (MacIntyre 1998, 268)

Because of discrediting and despising tradition's narrations, the only cultural dimensions giver of sense, in the modern societies the understanding of morality has been lost (MacIntyre 1998, 30). Through enlightenment, the morals and the tradition of virtue have got the hardest shocks, so that today emotivism reached to dominate – the conviction that moral appreciations are questions which depend on our subjective preferences, being undecidable and impossible to be legitimated in a widely accepted manner (MacIntyre 1998, 34-49). Human typologies as The Esthete, The Therapist and The Manager – central characters of contemporary society, a society which inherits the failures of the enlightenment project – are incapable of connecting to super-individual narrations of tradition and are obligated to build manipulative social relations, instrumentalizing persons and promoting an emotivist ego, lacked of critical limits, of ultimate goals and of *telos* (MacIntyre 1998, 50-61).

Within the enlightenment, there was a strong and constant attempt of rationally legitimating morals, in a publically accepted and shared manner, but this attempt didn't succeed (MacIntyre 1998, 74-75). It had no chances to succeed, because the enlightenment view, thinks MacIntyre (1998) is fundamentally wrong; it makes no reference to a major sense of life, that a certain particular, narrative cultural tradition could validate and transmit further, along generations (76-86). Without this reference to a history of traditions, to a specific cultural context and to a super-individual narration about goal, no moral norms set can be convincing, and no correlation of principles to human nature can be consistent and durable (MacIntyre 1998, 77-80). Thereby, enlightenment doesn't autonomizes morals, but destructures it, making it anomic, while the consequences of enlightenment on the individual don't belong to the sphere of liberation and emancipation, but to the one of loss, disorientation and uprootedness (MacIntyre 1998, 85).

Valorical neutrality of the social and political engineering, of rational-objective origin, dreamt by the descendants of enlightenment is an illusion, being replaced by valorical confusion, abandonment of virtues and search of the manipulatory power (MacIntyre 1998, 109). MacIntyre considers that “if there is no *telos* meant to transcend the limited goods of practice and to represent the asset of an entire human life, on the one hand, moral life will be invaded by a certain subversive arbitrariness and, on the other hand, we will not be able to specify adequately the context of certain virtues” (1998, 211). Due to the fact that enlightenment philosophy made so that people cannot perceive anymore as a vital need the connection to a set of identitary, unifiable traditions, “a modern liberal political society appears as a confused mixture of citizens from nowhere, who meddled to feel protected. They attained, in the best case, that inner form of friendship based on mutual advantage” (MacIntyre 1998, 170). The politics of enlightenment modernity, shows MacIntyre, must be rejected, because it evolves as a permanent “civil war contended with other means” (1998, 258). Being outside the tradition of virtue, this kind of politics cannot aim at obtaining any moral consensus; it can only propose a kind of rational-bureaucratic construction, which weakens the

dimension of responsibility, of virtue and of moral duty (MacIntyre 1998, 258-259). Moreover, the image of the self, dominating nowadays in the entire society, is that of individualistic-emotivist type. According to this view, there are not constituent elements of what you are, which you receive from the community, and that you cannot filter, accept or reject (MacIntyre 1998, 227). But this attitude is distorting the self image and the way of relating to the others. The history of the particular life is interwoven with that of the community, that which truly gives identity and provides the reference data, those data from which anybody can start in his searches, but which cannot ignore (MacIntyre 1998, 227-228). Thus, for MacIntyre, "I am in essence what I inherit, namely a specific past which is, to some extent, present in my present. I consider that I am part from a history, that is to say I am, generally speaking, the bearer of a tradition, whether I like it or not, whether I recognize it or not" (1998, 228). Tradition of virtue has been seriously affected by modernity of enlightenment kind, so that MacIntyre reaches the conclusion that "we have reached for some time past at a turning moment. At this stage is important to build local forms of community, inside which civility, moral life and the intellectual one can be maintained in the darkened times which fell upon us" (1998, 266).

Charles Taylor (1995), another representative of communitarian political philosophy, underlines the importance of Herder, considering that his merits are not fully acknowledged. For example, shows Taylor, Herder – before Hegel – has exposed and has opened the way which ended in constituting the doctrine of philosophical expressivism (Taylor 1995, 79) – theory according to which there is an interdependence and an interrelationship between word and thing, language and existence, human being and world, between normativity and particular social practices (Buchwalter 1994, 163). Herder's influence on Taylor can be observed in many of the ideas and theories that the Canadian philosopher assumes, including by the fact that he himself develops an expressivist approach, pointing out how the word or the thought, expressing themselves, presuppose a framework where they are situated, interacting with it (Smith 2010, 150). Our situation in the world, into a

particular context, is decisively influencing us, we cannot manifest ourselves otherwise than by this encapsulation, and by the act of expressing we are making known both to ourselves and to the others the meanings of our reflections. According to Taylorian expressivism,

our original condition is not that of minds with private thoughts and feelings which are subsequently communicated in speech (though this is an ability we later acquire as a refinement of our capacity for linguistic expression). Rather, the thoughts and feelings we recognize in ourselves and others come to be as we recognize them through the way we express and articulate those thoughts and feelings. (Smith 2010, 150)

The primary function of the language is not the descriptive one, but an expressive-creative one (Smith 2010, 151). By expression, there are opening worlds which otherwise couldn't get contour, as in the cases when, by expressing a feeling, there are emerging new horizons of social relations, when, by expressing the proper words, there are emerging new emotions, or the experiences are clarified, or when, by expression, we are influenced by certain moral benchmarks, whereas we, on our turn, are influencing through them (Smith 2010, 151). Taylor considers that, through the agency of Herder and of the expressivist tradition opened by him, we can understand completely different the role of language than in the classical, representationalistic manner (1995, 80). Herder, shows Taylor, “constantly stresses that we have to understand human reason and language as an integral part of our life form. They cannot be seen as forming a separate faculty which is simply added on to our animal nature” (1995, 91). Comprehending the influence of language and of expression on the world also determines another way of relating to cultural-linguistic particularity of communities, a way which largely defines the identitary and situational frame of the manner in which we think and feel. All these aspects are neglected by rationalist and universalist enlightenment. Opposed to it, political philosophy of communitarianism affirms that ignoring the role that cultural, linguistical and national traditions have, is negatively affecting the development of a person. Taylor, analyzing what he calls the maladies of modernity (2003, 2-10), highlights

individualism, that which drives to a weakening of morality, *instrumental reason*, by which the superior finalities of life are threatened, and *civic withdrawal*, by which liberty is threatened (2003, 10). Enlightenment philosophy of de-situating of reason, the quest for the neutral self, undisturbed by cultural particularities, or the attempt of finding a supposed individual authentic nature, non-connected to any preexistent order of the community, are as many elements of individualistic outlook, which weaken the morals (Taylor 2006). Individualism, shows Taylor, is affecting the capacity of being strong moral evaluators, power which presupposes “discriminations of right or wrong, better or worse, higher or lower, which are not rendered valid by our own desires, inclinations, or choices, but rather stand independent of these and offer standards by which they can be judged” (2006, 4). The particular cultural frame of a community is decisive for a functional moral and for a solid identitary construction, while the recognition of its value is a vital request (Taylor 1994).

Through the importance granted to communitarian identity, by the critique made on the address of liberal individualism, or of civic isolation, communitarianism has been associated to multiculturalism (Song 2106), to the theories of egalitarianism and civic coworking (Avnon and De-Shalit 2005, 144), or to democratic participationism (Sargent 2009, 145). On this interpretative line, communitarianism is considered as part of the contemporary political left (Avnon and De-Shalit 2005, 144-147). But, as we've already seen, communitarianism has a strong source of counter-enlightenment inspiration. This source sends communitarianism to conservatism (Epstein 2016, 13-23) and to the political right, orientations with which it shares the valorization of traditions, of historical memory and of the superior cultural benchmarks, the only ones supposed to be capable of giving sense to individual life.

The counter-enlightenment discourse may also be identified within social philosophy specific to postmodernism (Wolin 2004, 3-9). This kind of philosophy is hardly classifiable from the political orientation point of view, being assumed by heterogeneous perspectives, which are extending on the entire political axis, from left to right (Rosenau 1992, 155-166).

Thus, postmodernism is either criticized from the positions of the political left (Rosenau 1992, 158-160), being seen as a form of the globalized consumerist capitalism ideology (Jamerson 1991, Eagleton 1996), or presented as promoting a liberating discourse (Lyotard 1984), integrable into a progressionist-pragmatical view of a post-enlightenment left (Rorty 1991; Rosenau 1992, 160-163). In the same time, postmodernist speech is also criticized for preferring the corrosive and destructive ideology of the left (Gross and Levitt 1994). Due to the fact that, within postmodernism, there are anti-etatist points of view, or which encourage a much larger deregulation and personal liberty, some political orientations of the right find affinities within this philosophy, or are upheld by it (Rosenau 1992, 165).

But, for understanding the nearness between conservatism, political right and postmodernism, first of all it must be emphasized the influence of counter-enlightenment legacy. Although post-enlightenment of postmodernism can be also comprehended as a form of neo-modernity, which doesn't follow the anti-liberal and anti-democratic way of some sort of conservatism (Zafirovski 2011, 306-307), the rejection of enlightenment project remains a common place of postmodernism and counter-enlightenment (Garrard 2006, 95-108). Some of those faithful to postmodernist spirit, as Richard Rorty (2001), try to separate the philosophical project of enlightenment from the political one, for succeeding in getting rid of the former, and in continuing the latter (Garrard 2006, 104-108). Others, as John Gray (2002), consider that the entire enlightenment project is downfallen (Garrard 2006, 117-121).

We live today amid the dim ruins of the Enlightenment project, which was the ruling project of the modern period. If, as I believe, the Enlightenment project has proved to be self-destroying, then that fact signals the close of the modern period, of which we are in the heirs. (Gray 2002, 145)

Albeit he criticizes postmodernism, especially the rortyan one (Gray 2002, 146-147; 169-178), for all that, by the acerbic critique of modernity, doubled by his attachment to post-enlightenment, pluralistic, relativistic and agonistic outlooks, Gray can be included in the main trend of postmodernist

social philosophy (Adams 2001, 41). Gray considers that the communitarian rejection of enlightenment is correct, especially the one made by MacIntyre. “With MacIntyre, I think that the Enlightenment project was the defining modern project and that the failure of the Enlightenment project, arising as it did from incoherences in its central commitments and beliefs, was inevitable” (Gray 2002, 150). This is a radical rejection of enlightenment, considered self-destructive, both at philosophical level and at the political one (Gray 2002, 151). But for Gray, unlike MacIntyre, the consequences of the enlightenment collapse are different. By this major event we are witnessing the end of modernity, fact which doesn't mean retaking the links with the world of pre-modernity – all the attempts made in this sense were absolute disasters – but the possible emergence of a truly post-enlightenment age, where cultural incommensurability and plurality, the diversity of political regimes, practices and institutions come to be considered a naturalness of human condition and of history (Gray 2002, 153-157).

The rejection of universalism, of foundationalism or of enlightenment rationalism, on which this postmodern pluralism of the incommensurable and agonistic values is based, finds its origins in counter-enlightenment. Gray (2002) sees in counter-enlightenment a reaction which, by its radicalness, is also of modern kind, not being capable of surpassing enlightenment, but only to permanently relating to it, with the aim of rejecting it (154; 164-165). Nevertheless, Gray admits the fact that his political philosophy borrowed considerably from the counter-enlightenment thinkers (2002, 64). For example, “the idea of a universal history was unavoidable (...) until Herder and his followers advanced an alternative conception of human history as an exfoliation of incommensurable cultures. This idea (...) struck at the roots of the Enlightenment philosophy of history” (Gray 2002, 165).

But not only non-universalism is of herderian inspiration. At the rejection of instrumentalist manner of understanding the language, points out Gray, have also fully contributed Hamann and Herder (2002, 177). Starting from underlining the decisive role that language has on people, we can better understand the

naturalness of cultural diversity and the incommensurability of the values. The pluralism of the values, inclusively legal pluralism proposed by Gray's postmodern political philosophy, was, on its turn, influenced by Herder.

Legal pluralism is justifiable ... on the Herderian ground that it allows even people who are commingled in the same territories or human settlements to recognize their cultural identities in the legal orders to which they are subject. Such legal pluralism is, in fact, the institutional embodiment of the human need for strong forms of common life in circumstances of substantial cultural diversity. (Gray 2002, 136)

Although underlining the cultural relativity, the pluralist social philosophy, theorized by Gray in a post-enlightenment manner, insists not only on the irreducible cultural and political diversity, but also on the major role that the community culture has on the ways of life and on the political options (Gray 2002, 136-143). Thus, orientating or placing these pluralist postmodern perspectives into an area close to conservatism and to political right are becoming more obvious. We cannot understand our own position, or know other different communities with which we may peacefully cohabit, otherwise than through the agency of cultural matrices. This idea, equally common to counter-enlightenment, to communitarianism and to postmodernism, leads to a constant preoccupation for history, cultural traditions, customs, particularity, context. Inspired by counter-enlightenment philosophy, the thesis of cultural pluralism – which is similar to the doctrine of communitarian multiculturalism – together with emphasizing the role of the culture and of the group, or with the abandonment of rationalist and universalist tracks, brings postmodernism closer to the standings of conservatism and of contestable political right, the last ones being centered on defending the cultural origins and the historical memory (Adamson, Carlbon and Ouis 2014, 33; 37-38).

Thus, counter-enlightenment, commonly interpreted in the history of the political thought as one of the main intellectual sources of conservatism, is even more than that. Its influence constantly reverberates on the entire social reflection proper to modernity, inclusively on some important contemporary orientations, as communitarianism or postmodernism. Without giving to this counter-enlightenment influence careful consideration,

the social philosophy of communitarianism or of postmodernism may be seen only as an integrant part of the contemporary political left. Nevertheless, beside the emancipatory discourse, aiming to give an equal respect to all cultures, or beside the critical, liberating view, which intends to carry on the progressive ideals, surpassing all dogmas specific to enlightenment universalist rationalism, there is, within communitarianism and postmodernism, a conservative line, which can be understood by knowing their common counter-enlightenment origins.

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