

And one more thing: There are situations and times when the most important variation of human courage is the courage of goodness. There is nowhere to hide the truth: courage and the readiness for self-sacrifice we really received have used to connecting almost exclusively with the ethos of violent uprisings. However, during our days, humaneness, goodness and a peaceful attitude towards understanding, not infrequently in their own way, require no less courage than some soldier virtues.

As already mentioned, some principles are difficult not to beat to death by talking. To mention goodness and humanness too often, certainly, is not good. Yet, in my opinion such reminders as well as the general direction of deliberations and conversations on which they are based are justified today at least by the mere fact that they go against the ruling tendency of the times, prone to radicalism and forceful confrontations. To be reasonable, humane, and patient, even when it ejects you from the crowd of adherents, when it becomes “untimely” and dangerous, when for this you have to answer with your life – to that, of course no one can obligate us. Except – perhaps – our own conscience.

Language and Power: Reflections on Totalitarianism and Global Justice

Of the many essential characteristics that any reflection on global political theory must entail, namely, moral universalism, cultural relativism, universal principles of civil and political justice, global distributive justice, structures of international political systems, relations between distinct political establishments, and war, I have chosen to address the question of global justice. Of course all these are intrinsically related to one another and so deep reflection on any one inevitably sheds light on the others. My approach has a decidedly speculative slant, but I attempt throughout to say how such conjecture might be relevant to what is happening on the ground today in Ukraine. More specifically, I am interested in the relation of totalitarianism to global justice in the context of Pope Benedict XVI’s third and final encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* (Love in Truth), an encyclical that Pope Francis has already made important references to, and, in particular, to Benedict’s urgent call in that encyclical for a “true world political authority.”¹ This paper was written over the last few months in Lebanon where I live and work and so my reflections have emerged in the context of watching *from afar* the dramatic events taking place in Ukraine, and from experiencing *up close* the equally dramatic and tragic events taking place in Syria, the daily repercussions of which are intense and dangerous for Lebanon.

The ultimate underlying theme throughout these reflections concerns the nature of genuine authority, as determined by authentic language, in other words and from another angle, the essential link between the abuse of language and the abuse of power.² Admittedly, I have too much on the table: totalitarianism, global justice as one characteristic of global political theory, the question of what Pope Benedict could possibly mean by the phrase and his plea for “a true political world authority”, pledges to show how all of this is presently relevant in Ukraine and now the revelation that my ultimate concern is really about the relation between language and power. Again, too much to consume in one sitting, but I hope the inevitable shortcomings in my ability to properly present and serve it all up, will be compensated for by the nourishing substance of what is being offered, namely, insights into how abuses in power begin with corruption in language, whether in totalitarian political regimes that openly threaten human life and dignity by brute force, or in the much subtler totalitarianism of unbridled global capitalism that gradually sucks our life out of us and little by little reduces the majesty and mystery of being human to a monotonous and mechanistic consumerism.³

The five decades of Plato’s thinking and writing were continually punctuated by the same question, as if he never felt that he had adequately addressed it. Time and time again for over fifty years, he returns to the same query in different contexts: what really is it that makes the sophists so dangerous?⁴ Plato’s own life here may be a microcosm of the macrocosm of the entire history of western philosophy, for the question reverberates down through the ages in the thought of the most astute thinkers. Hegel says that “the sophists are not as remote to us as we may imagine,” and goes on to argue that the very structure of the human mind is prone to an intrinsic sophistic danger, namely, that of cleverly justifying through

overly refined speech and argument anything whatsoever, even evil itself.⁵ When Nietzsche refers to the era of the sophists, he simply states, “oh that is our time.”⁶

It is easy enough to define and then denounce sophistry as the intentional corruption of language for the selfish sake of power, but it is another thing to say precisely in what this corruption of language essentially consists, because as soon as you say something like “the failure to identify, name, and describe what is *real*,” you are plunged into the ontological, and so-called, abstract/metaphysical realm, which, paradoxically, we are told, has nothing to do with *real* life. Moreover, this account of the corruption of language also raises the question of authority: who is authorized to name and ascertain what is *real*, and whose prerogative is it to announce when the failure to do so has taken place?

Plato was moving in the right direction with his philosopher kings here, claiming as he did that true political authority came not from material wealth, whether inherited or stolen, but from knowledge of the good, the beautiful, the real and the true. Money brings with it a certain authority and power of course, but who would want to really acknowledge that such authority is actually legitimate? Genuine authority must be rooted in actual and authentic superiority and authentic superiority must be rooted in an ontological hierarchy that is *real*, not contrived or invented, some sacred order akin to what the ancient Rigvedas called *Rta*, and the Chinese called the *Tao*. There are echoes of this sacred order, this ontological hierarchy, in Pope Benedict’s urgent call for a true world political authority, an idea present in the official Magisterium at least as early as John XXIII, and one that Pope Francis has brilliantly and with great credibility connected to the idea of global justice. These pontifical teachings on, and calls for, a true world political authority have nothing to do with advocating

some kind of world state. In many ways, in fact, they directly challenge both the age-old tendency to eliminate diversity in favor of homogenous domination and the contemporary desire for an ideal Huxlian world state.⁷ No doubt, Benedict calls for this true world political authority in the context of his praise for international organizations such as the United Nations, but he quickly points out here that some of these global establishments are seriously out of touch with the original insight and impetus that made them so promising in the first place – promising, that is, because of their potential to cultivate the kind of true world political authority, grounded in global justice, that the world so desperately needs.

The reform of international organizations which Benedict (and now Francis) calls for is not at the level of structure and organization only, but at the deeper ethical level – it is a call to recover a robust sense of justice *as a virtue*. The full weight of what this really means risks falling on deaf ears because the very word *justice* has been so progressively stripped of its meaning by the enlightenment notions of progress and equality, both of which have been cleverly woven, in fine sophistic fashion, into the very fabric of even the Christian gospel itself. Justice, *as a virtue*, refers to an acquired quality of the human soul that one eventually comes to possess by performing acts of justice over and over; it is not a social campaign to feed the poor in order to relieve one's conscience for having so much wealth, or a social movement to steal from the rich and give to the poor so that everyone will be equal. Justice first refers to *just* human beings, and if all the virtues are more or less connected, you cannot have one without to some degree having the others. The just person is also a courageous and intelligent and chaste and humble and honest person, who first being both just and honest with himself is then just and honest with others; in the words of Charles Taylor, “a *flourishing* human being,” and in the words

of the Hebrew bible, “The just man *flourishes* like a palm tree; he grows like a Cedar of Lebanon.”

If this is all correct, then global justice must flow from individual persons who possess the virtue of justice; it cannot be programmed or imposed by international organizations, unless the members of those organizations are just and virtuous human beings themselves and share a common vision of what justice *is*, and then weave justice into the very structure of the organization.⁸ Yes, the real question when it comes to determining what true authority *is* concerns getting to the heart of what virtue *is* because what is good, true, and beautiful carries with it its own intrinsic authority. With this we inevitably arrive back to the realm of the ontological and that age-old metaphysical question of the one and the many, which is perhaps the most fundamental problem of all being, and it is directly related to the quandary over the idea of global justice. Of course, questions about whether existence or being is primarily one or many and whether being or existence is ultimately changing or changeless are never answered once and for all, as Aristotle already pointed out, but the attempted answers, and the emphases given to either unity and immutability on one hand or to change and the many on the other, make all the difference when it comes to all other important questions, including questions regarding the nature of virtue, and for our purposes now, the nature of justice, and then global justice.

In an attempt to shake off some of the legalistic shackles⁹ associated with the traditional definition of justice as “giving the other their due,” I will introduce another definition in order to supplement this classical one and also speak of “the quality of people living *together* in a healthy way,” beginning with one's own self, moving to the next most basic *unit*, the family, and then on from there to the local, regional, and global *units*. Now, in calling these

various collections “units” one could object that I am already *begging the question* of the *one and the many* by coming down solidly on the side of the *one*, but there is no other way of speaking about these basic realities. That is to say, all living things not only *tend* to live together, but *need* to live together if they are going to *live* at all. This seems to give a certain priority to unity, but upon further investigation we see that this cannot be the case: “the many” or “plurality” must always have a certain priority over unity for the very simple reason that the way in which unity presupposes plurality is not the way in which plurality presupposes unity, if it can even be said that plurality presupposes unity at all. With respect to how this is relevant to our themes of global justice and totalitarianism, it may be helpful to look at two very different traditions, the Anglo-Saxon analytical tradition on one hand and the European Continental phenomenological tradition on the other. What we find is somewhat surprising. Consider, for instance, two philosophers that had completely different philosophical projects, aims, sensibilities, conclusions, and even opposing theories of the person: John Rawls and Dietrich von Hildebrand. But when it comes to justice there is an interesting convergence. Both authors warn against undefined and ambiguous notions of community that threaten to undermine the value of the individual person, and they are both convinced that acts of justice (and injustice) are always and only acts of individual persons, whether persons act alone or together. Agency, strictly speaking, should never be accorded to ambiguous and vague so-called organic wholes such as *society* for instance. Von Hildebrand goes about demonstrating his point through sharp and penetrating metaphors,¹⁰ Rawls drives home a similar point through recourse to long and careful arguments of painstakingly logical rigor, but they are arguing for a very similar and fundamental position.¹¹

At any rate, I have been speaking so far about the ethical obligations we humans have towards other humans, but in this I am not implying that we do not have ethical obligations of justice towards non-human animals, or to vegetative life, or even to non-living things for that matter. I am convinced that we certainly do, but since neither non-human animals, nor plants, nor non-living things have any *reciprocal* obligation towards us in that they cannot choose to act differently than they do act, we cannot speak about any obligation on their part to reciprocate and give human animals *their due*.

This means justice is primarily about relations between human beings and various *collections* of human beings. Once again, it is all about living together – together with ourselves, since we do have and must have a relation to ourselves. We must *face* ourselves so to speak, to our significant others, family, loved ones, immediate neighbors, our associates and countrymen, and then to all the inhabitants of the world. In all these relations we have, by nature, duties and rights; the subtle intricacies of the relation between duties and rights are important, with rights *taking priority* over duty at the *ontological* level, that is, while still in the womb of our mothers, and with duties having priority over rights as we mature. In fact, an emphasis on duties over rights is a sure sign of what is meant by maturity itself. Concerning global justice, then, a *mature* relation between nations or countries is one that gives priority to duty alongside rights. This is precisely what Benedict emphasizes in *Caritas in Veritate* while discussing the badly needed reform of the United Nations. There he states that the stronger nations have a *duty* to help the weaker nations. Sadly, he implicitly laments, what too often happens is that the strong exploit the weak by separating the language of rights from the language of duties in order to justify the most hideous of crimes.

Through this corruption of language, powerful nations, in the name of an alleged *unity* among nations, and in the name of human *rights*, are tempted to impose¹² by brute force their will on the weaker nations. This is always the inner logic of illegitimate power: the weak and the vulnerable are the first victims, and it all begins in the failure to allow *what is real* to become intelligible through words, through language. Nowhere is this sophistic danger more evident than in the way the language of rights is distorted to justify the murder of innocent life in the womb, wherein the sophists speak about the *right* of a woman over her own body, or the *right* to privacy. The sophistic propaganda is so effective that it is becoming politically incorrect to even raise the issue. It is taken for granted that most developed and enlightened nations have already solved this problem; those who dare disagree are immediately dismissed as reactionary, immature, unenlightened, or lacking compassion. The voice we do not hear in this debate, if it is deemed worthy of being debated at all, is the little voice of the little one most concerned.¹³

The point is that the abuse and corruption of language leads to the abuse of power, and that the ones to suffer the greatest injustices as a result of this abuse are always and inevitably the weak, the innocent, and the vulnerable. Though seemingly a straightforward claim, it is still perplexing, however, because still more needs to be said about what the *corruption of words* really means. I have stated above, following Plato, that the failure to identify, name, and describe what is *real* is the essence of this corruption of language we are talking about. In this regard, Slavoj Žižek's book, *Interrogating the Real*,¹⁴ goes part of the way towards capturing what Plato is trying to get at. And Nietzsche perhaps goes even further because while insisting that the Greek emphasis on tragedy, as an essential part of *reality*, ought to be recovered, he also reveals how the

sophists prevented this recovery through their tendency to create ideological utopias.

But there is another dimension to this distortion which I have only briefly alluded to, and which now demands more attention, namely, the ultimate reason *for which* we want to name and identify what is *real* in the first place. As I have said, again partly following Plato, our desire to name things is always connected to wanting to name things *for* someone else – for the *other* who can even be, via inner dialogue, ourselves. When we do this because we want to communicate something true or good or beautiful to *the other* simply for the sake of the other's own good, then genuine interpersonal communication is taking place. But even when we speak to manipulate or deceive or to boast, the import and *power* of our words remain. In other words, not all speaking is communication, but all speaking by its very nature entails some sort of power. This, I believe, is an ontological truth; the very ability to speak and think carries with it a great potential power for good or for evil. Words are meant to make reality intelligible; this is their fundamental purpose. When they fall short of this purpose unintentionally and without malice, the damage is minimal, but when someone's very intention is malicious deception, then their speech, like that of the sophists, is the most horrific distortion of reality possible. Of course, all this comes to light in the slogans and propaganda of totalitarian regimes, as Ukrainians know only too well, but the sophistic tendency is not first and foremost "out there" in some sort of impersonal corrupt power structure. It exists first in the very depths of the human soul and risks being activated each and every time anyone says anything at all to anybody. Here, I tend to agree with Hegel's point about some sort of intrinsic tendency to distort reality lying deep within the very structure of the human intellect. Paradoxically, this tendency is usually expressed in trying

to promote some version of utopia, as if the mind somehow knows that its ultimate and original aim or capacity is towards perfection – towards some grasp of truth in its *totality*. The paradox is that in the attempt to know the whole truth about the whole of reality, reality is distorted. It's as if the mind in wanting to possessively grasp the whole of reality becomes frustrated when it inevitably falls short, and lacking the virtue of intellectual humility and gratitude, decides to get what it wants anyway and thereby creates a false and all encompassing utopia, which in actuality is a corruption of the whole truth it instinctively wants to know – very much like the man who upon realizing that the woman he wants to possess in her totality cannot possibly be possessed, decides to possess her anyway, and through a violent rape grabs for the totality and perfection of what he really desires, resulting of course in the very destruction of the totality for which he yearns.

The origins of the nightmarish totalitarian regimes of the last century can all be traced back to this “passionate intensity” for ideological utopia, usually conceived in the mind of one deeply distorted individual who then convinces others, one by one, of the perverse illusion until the ideological tumor gains force and spreads like an aggressive cancer contaminating at first a small group, an institution, a wider organization, a government, a whole country, and perhaps, the entire globe. And the means by which the disease is rapidly disseminated, of course, is language. Words, words, words – separated from that *reality* which they had originally named and identified – torn apart from the fresh and original meanings they had organically and spontaneously signified, now become the vehicles for the dissemination of illegitimate and destructive power.¹⁵

To unmask the distortion requires a clear understanding of what exactly is being distorted and how. Plato kept returning to

the question of what made the sophists so dangerous because it was not always easy to see how they made white black and black white – how, through overly refined words and sophisticated argumentation, good appeared as evil and evil as good. It was not enough to answer the sophists once and for all, it was an on-going battle because not only did the arguments change, but that which was argued about changed: five decades witnessed much change in Plato's Athens. And if Nietzsche was right about his era as being the real era of the sophists because of the increased pace of change in political and social life which played perfectly into the hands of the sophists, what are we to say about our own era, wherein the sophistry is instantaneously scattered worldwide in what is so rightly named the world wide web?

Milan Kundera in his novel, *Slowness*, offers penetrating insights into how such speed can all but destroy reflection and memory. A case in point is that this year marks the twenty fifth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, which provides an ideal perspective to reflect upon our themes in the light of what is happening today, a quarter of a century later. And is there a better place in Eastern Europe than in Ukraine, considering the dramatic events unfolding before our very eyes, to enter into such reflection?

We are all accustomed now to refer to the fall of the Wall as miraculous; it has even become commonplace.¹⁶ But what is perhaps more astounding, and something that is hardly ever talked about, is how quickly those who lost power returned to power only a few years later, following, of all things, free democratic elections. The rise and fall of someone like Lech Walesa is the stunning example here. If we consider in the light of our themes, then, the different ways in which Communism was resisted in Eastern Europe, we are able to find ample support of the claims I have hitherto been making. Two of the three forms that such resistance

took were more or less plagued by the same kind of sophistic confusion being resisted. First, there were those who were more Marxist than the Marxists; this resistance advocated a return to authentic socialism by emphasizing the centrality of freedom. To be sure, a direct and fresh study of Marx, especially the early Marx, without Leninist filtering, does reveal a serious and sustained reflection on the concept of freedom, as the work of contemporary Marxists such as Michel Löwy has demonstrated, but at that time the Marxist critique of actually existing Socialisms was dismissed by those in power as revisionist, and for the sake of wanting to usurp power. The second form was the direct and open struggle for power, which resorted to the same kind of corruption of language which the “enemies” employed. In this form of resistance, slogans and propaganda, justified by a utilitarian ethic that took the moral high ground, was the preferred method of approach. In yet a third form of opposition we find a conscious decision not to appropriate the existing power structure, but an insistence on the dire necessity for a space free from the Party control where people could critically reflect upon those things that matter most, those things symbolized by what we might call the great *words*: love, death, suffering, hope, evil, beauty, joy. We know, for instance, that such a space was created in the early years of the *Solidarity* movement, as everyone who has studied the period knows. To bring in Kundera again, we might say that a time was created then to gaze at the windows of God, something he says only the gypsies and contemplatives still find time to do; but as for what happens later in that Solidarity movement, there is still disagreement. No doubt, the problems began with a sophistic corruption of language that infiltrated the movement spawning division and ambiguity.

I want to suggest that there are real parallels between all of this and what has been happening here in Ukraine. I do not pretend

to know all the intricate complexities of these many layered parallels; I raise the issue primarily as a question, which I myself am still trying to answer by reading about the events and by talking to both my Russian and Ukrainian friends and colleagues. Of all the analyses I have read in the last few months, though, one piece in particular captured for me many of the themes in this paper. It appeared as an op-ed in the *Kyiv Post*, written from the perspective of someone presently living in Paris, who describes his experience at Independence square from December 8th through December 16th in these penetrating words:

“Day and night, between the revolutionary energy of the main stage with its musicians and politicians and the reverence of the ecclesial tent served by priests, sisters and seminarians, amidst the students and entrepreneurs, Afghan veterans and Crimean Tatars, white collar workers and villagers, taxi drivers, police and Berkut riot troops, through meetings with those who run the country, those who want to run the country, and those who have been run over in this country, a distinct antinomic identity emerges: the Maidan is wide and vital, internally structured yet open-ended.”¹⁷

Yes, sooner or later the contradictory and paradoxical identity emerges, not only the identity of the Maidan, but of every human being. After all, the Maidan, as our commentator points out, is a collection of diverse human beings, with sometimes opposing motivations, but brought together by something bigger and more substantial than any one individual – although, as we noted above, the power structures are built up one individual at a time.

“Wide and vital, internally structured yet open-ended”: What a prophetic description of the Maidan, and how relevant to Hegel’s

insights into the mind mentioned above. If we are to compare this description of the square in early December to what is happening now, what are we to say? Something of the authentic purity of the movement is captured in the *words* of our commentator; he is trying to describe something *real* in order to share what is real with others in genuine interpersonal communication, and to also issue a *real* warning. How different this sounds when compared to those sophists from both inside and outside the movement who corrupt language in order to selfishly dominate and control it. It sometimes seems as if the inevitable destiny of all such movements to unite people around a just and noble cause, in order to promote the common good, ends up disintegrating into more and more division. Did something similar happen in the last century within those three major forms of resistance to Communism? What are the similarities and differences, especially with respect to the third form? What can we learn from them? What is the precise role of the corruption of language in all of this? What light do they shed on our theme of global justice and totalitarianism in the light of the Church's official and urgent call for a true world political authority? If justice is to be global, it would seem that some form of "totalitarianism" is required on two fronts: to first determine and authoritatively declare what it is, and then to provide the power to enforce it. Throughout the encyclical, Benedict advocates an Aristotelian approach by combining individual/personal virtue-centered ethics (the focus of the Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*) with what we might call the *social ethics* of Aristotle's *Politics*, and assumes that the latter flows from the former. And with respect to how global justice is to be enforced after we determine what it is, he simply states that in order for such an authority to ensure security and justice for all, it must be "vested with... *effective power*." We are not really told *who* does the vesting, or *how* it is to be

done, though he does say that various international forums would have to play a major role in bestowing effective power on this "true world political authority" *through cooperation*, implying that there are existing models regarding the nature of this cooperation when it comes to making an idea of global justice compulsory.

Although Benedict is not explicit when it comes to how this "true world political authority" will implement global justice, he is loud and clear in terms of what global justice is. He assumes that since justice concerns the relations between and among human beings and collections of human beings, the question of whether justice is one or many, or whether there is such a thing as global justice, necessarily entails the question of whether human beings are one or many. In this he comes down on the side of Aristotle's attempt to deepen Plato's insight into the essential unity of both justice and humanity in the world of forms, and concludes that the essence of humanity is present in every single human being. His formulation of this ontological position does not appear in some detached metaphysical speculation, but is found in the context of his strong call for a serious reform of *economic institutions and international finance* so that "the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth." In another place he simply speaks about all the inhabitants of the globe as forming one single human race. In this we could say that he uses Aristotle to go beyond him, which is commensurate with why the great Jewish philosophers in the past concluded that the Torah's command to "love one another as you love yourself," a command which Jesus deepened with "love your enemies" was precisely the way in which revelation perfected reason, or how Jewish and Christian faith respectively completed, so to speak, Aristotle's philosophical anthropology.

This command, I suggest, is what the idea of global justice must be based on because "to give each one their due" should ultimately

mean, when speaking about human beings or collections of human beings, to give each one what they, *in their essence*, deserve, not what they *may merit by their actions* as they mature, or fail to mature, but what they, *in their essence*, have a right to from the first moment of existence in the womb; every human being has the right to be loved, and it is this experience of being loved which enables them to love in return, in other words, to perform their duty. And the first and greatest duty of each and every human being, according to this anthropology, is to love. To love according to “Love’s Sacred Order” as some of the ancients said, which is really just another way of saying to “give each one their proper due.” Or as the poets say, “the just man justifies”¹⁸ just as the “lover loves” – these are two expressions of the same reality. When love is not present, it is difficult for human beings even to be human. Many psychoanalysts tell us that human beings can be adversely affected even while still in the womb by mothers who don’t want or who don’t love the little lives growing there; and such rejection of life in the womb, even if the life were a result of something as horrible and unjust as a violent rape, is an offense against justice, because that life in the womb is entirely and indisputably innocent, and I would suggest, following Benedict, infinitely valuable. If global justice really exists ontologically then I think it must be built upon a philosophical anthropology that takes each and every individual life as the greatest value, which would mean that certain actions would always and everywhere, with absolutely no exceptions, be grave violations of justice: murder, rape, torture, and modern warfare with its inevitable indiscriminate killings which, given the nature of modern weaponry, make the very notion of a just war absurd. Can such a view of global justice be accepted, let alone implemented, today?

By way of conclusion, I suggest that not only can it be accepted, but that in some ways it already has been. If we examine

the philosophical presuppositions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we find a robust idea of global justice beneath the surface. I do not have the time here to argue for the universality of this document, against the opposing claim that it was merely a Western document, but even if we assume that it was universal and that global justice is a real thing which really exists, we are still left with the sad reality that global justice is not widely implemented or practiced, and that the very international institutions responsible for pointing to the reality of global justice are paradoxically the same institutions that often violate it. Yes, the powerful nations usually get their way in this so-called United Nations, or if they don’t, they go their own way. The only remedy, it would seem, is for a “true world political authority” to emerge from within a real and genuine solidarity among nations, rich and poor alike, for the poor nations are sometimes the richest in moral value, while some of the so-called rich nations often suffer from a lack of morality, and what is worse, try to impose their so-called enlightened moral values on weaker nations in what can only be described as social imperialism: the relation of the United States to certain African nations (over the issue of gay marriage) is a stunning example. At any rate, the original impetus of the founding of the United Nations is a solid one, but it needs to be re-captured so that the entire organization can be re-formed. In this work of reform, I believe, my little nation of Lebanon has something to say. Yes, Lebanon’s voice, in spite of all our problems, needs to be heard when it comes to the important work of reforming the UN because of the unique way it tries to balance the realms of the sacred and the secular in its unique confessional political system. It was not mere showy statesmanship when our President called upon the UN in 2008 to recognize Lebanon as a land of dialogue among civilizations and cultures. Nor was it mere rhetoric when John Paul II said in an official

Vatican document that Lebanon was “more than a country, it is a mission,” “a mission of liberty and a model of pluralism.” He was led to say this based upon Lebanon’s long history of genuine co-existence, wherein Jews, Christians, and Muslims worked and lived and prayed and worshiped together. This “coming together” was made possible by a common sense of justice, rooted not in mere tolerance, but in hospitality and even in love – a love that is above and below and all around each and every kind of genuine justice.

Endnotes

- ¹ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [67].
- ² This, in fact, is the title of the book by Josef Pieper, *Abuse of Language – Abuse of Power* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), that has inspired my paper.
- ³ As free and spontaneous creatures, due to our spiritual nature, we inevitably revolt against this monotonous and mechanical consumerism and so try to compensate through a new style of *recreational* sex and frivolous experimentation with drugs, and tend to plunge ourselves into a plethora of other similar virtual realities.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- ⁷ I am referring here to that ideal futuristic world created by Aldous Huxley in his classic 1932 novel, *Brave New World*.
- ⁸ I am grateful to my colleague, Jose Casanova, for pointing out a weakness in my presentation regarding the way I deemphasized the importance of *just structures*. The latter part of this sentence is an attempt to address his very valid point, without, however, giving up any ground with respect to the question of agency as being always and everywhere the agency of human subjects.
- ⁹ This is a long and complicated story that begins with what happened to *Greek Virtue* when “transformed” into *Roman Law*. No doubt, the strength of *Roman*

Law resided in the very rich and robust account of justice in Greek philosophy, which the Romans inherited, but there is also no doubt that some of the depth and philosophical profundity got lost in the process. And this is to say nothing of the later Medieval attempt to resurrect *Roman Law*.

- ¹⁰ Such as the unity that emerges in a melody when the notes are put together. The notes are the basic subjective and irreducible entities which provide the sound, and each one stands on its own. The notes do not melt into the melody to lose their individuality. Thus, notes are to *persons* as melodies are to *communities*.
- ¹¹ There is much more to say about how the perennial question of the *one and the many* is relevant to the question of justice, but in this paper I am only marginally interested in this question, as relevant as it may be, and am more concerned with the relation between language and power. For my remarks on Rawls and von Hildebrand, I am indebted to the fine series of lectures given by my colleague and friend, Czesław Porębski, at a summer philosophy school in Ukraine, organized by the Ukrainian Catholic University (July 1-10, 2014), which gave me the occasion to rethink these philosophers in a new light.
- ¹² In the light of what I have been saying about the subjectivity of human agency, I do not mean, strictly speaking, that a “nation” can act. But given the nature of the “united” nations, I believe I am justified in speaking in this manner.
- ¹³ “As long as you did it to one of these little ones, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).
- ¹⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *Interrogating the Real* (London: Continuum, 2005).
- ¹⁵ To give a timely example of how dangerous sophistry is, how powerful “cleverness” is when divorced from virtue, or at least when separated from a desire for virtue, it is enough to look to Syria and Ukraine: both Putin and Assad seem to be playing a similar sophistic game in that Putin’s sophistry would have us believe that the essential conflict in Ukraine is between Ukrainian nationalists and those ethnic Russians living in Ukraine who are all of the sudden under threat, whereas Assad wants us to believe that the conflict in Syria is primarily between Sunni fundamentalists and respectable, secular Baathists, whose long-established political legitimacy is likewise now under threat. Both cases are good examples of sophistry since there really are Ukrainian nationalists operative in Ukraine and there certainly are radical Sunni fundamentalists operating in Syria. But in neither case do these conflicts constitute the essence of the original confrontations; the radical elements in these countries were marginal, to say the least, when the conflicts began, arguably less so in Syria than in Ukraine, and one could easily conclude that these radical elements (both in Ukraine and in Syria) were actually encouraged by Russia and Syria respectively in order

to justify their own acts of aggression against the real and authentic movements and protests. The movements in Ukraine and in Syria are (were?) essentially grass-roots authentic movements against clever sophistic dictators who have long refused to operate in the light of any traditional notion of commutative justice whatsoever. With this, one should not commit the inductive logical error of *black-and-white* thinking and thus argue for an “enlightened” West, free of sophistry; I have already referred above to the nature of “Western” totalitarianism, which is no less brutal, and is the driving force behind the viciousness of unbridled “global” capitalism. And needless to say, in both these situations the “enlightened” West misses no opportunity to take the moral high ground, and in the case of Syria, the dirty low ground (by adding militaristic fuel to the fire) in their support of the “opposition” – an opposition almost impossible to identify now because of spiraling fragmentation. In any case, for one wanting to be schooled in the art of sophistry, it would be wonderful to sit in on a meeting between Putin and Assad, who, we are told, and understandably so, are good friends.

¹⁶ Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso, 2011), p. vii. This and what follows concerning the three forms of resistance to Communist rule in Eastern Europe, closely follows Žižek’s analysis.

¹⁷ Bishop Borys Gudziak, “The Maidan, Christmas, the New Year and a New Ukraine,” *The Kyiv Post*, January 6, 2014.

¹⁸ From Gerrard M. Hopkins’ poem “As Kingfishers catch fire”.

Solidarność, Euromaidan, and Realpolitik

I

In his book *Moscou aller-retour*, Jacques Derrida expresses the thesis that *perestroika* was a condition for the non-violent revolutions in Central Europe.¹ If it had not been for the slogans of *perestroika* sounding in Soviet generals’ ears, *non-violence* would neither have had any chance of practical success, nor could it even have appeared – as it was too far an idea from the reality of real socialism. (Obviously, the author does not miss the opportunity to notice etymological and other, deeper – presumably unfathomable – relations between *perestroika* as a “reconstruction” and “deconstruction”).²

Derrida’s thesis is doubly false. It is untrue owing to basic chronology. The *Solidarność*, or “Solidarity” movement, initiated by workers’ protests in August 1980, emerged a few years before *perestroika*. Furthermore, Derrida’s thesis seems to reveal a deep misunderstanding of the Solidarity phenomenon. It contains a suggestion that Solidarity, motivated by tactical reasons mainly, chose the means which were absolutely necessary to achieve its goals, and that the situation of the time was not in favour of violent actions.

But the essence of Solidarity we know from the experience gathered between August 1980 and 13th December 1981 was different. As a large social movement almost from the beginning, *Solidarność* was also, on top of that, a moral movement, as the workers of Lublin, Gdańsk, and Szczecin facing the actions