

Political Realism and Wisdom

ANDRÁS LÁNCZI

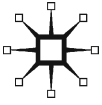


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András Láncki

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Preface

In recent decades there has been a growing interest in the idea of political realism, which must be distinguished from the concept of “Realpolitik,” a term applied in international politics. Already R. N. Berki, the author of a book published in 1981, wished to indicate by the title *On Political Realism* the original or classical problem of political thought, that is, the unsolvable conflict between “realism” and “idealism,” “philosophy” and “ideology.” According to Berki, there are three dimensions of political realism: “These three dimensions of are political understanding, political necessity and political action.”¹ This book is focused on political action, which is based on the distinction between “what there is” and “what there should be” in both public and individual life. The “what there is” phrase is meant to express the idea of reality, often used as a reference point even in common language; whereas the “what there should be” is usually taken as something opposite of reality, often labeled “normativity.” As such the tension or conflict between “what there is” and “what there should be” is an ever present characteristic of European political thought and culture at least since Plato. But recent concern with and rediscovery of political realism must have particular reasons. One of them is the evaporating shock and threat of the two world wars, and a fading memory of what it means to live in or with a war. This development is joined with a parallel feeling of the lack of goals or loss of the meaning of life. The dominance of cynicism in both public and private life today is a sign of despair as to the question of “how should I/we live?” Another reason is the growing dissatisfaction with one’s own life in terms of why we should live at all. The constant struggle between faith and reason in European-American culture might have produced a context when neither faith, nor reason seems to provide man with relevant answers to ultimate questions—total nihilism threatens Western culture more than Nietzsche beheld it. A sure sign of it is the neglect of philosophy that has been trying

to become rigorous science instead of cultivating what was once called “love of wisdom.” And third, today’s politics slowly but steadily are losing helpful illusions that cover the actual workings of political power. Pure or rough power is back to man’s everyday life. The rude mechanics of power eternal is again open to the public eye. Modern life is in a constant crisis because it requires activism rather than contemplation. Action, motion, and progress are promoted to tackle evil, and many forms of surrogate religion are supposed to make life safe and calculable. We must, therefore, somehow find a new balance, which necessitates the serious reconsidering of the contents of our culture, the core of which is love of wisdom, and not philosophy without qualification.

There is important distinction we have to make when we come to discuss the role or function of political science and its relationship with political action. Modern “new” political science (as it was initiated already by Alexis de Tocqueville) is inseparable from the needs of democracy. If we insinuate ourselves into this thought then we shall easily arrive at the endorsement of political science as a science of normativity. But this is a confusion of two different realms of our life: the realm of manners, written and unwritten rules how we should live our lives, and the methods we apply when we wish to understand political matters scientifically. The distinction must be sharply drawn between norms of morals and manners and those of scholarly inquiries, that is, political science. What is necessary in action, could be an obstacle or distortion factor in intellectual efforts. To put it simply, norms are relevant in morality but might serve as unbridgeable impediments in political science. We have to retake *common sense* in our understanding political matters. This is what the concept of political realism aims at.

This book is an attempt to focus upon political reality by concentrating on the constant elements of political action. Political reality has a metaphysical layer as Heraclitus already suggested it, and political science issues like the forms of government or the nature of law are proceeded by philosophical problems, like “how should we live?,” which cannot be answered by scientific means. Only then we can tackle the issues of political action, the backbone of it is acquisition of power. Today’s liberals claim that individual human rights and democracy are the ultimate absolutes that ground political action as norms. The author of this book has serious doubts and reservations about it and regards their basic propositions as utopian, and as such, against the nature of man and the role of power. Utopias are bad not because they contain false ideas, but because they are ready to act along the lines of bad ideas, that is, they want to govern in the name of superior ideas to ideas that

they regard as inferior or glued to the real and thus to relativity of political action. Utopian ideas are common in refusing the binding force of the here and now. They want to get rid of everything that is rooted in bequeathed processes. Utopian ideas are against all traditions, which is frightening and useless. Some of the utopian ideas can be realized, even can be maintained for some time, because utopian ideas are tempting and assume rational justification, yet the ultimate sobering process will arrive causing a lot of pain. One has to understand that the “what there should be” is not identical with utopianism. The previous is a rational attempt to suggest new ways and ideas, the latter one is motivated by mere wishes and hopes. Political realism is an idea that is aware of the dangerous gap between what there is and what there should be. As such it wishes to react or respond to the mere irrational flow of ideas and emotions to revolt against the current conditions of the world by pointing out that we as human beings have insurmountable boundaries. But political realism is determined to distinguish between utopia and the rational or conscious attempt to find new ways on the basis of there is.

Man of all times has two questions: “How should I live?” and “What sort of government is the best for me?” I claim that the first, which is a philosophical issue, will always precede the second one, which is obviously a political one. Any time when the two are unknowably intermingled serious political conflict will evolve, and political reality would sweep all other approaches to politics. Since power is the same at any time and in all places, political knowledge should heed the basic question: Who rules? Political realists should not be alarmed that it is the question of not only political science but of political knowledge, too. Political knowledge in its most profound understanding should be wisdom—a balanced view of political action, its moral consideration, and solid judgment of its consequences.

CHAPTER 1

What Is Political Realism?

Zero or the Democratic Order

We need to find a vantage point for the treatment of the subject usually denoted as “political realism” in political thought. In the study of human matters, it is hard or even impossible to detect such a vantage point. It would amount to the invention of zero in arithmetic. Zero is one of the most relevant inventions of the human intellect. The history of zero is not only exciting from the Indian roots through the Arab mathematicians down to Fibonacci and Descartes but also points toward the meaning of zero: it represents the power of human understanding and creativity, namely, something can be made out of nothing, and an absolute vantage point is needed to create anything new. Without zero our understanding of the world would be different.

In political thought there is no such absolute or unrivalled vantage point—though the idea of forms of government has come down to us as a common approach to the realm of politics. As if this idea were to be the most exact and least disputable way of providing a vantage point for talking about politics at any place and time. Machiavelli, probably the first “political realist” thinker also began his major work *The Prince* by saying that “[a]ll states, all dominions that have held and do hold empire over men have been and are either republics or principalities.”¹ It is also a matter of fact that David Hume in his essay “That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science” connected the problem of the forms of government with the possibility of turning political knowledge to a science: “It is a question with several whether there be any essential difference between one form of government and another, and whether every form may not become good or bad, according as it is well or ill

administered?”² And as a result of a short and classical consideration, he preserved the original idea that any form of government can be good if it is administered well: “It may, therefore, be pronounced as a universal axiom in politics *that a hereditary prince, a nobility without vassals, and a people voting by their representatives form the best monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy.*”³ Whether this “universal axiom” satisfies the standards of science is open to discussion, but it is undeniable that the issue of the forms of government served for the zero in political studies—up until the rise of modern democracy after which it is an anathema to suggest that any other form of government can be better than democracy.

Yet we are not entitled to say that the idea of the forms of government serves as a universal and absolute vantage point in political thought. All we can say is that the forms of government should be included in any serious essay on politics or political constitution. Plato suggested justice to be the first issue of politics; Aristotle first discussed man as *zoon politikon* in his book on politics; Thomas Hobbes begins his *Leviathan* by the categorization of sciences searching for the most adequate place for political science; Rousseau had a universal moral statement about man’s lost and missing natural freedom. The number of examples is unlimited. Today it would be an error to overlook the simple observation that the concept of *democratic order* is the zero and coordinate a political system whereby we can judge political issues universally. It implies at least two requirements: the majority principle and constitutionalism or rule of law. Because democratic order is taken for granted, the original question or classification of the forms of government does not have the appeal that it used to have. Allegedly the democratic form of government is the best compared to other ones. Because the scope of this book is political realism, we are compelled to accept this state of affairs.

The recent renewed interest in political realism warns us to try to understand what went wrong in political science that provoked a number of titles to contribute to answer this question.⁴ The need for political realism arose in response to the more and more formalized arrangement of political knowledge losing contact with actual political issues and creating a normative context for them simply by blurring the natural connection of thought and action. In this normative context, democracy is opportunistically taken for granted as the best form of government, moral norms are mandatory for political agents, institutions are more relevant than persons, yet political action must be distinguished from political science. While looking for a vantage point of the discussion of political realism, we must remind ourselves that Europe is still in the shadow of the horrendous experience of WWII, a burden

that influences, and sometimes almost hinders, our direct approach to politics. The assumption is that as long as you can increase economic development and resultant welfare, each state would stay away from applying classical means like war, ethnic conflicts, and cultural intolerance. Free market economy replaced the old Marxian term; capitalism that has become global and economic could easily challenge any local political intentions. The world can be “flat,” but the deep-seated problem of politics, that is, power, would exert its impact, and finally, some of us bitterly may end up with an insight that politics is neither primarily about economics nor about cultural hegemony or fundamentalist human rights doctrines. It is about power, and power is about action. Action is of various sorts, but in the case of politicians, delivering speeches is the most common form of political action.

Distinction between Political Action and Thought

In the focus of political realism there is political action—no lofty theories, no large-scale or covering conceptions, and no analytical laws, only insights mostly grounded on direct perceptions. The guiding line of political action is power—its acquisition and preservation. Modern political science, however, distinguishes itself from the knowledge of political action and has opted for a direction that intentionally contrasts itself to political action—to put it simply, if you are concerned with political action, you cannot be taken seriously scientifically, and vice versa, if someone chooses modern political science, this would be regarded a useless and self-centered course of investigation about human behavior that has hardly anything to do with real politics. Thus political knowledge and action have departed to an extent where it is almost impossible to reconcile the intentions of the two intellectual aspirations. The only problem is that the common ground of both is what we call politics or the life of the polity.

Anyone concerned with political action should also be concerned with the success of political action. To be honest, Machiavelli was and remains to be the only one who could combine the aspects of political success, political morality, and political wisdom. Even Hobbes, whose perspective came close to that of Machiavelli, remained within the confines of political philosophy that did not want to deal with the direct issues of political action. Thus at least one of the three components of political knowledge is missing from all other political thinkers. Machiavelli concentrated on political action as such, but travelled on the land of morality and political wisdom. Not that Machiavelli

has never become the standard of political thought; the contrary is true. Actually both political agents and political theorists would like, intentionally or unintentionally, to achieve the quality and success of Machiavelli's work. Today all we can do is to remind ourselves that Machiavelli's works are a treasury of elements of factors in the broadest sense affecting the success of political action. In contrast to today's political realists, Machiavelli did not have to discover power as the subject of political inquiry, because he eliminated all ingredients of utopian political philosophy. The major difference is that Machiavelli did not know what normative theory is, and today's theorists regard political action as the measurement of political thought.

Political reality, that is, what happens in politics by whom, is the point of departure of all analysis about what the political is and what we can achieve by political means. The original conflict between what there is and what there should be according to reason remains to be the major source of both individual and communal tensions in politics. The role of political realism is to measure up the focus of political reality and the possibility of political action. But political realism is not a sheer view of the political or one of the possible approaches to politics but a metaphysical interpretation of the basis of politics. Political realism is an overt claim to provide the grounds of political action and thought. Therefore it needs to have philosophical underpinnings—it is not a paradox but instead the stretching of the intellect to its boundaries in order to define what politics or, rather, the political is.

Strife and Necessity

Most political realists would start to discuss political realism by pointing at Thomas Hobbes who published his seminal work, the *Leviathan*, during the English Civil War and was abhorred and inspired by the repugnance of the civil war caused by mutual hostility among compatriots. But political realism has a more far-reaching and metaphysical consideration and argument to be traced back to Heraclitus's fragments. Almost all of his fragments need to be interpreted and carefully explained requiring some knowledge of ancient Greek language and culture. Precisely this is the problem with his Fragment 80, which can be understood as metaphysics of politics, that is, the first questions of politics: "It is necessary to know that war is common and right is strife and that all things happen by strife and necessity."⁵

I regard this fragment crucial from the point of view of political realism. This is not only a view on man's limited scope of public action

but also a challenge for later political thinkers to take a stand whether Heraclitus is right in terms of whether war is the natural condition of human life, or it can be averted. By “natural” I mean that whatever man does drawing on his rational abilities, conflict and ensuing war is inevitable. It is in stark contradiction to what modern Enlightenment thinkers like Kant suggested especially in his “Perpetual Peace.” What comes after modern Enlightenment is the product of a paradox that has tried to conceal, rather than to solve, the problem arising out of two opposite experiences of man, namely that the world around us shows signs of permanence and of change, too. Logical constructions do not help since we have ample evidence to contradict both sides arguing either about the permanent substance of being or the changes in flux. By practice or realist thinking, that is, grounding our views on what has happened so far, all we can say is that our basic experience is that strife seems eternal, and peace is only casual or transitory, and even periods of peace are full of strife, conflicts, and enmities. Let us not tackle the problem now that war and peace are complementary, or neither peace nor war is total; they exist side by side even at a particular place and time.

The core question is whether Heraclitus captured the metaphysics of politics by stating that the whole world is subject to constant changes, what is more, they do exist and anything else is just a passing phenomenon including our logical inferences that there must be something permanent to ground the possibility of changes, therefore strife is a concept of possessing the power of being and does not enjoy its existence to the excellence of *logos*. Strife can only attain absolute existence if it is based on the ineluctable rivalry between two opposites. Heraclitus is consistent on this point by claiming that the world consists of opposites. We have several fragments by Heraclitus in which he expresses the fundamental dichotomy of all things. For instance, “The path up and down is one and the same.”⁶ Or “God is day night, winter summer, war peace, satiety hunger [. . .]”⁷ The term “same” is, however, misleading as it is pointed out by Kirk, Raven, and Schofield: “Other references to Heraclitus in Aristotle attack him for denying the law of contradiction in his assertions that opposites are <same>. Again, this is a misinterpretation by Aristotle, who applied his own tight logical standards anachronistically; by the <same> Heraclitus evidently meant not <identical> so much as <not essentially distinct>.”⁸ If we raise the issue of what is real, then Heraclitus has a metaphysical addition because if strife were not, the world would not be either. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield have an important proposition here: “[I]f strife—that is, the action and reaction between opposed substances—were to cease, then the victor in every

contest of extremes would establish a permanent domination, and the world as such would be destroyed.”⁹ So without opposites, there is no existence at all. And opposites are the products of perpetual flux like a river. All we, human beings can experience is that changes cannot be stopped, they are not simply phenomena waiting to be observed by us but are given just as the sun or other stars in the universe. Strife is unavoidable or ineradicable due to constant minor changes in the world in and around us.

But strife is only the first element of political realism. The second one is necessity, which I regard as a sure sign of political realism in later texts, too. For Heraclitus, “necessity” accomplishes or adds to “strife.” What is necessary will have to be evolving or has to be done now. It has been debated for long whether the original Greek word is “chreómena” or “chreón.” The latter one was chosen by Diels and accordingly by Kirk et al., too.¹⁰ It is important since “chreón” should be translated as “necessity,” although the Greek word could also mean “fate” and “destiny.” Necessity suggests that one has to do something in order to stay alive or there is an internal urge, like sexual desire, hunger, etc., which is indispensable for living or unavoidable only at a price that is contrary to one’s character. Necessity is a trump in various contexts when someone wants to explain why a particular action has to be carried out. Necessity is a form of constraint the source of which is beyond man’s reach; understandably the other meanings—fate or destiny—are closely related to the basic or real problem: you are either compelled to do something, or you yourself would choose to do something because there is no other alternative. We have another decisive case here to present. Plato wrote: “[A]nd yet the true creator is necessity, who is the mother of our invention.”¹¹ The word for “necessity” Plato uses is “chreia,” that is, the first thing one has to do when thinking about the best state is the acknowledgment of necessity as the first duty one has to fulfill. But necessity here may mean not only one obvious thing (i.e., one has to eat, to dwell etc.), but also that it is necessary to think. Thus necessity has a twofold meaning: necessity arises in connection with body needs, but also in terms of mental activities, which involve thinking and communicating. It is also implicit that necessities can be infinite though very often they must be limited in order to get accommodated to the possibilities of conditions and the acknowledgement of others’ necessities grounding the basis of a talk about justice.

In the metaphysical sense, political realism rests on these two concepts: strife and necessity. Relying on these two concepts we can distinguish two sorts of political realists: the semirealist or reluctant realist

political thinker who applies either of the two, and the full-fledged thinker or agent who applies both of them. Obviously Machiavelli applied both concepts with a stress on necessity, and even if strife is not treated by him distinctively, all he says is implicitly rooted in the idea of conflict. An obvious example for the semirealist is Thomas Hobbes, who saw an eternal strife in politics. A less obvious stance is that of Leo Strauss, who stressed that European culture would have long lost its philosophical character and appeal to other cultures unless the strife between Athens and Jerusalem, that is, rationality and faith, did not exist together. But we can also mention Nietzsche, who was deeply influenced by Heraclitus's conception of the opposites. Or Marx must have borrowed the idea of change from Heraclitus or other Greek philosophers as a fundamental feature of living.¹² Briefly, political realism can only be taken seriously if we apply the ideas of strife and necessity seriously. Without metaphysical underpinning political realism would only be one of the possible interpretations of political action and thought. Conflict that is often mentioned as a characteristic of political realism unites these two basic concepts: strife and necessity.

Change

Anyone concerned with politics must bear in mind that change is the most relevant features of both political action and its political understanding. This is how Walter Bagehot started his book *The English Constitution*: "There is a great difficulty in the way of a writer who attempts to sketch a living Constitution,—a Constitution that is in actual work and power. The difficulty is that the object is in constant change."¹³ Bagehot suggests that a constitution, which is the core of political institutions, is "living" to the extent that it is "actual" in terms of action and power. "Living" here means that the constitution is in a flux or change—it is not really the quality of politics but it is politics itself, that is, politics is change. Bagehot keeps repeating all through his book that "there have been many changes," thus indicating his commitment to understand the political life of his age by concentrating on change. The idea of change always raises the question of revolution at least in modern times. Bagehot has a definition for "revolution": "The change since 1865 is a change not in one point, but in a thousand points; it is a change not of particular details, but of pervading spirit."¹⁴ Revolution is, then, concentrated change appearing "in a thousand points" and is concerned not with certain particulars but with "a pervading spirit." It is not enough to have many changes; they should evince spiritual

character, and, we could add, also reveals some predetermined intention to achieve something new.

That change as a substantial element of politics was already stressed by Machiavelli as well. Since change is inevitable in politics, too, the better for the prince is to be able to read the timing and direction of changes, all the more so, because he is compelled to accommodate himself to changes; what is more, it is he who should stand in the forefront of changes. According to Machiavelli, a prince would fail if he cannot control change: “And above all, a prince should live amongst his subjects so that no single accident whether bad or good has to make him change; for when necessities come in adverse times you will not be in time for evil, and the good that you do does not help you. [...]”¹⁵ Change in this rendering is the enemy of the prince, or it is Fortuna or chance in a disguise (“fortune being changeful”), unless it is he who beholds in time the compelling circumstances and acts accordingly. Change is potentially threatening if it comes unexpectedly in time and space. And even the good can be overturned if change is not served well by the prince, because “the affairs of the world are so changeable.”

No wonder all modern politicians are initiators of changes—they are proud of suggesting changes for the future, and deliberate change is in the focus of most electoral campaigns. For instance, Barack Obama’s central slogan was “Change we can believe in” in 2008, and he won the election. But it would be too easy or simplistic to think that change itself is enough to grasp the meaning of political reality. The wish for change is counterbalanced roughly in equal measure to the wish for preservation. Leo Strauss has this fundamental insight: “All political action aims at either preservation or change. When desiring to preserve, we wish to prevent a change to the worse; when desiring to change, we wish to bring about something better.”¹⁶ To capture the meaning of change in politics, Strauss, in an Aristotelian vein, combined the idea of change in political action with moral considerations—we act in order to achieve some good ends. What is important in this proposition, actually in all ancient political propositions, is the meaningfulness of political action. Change is not for itself, even less so, since change is essentially the political, but it should somehow conquer the future, thus giving hope that things remain or become stable, secure, and prosperous. Political action can be deprived of moral aspects; no one really dares to do that, but an action will become political if it involves elements of promises, hopes, and at least one general goal. Change could be annoying, and all of us may yearn for permanence and stability, yet a

prudent political agent should have to concentrate incessantly on future changes that may occur or the ones that he wants to initiate.

Acquisition

Immediately next to strife, necessity and change it is acquisition that bears a clear concern with realism. All the three concepts are tied to political action. Strife expresses the unavoidable character of human interactions, necessity refers to the vitals of maintaining mere existence, and acquisition stands for action to settle strives and fulfill requirements posed by necessity. All the three are joined by power. When it is fixed as basic motivation of man, political realism has a chance to confront two fundamental urges of man: the natural, or instinctual, and the rational. Hobbes had a decisive point here: “So that in the first place, I put for a general inclination of all mankind a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death. And the cause of this is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight than he has already attained to, or that he cannot be content with a moderate power, but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.”¹⁷ We have to distinguish, however, between necessities and desires. Hobbes calls the striving for power as “restless desire” suggesting that it comes from within man, the sources of which is difficult to clinch, but we know that it is something belonging to an inner inclination or urge. Desires are various and change from man to man, and what is conspicuous is that desire lacks any moral justification—desire is natural exempt from moral considerations. In contrast to desire, necessity has an outer control: when you are needy, for example, you are starving, when you need a shelter in order to save your body etc., your external conditions compel you to act in order to provide yourself with vitals. Also, necessity as an outer condition often implies moral constrain or duty, whereas desire can be completely devoid of them. Strangely enough Hobbes seems to have mixed up the two. And it does not really help if we designate his political philosophy as a hedonist one, for he was to ground his political community on real terms. If man is but a hedonistic creature, then the concept of good is an empty concept. Hobbes had wanted to put forward “his own reading,”¹⁸ that is, suggesting new ideas, also wishing to find universal knowledge of good, man, politics, etc. The common ground is provided by man’s rationality: “all men by nature reason alike, and well, when they have good principles.”¹⁹ So goodness is provided by reason—appetite, desire,

necessity, and the like are outside or beyond it, they are to be mastered by reason. So if man's motivation is desire, the synonym of which is wish, then man is to be ruled by good principles which are, due to the universality of reason, can be summed up in natural laws. This is how Hobbes arrives at the core of his own anthropology in his enumeration with natural law no. 7, which is preceded by a lengthy description of man's various passions. This is where he explicitly tells us what good is. Here are Hobbes's words:

But whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part calleth good; and the object of his hate and aversion, evil; and of his contempt, vile and inconsiderable. For these words of good, evil, and contemptible are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: there being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common rule of good and evil to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves; but from the person of the man, where there is no Commonwealth; or, in a Commonwealth, from the person that representeth it; or from an arbitrator or judge, whom men disagreeing shall by consent set up and make his sentence the rule thereof.²⁰

Primarily good is derived from personal appetite or desire, and evil from hate and aversion, but to avoid a complete relativism, Hobbes also refers to "common rule of good and evil" by which he presumes that man is able to reconcile numerous and diverse views or opinions on good and evil. Perfection can only be attained through reasonable compromise on good and evil. This conception fits Hobbes's later statement that "there is no such *finis ultimus* (utmost aim) nor *summum bonum* (greatest good) as is spoken of in the books of the old moral philosophers."²¹ Hobbes not only neglects the ultimate aim or context of "old moral philosophers" but strengthens the idea of the modern individual as a pleasure-seeker who is always striving toward the acquisition of power to avert violent death and secure as much pleasure as possible over as long a time as it is available. In brief, Hobbes contributed to the enfolding development of stripping man of his communal character, making man an autonomous, that is, self-ruling being, who maintains himself through harnessing pleasure. His moral character would be formed accordingly, that is, all his moral traits can be reduced to the individual's behavior governed by contention for acquiring pleasure, enmity, and war. Competition is necessary because man is under constraint to satisfy his desires; competition leads to enmity and war, and the purposes of wars are acquisition. The dividing line between outside-conditioned necessities and personal longing for satisfying one's desires has not been clarified by

Hobbes. There have been regimes that deliberately sought to make this distinction by setting the measurements of what is necessary and what is not. All regulations throughout history, from Sparta down to modern communism, we have seen efforts to set limits to acquisition in various forms like using iron money like in Sparta or implementing a policy in which private property is confiscated by the rule of and continuously denying the grassroots to amass private property in gold or real estate by the force of law. If acquisition is a must, then the defense of the institution of private property is but an extension of acquisition. Paper money without the gold standard dropped in early 1970s just symbolizes the possibility of infinite acquisition and wealth, which were limited by any objective standard.

Unlike Machiavelli Hobbes was not concerned with political action. He replaced the political agent by the concept of human nature, necessity by desire, and Fortuna by reason. It was natural that Hobbes, enamored by the potentials of human reason, at one point artificially switched over to a norm-utopianism by stating that “[d]esire of knowledge, and arts of peace, inclineth men to obey a common power: for such desire containeth a desire of leisure, and consequently protection from some other power than their own.”²² From political realism’s point of view, Hobbes’s turn is tenable if we could explain why there is a desire for peace at all. Not in real or common sense terms, all living creatures want to live rather than die, but from a theoretical aspect. For Hobbes war is natural in a state of nature, which is an inferred proposition, not an empirical one. Therefore as long as the conditions of Commonwealth are unable to control the state of nature, war is imminent. Therefore peace is exceptional, and war is common. To change it one must make a good use of “desire of knowledge, and arts of peace,” the two are compatible and indispensable. Arts of peace grow out of desire of knowledge—what else? If Hobbes were a true realist, he would have had to extend the latent potential of competition, conflict, and war over to the actual conditions of man. Competition is inherent in the necessities of life, therefore only reasonableness in conducting conflicts and arranging competitions cannot really serve the goal of attaining peace at least not more than earlier in history irrespective of his teachings or insights. Peace is simply necessary because of self-preservation, and leisure is the condition of acquisition of knowledge and certain distance from power. Hobbes reshuffled the cards of political concepts: since nothing is absolute, the only resort of man is to seek peace that leaves some space and chance for man to maintain his life. The duality of war and peace is inevitable, or given, the rationality

with which man can dispose of mandates to men to agree among themselves. Rationality offers the possibility to achieve agreement, thus justice is nothing else but to abide by the words of a compact. The question is whether rationality is capable of maintaining itself in the face of other constituents of human nature. Or what is rational at one point may turn into irrational if it is repeated endlessly, ideologically charged, and stripped of its original arguments or context of arguments.

On a Christian basis, Marsilius of Padua beheld the major cause of war in the different views of transcendence—the religious and the secular have utterly opposing views on how man should live. Extinguishing the conflict between the religious and the secular, more precisely the conflict between the Church and the Emperor, war could result in peace. Marsilius wished “to demonstrate that Christ wished to exclude and did exclude both Himself and His apostles from the office of ruler”²³—Christianity never wanted to interfere with ruling or worldly power.

Machiavelli was not a philosopher in intent because he did not make any attempt to define or clarify any of his terms (he did not directly address the “what is . . . ?”—type questions). His special terms are not special by assuming new meanings; if they do, it is achieved through the context he presents. Necessity, acquisition, Fortune, and his other frequently used terms obtain their meanings by relations to each other. Power has many forms, but it must be acquired irrespective of the form of the government. Classical political philosophers kept searching man’s communal life from the angle of how man can become happy, which by and large depends on man’s perfection with a strong emphasis on the idea of good. Modern political theorists, however, are more concerned with the institutions of government than with political action, because they believe that the form of government, especially principles of a government based on constitutionalism, would ultimately determine political action.

But contrary to what is expected as a simple explanation according to what is natural is clearly the opposition of what is artful, Hobbes, if he is a realist at all, and other political realists look at the rational as an extension of the natural: the natural cannot be either destroyed or sidelined, instead we try to calculate with it when planning our actions. Utopians, however, tacitly assume that the natural can and should be mastered and thus disregarded.

Enemy

Enemy is created in a natural or an artificial way. In most cases we are born to have an enemy, we inherit our enemies from the past and