

THE LEFT HAS WON: A REVIEW OF JULIEN ROCHEDY

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For almost three years now, Julien Rochedy has been writing books. His latest book *Philosophie de droite* confirms his talent.

The left has won. The right has lost. *Vae victis*. In this accessible and cultured book, the author presents a critical genealogy of the 18th century, from which all our problems emanate: progressism, wokism, deconstruction, nihilism, soft and Europeanist liberalism, self-hatred, universalism. Blue, green, colored hair, interlopers and grotesque drag queens are the corrupted fruits of this difficult century. And likewise, in a conversational tone, our friend Rochedy explains to us how and why the right lost and why the left won: "The counter-revolutionary restoration regularly failed, not because of any weakness in the counter-revolutionary philosophy, but because the counter-revolutionaries were largely incapable of using political methods and the press." And to continue: "It is useless to congratulate oneself, as the right still does, by noting that the major part of the people shares a good part of conservative ideas. Also, the inability of the right to become an aggressive minority is without question one of the great causes of its perpetual failures."

Julien Rochedy does not seek to distinguish the left from the right as political parties on an increasingly fragmented chessboard, but as a course of life, a line of thought and conduct. In short, to be left or right is to be bilious or sanguine. The right is dour, a kill-joy, declaiming ill omens, while confusing bourgeois domination by money with the conservative or reactionary base. In short, the right has become autistic, crazy by dint of being right, without ever having known how to sell a dream.

The core of the book is a critical and impressive synthesis of the Left Enlightenment. We are, at our time, in the degenerate phase of the Enlightenment. The old regime is characterized, as Charles Maurras said, by that tradition "which reigns in the past by its silent power and the solid bond of habit;" it is from this point of view that [Hubert Métiévier](#) defines the Old Regime as custom. The Enlightenment is the opposite. Jacobinism established it; the use of the Reason devoured faith and mystery; the will to deconstruct prevailed upon tradition; and the conceptual and universal man prevailed on real men. "The enlightenment invented the idea of possible happiness. If happiness was possible, it had to be for all: whoever emancipates himself, by Reason, from the past and its traditions, was its natural candidate; the mathematical laws which apply to nature are invariable and universal; it can thus only be thus for the whole human race." Happiness itself is built against Christian joy, the foretaste of the heavenly table, and turns away from original sin that Lent reminds us of every year. If happiness, a new idea in Europe, the happiness of this earth, is attainable, let's go for it, even if it means massacring, destroying, burning. All means are good to gain it.

The elite of this century are more and more gnawed at by an established bourgeoisie and convinced of progress. This elite, motivated by "likes," flirt in the salons like on Tinder; they are depicted with exquisite cruelty by [Crébillon fils](#), notably in [Les Égaréments du cœur et de l'esprit](#) (*The Wanderings of the Heart and the Spirit*), the most beautiful piece of writing of the Regency. Autistic, the nobility hid in their lands, refusing to go to war. The bourgeoisie, harried yet ambitious, formed into clubs, into circles, entrepreneurial, patrons of new ideas, and awaited their turn. Chateaubriand says it in his *Memoirs*: the aristocracy had reached the age of vanities. In a century when the Old Regime was slowly rotting, two thinkers imposed the foundations of the left: Voltaire and Rousseau.

Robert Darnton in [The Literary Underground of the Old Regime](#) explains the difference between the two men: the one thinks of what has been polished by the use of society, relationships and world codes; while the other thinks that society is bad; that it rots men and corrupts hearts, who are infinitely good however when they are naked, in the natural. Julien Rochedy sums up very well the differences between a left of center and a societal left. Voltaire advocates the liberal values of tolerance and progress, and thus impiety and materialism; Rousseau advocates the deconstruction of the structures of society, structures that are factious and therefore unjust. Voltaire is linked to Sade, the archetype of the degenerate produced by a society without God, without taboos or prohibitions; while Rousseau is linked to Robespierre, the terrible technocrat motivated by cold and vaunted ideas.

The revolution inspired by Rousseau envisages this: namely, that the citizen consents from now on to give himself entirely to the community, body and goods. In the *Discourse on Political Economy*, the Swiss defends the idea that everything belongs to the State: property, goods, education of children. What a magnificent totalitarian system! He excludes the one who voluntarily evades the clause of the contract. Rochedy quotes extracts from *The Social Contract* that are particularly eloquent: "The sovereign people can banish from the State anyone who does not trust them; they can banish him, not as an impious person, but as an unsociable one, as incapable of sincerely loving the laws, justice, and of immolating his life to his duty if necessary."

The way Rochedy draws the French revolution as a progressive left-wing revolution, opposed to the English revolution, a hundred years before, defined by Burke as conservative, is remarkable. Burke understood the use of a revolution to restore a political situation, by re-establishing historical continuity. It is the people who put a sovereign monarch back in place, conscious of tradition and permanence.

Can we save the 18th century? Yes, insofar as it still produces beauty, designs beautiful castles, large

gardens, interiors furnished with remarkable furniture, colorful fittings, delicate paintings. If Rousseau and Voltaire are our enemies, how can we not love the melancholy of the solitary walker and the Century of Louis XIV in which lived the excellent master of Ferney, so remarkably well written. Voltaire is the [BHL](#) of the XVIIIth century, who has for him, at least, the form and the pith.

"The counter-revolution will not be a contrary revolution, but the opposite of the revolution." Half of the book, once the left-wing thought is dismantled, is a praise of counter-revolutionaries. Burke is the theorist, de Maistre the polemicist, Chateaubriand the fiddler. This book is an initiation into a current of thought so badly explored and so denigrated. One can only feel a deep sympathy for these thinkers as they are clear, just, clairvoyant; and in the ideas as in the form. They have the talent for the sentence well-written, for aphorism, for the punch line. They all participate in literary glory. Let's taste the efficient and acid prose of Joseph de Maistre who shoots red-hot at the rights of man: "If they had said the rights of the Citizen, or of the man-citizen, I would still understand them. But I confess that Man, as distinguished from the Citizen, is a being that I do not know at all. I have seen, in the course of my life, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Italians, Germans, Russians, I have even learned, in a famous book, that one can be Persian. But I have never seen the Man, if he has rights, I do not care; never will we have to live together: let him go to exercise these rights in imaginary realism." Edifying!

The counter-revolutionaries resurrected, in the middle of a century that invented individualism, the holistic conception of the Classics. Man is part of a whole and this whole is made of identity, of tradition. This is the thought of Herder, the best enemy of Kant who ever remained in Koenigsbergian mists, that theorist of a universal history and of a cosmopolitan world inhabited by abstract Man; thought confirmed by this sentence of de Maistre: "Let us be told, let us write whatever we want; our fathers have dropped anchor, let us hold on to it."

In opposition to the Revolution and the rights of man, theorizing and applying the supreme being, and to Freemasonry, which wants to crush the wicked, the thinkers of the counter-revolution defend Christianity and praised this religion as a guarantee of stability and tradition that societies need. It is not a secularized Christianity, the product of a bland globalism, open to the world, adept at tea parties, but a Christianity that embraces natural law, the famous Ambrosian revolution, and makes sense in the lives of men in an organic way.

"It is the authority," writes Rochedy, "of the Church that maintains it, after having shaped it in view of Christ; it is her infallibility that imposes on men the spirit of obedience and fidelity to that which is older

and greater than themselves. The Catholic Church is the guarantor of the principle of authority." In short, Christianity structures and guarantees society horizontally and vertically through access to a hierarchy that leads to the transcendent and to Heaven. The cross, in short. I would advise my friend Julien to read Father William Slattery's book, *Comment les catholiques ont bâti une civilisation* (*How Catholics Built a Civilization*), a fundamental book in this defense and illustration of Christianity. Christianity has built a civilization of builders, from Ambrose of Milan to the rise of monasteries, Venetian capitalism, the fruit of entrepreneurial freedom, the year 1000, land clearance, the formation of champions of knowledge and of schools. "Catholicism," says the abbot, "is not a religion, but a vision of the world, a vision of all the dimensions of man, of all the dimensions of society."

The last part of Julien Rochedy's book presents in two chapters the project of a right-wing thought that opposes to reason, materialism, politics, individualism, Man, the contract, revolution and freedom, tradition, Christianity, religion, community, humans, history, continuity, freedoms. History is the conscience of right-wingers: it sets the example, makes sense, confirms continuities. Classical truths make sense. One can then begin to dream of a society where the sovereignty of borders would be guaranteed, where the structures governed by God would make sense, from the nation to the family; where solidarity would make a community; where respect for hierarchy would place the soldier, the priest, the father and the ancestor in their rightful place in society. This world is the world of peace that the counter-revolutionaries have outlined.

It is regrettable that the title of the book does not correspond entirely to the project centered on the eighteenth century, at the origin of left-wing thought, and that the author does not continue in the history of ideas with the Romantic current, reduced to Chateaubriand, the anti-moderns such as Flaubert and Balzac, the anti-bourgeois such as Baudelaire and Bloy; then the thinkers of the Action Française up to the philosophers of politics and law, like Spengler, Toynbee, Evola or Schmitt. Perhaps even an overview from Saint Augustine to Tolkien would have given a sum of traditional thought. This is the wish that we address to our friend: to continue his work from book-to-book with a true counter-history of ideas likely to make us renew with the beautiful, the good, and the true. Our society needs it.

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***Featured:** "Marie Antoinette being taken to her Execution, October 16, 1793," by William Hamilton; painted in 1794.*

