



The Extremist Civilization

Mircea A Tamas

Today we can define the modern, profane world as an “extremist” civilization, which is somehow understandable, considering the fact that our cycle is reaching its extreme. Yet nobody should forget the enormous, incommensurable difference between Infinite and indefinite, as explained by René Guénon, who demonstrated that pushing a possibility to the limit does not mean attaining this limit, since only a metaphysical “jump” would permit, for the qualified ones, to unite with the Great Anonymous, the Great Extreme (Tai-ki).¹ Otherwise, what will happen is that a “religious” person, for example, would think that pushing to extreme his “religious” system will allow the gain of a spiritual take off, when in fact he is just adding more elements of this particular indefinite series, in a similar manner with someone who is adding number after number.

As we stressed with many other occasions, one of the Adversary’s most powerful weapons is the “confusion,” which is created continuously, using sometimes a very little distortion of the truth, other times expressing obvious stupidities, and so on. In this very delicate and important case with respect to extremism, the confusion is at home, since nobody in our modern world seems to distinguish the tolerance from intolerance, the extremism from normality.

What is crystal clear and does not leave place for equivocation is the fact that our modern world or profane civilization is an extremist one. Extremism is the child of ignorance, in a metaphysical sense, and a part of world’s profanation. It is strongly related to all the stupid modern theories regarding the continuous evolution and progress of humankind. The modern world, because it is not traditional anymore (that is, it lacks the non-human element), lost its stability, harmony and righteousness, and it is fully consumed by the vicious and insatiable need for change, the theory of unstoppable progress being the only way the modern world could pretend that its present situation is one of order and not of chaos. These fantasist concepts of progress and evolution imply a journey towards the extreme, and the extreme is promoted today in any possible form. The goal of the so-called progress is to push individual possibilities to their limits or to create the illusion of such a thing, and of course what it is understood today to be individual possibilities is something very incomplete and cripple.

¹ René Guénon, **La Grande Triade**, Gallimard, 1980, p. 26.

The Extremist Civilization

The word “extreme” was associated with the letter X. “X-treme” and “X-tra” are showing people at large how much progress the world has made.² Extra-strong medication, extra-large or even extra-extra-large (XXL) clothing, extra-forte beer, extra loud music, also sports have been stretched to the extreme. But what is even stranger, is that tolerance so precious to the modern world as opposing extremism, has been pushed to its extreme in a way that it became absurd and not less extremist.

The Western world tries to depict itself as opposing the so-called religious extremism, developed especially in the Islamic countries. Unfortunately, there is no difference. All of them are duped by the Adversary; all of them strive to stretch their possibilities to the extreme, in a completely anti-traditional way. The religious extremists are called also fundamentalists, but we should remember that “fundamentalism” was a Protestant movement that originated in the United States of America, and this appellation is meaningless.

To give an example about the present confusion, let us go back to the letter X. With regard to the Roman alphabet, X represented perfection, the sign for 10; in the Christian tradition, X is the sign of the cross and the initial of Jesus Christ. Yet more important, X is the sign of the Center and so, implicitly, that of the Principle, not of an affirmative god, but of the Non-Being, of the Great Anonymous. For this reason, X became later in Mathematics the symbol of the unknown variable, and also the substitute for signature. However, in our modern world the letter X has a completely opposite meaning, representing the profanation and the decadence of the present humankind, the total loss of the Center.³

The modern world fell from the Center to the extreme and there it started to yell its anti-extremism position, negating at the same time the Center. Just watch the anti-smoking campaign. Smoking was for the native people of America a spiritual rite; the Europeans changed it in a profane habit shifting it from Center to extreme; and now they are yelling against smoking, but without restoring its traditional significance, which is impossible for them.

The only normal civilization is a traditional one. A normal society is neither extremist nor mediocre. Today’s extremists are born from the mediocre class, and, we insist, “mediocre” does not mean normal, because “normal” must be understood as related to the Latin *norma*, and we should remember that in the Chinese tradition the Principle was, as Guénon stressed, “the pivot of the *norma*”. We must not confuse “mediocre” with the “middle” or “center,” because a traditional civilization has the Center, the Middle, as fundament (and therefore it is “fundamental” and not “fundamentalist”), while the modern world moved away as far as possible from the central point, from the point of equilibrium and harmony, reaching the “extreme.” The idea that “traditional” means “extremism” was promoted on purpose, at the suggestion of the counter-initiatory forces, and even René Guénon was labeled as extremist. The truth of the matter is that the only normal society is a traditional one, and only in such a society is extremism excluded; this does not mean that such a society has to be tolerant, the same way justice does not have to be “sentimental.”

² Another significant word, very much appreciated, is “ultimate.”

³ As a curiosity, we mention that the moderator of one of the “Guénon” groups on the Internet called himself “Marxx.”

The Extremist Civilization

But a traditional society will not be traditional because some cleric or some politician declares it as such, for the simple reason that a traditional civilization is based on the “presence of God” in its center. And the “presence of God” will walk with the people as long as the people’s hearts are open to God and nobody can deceive Him with words and fake oaths. As we said on another occasion, the Holy Land is so not because we used to call it holy, and similarly, a society is normal or traditional not because an individual states it.

Undoubtedly, during the present *Manvantara* there were various holy lands situated in different conditions of space and time. Yet, in each case, for a holy land to be holy it was mandatory to shelter the divine presence; in the Judaic tradition, the divine presence is called Shekinah and the Tabernacle is considered “habitable of God” or, in Hebrew, *mishkan*, a word deriving from the same verbal root as Shekinah. Abraham’s altars are habitacles of Shekinah and they represent the *principal* point’s “modes,” “the vital centers” reflecting the supreme center, the sacred knots of the texture that keep the holy land holy. If the profane point of view starts to prevail, Shekinah will withdraw and the holy land will become an empty shell. To maintain Shekinah in place, while the cycle declines, there is a need for more elaborated rites, performed more often, an increase of spiritual degrees to allow the spiritual influences to operate efficiently and guard the land holy; but even in this case, a displacement towards the extreme will happen, and the multiplied rites and degrees will dry out. In the end, because the lack of righteous men, the center will disappear underground and the holy land will become a barren desert, a land of desolation.