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OAKESHOTT ON *ARTES LIBERALES* AND POLITICAL AGENCY

Abstract¹

Oakeshott's well-known interest in political knowledge was associated with the defense of practical knowledge and the criticism of rationalism. Although he didn't seem to realize, the scientist version of rationalism was launched partly by one of his favorite, Thomas Hobbes. Despite of his life-long defense of practical knowledge and the criticism of bookish politics, in several papers he didn't simply refused scientism, but wrote for liberal education, involving reading. He implied that practical knowledge needed in proper political activity connected to liberal education, that is, practice to rhetoric, reading to judgment.

Key words: Oakeshott, Hobbes, liberal arts, political knowledge, scientism, rhetoric, hermeneutic.

1. Although Oakeshott disdained mass society and the concomitant enterprise association, he accepted the status quo as many others in the political thinking of his age, without any effort to criticize or justify any particular political institution². He abandoned the issue of political regime, and instead he, as many others, focused on political knowledge. Oakeshott's *Rationalism in Politics*, like many other works since Plato's apocryphal *First Alcibiades*, focused on a classical issue, the problem of political knowledge, what its nature is, where one can get it and how? For Oakeshott, political education is not *ex ducare*, not leading someone into the truth, it has nothing to do with justice and the world outside of cave-dwellers. The cave-dwellers cannot get practical knowledge from political philosophers

¹ The paper was written in longer project supported by the *Hungarian Research Fund*.

² M. Oakeshott, *Morality and Politics in Modern Europe*, Yale University Press, New Haven-London, 1993.

M. Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975.

M. Oakeshott, „The masses in the representative democracy”, in *Rationalism in Politics*, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis, 1991.

who escaped from the prison of conditionality. Here Oakeshott wrote against the idea of political action “under the guidance of an independently and premediated ideology” as opposed to tradition.³ However, at the beginning of the *On Human Conduct* he didn’t argued against ideologies in general, but only against the causal explanations of ”alleged sciences”⁴ as psychology and sociology, using the vocabulary of “laws” and “process” instead of practice. Here he criticized the “categorical muddle”, “confusion” and “rubbish”⁵ of modernist social sciences where “ignorant armies clash by night”.⁶ It is a little bit embarrassing that Oakeshott traced back them to Bacon’s anti-rhetorical phrase, “*res, not verba*”, but he seems not to reflect to Hobbes anti-rhetorical program of civic science.

The lack of Oakeshott’s critical reflection to Hobbes anti-rhetorical and scientific program is rather surprising. Hobbes claimed the restoration of hierarchical order with the construction of civic science in the *De Cive*, the *Elements of Law* and the *Leviathan*.⁷ What is more, Hobbes perceived the plurality and subjectivity of individuals as dangerous for public peace, therefore he aimed to eliminate them from public life. In the “Preface” of *De Cive*, Hobbes wrote about a hypothetical golden age when there was full authority, but it was ruined by the debates of private people.⁸ According to him, the debate can never result consensus and peace, only authority can create and keep them. The roots of debates and rebel are the nature of language and the man rebellious nature, so these seem to be parts of human condition. Opposing the optimism of Milton’s *Aeropagitica*, Hobbes lamented: “what bloodshed hath not this erroneous doctrine caused, that kings are not superiors to, but administrators for the multitude! Lastly, how many rebellions hath this opinion been the cause of, which teacheth that the knowledge whether the commands of kings be just or unjust, belongs to private men; and that before they yield obedience, they not only may, but ought to dispute them!.. They kept empire entire, not by arguments, but by punishing the wicked and protecting the good... [people] nor were they kept in peace by disputations, but by power and authority... private men being called to councils of state , desired to prostitute justice, the only sister and wife of the supreme, to their own judgments and apprehensions; but

³ M. Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics*, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis, 1991, p.56.

⁴ M. Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, p. 15-20.

⁵ Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* p. 22-3

⁶ Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* p. 23.

⁷ Hobbes, *De Cive*, Hackett, Cambridge, 1991. p. 95.

⁸ Hobbes, *De Cive*, p. 95.

embracing a false and empty shadow instead of it; they have begotten those hermaphrodite opinions of moral philosophers, partly right and comely, partly brutal and wild; the causes of all contentions and bloodsheds”.⁹

Hobbes saw civic science as weapon against human proudness, rebelliousness and fights in the “The Epistle Dedicatory” of *De Corpore*.¹⁰ “The tongue of man is a trumpet of war and sedition”.¹¹ Political chaos connected to the disorder of language.¹² Rhetoric can be effective from the same causes which question its efficiency, i.e. the limited capacity and opaque character of human mind. Speaker and *Fortuna* can exist only in a contingent world, where deliberations are needed and may happen. Rhetoric and practice can exist only in the opaque human condition, therefore the civic science (*scientia civilis*) aimed by Hobbes not only opposed rhetoric, but it had a different view on human condition, too.

It is a part of the nature of language that its meanings, mainly the metaphors¹³, are ambiguous, debatable, therefore language needs deliberation. Because language lacks natural standards, it may not exist in practice without authority deciding the ambiguities. Language needs authority, therefore it cannot found it.

“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”.¹⁴

⁹ Hobbes, *De Cive*, p. 97-8.

¹⁰ Hobbes, The Epistle Dedicatory, in: *The Elements of Law*, Oxford, 1994.

¹¹ Hobbes, *De Cive*, p. 168-9.

¹² David Johnston, ‘Plato, Hobbes, and the Science of Practical Reasoning’, in Mary Dietz ed. *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory*, Lawrence, University of Kansas Press, 1990, pp. 37-54.

¹³ Karen S. Feldman, Conscience and the Concealments of Metaphor in Hobbes's "Leviathan", *Philosophy & Rhetoric* Vol. 34, No. 1 (2001), pp. 21-37

¹⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1909. p. 41.

On the other hand, not only language need authority, but authority works by words.¹⁵ That was the reason why, mainly in his *Behemoth*, Hobbes refused the Protestant practice of Bible interpretation and Luther's teaching of *sola Scriptura*. In the chapter X. of *De Cive*, Hobbes refused the basic element of rhetoric, the ethos and invention. According to the chapter ch. XII of *De Cive*, rhetoric and the *studia humanitatis* are the root of political evil in general. In the chapter V. of the *Elements of Law* one may find the refusal of *prudential*, and in the next chapter the enthronement of maths as a perfect and universal demonstrative method.

Hobbes needed civic science as not linguistic, therefore preceding debates and fights. Thus, not the practice of civic science, but its conclusions can found order and support authority. It presupposes a different world than rhetoric: civic science's world is transparent for human mind, containing clear causal relations which can be known and by them eliminating the uncertainties of human condition. *De Cive* hopes that the science created on the pattern on geometry can save people from ambiguity and fights.¹⁶ So, the epistemological uncertainty, plurality and debates are the sources of civil wars.¹⁷ Hobbes taught that ethics and politics can be sciences, and the civic science can be useful to achieve the wished aims, i.e. public peace. Therefore, he proposed civic science where "everything is best understood by its constitutive causes", like "in a watch, or some such small engine".¹⁸ Civic science describes the human word as a contest of "blind forces" instead of the "twilight of obscure ideas".¹⁹

In the *Experience and its Modes* Oakeshott understood science as a quantitative discipline, but later he emphasized the impersonal, mechanical character of social sciences in which "a society is understood as a process, or structure, or an ecology; that is, it is an unintelligent „going-on", like a genetic process, a chemical structure, or a mechanical system. The components of this system are not agents performing actions; they are birth-rates, age groups, income brackets, intelligence quotients, life-styles, evolving 'states of societies', environmental pressures, average mental ages,

¹⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch 31.

¹⁶ Hobbes, *De Cive*, p.91

¹⁷ Robert E. Stillman, Hobbes's "Leviathan": Monsters, Metaphors, and Magic, *ELH*, 1995, Winter, Vol. 62, No. 4, pp. 791-819

David Boonin-Vail, *Thomas Hobbes and the Science of Moral Virtue*. Cambridge University Press

¹⁸ Hobbes, *De Cive*, p.98.

¹⁹ Fr. Schiller, *Letters Upon The Aesthetic Education Of Man*,

distributions in space and time, 'numbers of graduates', patterns of child-bearing or of expenditure, systems of education, statistics concerning disease, poverty, unemployment, etc. And the enterprise is to make these identities more intelligible in terms of theorems displaying their functional interdependencies or causal relationships... It is not an impossible undertaking. But it has little to do with human and nothing at all to do with the performances of assignable agents. Whatever an environmental pressure, a behavior-style, or the distribution of gas-cookers may be said to be correlated with or to cause (a rise in the suicide rate? a fall in the use of detergents?) these are not terms in which the choice of an agent to do or say this rather than that in response to a contingent situation and in an adventure to procure an imagined and wished for satisfaction may be understood. It is only in a categorical confusion that this enterprise could be made to appear to yield an understanding of the substantive actions and utterances of an agent".²⁰

It was clear for Oakeshott that theorems concerning human agency alter from those of mechanics or watches because of the interpretative character of human life.²¹ Even the expression, "social science", aiming to reduce human actions to causal relations, is a "ruinous categorical confusion" because it supposed to investigate human conducts "as if they were nonintelligent components of a 'process', or the functional constituents of a 'system', which do not have to learn their parts in order to play them. The design here is to remove human action and utterance from the category of intelligent going-on".²²

2. In the past, political education was for the prince or the political class, let's say gentlemen as the ambitious Alcibiades. The *artes liberales* and rhetorical education declined with the genre of the mirror for prince (*specula principum*). The education and character of the prince and the political class were seen important because of the good governance. It was not a question that someone should rule, therefore it was important that the ruler should be virtuous man and not a tyrant. Erasmus wrote in the *Education of a Christian Prince*: "In navigation the wheel is not given to him who surpasses his fellows in birth, wealth, or appearance, but rather to

²⁰ Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* p. 97.

²¹ T. Nardin, "Oakeshott's Philosophy of the Social Sciences," in C. Abel and T. Fuller eds. *The Intellectual Legacy of Michael Oakeshott*, Imprint Academic, 2005.

²² Oakeshott, *Voice* p. 25.

him who excels in his skill as a navigator, in his alertness, and in his dependability. Just so with the rule of a state: most naturally the power should be entrusted to him who excels all in the requisite kingly qualities of wisdom, justice, moderation, foresight, and zeal for the public welfare”.²³ So politics is personal.

In the pre-modern world, people lived in hierarchical institutions, therefore the practical question was for them: “How we should educate the good decision makers?”; “What kind of character may help them in practical decision making?” The only alternative for hierarchy was thought anarchy, the horrible chaos. But during and after the Reformation the idea of horizontal, that is, non-hierarchical and egalitarian relations spread, which could be based on faith or love, later on rational consensus or mutuality. In the 16-18th century the contractualist approach to good order replaced the monarchism of the Middle Age and the Renaissance. Contractualism asserted that government can exist only by the rational consent of the governed, men can live together as brothers, with minimal enforcement, “according to Reason” and “united in one Body”. This contractual hope to eliminate enforcement was followed by scientism after the failure of the contractual remaking of political and social relationships during French Revolution.

After the failure of contractual reconstruction of human world, the new hope was scientism. Firstly, it supposed a basically egalitarian, still non-chaotic human world. Its main question was, if not the authority of hierarchical institutions, like state or church, what can arrange people in peaceful cooperation. As Tocqueville noted: “In the ages of equality all men are independent of each other, isolated and weak. The movements of the multitude are not permanently guided by the will of any individuals; at such times humanity seems always to adherence of itself. In order, therefore, to explain what is passing in the world, man is driven to seek for some greater causes, which, acting in the same manner on all our fellow creatures, thus induce them all voluntarily to pursue the same track. This again naturally leads the human mind to conceive general ideas and superinduces a taste for them”.²⁴ The character of citizens as well as political class was undervalued by the egalitarian and scientist interpretation of politics.

Secondly, this social scientific approach to the understanding of human condition was, rather ironically, based on the idea of Providence.

²³ Erasmus, *Education of a Christian Prince*, New York, Octagon Books, 1963, p. 140.

²⁴ A. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Everyman’s Library, 1994, vol. II, p. 15-6.

This understanding of human cooperation presupposes that morality or motivation of actions are out of question, because an invisible hands or some hidden causes, forces, or mechanisms,²⁵ systems²⁶ explain the on-goings. The modernist social sciences have claimed to find these hidden and non-moral causes and forces, and they offered “regularities which do not have to be learned”,²⁷ but can be used by politicians to manage rationally the political society for better future.

In the pre-scientific view, the human condition, just like the motivation of each person in it, is opaque. Man is an unity of opposing and endless diversity of inclinations, and the invincible difficulty of agency is that we understand backward, but we must act and deliberate forward on the sandy basis of guesses and past experiences. Modern scientists have abandoned the problem of moral motivation of actions coming from plurality and uncertainty of human condition, and started to create an amoral language of social and political sciences. As Yaron Ezrahi wrote: “sociology, political science, economics, psychology, and other modern social sciences was amoral discourse on human behaviour”.²⁸ Because of “the difficulties of knowing other persons, of inferring their "reality," their true motives and intentions, from their outward behaviour”, modern social scientists implemented the machine metaphor and the notion of impersonal causes.

Oakeshott reacted against this scientist view of human affairs mainly in the *On Human Conduct*, but he seems not to note Hobbes anti-rhetorical project. The “fraudulent claims of the so-called social sciences”²⁹ call the self-interested or calculating action as the *only reality*, and according to them every moral consideration are only hypocritical appearances and useless for understanding and controlling on-goings. Referring to Thucydides’ and Mandeville’s heritage, the basic and debunking experience of social scientists is that people only hypocritically refer to moral values. Science as such, in this view, is a version of realism or Epicureanism: humans are motivated by calculable self-interests, material-sensual joys. Therefore, social sciences presuppose a human being different from that of *artes liberales*. In social sciences neither individual action is moral, nor it

²⁵ Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, p. 18.

²⁶ Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, p.24

²⁷ Oakeshott, *The Voice of Liberal Learning*, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis, 1989, p. 25

²⁸ Y. Ezrahi, The Theatrics and Mechanics of Action: the Theater and the Machine as Political Metaphors, *Social Research*, 1995, Summer 95, Vol. 62, No. 2 pp. 299-322.

²⁹ Oakeshott, *Voice*, p. 97.

should be, because social and political arrangements are unintended consequences of actions, created by hidden forces.

The motivation and the consequences of action are separated since St. Augustine in our culture, and politics has been centered increasingly around consequences. From this point, the importance of the moral considerations or moral judgments of actors have been undervalued. The amoralizing social sciences offered a vocabulary of “machine metaphor and concomitant notions such as equilibrium, balance, and self-regulation” and alleged techniques to manipulate human relations for peace, harmony and progress, without claiming moral actions of individuals or their moral re-education. In the 20th century, in the dominant view of market or democracy the ideal situation is a balanced one – see the phrase of “checks and balances” – apart from the equal actors’ moral considerations or characters.

This view on political leadership as social-engineering needs technical knowledge of social relations to manipulate them with an emancipatory ethos: there is no need for moral education or moral control of citizens, because of the irrelevance the morality of individuals. Therefore, social-engineers could take the robe of emancipator from moral constrains as in the case of Karl Popper’s open society. The point is not whether someone is virtuous, but whether he has to bother himself with it or not. Modern political thinking have de-emphasized the importance of the character of political actors because of the alleged rationally enineered political arrangement which excludes enforcement.

Not only the sort of knowledge contained in *artes liberales*, the education of *phronimoi* long ago, differs from that of the modern social science, but their basic presuppositions concerning human being and human condition are antithetical. Both contractualist and scientist view of human agency turned the attention to non-personal elements in politics, like institutional settings and rational knowledge used for continuous re-reform.

If political actors’ moral considerations don’t matter, political agency – reinterpreted as engineering or reforming expertise - may be liberated from the moral dilemmas, uncertainty, risky decisions, responsibilities and conflicts coming from moral pluralism and uncertainties of human condition. Tradition, authority, faith and uncertainty have been thought as non-scientific and non-progressive, whilst scientific knowledge has been increasingly seen as solution for political debates, dilemmas and perplexes.

According to the self-image of mainstream social sciences, these are interested in a disinterested comprehension of the play of interests. Whether

politics is seen as a battlefield or a self-regulating machine containing checks and balances, political science itself amoralizes the very activity, it supposed to understand. According to the mainstream, political results are not connected to the actors morality, basically they motivated only or mainly by their interest. Successful understanding of political situations and actions can be based only on this so-called realist anthropology. The normative element of this view emphasis proper and exportable institutional setting, instead of the moral character of the political class.

3. Oakeshott opposed practical knowledge to the rationalism of bookish action. At this point, he followed Hobbes in refuting those actors who “trusting only to the authority of books, follow the blind blindly”.³⁰ In this dichotomy of practice and rationalism, is there any place for *artes liberales*? *Artes liberales* connected strongly to books, even if criticizing wise follies as the *Praise of Folly*.

If morality is a language which can be “learned only in being used”,³¹ where is a place for *artes liberales*? In the *On Human Conduct*, Oakeshott connected human agency to the *Geistesgeschichte*,³² because reading juts like acting needs some hermeneutical practice: “The starting-place of a doing is a state of reflective consciousness, namely, the agent’s own understanding of his situation, what it means to him”.³³ In the world everything is known to man “in terms of what it means to him. A human being is condemned to be a learner because meanings have to be learned”.³⁴ Writing about the liberal education he wrote: “Learning to read or to listen is a slow and exacting engagement... It is learning to follow, to understand and to rethink deliberate expressions of rational consciousness; it is learning to recognize fine shades of meaning without overbalancing into the lunacy of “decoding”; it is allowing another’s thoughts to reenact themselves on one’s own mind...and one may learn to read only by reading with care, and only from writing which stand well off from our immediate concerns: it is almost impossible to learn to read from contemporary writing”.³⁵

³⁰ Leviathan, ch. iv

³¹ Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* p. 64

³² Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* p. 99.

Oakeshott, *Voice* p. 4., 24.

³³ Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* p. 37.

³⁴ Oakeshott, *Voice* p. 9-10.

³⁵ Oakeshott, *Voice* p. 69-70.

It's no wonder that Oakeshott trusted the educational capacity of reading, because in our tradition reading is connected to moral education: *lectio transit in mores*.³⁶ This tradition didn't want to eliminate arbitration from human agency, he wanted only to educate and discipline it.

The aim of liberal arts as an educational activity is character formation, and not the import and fabrication of institutional settings and manipulating techniques. It would educate people, because it presupposes the importance and the cultivation of the character of political class, ideally the *phronimoi*, and it understands political agency as *prudent particularism*. So it seems that not only in practice, but by means of reading as well one may get some practical skills. By means of liberal education, person may become "being able to see connections that allow one to make sense of the world and act within it in creative ways".³⁷ Meanings, partly explicit and partly implicit, interpret situations and keep relations, practices and selfs. Joseph says in Thomas Mann's *Joseph and his brothers* that leadership is not in hand, but in mind, it means the ability for overview, i.e. to see meanings, coherence and incoherence in situations and in actions. Agency often means answering to empirical desire or difficulties, but political agency is typically needs Joseph's ability. According to the fans of liberal education, one may get this sensitivity for meaning, coherence and incoherence in this education, but – and that's important – nobody knows exactly how. This education is about morality in sense of self-discipline, about reflection but not about technical skill or representation of interest; it's overtly a slow and time consuming process, admittedly opaque and the result is also confessedly uncertain. So, it is an aristocratic practice, proper for those who apply for political agency for its own sake, and won't be in despair in case of unsuccessful public career.

There are three different arguments about the connection between liberal education and political agency:

a) Presupposing that life is a "continuous intellectual adventure",³⁸ one willy-nilly deals with human intelligence. According to his approach meaning is the common element in reading and acting: both contain the "intelligent procedure"³⁹ of understanding. The two characteristic elements

³⁶ V. Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence and Scepticism in the Renaissance*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-London, 1985. p. 40.

³⁷ William Cronon, "Only Connect: The Goals of a Liberal Education." *The American Scholar*, Autumn 1998. Volume 67, No. 4, p.79.

³⁸ Oakeshott, *Voice* p. 13.

³⁹ Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* p. 24.

of rhetoric, separating it from civic sciences, are metaphor and invention. “The metaphor is, therefore, the original form of the interpretive act itself, which raises itself from the particular to the general through representation in an image”.⁴⁰ Invention is a “capacity to perceive the analogies existing between matters lying far apart and, apparently, most dissimilar”.⁴¹ The vocabulary of understanding and rhetoric is rather close to that of practice and morality: contingency, alternatives, deliberation, uncertainties, perplexes, propriety⁴² and in practice like in understanding the judicial faculty of mind should be used. In aesthetic education or in games one may learn to see differences and to practice judgment⁴³ without real responsibility.

Politics is an art without rules and aiming to find decorum in the midst of opposite and irreconcilable expectations, and artistic education is basically the same in every arts because of the cultivation of intuitive judgment.

The knowledge contained in agency is not scientific but artistic, so it is never completed. From Classics, just like from practice, one may learn that no-one can control his life. And that’s fine. Culture, opposed to science, is an unfinished emotional and intellectual journey connected to liberal education.⁴⁴

b) Beside the similarities between in the intellectual activity of practice and reading, reading may make reader reflect to himself, and may help forming humility and self-criticism. For example, von Kleist’s *The Prince of Homburg* and *Michael Kohlhaas* are about moral luck, dilemmas, justice and responsibility “Being human is a historic adventure... Know Thyself meant learn to know thyself. It was not an exhortation to buy a book on psychology and study it, it meant, contemplate and learn from what men, from time to time, have made of this engagement of learning to be a man”.⁴⁵

This moral stance of reflection is experienced as a restrain from within, traditionally called as the “inner man”. Not sainthood, but the normative self-reflection is human, that is, knowing that one has acted or are acting against his notion of proper or good behavior. Liberal education turns our attention to dilemmas or perplexes, to the tragic sense of agency, and by

⁴⁰ Giambattista Vico, *On the study methods of our time*, Cornell University, 1990. p. 67

⁴¹ Giambattista Vico, p. 24.

⁴² Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* p. 60.

⁴³ Oakeshott, *Voice* p. 53.

⁴⁴ Oakeshott, *Voice* p.18

⁴⁵ Oakeshott, *Voice* p. 16

reflecting to them one may realize his limits. Prudence may start by this elimination of *hybris*.

c) The voice of poetry was important for Oakeshott, because it may liberate one from the constrain of his time, situation and “currant engagements, from the muddle, the crudity, the sentimentality, the intellectual poverty and the emotional morass of ordinary life”.⁴⁶ “Becoming educated is itself an emancipation”.⁴⁷ Liberal education takes individual into another world, it can liberate mind from hegemonic intellectual fashions and from the professionally narrow expertise. On the other hand, the poetical character of liberal arts refers to the search for intuition. Logic, arithmetic or syllogism cannot lead to new insight, but somehow, in the play of free association of ideas new insights may emerge.⁴⁸

4. The relation between liberal education and modern social sciences seems to be not too friendly. Oakeshott wrote that “social sciences... damaged liberal learning” because of using the mask of science.⁴⁹ The decline of liberal education has been connected to an attack from social science arguing by their alleged relevance and usefulness and to the massification of society. He wrote about the “cruder subversion of liberal learning” associated with an apocalyptic view of “collapse which now threaten us” and the “abolition of man”.⁵⁰

The liberal education was associated with the gentleman. In the contemporary academic life liberal arts are pushed back into the humanities. Oakeshott didn't perceived only social sciences and the fashion of technics as dangers for liberal education and civility, but “culture philistines”, too.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Oakeshott, *Voice* p. 18., 23.

⁴⁷ Oakeshott, *Voice* p. 2.

⁴⁸ Karen LeFevre, *Invention as a Social Act*, SIU Press, 1987

⁴⁹ Oakeshott, *Voice* p. 26.

⁵⁰ Oakeshott, *Voice* p. 20.

See: „The process which, if not checked, will abolish Man goes on apace among Communists and Democrats no less than among Fascists. The methods may (at first) differ in brutality. But many a mild-eyed scientist in pince-nez, many a popular dramatist, many an amateur philosopher in our midst, means in the long run just the same as the Nazi rulers of Germany/Traditional values are to be 'debunked' and mankind to be cut out into some fresh shape at the will (which must, by hypothesis, be an arbitrary will) of some few lucky people in one lucky generation which has learned how to do it.”

C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, A free ebook from <http://manybooks.net/> p.20.

⁵¹ Oakeshott, *Voice* p. 21.

Liberal education could survive only in a closet far from any practical relevance. The contemporary liberal education can be found mainly in departments following the philosophical ideal, searching speculative truth and beauty. The ideal of gentleman declined, and the philosophical ideal of open rational discussion aiming truth, called deliberative democracy is strong today. Political and moral thinking has been being dominated partly by the liberal casuistry, i.e. analytic philosophy, and partly by several emancipating versions of post-moderns.

Liberal education was connected originally to the Ciceronian republicanism, to the philosopher in action, who takes part actively in political-moral community and tries to find the propriety. Cicero's phrase *artes qua libero sunt dignae* has been and it is still aristocratic, claiming freedom and leisure⁵², and aiming public leading roles. So *otium* may effect somehow *negotium*. Emphasis is on both "effect" and "somehow". One of the scandal concerning liberal education is the lack of its methodology and the highly probable results arrived by it.

Political agency described above does not only differ from social engineering, but overtly opposes the dominant political ideal of morally free and consensual, only technically and impersonally dominated people. Liberal education as education for political agency is about decision making. But the notion of decision contains enforcement, because making decision among competing claims means to overshadow some, therefore a decision always means enforcing some people and their claims. No decision can be perfectly founded, there may be always some criticism concerning it, thus the ideas of decision and liberal education oppose a wall-to-wall consensus and implying enforcement.

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⁵² Vukan Kuic, "Work, Leisure and Culture" *The Review of Politics* Vol. 43, No. 3 (Jul., 1981), pp. 436-465.

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