

POLITICAL ZOOLOGY

EDITORIAL

The difference between the right and the left dwindles, appears as progressively unclear. With respect to the right and the left, one could say what Augustine maintains about time. If no one asks us what the right and the left are, we know it well; yet if someone asks us, we no longer know. What kind of odd mutant animals have the right and the left become, or are they? In any case, such shock concepts are present and active within the public space; therefore they are particularly relevant to *Spazio Filosofico*.

The essays that have been gathered in this issue of *Spazio Filosofico* (some from the right, some from the left, and some from neither) try to cast some light on this topic. With respect to their subject matter, they behave a little like Goethe; when having to distinguish among natural forms that were diverse and yet similar, intertwined, and related to one another, Goethe admitted to his frequent difficulties since he did not “dare plant his stake or draw a boundary line” and could “never hope for an indisputable application” of norms and definitions. Goethe asked: “What should we think of some many irregular malformations?”

With respect to this state of fluidity, this extreme passage from one form to the other, and these rightist and leftist monsters that are currently circulating, one could emphasize the mobility of nature – in the current case, the mobility of political forms – as Goethe did. Or one could do like Linnaeus, whom Goethe claimed to admire without wishing to duplicate him, and try to isolate political forms in their pure essence, independent from interferences and turbulences that deconstruct and muddle their borders. “I thus came to regard Linnaeus and the scholars who came after him as legislators who, less concerned with what is than with what should be,” provide unordered phenomena with an unsurpassable border. “When regarding Linnaeus in this light ... I started to feel an increasingly reverential awe for this unique man.... At the same time, however, I also felt that another path was perhaps possible for me.”¹

What is such a path? Is it possible to sidestep the classificatory fixity maintained by those who mistake historical forms for essences impermeable to time while at the same time avoiding the simple affirmation that no distinction is possible? When framed in this manner, the problem of the distinction between the right and the left is a classical problem of philosophical practices. The right and the left continuously metamorphose into each other, and not since just now. How can we “be saved from the unlimited multiplicity, fragmentation, and complication” of modern political theory? Goethe’s conclusion is that if we do not wish to be disoriented and want instead “to return to the

¹ J.W. Goethe, *Entstehen des Aufsatzes über Metamorphose der Pflanzen*, in Id., *Sämtliche Werke*, 40 voll. (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985), section I, vol. 24, pp. 412-413.

simplicity” (which is also pragmatic) of distinctions, then “we always have to ask ourselves: what would have Plato done?”²

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(translated from Italian by Silvia Benso)

² Goethe, *Sämtliche Maximen und Reflexionen*, in Id., *Sämtliche Werke*, cit., section I, vol. 13, p. 159.