

J. C. Nyíri

TURN THE LEAF



Dunabogdány, 2024

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Cover illustration:
A page from C. G. Jung's *Red Book*

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Preface

With the deadline to deliver my envisaged paper “The Collapse of Democracies and the Need for a New Aristocracy” imminent (the endeavour made possible by the publisher allowing me to use the reference style I insist on, that is old-fashioned footnotes), I feel I am at a crossroads necessitating to take stock of the work I had done during the past few years. In the present slim volume I have collected four online essays. “The Merits of Self-Publishing” and “Back to the Roots – Conservatism Revindicated” were published in 2020, “Turn the Leaf” in 2022 (in the volume [*Facing the Future, Facing the Screen*](#)), while the somewhat longer paper “Back to the Past: Notes towards a Conservative Revolution” in 2023. The cover illustration is a page from C. G. Jung’s *Red Book* reflecting Jung’s yearning for bygone ages. If you care to take a glance at the present online volume, I suggest you use the “Two-Up Continuous” pdf mode.

Dunabogdány, March 17, 2024

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1. The Merits of Self-Publishing

In his famous 1938 paper “The Age of the World Picture” Heidegger wrote: “The scholar disappears and is replaced by the researcher engaged in research programs. These, and not the cultivation of scholarship, are what places his work at the cutting edge. The researcher no longer needs a library at home. He is, moreover, constantly on the move. He negotiates at conferences and collects information at congresses. He commits himself to publishers’ commissions. It is publishers who now determine which books need to be written.”¹ Let us skip the sentence “The researcher no longer needs a library at home”, so obviously true today, but, at the time Heidegger pronounced it, an uncanny premonition rather than a statement of fact or a prediction of technological developments actually foreseen. I want to reflect on the assertion that it is publishers who (and I add: today much more effectively than in the 1930s) determine what should be written. Of course the typical publication today is not the book but the paper, even in the humanities or more broadly the social sciences, the fields I have before my mind’s eye in the present brief essay. So how does the process of publishing a scholarly paper look like?

First, the author (for simplicity’s sake, let us speak of single authors) gets an idea (or does not get an idea, about this more soon), decides to write a paper, and produces a list of possible journals he or she might send the contemplated manuscript to. This list is important, because most journals have very detailed requirements as to the structure, referencing style, etc. of the papers they publish (and here begins the determining role of publishers). On the other hand the list is not really important, since most journals adhere to some variation of the APA style.²

¹ Martin Heidegger, “Die Zeit des Weltbildes” (1938), here quoted from the translation by Julian Young and Kenneth Hayes in Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 64.

² Cf. my https://www.academia.edu/41951747/HOW_TO_CITE_The_Glory_and_Misery_of_the_author_year_Reference_Style. An overwhelmingly convincing, in-

The author now sits down to actually write the paper. Whatever he has to say, he must be careful not to frustrate possible referees. Indeed it is wise to include in the references works by any probable referees the author can think of. It does not matter if those works are actually irrelevant, the (author, year) reference system does not require a genuine context. Even so, the scheme will not work flawlessly, the referees, if at all benign, will voice wishes. The journal's editor will have a suggestion, too, namely that the author should refer to some papers that have been published in that very journal – think of the impact factor. Revisions ensue. Eventually, if all goes well, the paper gets published. But very few people will read it; as a matter of statistical fact, in most cases nobody will read it.

So why do authors go to all this trouble? The reason, of course, is the “publish or perish” pressure.³ Whenever they have some spare hours – which seldom happens, since most of their time is spent on writing grant applications⁴ while collapsing under the usual teaching burdens – they will be worrying not about how to add new insights to their research field, but about how to add new items to their list of publications. The safest way here is to participate in conferences. Your university pays for it. You travel, you contribute, if not to scholarship, but at least to the climate catastrophe. Still, your paper – practically the same paper given again and again, given to the same audience again and again – will be published.

Is there an alternative? Certainly there is, but not within the framework of the present university system. At the moment, the option to bypass editors, referees, publishers and the rest, that is the possibility to practice online self-publishing, to choose the format and layout one finds adequate, not to care about copyright issues, to face

deed staggering, analysis of what the catastrophic implications of the (author, year) reference style amount to is a paper by Nicholas C. Burbules, “The Changing Functions of Citation: From Knowledge Networking to Academic Cash-value”, *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education*, vol. 51, no. 6 (2015), pp. 716–726. I have exploited this paper by Burbules in my “How to Cite” piece quite essentially.

³ Cf. http://www.hunfi.hu/nyiri/selected_fb_entries.pdf, entry of April 5, 2020.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, entry of April 9, 2020.

genuine post-publication reader judgement instead of phony pre-publication refereeing, is open only to outsiders – e.g. retired professionals like me, past the job-hunting and grant-seeking age, or say to amateurs safely embedded in a different discipline. However when the present pandemic is over, when the smoke lifts, a revolution – a conservative revolution – will be inevitable. Our way of life will have to change. The university system will have to change. And last but not least, our publishing patterns might – indeed they should – very fundamentally change.

2. Back to the Roots – Conservatism Revindicated

Wittgenstein and Heidegger

The paper in which I first gave expression to what might be taken as my conservative world-view began with a quote from Wittgenstein: “Men have judged that a king can make rain; we say this contradicts all experience. Today they judge that aeroplanes and the radio etc. are means for the closer contact of people and the spread of culture.”¹ Two passages by Heidegger, written in the 1930s, form an interesting parallel: “These days, airplanes and radios belong among the things that are closest to us”², and: there occurs “the annihilation of great distances by the airplane, in the setting before us of foreign and remote worlds in their everydayness, which is produced at random through radio by a flick of the hand”³. Heidegger was definitely not fond of travelling to remote worlds. Where he felt safe – indeed philosophically safe – was in his hut up the mountains in the Black Forests, and in the pub not far from that hut, in the company of village peasants, smoking his pipe in silence. As he put it: “my whole work is sustained and guided by the world of these mountains and their people. Lately from time to time my work up there is interrupted for long stretches by conferences, lecture trips, committee meetings and my teaching work”.⁴ The world of conferences and

¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, § 132, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, remark written in April 1950. I am referring to my paper “Wittgenstein’s New Traditionalism”, *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 28/1–3 (1976).

² Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1935-36), translated by Julian Young, in Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, edited and translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 4.

³ Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture” (1938), in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, edited and translated by William Lovitt, New York: Garland Publishing, 1977, p. 135.

⁴ Heidegger, “Why Do I Stay in the Provinces?” (1933), translated by Thomas J. Sheehan, in *Martin Heidegger: Philosophical and Political Writings*, ed. by Manfred Stassen, New York: Continuum, 2003, p. 17.

lecture trips was one Heidegger detested. Compare a famous passage by him: “The scholar disappears and is replaced by the researcher engaged in research programs. These, and not the cultivation of scholarship, are what places his work at the cutting edge. The researcher no longer needs a library at home. He is, moreover, constantly on the move. He negotiates at conferences and collects information at congresses. He commits himself to publishers’ commissions. It is publishers who now determine which books need to be written.”⁵ I will come back to this passage towards the end of the present essay.

Both Wittgenstein and Heidegger were conservative thinkers, holding conservative views of man and history. In Heidegger’s case this has of course never been in doubt.⁶ And for half a century now I have been arguing that Wittgenstein, too, was a conservative, indeed a rather old-fashioned conservative.⁷ My arguments have been generally rejected,⁸ but I am sick and tired of repeating the obvious over and over again. Let me here just quote one surely remarkable passage, written by Wittgenstein in 1948: “I think the way people are educated nowadays tends to diminish their capacity for suffering. At present a school is reckoned good if the children have a good time. And that used *not* to be the criterion. Parents moreover want their children to grow up like themselves (only more so), but nevertheless subject them to an education *quite* different from their own. – Endurance of

⁵ Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture”, translated by Julian Young, in *Off the Beaten Track*, p. 64.

⁶ A broad survey is Daniel Morat, *Von der Tat zur Gelassenheit: Konservatives Denken bei Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger und Friedrich Georg Jünger 1920–1960*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007.

⁷ See especially my paper “[Wittgenstein’s Later Work in relation to Conservatism](#)”, in Brian McGuinness (ed.), *Wittgenstein and his Times*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1982, pp. 44–68, and the chapter “Heidegger and Wittgenstein”, in my volume [Tradition and Individuality](#), Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992, pp. 93–103.

⁸ For a recent summary of those arguments, and for some references to the criticisms of my position, see my “[Conservatism and Common-Sense Realism](#)”, *The Monist*, vol. 9, no. 4 (Oct. 2016), pp. 441–456.

suffering isn't rated highly because there is supposed not to be any suffering – really it's out of date.”⁹

Where Wittgenstein Failed

Wittgenstein's theorizing about human nature and cognition has a definite historical context: the Austrian and German neo-conservative movement of the 1920s and 30s, emerging in the aftermath of the Great War. Think of Spengler, think of the German Dostoevsky cult. The neo-conservatives faced a dilemma. While on the one hand they maintained that what holds together society cannot be but common traditions and ideals, on the other hand they had to realize that such traditions and ideals have been, by their time, irretrievably lost. Both Heidegger and Wittgenstein escaped this dilemma by transforming it into a purely philosophical one. The philosophy Heidegger developed became, by the late 1930s, a rather impenetrable kind of new metaphysics. In Wittgenstein's case the development was towards a philosophy of common-sense realism. His famous, far-reaching insight: the meaning of a word is not some abstract idea, but the way we *use* that word.¹⁰ Now using is *doing*: what society is held together by is “not an agreement in *opinions*”¹¹, agreements in beliefs, but agreements, regularities in the “common behaviour of mankind”¹². As Wittgenstein then in his last years added: one must “recognize certain authorities in order to make judgements at all”, and: one cannot even

⁹ MS 168, p. 2, entry dated 30.5.48, here quoted from Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, transl. by Peter Winch (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 71e. The expressions “if the children have a good time” and “only more so” are in English in the German original.

¹⁰ For the central formulation here see § 43 of Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963.

¹¹ Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (1956 – notes edited from Wittgenstein's manuscripts), translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998, Part VI, § 49.

¹² Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 206.

err – that is, one loses altogether the capacity for rational thought – if one does not “judge in conformity” with some group or other.¹³

During a lecture series he gave in 1939, Wittgenstein made an intriguing remark: “The important point is to see that the meaning of a word can be represented in two different ways: (1) by an image or picture, or something which corresponds to the word, (2) by the use of the word – which also comes to the use of the picture.”¹⁴ It is not entirely clear whether Wittgenstein here refers to pictures in the sense of metaphors, or to visual images, but certainly the latter constituted a crucial topic both in his early and later philosophy. The so-called *Brown Book* – a dictation to his Cambridge students in which he felt he made such a progress that he even began to translate it into German, in 1936, in a hut in Norway he had built for himself – has some pages showing, and discussing, schematic drawings of human faces, of specific facial expressions, say of a friendly mouth. Visual images some years later become a central topic in the manuscript which the editors decided to publish as “Part II” of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Images, Wittgenstein here strives to say, can express meanings words cannot; images can function as *natural signs*. In a manuscript entry written in 1946 Wittgenstein hypothesizes about some possible ways a tribe imagined by him might think: “To this people certain gestures, certain images, & so also certain words, are natural. And some of this is tradition, some are / original / reactions which were not (or at least not directly) given rise to / caused / by the influencing of the child on the part of the adults.”¹⁵ What Wittgenstein here does not, and nowhere does, explain: what is the basis of our spontaneous reactions to certain fundamental primitive visual patterns, say a friendly smile, say a newborn baby’s reaction to its mother’s smile? Wittgenstein’s theory of the visual, and in a broader sense his conservatism, is in need of completion. Strangely, it can be completed by join-

¹³ *On Certainty*, §§ 493 and 156.

¹⁴ *Wittgenstein’s Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, edited by Cora Diamond, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976, p. 190.

¹⁵ MS 133, p. 41r, entered on Nov. 17, 1946, “on the part of the adults” in the manuscript crossed out.

ing it with the work of another member of the Austro-German neo-conservative movement of the 1920s and 30s, a work in itself very much incomplete, too: the work of the psychiatrist C. G. Jung.

Primordial Images

In his famous essay “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes”, published in English in 1917,¹⁶ Jung wrote: “In every individual, in addition to the personal memories, there are also ... the great ‘primordial images’, the inherited potentialities of human imagination. They have always been potentially latent in the structure of the brain.” These images, Jung goes on to write, constitute the content of a *collective unconscious*, they are “imprinted on the human brain for untold ages”, are “images formed in the brain”, and they encompass “the wisdom of the experience of untold ages, deposited in the course of time and lying potential in the human brain”.¹⁷ A basic primordial image is that of the *mother*, the mother archetype, the loving mother with her loving smile, but also the mother who destroys you, with the hatred in her eyes betraying her smile.¹⁸ In his later writings, Jung gradually deleted almost all references to the human brain, the collective unconscious became a mystical/metaphysical notion, with “primordial images” divested of any perceptual/visual dimensions. Wittgenstein failed to see mankind’s history as a hidden source be-

¹⁶ Full title: “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes: Being a Survey of the Modern Theory and Method of Analytical Psychology”, translated by Dora Hecht, in C. G. Jung, *Collected Papers on Analytical Psychology*, 2nd edition, ed. by C. E. Long, London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox, 1917. Originally published as *Die Psychologie der unbewussten Prozesse: Ein Ueberblick über die moderne Theorie und Methode der analytischen Psychologie*. For the further – amazing – publication history of this work see p. 5 of my *Forever Jung*, https://www.academia.edu/42736672/Forever_Jung.

¹⁷ “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes”, pp. 410, 413, 432, 442.

¹⁸ Compare Jung’s *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*, 1911/12, translated as *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido: A Contribution to the History of the Evolution of Thought* (New York: Moffatt, Yard and Co., and London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1917).

hind individual mental images; Jung on the other hand eventually became blind to the fundamental visuality of the latter.

The Road Back

While Jung, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger all shared some kind of a conservative world-view, their conservatisms were of differing radicalness. Jung had an active yearning for long-bygone primordial ages; Wittgenstein spoke of the “darkness of this time”¹⁹ but believed that “the sickness of a time” cannot be cured by purposeful action;²⁰ Heidegger warned that “[t]he flight into tradition, out of a combination of humility and presumption, achieves, in itself, nothing, is merely a closing the eyes and blindness towards the historical moment”.²¹ Now the historical moment today, with the pandemic clearly showing that the past century or so has led us into a blind alley, seems to me to call for a conservatism more radical than even Jung represented, for a conservatism the politically so very misguided neo-conservative movement to which he belonged proved unable to formulate, although possessing an adequate slogan: that of a “conservative revolution”. It is this slogan we today have to give content to. The task is to go back to the juncture where the blind alley was chosen. The sickness of our time consists in over-industrialization, overpopulation, extreme globalization, health-care aiming at prolonging age beyond any humanly reasonable point, and last but not least: the rise of the mass university. It is the phenomenon of the mass university I indirectly alluded to in the first paragraph of the present essay, and it is with pointing to some sobering aspects of the mass university I will now conclude.

¹⁹ See the “Preface” to his *Philosophical Investigations*.

²⁰ “The sickness of a time is cured by an alteration in the mode of life of human beings, ... not through a medicine invented by an individual. – Think of the use of the motor-car producing or encouraging certain sicknesses, and mankind being plagued by such sickness until, from some cause or other, as the result of some development or other, it abandons the habit of driving.” (Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* [see above, note 11], Part II, § 23.)

²¹ Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture” (see above, note 3), p. 72.

Well before the pandemic arrived, the crucial connection between professors and students that had characterized the classical research university has become illusory, and indeed phoney. Professors, and their assistants striving for tenure-track and eventually for a professorship of their own, as a rule regard teaching as an unpleasant burden. What they really concentrate on are other unpleasant burdens: those of fundraising; of compulsory publishing which increasingly involves impact-factor manipulation; and on the perhaps less unpleasant but mostly sterile practice of participating, say monthly or even weekly, in conferences. Conferences help in getting papers published, but it is a fact that most of those papers are never read by anyone. What the present system of mass conferences adds to is just mass tourism. The road back fundamentally involves a new localism, with the resurrection of research universities that have a brick-and-mortar basis even while exploiting all the wonderful potentials of on-line communication and the web. But those potentials, too, need to be critically examined. Wittgenstein and Heidegger were clearly pessimistic about the radio. We today need a measure of pessimism when it comes to the internet. That pessimism, I am afraid, is part of conservatism revindicated.

3. Turn the Leaf

Scrolling down a text is not an entirely new experience in human history. In ancient Greece the earliest texts were written on clay or wax tablets, with parchment scrolls as the next development. Then came the codex, with pages one could turn, first in very crude forms, however much refined during the Middle Ages,¹ lastly becoming, in Gutenberg's time, the printed book as we today know it. In the past decades the typical layout of the printed book has changed. Footnotes became endnotes, then were often dropped entirely, with the (author, year) reference system becoming mainstream. Now you really have to turn the pages – going from the main text to the bibliography at the end of the chapter or the volume every time you encounter a reference, and then going back to the main text again.² Printed books, and printed journals, are today produced in previously unknown numbers – alas mostly by predatory publishers, terrorizing and financially exploiting authors. However, those books and journals are hardly read by anyone. The printed text has been supplanted by the digital document you read on your screen. This development is not an altogether felicitous one, as by now pointed out in many scholarly contributions. My favourite is Andrew Piper's *Book Was There: Reading in Electronic Times*.³ Piper's main message: "Reading isn't only a matter of our brains; it's something that we do with our bodies." He refers to those well-known lines in Augustine's *Confessions* telling about his

¹ By the 13th century there emerged codices with complex visual layouts, including specific images directing the reader's eye to the appropriate place in the text. See Anna Somfai's brilliant paper "Visual Thinking: A Cognitive Reading of Codex Layouts", in András Benedek – Kristóf Nyíri (eds.), [Visual Learning: A Year After](#), Visual Learning Lab Papers no. 9, Budapest University of Technology and Economics, 2019.

² Cf. my paper "[How to Cite: The Glory and Misery of the \(author, year\) Reference Style](#)", 2020.

³ The University of Chicago Press, 2012. I will quote from his online selection "[Out of Touch: E-reading isn't reading](#)".

conversion, picking up, reading and then closing the Bible, marking his place with his finger. “Augustine”, Piper continues,

was writing at the end of the fourth century, when the codex had largely superseded the scroll as the most prevalent form of reading material. We know Augustine was reading a book from the way he randomly accesses a page and uses his finger to mark his place. The conversion at the heart of *The Confessions* was an affirmation of the new technology of the book within the lives of individuals, indeed, as the technology that helped turn readers *into* individuals. Turning the page, not turning the handle of the scroll, was the new technical prelude to undergoing a major turn in one’s own life.

As Piper then puts it, the “graspability of the book” is of enormous significance;⁴ he points to Aristotle’s view that touch is the most elementary sense. Thus in today’s digital world touchscreens and handheld devices, Piper suggests, may amount to a way forward; still, digital documents should not supplant printed ones. Ideally, printed and digital texts might complement each other.⁵

Another line of reasoning is one initiated by Dimler in 1986,⁶ analyzing the setbacks not just of reading on the screen, but also of composing texts on it. I have described in detail Dimler’s argument,

⁴ See also Tim Challis, [“5 Reasons Books Are Better Than E-Books”](#): “Books are a tactile experience. An e-book reduces books to merely words; a printed book maintains that a book is far more than words – it is an experience and an object. Books can be touched, they can be held, they can be smelled (particularly if they are old!). A book includes a cover, a binding, a slip cover, the texture of words or images impressed upon that cover, the pages, the deckled edges, the weight of the paper, the feel of turning a page. All of these elements combine to make a book what it is.”

⁵ Cf. Andrew Piper et al., *Interacting with Print: Elements of Reading in the Era of Print Saturation*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018, p. 16: “We think the fusion of print and digital media will prove in the end to offer a substantial contribution to how we as academics think and communicate.”

⁶ G. Richard Dimler, S.J., “Word Processing and the New Electronic Language”, *Thought*, vol. 61, no. 243 (Dec. 1986).

and similar ones following upon it, in my 1994 paper “[Thinking with a Word Processor](#)”.⁷ Let me quote somewhat longer from that paper:

... a text composed on screen tends to be less coherent than a text composed in handwriting or on the typewriter. The reason for this is obvious. Maintaining coherence is a matter of comparing texts with each other, as well as of comparing one bit of a text with other bits of the same text. On screen such comparisons can be executed to a very limited extent only. Depending on the system used and the kind of display available, one, two, or even more documents can be viewed simultaneously; but of each document only a small segment will be exposed at a time. Comparison of segments of texts – their juxtaposition – is of course becoming less awkward as programs allowing for a flexible use of so-called “windows” are increasingly available. Working with windows does indeed resemble working with sheets of paper – but the resemblance is confined to narrow limits. A synoptic view of all accessible and relevant documents, or even of a single extended document, is not possible to attain. Contradictions become difficult to spot; the unity of a text difficult to sustain. A decrease in logical rigor is the inevitable consequence.

And finally a third approach, that of Sven Birkerts in his *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*, of which book I sense faint echoes in the Challis piece quoted above (see note 4). As Birkerts puts it: “our sense of the past ... is in some essential way represented by the book and the physical accumulation of books in library spaces. In the contemplation of the single volume, or mass of volumes, we form a picture of time past as a growing deposit of sediment; we capture a sense of its depth and dimensionality.”⁸

⁷ In R. Casati (ed.), *Philosophy and the Cognitive Sciences*, Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1994, pp. 63–74.

⁸ Boston: Faber and Faber, 1994, p. 129.

Now whatever arguments we might marshal in favour of the printed book, fact of the matter is that students today (as well as most people) do not read long texts, neither in print nor on the screen. Being brief is the new normal. Working with digital texts, using the rich resources of the internet, and indeed recognizing that brief documents, texts and images, in these days have their clear advantages, seems to be inevitable. How to achieve a balance between the printed and the digital? My impression is that such a balance can only emerge if we in a sense embark on a road leading back to earlier times in human cultural history, or to put it bluntly: to earlier times in human history. That means turning a leaf not just in a book.

4. Back to the Past: Notes towards a Conservative Revolution

There is a saying that has now circulated for many decades or even centuries, in various forms, attributed to various sources, let me here quote the variant Winston Churchill is credited with: “If you’re under 30 and not a liberal, you don’t have a heart, but if you are over 30 and not conservative, you don’t have a brain.” If Churchill was right, I am definitely a heartless person, having written a paper in an unmistakably conservative spirit at the age of 28. This was the paper “The Unhappy Life of Ludwig Wittgenstein”¹. Here I interpret Wittgenstein as being an old-fashioned conservative, a traditionalist,² and quote this passage from his early notebooks: “I cannot bend the happenings of the world to my will: I am completely powerless.”³ Next let me mention my talk “Musil und Wittgenstein”, given in 1975 in Graz (Austria).⁴ Musil had rather diversified views on conservatism, I will come back to them below, but first I want to stay with Wittgenstein. In my 1975 talk I focussed on his later work which, I suggested, ultimately implies that *freedom*, “if by that expression one understands something else than being bound to genuine traditions, is sim-

¹ “Das unglückliche Leben des Ludwig Wittgenstein”, *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, vol. 26, no. 4 (1972), reprinted in my volume [Gefühl und Gefüge](#) (1986).

² Wittgenstein believing, as I had put it, in a “Traditionen entsprechend gelebte[s] Leben”, having a “Widerwillen gegen jede Veränderung des Bestehenden” (*Gefühl und Gefüge*, p. 124). I quoted his formula “The sickness of a time is cured by an alteration in the form of life of human beings” (*Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Appendix II, § 4), and claimed that Wittgenstein’s message here was: alterations having an ideological motivation, consciously/actively brought about, cannot in fact lead to a healthier society (cf. *Gefühl und Gefüge*, p. 131).

³ *Notebooks 1914–16*, 11. 6. 16.

⁴ The talk was published in the journal *Literatur und Kritik* 113 (Apr. 1977) and also in the *Conceptus* special issue *Österreichische Philosophen* (1977). Reprinted in my volume *Gefühl und Gefüge*.

ply incompatible with any sort of rationality”.⁵ I referred to Wittgenstein’s Russian teacher Fania Pascal recalling her student’s political worldview in the mid-thirties: “At a time when intellectual Cambridge was turning Left he was still an old-time conservative of the late Austro-Hungarian Empire”⁶; then I cited the Nestroy-motto at the beginning of the *Philosophical Investigations*: “Überhaupt hat der Fortschritt das an sich, daß er viel größer aussieht, als er wirklich ist”, that is: “Progress at all is such that it looks much greater than it really is”⁷, and of course I quoted from the 1930 preface to the *Philosophical Remarks*: “This book is written for such men as are in sympathy with its spirit. This spirit is different from the one which informs the vast stream of European and American civilization in which all of us stand. That spirit expresses itself in an onwards movement, in building ever larger and more complicated structures...”. The phrase “onwards movement” stands for “Fortschritt” in the original German; the translators and the editor⁸ obviously recoiled from letting the reader know, even in this unmistakably social-political context, that Wittgenstein was an enemy of progress – that is, a conservative. I concluded my talk by suggesting that Musil’s work in a sense might provide a key for understanding what Wittgenstein’s

⁵ *Gefühl und Gefüge*, p. 144.

⁶ “Wittgenstein: A Personal Memoir”, *Encounter*, August 1973, reprinted in Rush Rhees (ed.), *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, Oxford University Press, 1984, the quoted passage on p. 17.

⁷ Incredibly, prior to the Hacker – Schulte version (2009), no English translation of the motto has been included in the *Philosophical Investigations* editions. Incredible, but at the same time easy to explain. As the literature shows, Wittgensteinians were eager to argue that the word “progress” here refers to the philosopher’s own progress as he saw it at the time, not to progress in some social-historical sense. The idea was to deny that Wittgenstein’s philosophy had any political relevance. This idea was of course untenable (and thus not put forward in the literature) when it came to the preface of the *Philosophical Remarks* (see the next passage in the main text above). Incidentally, the Hacker – Schulte rendering of the motto – “The trouble about progress is that it always looks much greater than it really is” – strikes me as a mistranslation, the word “trouble” is not there in the original German. I wonder what the editors were troubled by.

⁸ Translators: Raymond Hargreaves and Roger White. Editor: Rush Rhees.

problem really was. “This problem”, I wrote, “is that of an age in which the dissolution of naturally-grown human communities has reached such a degree that the illusions of liberal anthropology cannot anymore be upheld.”⁹ Liberal anthropology believes that human beings can develop an autonomous inner self which can liberate them from the moral-cognitive bonds of society, i.e. they can become independent individuals. However, with those social bonds vanishing, there remains nothing against which the notion of being an individual makes sense. Wittgenstein here certainly drew the appropriate epistemological consequences, by introducing the conceptual framework of custom, of conformity, of rule-following, of training¹⁰ (as opposed to explanation), and the use-theory of meaning.¹¹ Wittgenstein’s new

⁹ “Dieses Problem ist das einer Zeit, in welcher der Auflösungsprozeß der naturwüchsigen menschlichen Gemeinwesen bereits derart fortgeschritten ist, daß die Illusionen der liberalen Anthropologie nicht mehr aufrechtzuerhalten sind” (*Gefühl und Gefüge*, p. 147).

¹⁰ See e.g. *Philosophical Investigations*, §§ 5 f. Wittgenstein uses the word “Abrichtung”, an expression with clearly authoritarian connotations. In the English editions the term is translated in a politically biased way. As I put it in my https://www.academia.edu/49537957/DOES_WITTGENSTEIN_SCHOLARSHIP_REST_ON_A_MISTRANSLATION?: »PU § 5 last lines and § 6 first lines run: “Solche ... Formen der Sprache verwendet das Kind, wenn es sprechen lernt. Das Lehren der Sprache ist hier kein Erklären, sondern ein Abrichten.” The 1953 Anscombe translation has: “A child uses ... primitive forms of language when it learns to talk. Here the teaching of language is not explanation, but training.” Now among the dictionary meanings of the word “Abrichten” you can certainly find “training”, but the primary translation should be “drill”. I am not surprised about Anscombe’s translation – she was not at home in the German language, my mother tongue – but I would have expected the 2009 Hacker – Schulte translation to rectify this passage, the only modification however Hacker and Schulte made here was to change the pronoun “it” to “he”, a change I find unexplainable but uninteresting. What is interesting is that the term “training” does not have the connotation “drill” has: *submitting to unthinking obedience*.«

¹¹ The use-theory of meaning has a conservative ring since it claims that the senses of the words we use are not based on the individual’s inner mental world, but rather on established community usage. Let me here note that the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski provided, in an 1923 essay, an explanation of this issue far superior to that of Wittgenstein’s, see my [“Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Post-Literacy”](#), and [“Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Secondary Orality”](#). Now not

epistemology implied that instead of giving up yet more traditions, we should re-create bonds and boundaries.

My paper “Wittgenstein’s New Traditionalism”¹² (1976) was composed in the same vein, but covered a broader scope of Wittgenstein’s oeuvre than the “Musil und Wittgenstein” talk did, with the references to Wittgenstein’s conservatism markedly more explicit. As I here wrote: “Wittgenstein’s so-called later philosophy is the embodiment of a conservative-traditionalist view of history, and ... this philosophy in fact provides a logical foundation for such a view.”¹³ It was in this paper I first mentioned the impact Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* obviously had on Wittgenstein.¹⁴ Also, I drew attention to some specific remarks he wrote towards the end of his life, remarks in which Wittgenstein’s traditionalism, and the close

only is Malinowski nowhere (do check the Nachlaß!) mentioned by Wittgenstein, but I do not know (I am sure I am just not sufficiently well-read) of works analyzing the two in a shared framework (would you believe that not even Gebauer’s *Wittgenstein’s Anthropological Philosophy* does refer to Malinowski?). The only exception I am aware of is Perry Anderson’s 1968 *New Left Review* paper “Components of the National Culture”, where the author discusses both Wittgenstein and Malinowski under the heading “white emigration”. Anderson’s paper is written from a shockingly extremist political (leftist) perspective, but is at the same time shockingly lucid and informative. May I here add that Anderson’s 1998 *The Origins of Postmodernity* is in my opinion by far the best (albeit politically biased) summary of its subject. I am adding this because I believe that whatever Anderson in this book writes about Wittgenstein, and whatever Wittgenstein was or was not, he was definitely a prototype of the postmodern philosopher (on my nutshell view on postmodernism, see below).

¹² *Acta Philosophica Fennica*, vol. 28, nos. 1–3, pp. 503–512. Reprinted in my volume [Tradition and Individuality](#) (Kluwer, 1992).

¹³ *Tradition and Individuality*, p. 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 2 f. — Let me here add that Wittgenstein’s use both of the terms “Familienähnlichkeit” and “Lebensform” (originally non-technical expressions in everyday German) show Spengler’s impact. For the Spengler / Wittgenstein / family resemblances connection see esp. the latter’s *Philosophical Grammar*, transl. by Anthony Kenny, Oxford: Blackwell, 1974, p. 299. “Lebensform” occurs conspicuously – already in the table of contents – in Spengler’s *Preussentum und Sozialismus* (1919), and is a recurring term in *The Decline of the West* (1919). On the *form of life* term’s history see also below, note 17.

connection of this traditionalism to his later theories, becomes most apparent. One must, claimed Wittgenstein, “recognize certain authorities to make judgments at all”; authorities, for instance, like our *school*, or our inherited world-picture; *foundations*, against which any doubt is hollow. “My *life*”, he wrote, “consists in my being content to accept many things.”¹⁵

Then came the essay “Wittgensteins Spätwerk im Kontext des Konservatismus”.¹⁶ Its introductory footnote states that I here “attempt to elaborate historically some theses which were put forward in my paper ‘Wittgenstein’s New Traditionalism’”. The central move in that elaboration was to connect Wittgenstein’s later philosophy to the Austrian and German neo-conservatism of the 1920s and 30s. Spengler was a dominant precursor of the trend, to which, among many others, Heidegger¹⁷ and C. G. Jung, too, belonged. Thomas Mann in

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6, cf. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §§ 493, 47, 664, 94, 449, 312, 344.

¹⁶ Based on a talk held in Kirchberg/Wechsel in 1977, published in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Schriften*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, Beiheft 3: *Wittgenstein’s geistige Erscheinung*. English translation: [“Wittgenstein’s Later Work in relation to Conservatism”](#), in *Wittgenstein and his Times*, ed. by Brian McGuinness, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, pp. 44–68.

¹⁷ I have given a talk (first published in Hungarian in 1990) in which I made some very detailed comparisons between Heidegger’s and Wittgenstein’s ideas, as well as between the diverse philosophical backgrounds of their conservative world-views, cf. ch. 9 of my volume *Tradition and Individuality* (see note 12 above). Naturally I there referred to Wittgenstein’s 1929 remark “To be sure, I can understand what Heidegger means by being and anxiety” (cf. *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle – Conversations Recorded by Friedrich Waismann*, transl. by Joachim Schulte and Brian McGuinness, ed. by Brian McGuinness, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, p. 68; for the whole complicated history of this remark – and the suppression of the reference to Heidegger in the first publication of the remark – see Peter Keicher, [“Untersuchungen zu Wittgensteins ‘Diktat für Schlick’”](#)). In the literature the question is sometimes raised whether Wittgenstein has actually read the book *Sein und Zeit*. I believe this is unlikely, but of course at that time Heidegger’s ideas were absolutely in the air. And Wittgenstein might easily have encountered Heidegger’s 1928 review of Cassirer’s *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Part II, *Mythical Thought* (1925), which appeared in the *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, a widely read journal. Heidegger refers to *Sein und Zeit* in the review at the point where he introduces his crucial notion of “thrownness”. Incidentally,

his 1921 paper “Russische Anthologie” used the term “conservative revolution”, the term taken from Dostoevsky, a figure, as I see it, having a debilitating influence on Austro-German neo-conservatism, the latter soon to be spiritually and physically destroyed by Hitler. Wittgenstein, as we know, was absolutely devoted to Dostoevsky.

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In my 1977 essay I quoted a formula by Gerd-Klaus Kaltenbrunner, from his “Der schwierige Konservatismus”. The man of conservative character, Kaltenbrunner there writes, is “devoted to the familiar and mistrustful of all novelties; he ... affirms instinctively the durable, the constant, the traditional; ... and [he] would rather underestimate than overestimate his fellow men”.¹⁸ Now in recent years psychologists and political scientists have succeeded in providing a rather more articulated, empirical and experimental characterization of what might be termed a genetically determined conservative personality, suggesting that in a broad sense not only conservatism, but also liberalism – the striving for ever more freedom, if you

the concept of a “form of life” is conspicuously present in the Cassirer volume, and is repeatedly used in Heidegger’s review. The literature on Heidegger and the conservative revolution is substantial, let me here just mention Daniel Morat, *Von der Tat zur Gelassenheit: Konservatives Denken bei Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger und Friedrich Georg Jünger, 1920–1960*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007, and the recent book by Reinhard Mehring, *Martin Heidegger und die “konservative Revolution”*, 2nd ed., Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2018, which I find particularly informative on the role of Thomas Mann. I am obliged to Tobias Adler-Bartels for alerting me to the Mehring volume.

¹⁸ G.-K. Kaltenbrunner (ed.), *Rekonstruktion des Konservatismus*, Freiburg i.B.: Rombach, 1972, p. 35. See also my references to Kaltenbrunner in the chapter “Wittgenstein 1929–31: Conservatism and Jewishness”, in my volume *Tradition and Individuality*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992, pp. 15 and 117. The chapter is an abridged version of the study “Wittgenstein 1929–1931: Die Rückkehr”, *KODI-KAS/CODE – Ars Semeiotica 4–5/2*, 1982, pp. 115–136, English translation in Stuart Shanker (ed.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Critical Assessments*, vol. 4, London: Croom Helm, 1986, pp. 29–59.

like – is a perennial attitude. My 1977 essay was written from the perspective of a one-sided, traditionalist – say old-fashioned – conservatism, but by 1981, when I published – alas, only in Hungarian – the paper “The Free Market in an Authoritarian Society: Anglo-Saxon Liberal-Conservative Theories”¹⁹, I was clearly on the way to become a liberal conservative myself. The 19th-century Hungarian conservative liberal József Eötvös was my main hero in a paper I published in Roger Scruton’s *Salisbury Review* in 1989.²⁰ And I still have been a liberal conservative in 2016, when my *The Monist* piece “Conservatism and Common-Sense Realism”²¹ appeared. This piece contains detailed references to the empirical-experimental studies I referred to above. Also, it attempts to sketch a typology of various kinds of conservatisms. I will come back to that typology in a minute, but first let me divulge that in my 1981 paper I was sharply critical of my good friend Roger’s book *The Meaning of Conservatism*. I quoted Ascherson’s observation that Scruton does not provide “an anthropology suggesting that authoritarianism is the natural condition of the human race”.²² Indeed, may I add today, such an anthropology cannot be provided at all if liberalism, as we have reason to believe, is a perennial attitude just as conservatism is.

So let us now turn to a possible typology of conservatisms. I am building, partly, as indicated, on my 2016 *The Monist* piece, but my basic position has since changed. My present paper is blatantly out of step with the times, and is clearly opposed to contemporary mainstream thinking.²³ The reason: the experience of the pandemic

¹⁹ “Szabadpiac és tekintélyelvű társadalom. Angolszász liberális-konzervatív elméletek”, *Világosság* 1981/8–9, pp. 534–540.

²⁰ “Tradition and Freedom: Austrian Conservatism from Eötvös to Musil”, *Salisbury Review*, March 1989.

²¹ Vol. 99, no. 4 (October 2016), pp. 441–456. I am obliged to Martin Beckstein for editing my manuscript for *The Monist* “Conservatism” issue.

²² Neal Ascherson, “Conservatives”, *London Review of Books*, vol. 2, no. 21 (Nov. 1980).

²³ My first recent attempt to formulate a radical conservative approach is the essay “Back to the Roots – Conservatism Revindicated”, uploaded on Sept. 7, 2020, see https://www.academia.edu/44033627/Back_to_the_Roots_Conservatism_Revindi

has made me change my mind. With overpopulation, overglobalization, climate change, mass tourism, mass universities, and the by now suffocating effects of extreme genderism, mankind has clearly been led into a blind alley. The task is to go back to the juncture where the wrong turn was chosen. Philosophy now faces the conceptual challenge to create a new–old world-view, suggesting new–old forms of life, pointing to the merits of the attachment to one’s home and vicinity – propagating a new localism – calling attention to the advantages of self-sustaining communities, the rewards of delayed gratification, the need for coherent social roles especially in the world of learning, the indispensability of autonomous scholarship, the value of elite institutions of higher education. What is called for is a return, under advanced technological conditions, to earlier attitudes – once more a *conservative revolution*, a revolution however not repeating the failures of the one crashed by Hitler a hundred years ago.

In my 2016 paper I pointed to characteristic paradoxes inherent in different kinds of conservatism. There is, most fundamentally, the paradox of backward-looking conservatism. This type of conservatism suggests that we should give up our current patterns of life and return to those of some earlier age. Let me here come back to Musil. In his 1923 draft essay “Der deutsche Mensch als Symptom” he wrote:

Having freed himself from all the old bonds, man is recommended to subject himself to them anew: faith, pre-scientific thinking, austerity, humanity, altruism, sense of national community, a concept of civic duty, and abandonment of capitalistic individualism and all its attitudes. ... The belief is that a decay has to be cured. ... It is seldom recognized that these features present a completely new problem for which no solution has as yet been found. I can think of hardly any account

[cated](#) (chapter 2 of the present volume). It centers on Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and C. G. Jung, and on what a “conservative revolution” these days, with the pandemic happening, should mean, and why it should happen. It ends – forgive me this repetition – with urging a return from the mass university to the research university.

which conceives of our present condition as a problem, a new sort of problem, and not as a solution that has miscarried.²⁴

That is, Musil did certainly not recommend a return to the past. However, he did have an understanding, even if no arguments, for the position he disagreed with. No wonder he chose to write (and was ultimately incapable of completing) his famous novel *The Man Without Qualities*, in part essayistic, in part mystic, with the protagonist Ulrich's meditations conveying Musil's uncertainties. As Ulrich for instance speculates:

In earlier times, one had an easier conscience about being a person than one does today. People were like cornstalks in a field, probably more violently tossed back and forth by God, hail, fire, pestilence, and war than they are today, but as a whole, as a city, a region, a field, and as to what personal movement was left to the individual stalk – all this was clearly defined and could be answered for.²⁵

Now the idea of returning to the past is a revolutionary one, in need of reasoned argument, and thus opposed to the conservative spirit. Wittgenstein apparently did not believe in such a return.²⁶ Heidegger was quite explicit: he warned that “[t]he flight into tradition, out of a combination of humility and presumption, achieves, in itself, nothing, is merely a closing the eyes and blindness towards the historical moment”.²⁷ By contrast, Jung had an active yearning for long-bygone ages, and was intent on awakening the same in others. The psychology by which he explained that yearning was his theory of

²⁴ “The German Personality as a Symptom”, transl. by David Hays, see J. C. Nyíri (ed.), *Austrian Philosophy: Studies and Texts*, München: Philosophia Verlag, 1981, p. 185.

²⁵ First volume, 1930, translation here quoted from the 1995 Alfred A. Knopf edition, p. 158.

²⁶ See note 2 above.

²⁷ Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture” (1938), in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, edited and translated by William Lovitt, New York: Garland Publishing, 1977, p. 72.

primordial images. I am in sympathy with that theory, even if I believe Jung did ultimately not succeed to elaborate it in a scientifically satisfactory direction.²⁸ Be that as it may, and with all the paradoxes a backward-looking conservatism implies, it is a revolutionary conservative position I have recently come to hold.

On the other hand conservatism might also be taken to mean that we should maintain whatever social conditions we happen to live under. But then we are once more faced with a paradoxical doctrine: one which would imply acquiescing to different values according to different times and places. And yet another cluster of paradoxes emerges when conservatism is equated, as it almost invariably is, with *traditionalism*. Twentieth-century scholarship has shown beyond any possible doubt that traditions in the rigorous sense of the term are instruments for preserving knowledge in pre-literal cultures.²⁹ Traditions belong to premodernity. Premodern conservatism strives to preserve the life of generations to come by seeking to ensure the survival of the mores and beliefs of former generations. Modern conservatism by contrast, that is conservatism in the age of the printed word, is forced to recognize that change is inevitable. It attempts to slow down change in order to reduce the destruction it causes.³⁰ But how should we construe post-typographic, post-mid-twentieth-century conservatism, conservatism in the age of online networks – that is, postmodern conservatism? At this point I propose an interpretation very different from that in my 2016 paper.

The literature on the postmodern, or on postmodernism or postmodernity, is not just vast and ramified, but adds up to, or rather

²⁸ See my paper “[Forever Jung](#)”, 2020.

²⁹ I have provided a thorough and I believe philosophically penetrating summary of the issue in my “Introduction: Notes towards a Theory of Traditions”, in J. C. Nyiri (ed.), *Tradition*, Wien: IFK, 1995, pp. 7–32, accessible online: https://www.academia.edu/4365551/Notes_towards_a_Theory_of_Traditions. A topic I especially focus on in this summary is the myth of national traditions.

³⁰ Perhaps it is apt to refer here to the often voiced idea, here in the formulation of Armin Mohler: Conservatism “congeals into a theory only when a point is reached where it must defend itself against some opposing theory”. (*Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932*, Stuttgart: 1950, p. 163.)

coalesces into, a fuzzy complex of contradictory approaches, a veritable morass of trends and theories. In this field to pronounce presupposes, and means, first of all to *stipulate*. I stipulate the post-modern to be an historical era: the era of post-typography. Post-typography means ageless digital documents, networked information, virtual communication, high mobility, with the ensuing forms of art, literature, and lifestyle. Thus conservatism in the postmodern age plausibly involves a turning back to the culture of the printed text, with a belief in the possibility of coherent knowledge, the unity of reason, well-defined social roles, and, not incidentally, less travelling, even if the portable book has been invented some five centuries ago.

Leslie Fiedler was on the right track when in his 1965 “The New Mutants” paper he saw a connection between postmodernism and the disavowment of “the very idea of the past”³¹, the withering away of “logical discourse”³², and the apparent need to determine “what significance, if any, ‘male’ and ‘female’ ... possess”³³. Also, in his famous 1969 *Playboy* essay he indicated that the rise of the post-modern is not independent of the emergence of mass media, and of “the printed book ... being radically altered”.³⁴

³¹ Leslie A. Fiedler, “The New Mutants”, *Partisan Review*, vol. 32, no. 4 (Fall 1965), pp. 508 f.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 512.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 518. A formulation by Fiedler two pages earlier: “To become new men, these children of the future” – meant are the participants in the Berkeley etc. student demonstrations – “seem to feel, they must not only become more Black than White but more female than male.” A prophesy, if you like, or perhaps an instance of the power of ideas becoming material force. Compare Roger Kimball’s essay “From Farce to Tragedy”, *Partisan Review*, vol. 60, no. 40 (Fall 1993), p. 565: “[A]nyone who has taken the trouble to observe what has happened in the academy knows that over the last couple of years political correctness has evolved from a sporadic expression of left-leaning self-righteousness into a dogma of orthodoxy that is widely accepted, and widely enforced, by America’s cultural elite.”

³⁴ Leslie A. Fiedler, “Cross the Border, Close the Gap”, *Playboy*, vol. 16, no. 12 (Dec. 1969), pp. 230, 253, and 230. Reprinted in Fiedler’s volume *Cross the Border – Close the Gap*, New York: Stein and Day, 1972. The page numbers there:

What we today face is the West's false assessment of the prospects of liberalism and democracy – or, more broadly, of our post-modern loss of understanding the realities of nature and society. I have been asked by colleagues why I apply the term “revolution”, and on what grounds I believe that the conservative revolution I envisage would not commit the failures, indeed the sins, of the one a hundred years ago. My answer is that the movement I argue for is a radical but non-coercive one. On the contrary, it is directed *against coercion*.

To begin with examples from my own world, the world of research and higher education: I argue against the publish or perish imperative and the (author, year) reference style terror,³⁵ against the inexorable expectations of successful fundraising, against the intimidation of not being politically correct, risking your job if not using the appropriate gender pronoun in English, or, when speaking German, not saying “Studentinnen und Studenten”, “Bürgerinnen und Bürger”, “Soldatinnen und Soldaten”, etc., etc., *ad nauseam*.

pp. 63, 69, and 66. For the volume Fiedler has very slightly rewritten the text, the *Playboy* version is the better read, though the nudes are of course distracting.

³⁵ First of course came the coercion to change footnotes to endnotes. As Gertrude Himmelfarb had put it: “with the banishment of notes to the back of the book, they have lost their honorable status as footnotes and assumed the demeaning position of endnotes. Publishers instigated this practice primarily as an economy measure to reduce the costs of typesetting. With the new mechanized and computerized processes, that is no longer a consideration. But the practice has been perpetuated for commercial reasons, to make scholarly books look more accessible and thus more marketable.” (“Where Have All the Footnotes Gone?”, *The New York Times Book Review*, June 16, 1991. A later version of this essay appeared in Himmelfarb's volume *On Looking Into the Abyss*, New York: Knopf, 1994, pp. 122–130.) Gertrude Himmelfarb, also known as Bea Kristol, was a prominent American historian, wife of Irving Kristol, a pioneering and leading neoconservative. Himmelfarb was from her youth on deeply involved in conservative circles. I believe that the adherence to footnotes is indeed a conservative position, in contrast to the (author, year) worldview, which Connors justly connects to “populist scholarship” (Robert J. Connors, “The Rhetoric of Citation Systems”, Part II: “Competing Epistemic Values in Citation”, *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 17, no. 2, Spring 1999, p. 223.)

Western political correctness ultimately turned out to aggravate the political conditions it had set out to correct. The movement I argue for might lessen the impotence of the West.

Books by J. C. Nyíri

[*Meaning and Motoricity: Essays on Image and Time*](#), Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2014.

Zeit und Bild: Philosophische Studien zur Wirklichkeit des Werdens, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2012.

[*Tradition and Individuality: Essays*](#), Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992.

Am Rande Europas: Studien zur österreichisch-ungarischen Philosophiegeschichte, Wien: Böhlau, 1988.

[*Gefühl und Gefüge: Studien zum Entstehen der Philosophie Wittgensteins*](#), Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1986.

With the deadline to deliver my envisaged paper “The Collapse of Democracies and the Need for a New Aristocracy” imminent (the endeavour made possible by the publisher allowing me to use the reference style I insist on, that is old-fashioned footnotes), I feel I am at a crossroads necessitating to take stock of the work I had done during the past few years. In the present slim volume I have collected four online essays. “The Merits of Self-Publishing” and “Back to the Roots – Conservatism Revindicated” were published in 2020, “Turn the Leaf” in 2022 (in the volume [*Facing the Future, Facing the Screen*](#)), while the somewhat longer paper “Back to the Past: Notes towards a Conservative Revolution” in 2023.

Kristóf [J. C.] Nyíri, born 1944, is Full Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He has held professorships at various universities in Hungary and abroad. He was Leibniz Professor of the University of Leipzig for the winter term 2006/07. His main fields of research are the philosophy of conservatism, the history of philosophy in the 19th and 20th centuries, the impact of communication technologies on the organization of ideas and on society, the philosophy of images, and the philosophy of time. For further information see: www.hunfi.hu/nyiri and <https://mta.academia.edu/KristofNyiri>. E-mail: nyirik@gmail.com.

