EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summer Seminar

Beyond liberalism and socialism:
searching for a decent society

23-28 August 2010
Vama Veche, Romania

Introduction

The Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies (LIEIS), in association with the Black Sea University Foundation and the European Cultural Centre of Bucharest, organised a seminar on 'Beyond liberalism and socialism: searching for a decent society' from 23 to 28 August 2010 in Vama Veche, Romania.

Since 1994, this seminar has been part of a long-term project of summer courses involving students from the wider Black Sea area and neighbouring countries. Past topics in this series have included the nature of conflicts in the international system, conceptual and practical issues in relation to European and world security problems as well as, more recently, the question of mentalities (2005), the quest for European values (2006), telos, ethos and demos in the European Union (2007), ideas for a viable society in the 21st century (2008), and the evolution in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989 (2009).

In line with this tradition, the goal of this seminar was to have an open and frank debate about the concept of decent society, and to criticise both socialism, and liberalism. The objective was to think collectively about core topics, and key issues in relation to this theme, without any a priori assumptions, prejudice or stereotypes. Rather than having long alternating presentations, this was a free-wheeling debate and a brain-storming exercise with a clear focus on interdisciplinary concepts and theories, with diverse and even clashing perspectives, as well as attention to specific empirical facts. The ambition of the organisers was to raise awareness, and stimulate sensitivity on problems such as lack of tolerance. Succeeding in such an enormous task would bring the youth, and possible future leaders of the region, closer to what humanity and our society long for — decency.

The lecturers were <u>Dr Armand Clesse</u>, Director of the LIEIS, and <u>Professor Gerhard Michael Ambrosi</u>, Jean Monnet Chair in European Economic Policy at the University of Trier. The group of twenty students included a wide range of different levels and profiles: some senior undergraduates, others doing Master degrees, yet others were PhD candidates. Several have studied abroad and gained professional experience at international level. Mostly they

originated from Romania, but there were also participants from Bulgaria, Lithuania, Moldova, Germany, Venezuela, as well as ten observers from France, Greece, Romania and Turkey.

The seminar was divided into twelve sessions[1], on conceptual issues such as ideologies (socialism, liberalism, utilitarianism etc.) and on a critical analysis of the empirical evidence concerning the progress or non-progress of our world towards decency. In addition to the plenary sessions, the students debated in separate working groups during two sessions. The results of these debates were summarised in three reports drawn up by the students themselves which can be found in the Appendix I, II and III.

This report does not outline in a chronological order the presentations given by the lecturers or the questions raised by the students. Rather, it seeks to provide an overview of the discussions and to highlight the main questions and conclusions that arose from the lively exchange of ideas. The topics of debate of the summer school can be divided into various categories: 1. Socialism; 1.1Alienation; 1.2 Class struggle and human nature; 2. Justice; 3. Utopias; 4. Utilitarianism; 5. Liberalism, tolerance, and the sanctity of life; 6. The role of work and money; 7. The role of religion for a decent society; 8. A new social contract.

In short, the seminar dealt with an evaluation of decency in the modern world, if it lives up to the system's proclaimed expectations as well as the relevance of various political philosophies, ideologies, and approaches.

More specifically, the summer school, after a broad transhistorical introduction on the subject by A. Clesse, commenced with an examination of socialism's ability to provide solutions to contemporary problems. Moreover, it was discussed whether it is still relevant concerning modern issues, and whether it can become a factor of peaceful change or whether the transformation is unavoidably revolutionary, just like in the previous two war-prone centuries.

Another important aspect of the week-long debate was the question of utopian designs. Utopias were not mentioned out of nostalgia but for two pragmatic reasons. First of all, utopias are critiques that represent their authors' dissatisfaction with the societies where they live in. However and most importantly, these critiques continue to be as relevant as ever.

Taking into consideration such critical investigations, the summer school group went on criticizing liberalism, its concept of justice and the principle of tolerance. It was suggested that both justice and tolerance are time- and context-bound, and not absolute concepts. Therefore, these concepts are dependent variables, and are not as determinant as they are assumed to be. The assessment of liberal societies (on religious freedom and practices such as prostitution) which followed the conceptual debate clearly supported this conclusion.

The summer school went even further with its critique of the West, and its achievements. The sanctity of life had a privileged role on the considerations for how a decent society might look like. The discussions also focused on controversial issues such as feminism and animal rights. Other issues like utilitarianism and economic developments were also, counter-intuitively, blamed for certain misfortunes. Utilitarianism, for example, with its focus on happiness is oblivious or even blind to the adverse effects of consumerism societies, hence revealing the egoistic face of the Western civilisation.

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[1] Agenda available at the Appendix V.

This was the spirit of the conversations of a versatile group consisting of professors, thinkers, young students, and researchers who were alarmed by the lack of decency in their societies. In spite of the extensive and analytic debates, reality was mainly depicted in 'shades' of grey. Hope for the future exists only in their willingness to continue to be dissatisfied and inquiring.

1. Introductory remarks

Following the presentation of the participants, A. Clesse opened the proceedings of the seminar by stressing the ambiguity and complexity of the term 'decent society'. First of all, he wondered whether the concept refers to one national society, to all the national societies or to the international society. He rejected the reference to international society because this would make the issue too heterogeneous. Nevertheless, there are synchronic and diachronic dimensions, as well as the differences and disparities among societies that still make 'decency' a complex term. Moreover, there are no relevant objective standards, criteria or parameters.

In addition, the concept of 'decency' is not only complex but also ambiguous. 'Decency' is not a strong word. It is, in fact, something minimalist in a sense, and apart from that it has also been used in a manipulative way. For example the German word for decent, *anständig*, is 'poisoned', in a sense, because it was used by Himmler when he was dressing his men, executing women and children and still remaining *"anständig"*.

A. Clesse continued with his introductory remarks and focused on the possible criteria of 'decency'. They may be formed in a minimum or negative way such as the absence of humiliation, fear, intimidation, domination, oppression and poverty for individuals living in a specific society. Nevertheless, humiliation, for example, needs to be defined, but its definition is broad, and entails the absence of rights, dignity, and respect. Consequently, the subject becomes enormously broad.

In relation to the positive criteria of 'decency', he said that the issue of concern was not the absence but rather the presence of certain features or characteristics. He mentioned the guarantee of physical and psychological integrity, liberty, autonomy, self-esteem, self-respect, tolerance in society, tolerance at the individual level and at the societal level, access to culture and justice – the single most important concept in contemporary philosophy, as he characterised it. He also cited virtues such as sympathy, empathy, compassion or *Nächstenliebe* (love your neighbour), which are key in most philosophical works and religions; not just in the Western tradition but also in the Eastern tradition. Therefore, 'decency', seen from this perspective, is a multifaceted concept.

In addition, A. Clesse briefly discussed the philosophical traditions and ideologies that were related to the issue of 'decency' and that the seminar would touch upon. First of all, there is the utilitarian approach which comprises Bentham, J.S. Mill, and some others. There were also other thinkers already in ancient Greek philosophy as well as later on, in more recent philosophy, that could be called utilitarian. According to this perspective the worth of an action is determined by its outcome.

Another tradition is the utopian designs, the designs for an ideal society, which are present in the whole history of philosophy. Typical examples range from Socrates and Plato via Thomas

More and Tommaso Campanella to Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx, Lenin and the quite recent critical theorists of the Frankfurt school such as Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin. Utopian thinking is intellectually probably the most fascinating. In a sense, most philosophers were utopians. Nevertheless, utopianism is often seen as equal to totalitarian thinking: communism as utopian thinking or Plato as a communist and totalitarian thinker. Therefore, A. Clesse stressed that people should be aware not only of the possibilities of utopias but also of the dangers and the critiques that have been levelled at utopian thinkers.

The philosophical agenda is vast and includes anarchism, and vegetarianism. Vegetarianism for example, which is a recurrent subject in A. Clesse's own philosophical investigations, refers to the fundamental relationship between (so-called) man and (so-called) animal. This is an issue of utmost importance but hasn't received sufficient attention by specific philosophers or by others who pondered on it in a counter-productive way. The most famous example is Descartes. Others like Kant, Fichte, Schelling or Hegel didn't devote much time to thinking about animals contrary to Schopenhauer. Eventually, in the 20th century this issue has become more and more important. A typical example is Derrida's last book *L'animal que donc je suis*. The relationship between man and animal, he emphasised, is central for an in-depth analysis of what is decent.

According to A. Clesse anarchism should be about decentralisation, federations, the federal approach, cooperative and voluntary associations of people that can be built and undone again, at will. In this understanding of anarchism flexibility, spontaneity, improvisation, trial and error are important. However, the standard aspects of anarchism are a complete distrust of the state, and self-organisation, and a caution towards implementing everything that science and technology allow people to do. So anarchism is certainly a lot about self-determination of the individual and about where his moral basis lies. Historical anarchism was mostly a-religious or anti-religious.

Subsequently, A. Clesse touched upon decency from a different point of view and asked if a society needs decent citizens in order to become decent or not. This is a crucial inquiry because it reflects on the importance of virtue ethics as well as it reveals the similarity among past and present philosophical inquiries on the subject.

More specifically, A. Clesse commenced with Plato who considered *arete* (virtue) of utmost importance for the citizens of a *polis*. According to this philosopher, a good soul was necessary for a good *polis*. Aristotle, in whose writing (together with Plato's) lie the Western roots of virtue ethics, considered virtue as a prerequisite of happiness and of the good of the whole community. His list of virtues included *sophia* (wisdom), *phronesis* (prudence), *andrea* (courage), justice, generosity and the right middle between extremes (*mesotes*).

Turning to the Middle Ages, A. Clesse referred to St. Augustine of Hippo, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Blaise Pascal who considered that, when people push virtue too far, it may turn into vice. He also mentioned more recent thinkers such as Adam Smith (*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*), Bernard Mandeville (*The Fable of The Bees*), David Hume (*A Treatise of Human Nature*) and Goethe (*Faust*). These authors thought about benevolence, self-control and other virtues. However, their common feature was their pessimistic approach towards human nature, namely that you achieve the good by seeking the bad. Of course, the relevant list does not stop there. It includes, among others, German rationalists and idealists such as Leibniz, Kant, Wolff, Hegel and Schopenhauer. Philosophers, from Socrates to contemporary ones,

have had a persistent interest in virtues and human nature. Throughout the centuries humans were interested in how virtuous people may influence politics.

Following this outline, he extended his thoughts and went beyond the theoretical perspective. The relevant and essential inquiry is whether we live in a decent society and whether people ask themselves this question. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Having to live in a society that we have not chosen reduces our choices. Although this point seems self-evident, it is essentially of high importance. If we accept what society offers us and if we are only interested in succeeding in our society, then we do not doubt the society we live in. We accept society's rationale, foundations and context as given. We do not strive to think about, much less to implement an alternative. Consequently, it seems that few people wonder whether the society we are living in is decent, more decent or less decent than others or not decent at all. This tendency to be solely interested in success deprives us of fundamental curiosity and doubtfulness. We accept its key imperatives. There are no dubious tenets. We obey our parents, teachers, bosses, etc. We unquestioningly adhere to the dominant paradigm or paradigms. A case in point is people eating animals. We don't question this. We take it for granted or normal to eat other animals, other creatures. The reason is that we have accepted the idea that animals are inferior creatures. What is more, this is what most religions preach. Indeed, religion is partly to blame for this state of affairs.

In this context, A. Clesse focused his analysis on contemporary liberal societies. According to him, liberal societies humiliate their own people. For example, when a person visits the United States, officials humiliate him by asking him questions about his private sphere and intimate life. Is this decent? Are we on a slippery slope? A. Clesse urged the participants of the seminar to ask this kind of questions. He cast doubt on how useful research or indices of happiness really are. The vast majority of people in any society, he suggested, say they're happy or even very happy or at least satisfied with their life. Is this accurate?

A.Clesse concluded the first session of the summer course by sketching out the framework of thinking that the participants of the seminar should bear in mind: "This seminar is about the future. We use the past, and all these philosophical concepts, as a form of conceptual guidance, and as ideas concerning the possible future functioning of society. We should also question who is responsible to determine the substance of society". He provided food for thought to the participants by posing a series of questions. He asked how future societies can be structured. Who should do this? Is it religion? Should it be the philosophers, the intellectuals or the politicians? Where does the basis of moral guidance lie?

2. Socialism

A. Clesse opened the discussions on socialism and decent society by narrowing down the subject to a number of specific questions in order to generate a vivid debate. His first question was about the most important aspects of socialism. He proceeded by suggesting that there are numerous kinds of socialism such as conservative socialism, religious socialism, anarchical socialism, state socialism as well as social democracy. He wondered how capitalism can be transformed and whether this process will be as violent as during the previous two centuries. Would the establishment of socialist states lead to a Kantian 'perpetual peace' among them? How well founded is the conceptual relation between socialism and humanism, referring to Sartre? Other important issues he raised included, first of all, economic planning, socialism

and human nature; secondly, socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat and class struggle; thirdly, socialism and freedom.

A. Clesse was also concerned about the moral grounds of communism. He made a comparison between the theory of communism, and how it was implemented in Eastern Europe. First of all, he referred to excerpts from the *Communist Manifesto*, and summarised the whole transformational process from capitalism towards communism. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the intermediate system between capitalism and communism when the government is in the process of changing the means of ownership from private to collective ownership. However, this leads to a rapid decrease in production and a deterioration of productive forces. Moreover, this intermediate stage necessitates, one way or another, a curtailing of liberty and freedom. This resembles a kind of despotism or despotic intervention. Nevertheless, the end goal is that bourgeois society with its classes will be replaced by association where the free development of everybody is the prerequisite. Eventually then, it is maintained that the condition for the free development of all will become reality. Secondly, A. Clesse turned to the participants, and mentioned that socialism has been discredited in this region of the world, and especially in Romania. Nonetheless, there have always been people who saw the previous system as morally better than capitalism, but they are mostly the elderly. Finally, he asked the participants whether they feel disappointed, frustrated and betrayed by socialism or if they consider it as superior to capitalism.

2.1 Alienation

The discussion with the participants commenced with a focus on the Marxian concept of 'alienation' which was linked to 'decent' society. More precisely, it was suggested, in a decent society people would be working in the kind of employment they prefer. The workers would not be alienated from the product. 'Alienation' is a central concept in the writings of the young Karl Marx. If the product is alien, then the whole activity becomes alienated. In that case, the whole production process represents alienation. On the contrary, an activity is free and humane if it is not alienated, if man is free to fulfil his potential, both physical and mental. However, in parts of our contemporary society this is not true. People are working for eight, ten or even more hours per day. How can they, a participant queried, be interested in other issues such as politics, if they are working so much in a job they do not like? In fact, this is detrimental to their being since according to Aristotle, human beings are political beings. Nonetheless, in comparison to the mainstream rival approaches of Marxism and liberalism, some common ground can be found for discussion on the issue of work. There is a common concern about how people can find appropriate work.

Here A. Clesse interjected a question about decency and the importance of contemporary improvements in working conditions. Is a woman sitting at the cashier in the supermarket alienated from her work? There are no longer so many people working in mines, and in most parts of world there are no slaves. However, this is still not a decent situation. We are not looking at it with sufficiently critical eyes.

On a different note, a student disagreed with the importance of alienation and job selection. According to him, the dissatisfaction due to personal failure in one's career may not be directly linked with any specific job that people might be doing. Echoing this critique, another participant's point of view revolved around redistribution versus job appropriateness. In practice, he claimed, we should focus on redistribution of material capabilities leading to

equality. He maintained that socialism did not work because society was probably not ready for socialism but in due course the new technologies would be sufficient factors for positive change. He concluded with a rhetorical question: did socialism fail to work because it was practiced in a predominantly liberal world?

Another member of the summer school mentioned that Marx's concept of 'alienation' is useful in a socialist society because it is an organic society. On the contrary, in capitalism the concept 'alienation' is difficult to use because a capitalistic society is primarily mechanic.

The other issue that was debated was education. One participant pointed out that despite the differences among socialist variations, what is common is socialism's approach towards education. The focal point is the idea that political education is necessary for an electorate to be mature and competent. This is valid for democracies as well. School education should include the teaching of political theories in order to form responsible citizens.

The debate on education further expanded to include political struggles for power when a student claimed that, paradoxically, people who are living in poverty, who are deprived of their basic needs, do not care about education. Therefore, someone else has to care for them. These people merely want to survive. In fact, many poor people in various countries vote for right-wing parties. Consequently, it makes people wonder whether it is possible to achieve a socialist world or a world which is more influenced by socialism if socialist parties do not come to power. This is, he concluded, the only way to implement social justice and decent living conditions, through the acquisition of power.

From a different point of view, another participant pointed out that making education an elitist project is dangerous. Who is going to educate people and who is going to choose these people? Elitism, he contended, is a fundamental reason why socialism failed in Eastern Europe. This is a frightening prospect. It is reminiscent of cases where the 'enlightened' few have received and grasped the word of God or Lenin, and wanted to educate or enlighten the masses. Similarly, in the USA the 'enlightened' few have the knowledge of the Bible and preach to Americans on liberty and on liberalism.

At that point A. Clesse intervened in order to focus the debate on whether socialism can make a useful contribution towards a decent or more decent society. Following his intervention, the members of the group started discussing what this possibility entails. In the interventions that followed, revolution and evolution had a prominent role. First of all, one participant mentioned that socialism is a gradual process that resolves issues such as the massification of politics, scarcity and modernization. It is an answer which is based on equality, social equity and even on class struggle. Additionally, if socialism can be fused with the liberal principle of freedom of thought, then socialism is the golden road leading to a decent society. This is going to be a gradual process along with society's progress.

The gradualism of this approach generated reactions from other members of the group who questioned the feasibility of such a project. The dilemma revolved around the consequences and side effects of a possible revolution. It was questioned whether we are prepared to accept a future which is not a direct continuation of the present and represents a rupture with the past or not? Can there be change without violence? Would violent change be decent?

One participant, reminiscent of last year's summer school, cited an intervention made by Prof. Christopher Coker. According to C. Coker, societies like post-communist Eastern European

countries face the dilemma of revolution versus evolution. The student touched upon the issue by raising a series of questions. When does a rupture take place, do people know what exactly they want to achieve? Logically, a rupture represents a rupture with specific past practices. Nevertheless, when it is a revolution, is it a planning process or not? Additionally, who is going to define the elements against which people are either revolting or evolving or rupturing? Is it going to be the elites or who else, and why?

Following these comments, another participant disputed the utility of revolutions. Others took a more nuanced position, claiming that a revolution is a change but only time shows whether this is something positive or not. Some linked revolution directly to evolution, whereas others compared revolution and evolution according to the criterion of legitimacy. Evolution, they claimed, is more legitimate than revolution because it does not discount the habits and culture of people, hence it is better than revolutions.

Concluding this debate, a student summarized the whole issue in a philosophical aporia: do we believe that this is the best possible world? The reply to this question will determine people's approach towards revolution and evolution. People who reply in the positive are in favour of evolution. People who answer in the negative and see no hope in the current state of affairs favour revolution: a radical change that can shake up things in order to make them improve. Whatever the answer, he added, a good starting point for improving our world is to consider the negative aspects of our societies from a liberal point of view and to try to improve them by introducing a socialist perspective.

2.2 Class struggle and human nature

The next topic, which A. Clesse had mentioned in his introductory remarks and the participants commented on, was class struggle. Social class is a central distinction in socialist thinking. If the concept of social classes is still valid, then socialism may still be relevant. On these premises, a disagreement occurred among those who supported the position that there are no social classes in Western Europe because the economy has changed and others – a majority – who disagreed with this claim.

One of the examples that was mentioned to support the existence of social classes was drawn from the US 2008 presidential elections and the statement by the (then candidate for the post of) Vice-President Joe Biden concerning the American working class. Joe Biden stated that he came from a very unprivileged background. The people from his region, he went on, had a disaffection with the notion of middle class. After losing their jobs, they preferred to be called working class. In America the middle class is called the working class. Nevertheless, no matter what the name is, social class is still a useful concept and point of reference.

A. Clesse commented on this example and brought to the group's attention the so-called 'working poor' as clear evidence of the existence of class divisions. 'Working poor' is a term used to describe individuals and families who maintain regular employment but remain in relative poverty due to low levels of pay. It is an intense phenomenon in the USA. These people are working hard but are not earning enough. This is the ugly side of capitalism: the 'working poor' are often people with families who have lost their houses during the real estate crisis and are striving to survive. This is a disturbing situation, especially if seen in the light of the US military expenditure which, if it were used for social purposes, could significantly change this situation. A case in point is, ironically, the proud announcement of US$150

million aid to victims of floods when a B-2 bomber costs about two billion. A. Clesse condemned this policy as the madness of our world.

Another case in point that confirms that social classes are a reality is widespread global poverty on a planet characterised by great inequality of wealth and income. A. Clesse referred to the failed UN goal of reducing poverty by half until 2015. He witnessed conditions of extreme poverty in his journeys throughout the world, such as in the Roma settlements in Central and Eastern Europe and in slums around the globe. The numbers are revealing. One billion people worldwide live in slums, and the figure is likely to grow. They are people living above all in Africa, South Asia and Latin America and some even in developed countries. Those people are excluded from the achievements of modern science, technology and the economy. To make things worse, the gap between rich and poor – not just in the United States but also elsewhere like in France which is more egalitarian than some other countries – has been growing dramatically. As a result, the middle class is eroding in many parts of the world. There are people who are moving or are being moved from the middle class to the lower class. Indeed, social classes still represent an important political consideration.

A. Clesse went further with his remarks and argued that despite socio-economic progress in comparison to past times, social classes still represent a contemporary concept for two additional reasons. The underlying reason why it is difficult to discern them is because there is often a misperception about them and because they have become more permeable in the developed countries than they previously used to be.

When people talk about class struggle, A. Clesse explained, they mistakenly refer exclusively to the mid-19th century and previous times such as feudal society – most importantly pre-bourgeois and pre-industrial society. During these periods, social classes were impermeable. People had practically no chance of getting out of them. This divide represented not only a reality but also the predominant thinking and attitude of the time. However, there can be social classes even if they are permeable.

In order to illustrate his point, he talked about the cases of the UK, India and the USA. Britain has had the strongest class divide until today. Despite its social modernisation, which has led to a certain permeability of classes, classes still endure. The USA has experienced a period of increased social mobility, but the current crisis has highlighted that the classes never disappeared. Americans had thought their society was permeable; people could move upwards towards higher classes. Nonetheless, for the time being they are experiencing exactly the opposite: downward mobility. India, a democratic and economically rapidly developing country, continues to be divided into castes. Castes are almost the equivalent of classes. In fact, in India a lower caste equals a lower class. The difference is that a caste is something permanent. Despite Indian modernization and increasing communication among people from different castes, the reality of castes is accepted as fate. It is quite astonishing, he stated, that over 400 million Indians who live below the poverty line (less than US\$ 1.25 a day), people who have no chance of improving their standard of living, do not revolt.

Indeed, the concept of social class is useful but all depends on the possibility of change. Can humans really become enlightened? A. Clesse wondered whether there is something basically good in people, something that can be brought out through education in order to enlighten them. Moreover, can enlightened people become factors of change? This is the old Enlightenment predicament, he noted, which has been underpinning not only the previous conversation on educating people but also many philosophical writings of the Enlightenment.

In fact, what people should and should not do to a young person in order not to turn him into a slave but into an enlightened citizen is the subject of one of the most important works in Western philosophical thinking: Rousseau's "*Émile, or On Education*". *Émile* is a treatise on the nature of education and on the nature of man. Jean-Jacques Rousseau considered it to be the best and most important of all his writings. According to him, society was to take the blame for its own failures because man, before entering society, is born free. That is the idea of Enlightenment, an idea endorsed by thinkers from Diderot to the members of the Frankfurt School and other contemporary thinkers. This was the idealism of the Enlightenment, bringing light to the minds of the people. Only the conditions that they are living in prevent them from achieving their potential. Even the Frankfurt School, which criticized the Enlightenment, accepts it. It proclaims that humans have enormous potential and they have to be given a chance to realise it.

This enduring philosophical aporia has not been answered yet. However, the deeper philosophical inquiry is another one: what is the nature of man? Human nature and its limits or potential have to be understood before seeking decent society. A. Clesse stated that this is a new debate. Is there something permanent there, something people cannot change in human nature? Is the reality of the human being, *homo sapiens*, still basically the same as a thousand or ten thousand years ago? This is the question of good and evil, it is a philosophical question. People may try very hard to build a better society but perhaps human nature does not allow it. It is a very simple and enormously difficult question, one of the most difficult questions of all. According to Konrad Lorenz, aggression is part of a natural selection process. Nevertheless, he does not state that aggressive behaviours are in any way more powerful, prevalent, or intense than more peaceful behaviours such as mating rituals. Rather, he negates the categorization of aggression as "contrary" to "positive" instincts like love, depicting it as a founding basis of other instincts, and analysing its role in animal communication. As far as Edward Wilson, the founder of socio-biology, is concerned, he was very harsh about human nature, about so-called altruism, and rejected what many people like to consider altruistic action. In other words, what is at issue is our credo that we want to be unlimited in our potential, in what we can achieve, but are we?

A. Clesse's final remark of the session summarised such a dilemma into the following question: can or should we seek to produce the perfect man or is this going to transform our society into a totalitarian regime? There is an ongoing research concerning not only the human brain but also genetics. The goal is to eradicate all deficiencies in the genetic potential so as to create the perfect man. Is this dangerous? Is this preventable, he wondered. Will this lead us to a perfect or decent society or to a new totalitarian society of an unprecedented degree? All the previous totalitarian regimes did not have the modern means of controlling the brain. We are moving towards a new reality with unpredictable repercussions. Is this a frightening possibility, is this a sound vision or is it a dangerous scientific utopia?

3. Justice

A. Clesse opened the discussions on the issue of justice by stressing its importance throughout history as well as its significance in the context of a decent society. Justice, or dikaiosune (δικαιοσύνη) in Greek, has been a central philosophical concept from Socrates and Aristotle to Kant, Kelsen, and more contemporary thinkers such as Rawls. For example, in Thomas Hobbes' conception of society, law and justice come into being with the creation of the

Leviathan who ensures the enforcement of the laws. By contrast, Leibniz considered *iustitia universalis*, which is to behave honourably and to obey God, to be the highest stage of justice, whereas the liberal thinker Locke considered a well-ordered society with private ownership a key condition for justice.

Hans Kelsen had a specific view of justice. Justice, he wrote, is societal happiness and guarantees societal order. However, no social or societal order may completely compensate for the injustices of nature. Nature, he added, is very unjust. As justice is about interests and conflicts of interests, justice is never sufficient or satisfactory. Consequently, absolute justice does not exist, justice can only be relative.

The first <u>participant</u> who opened the debate made extensive reference to John Rawls who considered justice as the highest virtue of social institutions. This understanding presupposes a concept of society where people not only interact with each other but also cooperate through political institutions which constitute society's basic structure. This basic societal structure is the subject of justice for Rawls.

Subsequently, <u>G.M. Ambrosi</u> took up this point and asked whether "virtue" can indeed be attributed to institutions. Can we think of virtue without considering the behaviour of specific individuals in a differentiating way? Is virtue imaginable without human action? <u>G.M. Ambrosi</u> cast doubt on the possibility of virtuous institutions by asking where institutions come from. Are they not based on the legal and constitutional framework of their social surroundings? But being lawful is a virtue in itself. There arise problems when different systems of laws collide, but such cases are not problems of virtue but rather tragic constellations. A good example for this type of problems was given by the ancient Greek tragedy Antigone by Sophocles. It illustrates the conflict between, on the one hand, positive law directed at the maintenance of the state and of the public order, represented by king Kreon and on the other hand the law of pious customs, represented by Antigone. Each of these actors had to follow the laws which compelled them to act as they did. In the end Antigone sabotaged the proclamations of the king and the king had to have her executed, even against his own will. None of these actors lacked in virtue although sabotage and killing are by no means virtuous. But neither can the state as institution be blamed for not having been virtuous nor the institution of pious burial customs which brought Antigone into conflict with the state.

Thereafter the discussion turned to the concept of accountability. <u>G.M. Ambrosi</u> pointed out that it is not institutions which can be held accountable, but accountability refers to specific actions. It was his firm conviction that only people can be held accountable for decisions. If decisions are covered by the respective system of laws, even individuals are immune against individual accountability. As a result, he considered accountability a dubious concept. He mentioned that not even a single German judge was sentenced after the Nazi regime because it was said that they were only administering justice according to the existing laws and, consequently, they could not be kept accountable – even though what they really administered was not justice but state terror.

<u>A. Clesse</u> refocused the dialogue on specific issues and asked which the necessary practical steps are in order to institutionalize justice. As the discussions proceeded, the <u>participants</u> debated the importance and difference between the letter and the spirit of the law. One participant pleaded for an appropriate education in order to enable people to respect not only the letter but also the spirit of the laws, thus leading to a decent society. Another discussant pointed out that laws define the limits of justice. Contrary to this position, it was stated that it

is justice that defines the boundaries of the law and not vice versa. The reason is that a law may be unjust. Therefore, undoing such laws requires justice. The heated debate went on with opposing positions referring to the importance of an uncontested interpretation of the laws so as justice to be delivered appropriately.

The final issue that was raised was Montesquieu's concept of checks and balances that was seen as a prerequisite for a well-functioning political system. As an example participants criticized Romania for inadequate checks and balances, transforming this new democracy into something similar to a 'despotic' democracy. Accordingly, the judiciary is not adequately independent as the Supreme Court appointees, for example, are selected according to their political affiliations. Prospects for an improvement of the situation in Romania, which is marked by corruption and a lack of checks and balances, were deemed limited because there are too many conflicting interests.

4. Utopias

A. Clesse introduced his topic by summarising what people usually think of utopia, and what utopian thinkers think of themselves and their work. He mentioned that the majority perceive utopia as something unrealistic, something that might look interesting and exciting in many respects but that cannot be really implemented.

Utopia comes from ancient Greek and means *u-topia* (*ou* or no, *topia* comes from *topos* or place), no place, a place that does not exist. There are many thinkers who wrote utopias such as Plato (*The Republic*, 380 BC), Aristotle (*Politeia*, 350 BC), Tommaso Campanella (*The City of the Sun*, 1623), Francis Bacon (*Nova Atlantis*, 1627), and others. Thomas More (1478-1535) coined the term 'utopia', a name he gave to the ideal, imaginary island nation whose political system he described in *Utopia* (1516).

Utopian thinkers often wrote utopias out of their dissatisfaction with their society and did not want to be seen as dreamers. A utopia is to measure the distance between what is and what should be. It is also a critique of the writer's society. A utopia in this sense may even be subversive or revolutionary if people take the idea seriously. Some utopian elements can be found in communist and socialist ideas. In contrast, Marx was opposed to utopian thinking as socialism and communism are brought about through inherent laws. More recently, utopian thinking turned to be anti-utopian. As for example George Orwell in "1984" pictured a totalitarian project. These anti-utopias can be understood as a warning against the inherent dangers of such designs.

Afterwards, A. Clesse discussed the most important aspects of Thomas More's *Utopia*. Thomas More was very critical of the social order, social problems, poverty, and misery of the people and their lack of freedom. He criticised both poverty and luxury. In *Utopia* there was no private ownership. Everybody had to work, and the most important activity was agriculture. Men would do the most physically demanding jobs but women would be paid the same. Everybody would work six hours per day so as to leave a lot of free time, time for games, music and conversation.

He denounced laziness. Whoever did not work would be frowned upon. That was a critique of the beggars and those living on social welfare. Most of the day should be devoted to spiritual

exercises and intellectual activities. In *Utopia* everybody had to be active. Money was also abolished in *Utopia*. Gold, silver and diamonds had no more value than ordinary stones. Similarly, the legal system had few laws. The system was very severe with lawyers who – if found crooked – would be excluded forever by the island. Euthanasia was permitted. Capital punishment was not approved. More's logic on the issue was quite modern, he considered the death penalty counter-productive. If the criminal was afraid for his life, then this would give him the incentive to kill his victim in order not to be able to be identified by him in a court of law.

The utopian thinkers also rejected war. However, they were prepared for war. They would never start a war but they would defend themselves from attacks. What is more, there was providence for a kind of 'humanitarian intervention', that is liberation of other people from extreme tyranny, and slavery.

The next important utopian oeuvre that A. Clesse touched upon was *Civitas Solis* or *La Città del Sole* or *The City of the Sun* by Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639), which depicts a theocratic and egalitarian society. *The City of the Sun* has a particular politico-theocratic hierarchy. The Prince, i.e. the Sun, has supreme authority and is both the king and the highest priest. Next to him were three princes of equal power to assist him. First of all, Power, who is in charge of strategy and all war activities; secondly, Wisdom who is the ruler of the liberal arts, mechanics, all sciences with their magistrates and doctors, as well as the discipline of the schools; thirdly, Love who is in charge of reproduction.

The state has also high dignitaries who are responsible for everything, including the most specific things. There are individuals responsible for grammar, logic, some elements of physics, medicine, politics, economics, morals, astronomy, astrology, geometry, cosmography, music, arithmetic, poetry *et al*. There is no private ownership and as a result there are offices responsible for the distribution of goods and for implementing virtues, offices of generosity, justice, courage, truth, attitude, compassion *et al*.

The City of the Sun has also a very precise division of labour. Just like in More's *Utopia*, the easy jobs are done by women. Moreover, the youth had to serve the elderly. Interpersonal relations are also strictly and precisely regulated. A woman is forbidden to have sex before she is 19 years old, and the man before he is 21. However, a man younger than 21 is allowed to have sex with non-fertile or pregnant women in order to practice. Furthermore, people should have sex every three days.

Another interesting aspect of *The City of the Sun* was peoples' dietary preferences and their justification. In the beginning, they were vegetarians because they considered killing animals as cruel. Lately, they thought that even plants had senses and feelings. Therefore, they decided to allow themselves to eat animals, which for them was no less cruel than killing a plant.

Subsequently, a discussion arose on aspects of totalitarianism in these concepts of utopian societies. These perfect designs were seen as immune to critique, hence they have to be accepted like a dogma. Commenting on the totalitarian features of utopias, A. Clesse argued that none of them is a democratic design. All utopian thinkers from Plato to Campanella believed that some virtues are self-evident. In this view some people are genetically superior to others and accordingly they are predetermined to lead. That is the premise of all this thinking. Most of these philosophers like Aristotle criticized what we call democracy.

Thinkers like Campanella and More were dissatisfied by their societies and wrapped their critique in the depiction of utopian societies.

5. Utilitarianism

A. Clesse moved on to criticising utilitarianism as a philosophy that may provide solutions to the pursuit of human happiness and as a guiding force towards the creation of a decent society. Utilitarianism has a common concept that runs throughout all relevant oeuvres, namely that an action is judged by its outcome. This is utilitarianism's morality: the pursuit of happiness and/or eudemonism. According to Mill, a good utilitarian is someone who maximises personal happiness while avoiding personal suffering, and this is good because it supposedly leads to the maximisation of general happiness. Utilitarians, from Mills to Rawls, thought that their concepts and ideas were sufficient to improve their societies. However, A. Clesse concluded that this is doubtful, and he referred to Schopenhauer who argued that everything is suffering.

A. Clesse's critique of utilitarianism revolved around the issue of those at whose expense we satisfy our needs. What is the cost of our satisfaction? Utilitarianism does not take into consideration this fundamental inquiry. Modern societies are typical examples of this costly indifference. Our standard of living, our life style, our comforts have enormous repercussions on other peoples' lives. The basic principle of utilitarianism is pleasure, but whose pleasure and at whose expense? Lately, we care about the impact of civilisation on nature. There is a very active environmental movement but it is one-sided. It does not involve other issues, nor does it lead to a change in other habits. A case in point is animals. We satisfy our appetite for meat but actually this is an appetite for destruction. We exchange cheap meat for a miserable and tormenting animal life. We base our pleasurable and abundant life on barbarism and humiliation of other people and living creatures.

G.M. Ambrosi considered specificities of the utilitarian thought and the measurability of happiness. He stressed that much of modern theoretical economics is indeed utilitarian economics. Its basic idea is that economic actors have utility functions which the actors aim to maximise under specific constraints. With this methodological approach economists then interpret and analyse real life behaviour and outcomes. But this method has many problems. One problem is measurement. The sentiment of utility satisfaction cannot be measured by an objective standard, although there were some early utilitarian economists like Francis Y. Edgeworth (1845-1926) who were convinced that some such measure might be possible. Another problem is posed by the specific shape of the utility function which economists must presuppose so that their analyses can give reliable results. Theoretical economists postulate that the necessary formal requirements of the utility functions are indeed fulfilled, like in particular the transitivity of the underlying order of preferences. But even if the formal requirements are fulfilled for individual economic actors, this does not mean that they are also fulfilled on the collective level, i.e. when analysing the economic decisions of a society as a whole. Indeed, there is the famous "Arrow impossibility theorem", named after the 1972 Economic Nobel Prize laureate Kenneth Arrow, which formally disproves the possibility to derive a consistent and transitive social preference function on the basis of a democratic aggregation of individual decisions, even when they are based on individual utility functions which do fulfil all the formal requirements.

Certain <u>participants</u> shared <u>G.M. Ambrosi</u>'s standpoint, and pointed out that the value of one thing is not only difficult to measure but also varies from person to person based on an individual's needs. Moreover, it was mentioned that the very idea of decency transcends commercial practices.

6. Liberalism, tolerance and the sanctity of life

In the following session, the summer seminar focused on liberalism. <u>A. Clesse</u> opened the debate on liberalism by focusing on the central and controversial issue of tolerance with reference to famous liberal thinkers. Subsequently, his main concern was to approach liberalism from a contemporary point of view based on current problems and contentious issues, such as euthanasia, abortion, homosexual marriage, preimplantation diagnosis *et al.* According to <u>A. Clesse</u>, the consideration of such issues may provide an understanding not only of what is allowed in our societies but also of how liberal and decent our societies really are.

In this context, he referred to John Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* in order to explain how controversial an issue like tolerance can be. Moreover, this issue is also both context- and time-bound. More specifically, Locke – one of the most well-known liberal thinkers of all times – writes that no church is bound by the duty of tolerance to retain any person who continues to offend the laws of society. This was a progressive approach during Locke's era. Nonetheless, it would probably be characterised as intolerant in our modern Western societies.

Another important but divisive aspect of Locke's thought was that the care of each man's salvation belongs only to himself; a notion which challenges religion. He wrote that no private person has any rights in any manner to prejudice another person in his civil enjoyments because he's of another church or religion.

Locke's position on atheism and atheists would not be considered tolerant according to our current understanding. More specifically, Locke argued that atheists should not be tolerated because "promises, covenants and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist".

<u>G.M. Ambrosi</u> claimed that society cannot find a spontaneous order if freedom is the only structuring principle. For thinkers like Kant and Hegel, freedom was very important because of their own experiences in a society marked by subordination and lack of liberty. But even for Hegel, freedom was propagated not in the absolute, but in a dialectical relation with necessity: "Freedom is insight into necessity" according to Hegel. Or consider Adam Smith who, in the eyes of many, stands for the idea of unrestrained economic freedom. But for Adam Smith the world was one of "pre-stabilized harmony", to use Leibniz's words who had similar ideas of the world. It was *created* by God to run according to eternal laws. It is because of these *laws* that economic freedom can do no harm in Adam Smith's view. To let society and economy move freely meant for Smith that people had the possibility to move as "freely" as the planets move, but according to certain rules which Newton and Leibniz discovered and described with their newly invented differential calculus. Later, the German founder of the modern value theory, Hermann Heinrich Gossen, wrote that if mankind seeks happiness it only had to discover these (utilitarian) laws, which God has set for it and follow

them. The central idea behind the pleas of the classical economists in the 18th and 19th century that government should have minimal influence was that then the pre-stabilized harmony would not be tampered with any more. But nowadays few people believe in such God-created harmony. The people who nowadays propagate Margaret Thatcher-type economic freedoms like the British Adam Smith Institute and the like ask for the same type of freedom as Adam Smith asked for in 1776. But that is inconsistent even as far as beliefs are concerned and we see in real life that there is no pre-stabilized harmony in the economy. G.M. Ambrosi concluded that economic liberty should be accompanied by an ordering principle that would structure such a freedom

One participant referred to an important French philosopher of the 16th century, Pierre Bayle, who is believed to have been a source of John Locke's ideas on tolerance. More specifically, in one of his treatises, Bayle acknowledges the link between freedom, reciprocity and responsibility. When referring to the Protestant refugees in the Netherlands who demanded freedom and tolerance, he wondered whether they would grant to others what they were asking for themselves because in England the Protestants did not act accordingly and failed to respect the rights of the Catholics.

At that point certain clarifications on the concept of tolerance were provided. One participant stressed that this concept emerged in Europe mostly after the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, and cited the notion of *cuius regio, eius religio*. However, he clarified, that was a highly limited concept in comparison to its contemporary meaning. At that time, somebody who was tolerated was under surveillance by the authorities, was discriminated against and did not really enjoy a free life. Another participant pointed out that the idea of tolerance as imposed from above lies at the historical origin of liberal tolerance. In fact, he added, this forced tolerance provided society with the building blocks of the modern kind of tolerance.

At this juncture G.M. Ambrosi emphasized that the concept of tolerance depends on the history and the cultural past of each and every society. In fact, there is no objective medium line between freedom and order. The reason is that people have different experiences and cultures on which they base their decisions. This, he added, is important, and has to be taken into consideration by those drafting or proposing utopias.

A. Clesse intervened in order to reorient the focus of the discussions. He acknowledged that freedom and tolerance are ambiguous concepts and that liberalism was initially meant to limit the power of the state. However, given that even great thinkers like Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Mill and Smith were inconsistent and had changed their ideas on the issue, he urged the participants to focus on more tangible and contemporary issues and to discuss the question of how liberal our societies really are. Is reality different from rhetoric?

A. Clesse's remarks generated a rich, and diverse debate focusing on (the lack of) tolerance and on national identity. The participants expressed various opinions relating to the foundations of tolerance, how intolerance can be tackled, the politics of identity, assimilation, populism and shared specific real-life examples.

Some participants argued that the lack of tolerance is actually rooted on the lack of knowledge and critical thinking because it is based on prejudice and stereotypes, hence education is the remedy. Additionally, the mixing, and interaction of populations from different religious backgrounds should be encouraged so as to reduce prejudice. This strategy has already been successful in the case of Costanza in Romania where people with different

cultural and religious backgrounds live peacefully together. Furthermore it was argued that the solution to intolerance is proper and organised communication. For example, a participant mentioned that the Muslim authorities in European countries should be invited to a dialogue that would produce shared understandings and would lead all involved parties to seize the opportunity to create appropriate solutions for the problem of religious intolerance.

Other participants emphasised the importance of the immigrants' attitudes towards their host countries. It was mentioned that immigrants should not migrate to countries with attitudes that do not suit them and that they should respect the traditions of the hosting countries. Moreover, national identity, especially a solid one, makes it very difficult for foreigners to adapt to the culture of the host country if they do not want to assimilate.

A. Clesse expanded on the concept of identity by referring to the current state of affairs in Europe, in particular France. President Sarkozy launched the *débat identitaire*. This debate represents the fear of loosing identity. The roots of this fear lie in a lack of self-confidence of the nation due to a perceived French decline, as described in several recent books. Perhaps such a debate may not exist in a more self-confident France. Besides this vague and abstract fear, there are more concrete anxieties concerning, for example, the violence in the suburbs that interact with anti-Muslim stereotypes and prejudice. One participant argued that in the final analysis the roots of the French identity debate lie in the very notion of the nation-state itself.

Another important issue that the debate touched upon was populism. It was stated that the focus on immigration and regulation is often based on a will to disorient the public away from more crucial and difficult topics such as the economic crisis. Another motive is the will of so-called mainstream parties to gain votes from right-wing parties. This leads to the promotion of fear and the intensification of xenophobia, and all this can eventually create some kind of a vicious circle that is also fed by the media. The media pay disproportionate attention to issues that can be used for political exploitation, hence allowing politicians to take advantage of the fears and phobias of their electorate. An example for this can be found in the debate on Muslim women wearing the burqa.

Afterwards, other participants took another point of view which was based on the communitarian dimension of the debate. They referred to the type of statement a person who uses religious symbols makes. Is that a positive statement, such as the expression of belonging to a specific group or is it the opposite, namely the expression of the difference from the majority?

Following some remarks on the burqa and burqa as a symbol of male domination over women, A. Clesse clarified that this is often not the case. He cited specific polls in countries like France according to which these women say that their husbands do not prefer them to wear the burqa. Therefore, the whole issue comes down to emotions, identity politics, defending cultural diversity *et al.*, and not so much to gender relations.

Others endorsed a slightly different position, stating that in cases like in France the origin of the debate lies in a shift in the evolution of the conception of secularism and only subsequently it became part of the identity debate. A typical example was the 1998 incident of a school teacher expelling two young girls because they were wearing head-scarves. This event took place long before the relevant law was voted.

Following this double reading of the burqa discrimination, another <u>participant</u> expressed his concern of the use of national security as an excuse for blatant intolerance. He referred to the French High Court that invoked this reason in order not to strike down the law on the banning of the burqa.

Other <u>participants</u> of the summer school also commented on the use of double standards by the West. A French quotation was mentioned: "La tolérance? Il y a des maisons pour ça!" In other words, if someone wants tolerance he should go to a brothel (maison de tolérance). This is indicative of the West's lack of tolerance and its application of double standards.

Another <u>participant</u> stated that double standards should not be surprising us. First of all, they are a consequence of the connection between liberalism and the nation-state. More specifically, the Declaration of Human Rights refers not only to human rights but also to citizens' rights, even though citizens' rights are more important than human rights. Thus, contemporary liberal nation-states distinguish between citizens and foreigners and apply different standards to both groups.

This point produced a reaction that concentrated on when it is permissible to wear religious symbols and when it is not – without having to use double standards. It was stated that the crucial question or criterion is whether there is a clash between peoples' right to display their religious symbols and their duties they are supposed to perform (at work or as citizens/residents in the public sphere). Indeed, it may be argued that a woman that wears the hijab or burqa or just the simple cross under her shirt voluntarily is doing nothing that should be banned. On this principle, wearing the burqa in public is just and should be permissible. Nevertheless, and this would be more just, a distinction between the private and the public sphere should be drawn to help define what is just. For instance, if a Muslim hairdresser wants to wear the burqa at work, then this creates a conflict with her duties because she may have to show her head as part of the commercial interest of the business.

<u>A. Clesse</u> welcomed the interventions of all the participants, and expressed his conviction that this was a rich, useful as well as multifaceted debate. In his ensuing remarks, he criticised the French position on the burqa. He considered this law as a display of power on the part of the French establishment which aims to make immigrants realise their limits and disguise the shortcomings of the French society. The case of Belgium, where a burqa law passed provisionally, in an almost uncontested way, underscores the importance of a societal debate.

A further example relating to the issue of tolerance that was discussed concerned the question of prostitution. <u>A. Clesse</u> asked the participants if selling one's own body should be allowed in a decent society or if society should come up with moral criteria to forbid it. He wondered whether it is a matter of self-respect or self-determination. He then expanded on the prostitutes' point of view: they argue that they are free to do whatever they want with their body. Furthermore, they believe that they are decent because this is what they do for a living. On the contrary, for them the real 'prostitutes' are those with a permissive life-style who pretend to be decent but are just fake.

The discussion commenced with a debate concerning the place of prostitution in our society. The opinions were divided between those in favour of banning prostitution and those in favour of liberal policies that would regulate it.

A minority of participants supported that prostitution should be forbidden because of the magnitude of forced prostitution. Given the moral decadence of the job, it should be banned. Additionally, others pointed out that prostitution is a vice and that we should not add more vice to our society. Legalization of prostitution would increase societal vice. Finally, it was argued that if we start with the expansion of liberty towards prostitution, then this raises questions about limits to individual freedom.

The argument on liberty as well as A. Clesse's philosophical question on what rights a prostitute has over her own body led to a lively discussion. According to the liberal participants, there is the principle of self-ownership which dates back to John Locke. More precisely, persons own their bodies and their 'manpower'. The main justification is that in order to have adequate control of their own faith, people need to be entitled to full control of their bodies. This also means that if the government decides to ban prostitution on these grounds, then it may also need to reconsider other forms of wage-labour relationships that entail not just the sale of sexual labour.

Other participants severely criticized the hypocrisy and double standards of the West, as well as of many other countries around the globe. Starting from the West, A. Clesse condemned the hypocrisy of people who profess or abhor prostitution but nevertheless go to prostitutes because they think these women serve them in a way no one else can do.

In the course of the discussions several participants expressed possible ways to handle the issue of prostitution. The general orientation was in favour of a decent state that does not forbid but on the contrary tries to prevent and alleviate suffering.

Another moral ethical question A. Clesse introduced to the debates was the sanctity of life. He addressed the issue by referring to the controversial issue of euthanasia. He is a fervent supporter of the absolute sanctity of life and considers it as a prerequisite of a decent society. He began by posing a series of questions related to euthanasia such as how society should handle euthanasia and whether it has a place in a decent society. His philosophical opinion was that there is no such thing as a 'good' death. People may go to Switzerland for a "good death" but that is plain hypocrisy. The organisations that are practising euthanasia are doing it for profit. Even the best death is still terrible. He then invited the participants to express their views on what should be done about people who suffer at the end of their life or who cannot express their will.

The opinions expressed were divided among those in favour of and those against the right to euthanasia as well as those in favour of euthanasia under certain conditions, and A. Clesse supporting the absolute sanctity of life.

The first member of the group that intervened worried about the repercussions of legitimising euthanasia. He sustained that in a decent society we should not kill. He then posed a series of questions. What if someone who does not wish euthanasia is killed? Who gives people the right to kill? If that is allowed, then what will be the limits? What if the system becomes corrupt in the future and people are assassinated in this way, or political persecutions are handled likewise?

A. Clesse likened this position to that of a moral lawyer. In the past, he maintained that many philosophers thought about letting or even assisting just old people to commit euthanasia and that it was not considered so scandalous. Additionally, there are old traditions or habits in some tribes in Africa and elsewhere where old people go by themselves to be eaten by wild

animals when they decide they cannot contribute productively any more to their society. They do not want to be a burden. Nonetheless, the instinct of self-preservation is the strongest. That is why most people, even if they suffer a lot, want to live.

Yet others argued that there is a minority favouring euthanasia which should be respected. Which kind of society, they went on, does not allow them to do what they want to their body? If euthanasia is a conscious decision, then it should be respected.

The final intervention concentrated on the elaboration of a liberal taxonomy that can be found in the literature on the ethics of euthanasia. Four kinds of euthanasia were listed: voluntary, non-voluntary, involuntary and assisted suicide.

Euthanasia is characterised as voluntary if a person wants to die and expresses this will but cannot do it himself or if someone asks for assistance with dying.

Euthanasia is characterised as non-voluntary if the patient cannot carry out the act by himself and if he cannot express a judgement and if he did not fill out a living will.

Euthanasia is characterised as involuntary (which in fact is unjustifiable killing) if someone is killed although he wants to live.

The main argument following this categorisation was that not respecting someone's will is a form of discrimination. As a result, assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia should be allowed.

A. Clesse welcomed that argument but contended that a person may change his mind. Despite the fact that a person in a healthy state may have taken a certain decision in the past, it does not mean that a person may not regret it. A person may want to die today but not tomorrow. Additionally, a person may be very ill, taking all kinds of medical substances, perhaps be in a depressive mood and want to put an end to his life. However, the next day, although he may still have the same illness, he may not be in a depressive mood and consequently may wish to live on.

7. The role of work and money

The summer school discussed the role of economics and the social impact of contemporary economic systems. The session began with A. Clesse asking whether work as we know it is a kind of humiliation or whether it can be compatible with a decent society or indeed whether people should organise work differently in the future. The question is this: can we imagine a society where there is no longer any really unpleasant and difficult work? Is this feasible? Which economic system would be appropriate? Indeed, he admitted, at least in our part of the world, things have changed and the majority of people do not have to do difficult jobs as it used to be the case. Moreover, what can we do to further improve this situation, and perhaps slowly eliminate all painful, embarrassing, difficult work, work that is detrimental to the physical and psychological health of workers?

A. Clesse's questions invited the participants to a lively debate that revolved around the problems of exploitation and alienation, the importance of private ownership, the barter method of economic exchanges as well as family ties.

G.M. Ambrosi related that Hegel proposed to look at work as communication with the surrounding. Furthermore Hegel stressed that the consciousness in the medieval feudal society was superior in comparison with that of the previous slave-based societies. For example, in the Roman society the ruling class became alienated from the rest of man's existence because the slaves were doing their work. But as Hegel emphasized, work is a human condition that is needed. Nowadays, it is more important to analyse whether and how work could be experienced as an interaction and as an enriching experience.

This was followed by several interventions from a Marxist point of view that concentrated on exploitation and alienation. One participant stressed that according to Marxism, the resource owners are unjust when they take the surplus value of the labour of the worker. A decent society should take that into consideration. Another participant argued that the problem lies in the lack of a real alternative to private ownership. He mentioned that in communist Romania the problem was that the ruling elite had equated social ownership with state ownership. Nowadays the problem has changed in degrees but not in essence. In democracies state ownership has been replaced by private ownership but with the addition of favouritism the result is not dramatically different from that of the communist era. One major problem that was identified concerned the character of money. Originally introduced as a means of exchange, it has become an aim in itself.

G.M. Ambrosi replied that as far as money is concerned, one has to discern between money as an economic institution and money which is held as an asset. The institutional existence of money - the fact that we can pay with tokens of money - serves an important economic purpose, namely to facilitate transactions and to avoid the necessity for a direct coincidence of needs. The effect of this institution is an increase of economic efficiency and of productivity, simply because transactions are so much easier in a monetary economy rather than in an economy where you have to barter one good directly against another good. We have an entirely different aspect of money when it is held as an asset. Massive money holdings by the public are an indication of an unwillingness to invest in producible goods. This occurs mostly in times of great economic insecurity. The result of this is that effective demand is diminished and economic production declines. Then production sites lie idle and there is unemployment. In this case the effect of money - or rather: the way in which people behave towards money - has an effect which is the opposite of the above. In this latter case we have a decrease of production and of the productivity of the resources of an economy. The question then is how to put people off from hoarding money so that economic activity can pick up again. Finally, sometimes even a wasteful way of spending money may lead to economic growth.

As an alternative to today's currency systems, A. Clesse mentioned the possibility of barter. Barter is a method of exchange by which goods or services are directly exchanged for other goods or services without using a medium of exchange such as money. This is a way for people to respond to primary needs, such as eating or clothing, and to some simple things they need at home. In essence, the issue is what would happen if money was abolished. What would happen if money was allowed only for goods of necessity but not for luxury goods? Is this a model for the future?

G.M. Ambrosi replied that one positive aspect of the abolition of money could be that then it would disappear as a medium for hoarding and the problem of an interruption of the circular flow of purchasing power which was just described above would disappear. But the down side of the abolition of money as a medium for payment would be the great loss in efficiency of transactions. Also, the problem of hoarding could not be eliminated entirely in this way. People could obtain a precious painting by an old master, say by Rembrandt, of which no new ones can be produced. Or people could hold land as an asset - not for agricultural production but as an alternative form of hoarding. Then we would have the detrimental effects of hoarding all over again. Therefore the abolition of money does not seem to be an easy solution for material betterment of mankind.

G.M. Ambrosi described the possibility of a system of time coupons with labour time as a sort of currency that is being exchanged. The exchange rate between a dentist's time and a hairdresser's time for example could be 1:3.

One participant commented that this would fundamentally change the current economic system since the laws of demand and supply would not be valid. They would not determine prices. Prices would be determined by the labour input and the Marxist labour theory of value.

G.M. Ambrosi conceded that the labour embodied in the products might then indeed become a more important factor in determining the structure of relative prices. But it is a rather intractable problem to trace the indirect input of labour as soon as material inputs like other materials, capital services, land use etc. are involved. There is a long debate in economics whether it is sensible at all to make the attempt to base economic analysis on the calculation of embodied labour input. An alternative in economic analysis is to use "labour commanded" values. That means that the calculation is not: how much labour went into the making of a product but rather: how much labour could I buy with the proceeds of selling a product? It was Adam Smith, by the way, who propagated such labour commanded values whereas the labour embodied values were favoured by David Ricardo.

Some participants questioned specific practical aspects of such a system like taxation. If standards are arbitrary, then how could a state tax transactions? Even if it was implemented, it would entail huge coordination problems.

Another issue of concern was the care of the elderly. How has the present economic system affected this aspect of family life? The reply was that this aspect has been neglected. The youth tends to become too calculating and rational, and all this at the expense of their children and parents.

One participant suggested that a decent society should take into consideration the upbringing of children. Nowadays, people who work do so often to the detriment of their duties towards their children.

Another participant criticised this kind of economically motivated thinking on reproduction as inappropriate. He referred to Susan Okin's book on *Gender justice and family*. Susan Okin, a liberal feminist political philosopher, writes that if it is valid that people may own everything they add their labour to, then women own the whole humanity. Of course, he concluded, this logic is a *reductio ad absurdum*. What the argument seems to prove is that we cannot conceptualize reproduction morally or economically in the same way as production. Reproduction has always been overlooked in the history of philosophy and economics, and it

has probably never entered into most theories of justice. That is a task for contemporary theories.

A. Clesse mentioned the calculating, rational and egoistic behaviour of part of the youth. He acknowledged that the majority of our societies face this problem. He also noted that this is much evidence of the decay of our societies and of the change of objective conditions that have created a different reality.

He then analysed important aspects of the relation between young and elderly people. First of all, he reminded the participants that in practically all western societies the number of old people is increasing. Secondly, it is difficult to pay for institutions that take care of old people when there are fewer young people. Thirdly, people are reluctant to act compassionately towards their relatives under the pretext that it is costly. According to a set of recent polls, only a third of young people acknowledge that it is their moral obligation to take care of their old parents when these cannot do it by themselves anymore. Indeed, the cost of such services is increasing whereas their quality is diminishing. However, it is regrettable that there are people who think just in economic terms.

In addition, A. Clesse mentioned that such calculating people often do not even want to bear children. They analyse the costs of a child and decide accordingly. Nevertheless, they do not take into consideration the adverse effects that this tendency brings about. This practice will probably worsen the demographic situation, social protection and social welfare. This is quite unfortunate for many reasons. It could be considered a betrayal of the social contract. Of course, this development is not confined to the West. Another example is China with its problematic one-child policy. Evidently, this may become a global predicament. Nonetheless, A. Clesse concluded that whether it is global or local, this logic is at odds with that of a decent society.

8. The role of religion in a decent society

The summer school group also discussed the function of religion in a decent society. A. Clesse began by asking which is the value of religion and whether it can be replaced by something else. He pointed out that religion prevents people from humiliation and provides moral clues to lead a decent life. Without doubt, religion offers a powerful system of rewards, and punishments either in this or in the "next life", thereby creating incentives to abide by an ethical code. Quite unconventionally, A. Clesse took the subject beyond the traditional debate on religion, its divisiveness or its past wrongdoings such as the Crusades or the Inquisition. At the centre of his attention was the present and future of a society with or without religion, and the practical significance of it. He described his interest with a kind of utilitarian question: if religion was eliminated, what would prevent people from debasing themselves and others?

These remarks were followed by a discussion that acknowledged and praised religion's dual function – the metaphysical and the ethical one.

Metaphysically, religion was portrayed as irreplaceable. It answers the existential question 'what we are'. G.M. Ambrosi wondered where else we should get the impetus to go beyond our existence as creatures. A. Clesse added that if man takes away religion, then he will

remain alone with his metaphysical fears, anxiety and questions. There seems to be no alternative to help him, not even science.

Moreover, some participants distinguished between secularism and metaphysics. They suggested that even though we are living in an era of secularism, we are modifying metaphysics but we are not abandoning it. Indeed, in the course of the history of the Western civilisations, the role of religious concerns, beliefs and norms moved from the public sphere into the private one. Moreover, constitutions, states, and societies, to a large extent, stopped being based on religious principles and even science. From a metaphysical and epistemic point of view, knowledge systems stopped being based on religious dogmas. Nonetheless, it was argued that a shift to a secular paradigm does not necessarily break the connection with metaphysics.

From an ethical point of view, it was commonly accepted that religion offers valuable and unique moral guidance. Religion is a reference point for proper ethical conduct. Its ethics are not 'mortal', they are universal and transcendental.

Another issue that A. Clesse brought to the attention of the participants was the charity of the Churches. Besides well-known religious notions of compassion and of love or agape, there is also the notion of charity. This is still an important role, and we should not just think of individual efforts like Mother Teresa. It is worldwide. It is undisputable that it would take years or decades to replace the role of Church in this field – if it were feasible at all.

A. Clesse concluded by renewing his initial questions and comparing political systems with or without religion. The final question on the role of religion was whether a decent society would be better without it. He indicated that this would probably not be the case and pointed towards states that had abolished religion. It was the less decent or indecent societies that had eradicated religion. Such countries had regimes or dictators who claimed that there was no need to have religion any more, that it could be easily replaced and that this would make their society more decent.

Moreover, it seems that in these parts of the world, religion has come back with a vengeance. It has even managed to survive communism. For instance, during the past 15 years and more, in places like Russia or Ukraine there is a new religious fervour. In fact this religious passion is stronger than that in the West nowadays. This is something astonishing. The creation of decent societies without religion has led to a disillusionment.

9. A new social contract

A. Clesse concluded the seminar with two final remarks that brought a whole new dimension to the debate. First of all, are people adverse to change for psychological reasons? Perhaps thinkers may devise beautiful models for the world that nobody wants to 'bring to life' in case the outcome might be worse than the previous one. Secondly, is it possible that the solution to Western lack of decency and decadence is indeed a return to this kind of thinking?

Towards the end of the seminar, A. Clesse then encouraged the participants of the summer school to ponder whether they believe that the solution will come from a new social contract as well as how this could take place. The kind of social contract to which he made reference was outlined in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Of the Social Contract, Or Principles of Political*

Right (*Du contrat social ou Principes du droit politique*, 1762). He described it as a 'rich' book that continues to have relevance because it theorises the best way in which to set up a political community in the face of the problems of a commercial society.

More specifically, the usefulness of Rousseau's thinking consists in his privileging of equality. Despite the fact that he acknowledges human weaknesses, he designs a system that actually produces a moral and legitimate form of equality. He transforms what nature has created as physical and intellectual inequality among people into equality by convention and by right.

Subsequently, A. Clesse wondered whether this approach is applicable to our era. He urged the participants to realise that this is the ultimate criterion. This is what everybody should bear in mind in order to judge the social contract's practical utility for our very pragmatic and pluralistic societies. In other words, does it represent an adequate answer to current socio-political problems?

In order to determine the feasibility of a Rousseau-type social contract, A. Clesse stated that we have to find out if the 'general will', his fundamental concept, really exists, and how it could be formed – two questions that Rousseau eluded. He insisted on the 'general will' because it lies at the heart of Rousseau's philosophy and guarantees a system of justice, and equality. Rousseau's 'general will' (*volonté générale*) is a complex concept which has to be distinguished from the will of all (*volonté de tous*). So, if the rights of the commonwealth prevail over those of the individual, equality, social links and real strengths in the exercise of sovereignty will be achieved.

Concluding Remarks

At the end of the course, A. Clesse addressed the participants more personally and referred to the role of the seminar and also to his own expectations. The reason why he is holding this seminar for 17 consecutive years (since 1994) is to stimulate people intellectually. He is not necessarily aiming to change or raise consciousness but instead to make people wonder, always be curious, and stop being satisfied with the situation they have got. If he did not believe that he could change something through his thinking and writing, he would stop. His very secret ambition is that some of the participants will not be satisfied with the present society and that they may start to long for a different one.

Alexandros Koutsoukis
LIEIS

Appendix I

Working Group 1 Report
Our Society: Between Decency and Indecency

The starting point for any inquiry into what "decent" and "indecent" might mean society-wise must be the utter relativity of such concepts on a personal level: plainly put, what is decent to someone may very well *not* be decent to someone else. What decency is - be it on an individual level or for society as a whole - varies according to prevailing norms and ideology-imbued values and their interpretations. It is thus in light of this brief disclaimer that we set out to discern between decent and indecent in the context of a contemporary Western society.

In order to be able to pinpoint the respects in which our world is found wanting, a mandatory mental exercise has been a debate upon some potential standards of decency that a better arrangement would satisfy. Our group found decency - regardless of the various standards it might imply in any specific case - to be tantamount to *respect* in its broadest sense; apart from such an attempt to find a meaningful synonym, decency takes - inevitably - different conceptual forms. Respect - for example - might itself be equated with a capacity for admiration within the mental framework of critical thinking and in search of common standards for social dialogue. Indeed, "dialogue" seems to be a constant, an oft-invoked standard in many definitions with regard to the public sphere, along with the idea of decency as distinction between public and private matters, as opposed to exhibitionism, voyeurism and wanton public pressure. To make matters clearer, pressure may be understood both intra-societally *and* in terms of the cultural domination one society may exert upon another in varying degrees, stifling local creativity. Indeed, creativity and dynamism are two twin concepts, which were frequently invoked during group debates: a decent society cannot be a static one, nor one where culture is commodified and originality deemed irrelevant. The role of education in protecting and enshrining (along with a critical view) cultural values has been unanimously agreed upon - yet the role of education is, as one would expect, even more pivotal. Societal decency may be reached only through life-long learning and a free and universal access to education, so that human potential will not be wasted and alienation be prevented by providing citizens with tools and skills for social insertion. Naturally, equal opportunities are the prerequisite for any such arrangement's success and - unsurprisingly - another recurring demand in our group's discussions; the idea of thoroughly safeguarded rights and liberties is central to any and all "decent" scenarios, with potentially new entries in the roll-call. Thus, a right to freedom from a generally fearful and anxiety-ridden outlook on life (as mentally induced by society) and a right to freedom from ideology-ridden and dogma-imbued brainwashing have been given as potential examples.

Having thus enumerated a few potential guidelines against the backdrop of which our society's indecencies might be better spotted, we may now proceed with drawing out a tentative taxonomy: one's understanding of society's flaws or high points can be rearranged in accordance with economic, socio-cultural and political criteria.

Firstly, from an economic standpoint, one decent aspect of the status quo is the absence (albeit not total) of slavery - and yet, widespread poverty and precariousness of food and shelter technically amount to precisely that. The free market might be seen as decent in being the most flexible and open arrangement known thus far, yet structural unemployment and the absence of work opportunities for all are to be deemed indecent and - hopefully - not inherent

to the market itself. Disparities between rich and poor, mainly due to an unequal access to the market and labor opportunity have been singled out by our group as being some of the most obvious economic indecencies of all. Overconsumption and the waste of natural resources are engendered by a work ethic (or absence thereof, one might say), which pays little attention to sustainability, while the indecent equation of happiness with material prosperity seems to be the likely culprit. The socio-environmental irresponsibility of economic actors who go unpunished while letting society right their wrongs at its own expense is highly indecent as well, though decency may arguably be hoped for in the future, with international cooperation in matters of environmental protection being taken more and more seriously by governments and NGOs. Finally, contrasting and comparing war expenditure with nearly any other government investment is plainly indecent, especially in light of the aforementioned.

Socio-culturally, the fact that we still treasure dialogue gives hope, even if we are still plagued by indifference, intolerance and the absence of a society-wide framework for dialogue. Creativity is surely not in its death throes, yet culture has been commodified and censorship is oftentimes still crippling. Friendly as we may be toward a small circle of acquaintances, we still lack a decent understanding of empathy as a universal and unconditional driving force of society; animals, too, must benefit from it, yet the extent and basic principles of such views are still debated. Anticipating the political, a main complaint of our times may be the lack of adequate permeability of the social classes, an absence of opportunities for upward mobility, be they cultural, economic or educational. Nepotism and corruption pervert society, rendering null and void - as we shall see - our enshrined rights and liberties. Though our life expectancy has dramatically increased, the young and old are still frail and unprotected from abuses and exploitation, against a general background of poor working conditions, occupational health problems, long working hours, and lack of safety of conduct and equipment imperilling all social categories.

In the political realm, though our age has secured almost all-encompassing human rights, the stringent lack of consistent respect for them and the rarity of trials both swift and fair still dull the shine of such theoretical achievements. Access to justice has improved markedly with the advent of NGO counselling and in view of the now-traditional practice of court-appointed lawyers; nevertheless, such advances are not truly universal yet. The ombudsman is an institution that seeks to remedy the lack of procedural transparency and self-governance, yet democracy is still suboptimal in this respect to say the least - hopefully not intrinsically so. The spoils system is yet another of democracy's major issues, as it sometimes renders the separation of powers and the system of checks and balances highly ineffective by being a gateway for politicians' and bureaucrats' abuse for personal gains. Populism and plebiscites are merely two of the possible symptoms of the aforementioned illness as perverted forms of the otherwise democratic practice of referenda and public consultation - though, in order to be effective and fair, even the latter two must be used moderately, accompanied by open and thorough debates. Lastly, freedom of movement becomes problematic in the context of stateless citizens and human trafficking, a pan-societal problem, to be sure.

To conclude, although fewer than the striking elements of injustice, a number of existing institutions and norms are excellent building blocks for a decent society; even these are nevertheless not generalized, and need a more adequate framework to be part and parcel of a fair, empathetic and creative Utopia.

ADDENDUM: DECENCY VERSUS INDECENCY, A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Category	Decent	Non decent
ECONOMIC	Free market	(Widespread) poverty / food deprivation, lack of shelter
	No slavery	Structural unemployment and lack of work opportunities
	Increasing environmental awareness	Pollution (negative externalities)
	International cooperation in environmental protection	Waste of natural resources
		Overconsumption
		No environmental protection
		Lack of interest in sustainability
		Lack of equal access to the labour market
		Disparities between rich and poor
		Prevailing mentality of equating happiness with material prosperity
		War expenditure
SOCIAL & CULTURAL	Existence of friendly relations between individuals	Indifference, lack of empathy, tolerance and mutual/common understanding
	Survival of cultural creativity	Consumerism and commodification of culture
	Communication/Dialogue	Censorship
		Sexual and economic exploitation of children
		Lack of opportunities (cultural, educational, economic), unequal access to culture
		Lack of adequate permeability of social classes
		Corruption, nepotism

		Poor working conditions , occupational health, long working hours, safety of conduct and equipment
	Increasing life expectancy	No real rights for animals, uncertainty regarding their status
POLITICAL	All-encompassing human rights	Lack of consistent respect for aforementioned rights and liberties
	Court-appointed lawyers' and NGO counselling	Insufficient access to justice and to swift and fair trials
	Ombudsman	Lack of self-governance and procedural transparency
	Freedom of movement	Stateless citizens and human trafficking
	Separation of powers and inherent checks and balances	Spoils system
	Referenda and public consultation (used moderately, with open and thorough debates)	Populism and plebiscites
		Abuse of power for personal gains

N. B. The features listed in the above table, mentioned as such in our discussions, are not ranked.

Working Group 1
Doris Manu (Steerer)
Emil Milanov Veselinov (Participant)
Andrei-Dan Sorescu (Rapporteur)
Ionel Androne (Observer)
Caner Mehmet Demir (Observer)
Alexandros Koutsoukis (Observer)
Ovidiu-Victor Olar (Observer)
Marina Elena Tataram (Observer)

Appendix II

Working Group 2 Report
The Principles of a Decent Society

- A normative principle for a decent society is understood by the group to be a principle of justice.

- The group focused on economic justice, identifying poverty as the one, most indecent feature of society that a principle of economic justice should address (this being the working hypothesis of the group).

- In working out the principle the group decided to tackle as the **first task** clarifying what it is about poverty that makes such a condition indecent, abject and unjust, and what the morally relevant aspects of poverty would be.

- Four options were presented as the relevant aspects of poverty:

  1. its causes
  2. the brute economic fact of poverty
  3. the psychological consequences it imposes on humans
  4. the fact that it marks out social and economic inequalities

- It was decided that the causes would be first discussed but not enough time would be available for a thorough and exhaustive elaboration on the causes of poverty. The results can be seen below from the perspective that this would not be a complete list of the causes of poverty.

- Regarding the second option, it was decided that it does not capture what is morally relevant about poverty since some forms of poverty (such as vows of austerity) are not intuitively to be viewed as morally abject.

- The third option was concluded not to work either since the psychological states of individuals should not be societal features of public concern.

- Finally, the fourth option was not focused on for the fact that differential incomes are not per se abject, but only insofar as they mark out poverty. It is not the opposite way that poverty marks out the abject situation of people[2].

- Therefore, the conclusion of these four points is that what "can" make poverty abject is what makes poverty morally relevant in its causal background.

- The **second task** was concluded from the first one by focusing on what makes poverty just or unjust (i.e. markedly relevant) in its causal structure. The group charted out a causal map of poverty, being decided that poverty is caused by:

---

[2] There were concerns of egalitarian justice only making sense in the "circumstance of Justice" (according to Hume). In a society characterized by perfect abundance, income inequalities become morally trivial.

1. lack of capacities/talents, ceteris paribus (equal access to natural resources and other socio-economic opportunities such as access to credit, rule of law etc).
2. natural contingencies (Dworkin's "brute luck" as opposed to "option luck")
3. reasoned decisions (e.g. vows of austerity or poverty as a result of actions/transactions whose risks are reasonably foreseeable)
4. lack of socio-economic and/or political opportunities (e.g. access to markets and institutions).

- Endorsing the last cause entails writing off as unjust a significant catalogue of negative economic consequences of common socio-economic structures. Out of these the group discussed competition, international trade, natural resources (including property regimes) and institution building. Upon discussing these, the raised counter-examples failed to prima facie discredit the stringency of the fourth cause of poverty. Therefore it was concluded that poverty caused by the first, second and fourth reasons, with the exception of the third cause, is considered as abject and unjust poverty by the whole group.

- In order to capture and explain the intuitions built into propositions 1, 2 and 4, we posit the following **principle: "A decent society should make people responsible – through a system of institutions – for poverty caused by natural, individual or systemic factors – excluding solely poverty caused by reasoned decisions".**

Evaluations of the principle:

- The principle has global scope as it has been tested against global-world order examples when the fourth cause was debated.

- The principle is logically independent of an economic definition of poverty. As a matter of fact, when applied to the global society the benchmark will have to be of "absolute poverty" (an income of less than $1/day). When applied to domestic systems, a standard of "relative poverty" will be required.

- Finally the discussion only briefly considered the distribution side of a redistributive scheme. A redistributive scheme is composed of a distributive side which regulates how funds are taken out of individuals, and a tax side which decides where the funds are directed at/to. The distributive side was discussed more in depth than the tax side because of the shortage of time.

Working Group 2
Luca Uberti (Chair person)
Sabrina Sotiriu (Rapporteur)
Gilles Bourhy
Iuliana Branzei
Costel Coroban
Jean Marc Groetz
Anabella Juhasz
Boris Sterck
Catalin Vrinceanu

Appendix III

P R O J E C T P R O P O S A L

A utopian construction for a tangible future society founded on solid foundations of rational ecologic democracy.

Prepared for:	**LIEIS Vama Veche Summer Seminar 2010**
Prepared by:	Sergiu Delcea, Stylianos Kelaiditis, Jorge Marcano,
	Darius Miliauskas, Peter Schaefer, Alexandru Toropoc
Date:	23 – 28 August 2010
Proposal name:	**Alexandreia Maxima**

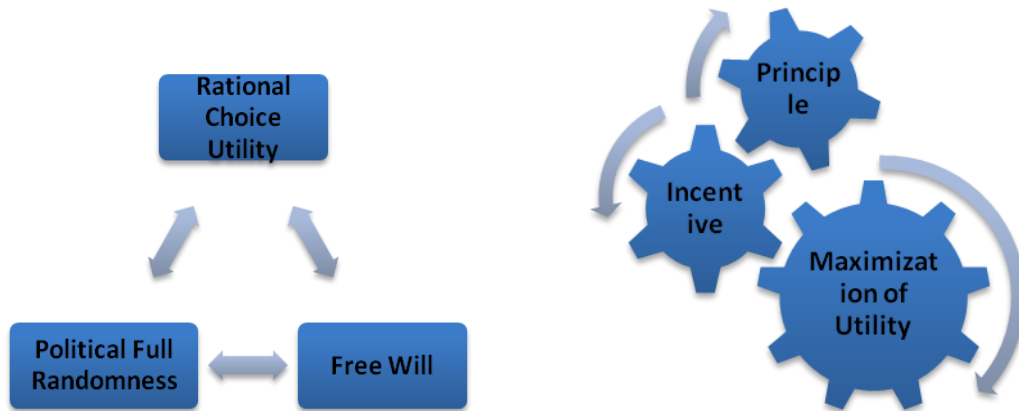|	
Name:	Alexandreia Maxima
Geography:	CityTech – City built on Concentric Ecologic Circles
Land&Population:	1 million each; Sea–beach and mountain access
Ecology:	Green technology city; Wind Solar and Sea power; Recycling
Environment:	Pristine atmosphere, water (sea, lakes, rivers) and mountain conditions; climate and weather control; earthquake and building disaster prediction
Language:	Universal Immediate Translation
Currency:	Digital Direct Exchange Credits (DDECs)
Life Expectancy:	Until euthanasia/when maximal utility ends (personal choice)
Religion:	No state/city religion; Freedom of religion

Pillars and Vision:

The Alexandreia Maxima Project is based on 3 basic fundamental Pillars, which guide people and society in their workings, as one would say, as an autopilot:

Rational Choice Utility, Political Full Randomness, and Free Will.

Additionally, the project's <u>Vision</u> for society and the individual entails maximization of utility both as Principle and Incentive.

Politics:

Full Randomness Lottery Democracy

- One level of power –at the executive (administrative–state laws produced at this level)

- City Council with X number of elected ministers/secretaries as needed per maximization of city utility

- 1-year term for managerial maximization of utility, with co-existing institutional civil service

- Entry level to FRLD politics (universal selection): at completion of basic education – all eligible for election derived from fully random lottery selection for city term [based on mathematical natural order]

- International Relations: Globally decentralized, no war, no military, transfer of know-how, trade, tourism, new city planning, freedom of movement within and from city to city

Economy:

- Full employment, DDECs as needed allowances i.e. based on physical needs/necessities (calorie intake, climate)

- Class is irrelevant, syndicalism is irrelevant

- The answer to the means of production question is technology (robots, robotics, automated systems)

- Private space as opposed to private property, and discernable from public sphere and public goods

Society:

- No class

- No gender roles

- Private space / public sphere

Justice:

- Laws as norms

- No legal practice (no courts, no lawyers)

- No police, no surveillance, rehabilitation instead of incarceration

Health, Science and Technology ("is king"), Culture, Education:

- Health a matter of Sci-Tech

- Food: by DNA decoding and mass production and automated reproduction –animals removed in their own utopia

- Rational, transparent, immediate information and media (including all things culture from museums to cinema)

- Education → organized by the city with similar principles for all but differentiated based on city and individual specific conditions; technology plays a vital role; best universities in the galaxy

- Easy transport: a public sphere issue with organized automated options from telepods, to "green" buses, cars, airplanes, ships

Appendix IV

Research Survey

During the 2010 Vama Veche Summer Seminar the Director of the 'Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies' Dr. Armand Clesse invited the participants to contribute to a research survey of their perceptions concerning the foundations of a decent society. More specifically, Dr. Clesse posed the following question: '*According to your opinion, what are the five most important individual and the five most important societal traits for a decent society?*'

The organisers were gratified to see the voluntary involvement of all the participants as well as the unexpected outcome of the survey. The results of the survey are summarized in the following two lists as well as in the two pie charts at the end of the appendix.

5 most important individual traits for a decent society
   1) Empathy (8 votes);
   2) Respectfulness (7 votes);
   3) Honesty (6 votes);
   4) Responsibleness (5 votes);
   5) Tolerance (5 votes).

6 most important collective traits for a decent society
   1) Rule of law (9 votes);
   2) Social cohesion (9 votes);
   3) Equality (5 votes);
   4) Tolerance (5 votes);
   5) Fairness (4 votes);
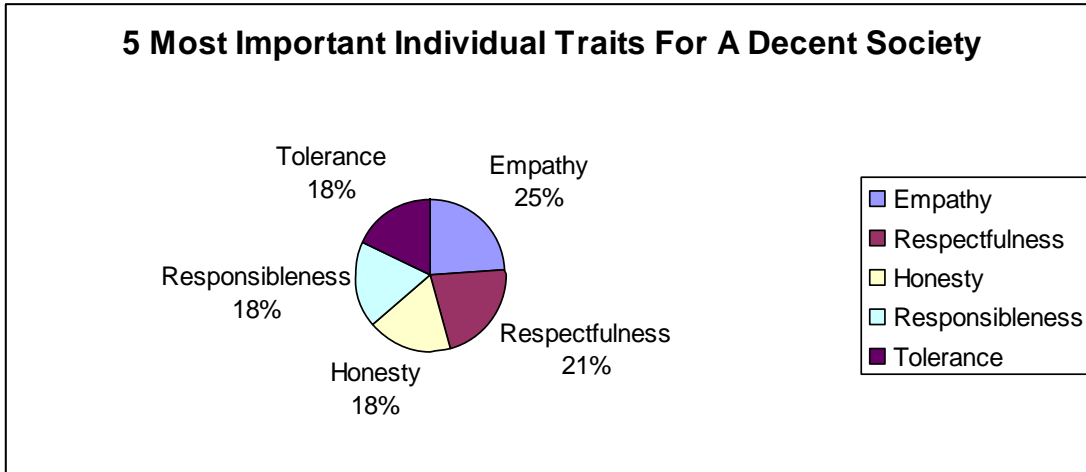   6) Transparency (4 votes).

The surprise of the outcome is related to the diversity of the participants' perceptions. Almost all 18 members of the summer school group selected three different values than everybody else. That is why the outcome of the data analysis was 46 different individual traits and 57 different societal traits.

The fact that so many persons, after a week of intense dialogue and socialisation had such diverse opinions is evidence of two things. First of all, that people disagree even on the fundamentals. Issues that according to a general sense of 'common sense' might have been considered as more or less given and specific, are not. Secondly, sometimes the difference lies in a different focus or conceptualisation of the same or similar values. For instance, 'freedom' was divided into 'freedom of speech, expression and thought', 'general freedom' and 'freedom from fear'. All kinds of freedom, if combined, comprised 14% of the votes. Additionally, justice was another central concept that was separated into social, institutional and general. The sum of the respective votes represented 11% of the total votes.
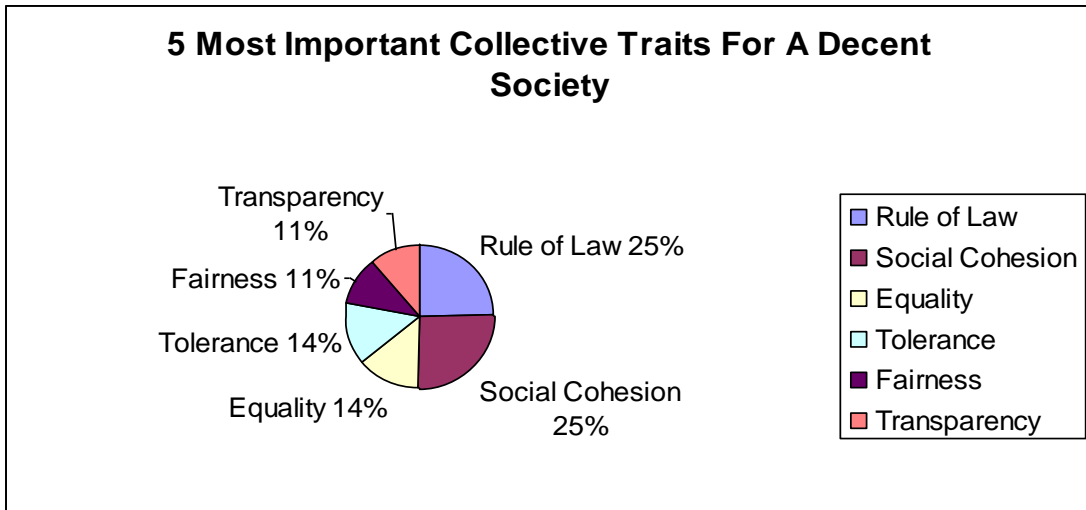
All in all, despite the wide range of the values selected, the research pointed out that the members of the summer seminar were indeed liberal individuals who lived in national, electoral democracies economically organized under the principles of the free-market. In other words, the outcome is indicative of the ideology and the world the participants live in.

For instance, what was praised was tolerance, industriousness, diligence, multiculturalism (liberalism), self-determination, representation, transparency, accountability (national electoral democracies), efficiency, innovation, free-enterprise, single currency (free-market). What could not be assessed are the conceptual tradeoffs the participants were making among different values such as freedom, equality, and justice, or equality, social cohesion, and social justice, or self-determination and peacefulness. A future research might focus on the prerequisites for a decent international society, and if the western values could be extrapolated to the rest of the world - as cosmopolitans would wish or hope for.

graph 1

5 Most Important Individual Traits For A Decent Society

Tolerance 18%
Empathy 25%
Responsibleness 18%
Honesty 18%
Respectfulness 21%

- Empathy
- Respectfulness
- Honesty
- Responsibleness
- Tolerance

graph 2

5 Most Important Collective Traits For A Decent Society

Transparency 11%
Fairness 11%
Tolerance 14%
Equality 14%
Rule of Law 25%
Social Cohesion 25%

- Rule of Law
- Social Cohesion
- Equality
- Tolerance
- Fairness
- Transparency

Appendix V

Summer Seminar

**Beyond liberalism and socialism:
searching for a decent society**

23-28 August 2010
Vama Veche, Romania

A G E N D A

Monday 23 August		
18.00 - 20.00	**Session 1:**	Do we live in a decent society? A critical look at past and present societal models
Tuesday 24 August		
10.00 - 11.00	**Session 2:**	Why did socialism not work as socialist theorists thought it would?
11.00 - 12.00	**Working groups**	
18.00 - 20.00	**Session 3:**	Liberalism and its - obvious? apparent? - limits
Wednesday 25 August		
10.00 - 11.00	**Session 4:**	The utilitarian approach
11.00 - 12.00	**Session 5:**	Critical and transcendental idealism
18.00 - 19.00	**Session 6:**	Utopian designs
19.00 - 20.00	**Working groups**	
Thursday 26 August		
10.00 - 11.00	**Session 7:**	Sceptical and pessimistic views of man and society
11.00 - 12.00	**Session 8:**	Moral philosophy
18.00 - 20.00	**Session 9:**	Anarchism, communitarianism, feminism, vegetarianism
Friday 27 August		
10.00 - 11.00	**Session 10:**	The role of religion (including Jainism)
11.00 - 12.00	**Working groups**	
18.00 - 20.00	**Session 11:**	Principles to implement: respect for life, justice, benevolence, empathy, tolerance .....
Saturday 28 August		
10.00 - 12.00	**Session 12:**	What a decent society might look like
12.00 - 12.30	**Closing session**	