NEXUS INSTITUTE

Nexus Conference 2021

The Revolution of Hope

The Sacrifice by Tarkovski, 1986

November 20, National Opera & Ballet Amsterdam

Svetlana Tikhanovskaya — Giuseppe Conte — Senator Jeff Flake
Nobel Prize Laureate Wole Soyinka — Baroness Minouche Shafik
Patti Smith — Mary L. Trump — Kehinde Andrews
Patrick J. Deneen — Haris Vlavianos — Father Antonio Spadaro S.J.
Colombe Cahen-Salvador — Anand Patwardhan
Nadia Harhash — Robert Cooper — Leon Wieseltier

MUSIC BY PATTI SMITH & LENNY KAYE

Programme Nexus Conference

Saturday 20 November 2021
National Opera & Ballet, Amsterdam

10.10 AM	Welcome *Rob Riemen*
10.15 AM	I. REVOLUTION! THE POLITICAL CRISES OF OUR TIME Coffee house conversation with *Svetlana Tikhanovskaya*, *Giuseppe Conte*, *Baroness Minouche Shafik*, *Wole Soyinka*, *Mary L. Trump*, *Kehinde Andrews*, *Patrick Deneen* and *Haris Vlavianos*, moderated by *Rob Riemen*
12.25 PM	Lunch with complimentary refreshments
1.15 PM	II. HOPE REGAINED. A NEW WORLD Coffee house conversation with *Senator Jeff Flake*, *Patti Smith*, *Father Antonio Spadaro*, *Colombe Cahen-Salvador*, *Anand Patwardhan*, *Nadia Harhash*, *Robert Cooper* and *Leon Wieseltier*, moderated by *Rob Riemen*
3.40 PM	Songs of Hope. *Patti Smith* & *Lenny Kaye*
4.00 PM	Reception and book signing session

The conference will be held in English.

A livestream will be available at www.nexus-institute.com

The programme may be subject to change. For the latest information on the conference and its speakers and for terms and conditions, please see our website.

A proof of vaccination or recent negative COVID-19 test is required.

Nexus Conference 2021

The Revolution of Hope

FIRST CONVERSATION: REVOLUTION! THE POLITICAL CRISES OF OUR TIME

I

'*Oui, c'était une belle journée*,' was the final thought of the king of France on the evening of Tuesday 14 July 1789 before he fell asleep and entered the land of dreams. Yes, it had been a delightful day. In bed, already slumbering in the oppressive warmth of the sultry summer's night, tired after the hunt and the copious dinner with just a little too much of that excellent Bourgogne wine, the monarch reflected on his impressions of the day now ending. Because of the morning rain shower, he had not had a successful hunt. In his diary he noted just one word: '*Rien*.' He had caught nothing. Relaxing in his extensive library of eight thousand books had been as pleasant as ever, and once again he had greatly enjoyed absorbing himself in history and astronomy. Yet he had derived most pleasure of all from the dinner, and especially the musical intermezzo, in which his beautiful Marie-Antoinette had participated by taking a seat at the harpsichord herself. Suites by François Couperin. Exquisite! Even as a child, at his father's soirées, he had been enchanted by the melancholy sound of the viola da gamba. Today, along with the food and the excellent wine, the music had been a welcome distraction from troubling affairs of state. Listening to the music, he felt proud that because of his wife and her love of the Muses, this magnificent palace of Versailles continued to live up to its reputation as the musical heart of Europe.

'*C'est charmant! Très charmant*', he had cried out spontaneously halfway through the concert, while with a wink he signalled a desire for more wine and at the same time waved away another lackey bearing some sort of message about the Bastille.

'No idea why the lad wanted to trouble me at such a moment on such a subject. The Bastille, that colossus, that ugly fort with some riffraff locked up inside. Whatever has happened, not now! Not during a beautiful summer evening when I'm enjoying a convivial dinner and lovely music. It can surely wait till tomorrow. I don't want to think about it now.'

The monarch, tired but content, had every reason to refuse to allow a delightful day and the night's sleep that awaited him to be spoilt by thoughts of the ever-growing pile of state business that had been deposited on his royal desk. Because although he, Louis-Auguste, had at the age of nineteen been crowned Louis XVI, King of France and Navarre, sovereign monarch by the Grace of God and hence endowed by God with limitless power, he had quickly come to realize that a chasm can exist between having power and exercising power as a ruler.

A true-born son of the eighteenth century, educated and well-read, he as king intended to implement countless social reforms. 'We shall abolish slavery! We shall abolish the death penalty! Catholic France will be tolerant of Protestants and Jews! Large landowners, nobles and the Church shall pay taxes!' Over the past fifteen years little had come of any of this. The nobles and clergy wanted no change. It had gently been pointed out to him that if he were to annul the traditions from which the nobility and clery derived their privileges, then all sorts of changes would ensue for him, the king, highest representative of the *ancien régime*, which his majesty, and indeed God, would certainly not welcome.

The monarch was happy with his decision to support the American revolutionaries in their struggle for independence from the British Crown. The more reduced Britain's power in the world, the greater the power of France. His ultimate triumph was that in 1783 the British had come to Paris to sign a treaty acknowledging the independence of the United States of America. But the national treasury was now empty. Supporting George Washington and his men had literally cost France a fortune. Furthermore, Louis XVI was deeply disappointed in the man to whom he had entrusted the government finances, monsieur Jacques Necker, a former banker from Geneva. Necker had made himself popular by telling the people that support for the American revolutionaries did not mean taxes would rise even higher. Monsieur had devised a plan to raise loans. What he had not mentioned was that the loans would be paid off by the sale of grain stocks. Smart thinking. Except that because of the dry summer and harsh winter, the grain harvest had failed. The grain stocks having been sold, the entire population was suffering a devastating famine. Bread had become unaffordable. It was also Necker who, to raise the loans, had decided to draw up a report giving everyone insight into the government finances, including the expenses of Versailles, Marie-Antoinette's wardrobe of a thousand elegant dresses and the costs of her musical soirées.

The man is a fool. *Un idiot!* Now the people think they're hungry because we love beauty. Nonsense of course. As if we were to blame for the failure of a harvest. And that tiresome Jacques Necker has decided that after well over a hundred years I must summon the States General to meet again,

and give not just the nobles and clergy but ordinary folk a voice in the affairs of state. He claims that with the support of the people it will be easier for me to force the aristocracy and the Church to pay taxes. Again, smart thinking. Except that the people — since there are many millions of them and the nobles and clergy are a million at the most — now want a far bigger say in the States General. France isn't America! We aren't a democracy. I have sent Necker back to Geneva and billeted troops in Paris, ready to restore order should it prove necessary. All the same, I do not want my people to go hungry. I want them to be happy and to love me, *Moi, Louis-Auguste, Roi de France et Navarre, Prince souverain par la grâce de Dieu*.

The king did not want to think about any of this, however, before falling asleep on 14 July 1789. It had been a delightful day.

Sadly he was able to sleep for only an hour before being woken from his dreamworld by the officer of the royal household, François de la Rochefoucauld, Duke of Liancourt. The duke was a firm adherent of the ideals of Voltaire and Diderot, and as a great supporter of the American Revolution he had translated the American Constitution into French in 1783, together with his friend Benjamin Franklin. But he was also devoted to his king. He was conscious of the fact that to the thirty-five-year-old monarch, the distance between Versailles and Paris, thirty-five kilometres as the crow flies, was as great as between the sun and the earth. Power, fame and love of money will always make a man blind to reality, and his majesty had all three in excess. The nobleman realised that the moment had come to make his king face reality, if only in order for him to understand that everything that was happening in his country would inevitably have consequences for his kingship.

François de la Rochefoucauld woke Louis XVI and patiently began to explain that out of rage at the unaffordability of bread, along with anger at the dismissal of the popular Necker, and fear that the king's soldiers would besiege the city, the people had robbed the veterans in the Dôme des Invalides of weapons with which to defend themselves and then stormed the Bastille to seize all the fort's canons.

— 'Sire, people are dead. Perhaps a hundred of them. And the governor of the Bastille has been killed. They have beheaded him.'
— The king, still half asleep, failing to understand what was going on, said, 'What? *C'est donc une révolte?*'
— '*Sire, c'est une révolution*.'

Paris, France, the whole world, this wise man knew, was now witnessing not a revolt but a revolution, the start of a new era in history.

II

But was the revolution that began on 14 July 1789 with the storming of the Bastille truly a turning point that introduced a new historical era?

If this revolution, with its ideals of freedom, justice and respect for the human dignity of each individual, and with its belief that all men could be brothers, because from now on Justice and Reason would rule humankind, was such a turning point, why was it that after just three years the new era became the scene of the fearsome blood-drenched spectacle of the Great Terror, in which thousands of men, women and even children were beheaded, purely because as members of the aristocracy or the church, or as displeasing critical spirits, they were regarded as 'enemies of the people'? How could a new era have dawned when the same French people who, in 1789, had risen up against the feudal powers that repudiated justice and freedom, ten years later hailed and adored Napoleon Bonaparte, a military despot who crowned himself emperor? And when that despot, with his hunger for power, was finally defeated and banished in 1815, why was it that, rather than the idealistic spirit of the French Revolution, the old powers, the aristocracy and Church, came to rule Europe, including France? And this time, on the pretext of 'restoring the social order' and for fear of yet more revolutions and terror, they had established a police apparatus with orders to silence all forms of criticism of those in power.

These are questions that endlessly tormented Jules Michelet. Since 1838, when he was forty, he had occupied the chair of History and Ethics at the prestigious Collège de France in Paris, Europe's intellectual Parnassus. As an historian, he felt duty bound to discover an answer to these pressing questions. Not just by virtue of his profession, either. For him personally, it was of vital importance to resolve these issues, because they touched upon everything he wanted to believe in and everything he wanted to be.

Michelet grew up as a child of the 'common people'. His mother died when he was sixteen and his father, who was first a printer and later a concierge, had financial worries all his life. Despite this, the old man, an autodidact, did all he could to stimulate his only child so that he would develop intellectually to the greatest possible extent. He encouraged Jules to read as much as he could and to enrich his knowledge with his own passion for the philosophers of the eighteenth century and their political ideals. He succeeded in kindling that passion in his son. Jules Michelet became not just a Professor of History and Ethics, but an ardent republican and anti-clerical, profoundly convinced that 'Justice and Reason' would bring about a brotherhood of man, and that a special role was reserved for the French people in making this vision a reality.

Relations between father and son remained close. As soon as Jules married, he took his father into his home, so that the old man would no longer have to worry about unpaid bills. When his father died in 1846, and repression by church and state became intolerable to him, there was just one question that

stared out at him from the mirror every morning: what could he, Professor Jules Michelet, do now to ensure that his father's ideals, the ideals of the French Revolution, would not be lost?

Michelet found the answer in the work of Giambattista Vico, an as yet utterly unknown Italian polymath and humanist educator who had taught at the University of Naples a century before and (partly thanks to Jules Michelet) was to become famous for his book *Scienza Nuova*.

Vico's work taught Michelet that, in contrast to the optimistic belief in progress of the philosophers he loved, such as Voltaire and Condorcet, history is in fact a never-ending cycle of *corsi e ricorsi*, courses and recourses, ups and downs. Also, and for Michelet even more importantly, Vico opened his eyes to the fact that another French philosopher, René Descartes, had been mistaken in thinking that knowledge of truth is exclusively the domain of the scientific paradigm. In his work on the new science, Vico showed that regarding the fate of humanity, the truth can be discovered and understood only through knowledge of all facts, ideas, stories, arts, classics and human experiences. And telling that story, that great and true story, is the task of a historian.

The writing of his *Histoire de la Révolution Française* (*History of the French Revolution*), a seven-volume work that he laboured on for seven years, was for Jules Michelet the fulfilment of a life's work. '*J'ai vécu pour vous ranconter.*' I have lived to tell it to you, he impressed upon his readers. Because by telling the true history of the French Revolution in this epic — and Michelet, as a true son of the muse Clio, can be regarded as one of those rare scholars who know how to write — he wanted to reignite the flame of the Revolution, its true spirit, in the soul of the French people, so that the ideals of 1789 would be reborn. Of this too the historian was certain: not through laws, nor any power, but purely and simply through education, through knowledge of history, philosophy and the arts, by knowing the truth, will humanity be inspired to come together as citizens and accept the authority of Justice and Reason.

III

When we consider that a political revolution resembles in its nature a volcanic eruption, with a comparable degree of power and violence, it will immediately be clear that in the summer of 1789 the unaffordability of bread, the dismissal of finance minister Jacques Necker who was popular among the people and the fear of a siege by the king's soldiers were what prompted the Revolution of 14 July. But they were not its causes, each of which Michelet was determined to ascertain.

First of all, in a society dominated by the Catholic Church, the existing social order is a God-given fact. A common law therefore exists in which the aristocracy and the clergy own the land, while the people must labour in the fields. The feudal powers are permitted to be rich and pay no taxes,

whereas the people must pay taxes and so remain poor. The aristocrats have all the privileges whereas the people are there to serve them. The king can say '*La justice est à moi*,' justice is mine, it is I who can judge or cause to be judged. By that he means nothing less, according to Michelet, than to say that with his right of succession, his privileges and corruption, nobody can judge him because, by the grace of God, he is the law.

Although not long after his mother's death, when he was eighteen, Michelet had himself christened in the Roman Catholic Church (to his father's dismay), later in life he was uncommonly critical of the dealings of the clerical world. He reproached the clergy for having let down the people in every respect. As they had in the darkness of the middle ages, when the Inquisition attempted to kill all intellectual endeavour, the clergy were still trying to keep the people as stupid as possible instead of encouraging them to think for themselves. Michelet believed that the Catholic clergy involved themselves in politics more to safeguard their own interests as large land-owners than out of any concern about the needs of the people. His deepest revulsion was reserved for the way the Church kept announcing that because of original sin (a concept Michelet fiercely rejected) the promise of fraternity could be fulfilled only through faith in Jesus Christ, rather than by acting in the spirit of the Revolution, in other words through the love from one human to another, and a mutual longing for justice and freedom.

These criticisms did not mean that Michelet had aligned himself with the intellectuals who rejected Christianity completely. The similarities between the Gospels and the Revolution were too great for that. He did, however, leave no room for doubt that Christianity would have to reform, to become true once again to its original ideals by wresting itself from the grip of its own clergy. 'The world is waiting for a faith, to march forward again, to breathe and to live. But, never can faith have a beginning in deceit, cunning, or treaties of falsehood', he wrote.

As the seeds of the Revolution — along with anger over poverty, lack of freedom, injustice and enforced tutelage — Michelet points to the special role played in it by *hommes de lettres*, by intellectuals. It was the French philosophers of the eighteenth century who taught the people (he among them) that the state must not be ruled by religious traditions and the privileges of the Church, king and aristocracy that go with them, but by fundamental ideas, accessible to anyone who is led by Reason and natural law. These are the *droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, the rights of man and of the citizen. They include freedom and equal rights for every individual, and entail the belief that sovereignty, the basis of the law, rests not with God but with the people. Michelet is convinced that the king and the aristocracy could imagine a revolt but not a revolution, because they themselves had made public debate impossible and were therefore deaf to the volcanic rumble of the growing influence of new political ideas among the people.

For Michelet the true heroes of the Revolution, however, are not the intellectuals with their revolutionary political ideas, nor those who came to the fore in the years of Revolution in speech or writing. No, the true hero and active power was the sovereign French people. Michelet shares with Rousseau the conviction that people are good by nature and the fraternity of all humanity will be in prospect as soon as the people are finally free and allow themselves to be led by the only meaningful moral commandment: *Soyez bons!* Be good.

Provided that the instinct of the people — to which Michelet attributes a mystical power — is not eroded by lies, fear, hatred and manipulation, if instead its moral compass is further nourished and educated by freedom, truth and a culture that cultivates the best feelings in the human soul, the dream of a new era in which a free and just humanity comes together as one may become a reality. Michelet leaves us in no doubt that if such a point is reached, it will be to a great degree an achievement attributable to *women*. Time and again he stresses that it is women who are most effective, as when, on 6 October 1789, women set out for Versailles to capture Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette and bring them to Paris. He writes almost lyrically about women like Madame Condorcet and Madame Roland, both of whom he sees as sublime examples of all those women who passionately keep the flame of freedom burning to light the future.

But when as evening falls Michelet takes his seat at his desk in his study to tell us this version of history, with his quill pen by the light of two candles, sixty years after 1789, that new era is further away than ever. He therefore tries to analyse as closely as possible what the negative forces were, and are, that make a hopeful future no more than a utopia.

One of those negative forces is a new phenomenon manifesting itself in the world: '*La grande machine modern, la Presse*.' He concludes that from the moment when the Bastille was stormed, interest in scholarship, literature and reflection ceased. Politics came to dominate life and brought with it a great torrent of newspapers, magazines and pamphlets. At first this vast supply of information benefitted the struggle for freedom, but to his dismay it soon transpired that the social force we call 'the press' actually turned itself against freedom. He concludes that it is a machine that speeds life up by presenting something new every day, '*sans laisser le temps de penser, d'examiner, de se reconnaître, elle fut au profit du mensonge*'. People have no time left to read, to investigate, to orientate themselves — and all this works in favour of the lie that is accepted by more and more people.

One lie that according to Michelet has a fatal influence on political morality in his country is the mentality of the English. He describes Britain as a nation that cherishes the idea that everything in life revolves around money and material success. The British, he goes on, have allowed themselves to be befuddled by the thinking of Newton, as if the laws of physics govern

the world. But justice is the opposite of physics. Physics always looks for a balance between forces, whereas the essence of justice is that it is concerned about the weak, the vulnerable, the powerless. Justice is an idea, a spiritual and moral concept that resists the laws of nature. The British, the Frenchman writes, have no knowledge of this. All the British care about is industry, trade, and anything else that may be of use in enriching oneself.

The greatest enemy of the Revolution, however, the most destructive force, comes not from outside but from inside. Worse, it comes from the heart of the Revolution itself, in the form of the radicals: the puritans, the doctrinaire, humourless intellectuals who initiated and carried out the Great Terror. This terror, this unstoppable bloodbath has sown so much fear and hatred everywhere that ultimately no one can any longer attach any value to what, it seems, were merely slogans of the Revolution.

The worldview of the Jacobins — the name the sect gave itself — is like that of all puritans: black-and-white. Colours do not exist. One class or group is good, the other by definition bad, with nothing in between. Everything that is not good must be destroyed. Only then can the world be pure, only then is fraternity possible. In the introduction to his *History of the French Revolution* Michelet observes that this cannot and must not be true. The world 'must be won over by the fraternity of love, and not by the guillotine'. The slogan of the Jacobins, '*la fraternité ou la mort*', fraternity or death, refers to nothing more than the fraternity of slaves, Michelet says, because only freedom, not coercion, the free choices people make, can be the basis of true fraternity.

The Jacobins would hear none of it, however. Their Revolution was not in truth inspired by the ideal of fraternity but by the apocalypse. First the old world must disappear completely before a new world could be built. These '*sombres figures apocalyptiques*' professed and practiced a political messianism that verged on despotism, in which neither doubt nor uncertainty, compassion nor empathy could exist. They could not accept beauty and eroticism either, since for a puritan everything that is enticing and pleases the senses is a form of idolatry.

Michelet concludes that by making a religion out of the Revolution, the Jacobins have in fact made it a police force. They maintain their power by sowing fear and distrust, and by urging everyone to inform on others and report 'socially impure elements', who are then quickly beheaded. Their justification for the terror is '*salut public*', the salvation of the people. What this supposed salvation is, the doctrinaire spirits know better than the people themselves, who are simple souls in their eyes. But, Michelet wonders, how can these abominable purges serve the *salut public* if all forms of justice are absent? History teaches him that the guillotine can never save a people if it kills justice itself.

Aside from all his moral revulsion, Michelet's fundamental reproach is that the ideology of the Jacobins, the doctrine of the 'salvation of the people'

versus 'enemies of the people' is founded in negativity. They want to destroy everything they oppose. Once again history, the teacher of life, teaches us that only what is positive offers hope, a fruitful soil that can enable all that is good to exist. For Michelet it is no accident that the radicals are often humourless, for 'Anyone who kills laughter in France, kills everything else as well.'

IV

In March 1847 a gentleman from Russia arrived in Paris by train. His name was Alexander Ivanovich Herzen. He was thirty-five years old and this was the beginning of a lifelong exile. He was neither willing nor able to return to Russia. A revolutionary, his loathing of the autocratic regime of Tsar Nicholas I and the obdurate faith of the Russian Orthodox Church was profound. Both powers had turned Russia into a slave society in which the peasants were the property of the landowners. Herzen was known in his native country as the inspiration behind a new movement: populism. With his populism (the only movement worthy of the name), Herzen was endeavouring to make a socialist ideal a reality in which all peasants would be free and equal citizens, and the village of the farming community would be the prototype of a society based on fraternity.

After studying physics and mathematics at the University of Moscow, he had no doubt that training in the scientific method and logical thinking were liberating forces that allowed all individuals to be independent, critical spirits who thought for themselves. Inspired by the French Revolution, he wanted to believe that a revolutionary fire could destroy all social evils, and that from the ashes of the old world a new, natural, harmonious and just society would arise spontaneously. Led by enlightened revolutionaries, it would be close to perfect.

A year after his arrival in Paris, Herzen noted in a letter how expectant he had been on arrival. 'Paris! The name of Paris is closely linked with all the best hopes of contemporary man.' Very soon, however, he, like Michelet, had been forced to conclude that no one in Paris laughed any longer. In that same letter he wrote, 'Visible Paris represents an extreme of moral corruption, spiritual fatigue, emptiness, and pettiness.'

When in 1848 a new revolution broke out in Paris, he was therefore far from surprised. But this revolution too was unsuccessful and its failure became definitive when on 2 December 1851 the president, Louis Bonaparte, consolidated his power with a coup and a year later, following the example of his uncle, had himself crowned emperor, as Napoleon III.

Herzen saw it, experienced it and wrote. A few years later, he published his reflections on the lessons taught him by recent history in a book entitled *From the Other Shore*. 'The time of former illusions and hopes has passed', he admits. I see the inevitable doom of old Europe and feel no pity for anything

that now exists, neither the peaks of its culture nor its institutions.' He is now critical of the generation of 1789, the followers of Rousseau, who were so naive as to think that 'if their ideas of fraternity weren't realized, this must be because of material obstacles. … How fortunate it was that all these enthusiasts were long in their graves! They would have had to realise that their cause hadn't advanced an inch, that their ideals remained ideals, that it was not enough to demolish the Bastille stone by stone to make free men out of convicts.' He goes on: 'Their fatal error was that, carried away by a noble love for their neighbour, for freedom, carried away by impatience and indignation, they threw themselves into the task of liberating others before they had liberated themselves.' Furthermore, Herzen concludes almost cynically, most people, especially the bourgeoisie, do not want a revolution at all. Change is fine, if it is gradual, but it must stop as soon as their own possessions have been secured.

For Herzen the prototype of this 'petit bourgeois state' is the Netherlands. He describes the country in his memoirs, *My Past and Thoughts*:

> Look close at hand, at the country in the West which has become the most sedentary — the country where Europe's hair is beginning to turn grey — Holland. Where are her great statesmen, her great artists, her subtle theologians, her bold mariners? ... She will show you her smiling villages on the drained marshes, her laundered towns, her ironed gardens, her comfort, her liberty, and will say: 'My great men obtained for me this freedom, my mariners bequeathed me this wealth, my great artists embellished my walls and churches: it is well with me — what do you want me to do?'

v

In that same period, Paris was home to another brilliant mind that examined a whole succession of political developments in order to discover their consequences for society.

In 1856 Alexis de Tocqueville published his *L'Ancien Régime et la Revolution* (*The State of Society in France Before the Revolution of 1789*), in which among other things he points out an important and paradoxical consequence seemingly common to all revolutions. As soon as the revolutionaries get hold of power themselves, they turn against any new revolution and become the greatest of anti-revolutionaries.

When as a result of the French Revolution, tradition and the social order associated with it, the feudal system, was wiped away, an individualist society arose, Tocqueville explains, of people who felt little connection with anything any longer and, partly for that reason, became concerned above all about their own private interests. 'Money', he goes on, became '*la principale marque*, the principal mark by which men are classed and

distinguished. … There is scarcely a man who is not compelled to make desperate and continual efforts to retain or to acquire it. The desire to be rich at any cost, the love of business, the passion of lucre, the pursuit of comfort and of material pleasures, are therefore in such communities the prevalent passions. … These debilitating passions assist its work: they divert and engross the imaginations of men away from public affairs, and cause them to tremble at the bare idea of a revolution.'

One logical consequence, Tocqueville believes, is that in this new capitalist society with its money-dominated order, there are no longer any shared universal values. Values have been replaced by interests, and because people only have eyes for their own interests, they feel no urgent need for the well-being of all. Alexander Herzen, who came to the same conclusion, had already shown that Holland was the perfect example of a country, once a proud and freedom-loving Republic, which because of its unprecedented prosperity had degenerated into a self-satisfied, narrow-minded monarchy, closed in on itself.

With the inescapable industrialization of capitalist Europe, the rich became steadily richer, the poor poorer, and there were more and more intellectuals who on seeing so much harrowing social injustice called for a new social revolution. But the French Revolution had taught Tocqueville something else, too. In his book he describes how the French people, partly because of a lack of interest among the aristocracy and clergy, were in fact educated politically by writers and intellectuals. In the burning desire of these scholars to build a whole new society, the philosophers came up with the most wonderful ideas and theories, but they were entirely abstract, unburdened by any governmental experience or practical knowledge.

Tocqueville, one of the few brilliant intellectuals with the necessary political experience, wrote, 'Nothing warned them of the obstacles which the actual state of things might oppose to reforms, however desirable. They had no idea of the perils which always accompany the most needful revolutions.' For Tocqueville this 'attraction towards general theories, complete systems of legislation, and exact symmetry in the laws', this 'contempt of existing facts', this 'desire to reconstruct, all at once, the entire constitution by the rules of logic, and upon a single plan, rather than seek to amend it in its parts' he called *un effrayante spectacle,* an alarming spectacle, 'for that which is a merit in a writer is often a fault in a statesman'.

Thus the seeds were sown for the great social revolutions that scarred the twentieth century and indeed our own time: the Russian Revolution of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin; the Fascist Revolution of Mussolini, Hitler and Franco; the Cultural Revolution of Mao; and the Islamist Revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini. We should never forget that the initial success of these revolutions was inspired by the hope of a better world that they gave to millions of people. History belied that hope.

VI

As a historian, Jules Michelet was increasingly aware that precisely because the future has a tendency to resemble the past, we must always be conscious that '*toute grande question est éternelle*' — every major question is eternal — but every age demands its own answer.

We have not seen far fewer plagues in our own time than in previous eras. Once again the ideal of fraternity seems further away than ever, and with the exception of the destruction of planet Earth and the continuing threat of a nuclear holocaust, our plagues are not new. There are still pandemics, wars, famines and bitter poverty, affecting countless people. Slavery still exists, as does racism, and there are theocratic and autocratic regimes that tolerate no form of individual freedom and mercilessly oppress their peoples. In rich countries, social and economic inequality is only increasing, as are ignorance, spiritual poverty, cynicism, nihilism and despair. Great powers still act on the principle that might is right, and democracies are increasingly being undermined by antidemocratic forces. And so it goes on.

Hence Arthur Schopenhauer's dry remark, 'For where did Dante get the material for his Hell, if not from this actual world of ours?' It was a thought that only reinforced Schopenhauer's conviction that it would be best never to have been born.

We have been born, however. The confrontation with one or more of the plagues that torment the world is unavoidable, as is the call for change, resistance, revolt, revolution. Unless we opt for what eternal pessimist Schopenhauer believed to be next best, namely to die as quickly as possible, we shall first have to examine a number of important questions, in order to know how best to safeguard against, or free ourselves from, contemporary evil. So that we do not immediately become discouraged by the tasks that await us, we should ideally adopt the attitude of Romain Rolland, which Marxist Antonio Gramsci made his motto in life. '*Il faut allier le pessimisme de l'intelligence à l'optimisme de la volonté*.' We must combine the pessimism of the intellect with the optimism of the will.

VII

The first question is: What revolutionary forces are now afoot? Why, and with what consequences?

In some parts of the world, revolutionaries under the leadership of a handful of brave individuals are fighting for their democratic rights. Where do they derive the courage to carry on resisting despite the relentless violence of despotic autocrats like Putin, Lukashenko, Maduro, Erdogan, Assad, Xi Jinping, Sisi in Egypt, Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia and their ilk?

When such courage exists, why is the free world in the grip of debilitating anxiety and depression? Where is the solidarity, the real engagement by the world of liberal democracy? Why have we forgotten the exhortation that

seventeenth-century poet John Donne expressed so splendidly in one of his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*:

> *No man is an island entire of itself;*
> *every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.* […]
> *Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.*
> *And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;*
> *it tolls for thee.*

Which brings us to another question. Just as in the eighteenth century the social order of the *ancien régime* fell into decline and thereby summoned revolutionary forces, so the social order of liberal democracy is subject to erosion, and to a similar degree. President Biden has rightly called the two social revolutions that are happening now '*uncivil wars'*. On the one hand there is the new reactionary revolution with its 'culture of despair', which advocates a return to a kind of neo-feudal era such as existed before the arrival of liberal democracy with equal rights for all, and on the other hand a new cultural revolution that, in the tradition of the Jacobins, wants to purify the world of everything that is improper and impure ('cancel culture', as it is now called).

That in Western society these are the great political revolutions is due, among other things, to the fact that the governing political class has no moral authority any longer. Elites are distrusted, and the revolutionaries of the uncivil wars are turning more and more forcefully against the ideological basis of Western democracy: liberalism. They claim that contemporary liberalism is utilitarian, spiritually empty, and in fact violent, because it serves above all the interests of the privileged class. Anti-revolutionaries like Vladimir Putin sneer that liberalism is obsolete.

Why have so many people lost faith in the liberal ideals of the Enlightenment? And what is left of the future of liberal democracy? If those ideals have to make way for a new social order, on what values will it be based?

What does it say about the fragility of Western democracy if the daily torrents of fact-free propaganda, conspiracy theories and suchlike anti-democratic forces are only gaining in popularity? What does it say about the quality of education, the power or powerlessness of mass media and the influence of intellectuals on the public debate? How free is a people that is ignorant, incapable of critical thought, led above all by instincts of fear and craving, eager to blindly follow the leaders who have illusions to sell? How much faith can we still have in the 'sovereignty of the people'? And just how credible are the liberal democracies when they continue to judge whether and to what degree the rest of the world is democratic?

The truly sovereign — because absolute — powers are now plutocracy and techno-democracy. Little remains that has not been forced to submit to them. Marxists and other leftist thinkers have good reason to call them totalitarian powers, yet this hegemony of money and technology exists because they are in a sense the fulfilment of the second *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* of 1793, compiled by the extreme-leftist Jacobins, the first article of which reads: '*Le but de la société est le bonheur commun*.' *Bonheur*, happiness, the happiness of everyone is the aim of society.

Money and technology are undeniably sources of happiness, but that happiness is both one-dimensional and accompanied by an endless amount of social evil: economic inequality, poverty, corruption, a technocracy in which the freedom and dignity of human beings is lost.

Jules Michelet was of the opinion that it is impossible to maintain the old and at the same time love the new and better. Reforms are pointless; only revolutions can overthrow absolute powers like plutocracies and technocracies. Except that it has been tried many times, in great revolutions, and failed. Even communist China is now a world power by dint of its wealth and technology.

What will the consequences be of the unstoppable technological revolution under the leadership of a handful of unassailable tech giants like Facebook, Google, Amazon and Twitter? Taking the example of the Netherlands, Herzen described the fact that those who already have money and power have no desire for radical change. But can the world of power be changed in pursuit of greater justice? As we know, inherent in the possession of power, and even the desire for power, is the temptation of corruption, a route to staying in power as effective as it is easy. How can we combat corruption? Both Machiavelli and Spinoza knew that it was a form of self-delusion to believe that with yet more rules, yet more laws and yet more bureaucrats, corruption could be suppressed. Is it possible in any case to imagine an economic system that provides prosperity and wellbeing for all but does not, like today's global capitalism, divide people more than it unites them?

Since radical change unavoidably requires radical means, revolutions rarely take place without conflict. But again, once the old order has been overthrown, what then? Rosa Luxemburg, the socialist revolutionary who in 1919 was so horribly murdered by German right-wing extremists, expressed fundamental criticism of Lenin in 1904, in an article entitled *Organisationsfragen der russischen Sozialdemokratie* (*Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy*) with the sober conclusion: 'The negative, the tearing down, can be decreed; the building up, the positive, cannot. New territory. A thousand problems.'

In 1946, George Orwell published a damning review of a then influential book by American philosopher James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution*. Burnham claims in his book that in the future, whether we like it or not,

the new managers and bureaucrats will rule the world. That is simply the reality, he writes. There is no choice but to accept it. According to Orwell, Mr Burnham has developed a little too much admiration for 'great men' such as Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin, but above all Orwell detested the author's determinism, his 'predicting a continuation of the thing that is happening'. Orwell could not stand that. It is not simply a sign of a bad habit and exaggeration, he says, 'it is a mental disease, and its roots lie partly in cowardice, and partly in the worship of power, which is not fully separable from cowardice'. Burnham, he goes on, is actually dreaming of a form of slavery, but such a system will not last, 'because slavery is no longer a stable basis for human society'. Orwell's conclusion is that the work of this American philosopher 'shows that damage is done to the sense of reality by the cultivation of what is called "realism"'.

If on the one hand it is unacceptable simply to affirm reality as it is and on the other hand social revolutions can break down but are incapable of building up, then how can social evil be banished in a radical sense? What does this mean for our economic and political order, with its institutions and vested interests?

The puritan is in a sense the truest revolutionary. The aim of the puritan is nothing less than to purify the world, by radical means, of all things and all people that are bad, wrong, seductive, sinful, faithless and malicious. Intolerance is a duty, forgiveness and empathy hard. But if a 'fraternity' can be made up only of the ranks of a chosen religion, race, class, tribe or ideology, how can the always *pluriform humanity* ever unite?

Was Nietzsche perhaps right when he remarked in his *Unzeitgemäß*e *Betrachtungen (Untimely Meditations)*:

> Every philosophy which believes that the problem of existence is touched on, not to say solved, by a political event is a joke — and pseudo-philosophy. Many states have been founded since the world began; that is an old story. How should a political innovation suffice to turn men once and for all into contented inhabitants of the earth?

If politics cannot save the world, or repair it, what can? In any case, there will always be a socio-political order, so which type should we strive for, now that the current democratic model is showing signs of decay?

In contrast to Michelet, Herzen and Tocqueville, Irish philosopher and politician Edmund Burke regarded the French Revolution as a catastrophe of global proportions. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) he expresses fierce criticism of the destruction of the traditional social order passed down through the generations, by democratic representatives he regards as conspicuous for their incompetence, ignorance, foolishness and greed. This does not mean he believes that 'blood, names and titles' are a

guarantee of good government. '*No Sir. There is no qualification for government but virtue and wisdom, actual or presumptive.*' These two qualities are of key importance because the good government of a country demands 'a deep knowledge of human nature and human necessities, and of the things which facilitate or obstruct the various ends'. A conservative philosopher, he writes of the French revolutionaries that 'they have no respect for the wisdom of others; but they pay it off by a very full measure of confidence in their own. With them it is a sufficient motive to destroy an old scheme of things, because it is an old one.' Burke assures us that liberal political values will always have to be complemented by universal moral and spiritual values as the basis of a civilized society. In the absence of justice, every society degenerates into a dictatorship or descends into anarchy. Human reason and science have no knowledge of what is good or evil, just or unjust. For Burke there can be no doubt that knowledge of these values will always be the domain of religious revelation, its tradition and the questing human spirit.

Now there can be nothing against *virtue and wisdom*, and in the contemporary political class both qualities are certainly rare, but is that not inevitable in a democracy in which the people prefer to choose political leaders in whom they can recognize themselves? Have virtue and wisdom not become rare in all societies, sacrificed to the cause of more democracy, more equality — and the accompanying aversion to intellectual elites? Nevertheless, the conservative politics of a man like Edmund Burke is all too often an excuse for the preservation of the social status quo with all the injustice and lack of freedom it contains. So what does his longing for virtue and wisdom mean today? When do conservatism and high culture become obstacles to social progress and when is the lack of conservatism and high culture a sign of spiritual poverty?

Fortunately, in our own era there is no lack of good intentions, of people who sincerely and with great dedication are attempting to make the world a better place, true philanthropists and activists in the most diverse of capacities. However, if a society no longer has any notion of the common good because it is torn apart by its many clashing private interests, by materialism and individualism, if no spiritual and moral values are any longer cultivated in pursuit of an ideal of civilization that does justice to human dignity and will bring people together, then none of those laudable initiatives will be what they are intended to be: the foundations on which a new world can be built. The main questions then are: What is in our day the common good? What can that ideal of civilization be? And do we now need to discover or rediscover it?

Ya'akov Leid Fleischer was born in Poland in 1916. In 1934 he emigrated with his family to Jerusalem, where he studied history. In that period he changed his name to Jacob Talmon. After the Second World War, he went in search of *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, as he named his wide-ranging,

three-volume work. Totalitarian democracy is a political messianism that promises heaven on earth and divides humanity into the pure and the impure; it is apocalyptic, involving a revolution that creates a new world at one blow; it is the fanaticism of those who believe themselves to have a monopoly on the truth; it is the assertion of the supremacy of 'the will of the people' as the all-powerful will that everyone must obey, and the reason why 'the enemies of the people' must be eliminated. These are all characteristics of a totalitarianism that leads to a holocaust and a gulag. Jacob Talmon traces its roots back to the ideology of the Enlightenment philosophers, Rousseau in particular, and the Jacobins who took part in the French Revolution. There is, however, one crucial problem for which he has no answer:

> We are thrown back upon the problem of man. Is he rational being born for harmony? Are his self-defeating impulses, his anti-social urges, his exasperating indolence and obtuseness only a remnant of old infirmities destined to be cured? Are the aberrations of nations, the inhumanity of crowds and the seeming absurdity of so much conflict and strife excrescences that will vanish one day never to recur? Or are these at the core of our being, part of the eternal human situation?

In a brief essay entitled *Idee zu einer allgemeine Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* (*Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*), Immanuel Kant notes, 'Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made.'

According to Kant it is obvious that only those who feel no shame about their lack of self-knowledge and knowledge of history could continue to believe, like Rousseau, that most people are virtuous. He would regard Jacob Talmon's questions as rhetorical. Kant did not believe that a political or social revolution really could make the world a better place, unless a *revolution in thinking* happened first, a revolution that would provide an answer to the three great questions he poses at the end of his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*):

1. What can I know?
2. What should I do?
3. What may I hope?

1

The key to the Bastille, symbol of the French Revolution, which began on 14 July 1789 with the storming of that hated prison, was given by the Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington, first President of the United States of America, in 1790.

The two men knew each other well. In 1777, the young French nobleman, not yet twenty years old, crossed the Atlantic to fight on the side of commander-in-chief General George Washington in the American Revolution. Washington would always remain grateful to his young French friend for his great loyalty to the American struggle for independence.

Back in France, the Marquis de Lafayette — even though like his friend François de la Rochefoucauld, Duke of Liancourt, he was well-disposed towards Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette — sided with the French revolutionaries in July 1789, for the same reasons that had led him to support the American Revolution. Yet with a heavy heart he watched in his own country how radicalization and growing terror put an end to the professed *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité.*

So his eyes remained fixed upon his old friend George Washington, the first president of a country that, according to Lafayette, held the key to the creation of a new world. America was the land of hope, the start of a new era in the history of humanity, a country that had driven out tyranny and was determined to defend democracy and the constitution with its inalienable right to '*Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness*' for every individual.

Another friend of Lafayette, Englishman Thomas Paine, was no less hopeful about what America might have to offer humanity. In February 1776 it was Paine who, with his pamphlet *Common Sense*, had called upon Americans to make themselves independent of the British Crown, because 'we have it in our power to begin the world over again'. When revolution broke out in France as well, Paine published his *Rights of Man* (1791), a book that is in part a criticism of the beliefs of his former friend Edmund Burke who, according to Paine, seemed to advocate the maintenance of a tradition that included deeply rooted despotic principles in preference to the essential and perpetual battle for freedom. At the same time, Paine's work was an ode to the newly independent America, with its revolutionary *Constitution* and with George Washington as president, as a hope-giving example to the world, a country in which the governing power was not determined by feudal traditions but '*founded on a moral theory, on a system of universal peace, on the indefeasible hereditary Rights of Man*'.

America as a paragon of *hope* became the distinguishing feature of the American Idea and the American self-image.

When Thomas Jefferson, also a friend of Lafayette, was sworn in as the

third president of the United States of America, on 4 March 1801, he praised American democracy in his inaugural speech, speaking of '*this government, the world's best hope*'. An echo of that can be heard in the message of President Abraham Lincoln to the American Congress on 1 December 1862, in which he characterized America as '*the last best hope on earth*'.

That same echo resounded again in the inaugural speech of President Joseph R. Biden Jr. on 20 January 2021. Despite the 'uncivil wars' that plague America, he remained convinced that 'together we shall write an American story of hope, not fear. Of unity, not division. Of light, not of darkness. A story of decency and dignity, love and healing, greatness and goodness'.

That President Biden is sincerely convinced of this is clear, among other things, from the fact that his life motto is based upon the following lines from 'The Cure of Troy' by Irish poet Seamus Heaney.

> *History says*, Don't hope
> On this side of the grave.
> *But then, once in a lifetime*
> *The longed-for tidal wave*
> *Of justice can rise up,*
> *And hope and history rhyme.*

II

It is a fact that for countless people from all over the world who were attempting to flee tyranny, persecution, war, poverty or hunger, the American Idea, symbolized by the Statue of Liberty at the gateway to the New World, was indeed a beacon of hope for a new, better life. And it is to a great degree thanks to President Franklin D. Roosevelt that Hitler and Nazism were defeated, that European colonialism was consigned to history, and that the United Nations was founded as the start of a more just world order. In world history America is that unique experiment of a continent where, in theory at least, the whole world is welcome and can believe in the American Dream as long as one unconditional demand is met: loyalty to the Constitution and the Rule of Law.

It is also a fact, however, that for millions of Americans the American Idea, let alone the American Dream, has never existed. For them, America is not a promised land but a living hell.

That was the case for the original inhabitants of that continent, who saw their way of life destroyed by the arrival of the European colonists. It was also true for the enslaved Africans who, from 1619 onwards, were brought to Virginia, initially by the slave traders of the Dutch Republic, and for all the African Americans who to this day are the victims of discrimination and racial hatred. It was not without reason that writer James Baldwin remarked in 1985 in an interview with Ken Burns: '*For Black Americans the Statue of*

Liberty is simply a bitter joke, meaning nothing to us.' This is no less true for the ever growing, already immense mass of 'deplorables' who are homeless, addicted to drugs or alcohol, dirt-poor, depressed or suicidal. The harsh contrast between them and the tiny group of ultra-rich in America is as great as in any developing country.

Just how fragile American democracy is today is clear not just from the popularity of 'Trumpism' (a euphemism popular with the American media as a way of masking the fact that it is nothing other than an American version of fascism) and the infamous attack on the American Congress by a legion of Trump supporters on 6 January 2021. It is also clear from the continuing *uncivil wars*, the organized stupidity, the neglect of education, the rapidly growing forest of conspiracy theories, the massive influence of the fact-free social media machine, the loss of basic faith in society as well as the corruption and brokenness of the American political system.

On our side of the Atlantic Ocean, the *Idea of Europe*, a cosmopolitan, humanist and moral worldview, has become no less an illusion than the *American Idea*. In the old world too, the cultivation of the *quality* of life has been exchanged for the cult of *quantity*, the worship of Big Numbers. Moral and spiritual values have been forced to give way to commercial interests and material values. The European Union, once the promising hope of a peaceful fellowship of nations, has over the past few decades degenerated into a soulless, bureaucratic *Economic Union* that pays little heed to the needs of the rest of the world. The poisons of fascism and nationalism have never been banished from it and are once again contaminating society.

In the 1930s French poet and philosopher Paul Valéry expressed the hope that America could become the 'better Europe'. It has certainly not become so, and neither has the European Union. A civilized ideal of justice and respect for everyone's human dignity as the foundations upon which humanity will come together cannot be found either in present-day America or in Europe.

So where can it be found? Is there a people, a nation in the world that is the incarnation of such an ideal of civilization? Does Pope Francis's perceptive analysis in his 2020 Encyclical *Fratelli tutti. On Fraternity and Social Friendship* not apply to the world as a whole? He writes:

> Our world is trapped in a strange contradiction. We believe that we can ensure stability and peace through a false sense of security sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust. […] In today's world, the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia. What reigns instead is a cool, comfortable and globalized indifference, born of deep disillusionment concealed behind a deceptive illusion: thinking that we are all-powerful, while failing to realize that we are all in the same boat.

III

Nor are we aware of the significance of a warning given to us by Eric Voegelin. Born in Germany in 1901 as Erich Vögelin, this brilliant political philosopher narrowly managed to escape the Nazis and flee to America in 1938, where he changed his name to Eric Voegelin. He dedicated the rest of his life to the contemplation of the causes and socio-political consequences of European gnosticism and nihilism. In the 1950s, as the last in a series of books on the history of political ideas, he published *Crisis and the Apocalypse of Man* in which he issues the following warning: '*It is a violent misunderstanding of historical forces to believe that a handful of men can destroy a civilization before it has committed suicide.*'

The forces of evil do not destroy a civilization, they merely profit from it. An ideal of civilization dies through a lack of interest, a lack of knowledge, in a society that feels no sense of responsibility for it. At the same time, the longing for a better world and the hope of an ideal world are present everywhere. But they generally take the form of hope from the famous *Pandora's Box* of Greek mythology, the false hope that sustains the illusion that, as if by a miracle, the evils that afflict humanity will one day disappear. Are the hope and the billions that we invest in the miracles of technologies such as artificial intelligence, artificial general intelligence, transhumanism and bitcoin not the same as the hope of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century alchemists who tried to turn lead into gold? Even if the contemporary alchemists are more successful than their predecessors, the result will assuredly not be a humanity united in freedom, justice and fraternity.

Should we then place our hopes in better achievements by the next generation, the young? That too is a widespread hope, cherished by President Barack Obama among others. At the end of his Foreword to his memoirs *A Promised Land*, he writes:

> If I remain hopeful, it's because I've learned to place my faith in my fellow citizens, especially those of the next generation, whose conviction in the equal worth of all people seems to come as second nature, and who insist on making real those principles that their parents and teachers told them were true but perhaps never fully believed themselves. More than anyone, this book is for those young people — an invitation to once again remake the world, and to bring about, through hard work, determination, and a big dose of imagination, an America that finally aligns with all that is best in us.

Aristotle would fully understand why Obama, and many others with him, expect more from the young than from the old. In his *Rhetoric* the Greek philosopher describes the old as 'small-minded, because they have been

humbled by life: their desires are set upon nothing more exalted or unusual than what will help them to keep alive. […] They are cowardly, and are always anticipating danger. […] They are too fond of themselves; this is one form that small-mindedness takes. […] They live by memory rather than by hope; for what is left to them of life is but little as compared with the long past; and hope is of the future, memory of the past.'

The young, by contrast, are described by Aristotle as follows. 'They look at the good side rather than the bad, not having yet witnessed many instances of wickedness. They trust others readily, because they have not yet often been cheated.[…] Their lives are mainly spent not in memory but in expectation; for expectation refers to the future, memory to the past, and youth has a long future before it and a short past behind it: on the first day of one's life one has nothing at all to remember, and can only look forward.'

This hope that is invested in the young is not much different, however, from what that equally great philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, defined in his *Ethics* as a state of mind: 'Hope is nothing else but an inconstant pleasure, arising from the image of something future or past, whereof we do not yet know the issue.'

For both Aristotle and Spinoza, hope is nothing more than an emotion, which arrives but then, with experience of life, just as quickly departs. If that is so, why would the current young generation manage 'to once again remake the world' when they too will recognize themselves in what F. Scott Fitzgerald, author of the American classic, *The Great Gatsby*, wrote a century ago at the end of his story 'This Side of Paradise':

> Here was a new generation, shouting the old cries, learning the old creeds, through a revery of love and pride, a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success; grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken.

IV

It is 1943, wartime. Gabriel Marcel, in his youth a playwright who became a philosopher because of an increasingly stark confrontation with a broken world, is in Paris trying to fathom what humanity is, and what hope is. In his essay *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, one of the insights he has gained is expressed as follows:

> It is urgent in all departments to carry out clearing operations which will make it possible to find once more the lost sources for lack of whose values men would be condemned to an infra-animal existence, an existence of which our generation will have had the painful privilege of witnessing the first apocalyptic symptoms.

This call to find again, after the Second World War, the sources from which we can relearn what it means to be truly human and how to create a world order that can unite humanity was heard by Karl Jaspers.

Jaspers is the prototype of an almost extinct species, the true polymath. As a doctor, psychologist, historian and philosopher, he was a man of staggering erudition. He had experience of life, too. He was one of the few professors in Germany who had the courage to resist the Hitler regime. He would never forgive Heidegger, once his friend, for wanting to be the paladin of the Nazis. During the war he and his Jewish wife Gertrud Mayer lived as secluded a life as possible in Germany. Both had cyanide capsules always close at hand, just in case. They survived the war, but, as Jaspers realized only too well: '*We survived by a passivity laden with guilt; that we are still alive is a guilt we will bear until our death*.'

After the war, in 1948, the couple emigrated to Switzerland and Jaspers became a professor at the same university where illustrious predecessors such as Jacob Burckhardt and Friedrich Nietzsche once taught, the University of Basel. It was there that he came upon the call of his French kindred spirit, and it reminded him of what Goethe teaches in his poem *West-östlicher Divan*.

Wer nicht von dreytausend Jahren
Sich weiß Rechschaft zu geben,
Bleib im Dunkeln unerfahren,
Mag von Tag zu Tag leben.

(Anyone who does not take account of the past three thousand years will remain benighted, living from one day to the next.)

Jaspers' quest resulted in his 1949 book, now a classic, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (*The Origin and Goal of History*), in which he does indeed look back over three thousand years. There he finds those 'lost sources' and they turn out, astonishingly, to be a universal spiritual heritage.

Over the centuries between 800 and 200 BC, in China, helped by the work of scholars including Confucius and Laozi, an advanced civilization flourished. In that period the same happened in India, with the *Upanishads* of Hinduism and the teachings of the Buddha, in Persia thanks to the work of the prophet Zarathustra, in Palestine because of prophets like Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and in Greece, with figures such as Parmenides, Thucydides, Archimedes and Plato.

Jaspers calls this remarkable period in the history of humanity '*die Achsenzeit*', the Axial Age. Through all the world's cultures, an axis developed in history upon which the spiritual foundations of humanity were laid. Humans became conscious of themselves as moral beings and started to ask the big, radical questions about life, seeking the meaning and purpose

of human existence. *Homo sapiens* became aware of human dignity and the connection between all people. In the knowledge that our limitations, dark urges and mortality are part of being human, we will always go in search of deliverance from our human shortcomings.

This Axial Age came to an end as soon as major states and empires arose in which political power and a slave economy came to dominate. Our own era, Jaspers says, has become that of science and technology. No sensible person would try to deny the well-being that the beneficial work of science and technology has brought humanity, but at the same time, Jaspers says, there are other facts that cannot be denied.

Because of the dominance of technology, the human spirit has generally been reduced to the capacity to know facts (now called data) and above all to be as useful as possible. Cut off from the great religious and philosophical traditions, society has lost the awareness of values that goes along with them. We barely know the real meaning of many moral and spiritual values. The dominance of science and technology has therefore opened the door to nihilism. In addition, all around us, spiritual poverty and great ignorance reign. Thinking for ourselves has been replaced by a blind adherence to an ideology (which by definition claims a monopoly on truth), or delivering ourselves up to simplifications by following slogans, propaganda or pseudo-scientific knowledge. The experts in science often only know in what they are 'experts', and so cultivate their own stupidity.

On top of all this, with the recent experience (when Jaspers is writing) of the Second World War, an abyss had opened up. It turned out that human beings were capable of exterminating a whole people by industrial means, making use of the best technology available, or of destroying a city with a single bomb. It had become clear in the most horrifying way how quickly and simply any individual could emerge as a cruel and heartless brute. (A century before, Alexander Herzen in his *From the Other Shore* asks, almost prophetically, the provocative question: 'Could you please explain to me why belief in God is ridiculous and belief in humanity is not; why belief in the kingdom of heaven is silly, but belief in utopias on earth is clever?')

Psychologist Jaspers also observes that although there is an obsession with finding *happiness*, the world is in the grip of fear, a deep anxiety that encroaches upon all facets of life. But that, according to this expert on the human soul, is precisely what offers *hope*. People who are indifferent have no worries and will remain passive, whereas those who are anxious do worry, and will go in search of change for the better. They will have hope.

All major socio-political questions and problems have become global problems, since they ultimately affect us all. '*Never send to know for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee*', as John Donne wrote. Jaspers' conclusion is therefore that we as human beings, together, must succeed in making the world liveable and the world order just. A single people or group is not enough.

So what to do? Science, the Church and humanism have all, Jaspers says, been forces that were indispensable in rediscovering true humanity and allowing a civilization to flourish. Yet, all three have been discredited. Science has refused to recognize its limitations with regard to truth, value and meaning, and has all too easily proved to be an unresisting tool in the hands of diabolical forces. The Church has become more interested in peddling dogmas than in perpetuating faith and keeping it alive, and has lost its biblical roots. Humanism has become abstract, unworldly booklore.

Eppure! And yet! With all his experience of life and knowledge of history, this particular philosopher and judge of human beings believes there is no reason for despair. A *revolution of hope* is not only necessary but possible.

v

How does a 'revolution of hope' distinguish itself from all the other revolutions we know about, which have all changed our world in one way or another, from a scientific, a digital, medical or artistic revolution, to a revolution in fashion? The answer can be found in the hope that Barack Obama places in the young generation, 'to once again remake the world'. To create a new world where, in view of the fate of all people, justice and freedom have a home: that is the ultimate revolution that surpasses all the others.

The revolution of hope is always a political and moral revolution, because the dignity of humanity is at stake. The French Revolution, however, was also a revolution of hope, as were the great revolutions in the twentieth century that followed it. If we do not know history and do not first learn its lessons, then a revolution of hope will again bring mainly despair.

Karl Jaspers, himself a witness to the mass hypnosis that led the country of Goethe and Beethoven to seal a Faustian pact with the devil in the guise of a revolution of hope, therefore warns that a revolution of hope is first of all a revolution that everyone must bring about for themselves. It starts with our own responsibility, and it must never be a mass movement.

Anyone daring to choose this path in life will, according to Jaspers, have a similar experience to Dante in his *Divine Comedy*:

> We are wandering in the obscurity of the future, on guard against the enemies of truth, incapable of relinquishing our own thinking nescience in obedience to an imposed knowledge — but above all ready to hear and see when fulfilling symbols and profound thoughts once more illumine the path of life.

According to both Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, the path that must bring us to a still unknown but hopeful future also takes us through the past of those 'lost sources'.

Before we follow the two philosophers along that path, however, the first

lesson of history is that we must ask ourselves whether we want to go where it leads. Does travelling into the past not mean choosing a conservatism that admits nothing new? And how should we treat Jaspers' idea that the only way out of this earthly vale of tears is to create a new Axial Age? We are now living seventy years after the publication of his book. Still today, and more than Jaspers could ever have imagined, we are living in the age of science and technology. Why would we not have confidence that science and technology will '*once again remake the world*'? Yet what kind of a world will that be? And what kind of people will be in it? What is the essence of our humanity? Long ago, in one of those lost sources, the answer given by Socrates was: 'The *soul*! That is the essence of a person.'

If that is so, then we should not expect too much of science and technology, since care for the human soul falls outside their domain. But if human beings can be entirely remade, and steered in their behaviour by algorithms, then we can indeed leave the future of this world entirely to science and technology, since the difference between human and robot will have been abolished. As long as we, the inhabitants of earth, are *Homo sapiens*, science and technology will be an important means but can never determine the purpose of human existence.

Back to the lost *sources*, then? That route too is not without obstacles. Because another question arises that, fortunately, Jaspers has already asked. Which sources represent nothing more than a nostalgia for a now dead past and which are still full of life? And how can we know?

Let us imagine a brave individual who no longer wants to conform to the world as it currently exists and, embracing uncertainty, chooses to walk through the darkness to that unknown but hopeful future, to follow the path that leads to those lost sources where she hopes to find wisdom and truth to light her way.

If her wanderings are within European cultural history, then she will certainly come upon Jewish sources and there encounter the idea of *tikkun olam*, the repair or even remaking of the broken world. It is a hopeful idea because everyone can contribute to the restoration of our world by their own actions. If the young woman walks further along the path, she will soon come upon Christian sources with a very different concept of hope than the pessimistic (because illusory) hope of Greek mythology, or the emotional, inconstant hope of Spinoza. The biblical hope she will find is not an emotion but a *virtue*, a form of wisdom and abiding *power* through endless *faith* in a notion of the divine. 'This hope we have as an anchor of the soul', she will read in Hebrews 6:19. Great. All is not lost. Our lonely traveller now knows that the world can be remade. A revolution of hope is possible. Not long after that she will learn from Immanuel Kant that the thing for which we may hope is nothing other than that hope itself is the basis for, and betokens confidence in, the human moral capacity to make the world anew.

But at this point too, countless questions arise. Is it realistic to expect that in a secular society a moral compass can once more be sought in religion? If God does not exist, then what remains of that constant hope? What in our own day can give us endless faith in an existence that is so full of uncertainties and deception? Moreover, do other ancient sources not point precisely to Reason as the only measure of our dealings? Is that not what Socrates, Cicero, Voltaire and Condorcet tried to teach us? Certainly, but surely the history of the French Revolution and everything that followed it has shown that faith in Reason alone is not without its dangers. Is there still room for faith? If so how, and what kind of faith?

Immanuel Kant, and Beethoven with him, sang an ode to two things. 'Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: *the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me*.' They are what makes us human, capable of moral acts. However, those stars turn out to be light-emitting plasma full of hydrogen and helium in which nuclear fusion takes place, producing energy and light, while the 'moral law within me' now has competition from the 'rule of law' and the critical spirit of relativism.

So what can still offer us a moral compass as we strive for the *tikkun olam*, the remaking of the world? History and philosophy teach that there can be no harmonious society in the absence of justice. So how do we know what justice is? Through laws and legislation? As Antigone knew, laws can never encompass moral value. Jules Michelet was absolutely convinced that people had an instinct that told them what justice was, but all too often we have seen that the opposite is true. And if justice is only a relative concept, then we will never truly know it.

Science cannot tell us, Michelet was probably right about that. But Herzen by contrast was profoundly convinced that science can put us on track towards a good society. If that is so, then how?

And what can the Muses do? What can art give us, or the artist? If we choose to wander through those lost sources, can the classics perhaps help us further towards our goal?

How do we actually arrive at that cultural legacy? Tradition and education were once the path that led us to the 'lost sources', but tradition is passed on only sporadically, and in our time education has been given an entirely different social function. One consequence is that today's universities no longer aim to offer spiritual education. The Ancient Greeks knew that only *paideia* (Goethe's generation would have called it *Bildung*) can teach humanity, that crooked timber that never wants to be straight, to follow the right path.

How can education and culture escape the iron grip of plutocracy and techno-democracy? What kind of new counterculture is needed to achieve that? Is it current *woke culture* and *critical cultural theory*, or will something else be needed? Herzen taught that we must first free ourselves before we

can free others. But what is freedom? When are we free and how can we liberate ourselves?

What will all this mean for politics and for the democratic social order? In his play *Wallensteins Tod* (1798), the poet Friedrich Schiller expresses anger at the politics of '*The commonplace, eternal Yesterday / What's always been, is always coming back*'. The politics of yesterday, the hackneyed repetition of empty formulae, is a characteristic of all non-extremist parties and politicians. Not only is this part of the explanation for the popularity of extreme anti-democratic political forces, it also confirms what Gaetano Mosca argued in his *Elementi di Scienza Politica* in 1896, that the political class is always a reflection of society as it is, and as such politicians are the last people truly to aspire to fundamental social change. Should such change come, they would immediately lose their power.

So our Western democracy seems trapped between a politics that is incapable of breathing fresh life into the democratic spirit and a politics that actually wishes to destroy the democratic spirit. Who or what can breathe fresh life into the democratic spirit and make politics part of the revolution of the spirit?

For Thomas Mann, a true European who in the America of a president he admired, Franklin D. Roosevelt, became an American citizen in 1944 out of conviction, along with his friend Albert Einstein among others, there was no fundamental difference between the *Idea of Europe* and the *American Idea*. He saw both as:

> An expression of a humanist tradition in which the dignity, the greatness of humanity is cultivated by art and science, the passion for truth, the creation of beauty and the idea of justice. That is also what a true democracy will cultivate, for in the tradition of humanism, democracy is the form of government that attempts to elevate humankind, to make it think (*sapere aude!*) and enable it to be free. Hence the goal of democracy is education, spiritual moulding, nobility of spirit.

Why has this ideal of civilization that took shape in the *Idea of Europe* and the *American Idea* been lost, and what is needed to give these ideas a rebirth? What might the West now learn from other cultures if the revolution of hope must lead to a renaissance of the Axial Age?

The Sacrifice was the last film by Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky. It is his artistic testament and not long after its release in 1986 he died of cancer. The film tells the gripping story of a man who, facing the threat of a nuclear holocaust, is willing to sacrifice all that is dear to him if God will save this world. When the threat has passed, we hear the *Erbarme Dich* from Bach's St Matthew Passion and as the credits roll we read: 'This film is dedicated to my son Andriosha — with hope and consolation.'

In the face of a climate catastrophe and the continuing threat of a nuclear holocaust, with so much conflict, hunger and poverty in the world and more than twenty-five million people fleeing these horrors, are we prepared to make sacrifices?

It should be clear that an apocalyptic downfall of humanity, which these days is far from unthinkable, can be prevented only by the idea of the unity of humanity, by restoring the brotherhood and sisterhood of the species and so making the world anew. This can never happen without a revolution of hope. Pray it be an eternal revolution, because the problem of humanity, that crooked timber that we are by nature, will always be with us.

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Founder & President, Nexus Institute

Speakers

SVETLANA TIKHANOVSKAYA (Belarus, 1982) is generally considered Belarus' real president-elect. An English teacher and interpreter, she courageously decided to step in for her husband Sergei Tikhanovski, a critic of President Lukashenko, when the election commission refused to register his candidacy in 2020, and who shortly after was (and still is) arrested and imprisoned for breaching public order. The disputed Belarusian elections led to widespread anti-government protests. Now living and working in exile, Tikhanovskaya has vowed to fight the authoritarian regime of Lukashenko, to introduce democratic reforms to the country, to free political prisoners and to move away from the union treaty with Russia. She was on the list of the BBC's *100 women*, included in the 2020 edition of *The Bloomberg 50*, and nominated for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize by the President of Lithuania and multiple Norwegian members of parliament.

GIUSEPPE CONTE (Italy, 1964) was Prime Minister of Italy from June 2018 to February 2021 and currently is the president of the Italian political party Five Star Movement. Combining political realism with the activism needed to change society, he has presented revolutionary plans to foster direct democracy and fight social evils. Conte studied law at the Sapienza University of Rome and was visiting scholar at Yale Law School and New York University. He has written many authoritative books in the field of civil law, and serves as Professor of Private Law at the University of Florence and at LUISS Guido Carli University in Rome.

BARONESS MINOUCHE SHAFIK (Egypt, 1962) is one of the most influential thinkers in the financial world, and currently the Director of the prestigious London School of Economics. After graduating in politics and economics at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, the London School of Economics and the University of Oxford, Shafik became the youngest ever Vice President of the World Bank. Between 2008 and 2017, she held leading positions at the IMF, and she was Deputy Governor of the Bank of England from 2014 until 2017. Shafik was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 2015, and appointed a cross-bench peer in the House of Lords in 2020. Recently, she published her powerful, timely and much-needed book *What We Owe Each Other: A New Social Contract for a Better Society* (2021).

WOLE SOYINKA (Nigeria, 1934) is a Nobel Prize-winning playwright, poet and essayist. He played an active role in Nigeria's struggle for independence from the United Kingdom and in opposing oppressive governments in Nigeria and elsewhere. As a result of his struggle for freedom, he was put in solitary confinement for two years and later had to escape from Nigeria by motorcycle. Soyinka was Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Ife, and has also taught at Cornell University, Emory University, Harvard, Oxford and Yale. In plays such as *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) and *The Beatification of Area Boy* (1995), he skillfully fuses Western influences with subject matter and dramatic techniques rooted in Yoruba folklore and religion. In 1986, he was the first author from sub-Saharan Africa to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. His latest novel is *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021).

MARY L. TRUMP (United States, 1965) is an American psychologist and author. The niece of Donald Trump, she wrote *Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man* (2020), which sold nearly one million copies on the day of its release and is considered a serious game-changer in the US presidential elections that Donald Trump lost decisively to Joe Biden. Trump holds a PhD in clinical psychology and, as an adjunct professor at Adelphi University, taught graduate courses in developmental psychology, psychopathology, and trauma. She also has an MA in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University. Her latest book, *The Reckoning: Our Nation's Trauma and Finding a Way to Heal* (2021), attempts to diagnose the current state of American society by examining the twin traumas — the genocide of the native population and the enslavement of Africans — in which it was born. Trump argues that these crimes have never been atoned for and only barely acknowledged and that they have led America to the current fraught political moment in which the future of liberal democracy hangs in the balance.

KEHINDE ANDREWS (United Kingdom, 1983) is the most eloquent and influential spokesman for Black Lives Matter in the UK. He became an authority on the subject of racism when he published *Resisting Racism: Race, Inequality and the Black Supplementary School Movement* in 2013, and has written two bestsellers since: *Back to Black: Retelling Black Radicalism for the 21st Century* (2018) and *The New Age of Empire: How Racism and Colonialism Still Rule The World* (2021). He is the editor of the *Blackness in Britain* book series with Bloomsbury. Andrews reaches a wide audience with his contributions to publications like *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post* and CNN, and with his Harambee Organisation of Black Unity and its website Make it Plain, dedicated to the dissemination of knowledge about the Black Radical Intellectual Tradition. Andrews is Professor of Black Studies at Birmingham City University.

PATRICK J. DENEEN (United States, 1964) is Professor of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame. He has published in democratic theory and practice, American political thought, political theology, religion and American liberalism, and literature and politics. Deneen is author of several books, including *Why Liberalism Failed* (2018), which has been translated into fifteen languages. The book has been widely discussed and continues to have a major impact on the public debate about the meaning of liberalism. It earned a recommendation by former President Barack Obama, who wrote that 'the book offers cogent insights into the loss of meaning and community that many in the West feel, issues that liberal democracies ignore at their own peril'.

HARIS VLAVIANOS (Italy, 1957) is the quintessential European thinker and humanist, known for his work as a poet, historian and translator. The thesis that earned him an Oxford PhD degree was published as *Greece 1941–1949: From Resistance to Civil War*. He gained international fame with his 'fictional document' *Hitler's Secret Diary*, in which he emplots Hitler's voice in a diary form. Vlavianos has published thirteen collections of poetry, of which his latest, *Self-Portrait of White* (2018), won several prestigious awards. Among his translations are the works of poets such as Walt Whitman, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Anne Carson, Zbigniew Herbert, Fernando Pessoa, Louise Glück and William Blake. Vlavianos is a Professor of History and Politics at the American College of Greece, editor of the literary journal *Poetics* and poetry editor at Patakis Publications.

SENATOR JEFF FLAKE (United States, 1962) is an American Republican politician and author. After serving in the US House of Representatives from 2001 to 2013, Flake was elected to the United States Senate, where he served for six years. While in the Senate, Senator Flake chaired the Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology & the Law. He also directed the Foundation for Democracy in Namibia during its transition to independence. His 2018 Senate floor speech titled 'Truth and Democracy' was carried live on CNN, MSNBC and the FOX News Channel. Flake was the brave first Republican Senator who started warning for the dangers of President Trump's politics to American democracy. He was a frequent guest on NBC's Meet the Press, ABC's This Week, CBS' Face the Nation, and CNN's State of the Union. He is author of the *New York Times* best seller *Conscience of a Conservative: A Rejection of Destructive Politics and a Return to Principle* (2017). Senator Flake was a Resident Fellow for the Institute of Politics at Harvard in 2019, and is currently on the Board of the Institute of Politics. In 2021, President Joe Biden nominated Senator Flake as Ambassador for the United States of America to Turkey.

FATHER ANTONIO SPADARO S.J. (Italy, 1966) is an Italian Jesuit priest. In 1988, he entered the Society of Jesus, and in 1998 he joined the community of the Jesuits' biweekly review *La Civiltà Cattolica*, of which he has been editor-in-chief since 2011. In 2014, he published his most influential book *Cybertheology*, which addresses the way in which the digital revolution and the internet changed the way we think about faith and our understanding of revelation, grace, liturgy, the sacraments, and other classical theological themes. Father Spadaro is Consultor at the Pontifical Council for Culture and ordinary member of the Pontifical Academy of Fine Arts and Letters of the Virtuosi at the Pantheon. In 2013, he published the first interview with Pope Francis. He also published a wide range of volumes of literary and theological criticism in dialogue with contemporary culture.

PATTI SMITH (United States, 1946) is a true American cultural icon. As a world- famous singer, performer, poet, novelist and visual artist she shows the power of imagination and creation, and she is peerless in her ability to speak about the meaning of art, religion and politics. In 1971, Smith started performing with guitarist Lenny Kaye and formed The Patti Smith Group, whose debut album *Horses* (1975) is considered to be one of the most influential albums in the history of rock music. Her brilliant and deeply moving memoir about coming of age in New York, and her friendship with Robert Mapplethorpe, *Just Kids* (2010), has become a classic. Her most recent books are *Devotion* (2018) and *Year of the Monkey* (2020). With her performances, her art, and the knowledge and wisdom she shares with her million followers all over the world through Instagram and Substack, Patti Smith has not only become a trusted guide through the culture and politics of a confused world, but also a rare, true source of hope. Together with Lenny Kaye, she participated in the Nexus Symposium 2018 'An Education in Counterculture' and the Nexus Institute has published her prose poem *The New Jerusalem*.

COLOMBE CAHEN-SALVADOR (France, 1994) is a young leader, who over the last decade has inexhaustibly committed herself to uniting people across borders to solve global challenges. She co-founded Atlas, the progressive social and political movement pushing for global change through social campaigns, electoral activities and direct actions on topics such as democracy or vaccines inequity — more than 20,000 people in over 130 countries are involved with Atlas. Cahen-Salvador previously co-founded the pan-European political party Volt that mobilized 60,000 people across Europe and elected representatives at the 2019 European Elections. She has worked with various human rights and humanitarian organisations, including Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights and the OHCHR. She holds a degree from the Warwick Law School and a Master of Laws from Duke Law School.

ANAND PATWARDHAN (India, 1950) is an artist-activist revolutionary spirit. As a student in the USA, he participated in the anti-Vietnam War movement and volunteered in César Chávez-led United Farmworker's Union. On his return to India he fought for civil rights, and he has continued to do so using his artistic skills to make award-winning documentary films that expose political malpractice and social injustice. Because of their controversial themes — the rise of religious fundamentalism, sectarianism and casteism in India, and nuclear nationalism and unsustainable development — many of his films have faced censorship or have been banned by state television channels in India. Patwardhan has, however, successfully challenged all censorship rulings in court. Among his most distinguished films are *In the Name of God* (1992), *Father, Son, and Holy War* (1995), *War and Peace* (2002) and *Reason* (2018). *Reason* won the award for Best Feature-Length Documentary at the International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam (IDFA).

NADIA HARHASH (Palestine, 1971) is a lawyer, writer, researcher and a human rights activist, known for her in-depth analysis on the Palestine-Israel situation and covering significant issues on Palestinian society. She is a columnist at *Ra'y Al Yom*. Her books include the brave novel *In the Shadows of Men* (2016), the thorough study *Growth and Development of Palestinian Women Movement during the Mandate Period* (2018) and *On the Path of Mariam* (2019). Most recently she published *Nietzsche in Jerusalem: A diary of a Dog* (2021). Harhash is a senior program officer at HEKS/EPER, a major humanitarian NGO. She plays an active role in transforming the politics of the Palestinian Authority and making it more democratic.

ROBERT COOPER (United Kingdom, 1947) was a top diplomat. As EU diplomat, he mediated in several geopolitical conflicts. For years, he was Tony Blair's advisor on foreign policy; he was also the UK's Special Representative in Afghanistan. Between 2002 and 2007, Cooper was Director-General for External and Politico-Military Affairs at the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU. He was then involved with the foundation of the European External Action Service, the EU's diplomatic service. He served as Special Advisor to Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Cooper's concept of 'failed states', as described in *The Post-Modern State* (2002) and *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century* (2003), has turned out to be of great political influence. His most recent book is *The Ambassadors: Thinking about Diplomacy from Machiavelli to Modern Times* (2021).

LEON WIESELTIER (United States, 1952) is an American-Jewish thinker and the founder and editor of *Liberties*, a journal of culture and politics. He was educated at the universities of Columbia, Oxford and Harvard where he was selected to the Society of Fellows. From 1983 to 2014 Wieseltier was the renowned literary editor of *The New Republic*. He is the author of *Against Identity* (1996) and *Kaddish* (1998), which was translated into many languages and has become a classic about love, death, the accursed questions and the quest for wisdom. His essays on culture, religion, and history have been published in many international journals and magazines. He has published many translations of Hebrew poetry into English. In 2013 he won the prestigious Dan David Prize for outstanding achievement in the humanities. Wieseltier has been a regular contributor to the publications and events of the Nexus Institute over the last two decades.

LENNY KAYE (United States, 1946) is a guitarist, composer and writer. As a young musician, he toured and played with various bands and worked as a journalist for American music publications. He met Patti Smith in the record store in New York where he worked; they started playing now half a century ago, in 1971, and their artistic efforts would bear fruit as one of rock's most long-lived and influential bands: The Patti Smith Group. Kaye was involved in making eleven albums with The Patti Smith Group, from the iconic *Horses* in 1975 to *Banga* in 2012. In addition, he collaborated with many other prominent artists such as Suzanne Vega, R.E.M., Allen Ginsberg and Pussy Riot. He is the author of *Lightning Striking*, on the history of rock and roll, which will be published at the beginning of 2022, but will already be available at book shop at the Nexus Conference. Kaye participated in the Nexus Symposium 2018, 'An Education in Counterculture'.

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