

“ Left ” ? “ Right ”

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Making history of blinding words, escaping from Manichaeism, freeing the political and legal imagination

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Hello to everyone, and thanks to Fabien for encouraging me to participate in this international workshop on a subject that has been in my mind for probably twenty years. I hope one day I'll write an entire book about the ideas of left and right, unless I approach this subject in a utopian fiction. And now, I had to try to gather my ideas in three days.

I would like to begin by restating the origin of my reflection: I had long been fascinated by utopian fictions; I had already studied the way in which the opponents of utopias had invented the pejorative meaning of the word "utopia" to prevent this type of text, heir to Thomas More's *Utopia*, from arousing the political and legal imagination; and I had noticed among friends, and perhaps among myself, among people who were apparently highly politicized, the almost total absence of political reflection in the form of proposals and deliberations.

Political discussions were limited to giving opinions about parties and candidates in elections, and if I caricature a bit, the most intense moments consisted of proclaiming one's identification with a camp, or expressing a feeling of betrayal of the parties or candidates to the camp to which one belonged. I finally concluded that political reflection could involve voluntarily abandoning the terms "left" and "right". It would be a matter of getting rid of a belief: believing that one has taken a position by saying that one is "left-wing" or "right-wing", in order to finally begin to try and elaborate a position, several positions, on such and such a precise subject.

One scene struck me. I can still see myself stating my idea at a restaurant table, and meeting astonishment and resistance: the idea of doing without the words "left" and "right" had probably given the impression that I was abandoning my camp, in this case by going "to the right", or by becoming a "centrist", or that I was abandoning all interest in politics, whereas the

rejection of these words seemed to me, on the contrary, to be one of the conditions for beginning to express oneself politically.

Unfortunately I do not remember what year this anecdote was, and I cannot date any historical symptom of this intuition that became a conviction. Was it due to my long-term work against fatalism, for the political imagination, and on the history of words, or to the feeling of betrayal that people on the left may have felt with regard to the links between the Communist Party and the Soviet Union, with regard to the Socialist Party in power, or again - a decisive moment in the history of France - with regard to the denial of democracy that took place during the passage in force of the European Constitutional Treaty, in 2007-2008, by the two governing parties of the left and the right, which had betrayed not only a part of their electorate, but the very basis of the Constitution guaranteeing the sovereignty of the people composed of all the voters. For this vote of the parliamentarians gathered in Versailles, the very place that King Louis XVI had to leave to return to Paris in 1789, imposed a modification of the Constitution in contradiction with the result of the 2005 referendum.

I now come to the presentation of my approach and the outline of my presentation. I propose:

- first, to make the history of the words “left” and “right” by showing that they are words that prevent us from thinking
- secondly, to question the possibility of escaping the Manicheism implied by this pair of terms, a Manicheism that contributes to political blindness
- finally, thirdly, to give tracks for an unprecedented improvement of the democracy, in the institutional field concerned by the history of these words.

I. FIRST STEP: MAKING HISTORY OF MISLEADING WORDS

I adopt here an essential method for the history of ideas: to question the very words by which we think, not by trying to define them better, but by making the history of their emergence, of the changes of meaning they may have undergone, of their success or their disappearance. I would add, as a major point, that the words that interest me most are not those that constitute our "mental tools", according to the expression of Lucien Febvre, but those words that prevent us from thinking, and whose history allows us to understand that they blind us. These semantic lures are screen words, or words in a blind spot: the history of their meaning is placed in the blind spot of the rear-view mirror, and can produce accidents without our even being aware of

it. The words "left" and "right" are one of these. In this case, a historical process of Manichean identification, and submission to partisan logics has produced a blockage of thinking and imagination.

I.1 I begin with the history of the words "right and left" according to Marcel Gauchet

A few years ago, I came close to directing a thesis on the history of the words left and right, a history that implies avoiding retrospective projection, while being aware of the paradoxically anachronistic character of such an investigation on the past of our present. Before entrusting this subject to the person who finally could not carry out this work, I checked that nobody had already worked in this rare and necessary perspective. Surprise: this approach, so enlightening, had already been taken by Marcel Gauchet, in a 1993 text published in the *Lieux de mémoire* series. The chapter of about sixty pages is remarkably rich and intelligent, and I can only subscribe to its first paragraph:

"Should we be surprised? We have hardly asked ourselves about the history of this pair of words so firmly established at the heart of the intellectual and symbolic functioning of contemporary societies. It is because we do not readily reflect on what allows you to think."

The occurrences noted may have come from the Frantext database, which preceded the creation of Gallica, and it would be interesting to repeat this investigation to establish whether an expanded database would lead to the same results today. I will only mention here the main lines of this fascinating account, before explaining how one can also find its conclusions debatable. Overall, Marcel Gauchet shows how these words are major intellectual and political tools, when I believe they can also be considered intellectually and politically harmful words, or at least harmful in France and today.

Marcel Gauchet's first contribution: while all historical dictionaries explain that the left-right division is established in 1789, the survey of the occurrences of these words shows that they are hardly used in their political meaning before the Restoration. Marcel Gauchet specifies that, during the whole Revolution, one aspires to the unity of a general will, and one is repulsed by parties and factions, to the point that the Constitution of the year III is completed by a regulation with a monthly drawing of lots for the places of the deputies, which however was not applied. I specify however that this aspiration to the unity of the general will reflects rather the Rousseauist or Robespierist tendency, whereas the works of Condorcet try to conceive and to put into practice a general will not conceived as unanimity, but as aggregation of the particular wills. In any case, this key moment of the Restoration is essential to understand the

matrix that Marcel Gauchet highlights, and the illusion to which I will return later: the terms "left" and "right" were originally and exclusively used in government and parliamentary circles, at the moment when the executive power was obliged, between 1815 and 1820, to find a majority, relying either on the left or on the right of the Assembly, which amounted to playing on a center, the binary matrix being in fact ternary. The success of this semantic couple is due to its parliamentary and governmental use. I will come back to this, because this is what makes both its strength and its weakness.

The second contribution of this study is that the idea that the left and the right have a history that goes back two centuries is a retrospective projection. Until the Third Republic, popular language used other terms, and other pairs of terms, notably Reds and Whites. It was only half a century after the introduction of universal male suffrage in 1848, and thirty years after the beginning of the Third Republic, that the major phenomenon of the identification of citizens with the left or the right occurred. Around the Dreyfus affair, what Marcel Gauchet calls a "small mental revolution" occurred, which corresponds "to the entry into democracy in the contemporary sense of the term" (p. 2551). The author estimates that the adoption of this spatial vocabulary in the range of structural abstraction makes possible its later use with other political parties and other ideological orientations, that it allows paradoxically the unification of two very divided political families, the lefts and the rights, and that it finally allows to consider the vote not anymore as a delegation to embody a whole collective, but as an identification. Marcel Gauchet adds that these words allow the citizen to identify himself as a partisan, and to constitute himself as an analyst of the system in which he places himself.

The next steps in the history of these words according to Marcel Gauchet consist in analyzing how the pair of terms has been maintained, despite frontal oppositions from the left or the right. The Communist Party tries to impose the opposition between two classes rather than the opposition Red-White or Left-Right, but the entry of the PCF into the Popular Front leads to the communist appropriation of these words and of the Left-Right system, while the idea of a continuity from the Jacobin revolution to the communist revolution makes the proletariat the pole of reference of the Left. As for the right, it remains more reluctant than the left to an antagonistic conception of society, while fascism is frankly opposed to it. But the polarization between communism and fascism reactivates the left-right structure.

However, Marcel Gauchet underlines the delicate complexity of this apparently binary system. He believes that there are in fact three lefts (communist, socialist, and radical), and three rights (liberal, authoritarian, and traditionalist), and that this double triplicity or trinity (sic) is complicated by the importance of the center in the game of alliances. We can thus speak,

at the very least, of extreme left, left, center left or right, right and extreme right. There would be moreover an invariant: "the tripartite organization of the party of the order and the party of the movement" (p. 2573). As for the citizens, according to him, they are supposed to identify themselves without fully adhering.

The last historical stage concerns the post-World War II period. Gaullism could not prevent bipartition. The Union of the Left did not succeed in eliminating the center advocated by Giscard. And, "For the first time in two centuries, the regime of freedom enters, in France, in the uncontested and unfolds safe from extremist challenges." (p. 2580), regardless of the rise of a nationalist and xenophobic party, and the progression of a family of ecological spirit that Marcel Gauchet then attaches to the extreme left. For the author, these categories of right and left have become universal, and beyond a complex and partly random emergence and history, their success is ultimately explained by their anthropological function: holistic societies are based on the identification of the whole society with a single body, notably the body of the king. Modern democratic societies, which consent to dissensus, now refer to the spatialized dimension of each individual's body. The Manicheism that founded this structure has given way, through the body of the individual, to an acceptance of the duality in each person. Each would be more or less as Valéry in 1934: "of right in the middle of the lefts, and of left in the middle of the rights" (p. 2587), the two logics of the emancipation and the socialization being combined. Taking again an expression of Guy Rossi-Landi of 1978, Marcel Gauchet estimates besides that there is a "possible chase-crossing of the themes of a side to the other, of which the shift of the Nation from left to right provides the most famous illustration" (p. 2592). And to conclude that "The metamorphosis is made to be particularly felt in a country that has invented these identifications to name the inexpiable of this discord." (p. 2593), and that this French singularity has become universal through the worldwide fortune of its fetish words, France having had "this unique past of divisions and struggles that made, for a long time, the former eldest daughter of the Church, the chosen homeland of politics." (p. 2594).

These last words date from 1993. Before commenting on the philosophy of history implicitly adopted by Marcel Gauchet in what he first presents as the empirical collection of occurrences of the words left and right, I must mention a new surprise for the researcher who returns to the subject in 2021: Marcel Gauchet has just republished his 1993 article in October 2021, completing it with an afterword in which he questions the validity of these terms today. He explains that this time he is choosing theory over empirical material, and states, "The thesis I will argue is that while this right-left divide has been relativized by others, while it has become blurred, while it has become more complex, it retains its anchoring and its scope." (p. 141).

According to him, the different ideological orientations (conservatives, liberals and socialists) continue to find their place in the binary matrix and, in reality, ternary. He does admit a "relativization" ("right and left have ceased to be unconditional affiliations", p. 146), a blurring on the left that reduces political control of the economy to social redistribution, and compensates for this loss with a societal politics in favor of minorities and identity causes. He also concedes a blurring on the right, through the opposition between neoliberals and conservatives. And he notes the rise of a populism that is no longer solely of the extreme right, and of an ecologism that is no longer solely of the extreme left. His thesis, however, is that all the oppositions to the right-left couple only reinforce it, while it has taken on an even more functional, symbolic and anthropological form: the strength of this opposition "is to link the opposition to that symmetry of eyes and ears, arms and legs, which makes us beings split in their unity" (p. 159).

I.2. I move on to the critique of the orientation of this national and universal narrative of the overcoming of conflicts by modern democracy

One will have understood the subtlety and the power of Marcel Gauchet's history and reflection. I will now move on to the criticism. That the emergence of this pair of notions and of this matrix, both mental and organizational, has moved from historical contingency to a universal model implicitly without temporal limit is a brilliant idea, but it is questionable. The context of the collective work of the *Lieux de mémoire* may have played a role in the magnification of a French monument born of the great Revolution and destined for the universal. One can also think that the historical context of the fall of the wall in 1989 followed by the fall of the USSR at the end of 1991 played its role, as it could have incited Fukuyama to celebrate the ideological victory of democracy and liberalism in *The End of History and the Last Man*, published in 1989.

What strikes me most is not the implicit ideological choice of a form of liberal democracy and a valorization of the center, but that the possibility of powerful historical changes over the long term, likely to cause the forms of democracy to regress or progress, cannot be imagined. In spite of his extreme attention to historical details, Marcel Gauchet adopts here a psycho-anthropological perspective, which transcends the historical dimension, a perspective coupled with a structuralist tendency. If the historical dimension seems to be taken into account, it is in fact driven by a teleology of Christian origin or a Hegelian dialectic of the overcoming of opposites, which reduce the complexity of history to a finality or a logic. From

someone who has proved his powerful capacity to try to give an account of the transformations of a very close past, one would have expected a relative reconsideration of his 1993 text in his afterword of 2021. On the contrary, while bringing new nuances to the period of the last thirty years, Marcel Gauchet maintains his conviction, barely formulated in the form of a wager. Besides the afterword, the main addition of the 2021 book to the 1993 article is its subtitle. The book is now entitled *Right and Left. History and Destiny* [*La droite et la gauche. Histoire et destin*]. The history of the words "right" and "left" has become a "destiny."

My analysis of the great geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-cultural transformations underway since 1989 (and for the Internet since 1995), my perception of the loss of confidence in politics by a large part of French citizens, lead me on the contrary to worry about the threats to the stability of the French democratic system, and much more broadly, to the cohesion it is supposed to make possible, to the physical and moral well-being it is supposed to contribute to organizing. It is not impossible to imagine the worst: a civil war based on a conflict between identities, or an international war favored by the progression of nationalisms reacting to the dysfunctions of a currently ultraliberal and anti-democratic European Union.

Having no taste for either optimism or pessimism, both of which being fatalisms (I spent a decade writing a thesis on the mystifying history of these words), I react by betting that the rejection of the notions of left and right is now useful for a profound renewal of democracy, which is moreover far too recent to believe that it is already complete (I suppose Marcel Gauchet would be in favor of seeking such an improvement). The bet is risky but I am convinced that it is necessary today, and to put it clearly: the words and ideas of left and right will have lived for two centuries, from 1789 to 1989. They have certainly had their uses. Trying to invent ideas for the future involve thinking about their shortcomings.

I.3 After the history of words, and its criticism, I move on to the next point, on the feelings of betrayal towards the left and the right or of disillusionment towards their incoherence

We could imagine to proceed to a vast investigation on the feeling of betrayal felt by people of the left, or of the right, or of the extremes, with regard to the camp with which they have identified themselves. One could speculate on Mitterrand remaining faithful to his friend Bousquet, organizer of the Vel'd'Hiv raid, choosing Fabius as Prime Minister, favoring the arrival of Le Pen on television, or praising the merits of Tapie. On the right, one could argue about the feeling of betrayal of Gaullists with regard to Giscard's policies and his choice of Barre as Prime Minister. Today, the feeling of betrayal can go so far as to see in the evolution

of the left an inversion of all the values it is supposed to have carried. And the terrible irony of Orwell's *Animal Farm* or *One Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty-Four* with regard to Stalinism (think also of the 2003 film *Goodbye Lenin!*), this irony denouncing a discourse that falsifies history and reverses the meaning of words, is now applicable to a large part of the Left. It asserts an intersectional orientation, which obscures socio-economic inequalities in favor of differences of race, sex, gender and religion. It favors a hyper-individualism at the same time as a hyper-communitarianism, and moreover endangers the necessary anti-racist, anti-sexist and secular struggles. But the feeling of betrayal is nothing new. To use a rather harsh formula, I would say that we have gone from a left imported from the Soviet Union to a left imported from the United States of America. The first one ended up despairing Billancourt, and the second one will end up driving a part of the currently seduced youth on antidepressants or in a psychiatric hospital.

One could also ask what would be a true left, or a true right. But this will not be my choice, and in a sense, Marcel Gauchet's analyses have the great merit of disqualifying this type of questioning in advance (as do those of many participants here). The words and ideas of the left and right make it possible to classify these parties on a political spectrum, the ideological content of these parties varying considerably in the course of history, and even probably much more than Marcel Gauchet implies by ending up superimposing on the continuous gradation from the extreme left to the extreme right a limited number of ideologies, corresponding in reality to key words that also deserve to be questioned. After all, are we really sure that freedom is more right-wing and equality more left-wing? Is it really certain that the republican revolutionary Chamfort was on the right when he ironized about fraternity during the Terror by declaring that it consisted in saying: "Be my brother or I will kill you"? Are we really sure that feminism is left-wing? That antisemitism is of the right? That racism is right-wing and secularism is left-wing? That slavery is right-wing and progress is left-wing? That the need for security is of the right? That the hope of a reduction of inequalities is of the left? I could go on giving concrete examples that would only seem paradoxical to those who would be disturbed in their "left" or "right" credo. Even more delicate, one could ask the same kind of questions about what is called "extreme right" or "extreme left". Is it really sure that the idea of regulating immigration or fighting against Islamism are "far right" ideas? Is the criticism of the extreme financialization of capitalism really an idea of the extreme left?

But my point is quite different, and I do not intend to explain the historical transformation of the ideological contents attributable to what is called the left or the right, or

superimposable on the different segments of the straight, curved or sinuous line that would lead from what is called the extreme left to what is called the extreme right.

I.4 My last point in this part on the history of words that blind us will be on the critique of the identification with the left or the right as voluntary servitude of the voters

Upstream of the feeling of betrayal is the situation of giving all power to those by whom one can then feel betrayed. Upstream of the feeling of incoherence of the camp in which one has placed one's trust, there is the illusion of coherence in which one has wanted to believe. And finally, the history of words proposed by Marcel Gauchet includes a certain number of decisive facts that can put us on the track of a more fundamental mystification. Summed up in its simplest form, the history of the words Left and Right is that, first, of a vocabulary used by governments and parliamentarians to try to obtain a majority in order to govern, and then, later, of an identification of the voting public with these two camps.

Whatever the practical necessity of finding the means to govern, and whatever the psychological and sociological nature of the identification processes, the problem here lies in the essentially passive character of the vast majority of citizens involved in this psychic and legal matrix. Because Marcel Gauchet does not imagine that it could be otherwise, his powerful analysis misses an essential fact: the passivity of voters in a system that is magnificently efficient only for a professional political elite. The interpretation of this story of words omits the depth of distrust present in this structure. Are the abstentionists on the left or the right? Is the Yellow Vests movement, which revealed and crystallized an immense crisis of democracy before the Covid epidemic emerged, a left or right movement?

The current crisis of democracy is also a crisis of identification with the left or the right. But this past and partly still present identification is not the solution but the problem. It finally functions as a trap. It is a voluntary servitude of the voters. It is a voluntary submission of the represented to their representatives. It is all the more powerful because it is based on a binary, Manichean representation of political camps and ideas.

It will be said that in a great modern democracy, political representation is indispensable. I fully agree with this idea. Just as I am convinced that the drawing of lots for representatives is a false good idea. But it is possible to imagine a considerable progress of democracy, to escape from Manichaeism, and from the submission of passive citizens to professional elected officials. This is all the more necessary since the critical distancing that Marcel Gauchet shows towards the notions of left and right is not necessarily shared, contrary

to what he suggests, by all citizens. A large part of them probably plays today reluctantly this game of being both a stakeholder and a critical observer. Another part, perhaps already considerable, has rejected or is in the process of rejecting this semantic and legal matrix to which the French population has only really adhered during a little more than a century of republican rule.

If the importance of the reflection on populism in our colloquium signals the progression of a refusal of the pluralist system of representation, it is perhaps possible to imagine a way to avoid the current dissociation between represented and representatives. I believe that it would notably pass by a deprofessionalization of politics, and the implementation of other voting modalities (neither the lure of the unanimous general will, nor the majority suffrage, nor the drawing of lots).

First of all, a few words on Manichaeism, which would deserve long developments, the second step of my reflection after the analysis of the history of the words "left" and "right".

II. CAN WE ESCAPE FROM MANICHAISM ?

In combat, identification with a leader or a camp may be necessary and effective. The fact remains that, in peacetime, Manichaeism is a calamity. And it has been maintained for too long by the identification of the represented with the camps of the representatives, whose professionalization, moreover, leads to their own interests.

The current meaning of the word "Manichaeism" has made us forget its history, witnessing the considerable importance of the thing. Before designating a moral, or even political dualism, which was at play between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the French Revolution, the word designated all the religions that assumed the existence of a god of good and a god of evil. In the history of theology and philosophy, this was in fact the best possible hypothesis to escape the contradiction of a unique God who is infinitely wise, powerful and good. No matter how you turn it, it is impossible to rationally save God from the accusation of having created evil. Unless one prefers polytheism or animism, one must choose between atheism or the existence of god. My hypothesis is that in reality all monotheisms are in one way or another disguised *dithiisms* (according to the *Encyclopedia's* term). Manichaeism was not only a belief shared by a few enlightened or heterodox followers, notably those who followed the teachings of Mani, it was constituted in the form of churches so powerful that the Inquisition, for example, was invented against Catharism, one of the forms of "dualist" religion.

This religious Manichaeism has to do with the dualistic form of our morality, and within the framework of the French Revolution and of a process of secularization of our society, it moved from the religious to the political, by transporting there the idea that there was a camp of Good and a camp of Evil. It was not long after the Cold War that new Manichean ideologies, in particular Islamism, and what is now called Wokism, which comes from North American Puritanism, progressed on a planetary scale.

The apparent irony of my reflection is that the power of Manichaeism, and with it a non-distanced faith from which I would like to see the functioning of our democracy and our mentalities escape, invites us to wonder about its possible universal anthropological determinations, while I am trying to oppose those that Marcel Gauchet acknowledges. I would rather say that Manichaeism draws first of all from a cosmological model, the opposition of day and night, and from a biological model that is probably much more structuring than the two sides of the body evoked by Marcel Gauchet: the sexual nature of a large part of living beings. The fact remains that if the metaphor of the Enlightenment invites Manichaeism, the difference of the sexes already invites the idea of complementarity. Without being able to develop a subject which is not at all simple, I would add that civilizations and human beings have long since imagined other ways of thinking than Manichaeism, and that democratic societies have produced powerful paradoxical overcoming, first and foremost secularism.

For our purposes, Marcel Gauchet has emphasized how the strength of the words left and right and of the political and mental matrix they form rests on the inscription of Manichaeism in a gradual and relative system, made of nuances and multiple possible alliances.

Progress, which I prefer to designate with a word that I have tried to revive, *meliorism*, thought of as a project and not as a blind and dogmatic faith, does not have to be satisfied with the supposedly universal and implicitly eternal success of a structure whose limits we now perceive. Any political proposal can have perverse effects. I will, however, submit to you some proposals that could perhaps respond in part to the political crisis of historical magnitude that we are currently experiencing.

To escape Manicheism, it is certainly not a question of replacing the couple of words left-right by another couple of words. It is the confinement in duality that prevents us from thinking and acting. The situation we are confronted with today, in France in particular, leads us to note how much political choices, duly combined, are lacking. A single example that I believe is enlightening: the fight against Islamism should be combined with a fight against ultra-liberalism. For the latter favors both Islamist communitarianism and the dispossession of national sovereignties by European communitarianism. Will we wait long for what is still called

"the left" or "the right", or for that matter "the center", to understand this combination? The reflection of the mathematician, historian and politician Condorcet would be very stimulating in this domain. Condorcet uses his combinatorial and probabilistic thinking to evaluate the reasons why history experiences progress or "disastrous retrogrades", according to the good or bad combinations of transformation in the economic, political, cultural, technical fields, etc. The founder of social mathematics, who imagined social security, was also a member of the committee of public instruction which set up a project of teaching and research whose hierarchical organization should paradoxically serve to reduce inequalities. He was a member of the committee in charge of the Constitution of the year III, of which he hoped for a combination that would allow new progress by avoiding new regressions.

It seems to me that it is by making it possible for most citizens to stop putting themselves in a position of voluntary servitude by believing that they belong to the left or the right, that it will be possible to bring about a new stage of improvement in democracy, consisting of both deprofessionalizing politics, and removing it from the Manicheism produced by the structuring of professional representatives on a matrix that is certainly subtle, but originally and structurally binary.

I am trying to set an example by moving on to my third and final step, to propose a way out of the political ideas of left and right, in the form of what I believe would be a profound improvement in democracy:

III. ELECTING BY RANKING, DEPROFESSIONALIZING ELECTED OFFICIALS

Since it seems proven that the terms "left" and "right" are first and foremost political terms, and are fundamentally related to the institutional functioning of our democracy, one of the possible improvements would be to change the system of election of representatives, and to modify the relationship between representatives and represented. All of this while betting that this modification of democracy would have effects on the political orientations themselves, both national and international.

I begin with the proposal that I have studied the least, which I believe to be essential and which I will only address in the form of a general suggestion:

III.1 Voting by ranking

In his numerous works on elections, Condorcet shows that the modes of election can be extremely varied, that the choice of a mode of election has considerable effects on the results of the election, and that the choice of a mode of election depends upstream on the very way in which one conceives the search for the best, and its collective search.

Condorcet was particularly interested in voting by ranking, also called voting by preference. Upstream, this does not consist in choosing the best candidate or program between two proposals, but in ranking several candidates or programs according to an order of preference. This type of voting gives the voter much greater latitude and, when all the votes are aggregated, often leads to results that are different from a one- or two-round majority vote. The final elected person could be the one that the voters as a whole found perhaps the best but also the least bad.

In addition, this vote by ranking can also meet the hopes expressed through the aspiration to what is called proportional. In the election of representatives of different lists, the number of elected members per list could be weighted according to the ranking. The result could allow the expression of pluralism, but also the combined search for a relative consensus, and the obtaining of a government majority or the incentive to form a coalition. The diversity of election methods must be analyzed by attempting to compare their advantages, as well as their possible perverse effects. We should also ask ourselves whether voting by ranking combined with the idea of proportional representation could not be applied to the election of an executive power, which would then escape the dimension that is both Manichean and monarchic that we know today with the presidential election.

I stop here to finish with my second proposal:

III.2 The deprofessionalization of politics

At present, high elective or governmental functions are exercised by people who have little choice but to make politics their sole profession. The current system confines them to a political and media environment that isolates them from those they represent. It leads them to prefer their career and the party that supports them rather than their ideas. Finally, their remunerations bring them closer to an oligarchy, which can favour, as we see in the European institutions, the destruction of the Republic and of democracy.

Conversely, a deprofessionalization of politics would be a major and totally unprecedented improvement of democracy, in order to move towards the realization of a government "by the people and for the people", according to Lincoln's expression, which is also that of our current Constitution. The Serment du jeu de Paume of 1789, the First Republic and those that followed fought against the power of one through representative democracy. The Liberation established truly universal suffrage in 1945. It is finally time to make possible a *truly active citizenship* for all.

The crisis of confidence in political professionals is so radical that it has facilitated the dissemination of an idea that at first seems interesting to put an end to this situation, but which turns out to be dangerous: the drawing of lots for representatives. Allegedly practiced in Athens (which applied it only to certain functions and excluded nine-tenths of the population), this device is in reality the very negation of democracy: the person elected by lot is exempted from elaborating a program and being responsible for it, citizens are deprived of any deliberation, and the community can no longer express a preference or give itself a goal. The drawing of lots is not a path to direct democracy. It is the reign of chance, and the opportunity for all kinds of manipulation towards the executors of programs conceived elsewhere. Let us rather reserve the drawing of lots for provisions that would make it both judicious and legitimate, such as the formation of commissions for the control of electoral promises, capable of initiating revocatory referendums.

Politics must not be a profession, nor a submission to chance or occult forces. It must be the object of a voluntary and temporary political service, truly accessible to everyone, and subject to deliberation, choice and control by all. The radical way to put an end to this harmful professionalization is to limit the duration of all elective mandates and governmental functions exercised during a lifetime. Moreover, it is advisable to exclude from the count the mandates of small local authorities, where a sort of third state of politics works, more than 500,000 of our fellow citizens, volunteers and devoted to the public good. As the primary source of this temporary political service, municipal councilors are far removed from the current political elite that professionalization has turned into an aristocracy. It is expected that they will abandon their privileges, just as the nobility of the National Assembly helped to abolish privileges during the night of August 4.

This legal revolution of democracy may raise an objection concerning the competence of non-professionals. Solutions exist: choose the right length of political experience necessary for the highest offices (professional and non-political experience being also a major contribution); institute initial and continuous training; ensure the replacement of citizens in their

professional activity and the return to a professional activity; and above all, encourage regular political deliberation.

A WORD OF CONCLUSION

I have been working on the history of David's painting of the *Serment du Jeu de Paume*. Contrary to popular belief, including that spread in history textbooks or on the Internet, David's painting was never completed. The complex political circumstances of the revolution prevented the painter from completing it. This incompleteness is for me a symbol of the necessarily unfinished nature of democracy. The notions of left and right have a history. As important as they may have been, they are based on a doubly binary conception of politics: at the level of ideas, reduced to the ideas in the camp of Good and Evil; and at the level of citizens, separated into active citizens and inactive citizens. The very serious crisis of democracy that we are experiencing could incite us to take up the forever unfinished picture of the progress of democracy.