Frederick D. Wilhelmsen (1923-1996)

Professor Frederick D. Wilhelmsen (1923-1996), was a Tomist philosopher and a political thinker in line with Spanish traditionalism. He began teaching at the University of Santa Clara in California, moved to Avila (Spain) in the mid 50's and later on to Pamplona (Spain) where he became member of the Academic College between 1961 and 1965. He came back to the US where he taught politics and philosophy at the University of Dallas until he passed away four years before entering into the XXI century. Besides English, he wrote in Spanish, particularly his books *El problema de Occidente y los Cristianos* (1964) and, *Así pensamos* (1977). Both were written with a teaching and proselytism goal in mind but with an extraordinary deepness as well. Hence, he is found among the most influential Carlist intellectuals during the second half of the XX century. Indeed, King Don Javier of Bourbon rewarded him for such merits appointing him as a Member Knight in the order of "Proscribed Legitimacy", his dynastic order. He himself also made funeral arrangements to be buried with a red beret and a rosary between his hands.

His friends and colleagues dedicated a *Festschrift* to him in 1993 with the striking title Saints, Sovereigns, and Scholars. And, I also dedicated a study to him, written in Castilian: “Frederick D. Wilhelmsen, tradicionalista hispánico”, published by the Journal “Fuego y Raya” number 10, in 2015.

The text we present today, translated to English by Eduardo Ordoñez, comes from a lecture given by Frederick Wilhelmsen at the Museo de Navarra in Pamplona on 5 February 1963. It was first printed in this city and in the same year by the publisher Príncipe, released as a second edition in 1978 by the Spanish Catholic Publishing House, Seville, which was founded by the legendary Carlist leader of the 1936 Spanish Crusade Manuel Fal Conde. The Spanish name Federico Wilhelmsen appears at the forefront, as in much of his Spanish texts. That's how we knew him here, just like his American friends called him Fritz.

The whole text is divided in different chapters. We will take advantage of such a division to publish it by installments, as used in 19th-century magazines. I'm sure he, a cheerful, good-humored man, would have had fun with this. The first part begins by provocatively stating the divide between Tradition and Revolution between Spanish Carlist and legitimate King Charles VII and French King Louis XIV. This serves to characterize French absolutism very brightly, which opposes Spanish traditionalism. France was more rationalist than Baroque, and from there the Enlightenment sprouted, which in turn led to liberalism. The Spanish world, on the other hand, embodied the spirit of counter-reformation, which is at the root of popular resistance to the Revolution. Not bad as an appetizer!

Miguel Ayuso

1. Towards a Philosophy of Carlism:

If I have to provide a symbol that could sum up the difference among Holy Tradition, Carlism, and Revolution's legacy, I would find it in the last words of two different kings far apart from each other. Far apart not only in time (more than two centuries) but also by the deep transgression that separated Spain, its tradition and everything else that came after which indeed was the rejection of Spanish tradition.

"L'etat, c'est moi" (The state is me). King Louis' words encompassed the essence of rationalism in France.

"Yo soy la legitimidad" (The legitimacy is me). King Charles VII's words represented the Spain of old, the Spain reflected in the Cross of Burgundy flag.

The fact that the first one reigned a long time surrounded by all Versailles' splendor and vanity while the second one carried on the cross of exile throughout the XIX century highlights even further this contrast.

King Louis XIV of France represented a country that partially belonged to the Baroque movement which came about as a protest against the Reformation. But it did it in order to accelerate governmental centralization, something incompatible with the tenets of Middle Ages popular and traditional monarchy. That monarchy, despite its human mistakes, had been the guarantor of many institutions that protected the rights and freedoms acquired by birth by all those Christians called to Redemption's glory.

Christian common legacy discovered long ago that justice and freedom are not pure essences like species or categories that a "logic" professor applies when writing with chalk on the whiteboard during class.

These two concepts have to be understood in plurality if they are to have a real practical effect in history. Early Christendom dedicated a great deal of effort fighting barbarism and heresy. It needed to provide a specific social order for man so he could be given what was just for him. That order was found in the many institutions that flourished from popular roots such as guilds, particular customs and, towns and kingdoms governed by the Holy Roman Empire, Christendom's supreme defender against outside enemies and internal abuses. Indeed, the English author Belloc defined Christendom as "the standing grace of this world". This reality's strongest supporter in the XIX century was King Charles VII.

This bearded giant whose body type resembled what any kid would have dreamed of a king would look like, also resembled what any catholic would have thought a king should defend in the temporal order of things. All future formulations and theorizations of what political traditionalism looks like should have King Charles VII as its most important reference. This soldier king that passed away in exile was the voice, the sword, and the great defender of Tradition. A tradition that was abrogated on the other side of the Pyrenees mountains. An abrogation that took root in the absolutism preached by Bodin as well as Descartes rationalism.

In fact, it should not be forgotten that the "Sun King" (King Louis XIV), despite his blameless and exemplar religious orthodoxy and piety, displayed in the last years of his life, represented in politics the same spirit Descartes represented in philosophy: Rationalism, western thinking's original sin. The identification of the real person with the State can also be compared and even identified with the Cartesian notion of identifying a person with his ability to reason. "The State is me" and "I think therefore I exist" are two sides of the

same coin. Between these two sentences all history of the last three hundred fifty years or so can be read. In politics, the State was first mixed up with the sovereign, and later on while the revolutionary fever was ongoing, with the "national assembly". The absolutism of one became the absolutism of many. At the same time, the progressive centralization of the state showed the Cartesian principle as the trendy source to understand knowledge and power. Man was reduced to his ability to reason creating a vacuum in the concrete dynamism that history displayed up until then.

Man, exclusively conceived as a mathematical operation, was left inside the structure of the State, which denied any right and any reality that did not have itself (the State) as the source of it. Hence, man became a mere number as he was placed in front of the popular rationalist image of justice, to whom eyes are covered to prevent her to look at man as he is concretely.

This was and still is the man type of the Revolution. A revolution that treats men equally. In other words, equally mistreated. The Liberal Revolution, Enlightenment's daughter, was an attempt to make into politics what Germans called "als ob" (As if…). If men were to be understood as nothing else than a reason accidentally attached to a body, to be governed by the laws of physics and chemistry, then the idea of politics the Revolution has is that of a tyrannical governance of nature.

Frederick Wilhelmsen and Miguel Ayuso (1993)