

Notes I took from a speech delivered by Judge Scalia of SCOTUS
And other musings

What does the political and theological terms “left” and “right” mean?

What does political left and right mean?

Is the political philosophy of the left or right more compatible with the general good?

Left and right, left wing and right wing or right-wing extremists (extremist connotations); most ominous is the Christian right

Hard to pin down these definitions

Sometimes to highlight differences between

“statists”: understood as supporting strong and authoritarian government (Nixon a man of the right)

and “libertarians”: supporting a high degree of individual freedom (Senator Eugene McCarthy a man of the left)

This understanding would have Fidel Castro and Pinochet as right wingers

Second connotation of those terms that distinguishes between

Laissez-faire capitalists and socialists

Can lead to an opposite understanding of the terms from the first connotation; there could be some people who would support a high degree of individual freedom (thus left in first connotation), but also support a high degree of individual economic freedom (thus right in the second connotation).

Thus, libertarians would be called party of the left in the first understanding and right in the second understanding.

Third connotation that distinguishes (in relative terms) between those who favor the status quo versus those who favor change.

But what happens when political fortunes reversals happen?

Example: old-line communists in Russia who favor not changing from socialism to democracy and capitalism are called “right wingers” in the press in the West.

Fourth, can connote a difference between “nationalism” and “one worldism” (or what I call “internationalism”). This could be on aspect of the first connotation mentioned because those who tend to support strong authoritarian governments tend to be nationalists.

However, what would be the basis of calling the Nazi’s the party of the right and the Communists a party of the left? Both are authoritarian, both socialist, and both are not traditionalists, but the Communists are internationalists.

Scalia uses the second connotation (capitalism vs. socialism) as the terms he is using when he speaks of left and right in what follows—chosen because they are the terms now being currently debated at the start of the 21st century.

Few are arguing (in America?) for strong authoritarianism, vigorous nationalism, or traditionalism.

Whereas, the debate between socialism and capitalism remains.

Is the left or right better for the common good?

He determines the common good to be understood as the Christian common good. That is, a view that is conducive to virtue as Christians understand virtue and sanctification.