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Politics's Genealogy: A Theoretical Approach

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Abstract

This article will analyse the alienation that politics has suffered since its creation. The analytical model, based not only on the ideal type of the Greek Polis, but also on the appearance of rhetoric within this public sphere, on the creation of small economic medieval groups (The Gilds in Italy), on the creation of military and political groups (The Gulfs and Ghibellines in France), and later on the creation of political groups (The Whigs and the Tories in England), will reflect the limits of Politics (of the Polis) as a public sphere in which citizens should actively participate in discussing and solving common problems, through the rhetorical participation of public speakers in the Polis and the expansion of the private sphere in creating these small enterprise, political-military, and political groups. It emphasises the necessity to understand and assess the city as a space where all citizens have the chance to participate in decision-making and in solving their problems.

Keywords: Public sphere (Polis), Rhetoric, Self- enlargement of economical groups, limitations of public sphere.

Introduction

The relationship and performance of citizen life in the Polis meant active engagement and the dedication of all citizens to the progress of city life, emphasising the creation of a public space in which citizens should participate and live in liberty, because their participation guaranteed the chance to avoid any type of violence that any citizen who took care only of his property could suffer. The house plot represented the private space, and there the citizen was easily an object of physical violence, working for the mere fact of fulfilling the principal biological needs and caring for his family.

But with the appearance of rhetoric in the Polis and with the enlargement of economic and trade activity, military-political and political activity of one of several groups in the Middle Ages (such as the Gilds, *confreries* and *compagnos* in Italy; the Gulfs and Ghibellines in France; or the Whigs and the Tories in England), politics changed its structure and functions, creating a path for an enlargement of the private sphere. Based on the ideal type of the Greek Polis and on the creation of these small pre-capitalist groups, this article will create an analytical model that will delineate on the one side the birth and development of the Polis (the public sphere) and the limitation of public space through the exercise of rhetoric and the enlargement of these private economic, military and political activities on the other side.

This means that with the inclusion of rhetoric in the space of the Polis and with the beginning of mediaeval times, one notices the influence of personal decisions within the public sphere (as is the case of rhetoricians in the Polis) and the occasional exercise of personal economic and trade activities outside the private space or outside the city, which led to a limitation and segmentation of the public sphere and the competition of private individuals to grow and enlarge their economic activities that later on were configured into military armies or political parties with the aim of preserving and adding to their properties.

Based on this argument, for the sake of citizens' well-being and their economic, academic, professional and cultural activities, it is more appropriate that the space of the city be understood and assessed as a common space where people try to solve their problems together.

The Birth and Development of Politics (the Polis)

Before the appearance of the Polis, the organization of human life in Ancient Greece was natural, divided into units such as phratria and phyle (kinship) that were based on physical work that was "the activity that best corresponds to the biological process of the human body, the growth of which, metabolism and disbanding are connected by the needs produced by the physical works that feeds the vital process" (Arendt, 2006, pp. 30). However, this structure, dictated by the principal condition of physical work, led to the continuous increase of needs and desires in function of improving living standards through the acknowledgement of working as a second condition, formulated as follows:

Working is the activity that corresponds to the unnatural human existence that is not fixed in the vital and eternally repetitive circle of the species, whose mortality is not compensable. Working provides an "artificial world" of objects distinguished clearly by the whole natural environment. Within its borders, each individual life is limited, while this world is destined to last more and to pass in all individual lives(Arendt, 2006 a, pp. 30).

Due to their nature, these two conditions led to the translation of this natural organization into a new form that had to do with the natural organization of humans

towards material property. Obliged to be developed within the house boundaries, physical work would at the same time carry the exercise of limitations imposed on family individuals by the needs of biological life, and working would be captured by the individual desire to fall victim to the extra physical tiredness of his own hands within his house, where "the husband was obliged for individual attention (providing food for the family), while the wife had to take care for the survival of the species (birth and growth of the baby)" (Arendt, 2006 b, pp. 56). All this would be judged by the Greek philosophers (of that period) as a pre-political phenomenon because ownership by these needs would justify the use of means of violence with the aim of owning them.

That is why "the Greeks did not choose to employ their agile wits in devising aids to physical comfort" (Robinson, 1933, pp. 71). This not only reinforced the fact that "the foundation of Polis was preceded by the destruction of all organized units based on kinship such as phratria and phyle" (Arendt, 2006, c, pp. 49-50), but also revealed the third human condition of "Bios Politicos that mean acting (praxis) and speaking (lexis) by which took life the sphere of human works (ta ton anthropon pragmata as Plato used to call it) and from which is excluded everything that was necessary or useful" (Arendt, 2006 d, pp. 50).

But in order to be a consequence of the third human condition, it was necessary to own the first two conditions and not be owned by them, because having a house plot or owning necessary objects for living in the house would be a condition for the freedom of the Polis, which means:

Acting, as the unique activity that happens directly among people, without the intermediation of objects or material things, corresponds to the human state of multiplicity, to the fact that people, not the Man, live in earth and are inhabitants of this planet. Despite the fact that the whole aspects of human state, in a way or another, are related to politics, this multiplicity is a special condition, not only condition sine quan non, but condition per quam, for the whole political life (Arendt, 2006 e, pp. 30-31).

Even though physical work and working could have a location, they were considered not free activities, because only the exit from the private sphere of the house leading towards human multiplicity (the public sphere), "reveals exactly for the world how much it is common for all and notable by the place we privately occupy on it" (Arendt, 2006 f, pp. 81). This organization was so natural that the activity of public life for a middle-class citizen of Athens had to be as diverse as possible, for each of them "was a practical politician, an administrator of the law, very possibly a speaker, and quite certainly a soldier or a sailor" (Robinson, 1933 a, pp. 150).

Being out of the house and engaging where everybody was noticeable and listened to by others made people expose themselves to another way of living where speaking, and only speaking, held meaning to the point that "thinking came after speaking,

while speaking and acting were equal in the same range and level and that finding the right words in the right moment, apart the information of the communication they can emit, is acting" (Arendt, 2006 g, pp. 51). According to Pericles, as Thucydides (as cited in Robinson, 1933 b, pp.152) records of him, "our citizens attend both to private and public duties, allowing no absorption in their own affairs to interfere with their knowledge of the cities. The man who holds aloof from public life, we regard as useless". This configuration of multiplicity would not remain as such if it were not characterized by the double nature of equality and distinction among people, because "everywhere there was an atmosphere of genial sociability, very different from the life of our great towns and suburbs where the neighbours often scarcely know one another to speak to" (Robinson, 1933 c, pp. 71).

"We have no sour looks for those around us", said Pericles (as cited in Robinson, 1933 d, pp.71) in a speech he delivered in honour of Athens' character. This means that if people were not equal, they would not understand each other, and if they were not different, they would not need to speak or act. So, the Polis was the place of the public sphere: where people did not reign and were not reigned over by others; where the meaning of words was dictated by the common majority; where the destruction of every life deprived by need, usefulness, and individual attention—which was similar to animal life without any glory or success due to isolation within the house walls—would compound " the perpetuity" of human life in the public sphere with the aim of gaining every common good for the time the world will exist. Although the spelling of the term Polis differs from Politics, the latter is identical in meaning to Polis and will serve as a referent for the analysis of the following arguments.

Restricting Politics Through the Appearance of Rhetoric and the Enlargement of Personal Activities (Economic, Military, Political)

The opportunities offered by politics through the chance of direct participation in public affairs and the interest shown were appropriated by the so-called rhetoricians, who defined the public as follows: "it includes everything that appears in the public that can be seen and heard by everybody and get the highest publicity possible" (Arendt, 2006 h, pp. 78-79). As a result, even in the Polis, acting and speaking were divided and became more independent. The inclusion of publicity within the Polis changed its inner nature, directing meaning in favour of the sophists and rhetoricians to the point that:

The effect of sophists' teaching had certainly its bad side. It gave men a taste for superficial knowledge and encouraged an appeal to bare self-interest. Politicians who came under its influence argued freely that might was right; and the methods of shameless aggrandizement were justified on the plea of national necessity (Robinson, 1933 e, pp. 146).

The stress shifted from action to the word, as a means of manipulation more than a specific human way to converse, discuss, rank, and resolve problems that could arise in the city space. The focus of the rhetoricians' discourse on words and the vocal emphasis on specific terms created a clash in the discourse content—which in reality aimed to use words in line with what they expressed and in function of achieving a common goal—giving way to its possession by them. At this stage, it was important to keep their rhetoric alive and legitimize a special status of public admirer. For them, the glory and success of the public show should not be displayed among the common majority of people, but should be defined only in some special individual to create ground for their prestige; this would manifest not only the fulfilled need of this status but also the need to consume it in a public space, just as the slave consumed his food to be able to work. Despite the frequency of these shows even during the Roman Empire, where the emperor had the privilege of being the head of state, this did not mean that the public sphere was deleted, because, as Abbot (1909) argues, Respublicca gave each citizen the right to enjoy the status of citizenship, to participate and decide on issues that dealt with collective interests in three spaces: the Contio (gathered for public discussions), the Comitia (gathered for the popular assembly), and the one gathered during the gladiators' fights.

"That is why the language of romans, maybe the most politicized people that we have known till today, used as synonyms the words "live" and "I am among people" (*inter homines esse*) or the words "die" and " cease to be among people"" (*inter homines esse esinere*) (Arendt, 2006 i, pp. 31). However, politics starts to feel its destruction during the Middle and Modern Age: even though the moral of the Christian political philosophy, legitimated under the postulate "as long as the world will exist"- meaning that what people had to divide among them was to be in a common world within a given time, - saved its conceptual terrestrial clarity of attention for the common good. Meanwhile, the enlargement of economic activity within the house clenched the public sphere in the private one.

The construction of feudal systems on public spaces and the dedication of all economic activity to the material earnings of the feudal lord transformed the natural organization of human life in favour of an economic liberty that, as Taylor (1913) puts it, was seen as an important right of individual activity and permitted them to own private property and to initiate financial enterprises according to their choices.

"A main feature for this enlargement of private sphere and somehow for the difference between the head of the house in antiquity and the feudal, is that the feudal could decide for justice with his reign boundaries while the head of the house in antiquity, even though he could exercise his power, did not take into consideration any law or justice coming out of the political sphere" (Arendt, 2006 j, pp. 61). These attributions within the household and the direction of all activities within its boundaries compelled the feudal lord, through rational nature, to specify the role of work or "the profession" for each farmer who worked on his property, with the aim

of increasing material resources and creating a dominant – submissive relationship, because the power of a man is the means that he possesses, his present means to gain some material goods in the future (Abbott, 1909 a). "Leading all human activities in the private sphere and modelling all human relationships according to the domestic example took place in the typical medieval professional organization in the cities, *as the Gilds, the konfreries and compagnons"* (Arendt, 2006 k, pp. 61).

Their continuous enlargement would shape that type of human organization that today is called society, which laid its strands in the Middle Ages and meant "an alliance among people for a special purpose" (Arendt, 2006 l, pp. 49), given that there could not be good laws (economic-political connections) where good organization and discipline did not exist (Russell, 1962). Even though they proved successful in weakening and later destroying absolute monarchies, providing an opportunity for the foundation of modern states composed of modern societies, the effects of the capacity enlargement of these mini-societies managed to blur the dividing line between the public and private spheres, "because the structure of citizens and the political unities are known in accordance with the image of a family, the daily works of which should be under the custody of a gigantic administration, all national, same as the house government" (Arendt, 2006 m, pp. 54), while "the easiest way to govern a city that was free before the invasion is to leave its governance to his citizens" (Machiavelli, 2003, pp. 30).

For the Greeks, this fact could be understood as a falsification leading to the loss of the public sphere, because "the natural socialization, pure social of the human species was considered as a imposed limitation on us by the needs of biological life that are similar as for human animals as for other forms of animal life" (Arendt, 2006 n, pp. 49). The foundation of the modern state through strategic ideologies, sustained and calculated efficiently through the division of work and the productive efficiency of small professional mediaeval companies, has to do with the fact that ""scientific thought related with this development is no longer the political science, but the "national economy" or "social economy" or Volkseirtschaft that show a kind "of inclusive domestic economy"" (Arendt, 2006 p, pp. 54).

This means that for the ancient Greeks, people who believed that a good life lay in material patrimony would agree with the idea that the state would be happy if it was materially rich, while those who accepted that virtue was the source of individual happiness would require a virtuous state to achieve greater happiness (Taylor, 1913 a). In a way, all this is related to the fact that ""these unities of economically organized families are similar with the super human family called "society", while the political form of its organization is called "nation". That is why is difficult for us to understand that the term "political economy" in antiquity would be a contradictory word: everything economical, related with the individual life and its survival, as a rule, was a non- political domestic matter"" (Arendt, 2006 r, pp. 54-55).

The richness of rational thought in the private sphere – fed by ideas to divide the political sphere and translate it into private space that would function as units for the regulation of "the collective interest" – legitimized the use of the means of violence because, as is known from Greek thought, power and violence are legitimized in this space as the only means to master necessity. Moreover, in order not to lose control of the means of violence, "the society" delegated them to the nation-state, making the modern state a ruling structure based on institutions that successfully sought to monopolize the legitimate use of physical violence (Weber, 2007). This does not mean that the state possessed infinite economic power; the exercise of violence, whether against individuals inside or outside the state, required economic capacities, similarly to the absolute monarchies where kings asked their feudal lords for money to handle the expenses of wars, offering them a place at court or the chance not to pay taxes (Taylor, 1913 b).

Liberated by the economic advantages, these societies had no reason not to surrender to the relationship of interest that the state could offer, because this meant greater security for their economic activity. The expansion of this activity and its transformation from pre-capitalist societies into capitalist societies surpassed not only the administrative performance but also the economic performance of the state; according to Russell (1962 a), the principal concept of society was power that appeared in the form of patrimony, armament, influence, etc…

This made it possible for them to perceive themselves as direct rivals of the state, which motivated a number of people to engage directly in political life and to have a say in political power (Weber, 2007 a). In the division of modern society into groups, the privilege of participating in so-called political life belonged to a minority of people who were later organized into political parties in defence of their interests, as was the case with the Gulfs and the Ghibellines, who were known as purely personal groups, or, as in England, the Whigs and the Tories, who were known as representative parties of the aristocracy (Weber, 2007 b). Clearly, the ultimate aim of these political parties in the modern era, which served as an axiom for the development of future political parties of an ideological, social – cultural, and physiological nature, etc., had to do with the attempt to share power or to influence its distribution among states or among small groups within the state (Weber, 2007 c).

Conclusion

We cannot deny the fact that the political actor managed to destroy the space where the participation and collective decision-making of citizens who were part of the Polis were exercised, at the moment when the transition from interactive politics towards active politics occurred, along with its individual expression as a correction of personal life outside the citizen community.

The development and continuous revival of Politics as rhetoric, based only on words, even towards participants that took part in the Agora, started to change not only the natural identification and solving daily problems in the city life, but they achieved to create new conditions of doing politics and its functionality.

Finding these new accepted conditions by all members, for example bring a new expression as would be the invention of formula that surpassed the needs of citizens and leaving aside their daily problems – eliminated the critics and resolution of common problems, but changed the true content nature of Politics in the city, giving these attributions to the innovative to the political rhetoricians. Even these citizenship elements that made possible to distinguish the truth and critic against rhetorical politics, are set back before the nomination, affirmation and its repetition, for the mere fact that finding those formulating conditions are considered as expressive utterances established as such.

This means that the entry into the public sphere of these utterances and the grounding of the discourse in the self of the rhetorician would give way to its emphasis as a testimony of equality, equity, systemic motivation of thought, and affirmative utterances according to the rules or corrections previously decided in accordance with all parties, numbing the critical approach of the citizens. Such a political show, similar in form, but not in content, to the ancient Greek dramas that were used to criticise and reflect on the mistakes of political actors in the common space of the Polis, later led the way to the disconnection from participatory decision-making and the direct fulfilment of citizens' requests, towards an active logic in favour of the division of the private sphere (the family).

This means that, in difference with the Polis where was found the public sphere and where the glory of each of the citizens lied on the fact of being equal among equals thanks to the fact the problems were resolved within this space, Politics in Middle Ages and later on followed the principle personal material properties. Said this, the principal and ultimate value of individual meaning on life and himself had to do only with the increase of financial and material capital. Even the modern states were created as a mean or justification to preserve and increase the capitals created by the small pre-capitalist societies, as the Gulfs and the Ghibellines in France or the Whigs and the Tories in England.

Regardless of the era in which we live, where activities and relationships among people and different socio-cultural contexts are characterized by material, physical, physiological, and metaphysical interests, etc., it is important to say that the Polis should be conceptualized as the common space where citizens participate in identifying and solving their common problems because the more one knows, accepts, and understands the city as a public space, the greater will be the awareness of and attention to interactive relationships and common economic, cultural, political, and artistic enterprises, etc., among people in this common space.

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