

Soft Power

Revista euro-americana de teoría e historia de la política y del derecho

Volumen 10, número 2, julio-diciembre, 2023

Soft Power

Revista euro-americana de teoría e historia de la política y del derecho

Volumen 10, número 2, julio-diciembre, 2023



UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA
de Colombia
Vigilada Mineducación



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI
STUDI DI SALERNO



UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA de Colombia

Vigilada Mineducación

PRESIDENTE

Édgar Gómez Betancourt

VICEPRESIDENTE-RECTOR

Francisco José Gómez Ortiz

VICERRECTOR JURÍDICO Y DEL MEDIO

Edwin Horta Vásquez

DECANO

Germán Silva García

VICERRECTOR ADMINISTRATIVO

Édgar Gómez Ortiz

DECANO ACADÉMICO

Elvers Medellín Lozano

SOFT POWER

REVISTA EURO-AMERICANA DE TEORÍA E HISTORIA DE LA POLÍTICA Y DEL DERECHO

www.softpowerjournal.com

DIRECTOR

©Antonio Tucci, Ph.D Università degli Studi di Salerno

EDITOR EN JEFE/EDITOR IN CHIEF

©Valeria Giordano, Ph.D Università degli Studi di Salerno

COMITÉ CIENTÍFICO / SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Adalgiso Amendola, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

Francisco Javier Ansuátegui Roig, Ph.D, University Carlos III de Madrid

Vittoria Borsò, Ph.D, Universität Düsseldorf

Adriana Cavarero Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Verona

Federico Chicchi, Ph.D, Università di Bologna

Sandro Chignola, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Padova

Pierre Dardot, Ph.D, Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense

Massimo De Carolis, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

Roberto Esposito, Ph.D, Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa

Maria Rosaria Ferrarese, Ph.D, Scuola Superiore della Pubblica Amministrazione

Victor Martín Fiorino, Ph.D, Universidad Católica de Colombia

Carlo Galli, Ph.D, Università di Bologna

Patrick Hanafin, Ph.D, Birkbeck – University of London

Daniel Innerarity, Ph.D, Universidad del País Vasco

Peter Langford, Ph.D, Edge Hill University

Thomas Lemke, Ph.D, Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main

Anna Loretoni, Ph.D, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna

Ottavio Marzocca, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Bari

Alfio Mastropaolo, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Torino

Sandro Mezzadra, Ph.D, Università di Bologna

Paolo Napoli, Ph.D, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris

Maria Aránzazu Novales Alquézar, Ph.D, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos de Madrid

Baldassare Pastore, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Ferrara

Elena Pulcini, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Firenze

Francesco Riccobono, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II

Antonio Scocozza, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

José Antonio Seoane, Ph.D, Universidad de La Coruña

José Luis Villacañas, Ph.D, Universidad de Madrid

Giuseppe Zaccaria, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Padova

CONSEJO EDITORIAL / EDITORIAL BOARD

Francesco Amoretti, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

Luca Baccelli, Ph.D, Università di Camerino

Laura Bazzicalupo, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

Marco Bontempi, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Firenze

Dimitri D'Andrea, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Firenze

Virgilio D'Antonio, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

Francesco Fasolino, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

Simona Forti, Ph.D, Scuola Normale Superiore

Valeria Giordano, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

Damiano Palano, Ph.D, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Geminello Preterossi, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

Antonio Tucci, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

Salvatore Vaccaro, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Palermo



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI
STUDI DI SALERNO

RECTOR
Vincenzo Loia

DIRECTOR (DISPC)
Virgilio D'Antonio

DIRECTOR (DSG)
Francesco Fasolino

COEDITOR

Carmen Scocozza, Ph. D., Universidad Católica de Colombia

Sandro Luce, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno
Michelangelo Luciano, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

COMITÉ EDITORIAL / EDITORIAL STAFF

Mirko Alagna, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Firenze
Giovanni Bisogni, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno
Gianvito Brindisi, Ph.D, Università degli Studi della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli"
Anna Chiara Carcano, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno
Alfredo D'Atorre, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno
Matthew D'Auria, Ph.D, University College London
Marianna Esposito, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno
José Luis Ferraro, Ph.D, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS)
Daniel J. García López, Ph.D, Universidad de Granada
Emanuele Leonardi, Ph.D, Universidade de Coimbra
Stefania Leone, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

Serena Marcenò, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Palermo
Giuseppe Micciarelli, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

Lucia Picarella, Ph.D, Universidad Católica de Colombia
Alessandro Pratesi, Ph.D, University of Chester
Francesco Raparelli, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno
Matias Saidel, Ph.D, Universidad del Salvador de Buenos Aires

Mauro Santaniello, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno
José Vicente Villalobos Antúnez, Ph.D, Universidad del Zulia

COORDINACIÓN EDITORIAL

Carmelo Nigro, Ph.D, Università degli Studi di Salerno

Università degli Studi di Salerno

Via Giovanni Paolo, II, 132
84084 Fisciano (SA) Italia
vgiordano@unisa.it
softpower.journal@gmail.com

DISEÑO

Daniela Martínez Díaz

APOYO EDITORIAL

María Paula Méndez P.

Universidad Católica de Colombia

Avenida Caracas # 46-72. Piso 9
Bogotá, Colombia
ediciones@ucatolica.edu.co

CUBIERTA

La estación de Saint-Lazare
Claude Monet (1877)

© Università degli Studi di Salerno

© Universidad Católica de Colombia, Maestría Internacional en Ciencia Política

Segunda edición: julio-diciembre de 2023

ISSN: 2389-8232

Revista certificada por la *Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca (ANVUR)*.

Todos los ensayos publicados en este tomo son evaluados con un procedimiento de *blind peer reviewed*.

Ninguna parte de esta publicación puede ser reproducida, almacenada o transmitida en manera alguna ni por ningún medio, ya sea electrónico, químico, mecánico, óptico, de grabación o fotocopia, sin permiso previo del editor. El editor agradece a la Universidad Católica de Colombia, Maestría Internacional en Ciencia Política; a la Università degli Studi di Salerno, Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e della Comunicazione y Dipartimento di Scienze giuridiche, y a la Fondazione I.S.L.A. per gli Studi Latinoamericani Salerno – Bogotá el apoyo institucional para la edición de esta obra.

CONTENIDO

EDITORIAL	13
ON THE DOORSTEPS: POLITICS, LAW AND ECONOMICS WITHIN AND BEYOND THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DICHOTOMY Carmelo Nigro	
BUILDING HOUSES, BUILDING NATIONS: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENTANGLEMENTS IN THE SHAPING OF THE UNITED STATES Carlotta Cossutta	23
BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE. MONEY, CENTRAL BANKING AND THE STATE: THE INSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLAGE OF CAPITALISM Francesco Raparelli	41
LA POLITICIDAD DEL DINERO: ¿DE MERCANCÍA FICTICIA A INSTITUCIÓN DE LO COMÚN? Antonio Di Stasio	57
TWEET WARS: CHINA'S ANTI-US PROPAGANDA THROUGH POLITICAL CARTOONS Mitchell Gallagher	81

'JUGANDO' CON CARL SCHMITT: GUERRA, POLÍTICA Y DERECHO ENTRE JOHAN HUIZINGA Y GIORGIO AGAMBEN Francesco Mancuso	111
COMPROMISED TRUTH: POLITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL RELATIVISM IN HANS KELSEN'S <i>FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY</i> Ernesto C. Sferrazza Papa	129
EN LA RAÍZ DE LA POLÍTICA: ANTAGONISMOS, POPULISMOS Y NUEVOS MOVIMIENTOS Sandro Luce	145
ARTÍCULOS	
THE WORKER'S KATECHON: MARIO TRONTI'S THEORETICAL CHALLENGE IN THE LABORATORY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY Damiano Palano	165
MARXISM AND THE CITY: A HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE Antonio Cerquitelli	197
NOTAS Y DISCUSIONES	
SHAPING THE PROFESSION – AND RESHAPING SOCIO-POLITICAL INCLUSION Tiziana Faitini	223
ON WORK AND CITIZENSHIP: ABOUT A BOOK BY TIZIANA FAITINI Michele Nicoletti	229

GENEALOGIES AND ARCHIVES OF THE POSSIBLE	237
Federica Giardini	
SKETCHES FOR A NEW SOCIOLOGY OF <i>INTELLIGENZ</i>: ABOUT TIZIANA FAITINI'S <i>SHAPING THE PROFESSION</i>	243
Massimo Palma	
DEL TRABAJO A LA PROFESIÓN DEL NO TRABAJO	251
Antonio Tucci	
RESEÑAS	
THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION: ALGORITHMIC GOVERNMENTALITY AND WORKERS' RIGHTS	257
Anna Cavaliere	
SOBRE LA REVISTA	268
ABOUT THE JOURNAL	269
NORMAS PARA LOS AUTORES DE LA REVISTA	271
EDITORIAL RULES FOR AUTHORS	274
CÓDIGO DE ÉTICA	277
CODE OF ETHICS	281

Soft Power. Revista euro-americana de teoría e historia de la política y del derecho hace parte de los siguientes índices, sistemas de indexación, catálogos, bases bibliográficas y portales web:

Soft Power. Revista euro-americana de teoría e historia de la política y del derecho is part of the following indexes, catalogs, bibliographic bases and web portals:



Carmelo Nigro is a research fellow in the Dipartimento di Scienze Giuridiche at Università degli Studi di Salerno. Among his publications: *Los Umbrales del Derecho. La Fictio Iuris entre norma y vida*, (Theory Now. Journal of Literature, Critique and Thought); *Institucionalismo y pluralismo jurídico en los procesos de construcción de la paz a partir del caso colombiano* (Cultura Latinoamericana. Revista de Estudios Interculturales); *Sovereignty on the Border: Spaces and Subjects of Contemporaneity*, in AA.VV. *Rights without Space?* (Mimesis); *Democracy on the Move: Neoliberal Exception and Neoliberalism as Exception*, in AA.VV. *Capitalism without democracy? Freedom, Equality and Rights in the Neoliberal Age* (Giappichelli).

Contact: cnigro@unisa.it

EDITORIAL

ON THE DOORSTEPS: POLITICS, LAW AND ECONOMICS WITHIN AND BEYOND THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DICHOTOMY*

Carmelo Nigro

Università degli Studi di Salerno

In a science fiction short story titled *Steadfast Castle*, Michael Swanwick (2016) stages an interesting dialogue between man and machine. In a world where «medical cards» report the *life-functions* of every citizen in real time, James Albert Garretson's suddenly stops working. The policeman in charge of investigating his alleged death questions the AI that runs the victim's home, which leads to the discovery that the real victim, a woman named Chrysoberyl Scofield, was killed by the house itself, as ordered by its master in the heat of an erotic game involving the three of them. In love with its own master, the house eventually makes a further extreme gesture in an attempt to buy time for Garretson's escape.

The thriller, developed entirely in dialogic form, contains in a few lines, as only science fiction can do, many of the elements that characterize the present and preoccupy our visions of the future, suggesting various points for reflection: from the relationship with technology to gender violence, from the objectification of the other to the pervasiveness of biopolitical techniques of control and the clash between privacy and security.

Perhaps one detail, surprisingly absent in the title, can serve as a *fulcrum* to summarize many of these topics: the name of the protagonist artificial intelligence. The home is named by its master and identifies itself as Cassie, short for Castle: «He called me Cassie», the AI reveals to the policeman, «It's short for Castle. As in a man's home is his castle».

*Reception date: 22th March 2023; acceptance date: 25th March 2023. The essay is the issue of a research project carried out within the Dipartimento di Scienze Giuridiche, at Università degli Studi di Salerno.

The absolute alliance between the man and his property, personified by an entity with not coincidentally female caring functions, opposes the investigator's public authority, assuring the man impunity from a crime as horrific as it is senseless, despite the methods of control with which the author's imagined future is pervaded.

The semi-eponymous phrase in the story is so famous that it has become commonplace, and its best-known formulation can be traced back to Edward Coke's *Institutes of the Laws of England*:

That the house of every one is to him as his Castle and Fortress as well for defence against injury and violence, as for his repose; and although the life of man is precious and favoured in law; so that although a man kill another in his defence, or kill one *per infortuntun'* (by misfortune), without any intent, yet it is felony, and in such case he shall forfeit his goods and chattels, for the great regard which the law hath of a mans life; But if theeves come to a mans house to rob him, or murder, and the owner or his servants kill any of the theeves in defense of himself and his house, it is no felony, and he shall lose nothing, and therewith agreeth 3 Edw. 3. Coron. 303, & 305. & 26 Ass. pl. 23. So it is helden in 21 Hen. 7. 39. every one may assemble his friends or neighbours to defend his house against violence: But he cannot assemble them to goe with him to the Market or elsewhere to keep him from violence: And the reason of all the same is, because *domus sua cuique est tutissimum refugium*. (Coke, 2003, p. 137)

The distinction between public and private has remained a central pivot in legal-political thought, a harbinger of numerous problems and questions that are largely unresolved and have become even more complex in the context of contemporary transformations. Norberto Bobbio describes it as one of the great dichotomies of legal thought. Noting the difficulty against which them who attempt to define its limits with precision often run up, Bobbio resolves the contrast by making it a comparison between two different ways of viewing the same object, rather than two species of a single genus (Bobbio, 2007).

From the more immediately political point of view, the contrast between the space of the public and the private is already a central issue in both Plato and Aristotle. For both, the *oikos* —the re-productive and potentially chrematistic space of the home— is the private place of 'natural' inequality and domination, and it's functional to public life. However, they resolve the relationship between *oikos* and *polytheia* in radically different ways. For the former (1995), according to an organicist approach, *oikonomia* is nothing more than the satisfaction of material needs for the maintenance of the state (*polis*). Thus, Plato hierarchically

subjects both *oikos* and *nomos* to the science of government, i.e. to *polytheia*, as philosophically valid knowledge of justice and the usefulness of the city.

For Aristotle, too, the economic dimension is functional to *polytheia*, but only in the sense that the satisfaction of economic needs is preparatory to the individual's free participation in the public sphere, which is the good life (*euzein*) for a political animal (*politikòn zôon*) (Aristotle, 1995; Bien, 1973).

Hannah Arendt (1958) will also start from the same distinction. On the one hand, the private, the *oikos* as the realm of *homo laborans* and *homo faber*, engaged in the dimension of labor and work to accumulate goods and property; on the other hand, the authentically public sphere, the *in-between* in which action is possible as the free and creative appearance of individuals as plurality: in other words, authentic politics, understood by Arendt as natality. Arendt preserves this rigid distinction between *zoè* and *bios*, between biology and bibliography, private and public, on which she builds the contraposition between dominion and power (Forti, 2006). Indeed, what worried Arendt, facing the development of her (and ours) contemporaneity, was the expansion of a third sphere of human existence, capable of making the other two disappear, i.e. the social. In her words:

What we called earlier the rise of the social coincided historically with the transformation of the private care for private property into a public concern. Society, when it first entered the public realm, assumed the disguise of an organization of property-owners who, instead of claiming access to the public realm because of their wealth, demanded protection from it for the accumulation of more wealth. (Arendt, 1958, p. 68)¹

As it has been observed, her partition is maybe excessively austere and artificial due to the fact that it runs the risk of obscuring the perversions related with participation and consents (Bazzicalupo, 2013, p. 23). What remains alluring in Arendt's vision is the possibility to conceptualize politics as detached both from 'natural' determinism and artificial projects. Rethinking politics as radically plural and unpredictable, Arendt inverts the expropriation of power made by domination, handing it back to the participation of non-predetermined —and therefore authentically free— subjectivities within the public space, i.e., that *in-between* that is the human reality.

¹ For a reconstruction of Arendt's positions on this subject, see Bazzicalupo (2013), Forti (2006), Dal Lago (1997). For a comparison with two other fundamental interpretations within the 20th century thought, namely those of Habermas and Dewey, see also Venco (1976).

The issue of the relation between public and private is also extremely felt by Coke's contemporaries at the dawn of modernity. For this era, too, we can observe a particularly illustrative pair of authors. On the one hand, Hobbes (1651), a theorist of absolutism, entrusts the sovereign with the task of ensuring social security, reducing in the name of the latter the private sphere to a mere moral sphere (internal forum); the conflict between the One and the many is thus expelled into the sphere of natural law, and preserved at the only point where its persecution by the sovereign would collapse the legal forms of coexistence (internal forum), namely the inner conscience (Catania, 1996).

On the other hand, the liberal Locke (1690) increases the tasks and obligations of public power, expanding the individual and private sphere to include the three rights of the emerging bourgeois class: *life, liberty and property*. Within the space circumscribed by this triptych, actively and passively protected by public power, private power knows very few limitations. Locke's position is, in short, not far so from that already observed in Coke: «Every man's home is his castle»; where castle takes up the dimension of sovereign power, and the reference to 'man' is a very concrete abstraction, so as to speak. In other words, the abstract silhouette of the citizen, who is the master of the house and the subject of rights, is conceived on a very concrete model, characterized by specific sexual, social, economic, ethno-racial and cultural characteristics.

In contrast with both of these perspectives, emancipation movements, feminism in particular, have progressively highlighted how much the space of the home, the private, can prove to be the site of paternalist inequality and patriarchal oppression (Pateman, 1988), as highlighted by the first essay in this issue of the journal (Cossutta). This analysis focuses, precisely, on the evolving role of the home in North American society and its political relevance. Being a place of choice for the private, the home proves to be anything but the neutral and irenic realm of the proper. Rather, it is the battleground of the production and reproduction of power dynamics and exclusion. It is precisely the obscurity into which its private membership relegates it, forcing it from participation and control, that has made it—and continues to make it—a space as much of exclusion from public life to the detriment of women as of perceptions of male domination. The article addresses the paradoxical nature of sentimentalism, unveiling the ideological character of the home as 'separate sphere', in which women remain excluded from direct political action. Finally, it highlights the feminist effort to bridge the gap between domestic and public life, in order to both recognize women's rights in the home and advocate for the visibility and political recognition of domestic work in the public space.

If the *oikos* is the paradigm of the private sphere, the dimension removed from the gaze in which inequality and domination are consumed and reproduced, money may

represent the ambiguous bonding element between this dimension and the public. From different perspectives Raparelli and Di Stasio address the problem of money and the economy, as well as the relationship between capitalism and public institutions.

The former, starting with currency as a political institution, shows the close connection between payment methods and the role of the state in capitalist development. Alongside currency as a private institution, modernity develops a series of public institutions essential for the development and defense of the capitalist market. Fundamental in this regard is the role of central banks developed since the 17th century. By analyzing the decisive function played by the rapid development of the System of central banks with respect to the government of public debt, business credit and financial markets, the essay clarifies the centrality and complexity of the *institutional assemblage* that has sustained and sustains the Capitalist System.

Thus, the capitalist system —especially in its neoliberal incarnation, as Michel Foucault's studies show— is not the effect of a 'natural' market freedom at all, but rests on politically determined institutional arrangements. Along similar lines are the positions of an author like Karl Polanyi (1944), for whom a free market has never existed, nor can it exist. As Block and Soamers argue, “Indeed he calls the very idea of an economy independent of government and political institutions a 'stark utopia'-utopian because it is unrealizable, and the effort to bring it into being is doomed to fail and will inevitably produce dystopian consequences” (Block, Soamers, Farrell, 2014; Block & Farrell, 2014).

Money can then be seen as “Fictitious commodities” (Polanyi, 1944), that is, as an extra-economic matrix just as other productive and vital forces, for example labor and nature. Rather than as an abstract and neutral signifier, currency constitutes a terrain of conflict that, if tuned to appropriate production relations, appears reshapeable within mechanisms of coordination and social validation alternative to those typical of the commodity form. Di Stasio's contribution to this issue asks, therefore, if currency could be configured as a *common* and which consequences would that entail.

Starting from an analysis of the geopolitical strategies of Chinese soft power, Gallagher shows another point of overlap between public and private dimensions: the ideological representation of conflict —in this case of geopolitical conflict— conveyed by the complex media sphere. Their use is neither new nor the prerogative of any particular regime, and its origin is lost in History, adapting from time to time to the needs of power and the technological, social, economic and cultural possibilities made available by the various eras. Precisely for this reason, this trait deserves special attention today, given given the omnipresence of information technologies (infotainment), as well as their pervasiveness and that of the tools of control, propaganda

and construction of reality that determine the extreme polarization of clashes in contemporary times.

Evidence of this extreme polarization is the success of the hard-to-define phenomenon that goes by the name of *populism*. Widespread across the political spectrum, now as much in the informal as in the institutional sphere, populist discourses can be said to have in common the extreme simplification of language, functionalized to the evocation of a unified and molar 'We', the people, existentially and axiologically threatened by an equally coherent enemy. Such a juxtaposition of identity and existentiality cannot fail to bring back to the exacerbating relationship between law and violence and to the categories of the political of Carl Schmitt, an author on whom the interest and debate of recent years has not surprisingly focused. In order to clarify some aspects of Schmittian thought, Mancuso's essay analyzes the relationship between law, play and war from two authors such as Johan Huizinga and Giorgio Agamben: the broader goal is to shed light on the problematic nexus that links without possibility of synthesis the forms of law and the dark core of violence.

Moving away from rigid substantive oppositions can then be a way to restore democracy's ability to reshape conflict in an increasingly plural society, such as ours, without excluding transformative energy but rather containing its most destructive instances. Recovering the political reflections of Hans Kelsen, expressed especially in *The Essence and Value of Democracy* (2013) and in the *Foundations of Democracy* (1955), Sferrazza Papa seeks in the not evaluative definition of democracy—seen as a way of achieving legal-binding social decisions (Catania, 2018)—a set of tools useful for the formalization of the clash between divergent values and visions. Rather than as an axiological model, democracy is seen in this perspective as a specific technique that enables plural participation in normative production. Therefore, for Kelsen democratic pluralism is necessarily accompanied by epistemological and moral relativism. However, the absolute adherence to an axiological relativism is not without its issues, on which the last part of the essay is focused.

Finally, Luce's analysis takes up the topic of populism, addressing the various post-foundationalist proposals that put people's power at the center of their strategy, despite their different starting points.

Proposals of radical politics such as those of Rancière (2005), Mouffe or Laclau (1985) see in the people a subject not only active, but susceptible to a coherent and unified construction, and thus capable of action disengaged from traditional mechanisms of delegation. The people would be the subject capable of reactivating the political sphere neutralized by the hegemony of *neoliberal governance*.

Although the reactivation of a political energy that takes away from the market the monopoly in the legitimization of decisions—in accordance with the hegemonic neoliberal ethos—is seen as necessary, the author is well aware of the limitations implicit in strategies of radical re-politicization that feature the concept of the people. The main risk is that the unique circumstances of the individuals involved may be obscured; in other words, once again ignoring the multiplicity of demands for recognition that press at the margins of the public space, often precisely from the opaque corners of a 'private' in which heterogeneous forms of inequality, exclusion and exploitation are concealed, but from which, perhaps, also arise the practices of adaptation, subjectification and resistance to government of life, from which the subjects may begin to imagine alternative forms of coexistence. It is the opaqueness of this ambiguous threshold—through which human life proposes its forms—that this volume aims to help illuminate; an attempt to pass over the doorsteps in order to free life from domination of castles and men.

References

- Arendt, H. (1958). *The Human Condition*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Aristotle (1995). *Politics*. E. Barker, R. F. Stalley (Eds.). Oxford University Press.
- Bazzicalupo, L. (2013). *Politica. Rappresentazioni e tecniche di governo*. Carocci.
- Bien, G. (1973). *Die Grundlegung der politischen Philosophie bei Aristoteles*. Verlag Karl Alber.
- Block, F. & Soamers, M. R. (2014). *The power of market fundamentalism: Karl Polanyi's critique*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674416345>
- Block, F., Soamers, M. R., Farrell, H. (July 18, 2014). "The free market is an impossible utopia". *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/mon-key-cage/wp/2014/07/18/the-free-market-is-an-impossible-utopia/>
- Bobbio, N. (2007). *Dalla struttura alla funzione. Nuovi studi di teoria del diritto*. Laterza
- Catania, A. (1996). *Lo Stato moderno. Sovranità e giuridicità*. Giappichelli.
- Catania, A. (2018). *Effettività e modelli normativi. Studi di filosofia del diritto*. Giappichelli.
- Coke, E. (2003). *The Selected Writings and speeches of Sir Edward Coke*. Vol. 1. S. Sheppard (Eds.). Liberty Fund.
- Dal Lago, A. (1976). "La città perduta". In H. Arendt, *Vita Activa. La condizione umana*. Bompiani.
- Forti, S. (2006). *Hannah Arendt tra filosofia e politica*. Mondadori.
- Hobbes, T. (1651). *Leviathan or the Matter, Form, & Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*. Crooke.
- Kelsen, H. (1955). "Foundations of Democracy". *Ethics*, 66 (1/II), 1-101. <https://doi.org/10.1086/291036>
- Kelsen, H. (2013). *The Essence and Value of Democracy*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. Verso.
- Locke, J. (1690). *Two Treatises of Government*. Awnsham Churchill.
- Pateman, C. (1988). *The Sexual Contract*. Stanford University Press.
- Plato, (1995). *Platonis Opera*. E. A. Duke, W. F. Hicken, W. S. M. Nicoll, D. B. Robinson, J. C. G. Strachan (Eds.). Oxford University Press.
- Polanyi, K. (1944). *The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Rinehart.

- Rancière, J. (2005). *La haine de la démocratie*. La Fabrique éditions. <https://doi.org/10.3917/lafab.ranci.2005.01>
- Swanwick, M. (2016). “Steadfast Castle”. In M. Swanwick, *“Not So Much,” Said the Cat*. Tachyon Publications.
- Venco, L. (1979). “Il concetto di «pubblico»: tre interpretazioni”. *Il Politico*, 44 (3), 513-539.

Carlotta Cossutta is a researcher in Political Philosophy at the University of Milan. Her research interests include critical theory, the history of women's political thought and feminist and queer theories. She published *Avere potere su se stesse: politica e femminilità in Mary Wollstonecraft* (ETS 2021) and *Domesticità. Lo spazio politico della casa nelle pensatrici statunitensi del XIX secolo* (ETS 2023).

Contact: carlotta.cossutta@unimi.it
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2483-3010>

BUILDING HOUSES, BUILDING NATIONS: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENTANGLEMENTS IN THE SHAPING OF THE UNITED STATES*

Carlotta Cossutta

Università degli Studi di Milano

CONSTRUYENDO CASAS, CONSTRUYENDO NACIONES: IMPLICACIONES PÚBLICAS Y PRIVADAS EN LA FORMACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

Abstract

The article examines the complex interplay between the public and private spheres, particularly through a feminist lens, emphasizing the political dimensions inherent in the evolving role of the home in North America. It challenges the traditional dichotomy, delving into the intimate connection between the public and private. The home, redefined as politically relevant, becomes a battleground for power dynamics, care responsibilities, and the construction of societal structures. The colonial house is portrayed as a crucial factor in colonization, undergoing transformation into the center of the 'cult of domesticity.' The article unveils the paradoxical nature of sentimentalism and the 'separate spheres' ideology, emphasizing the political value of the home

* Reception date: 26th March 2023; acceptance date: 29th March 2023. The essay is the issue of a research project carried out within the Dipartimento di Filosofia at Università degli Studi di Milano.

while women remain excluded from direct political action. The concluding discussion emphasizes feminist endeavors to bridge the gap between domestic and public life, recognizing women's rights in the home, and advocating for the visibility and political acknowledgment of domestic work in the public space.

Keywords

home; separate spheres; domesticity; feminism

Resumen

El artículo examina la compleja interacción entre las esferas pública y privada, en particular desde una óptica feminista, haciendo hincapié en las dimensiones políticas inherentes a la evolución del hogar en Norteamérica. Se desafía, por tanto, la dicotomía tradicional, ahondando en la íntima conexión entre lo público y lo privado. El hogar, redefinido como políticamente relevante, se convierte en campo de batalla de dinámicas de poder, responsabilidades de cuidado y construcción de estructuras sociales. La casa colonial es retratada como un factor crucial en la colonización, sufriendo una transformación que la convierte en el centro del "culto a la domesticidad". El artículo desvela la naturaleza paradójica del sentimentalismo y de la ideología de las "esferas separadas", resaltando el valor político del hogar mientras las mujeres permanecen excluidas de la acción política directa. La discusión final hace hincapié en los esfuerzos feministas por salvar la brecha entre la vida doméstica y la pública, reconociendo los derechos de las mujeres en el hogar y abogando por la visibilidad y el reconocimiento político del trabajo doméstico en el espacio público.

Palabras clave

hogar; esferas separadas; domesticidad; feminismo

The Domestic Space Between Public and Private

The dichotomy between public and private is based on the idea of a subtraction from the common and shared dimension of collective space. The private is defined by absence, lack, as if it were a void surrounded by the fullness of public space. However, can we truly say that the *din of the public* does not also accompany us in private spaces? The feminist critique of the modern distinction between public and private is articulated around this question, identified as “the crucial foundation of patriarchal political thought” (Phillips, 1992, p. 197). Criticizing this distinction, therefore, immediately becomes a way of questioning the hierarchies and forms of politics, so much so that Carole Pateman argues that this “it is, ultimately, what the feminist movement is about” (1987, p. 103).

Feminist criticism, from its origins, does not merely extend a public gaze to dimensions traditionally considered private, enlarging a sphere to include new aspects, but without questioning its structure. In contrast, to criticize the dichotomy between public and private is to discuss the very nature of these two spaces and the demands that constitute them. In 1938, in a Europe on the brink of war, Virginia Woolf warned against believing that the separation of the public and private spheres can function as a barrier to abuse and revealed how, on the contrary, this distinction prevents us from seeing the germs of despotism that are born within the domestic sphere in the relations of domination between husband and wife. To read in English newspaper pieces about women and their role in society is reminiscent of the social hierarchies we consider tyrannical when uttered by dictators in Italian or German, “it suggests that the public and the private worlds are inseparably connected; that the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other” (Woolf, 1938, pp. 97-98). Thus, the opacity of the private sphere allows us, on one hand, to consider our societies democratic and egalitarian even when they tolerate and promote inequality and authoritarianism, and on the other hand prevents us from seeing the social and political structures that make tyranny possible.

The intimate connection between private and public was famously highlighted by Pateman when analyzing the *sexual* contract, i.e., the contract that precedes and finds the institution of civil society, transforming patriarchy no longer into the solitary domination of the father but into an egalitarian bond between brothers that excludes women from politics. This exclusion founds the peculiar status of women, who have never fully emerged from the state of nature despite being part of society, a condition made possible by the fact that “the private sphere is part of the civil society but is separated from the ‘civil’ sphere” (Pateman, 1988, p. 11). A separation that is only apparent, however, because “civil society bifurcated but the unity of

the social order is maintained, in large part, through the structure of patriarchal relations” (Pateman, 1988, p. 12), which crosses the boundaries between public and private and constructs a two-faced public sphere in which one side always remains in the shadows. The equality of men —male, united by *fraternity*— is made possible by the construction of female inequality, which is indeed instituted by the sexual contract but is indeed configured as natural and prepolitical: “the unequal relations of domestic life are 'naturally so' and thus do not detract from the universal equality of the public world” (Pateman, 1988, p. 117). In this way, Pateman sheds light on “a double opposition and dependency between 'natural' and 'civil'” (Pateman, 1988, p. 11), emphasizing how the claim to construct the political dimension as separate from the private dimension is the structure that allows women's subordination to be justified as natural and rational at the same time.

This separation is made evident by the space of the home, constructed and thematized as a place opaque to the political dimension, a private and intimate space, but one in which relations of power and discipline emerge and act. It is, therefore, a politically relevant space, but often invisible to politics, conceived as an eminently prepolitical space, in the sense both of a remote foundation of the public sphere and sociality and of a possibility of disorder and disintegration of those same social ties. Domesticity, thus, takes on many of the characteristics of the feminine and is configured as the place where femininity reproduces itself and to which it is destined. It is a space laden with meanings, experiences, memories, and ties; a place of care, but at the same time a possible prison; a welcoming refuge but also a sphere of unrecognized work; a condition to which one aspires and from which one tries to escape. All contradictions change as historical situations change, yet these same contradictions remain instrumental in setting social change in motion throughout history. Therefore, observing the home with eyes that are both philosophical and feminine allows us to discover its most politically relevant sides.

Philosophical-political reflection on the domestic begins with Aristotle's treatment of the *oikos* and the consequent traditional partitioning between the ‘Political’ and the ‘Economic’. The *domestic* delineates, in the tradition that goes back to Aristotle, a political concept that serves to delimit a space opposite to that of the square. At the same time, however, the *domestic* comes to be structured as a space opposed to nature, the first place of sociability and sociability and the seat of the first forms of legitimate power. Since antiquity, the home has been configured not only as a physical space but also as a conceptual place that encompasses the relationships of power, care, affection and work that are established within it. Following

Otto Brunner, in fact, one can speak of “the house as a whole” [*das ganze Haus*], that is, of the house as a place that encompasses knowledge pertaining to ethics, sociology, pedagogy, medicine, and the different techniques of domestic and agricultural economics (Brunner, 1968, pp. 103-127). Brunner himself highlights how the power of the *father/sire of the house* acts in the home and how what is opposed to the *societas civilis* (translation of *koinonía politiké*), to ‘civil society,’ is not the state, but the home, the *societas domestica*. Therefore, the doctrine of *res publica* or *societas civilis* is called political, while that of the home is called economic instead (Brunner, 1968, p. 202).

From Vitruvius' *De Architectura* onwards, the house has been examined, therefore, in both its spatial and symbolic dimensions, highlighting its trait as a properly human invention. In addition, if in the Middle Ages the house is a ‘disorderly’ space and is primarily understood as an extension of the work space (Lambertini, 2018, pp. 306-324) or a display of prestige, the Renaissance treatment that culminates with Leon Battista Alberti's *De Familia* begins to delineate domestic space as eminently private for women but as part of a citizenship project for men. Through economic considerations and advice to the *father of the family*, Alberti clarifies what role the citizen should play in all the spaces he traverses: from the streets of the ideal city to the family home. It was precisely this treatise that gave rise to a series of other texts that addressed the fathers of families between the 16th and 17th centuries to illustrate their duties and economic and social role, marking the continuity between private and public space (Frigo, 1985). In the arguments of these texts, “the house is literally understood as a mechanism for the domestication of (delicately minded and pathologically embodied) women” (Wigley, 1992, p. 332), who must be confined within a space and a relationship -that of marriage- that guarantees the reproduction of a social order: “in these terms, the role of architecture is explicitly the control of sexuality, or, more precisely, women's sexuality, the chastity of the girl, the fidelity of the wife” (Wigley, 1992, p. 336).

At the same time, the division between the home as a private place and an external place of work is the result of a process that began in the 17th century in the Netherlands, where the domestic dimension began to take shape as an intimate family space in which private relationships separated from public space were constructed (Rybczynski, 1986). The transformation of the home into an eminently private place is accompanied by the development of the bourgeoisie and a process of *feminization* of domestic space that is profoundly linked to the care work that women perform almost exclusively. A process that also stems from the transformation of housework, which in the bourgeois family is less and less entrusted to servants and more and more entrusted

to the women in the household. Obviously, these transformations do not erase the more blurred divisions, so much so that there continue to be craftsmen's workshops located underneath homes and farm work where the boundary between home and work is often invisible. However, over the course of the centuries, there has been a change whereby not only has the home been structured as a private place, confined in that space work not considered as such, such as all care work or domestic work performed by women, but this process has also shaped an understanding of work as a public dimension, recognizable and separate from private life.

Moreover, the separation of the home from public space and the very internal subdivision of domestic environments reveals, and at the same time produces, a new idea of privateness (McKeon, 2005). This new sense of *privacy* was gradually produced over the following centuries, redefining the elements of the home in a complex order of layered spaces and room subdivisions, which delineate a social order by literally drawing the lines of demarcation according to different levels of decorum and appropriate behavior for different places. Rooms that are not open to public view, such as bedrooms or bathrooms, are defined, while others become the center of sociality. Thus, an interplay emerges between visibility and modesty, an economy of vision based on a certain blindness, which ensures that the disorder of the body does not infect ethical, aesthetic, political and legal regimes. Social order also depends on an ordering of the body, that is, on detachment from it, and it is this detachment that makes the individual subject possible. In this process, architecture has been used to construct the subject as the agent of a new type of modesty and, in so doing, has played an active role in the constitution of the private subject, considering the body as dangerous and at the same time containing that threat. This disciplining of the body is an extension of the traditional disciplining that takes place in the social construction of 'woman', made necessary by the idea that she is endowed with a body full of humors and uncontrollable instincts. The privatization of sexuality, where sexuality is understood as feminine, is used to produce the individual subject as a masculine subject and subjectivity itself as masculine; in this way, the new conditions of privateness and modesty, also constructed by the spaces of the home, mark the development of a new subjectivity rather than simply modifying a preexisting one.

A Colonial House

The colonial house played an essential role, both in material and imaginary terms, in the colonization of North America. It was a house that functioned as a place of hard work for

all who lived in it and an outpost of a colonization that proceeded through commercial and agricultural enterprises, often described as follows: “the mother at her spinning wheel, children scattering feed to the chickens, a daughter carrying kindling to the hearth in preparation for a day’s baking, the father with his older sons in the fields, girdling trees, plowing the land, or mending a fallen fence –the sense of harmony and shared enterprise of this vision of the colonial family has remained compelling for Americans across a span of almost three hundred years” (Boydston, 1990, p. 1). At the same time, however, this house was not yet the *realm* of women, and nothing in the domestic space signaled an eminently feminine place: women’s work was part of a working ecosystem taken for granted, in which the whole family was thought of as the protagonist of work activities, which were imagined as a *continuum* between the inside and the outside the home, between domestic and agricultural work necessary for subsistence. The female difference emerged not so much in practical functions but more often as in the case of the literary heroines of 18th century British novels, who were notable for their purity and kindness and not for their domestic skills.

By the mid-19th century this had already changed. The home was so clearly established at the center of culture that historians even speak of a “cult of domesticity” (Kraditor, 1968, p. 10), which not only spread quickly but also rapidly pervaded every cultural and social dimension of the newly formed United States. This veritable cult recognized the *domestic* as a separate sphere of society, a place where different values prevailed, where care and piety dominated, and where people could find refuge from the difficulties of public life. A separate and purely feminine environment, thanks to which women, in their homes, became within a few decades the place of moral authority in society but at the same time a sphere that delineates and defines an ideal of femininity, a figure of the “true woman” (Welter, 1966) that serves as a model for inclusion and exclusion. Moreover, during this timeframe women could read a flood of novels in which housewives were portrayed in highly positive terms, although “ironically, while a True Woman was assumed to be a pillar of moral strength and virtue, she was also portrayed as delicate and weak, prone to fainting and illness. She dared not exert herself too much physically or be emotionally startled for fear of her health. Due to her emotional and physical frailty, a True Woman needed to be protected by a male family member” (Cruea, 2005, p. 189). How did these changes come about?

Perhaps the most important factor in the change was the role the home played in politics after the American Revolution. Indeed, the intertwining of home life and politics began even before the war itself, with the boycott of British-made goods. What had been regarded by men and women as a set of uninteresting everyday concerns —what

kind of cloth to use to make a dress, for example, or what food to consume— took on a whole new political relevance. Boycotts would not have worked without the cooperation of women acting within their families, and this gave women a new self-respect and motivation to enter political discussions. Consequently, “the public recognition accorded the female role irreversibly altered its inferior status” (Norton, 1980, p. 55).

This political participation of women immediately highlights the paradoxical character of the cult of domesticity, which certainly confines women within domestic walls but also allows them to think of the home as a basis for political action. As Linda Kerber (1980) and Mary Beth Norton (1980) have shown, women's political involvement through the private sphere took on new forms as early as the beginning of the 19th century. As we shall see more clearly later, it was precisely in this period that women combined political activity, domestic life and republican thought through the role of mother. Even outside formal politics, in fact, maternal activity was crucial: by raising virtuous children and transmitting a civic mentality, they ensured the survival of the republic. Based on this important task, women advocated greater access to education and justified interest and involvement in public affairs. As mothers, women were republicans; they possessed civic virtues and an interest in the public good. Their exclusion from traditionally defined politics and economics ensured their lack of interest in personal gain. Through motherhood, women sought to compensate for their exclusion from the political world by translating moral authority into political influence. Their political demands, formulated in these terms, did not violate the canons of domesticity, to which many men and women adhered.

Starting with this political participation, women's demands were explicitly passed on through the right to vote. In this sense, it is significant to note that the women's suffrage movement in the United States started in the early 19th century during the mobilization against slavery, with which it shared many demands, starting with the criticism of the claim that the inferiority of slaves and women could be considered a natural fact. Many of the women who would animate the suffrage movement, such as Lucretia Mott or the sisters Angelina and Sarah Grimké, showed a keen interest in the anti-slavery movement and demonstrated their ability to speak out publicly to defend their cause. When Elizabeth Cady Stanton joined the antislavery forces, she and Mott agreed that women's rights, like those of slaves, needed reform. The incident that triggered the need to promote women's rights was the fact that Mott and Cady Stanton were excluded from participating in the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Conference in London precisely because they were women. Therefore, they convened a conference to discuss the issue of women's rights, which took place in Stanton's hometown of Seneca Falls, New York on 19-20

July 1848 and promulgated a declaration calling for women's suffrage and women's right to education and employment opportunities. This was the *Declaration of Sentiment*, a text inspired by the American *Declaration of Independence*. In this declaration, on the one hand, they claimed the rights to vote and citizenship, based on the idea of equality, which is accompanied by the exit from domesticity and the breaking of the mythology of 'separate spheres.' On the other hand, in the same text, we find the valorization of women's difference through fidelity to the idea of a female 'moral superiority', to the maternalism expressed in women's special duties and missions, the appeal to different values and the dimension of feelings. A declaration that unites rights and feelings and that "was the culmination of at least a decade of activism and women's participation in public life" (Baritono, 2001, p. XIX): a construction of a movement and a political action that questioned the separation between public and private, not only linking the intimate realm of feelings to the political realm of rights but also building ties and networks from friendships, proximity, personal relationships and affections. This choice was born out of necessity, as women were excluded from political citizenship, but beyond and "despite this, they appropriated those tools, found in the folds of the American political system, that they could use to assert themselves as public subjects" (Baritono, 2001, p. XIX).

In this sense, it is relevant to note how the link between suffragism and the abolitionist movement not only stems from a historical contingency but is rooted in a critique of the claimed universality of rights, which are presented as an abstraction from individual conditions in the name of formal equality, while slaves and women are excluded precisely on the basis of their primarily bodily particularity. If the rhetoric of rights is, then, presented as a form of abstraction from the body in the name of an individual without essential particularities, the abolitionist and suffragist battles show how this abstraction is made possible precisely by the exclusion of certain bodies, namely, black and female bodies.

Suffragists show not only the link between public space and the domestic sphere but also how men's public freedom is based on women's domestic slavery and how men's equal rights are based on the construction of female difference and its exclusion from politics. They also point out how, even in the domestic sphere, women are not fully empowered, despite a rhetoric that wants designate it to be their area of influence. In fact, as Jeanne Boydston (1990) notes, women do not even have ownership of the fruits of their labor, as they have no private property. It is precisely the lack of ownership that makes it clear how the claimed equality of the 'separate spheres' is nothing more than a way of confining women to an impolitic space but subject equally to male political power.

This is also why, from the 1830s onwards, the house began to be sentimentalized to an unprecedented degree. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact timing of this change

because there was no clearly identifiable event that precipitated it or that allows us to identify an unambiguous origin. However, to explain this phenomenon, we can recognize it as the culmination of a series of long-term trends that manifested themselves in the Anglo-American world. First, childhood began to be a period of life worthy of increasing attention. In this sense, Jay Fliegelman argues that John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* was “perhaps the most significant text of the Anglo-American Enlightenment” (Fliegelman, 1982, p. 13) because it contributed to making childhood a significant moment, giving new value to education and building a style of parenting based on consent and persuasion rather than authority. Locke's empiricism, with its view of the human mind as a *tabula rasa* at birth, implicitly made the home the site of intelligence and character formation. In this sense, only a safe, loving, secure home would be able to produce the desired results.

This view of childhood and upbringing also transformed the relationships between parents themselves, for if their highest duty was to create a serene home to provide optimal nurturing for their children, a new model for marriage had to be constructed. Carl Degler traces the emergence of the modern American family, characterized by marriage norms based on the idea of complementarity and mutual support, 'companionate' (Degler, 1980, p. 8), to the period between the American Revolution and approximately 1830 (Simmons, 2009). Once again, it is not a matter of imagining forms of material equality between husband and wife, but of constructing separate spheres in which both spouses, without invading each other's space, contribute to the common goal of bringing up intelligent and capable offspring, developing their potential.

The most important male writer who dealt with the house was Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was undoubtedly the most influential American thinker of his time. It is well known that Emerson, with his 1836 essay entitled *Nature* (Emerson, 1971, pp. 3-48), hoped to initiate the creation of an authentically American culture. From this consideration, he also developed a reflection on the home, expressed later in 1870 in *Domestic Life* (Emerson, 2008, pp. 52-69), which questioned the moral foundations of a just home in a democratic society (Newfield 1996). First, he advocated a distribution of domestic tasks that reflected democratic values, in which it was work that created a common home, with children at its center: “I think it plain that this voice of communities and ages, 'Give us wealth, and the good household shall exist,' is vicious, and leaves the whole difficulty untouched. It is better, certainly, in this form, 'Give us your labor, and the household begins.' I see not how serious labor, the labor of all and every day is to be avoided” (Emerson, 2008, p. 58). Taken in its most literal form, this passage would seem to indicate an absolutely egalitarian approach to housework, but there are many other

passages in the essay that reflect the idea that household chores belong to women. Rather, his attempt was to combat caste distinctions that could lead some to devalue manual labor, thus making it impossible to create safe and secure homes capable of building peaceful households. In his view, Americans needed to rethink their approach to manual labor: “many things betoken a revolution of opinion and practice in regard to manual labor that may go far to aid our practical inquiry [...]. However, the reform that applies itself to the household must not be partial. It must correct the whole system of our social living. It must come with plain living and high thinking; it must break up caste and put domestic service on another foundation” (Emerson, 2008, p. 58). If it is women who have to do the manual labor, putting domestic service on another foundation means imagining self-sufficient homes, in which it is women—even bourgeois women—who take care of the home and its inhabitants.

Moreover, for Emerson, the home becomes an extension of the individual typical of democratic individualism (Urbinati, 2009), a representation of it, functioning not only as a private place but also as a space of conviviality, of bonds to be woven, in a word, of hospitality. Emerson’s emphasis on the importance of hospitality is so pronounced that it seems clear that he was trying to mediate between the public and private spheres in this way. On the one hand, he emphasizes that domestic life is more important to most of us than the public life of the world outside the home: ‘domestic events are certainly our affair. What are called public events may or may not be ours’ (Emerson, 2008, p. 54). But on the other hand, he was concerned about the negative effect on a society if families simply portrayed themselves in their homes. Therefore, families should be hospitable, and houses should always be open to travelers and friends so much that “the language of a ruder age as given to common law the maxim that ‘every man’s house is his castle’: the progress of truth will make every house a shrine” (Emerson, 2008, p. 67). The house, thus open to the world, becomes a place to host and meet different people, overcoming the isolation of the family but without the domestic work being shared as well. Thus, the leading American intellectual of the 19th century not only took the home seriously as a political space but also explicitly sought to bridge the gap between home and world.

The home described by Emerson is supposed to be caste-free, hospitable, loving and inhabited by a family whose lifestyle can be emulated by others, but who is supposed to make these homes not only safe but also comfortable? Women, with their work that remains taken for granted even when at the center of a political look at the home.

To explain the invisibility of women’s work, Boydston speaks of the “pastoralisation of housework” (1990, pp. 142-63), a process that emphasizes the sanctified house as an emanation of the nature of women. To avoid characterizing housework as an activity,

however, it was necessary to rearticulate the notion of work itself, speaking, in the case of women, of *influence*. Women, in fact, did not create domestic space through explicit action but through their ability to influence those they acted upon. Typically, invoked as the female counterpart to formal, supposedly male, political power, the concept of indirect female influence supplanted notions of women as direct agents and thus as workers. As illustrated in 1851 by John Holmes Agnew¹ in an intervention on women, the contrast between supposedly male 'power' (both physical and moral) and female 'influence' could be drawn quite explicitly:

We may stand in awe, indeed, before the exhibition of *power*, whether physical or moral, but we are not won by them to the love of truth and goodness, while *influence* steals in upon our hearts, gets hold of the springs of action, and leads us into its own ways. It is the *inflowing* upon others from the nameless traits of character which constitute woman's idiosyncrasy. Her heart is a great reservoir of love, the waterworks of moral influence, from which go out ten thousand tubes, conveying the ethereal essences of her nature and diffusing them quietly over the secret chambers of man's inner being. (Agnew 1851, p. 657)

The woman does not *act* alone. Rather, she is able to infuse her natural *ethereal essences* into man through a force that flows impersonally. Agnew concluded: "Let man, then, exercise power; woman exercise influence. By this, she will best perform her offices, discharge her duties" (Agnew 1851, p. 657). This is the crowning of the sacralization of domestic labor, which is no longer work, but a *reservoir of love* that overflows and flows by building houses as comfortable places in which men can find themselves, recognize themselves and act. Through this naturalization of the female essence and its relationship to the domestic sphere, it is possible to recognize the political value of the home while still excluding women from the sphere of action.

Precisely for this reason, at such a historical moment, the home, dwelling, and domestic space are also themes at the center of the feminist debate and in some ways constitute its original thrust. As Dolores Hayden points out, in fact, "the overarching theme of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century feminist movement was to overcome the split between domestic life and public life created by industrial capitalism, as it affected women. Every feminist campaign for women's autonomy must be seen in

¹ John Holmes Agnew (1804-1865) was a professor of ancient literature at the University of Michigan, a member of the Presbyterian clergy, an author of biblical studies, and the first editor of *The Eclectic Magazine*, a monthly magazine published between 1844 and 1907 that carried a selection of the best articles from British newspapers on art, science and literature.

this light” (1982, p. 4). In this context, a twofold objective emerges strongly: to recognize women's rights in the home but also to bring domestic work into the public space, giving it value and freeing up women's time. The aim is to counter the naturalization of domestic space by recognizing it as a place of work but also to escape the women-inaction binomial it constructs. It is therefore a question of rethinking the home to rethink public space and political action, imagining a development of domestic space that allows women to work and be independent, a prerequisite considered necessary to be able to participate in political life. A development that must also transform the way of living, professionalizing, and collectivizing domestic work.

Alongside this explicitly political work, women use the home as a public space, turning even domestic work into an action that contributes to citizenship. This process is particularly evident, for example, in the first North American cookery book, which appeared in Hartford in 1796. Amelia Simmons's *American Cookery* (1996) exemplifies both the changing culinary standards of the 18th century and a strongly patriotic sensibility, which turns cooking into a statement of support for the American Revolution, through recipes that use native ingredients and terms that move away from classical English in preference to colloquial English. The kitchen becomes here one of the grounds for creating a new *American* sensibility, a task that, as we have seen, is handed over to women and the domestic space (Levenstein, 1986).

Thanks to this kitchen text, we are faced, once again, with the paradoxical task assigned to women: to form the body of the nation, in the sense of physically forming future citizens but also of shaping a national character and feeling, at the same time as women are excluded —along with slaves and female slaves— from political participation. A role was imposed but also claimed by women both because it allowed them public recognition, however partial, and as a strategy to be able to intervene at least partially in society. A paradox that also becomes evident as this process that takes place in the private sphere is accompanied by a virilization of the public sphere, in which nationalistic ideals are welded together with the construction of a model of hegemonic masculinity that, as George Mosse (1996) notes, takes up the image of the Greek man to bind the male body itself to the idea of virtue, value and respectability. In this vision, the male national body, described as the backbone of a new nation, was opposed to the female and slavery. However, at the same time, women were responsible for managing the relationship between national embodiment and the national body. These contradictory relationships are again highlighted by Mosse, who emphasizes how the division of labor within the family and the distinction between masculinity and femininity were continuously reaffirmed as imperatives of the modern era (Mosse, 1985). Through this

division, according to Mosse, it emerges how the paradox of sentimentalism, as much as the paradox of the 'separate spheres' ideology with which it is often associated, lies precisely in this combination of national symbolism and particular embodiments, an obligation at once to national respectability and to a private virtue that is constantly removed from national power. This dual logic of power and powerlessness meant, in the case of the separate spheres, that separation from the public world of politics and labor (and economic power) was compensated for by the affective power of 'home.' In the case of sentimentalism, the exclusion of women from political action meant, however, that an affective alternative was presented that not only gave political actions their emotional significance, but in addition to this, intimately connected individual bodies—even those excluded from the public sphere—to the national body.

In this context, however, exclusion along the lines of gender and race was constantly reinforced: it is not just a matter of proposing a comparison between the condition of women and that of slaves but also of highlighting more substantial links. For example, Lydia Maria Child, in her *History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations* (1835), points out on the one hand how slavers call slavery 'the patriarchal institution' by referring to the Bible, while on the other hand, the same Bible is used to consider women as property, subjecting them to male domination. From this reflection, Child observes the connections between slavery and patriarchy, which she also exposes through her description of slavery's *desecration* of the home. In her short story, *Slavery's Pleasant Homes* (1843), based on real episodes reported in the press or told by slaves, she introduces the metaphor that defines the plantation not as a Christian home but as an Islamic menagerie. Through this metaphor, Child establishes a parallel between the master's bride, in this case Marion, and his slave Rosa, who is also his half-sister, as she is the daughter of the same father and a slave. Both women occupy the position of harem slaves and the master has exclusive access to the bodies of both. The main difference is that while the master expects Marion to embody the purity ideals of the cult of domesticity and give the house the affectionate character that comes with it, the slave girl Rosa is only seen as a sexual object. Moreover, after pointing out that slavery turns the house into a harem, Child proceeds to examine the resulting perversions of domestic relations. Marion and Rosa are "grown up from infancy together" (Child, 1843, p. 148), suckled by the same mother, but Marion's awareness of her superior rank distorts her affection for her adopted sister: "soon as the little white lady could speak, she learned to call Rosa *her* slave" (Child, 1843, p. 148). Raised to be nothing more than a "pretty little waxen plaything" (Child, 1843, p. 148), Marion in turn treats Rosa like a toy, decorating her with jewelry like a doll. In this way, Child highlights how, despite being both oppressed, the two women occupy different positions and

reveals how white women themselves reproduce the oppression they suffer by replicating it to black women. This account makes it possible to show how the exclusion of women based on a normative ideal of femininity does not produce a unitary and homogeneous female subject but a collection of women occupying different positions, some, such as the slaves, excluded even from femininity itself.

Even through this look at the plantation house, to which a look at the houses on the reservation should be added (Hoxie, 2001; Glenn 2015), it becomes evident how the domestic space is configured as a central field for American politics in the 19th century. A field that women recognize as immediately strategic and on which they always intervene with dual intent: on the one hand, to modify the material conditions that make the home tiring and time-consuming to manage; on the other hand, to question the symbolic and political structures that bind the home to a subordinate and passive model of femininity. A battlefield that signals, once again, the porosity of the boundaries between public and private and the centrality of domestic spaces for thinking about the construction of civil society and politics. Furthermore, observing how houses are materially constructed and investigating the lines of power seen within them allows us to question the processes of constructing citizenship and access to public space. Finally, it is interesting to note how, at a time in history when the sexual divide was becoming deeper and more *naturalized*, the home became the center of a transformative reflection and practice by women, who re-evaluated domestic work and questioned their exclusion. A taking of words that meant recognizing in the domestic space the point of application of different interweavings of knowledge and power and highlighting how it is possible to rethink society and politics even from the space in which we are confined, from the rooms and activities that have been assigned to us by others.

References

- Agnew, J. H. (1851). Woman's Offices and Influence. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 3, 17, October, 657.
- Baritono, R. (2001). *The sentiment of liberties: the Seneca Falls Declaration and the women's rights debate in the mid-nineteenth century United States*. La Rosa Éditrice.
- Boydston, J. (1990). *Home and work: housework, wages, and the ideology of labor in the early republic*. Oxford University Press.
- Brunner, O. (1968). Das 'ganze Haus' und die alteuropäische 'Ökonomik'. In Id. *Neue Wege der Verfassungs- und Sozialgeschichte* (pp. 103-27). Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht.
- Child, L. M. (1835). *History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations*. John Allen.
- Child, L. M. (1843). Slavery's Pleasant Homes. *The Liberty Bell*, 4, 147-160.
- Cruea, S. M. (2005). Changing ideals of womanhood during the nineteenth-century women's movement. *ATQ*, 19(3), 187-204.
- Degler, C. (1980). *At Odds: Women and the Family from the Revolution to the Present*. Oxford University Press.
- Emerson, R. W. (1971). *Nature*. In *The Collected Works of R. W. Emerson, I, Nature. Addresses and Lectures* (pp. 3-48). The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Emerson, R. W. (2008). *Domestic Life*. In *The Collected Works of R. W. Emerson, VII, Society and Solitude* (pp. 52-69). The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Fliegelman, J. (1982). *Prodigals and pilgrims: The American Revolution against patriarchal authority 1750-1800*. Cambridge University Press.
- Frigo, D. (1985). *The father of the family. Household government and civil government in the tradition of the 'economica' between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*. Bulzoni.
- Glenn, E. N. (2015). Settler Colonialism as Structure: A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S. Race and Gender Formation. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 1(1), 52-72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649214560440>
- Hayden, D. (1982). *The Grand Domestic Revolution. A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods and Cities*. MIT Press.
- Hoxie, F. E. (2001). *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Kerber, L. K. (1980). *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Kraditor, A. S. (1968). *Up from the Pedestal: Selected Writings in the History of American Feminism*. Quadrangle Books.

- Lambertini, E. (2018). Economic Ethics. In T. Williams (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Ethics* (pp. 306-324). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316711859.015>
- Levenstein, H. (1986). The 'servant problem' and American cookery. *Revue française d'études américaines*, 27/28, 127-137. <https://doi.org/10.3406/rfea.1986.1226>
- McKeon, M. (2005). *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge*. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Mosse, G. L. (1985). *Nationalism and Sexuality. Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*. Howard Fertig.
- Mosse, G. L. (1996). *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195101010.001.0001>
- Newfield, C. (1996). *The Emerson effect: individualism and submission in America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Norton, M. B. (1980). *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800*. Little, Brown.
- Pateman, C. (1987). Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy. In A. Phillips (Ed.), *Feminism and Equality* (pp. 103-26). Blackwell.
- Pateman, C. (1988). *The Sexual Contract*. Stanford University Press.
- Phillips, A. (1992). Universal Pretensions in Political Thought. In A. Phillips and M. Barrett (Eds.), *Destabilizing Theory* (pp. 10-30). Polity.
- Rybczynski, W. (1986). *Home: A Short History of an Idea*. Penguin.
- Simmons, A. (1996). *American Cookery [1796]*. Applewood Books.
- Simmons, C. (2009). *Making Marriage Modern: Women's Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II*. Oxford Academic. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195064117.001.0001>
- Urbinati, N. (2009). *Individualismo democratico. Emerson, Dewey e la cultura politica americana*. Donzelli.
- Welter, B. (1966). The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860. *American Quarterly*, 18(2), 151-174. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2711179>
- Wigley, M. (1992). Untitled: The Housing of Gender. In B. Colomina (Ed.), *Sexuality and Space* (pp. 327-89). Princeton Architectural Press.
- Woolf, V. (1938). *Three Guineas*. Hogarth Press.

Francesco Raparelli teaches Social Philosophy as an adjunct professor at the University of Roma Tre. Author of *La lunghezza dell'Onda* (2009) [*The Length of the Wave*], *Rivolta o barbarie* (2012) [*Revolt or Barbarity*] and *Singularità e istituzioni. Antropologia e politica oltre l'individuo e lo Stato* (2021) [*Singularity and Institutions. Anthropology and Politics beyond the Individual and the State*], he also edited: *Istituzione e differenza. Attualità di Ferdinand de Saussure* (2014) [*Institutions and Difference. Actuality of Ferdinand de Saussure*]; with the collective "C17", a new critical edition of *Il manifesto comunista* by Marx and Engels (2018) [*The Communist Manifesto*]; with Federica Giardini and Federica Castelli, *Conflitti. Filosofia e politica* (2020) [*Conflicts. Philosophy and Politics*]; with Nicolas Martino, *L'intelligenza in lotta. Sapere e produzione nel tardocapitalismo* (2021) [*Intelligence in Struggle. Knowledge and Production in late Capitalism*].

Contact: francesco.raparelli@uniroma3.it

BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE. MONEY, CENTRAL BANKING AND THE STATE: THE INSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLAGE OF CAPITALISM*

Francesco Raparelli
Università di Roma Tre

ENTRE LO PÚBLICO Y LO PRIVADO. EL DINERO, LA BANCA CENTRAL, Y EL ESTADO: EL ENSAMBLAJE INSTITUCIONAL DEL CAPITALISMO

Abstract

Currency is a political institution, present on Mediterranean coasts and islands as early as the 6th century BC. From the commercial revolution of the late Middle Ages to the present day, “payment technologies” other than cash have become established: bills of exchange, bank deposits and cheques, credit cards and bitcoins. The *public institution*, guaranteed by the state, is accompanied by the *private institution*, *money-credit* issued by banks, which supports the expansion of the market. To understand the success of capitalism, however, we need to focus on the emergence of the large national banks at the end of the 17th century and the subsequent development of central banks. Indeed,

* Reception date: 24th March 2023; acceptance date: 27th March 2023. The essay is the issue of a research project carried out within the Dipartimento di Filosofia, Comunicazione e Spettacolo at Università di Roma Tre.

central banks play a decisive function regarding the government of public debt, credit for businesses and financial markets. Through some classics of economic and political thought, from Locke to Marx, from Schumpeter to Keynes, the article critically reflects on the *institutional assemblage* that has made the fortune of capitalism.

Keywords

money; credit; banks; capitalism; institutions

Resumen

La moneda es una institución política, presente ya en las costas e islas del Mediterráneo desde el siglo VI A. de C. A partir de la revolución comercial de finales de la Edad Media y hasta nuestros días, se establecieron “tecnologías de pago” distintas del efectivo: letras de cambio, depósitos y cheques bancarios, tarjetas de crédito y bitcoins. A la *institución pública*, garantizada por el Estado, le acompaña la *institución privada*, el *dinero-crédito* emitido por los bancos, que apoya la expansión del mercado. Sin embargo, para comprender el éxito del capitalismo, debemos centrarnos en la aparición de los grandes bancos nacionales a finales del siglo XVII y el posterior desarrollo de los bancos centrales. En efecto, los bancos centrales desempeñan una función decisiva con respecto al gobierno de la deuda pública, el crédito a las empresas y los mercados financieros. A través de algunos clásicos del pensamiento económico y político, de Locke a Marx, de Schumpeter a Keynes, el artículo reflexiona críticamente sobre el *conjunto institucional* que ha hecho la fortuna del capitalismo

Palabras clave

dinero; crédito; bancos; capitalismo; instituciones

0. In his *The Philosophy of Money* (2004) [1900-1907], Georg Simmel asserts that the more money becomes a “public institution,” the more it can relinquish its substantial, intrinsic value and become a pure function. It is an *institution* because it is an abstract form and a symbol of exchange relations (exchange of goods and services); it is a *public* institution because it is guaranteed by the issuing authority, the State. However, Simmel makes an even more relevant statement: all money, including metallic money, is a promise of payment, it is credit-money. Whether minted coins of metal or banknotes, currency demands trust in regard to future purchasing power. A trust of a special kind, similar if not identical to religious trust. One trusts currency as one trusts God, as one “believes in someone”: not a weak form of inductive knowledge, but a “meta-theoretical faith”.

Simmel clarifies that the phenomenon in question displays a biunivocal link and a mutual influence between money and the State: the State ensures that the monetary promise is fulfilled, while religious confidence in money, and in its future purchasing power, strengthens confidence in the State. The fact that money becomes a public institution, guaranteed by legitimate issuance, also strengthens the credibility of the State. Simmel does not rule out the role of private sources of issuance, namely banks; and he is aware of the ongoing clash between free banking and State monopoly in the United States. But he is equally convinced that the expansion of markets demands a process of “centralization of the institutions and powers that guarantee money values” (Simmel, 2004, p. 182). Although he does not explicitly refer to the decisive function of the Bank of England, he points to English government bonds, secured by “general confidence in the State’s capacity to pay” (p. 182), as the privileged source of the monetary system of capitalist modernity.

Simmel was a sociologist and philosopher and is rarely considered by economists. However, he attracts the interest of economists who focus on the institutional articulation of market economy and, therefore, on the fundamental role of trust in monetary processes and, more generally, in economic processes. *As a social institution, money is both private and public*; and these two polarities are institutionally embodied by the banks and the State. In my opinion it is not possible to fully comprehend capitalism without grasping *the singular assemblage of private and public* embodied by central banks. In the contemporary world the latter play a decisive public role, being currency fiat money, but they are also increasingly independent of the powers of the nation-state. This assemblage is made necessary by the expansion of money-credit and by the instability it generates.

In the following pages, more specifically, we will focus on the origins of the Bank of England (§ 1), the establishment of deposits and the creation of bank money (§ 2), the

role of central banking in stabilizing currency and the role of government spending in stabilizing confidence (§ 3). Historical facts, however, will be examined through the lens of economic and philosophical-political discourses shaping them, looking at the close relationship between theoretical contributions and power practices, critical thinking and social struggles. In the final section, the notion of a public, democratically governed currency will be outlined (§ 4).

1. The Bank of England was founded in 1694. It was not the first major national bank –in fact the Swedish Riksbank was founded a few years earlier, in 1668. Founded as a capital company, with a capital of 1.2 million pounds and 1,272 participants, the Bank was the most relevant response to the combined political crisis generated by the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the financial collapse caused by England’s failed war with France. The Bank’s main objective was to “rationalize and subject to the control of Parliament the financing of the finances of the Crown” (Giannini, 2004, p. 137)¹. The initial capital raised was lent to the Crown, which allowed the Bank to issue banknotes in the same amount. In 1707, the Bank acquired the status of a “joint-stock bank”, the only one of its kind by law (other banks had to be partnerships with no more than six participants); in 1751 it obtained the management of the public debt. With an apt expression, Felix Martin (2013) calls the whole process, from the founding to the establishment of the Bank of England, the “Great Monetary Settlement”.

Among the many errors Karl Marx is often accused of, two stand out more than others: the underestimation of the institutional mechanisms that made the establishment of the capitalist mode of production possible; and the marginalization of money-credit in favor of money understood as a commodity. Consequently, a paragraph in the penultimate chapter of Book I of *Capital* is of fundamental importance:

The Bank of England began by lending its money to the government at 8 per cent; at the same time it was empowered by Parliament to coin money out of the same capital, by lending it a second time to the public in the form of banknotes. It was allowed to use these notes for discounting bills, making advances on commodities and buying the precious metals. It was not long before this credit-money, created by the bank itself, became the coin in which the latter made its loans to the state, and paid, on behalf of the state, the interest on the public debt. (Marx, 1867, p. 920)

¹ My translation

Marx goes on to clarify that, in this way, the Bank of England became the “receptacle of the metallic hoard of the country” and “eternal creditor of the nation”, with the public debt becoming “the only part of the so-called national wealth that actually enters into the collective possession of a modern nation” (p. 919). The public debt imposed and facilitated the implementation of a thoroughly modern system of taxation, at the same time in which the colonial system (extraction and slave trade) became widespread, together with protectionism and trade wars. *The power of the State and the power of the great national bank constituted the institutional framework* that drove the world from feudal rule to the triumph of trade, manufacturing, and big industry.

The connection highlighted by Marx between the colonial system, national banking and international credit deserves further attention. In fact, the birth of the Bank of England was accompanied, in the summer of 1696, by what is known as the Great Recoinage, successfully proposed by John Locke the previous year. Having returned following his Dutch exile, Locke went back to work in 1691 on an elaborate text written twenty years earlier (*Some of the Consequences that are Likely to Follow upon Lessening of Interest to 4 Per Cent*) and published it anonymously (in 1692), with a new title (*Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest and Raising the Value of Money*). As he had done twenty years earlier, responding polemically to Josiah Child, a merchant of the East India Company and author of the pamphlet *Brief Observations Concerning Trade and Interest of Money*, he defends the “natural” rate of interest, considering currency and its value as distinctive features of property. Already in his *Treatise on Government*, published in 1790, Locke makes it clear that ownership of land, generated by working on it as well as by enclosing it, can be extended only through trade and monetary convention. The protagonists of this convention are precious metals, at once durable and scarce, arduous to find and extract. The task of political society is to safeguard property, the enjoyment of which, in the state of nature, is uncertain and insecure; to defend it, not limit it. To impose a low interest rate by law, on the other hand, means affecting monetary property and, consequently, commerce. Why?

In order to answer this, it is necessary to take a closer look at the notion of money presented by Locke in his *Some Considerations...* Firstly, money is a unit of account; secondly, however, and this is what makes a difference, it is a pledge, a guarantee; in other words, it is a promise, future purchasing power. Locke is well aware that the market can function through alternative means of payment, such as bills of exchange. He also knows, however, that the latter are effective in contexts where trust is a widespread, circulating resource. What happens, on the other hand, when trade becomes global?

And hence Foreigners can never be brought to take your Bills, or Writings for any part of Payment, though perhaps they might pass as valuable Considerations among your own People, did not this very much hinder it, viz. That they are liable to unavoidable Doubt, Dispute, and Counterfeiting, and require other Proofs to assure us that they are true and good Security, than our Eyes or a Touchstone. (Locke, 1692, p. 11)

Only the intrinsic value of precious metals can make currency reliable and thus foster international trade. Moreover, as Locke had argued in his *Second Treatise*, only the prospect of international trade prompts the colonial endeavor; in which Locke was more than involved, beginning with his employment by the Earl of Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, since 1663 Lord Proprietor of Carolina.

Therefore, when urged by the judges of the Court of Appeals in 1695, he voiced his opinion on the issue of coinage. Locke clashed with the Secretary of the Treasury, William Lowndes, an advocate of raising the nominal value of currency. As Stefan Eich (2022) rightly points out, Locke did not disavow the position of his *Second Treatise*: gold and silver, which have intrinsic value because they are scarce and arduous to extract, are nonetheless currency by convention; precisely because convention is by its very nature fragile, however, the monetary parameter, once fixed, must be removed from the domain of political dispute. Not coincidentally, Locke proposed a return to the Elizabethan parameter, which was a century old and predated clipping. While the Tories, Nicholas Barbon in particular, insisted on the political validation of currency (“Charlatists” *avant la lettre*), the Whigs followed Locke, partly and mainly to wrest further power from the Crown. The founding of the Bank of England, the concentrated and private management of the public debt, the depoliticization of currency: these are the fundamental steps that favor England’s imperial fortunes. In the short run, recoinage favored creditors and generated deflation, impoverishment, and revolts (Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire); in the long run, it consolidated colonial expansion and English primacy in the world market. The industrial revolution of the 18th century would have done the rest.

2. An executive at the Bank of Italy, as well as an economist, Curzio Giannini (2004) reconstructs the genealogy of central banking by following the emergence and affirmation of different “payment technologies”: from bills of exchange to banknotes, from the latter to bank deposits, and finally to fiat currency. The long journey that would culminate in the affirmation of convertible banknotes in the 18th century, Giannini points

out, was shaken by the French Revolution and the European War. Firstly, because the French assignats, which were inspired by and relaunched John Law's failed experiment (Galbraith, 1995), decoupled the currency from precious metals (the counterpart of the issued currency was land expropriated from the Church); secondly because, given the negative course of the war against revolutionary France, the Bank of England was forced to declare the bills inconvertible. The gold standard was restored a quarter century later, in 1821; after the defeat of Napoleon and with the restoration ratified by the Congress of Vienna. During the next two decades, leading up to the Bank Charter Act of 1844, the first part of the process that began with the founding of the Bank of England concluded. As early as 1833, the Bank's monopoly on bill issuance was established; with the Peel Act, a quantitative limitation on issuance was also established and the Bank was divided into two departments, one overseeing issuance, which therefore had an eminently public role, while the other dealt with bank portfolio management, and had a private, profit-driven role.

Giannini highlights that the victory of the Currency School (inspired by David Ricardo) over the Banking School (Thomas Tooke, among others), decided by the Bank Charter Act of 1844, was a fragile one: the emergence and expansion of a new payment technology, i.e. bank deposits, set things in motion again; not only did instability not subside, but banking panic from exception became the rule.

In order to fully understand the instability generated by the prevailing of bank deposits over the convertible bill, a comparison with Joseph Schumpeter's *The Theory of Economic Development* (1911-1934) is indispensable. As is well known, Schumpeter explains economic development through discontinuities endogenous to the economic sphere, particularly the productive and commercial spheres; this discontinuity is made possible by innovation. Innovation, in turn, should be understood as a "new combination" of the means of production. More precisely: "the production of a new good"; "the introduction of a new method of production"; "the opening of a new market"; "the conquest of a new source of supply of raw materials or half-manufactured goods"; "the creation of a monopoly position (for example through trustification) or the breaking up of a monopoly position" (Schumpeter, 1911-1934, p. 66). The source of innovation, according to Schumpeter, is the entrepreneur, who has the characteristics of a leader, capable of "authority" and "prestige": he is the one who "makes things happen", that is, the one who decides, actualizing some, and only some, possibilities (possible new combinations) that would otherwise never come into being. In order for the entrepreneur to innovate, in order for the entrepreneur to have leverage to "*subject to his control the concrete goods which he needs*", capital is essential: as a "purchasing power fund", the latter is first

and foremost bank credit. In order to introduce new combinations, the entrepreneur needs purchasing power he does not have, and in this sense, Schumpeter states, he is the “typical debtor in capitalist society”; or rather, “he can become an entrepreneur only by previously becoming a debtor”. If entrepreneurial innovation is a new combination, the currency that makes this possible is created from nothing by banks; it is therefore bankable or scriptural. Quoting Frank Fetter’s *Principles of Economics* (1904), banking should be understood as “a business whose income is derived chiefly from lending its promises to pay” (p. 426).

Schumpeter argues that:

(...) to this extent giving credit involves creating purchasing power, and newly created purchasing power is of use only in giving credit to the entrepreneur, is necessary for this purpose alone. This is the only case in which we cannot, without impairing the truth of our theoretical picture, substitute metal money for credit means of payment. (Schumpeter, 1911-1934, p. 106)

It is not, and cannot be, about already existing purchasing power, and this is precisely why it generates economic development. Through credit, the entrepreneur secures access to “to the social stream of goods before they have acquired the normal claim to it” (p. 106); this right is replaced by a “fiction”. Also:

Granting credit in this sense operates as an order on the economic system to accommodate itself to the purposes of the entrepreneur, as an order on the goods which he needs: it means entrusting him with productive forces. (p. 106)

With Schumpeter, the political character of banks and deposits emerges with a force that will remain unmatched².

3. As deposits take hold, money creation overtakes reserves at an unprecedented pace and all attempts to quantitatively control the supply of currency. The system becomes maximally unstable and panic crises increase. When and why does a panic crisis erupt? When confidence in the solvency of a credit institution weakens, in other words when

² A more recent and equally fundamental text on the issue is Hyman P. Minsky, *Stabilizing an Unstable Economy* (1986): “Banks whose liabilities are money are unlike money lenders whose financing activities are restricted to the contents of their strongbox. Banks lend by taking on an obligation to make payments on behalf of a borrower in the future, confident that when the time comes they will obtain the asset needed to fulfill these obligations either as a result of flows in their favor by prior borrowers or by dealing (borrowing, selling) in some market.” (Minsky, 1986, pp. 250-251)

all the customers of the institution in question rush to convert their promises to pay. The transformation of loans into deposits, of deposits into means of payment, is an opaque and almost uncontrollable activity: the reliability of a commercial bank can only be volatile, exposed to sudden and dramatic changes.

The events of the Bank of England following the Bank Charter Act of 1844, of which Curzio Giannini offers a detailed account, bring forth new practices of governing monetary crises. In 1847, then in 1857 and 1866, panic is dealt with through letters written by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and addressed to the governor of the Bank, in which the governor is urged to discount letters of credit and other securities, because “the government will implement regularization in the event this were to result in an excess of circulation beyond the permitted limits” (Giannini, 2004, p. 184)³. The combination of State guarantee and rapid intervention of the Bank underscores the importance of trust in the smooth functioning of the market mechanism. Confidence, Giannini continues, is presented as a decisive “public good”, central to the action of the Bank of England and, more generally, of the large national banks that meanwhile, largely following the English model, were established in Europe and in the United States (in 1913 with the birth of the Fed). It was Walter Bagehot, in his *Lombard Street* of 1873, who outlined the new role that the Bank was acquiring, articulating some of the main functions of central banking that can be observed still today, of course with some variations.

As is well known, in addition to having advocated since the early 1920s (*A Tract on Monetary Reform*, 1923) an active monetary policy by central banks, John Maynard Keynes placed the problem of confidence at the center of his seminal work, *General Theory* (1936). In the 1930s central banks had proved incapable of preventing the stock market crash of 1929 and the employment catastrophe of the following years; the Bolshevik revolution, on the one hand, and fascist regimes, on the other, marked the end of the 19th-century liberal order (Polanyi, 1944). With his typical insightful and polemical boldness, Keynes advances, albeit from an openly professed liberal political position, novel and radical proposals. Firstly, going beyond his earlier stances, he asserts that monetary policy, that is, the active regulation of money through “reasoned decisions” concerning the monetary rate of interest, alone, cannot stabilize the business cycle. The stabilizing function, the public control of central banks, is also restated in his *General Theory*, in the well-known chapter 17 dedicated to the “cheese factory”⁴, but in a new and far more articulate framework. Secondly, Keynes stresses that:

³ My translation.

⁴ “Unemployment develops, that is to say, because people want the moon; men cannot be employed when the object of desire (*i.e.* money) is something which cannot be produced and the demand for which cannot be readily choked off. There is no remedy but to persuade the public that green cheese is practically the same thing and to have a green cheese factory (*i.e.* a central bank) under public control”. (Keynes, 1936, p. 235)

For my own part I am now somewhat sceptical of the success of merely monetary policy directed towards influencing the rate of interest. I expect to see the State, which is in a position to calculate the marginal efficiency of capital-goods on long views and on the basis of the general social advantage, taking an ever greater responsibility for directly organising investment (...). (Keynes, 1936, p. 164)

While rejecting Soviet-style planning, Keynes urges a decisive role for the State, public policies, in the economy; and he does so to save capitalism from itself. Transformations in the world of business, that is, the separation of business ownership and administration, the emergence of organized securities markets (stocks and bonds), favor short-term over long-term investment, financial speculation over entrepreneurial enterprise, and a preference for liquidity and hoarding. The conventions that seem to stabilize financial markets are in truth shown to be precarious, always exposed to sudden changes. Above all, the “vital impulses” that are essential for taking risks under conditions of uncertainty —indeed according to Keynes no mathematical calculation can replace entrepreneurship and “spontaneous optimism”— evaporate in the absence of a climate of confidence: monetary policy and fiscal policy, the State becoming an entrepreneur, thus define the governance necessary for the “monetary economy of production” to work.

4. In the past four decades people have never stopped blaming the inflation of the 1970s on postwar policies inspired by Keynes and Frank Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal. More than fifty years after the uncoupling of the dollar from gold and the beginning of financial deregulation, which reached its peak with Bill Clinton’s administration in the 1990s, to say that *the world has become an insecure place* is neither ideological nor an exaggeration. Using the expression popularized by Adam Tooze (2022), we may describe the present as an era marked by a “polycrisis”: both financial and economic, the one started in 2007; a health crisis, with the coronavirus pandemic beginning in 2020; war, with the multiplication of crisis scenarios, most recently Ukraine and the Middle East; and, of course, the climate and environment crisis. Politically, all this translates into the collapse of trust in representation, the proliferation of populist and nationalist forces and outright fascist ones. In this catastrophic scenario, among other things, the specter of inflation has never subsided: with the bottlenecks in global value chains caused by pandemics and wars, rising energy costs have generated renewed inflation that adds to the “secular stagnation”, which began soon after the financial crisis of 2007-2008 (Saraceno, 2023). The accelerated raising of interest rates by major central banks will only lead to recession, employment crisis, impoverishment, and politics based on resentment.

Beginning in the spring of 2012, up to the massive mobilization in March 2015, tens of thousands of citizens and activists from across the Eurozone gathered in Frankfurt to demonstrate against austerity policies and in support of a Quantitative Easing for the People, i.e., the issuance of money by the ECB and earmarked for public spending, welfare (health, education, social security), and essential services (Marazzi 2016; Charrel 2016). The mobilization eventually ended, but the issue came up again during the 2020-2021 pandemic crisis, so strongly that for the first time when launching the Next Generation EU plan, the Commission introduced a first common bond issue on the public debt of states. The fact remains that with no continental fiscal and welfare policies, no single Treasury Minister and homogeneous wage benchmark, the democratization of the economy and, in particular, of currency, is impossible (Visco, 2019). The ECB is, in fact, an independent institution whose main mission is price stability. This particular status, now common to major central banks, frees it from the interference of political parties and their clientele, but it also prevents currency from being the subject of public debate and deliberation – despite the increased rules and supervisory mechanisms imposed by the sovereign debt crisis of 2010-2015.

According to some economists (Ricks, 2016, 2021; Grazzini, 2023), the advent of legal digital money issued by central banks could represent a major breakthrough: all citizens could in fact become account holders of central banks, which, in turn, could use the resources collected, as well as the further issuance of money, to foster universal welfare and full employment. This would mean, however, affecting bank intermediation, as well as profits made by private banks through increasingly risky ventures. Since the cancellation of regulations put in place in the 1930s, in these banks commercial and investment activities are blended in an obscure and dangerous way. At present, however, what powers would be able to force such a radical turnaround? Social movements have played and can undoubtedly play a decisive role, but on their own they are not decisive. The power of financial markets, the pressure they exert on national policies through the management of public debt, is difficult to match; impossible, if one assumes a nationalist/sovereigntist perspective. Equally limited are the powers of States, even when they are in the hands of progressive and radically reformist political forces (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2019). The institutional arrangements that have made possible, and have over time consolidated, capitalism should prompt philosophical and political reflection on the new actors of change, which are *transnational (networks)*, *multilevel (bottom-up and top-down)*, and *heterogeneous (movements, unions, parties, associations, informal groups)*. These are phenomena, or rather needs, that have not yet been fully actualized; rather, they are “real virtualities” that have been operating in a seminal way, in social movements and in some

of the political-institutional experiments we have witnessed in the last twenty years: from the alter-global movement to Latin American progressive governments; from *acampadas* to the most radical components of Anglo-Saxon and European labourism; from social strikes to the recent unionization in East Asia and North America; from the feminist movement to the ecological movement. These “virtualities” are oppressed, it should be pointed out, by the regime of war and systemic chaos characterizing the world at the moment; often marked by fragmentation and powerlessness, though they should not be underestimated. What is needed, of course, are “accidents,” in the “ancient” sense that Machiavelli ascribed to the word, and a constituent political imagination able to meet the challenge.

References

- Bagehot, W. (1873). *Lombard Street: A Description of the Money Market*. 65 Cornhill & Paternoster Row, London Henry S. King & Co.
- Charrel, M. (2016, February 18). *Taux & Changes : De la monnaie pour le peuple. Le monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2016/02/20/taux-changes-de-la-monnaie-pour-le-peuple_4868949_3234.html
- Eich, S. (2022). *The Currency of Politics: The Political Theory of Money from Aristotle to Keynes*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.23943/princeton/9780691191072.001.0001>
- Fetter, F. (1904). *Principles of Economics*. The Century Co.
- Galbraith, J.K. (1995). *Money: Whence it Come, Where it Went*. Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Giannini, C. (2004). *Letà delle banche centrali. Forme e governo della moneta fiduciaria in una prospettiva istituzionalista*. Il Mulino.
- Grazzini, E. (2023). *Il fallimento della moneta. Banche, debito e crisi. Perché bisogna emettere una moneta pubblica libera dal debito*. Fazi Editore.
- Keynes, J.M. (1923). *A Tract on Monetary Reform*. McMillan & Co., Limited.
- Keynes, J.M. (1936). *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*. McMillan & Co., Limited.
- Locke, J. (1690). *Two Treatises of Government*. A. & J. Churchill.
- Locke, J. (1692). *Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest and Raising the Value of Money*. A. & J. Churchill.
- Marazzi, C. (2016). *Cos'è il plusvalore*. Casagrande.
- Martin, F. (2013). *Money. The Unauthorised Biography*. Failu Ltd.
- Marx, K. (1867). The production process of Capital. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*. Penguin Ltd.
- Mezzadra S. & Neilson B. (2019). *The Politics of Operations. Excavating Contemporary Capitalism*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478003267>
- Minsky, H.P. (1986). *Stabilizing an Unstable Economy*. Yale University Press.
- Polanyi, K. (1944). *The Great Transformation*. Rinehart & Winston Inc.
- Ricks, M. (2016). *The Money Problem: Rethinking Financial Regulation*. The University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226330464.001.0001>
- Ricks, M. (2021). *FedAccounts: Digital Dollars*. Vanderbilt Law School Faculty Publications.
- Saraceno, F. (2023). *Oltre le banche centrali. Inflazione, disuguaglianze e politiche economiche*. LUISS University Press.

Schumpeter, J. (1911). *The Theory of Economic Development. An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Interest and Business Cycle*. Harvard University Press.

Simmel, G. (2004). *The Philosophy of Money*. Routledge.

Tooze, A. (2022). Welcome to the World of the Polycrisis. *Financial Times*. <https://www.ft.com/content/498398e7-11b1-494b-9cd3-6d669dc3de33>

Visco, I. (2019). L'Unione economica e monetaria: è ora di superare lo stallo. *Seminario OMFIF-Banca d'Italia "Future of the Euro area"*. https://www.bancaditalia.it/pubblicazioni/interventi-governatore/integov2019/Visco_OMFIF_15112019.pdf

Antonio Di Stasio es doctor por la Università degli Studi di Salerno en Filosofía y Sociología del Derecho y por la Université Paris 8 en Ciencias de la Comunicación y la Información. Es miembro del laboratorio CEMTI (Centro de Estudios sobre Medios de Comunicación, Tecnología e Internacionalización) Paris 8 y del laboratorio Communalia (Unisa). Sus estudios se centran en el dinero como institución política y jurídica, y en la teoría de los bienes comunes y lo común.

Contacto: andistasio@unisa.it
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8441-6411>

LA POLITICIDAD DEL DINERO: ¿DE MERCANCÍA FICTICIA A INSTITUCIÓN DE LO COMÚN?*

Antonio Di Stasio
Université Paris 8

THE POLITICIZATION OF MONEY: FROM FICTITIOUS COMMODITY TO INSTITUTION OF THE COMMON?

Resumen

El dinero, junto con el trabajo y la tierra, forma parte de lo que Polanyi denomina “mercancías ficticias”. “Ficticio” es la reducción al estatus de mercancía de aquellas cosas sociales que, aunque de hecho están sometidas a procesos de mercantilización, nunca son enteramente reducibles al estatus de mercancía y que, por el contrario, sirven como presupuesto de todo proceso real de producción y reproducción social y natural. Partiendo de esta definición, el objetivo de la siguiente contribución consiste en sondear las razones profundas que llevaron a Polanyi a atribuir al dinero, elemento aparentemente económico y totalmente convencional, el mismo estatus de matriz extraeconómica que otras fuerzas productivas y vitales como el trabajo y la naturaleza. Se trata, en efecto, de una operación que no es en ningún caso inmediatamente evidente y que —esta es nuestra primera hipótesis— nos permite ofrecer una poderosa crítica de ciertos supuestos fundamentales del

* Fecha de recepción: 10 de febrero 2023; fecha de aceptación: 30 de marzo 2023. Este trabajo es fruto de un proyecto de investigación desarrollado en el UFR Culture et communication de l'Université de Paris 8.

neoliberalismo y una fructífera clave de interpretación de las inestabilidades financieras y monetarias actuales. Un segundo punto de interés se refiere a la relación entre los mecanismos de “autoprotección” de la sociedad y lo que en el debate contemporáneo se conoce como bienes comunes y común. El dinero aparece como un terreno de conflicto que, si se sintoniza con las relaciones de producción apropiadas, aparece remodelado dentro de mecanismos de coordinación y validación social alternativos a los típicos de la forma mercancía, y como dispositivo que garantiza la efectividad de los derechos más allá del ejercicio de la fuerza. En este sentido, recientemente se ha hablado de la moneda de lo común. Por tanto, exploremos el potencial de esta noción.

Palabras clave

dinero; teoría de la institución; mercancías ficticias; bienes comunes; mercancía-forma

Abstract

Money, along with labor and land, is part of what Polanyi calls “fictitious commodities.” “Fictitious” is the reduction to commodity status of those social things, which, although they are in fact subjected to processes of commodification, are never quite reducible to commodity status; and which, on the contrary, serve as the prerequisite of every real process of social and natural production and reproduction. Starting from this definition, the aim of the following contribution is to probe the profound reasons that prompted Polanyi to attribute to money, an apparently economic and entirely conventional element, the same status of extra-economic matrix on a par with other productive and vital forces such as labor and nature. This is in fact by no means a foregone conclusion and —this is our first hypothesis— allows us to offer a powerful critique of some of the fundamental assumptions of neoliberalism and a fruitful key to understanding today’s financial and monetary instabilities. A second point of interest is then related to the relationship between mechanisms of societal “self-protection” and what in contemporary debate goes by the name of the commons and the Common. Money appears as a terrain of conflict that, if tuned to appropriate production relations, appears reshapeable within mechanisms of coordination and social validation alternative to those typical of the commodity form. In this regard, there has recently been talk of the money of the Common. We will then explore the potential of this notion.

Keywords

money; theory of institution; fictitious commodities; commons; commodity form

Introducción

El dinero, junto con el trabajo y la tierra, es una de las nociones que Polanyi denomina “mercancías ficticias”. Desde la perspectiva del historiador y antropólogo húngaro, se considera como “ficticia” la reducción al estatus de mercancía de aquellas cosas sociales que, aunque de hecho están sujetas a procesos de mercantilización, nunca son enteramente reducibles al estatus de mercancía; y que, por el contrario, sirven como prerrequisito para cualquier proceso real de producción y reproducción social y natural.

Partiendo de esta definición, el objetivo de la siguiente contribución consiste en sondear las razones profundas que llevaron a Polanyi a atribuir al dinero, un elemento aparentemente económico y totalmente convencional, el mismo estatus de matriz extraeconómica que otras fuerzas productivas y vitales como el trabajo y la naturaleza. Se trata, en efecto, de una operación que no se da en absoluto por descontada y que —esta es nuestra primera hipótesis— nos permite ofrecer una poderosa crítica de ciertos supuestos fundamentales del neoliberalismo y una clave fructífera para interpretar las inestabilidades financieras y monetarias actuales.

En efecto, durante la última década hemos asistido a la multiplicación de las llamadas *políticas monetarias no convencionales*. Esto ha llevado a una parte creciente del pensamiento económico, sociológico y político heterodoxo a considerar la mercantilización del dinero como uno de los principales procesos que subyacen a la inestabilidad financiera y monetaria (Martin, 2014; Amato, 2016; Graeber, 2011; Aglietta et al., 2016). A la luz de este debate, el enfoque polyaniano del estudio del dinero ha gozado de un renovado interés en los últimos años (Seccareccia & Correa, 2018; De Carolis, 2020; Szelényi & Mihályi, 2021).

Un segundo punto de interés se vincula entonces a la relación entre los mecanismos de “autoprotección” de la sociedad y lo que en el debate contemporáneo recibe el nombre de bienes comunes y común. El dinero emerge como un terreno de conflicto que, si se sintoniza con las relaciones productivas apropiadas, parece remodelable dentro de mecanismos de coordinación y validación social alternativos a los típicos de la forma mercancía y, al mismo tiempo, como dispositivo que garantiza la efectividad de los derechos más allá del ejercicio de la fuerza.

En este sentido, recientemente se ha hablado de la moneda del común (Braga & Fumagalli, 2015; Bollier & Conaty, 2015; Servet, 2017; Couppey-Soubreyan & Delandré, 2021). Estos análisis insisten en la institucionalización de una economía monetaria no mercantil (Harribey, 2020) en la que las instituciones *relacionadas con el bienestar*, para no estar subordinadas a una racionalidad basada en el beneficio, deben

dotarse de formas monetarias específicas de financiación y validación social. Concebir el dinero como una institución política (Eich, 2022), sin reducirlo por tanto a una mercancía, resulta ser un paso decisivo para no subordinar la economía no mercantil, y el ejercicio real de los derechos sociales vinculados a ella, a la lógica financiera y a la *gobernanza* neoliberal.

La intersección de la teoría monetaria polanyiana con la cuestión del dinero del común es, pues, doble: por un lado, la crítica al dinero como mercancía ficticia puede reforzarse y profundizarse junto con las teorías monetarias heterodoxas más recientes, sobre la base de una concepción institucional de lo económico que concibe el dinero como una institución jurídica y política; por otro lado, la noción polanyiana de “doble movimiento” —entre procesos de mercantilización y desmercantilización— resulta ser una contribución importante en la determinación en perspectiva de las condiciones que pueden hacer posibles modos de financiación y validación social adecuados a las actividades productivas vinculadas a lo común, capaces de interrumpir esas relaciones de dependencia material inducidas por la mercantilización monetaria.

Un doble movimiento que, como veremos, nos lleva mucho más allá del propio Polanyi. La institucionalización financiera de lo común, entendida como una relación de producción, nos permite avanzar más allá de cualquier nostalgia “comunitarista” (que ha estado muy presente en el debate sobre los bienes comunes); eludir cualquier intento de volver a las buenas prácticas de las pequeñas comunidades y a la primacía del valor de uso frente al valor de cambio. Los nuevos modos de producción de dinero y de validación social de la riqueza abren horizontes de socialización de la riqueza y de sostenibilidad financiera de la transición social ecológica, alternativa a la gobernanza neoliberal, pero capaz de moverse al nivel de sus propios procesos globales.

Crítica al dinero mercancía

En la introducción ya hemos identificado el primer nudo teórico que hay que desatar para llegar a una institucionalización del dinero. Es necesario aclarar las razones que permiten a Polanyi situar el dinero entre las mercancías ficticias. Sabemos que define mercancía como aquello que se produce para ser vendido (Polanyi, 2007, p. 127). En el sexto capítulo de *La gran transformación* (2007), expone las contradicciones de estas mercancías ficticias y argumenta que, para constituir una sociedad basada en el mercado autorregulado, es necesario que todas las formas de ingresos deriven del mecanismo de fijación de precios. Así, en asonancia con la fórmula marxiana trinitaria del capital, tendrá que haber un mercado del trabajo, un mercado de la tierra y también un mercado del dinero. El precio del trabajo corresponderá a los salarios,

el precio de la tierra a las rentas y el precio del dinero a los intereses (Polanyi, 2007, p. 123). Sin embargo,

El trabajo no es más que la actividad económica que acompaña a la propia vida —la cual, por su parte, no ha sido producida en función de la venta, sino por razones totalmente distintas—, y esta actividad tampoco puede ser desgajada del resto de la vida, ni puede ser almacenada o puesta en circulación. La tierra por su parte es, bajo otra denominación, la misma naturaleza que no es producida por el hombre; en fin, el dinero real es simplemente un signo del poder adquisitivo que, en líneas generales, no es en absoluto un producto sino una creación del mecanismo de la banca o de las finanzas del Estado. Ninguno de estos tres elementos —trabajo, tierra y dinero— han sido producidos para la venta, por lo que es totalmente ficticio describirlos como mercancías. (Polanyi, 2007, p. 130)

Esta es la primera justificación que encontramos en el texto para calificar al dinero de mercancía ficticia. Sin embargo, digámoslo de entrada, no es del todo satisfactoria: el hecho de que el dinero sea un símbolo no implica que no pueda ser considerado un producto del hombre como cualquier otro, ni que no pueda ser producido para ser vendido como cualquier otra mercancía. Ciertamente, la tierra y el trabajo pertenecen al bíos, a la vida humana y extrahumana, representan las condiciones de posibilidad por excelencia de cualquier sistema de intercambio y producción. Se comprende bien la razón por la que Polanyi las llama mercancías ficticias: puesto que no son algo producido, sino las condiciones necesarias y suficientes para iniciar toda producción, su estatus de mercancías es ficticio. No pueden reducirse a la esfera de lo económico como mercancías porque, tanto el cuerpo como la tierra, son condiciones presupuestas de la existencia de todos y, por tanto, de la propia esfera económica.

Esto, sin embargo, no es una gran novedad. Ya la escuela fisiocrática, por ejemplo, consideraba únicamente el trabajo agrícola como fuente de excedente, ya que la fertilidad de la tierra era vista como la única fuente de “un maggior prodotto finale (output) rispetto alla quantità di merci anticipate (salari e materie prime, input)” (Marazzi, 2016, p. 17). Además, es bien conocida la tesis que, a partir de Adam Smith, marcará la economía clásica: la producción de valor no reside en tal o cual sector, sino en el trabajo *tout court*¹. El ser humano no se reduce a funciones adaptativas. Al estar dotado de la capacidad transformadora del entorno en el que vive, es capaz de doblegar este último a su propio plan. Cuanto más difícil

¹ Aunque hay que subrayar que, en Smith, la economía de servicios sigue siendo improductiva.

sea esta labor transformadora, más valiosa será. El trabajo, pues, como actividad transformadora por excelencia, se convierte en una expresión de la facultad humana de generar valor. En resumen, la tierra y el trabajo siempre han sido considerados, de manera alternativa, como un presupuesto de la riqueza o como una fuente privilegiada de valor. Y siempre se ha reconocido el carácter extraeconómico —biológico, antropológico, etc., según el aspecto en el que se haga más hincapié— en la base de las relaciones económicas. Además, así lo ha demostrado la genealogía foucaultiana del gobierno biopolítico como dispositivo consustancial a los procesos de producción capitalistas y al orden discursivo liberal y neoliberal (Foucault, 2004a, 2004b).

El dinero, en cambio, aparentemente no puede equipararse al bíos, no es algo orgánico ni parece ser, más prosaicamente, una condición técnica previa del sistema económico. De hecho sabemos, con el propio Polanyi, que existieron sistemas de intercambio basados en el trueque en los que el dinero simplemente estaba ausente. En gran parte del pensamiento económico, el dinero se presenta como una mercancía entre otras a la que se ha asignado la tarea de actuar como equivalente general (Curtis et al., 2010). Se le excluye de su dimensión de utilidad inmediata, para utilizarlo únicamente como medio de intercambio: ya que no es un objeto de utilidad, sino solo un medio de intercambio. Y como medio de intercambio, si se quiere seguir el enfoque de la economía clásica, sigue siendo el producto del trabajo humano. Si, por el contrario, uno quiere acercarse a las posiciones neoclásicas, es una convención social surgida de la necesidad técnica de superar una economía de trueque. Lo importante aquí es que, en ambos casos, esta mercancía-símbolo sirve de equivalente general, cuyas funciones se resuelven en hacer más fluidos los intercambios y en servir de patrón de valor (unidad de cuenta) para comparar todas las demás mercancías. En resumen, entre un sistema económico basado en el trueque y la economía capitalista monetaria solo habría una diferencia de grado, no de especie.

Llegados a este punto, la pregunta sigue abierta: ¿existe una razón profunda para que Polanyi sitúe el dinero junto al trabajo y la tierra como una mercancía ficticia, o debemos resignarnos a las aporías ya señaladas en esa primera justificación?

El capítulo seis de *La gran transformación* sigue la reconstrucción histórica realizada en las secciones anteriores, donde se demuestra que “hasta nuestra época contemporánea, los mercados han sido únicamente elementos secundarios de la vida económica” (Polanyi, 2007, p. 123). Nótese que aquí Polanyi no argumenta en absoluto que la economía, antes de nuestro tiempo, tuviera una función accesoria para la vida social; argumenta que una forma muy específica de organizar la economía, a saber, los mercados, antes de nuestro tiempo, tenían una función accesoria para la vida económica. Para

comprender la razón por la que Polanyi considera que el dinero, al igual que el trabajo y la tierra, es una mercancía ficticia, debemos despejar una confusión inicial.

La crítica de Polanyi al liberalismo económico y, con ello, también a una cierta simplificación del pensamiento marxiano, no consiste en atribuir a lo económico un carácter de condición fundamental de las relaciones sociales. Consiste en reducir lo económico a la racionalidad del *homo oeconomicus*, es decir, en esa operación que abstrae las relaciones económicas de su consustancial dimensión moral, política y simbólica, para aplastarlas sobre el mero cálculo mercantil de la utilidad. En resumen, la crítica de Polanyi se hace contra la reducción de lo económico a la forma mercancía y, a partir de ahí, contra la reducción de lo social a lo económico: “una economía de mercado no puede existir más que en una sociedad de mercado” (Polanyi, 2007, p. 128). Cuando lo económico es colonizado por la forma mercancía, toda la sociedad acaba siendo moldeada por ese mecanismo.

Por supuesto, la crítica de esta reducción es una crítica de procesos reales que, aunque nunca han alcanzado su forma pura, han afectado concretamente a la sociedad capitalista, desencadenando sistemáticamente crisis sociales y financieras. El proceso real que se critica es el mercado autorregulado en su propensión a la expansión continua. Y aquí llegamos al quid de la cuestión. Criticar el dinero mercancía, es decir, desvelar su carácter ficticio, solo es posible a condición de comprender la relación social de la que es expresión. Y es allí donde no se ha producido la separación de lo económico, lo moral y lo político donde es posible ver mejor de qué relación social es expresión la moneda. El antropólogo Polanyi de los últimos años se vuelve particularmente perspicaz a este respecto. Ciertas intuiciones sobre las funciones del dinero ya estaban presentes en *La gran transformación*, pero es solo en su obra más explícitamente centrada en la antropología económica cuando estas se hacen patentes en sus consecuencias más radicales.

En una conferencia en la Universidad de Yale, sin fecha, pero presumiblemente de la década de 1950, Polanyi, observando las sociedades arcaicas, atribuye al dinero dos funciones fundamentales: a) la de medio de pago y b) la de patrón de valor. Estas, subraya, no tienen por qué ser desempeñadas por el mismo tipo de objeto (Polanyi, 2013, p. 106). El pago se refiere a una relación de deuda-crédito. Lo que se intercambiaba en esas sociedades no solo tenía un valor económico, sino que se refería al establecimiento de obligaciones sociales recíprocas, cuya finalidad era generar y cimentar vínculos sociales en y entre las comunidades. No se trataba solo de cubrir las necesidades de subsistencia, sino al mismo tiempo de construir alianzas, parentescos, relaciones de reciprocidad. En otras palabras: un sistema de obligaciones mutuas basado en valores

comunes. Valores que no solo se referían a la utilidad material de la mercancía, sino que representaban vínculos morales, políticos y simbólicos.

En los mismos años, para la presentación de otra conferencia, a partir de un análisis del trabajo de Malinowski sobre las economías de las islas Trobriand, Polanyi escribe:

En cuanto al problema de la subsistencia, estaba muy extendida la práctica de la reciprocidad, (...) se practicaba un sistema de regalos y contra-regalos. Sólo se apelaba indirectamente al interés económico individual: la motivación determinante era de naturaleza no económica, como el orgullo por el reconocimiento público de las virtudes cívicas como hermano o campesino. (...) Las transacciones kula entre los habitantes del archipiélago abarcaban varios años, cubrían decenas de millas de peligrosas extensiones de mar e incluían miles de objetos individuales intercambiados en forma de regalos entre socios individuales que vivían en islas distantes. *Toda la institución estaba concebida para minimizar la rivalidad y el conflicto y maximizar la alegría de dar y recibir regalos.* (2013, p. 98, la cursiva es mía, traducción propia)

Por otro lado, el patrón de valor hizo del dinero una verdadera institución social que cualificaba las relaciones deudoras: es lo que establece criterios comunes para juzgar lo que vale y cuánto vale. Si, por el contrario, el dinero se mercantiliza en ambas funciones, se reduce efectivamente a una de ellas, a medio de pago. Esta reducción se realiza de hecho en la privatización del dinero, es decir, en el modo bancario como única fuente de creación de dinero. Tenemos así un medio de pago estructuralmente desequilibrado, ya que, como veremos con mayor claridad posteriormente, el coste de acceder a él (el precio del dinero, el tipo de interés) será estructuralmente superior a su valor real (el medio de pago). Dado que su precio y su demanda —de ahí los mecanismos que rigen su emisión por parte de los bancos— están determinados por los flujos del mercado, el aspecto social y políticamente decisivo (la norma de valor: la definición de un criterio común para medir y distinguir entre lo que es socialmente valioso y lo que no lo es) está en sí mismo mercantilizado (Polanyi, 2007, pp. 219-221).

Desde este punto de vista, la razón por la que Polanyi critica la reducción del dinero a mercancía comienza a parecer más clara: cuando uno inserta lo que llamamos dinero en el sistema de la oferta y la demanda, no está simplemente sometiendo al sistema de mercado una mercancía entre otras que le sirve de equivalente general. Lo que se hace consiste, por una parte, en separar por la fuerza lo económico en sentido estricto de los demás vínculos sociales, por tanto, de las racionalidades sociales ajenas a la vinculada al imperativo de acumulación; por otra parte, en reducir la norma de valor,

es decir, ese rasero al que debe referirse todo valor para encontrar una determinación social capaz de expresar criterios comunes de evaluación, a un objeto de venta. Dicho de otro modo, la mercantilización del dinero implica que el crédito social, en su forma impersonal y abstracta, por tanto monetaria, solo se concederá a aquellas iniciativas, empresas, que se comprometan a valorar el dinero que se les conceda. Todas aquellas actividades, por el contrario, que, aunque puedan considerarse socialmente beneficiosas, productoras de valores de uso social, no tengan como objetivo la acumulación monetaria, quedarán excluidas del crédito social. Pero esto, en su forma ideal más acabada, la mercantilización completa del dinero, significaría borrar la función de la norma de valor, es decir, la determinación entre lo que es colectivamente útil y lo que no lo es.

Es en este nivel donde la función de la norma de valor entra en contradicción patente con la definición de mercancía y donde las tesis polonianas se entrelazan con las teorías heterodoxas contemporáneas del dinero. Si es perfectamente posible producir para vender un medio de pago, constituye una contradicción producir y pretender vender la misma determinación del patrón de valor. Y, de nuevo, pretender hacer corresponder la facultad humana de construir sistemas comunes de valor con un precio significa —nada menos que cuando hablamos de la dimensión antropológica del trabajo y de la dimensión medioambiental de la tierra— imaginar que la propia vida humana, en su naturaleza social —el hombre como animal político y lingüístico— se produce para ser vendida.

Moneda y lengua

Christian Marazzi, en un texto titulado *La natura linguistica del denaro* (2013), escribe: “la monetizzazione del pensiero, il nostro ‘pensare monetariamente’, insomma la colonizzazione del linguaggio da parte della moneta, che Nietzsche ad esempio vede nel debito (*schuld*) come, contemporaneamente, debito e colpa (...) ha a che fare con la potenza della negazione” (p. 200). Una norma de valor, un criterio de evaluación, es posible y necesario para un animal capaz de negación, cargado de imaginación y en continuo proceso de diferenciación. Esa antropología que podemos encontrar en Polanyi, es decir, la idea de que la subjetividad humana es irreductible a la racionalidad del *homo oeconomicus*, se basa en la facultad del lenguaje como connotación indispensable de la politicidad humana. Mientras que los animales están atados por sus instintos, es decir, son incapaces de cuestionarse lo posible, los seres humanos, por el contrario, tienen conciencia de la contingencia, es decir, son siempre conscientes de que lo que ocurre aquí y ahora es solo una de las muchas posibilidades y que, por tanto, podría no ocurrir. El ser humano se diferencia de los animales precisamente porque es capaz de

negar la realidad, de captar su lado potencial, no real. Es un animal lingüístico, no tanto porque sea capaz de comunicarse, sino porque es capaz de negar, de coincidir en lo no realizado, en lo que solo es posible.

Siguiendo esta pista, Paolo Virno, como filósofo del lenguaje, dedicó un capítulo de su *Saggio sulla negazione* (2013) a “La negazione come moneta del linguaggio”. Su propuesta consiste en mostrar la homología entre la negación (en el lenguaje) y la moneda (en las relaciones sociales). Esto, en pocas palabras, marca la diferencia entre los enunciados positivos y los negativos; así, convierte a estos últimos en un orden de comparación y significación de los primeros. Mientras que los enunciados positivos pueden representarse mediante una imagen mental que correspondería a su contenido semántico y que puede referirse a una condición fáctica (por ejemplo, “Miguel y José juegan al fútbol”), los enunciados negativos (por ejemplo, “Miguel y José no juegan al fútbol”) no corresponden en absoluto a una imagen mental; podría decirse que funcionan mediante una operación de mera exclusión que, en lugar de consistir en la presentación de una posibilidad, consiste en el acto mental de su eliminación. Al excluir una posibilidad, se deja abierto un número indefinido de posibilidades. Los enunciados negativos solo nos indican lo que no debemos pensar, pero al indicarlo utilizan la imagen mental suscitada por el enunciado negativo en el acto mismo de su exclusión. La negación se vincula así a las posibilidades como una equivalencia general: debemos excluir una posibilidad para que todas las demás sean igualmente posibles. Un enunciado negativo es así mera potencia: decir que “Miguel y José no juegan al fútbol” implica que potencialmente, mientras este enunciado no se intercambie con un enunciado positivo, es *intercambiable* con una multiplicidad de enunciados positivos (por ejemplo, “Miguel y José beben café”; “Miguel y José comen pizza”, etc.), por tanto, aparece a la mente como aquello que, por su propia naturaleza, debe desaparecer.

Del mismo modo, el dinero pierde su contenido semántico, su valor de uso, y se convierte en mera potencialidad, en poder adquisitivo que, como tal, es potencialmente intercambiable por una multiplicidad indefinida de valores de uso. Todos los valores de uso adquieren así un significado económico; o mejor dicho, adquieren un valor de cambio en relación con los demás. Pero, como poder, el dinero está destinado a desaparecer en su uso mismo; en el acto mismo de actualizarlo en tal o cual valor de uso, en el momento mismo en que se ejerce el poder adquisitivo, este, como negación (mera potencialidad), es sustituido por una afirmación (tal o cual valor de uso).

Eso sí, este mecanismo institucional funciona como generador de un orden social concreto en la medida en que ese poder adquisitivo genérico está arraigado en unas relaciones sociales concretas: las relaciones crédito-débito. Como ya escribió Aristóteles

en la *Ethica Nicomachea*:

Una comunità non sorge da due medici ma da un medico e un contadino e, in generale, da individui differenti e non uguali. E però è necessario che essi siano resi uguali. E questo è il motivo per cui tutti i beni tra cui c'è scambio debbono essere in qualche modo confrontabili. A tal fine sorse la moneta che è in un certo modo un intermediario. (Lo Piparo, 2003, p. 126)

Igualar a individuos diferentes mediante abstracciones. Esta es la cuestión. Marazzi (2013) de nuevo: “Una comunità di animali linguistici, cioè di umani fra loro differenti, ha contemporaneamente nel linguaggio e nella moneta la sua forza costitutiva” (p. 196). Los animales lingüísticos están marcados por la diferencia mutua, la unidad según ciertos criterios, según normas de valor, debe ser generada socialmente, deben establecerse o generarse criterios comunes. El dinero como institución social se presenta así como un dispositivo de control que se construye a través de un sistema de recompensas y sanciones, es decir, de reconocimiento de las acciones de los miembros que participan en esa institución. Las recompensas y las sanciones, sin embargo, necesitan un parámetro —de nuevo, una norma de valor— que defina las razones de estos reconocimientos, para poder discernir entre acciones sociales cooperativas y destructivas, merecedoras de crédito o deuda.

¿Qué ocurre si lo negativo se impone a lo positivo, a la definición misma de una norma, a una forma de institucionalizar las relaciones? Permaneciendo aún en el ámbito de la filosofía del lenguaje, esto conduce a la afasia, a la incapacidad de articular, de actualizar lo que también es potencialmente posible. La superación de lo negativo, la apertura indeterminada a cualquier posibilidad, implica precisamente la imposibilidad de pasar a tal o cual determinación positiva:

Lenunciato senza predecessori e senza eredi intrattiene intimi rapporti con l'afasia: la presuppone e la preannuncia. La performance, poiché è un prototipo che non inaugura alcuna serie, somiglia fatalmente a un *atto superstite*. Va da sé che l'atto superstite attesta la sopravvenuta inconvertibilità della potenza in atti. Ma, oltre ad attestarla, esso non manca di promuovere e corroborare questa inconvertibilità: la realizzazione di una singola performance comporta, infatti, l'inibizione perentoria di qualsiasi diversa realizzazione. La performance è l'atto che, per il solo fatto di aver luogo, sabota e interdice ogni altra attuazione. (Virno, 2021, pp.101-102)

Virno (2013) atribuye esta afasia a la desproporción que implica la falta de una forma de limitación del poder: a la ausencia de una fuerza katechónica que lo mantenga dentro de

una forma. Otros, dentro de un marco inmanentista, la relacionarían más bien con la ineficacia de las instituciones para proporcionar un modelo positivo de acción (Deleuze, 1997). Pero más allá del horizonte ontológico de referencia, es precisamente la estrecha homología con la mercancía-dinero lo que nos permite enmarcar la conexión entre la deflagración de la norma de valor y los procesos históricamente determinados por la mercantilización del dinero. En definitiva, en términos marxianos, entre la valorización de las capacidades cognitivo-lingüísticas y la crisis de la mensurabilidad del valor (Vercellone & Dughera, 2019).

Lo económico se *desarticula* porque “un mercado autorregulador exige nada menos que la división institucional de la sociedad en una esfera económica y en una esfera política” (Polanyi, 2007, pp. 125-126). La impotencia y la afasia de la mano de obra actual resultan precisamente de esta neutralización de la dimensión política inherente a la definición de normas comunes de valor, es decir, de la valorización de la facultad del lenguaje: la dimensión política transformadora se remonta continuamente a la flexibilidad laboral, la precariedad existencial, la adaptación sumisa, la resolución de problemas, entre otras cosas. Esta neutralización, típica de la gubernamentalidad neoliberal, con su propensión a invertir todas las esferas de la vida, hace saltar por los aires cualquier posibilidad de distinguir el proceso de acumulación de dinero en sí mismo y una definición autónoma de la calidad de vida, de la relación con la naturaleza y de las relaciones sociales. Dicho de otro modo, en su manifestación más cruda, el PIB se convierte en el indicador de último recurso para determinar la “sostenibilidad” de la provisión de crédito público; por tanto, todas las demás dimensiones “políticas” (equidad social, sostenibilidad ecológica, niveles de democratización, etc.) deben subordinarse a él.

En un intento de mostrar la falacia teórica y concreta de esta relación de subordinación —fundada precisamente en la mercantilización de la tierra, el trabajo y el dinero— resulta muy útil la distinción recientemente resucitada por Vercellone (2014), pero ya bien presente en los textos marxianos, entre valor mercantil y riqueza social. La riqueza social constituye un dominio mucho más amplio que el valor mercantil, ya que está formada por todos los valores de uso existentes, ya sean productos del trabajo o de la naturaleza. Además, su producción no depende necesariamente de una subjetividad consagrada a la acumulación de dinero, puede depender, por el contrario, de deseos, pasiones, modos de vida total o sustancialmente ajenos al imperativo de la acumulación monetaria. El valor, en cambio, representa la parte de la riqueza que ha sido subsumida en la forma mercancía, por el mercado, y que solo encuentra su fuente en las dificultades de la producción expresadas en tiempo de trabajo. La subjetividad que impulsa la valorización tiene como objetivo el crecimiento del capital que encuentra en el beneficio monetario su razón de ser.

Como es bien sabido, la primacía del valor mercantil se legitimó sobre la base de un discurso que atribuía al capital una función histórica: mediante la valorización de sí mismo, pondría a trabajar la fuerza de trabajo de forma cada vez más productiva, produciendo finalmente más riqueza, así como una masa de valor. Desde la mano invisible de Smith hasta la catálisis del mercado de Hayek, la legitimación liberal del capital se basa en este argumento: al perseguir cada cual egoístamente la valorización de su propio capital (más valor), por heterogénesis de fines acabamos generando más valor de uso para todos (más riqueza); la violencia y las contradicciones, si las hay, acaban considerándose como el precio necesario que hay que pagar a la historia en la lucha contra la escasez. Marx criticó esta teoría, no como falsa, sino como una mistificación interna de la realidad social. La racionalidad capitalista, según el ciclo D-M-D', se basa en la producción de plusvalía, es decir, en una relación de mando-obediencia, en la cual prima la dependencia material entre las clases sociales. Del hecho empírico de que en cierta etapa, y en ciertos lugares, ambas coincidieran, no puede deducirse una conexión lógica. La producción de riqueza no se deriva necesariamente de la producción de valor, y esta última no genera necesariamente la primera. Sin embargo, las fases de aumento simultáneo de la riqueza y del valor han llevado a muchos marxistas occidentales a creer que esta función era consustancial al proceso capitalista de valorización. Esto ha permitido una peligrosa subestimación de ese carácter ciego y destructivo del mercado capitalista tan bien subrayado por Polanyi. La subsunción de la riqueza en la lógica del valor no es más que el proceso de mercantilización ficticia de aquello que ontológicamente presupone y excede la forma mercancía. La crisis de la mensurabilidad del valor que se presenta fenoménicamente como una crisis financiera desconectada de la economía real es el resultado más visible. Y es precisamente dentro de estas crisis, según Polanyi, donde se desencadenan los contramovimientos de desmercantilización dentro de los cuales puede establecerse una economía monetaria no mercantil.

Dinero más allá del dispositivo soberano

Sin embargo, antes de establecer la conexión entre el dispositivo monetario y las relaciones de producción alternativas, hay que subrayar que sería reduccionista atribuir a Polanyi la idea de que el Estado es el centro de regulación o de desvinculación de la entropía del mercado capitalista². Esto puede entenderse precisamente tomando en serio su concepción del dinero como institución política.

² Giacomo Marramao (1997) vio a este respecto en el pensamiento de Polanyi la clave para ir más allá de un debate filosófico-político aplastado sobre la dicotomía Estado-mercado.

Como hemos visto, para Polanyi, tiene dos funciones fundamentales: actúa como medio de pago, es decir, como vector a través del cual funcionan los vínculos sociales, y como patrón de valor, es decir, garantiza unos puntos de referencia comunes mediante los cuales será posible discernir lo que vale de lo que no, según ratios cuantitativos. Los coeficientes de crédito se refieren a una multiplicidad de contenidos diferentes, por lo que es necesario constituir un patrón común que los iguale en cierto sentido. Sin embargo, aunque la determinación de esta norma no puede reducirse a una mercancía, es decir, a algo que debe producirse con vistas a su venta, para Polanyi sería profundamente destabilizador hacerla derivar de algún tipo de decisión fundacional, emanación de una organización que detenta el monopolio de la toma de decisiones públicas en una sociedad determinada. Las normas de valor, aunque en cierta medida puedan estar influidas conscientemente por algún organismo político, pertenecen ontológicamente a dinámicas históricas, culturales y sociales que escapan irremediabilmente a un intento de programación o planificación desde arriba. Polanyi, insistiendo precisamente en la homología con el lenguaje, lo dice claramente: en lugar de tomarlo como una institución pública o, peor aún, como un mero instrumento del Estado, “el dinero debería definirse como un sistema semántico, aproximadamente análogo al lenguaje” (2013, p. 46, mi traducción), es decir, como una institución integrada que debe estudiarse “*en el marco de la estructura de la sociedad vista como un todo*” (Polanyi, 2013, p. 100, mi traducción). Es precisamente la analogía con el lenguaje lo que hace del dinero, y de las relaciones sociales de las que es expresión, algo irreductible a un centro de decisión. Pretender remontar el sistema de coordinación monetaria al dispositivo soberano sería, desde este punto de vista, como intentar decretar por ley las estructuras y las reglas del lenguaje. Los procesos de producción, por tanto de crédito y de validación social, requieren dinámicas innovadoras, creativas y comunicativas: superan continuamente cualquier intento de establecer la primacía de la autoconciencia e implican una normatividad inmanente a las relaciones sociales en las que se institucionaliza la dimensión no mercantil, por tanto propiamente política, del trabajo, la tierra y el dinero.

Por el contrario, la reivindicación de la llamada “soberanía monetaria” surge como resultado de las crisis producidas por la mercantilización del dinero, es decir, del *laissez-faire*. Para Polanyi, el paso de la primacía del libre comercio al nacionalismo liberal cobra fuerza precisamente en las crisis inflacionistas producidas por la mercantilización del dinero. En este contexto, si bien la gestión política del dinero resulta evidente e inevitable, no favorece automáticamente su democratización. Por ejemplo, a principios del siglo XX, el control político de la oferta monetaria por parte del banco central se consideraba una injerencia arbitraria en su forma de dispensar el dinero, es

decir, la financiarización de la economía; sin embargo, cuando el movimiento de los precios interiores, necesario para conservar la estabilidad de los cambios, fue más amplio, cuando saltaba del 10 al 30 por 100, la situación cambió por completo. Un descenso semejante del nivel de los precios iba a generalizar miseria y destrucción. Las monedas estaban siendo gestionadas: el hecho iba a ser de una importancia capital, puesto que *esto quería decir que los métodos del banco central eran un asunto político*, es decir, que el cuerpo político podía adoptar decisiones al respecto. Y, de hecho, el sistema del banco central tuvo una gran importancia institucional, ya que la política monetaria se vio así englobada en la esfera de lo político, de donde se derivaron inmensas consecuencias (Polanyi, 2007, p. 317).

Fue precisamente la emergencia de la naturaleza política del dinero entre los años 1920 y 1930 lo que condujo, sobre todo allí donde la crisis era más profunda, en Italia y Alemania, al nacionalismo que, ciertamente, centralizaría la cuestión del dinero, sacándolo del estatus de mera mercancía, pero aboliendo los derechos políticos y cualquier instancia de democratización.

Por otra parte, la vía socialista antimonetaria tampoco le parecía a Polanyi una respuesta aceptable. En una comparación con Von Mises³, ya señalaba en un artículo de 1922, dirigido a “los hombres prácticos del socialismo”, que la idea de regular una gran economía sin alguna forma de intercambio (Polanyi, 1922) sería una ilusión perjudicial. En resumen,

Pur dichiarando subito la sua lontananza dalla teoria capitalista, mostrò fin dall'inizio la sua avversione anche nei confronti di un modello di economia centralizzata, preferendo a questa una società organizzata in maniera funzionale, secondo i modelli del socialismo inglesi molto lontani dall'esperimento sovietico allora in corso. Si può in un certo senso affermare che l'analisi di Polanyi non era tanto centrata sulla possibilità di realizzare il calcolo economico in un'economia pianificata, quanto piuttosto in un'economia non capitalista, la quale non avrebbe dovuto essere obbligatoriamente di tipo collettivista. (Becchio, 2002, p. 9)

Polanyi traza así una línea de discontinuidad con la dicotomía entre mercado capitalista y planificación socialista configurada sobre la oposición entre economía monetaria y economía planificada. Esta discontinuidad le empuja a investigar la posibilidad lógica

³ En los años 20 se dedicó a refutar teóricamente la planificación socialista.

y la eficacia histórica de una forma alternativa de producir dinero, tanto a la capitalista como a la centralización estatal de la planificación productiva. Una posibilidad/eficacia que puede buscarse precisamente en la dinámica histórica del capitalismo en virtud del hecho de que el dinero, como mercancía ficticia, nunca es completamente reducible al modo bancario de emisión de dinero; no sin desencadenar un contramovimiento que se sustancia en una producción de dinero —no mercancía sino poder adquisitivo— de hecho sin contrapartida: en forma de deuda estructuralmente impagable. Esto se debe a que su completa privatización, la totalización de la forma bancaria de dispensar dinero, entra en contradicción con su propia lógica: sin una creación alternativa de dinero, sin la inyección de dinero sin contrapartida, nos encontramos con crisis estructurales que requieren el control político del dinero. Donde por *dinero sin contrapartida*, entendemos esa creación de dinero que se inyecta en el circuito económico sin que la deuda que genera se reembolse realmente, salvo mediante la acumulación de más deuda, mayor e igualmente insolvente. El dinero sin contrapartida de facto es, por tanto, lo contrario de la forma bancaria de dispensar dinero. La necesidad de generar dinero sin contrapartida surge históricamente con la crisis de la mercantilización del dinero y, por tanto, con la reafirmación de su dimensión política. Sin embargo, puede utilizarse tanto en una economía de guerra (Brancaccio et al., 2022) como para el establecimiento de una economía monetaria no mercantil basada en otros principios de producción no orientados a la acumulación de beneficios y rentas; es decir como institucionalización histórica de procesos de desmercantilización del trabajo y de la tierra (Harribey, 2020).

¿Una moneda como institución de lo común?

Hemos visto que históricamente el contramovimiento de la moneda sin contrapartida puede generar repliegues soberanistas y nacionalistas extremadamente destructivos, como en el caso del fascismo y el nazismo, y que las soluciones antimonetarias, según Polanyi, son altamente problemáticas en una sociedad compleja. Sin embargo, aunque este autor había intuido la necesidad de pensar en formas de autogobierno económico inmanentes a las relaciones sociales, aún no había desarrollado plenamente la desmercantilización del dinero en relación a nuevas relaciones de producción con principios propios de organización y socialización. Y es exactamente en este punto donde, más allá de Polanyi, la teoría de los bienes comunes y de lo común puede ofrecer una contribución fundamental.

Aquí, en particular, nos interesa sondear las condiciones de posibilidad de una moneda *incorporada* (*embedded*), no sujeta ni a la forma bancaria de producir dinero ni a la

forma soberana. Y es precisamente en este nivel donde el análisis de Polanyi puede cruzarse con las teorías de lo común y de los comunes, que han trabajado en una instancia productiva de autogobierno más allá de lo público y lo privado. ¿Pueden las prácticas de “autoprotección de la sociedad” encontrar su articulación en una especie de comunización del dinero? Es decir, ¿son posibles mecanismos de financiación y validación social capaces de escapar al dispositivo del mercado capitalista y de la soberanía estatal?

Un primer terreno de investigación podría determinarse en el vínculo entre una nueva forma de dispensar el dinero y una dimensión global de la ciudadanía y los derechos. La obra de Stefano Rodotà, aunque no entra en las exigencias de la reestructuración monetaria, al insistir en la conexión entre los bienes comunes, la ciudadanía global y la efectividad de los derechos fundamentales, avanzó sustancialmente en esta dirección. Ciertamente, históricamente, el ejercicio efectivo de los derechos fundamentales de la ciudadanía —como la educación, la salud, el conocimiento, etc.— ha estado garantizado en gran medida por la relación entre la ciudadanía y el Estado. Sin embargo, afirma Rodotà, es precisamente el grado de interdependencia global que ha asumido la producción y reproducción de ciertos bienes —pensemos en los bienes naturales y digitales— lo que hace necesaria otra dimensión de la ciudadanía:

Oggi sono soprattutto i beni comuni – dall’acqua all’aria, alla conoscenza – al centro di un conflitto davvero planetario, di cui ci parlano le cronache, confermandone la natura direttamente politica, e che non si lascia racchiudere nello schema tradizionale del rapporto tra proprietà pubblica e proprietà privata. Nuove parole percorrono il mondo: software libero, no copyright, accesso libero all’acqua, al cibo, ai farmaci, a Internet, e queste diverse forme di accesso assumono la veste dei diritti fondamentali. (Rodotà, 2012, p. 111)

Este vínculo entre bienes comunes y derechos fundamentales libera a los primeros de una dimensión localista y de una concepción “naturalista” (como suele ser el caso de Ostrom), y dota a los segundos de una medida de eficacia vinculada ahora a dinámicas que van más allá de la dimensión estatal, asumiendo una perspectiva inmediatamente global. Eficacia que, sin embargo, si no está respaldada por una forma de producción monetaria adecuada a ella, corre el riesgo de ser siempre puesta en tela de juicio.

Aunque este vínculo entre lo común y los derechos fundamentales nos sitúa en una perspectiva global, por otro lado, a menudo se ha pensado en él como una mera barrera antieconómica al avance de la subsunción capitalista (Dardot & Laval, 2014). Si se toma desde una perspectiva extramonetaria, se acaba pensando en el común como una

reedición del *Estado del bienestar*: un “coste” que, por muy necesario, ético y/o “justo” que sea, quizá por estar vinculado a derechos fundamentales, debe ser soportado por la fiscalidad a costa de las “clases productivas”. Lo que nos devuelve a un paradigma redistributivo, ligado por tanto a la mediación estatal y a la primacía de la acumulación capitalista de la que solo pueden derivarse recursos financieros⁴.

En este sentido, Luigi Ferrajoli (2022) apoyó recientemente la necesidad de una “constitucionalización de la Tierra” ante la necesidad y la urgencia, frente a las crisis mundiales, de ir más allá del constitucionalismo estatal y hacer frente a la emergencia medioambiental y a las catástrofes ecológicas cada vez más frecuentes. Estas propuestas, si quieren dotarse de sólidos resortes de eficacia, deben vincularse a la cuestión de una nueva gubernamentalidad monetaria; es decir, de una forma de producir dinero destinada a financiar y validar las actividades de producción de riqueza social, basada en los principios de lo común como modo de producción (Branciaccio et al., 2021). Esto daría una perspectiva material a las propuestas de un nuevo constitucionalismo transnacional, más allá de la apelación ética-moral, aunque justificada, a los derechos fundamentales y a la “razonabilidad” de la redistribución de la riqueza frente a los niveles actuales de desigualdad económica y social.

En esta línea, el economista francés Jean Marie Harribey (2020) demostró el sinsentido de la idea de que los sistemas de bienestar, y toda producción monetaria no mercantil, dependen de una fiscalidad previa. Del mismo modo que una empresa privada se financia mediante el acceso al crédito a través del cual produce bienes que luego intentará vender en el mercado a los consumidores, del mismo modo, los servicios colectivos de bienestar se financian en los bancos centrales y producen bienes y servicios para la ciudadanía, los impuestos no son más que un pago socializado por la producción no acumulativa. Sostener que los “ciudadanos” —es decir, el capital y el trabajo— financian el bienestar, sería como sostener que los consumidores financian las empresas. La diferencia sustancial entre los dos modos de validación social reside en que la producción del bienestar pasa por decisiones políticas, mientras que la producción de bienes es un asunto exclusivamente “privado”. Por lo tanto, este mecanismo de financiación alternativo también puede fundamentar la forma en que el dinero es producido por las instituciones monetarias transnacionales actuales.

⁴ También hay que subrayar que los avances más significativos en derechos fundamentales y niveles de democratización, incluso en la concepción clásica de ciudadanía ligada al Estado, fueron garantizados precisamente por una emisión de dinero, efectivamente, sin contrapartida y antagónica a la lógica de acumulación de dinero a través del dinero. Aquí no hay espacio para reconstruir esta dinámica histórica y la ambivalencia dentro de los sistemas de Estado de bienestar.

Ese vínculo entre bienes comunes y derechos fundamentales, en la medida de su eficacia, abre una inversión del modo capitalista de producir el dinero. Si la tendencia a la mercantilización del dinero solo puede conducir a profundas crisis monetarias, que se “resuelven” puntualmente mediante una creación “de emergencia” de dinero, de facto, sin contrapartida —de la que las recientes *políticas monetarias no convencionales* no son sino la última manifestación—, entonces, la intervención de “rescate” operada por los bancos centrales, el mencionado “momento Polanyi”, se vuelve decisiva cuando las crisis monetarias ponen en cuestión la realización misma de los beneficios y las rentas. La creación ex-nihilo de liquidez, políticamente controlada, se vuelve útil para reemplazar, al menos parcialmente, las rentas perdidas. Con estas medidas (*flexibilización cuantitativa, fondos de recuperación, etc.*), como han argumentado Couppey-Soubeyran y Delandre (2021), tenemos la otra cara de la moneda: los bancos centrales se han abierto de hecho a una nueva forma de producción de dinero. La creación sin contrapartida de dinero destinado a comprar títulos financieros malos. Esta forma de producir dinero, si se sintoniza con las dinámicas de democratización, podría abrir una transición monetaria capaz de poner el dinero al servicio de la equidad social y de una verdadera transición ecológica. Para ello, tal y como había argumentado Polanyi, la primera condición es “desvincular el dinero de la deuda”, es decir, “le fait que la monnaie ainsi mise en circulation n’a plus comme contrepartie, à l’actif de l’institution qui l’émet, un prêt (de la banque centrale aux banques) ou un crédit remboursable (des banques à leurs clients)” (Couppey-Soubeyran & Delandre, 2021, p.18). Este dinero sin reciprocidad, al que denominan “dinero voluntario”, si se emplea en el marco de una gobernanza política y democrática, podría utilizarse para financiar aquellas actividades que producen riqueza social dentro de una economía monetaria no mercantil:

Le mode volontaire de création monétaire vise justement à ce qu’elle le devienne. Il vise à établir la monnaie en tant qu’institution du bien commun au service d’objectifs cruciaux pour le maintien de la communauté (sa cohésion sociale, sa survie écologique...), décidés démocratiquement. Il encadrerait la monnaie dans la société, au sens où il créerait une potentialité énorme pour répondre aux enjeux sociétaux sans se heurter à la contrainte de soutenabilité de la dette publique, qui limite la capacité de réponse des autorités publiques à ces enjeux. Il la libérerait aussi de l’injonction totalement paradoxale, induite par le mode bancaire de création monétaire, d’avoir à soutenir sans cesse la croissance économique pour financer une transition écologique censée limiter l’impact environnemental et climatique négatif de la croissance économique. (Couppey-Soubeyran & Delandre, 2021, p. 30)

La necesidad de democratizar la forma en que los bancos centrales dispensan el dinero está en el centro de los debates más avanzados de la economía heterodoxa; sin embargo, lo que a nuestro juicio puede sustentar este tipo de reivindicación es precisamente su constitucionalización. Es precisamente ese vínculo entre ciudadanía global, derechos fundamentales y bienes comunes el que puede encontrar su feliz entrelazamiento con la constitucionalización de una forma de producir dinero orientada a satisfacer las necesidades colectivas y a potenciar la reproducción social en torno a los principios de autogobierno de lo común.

Referencias

- Aglietta, M., Ahmed, P.O., & Ponsot, J.F. (2016). *La Monnaie. Entre dettes et souveraineté*. Odil Jacob.
- Amato, M. (2016). *L'énigme della moneta e l'inizio dell'economia*. Orthotes.
- Becchio, G. (2002). Polanyi e la visione austriaca del mercato. *Working papers series* 03/2002. Cesmep, Università di Torino.
- Curtis, D., Irvine, I., & Begg, D. (2010). *Microeconomics*. McGraw-Hill.
- Bollier, D., & Conaty, P. (2015, September 8-10). *Democratic money and capital for the commons*. A Report on a Commons Strategies Group Workshop in cooperation with the Heinrich Böll Foundation. https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/democratic_money_report_executive_summary_1.pdf
- Braga, E., & Fumagalli, A. (2015). *La moneta del comune. La sfida dell'istituzione finanziaria del comune*. Alfabeta edizioni.
- Brancaccio, E., Giammetti, R., & Lucarelli, S. (2022). *La guerra capitalista: Competizione, centralizzazione, nuovo conflitto imperialista*. Mimesis.
- Brancaccio F., Giuliani, A., & Vercellone, C. (2021). *Le commun comme mode de production*. L'éclat.
- Couppéy-Soubeyran, J., & Delandre, P. (2021). *La transition monétaire. Pour une monnaie au service du bien commun*. Institute Veblen de réforme économique/Etopia. https://www.veblen-institute.org/IMG/pdf/la_transition_monetaire_note_veblen_mai_2021.pdf
- Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2014). *Commun. Essai sur la révolution au XXI siècle*. La Découverte.
- De Carolis, M. (2020). Gli automatismi distruttivi della società moderna in Karl Polanyi. *Politica & Società*, (9.3), 301-318.
- Deleuze, G. (1997). *Empirisme et subjectivité: Essai sur la nature humaine*. PUF.
- Dughera, S., & Vercellone, C. (2019). Metamorphosis of the theory of value and becoming-rent of profit. In *Cognitive Capitalism, Welfare and Labour* (pp.33-60). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315623320-3>
- Eich, S. (2022). *The Currency of Politics: The Political Theory of Money from Aristotle to Keynes*. Princeton University Press.
- Ferrajoli, L. (2022). *Per una costituzione della terra. L'umanità al bivio*. Feltrinelli.
- Foucault, M. (2004a). *Sécurité, territoire, population. Cours au Collège de France 1977-1978*. Gallimard.
- Foucault, M. (2004b). *Naissance de la biopolitique. Cours au Collège de France 1978-1979*. Gallimard.
- Graeber, D. (2011). *Debt. The First 5,000 Years*. Melville House.

- Harribey, J. M. (2020). *Le trou noir du capitalisme*. Le bord de l'eau.
- Lo Piparo, F. (2003). *Aristotele e il linguaggio. Cosa fa di una lingua una lingua*. Laterza.
- Marazzi, C. (2014). La natura linguistica del denaro. *Rivista Italiana di filosofia del linguaggio*, 186-206. <http://www.rifl.unical.it/index.php/rifl/article/view/207>
- Marazzi, C. (2016). *Che cos'è il plusvalore?*. Casagrande.
- Marramao, G. (1997). Dono, scambio, obbligazione: Il contributo di Karl Polanyi alla filosofia sociale. *Inchiesta*, 27(117/118), 35-44.
- Martin, F. (2014). *Denaro. La storia vera: quello che il capitalismo non ha capito*. De Agostini Libri.
- Polanyi, K. (2007). *La gran transformación*. Ediciones de La Piqueta.
- Polanyi, K. (2013). *Per un nuovo Occidente. Scritti 1919-1958*. Il Saggiatore.
- Polanyi, K. (1922). Sozialistische Rechnunslegung. *Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 49(2), 377-420.
- Rodotà, S. (2012). *Il diritto di avere diritti*. Laterza.
- Seccareccia, M., & Correa, E. (2017). Supra-national money and the Euro crisis: Lessons from Karl Polanyi. *Forum for Social Economics*, 46(3), 252-274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07360932.2015.1075896>
- Servet, J.M. (2017). *Institution monétaire et commun (s)*. Économie et institutions, 26.
- Szelényi, I., & Mihályi, P. (2021). Karl Polanyi: a theorist of mixed economies. *Theory and Society*, 50(3), 443-461.
- Vercellone, C. (2014). La legge del valore-plusvalore nella dinamica storica del capitalismo: un'analisi neo-operaista. *Critica Marxista*, (1), 64-73.
- Virno, P. (2013). *Saggio sulla negazione*. Bollati Boringhieri.
- Virno, P. (2021). *Dell'impotenza*. Bollati Boringhieri.

Mitchell Gallagher Mitchell Gallagher is Ph.D. candidate at the Wayne State University and achieved a Master of Arts - East Asian Studies (University of Sheffield) and a Bachelor of Arts - Politics (Liverpool John Moores University).

After six years of professional experience in China, his contributions to education were awarded from the Beijing College of Finance & Commerce. He is the author of “Polling to Vaccination Stations: Brexit’s Influence on Immunisation Uptake”, in *New Perspectives* (2024).

Contact: hj0003@wayne.edu

TWEET WARS: CHINA'S ANTI-US PROPAGANDA THROUGH POLITICAL CARTOONS*

Mitchell Gallagher
Wayne State University

GUERRA DE TUIITS: LA PROPAGANDA ANTI EE.UU. DE CHINA A TRAVÉS DE LAS CARICATURAS POLÍTICAS

Abstract

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) utilises strict censorship to enhance its legitimacy and justify its actions. In the digital age, the internet is a vital platform for disseminating propaganda to domestic and global audiences. Political cartoons transpire as a potent tool, employing parody to transmit political messages. Their effectiveness lies in their faculty to simplify complex ideas, provide humour, and reinforce biases. China's diplomatic approach has shifted to wolf warrior diplomacy, a use of authoritative language to safeguard its interests. Chinese diplomats increasingly use X (formerly Twitter) to convey political messages, and growingly, anti-US sentiments through negative portrayals. This paper reviews the thematic relationship between tweets by the Chinese government and anti-US propaganda political cartoons, exploring how tweets from government officials influence the creation of

* Reception date: 27th March 2023; acceptance date: 30th March 2023. The essay is the issue of a research project carried out within the College of Liberal Arts and Science at Wayne State University

negative portrayals of the US. Employing a content analysis methodology, the study explores tweets and political cartoons, revealing insights into China's soft power and propaganda efforts. It was found that there is a significant correlation between anti-US sentiment expressed through tweets and political cartoons, with variations depending on specific categories of political subject matter and presidential administrations.

Keywords

Chinese Communist Party; propaganda; political cartoons; social media; X (Twitter); soft power

Resumen

El Partido Comunista Chino (PCC) utiliza la censura estricta para aumentar su legitimidad y justificar sus acciones. En la era digital, Internet es una plataforma vital para difundir propaganda a audiencias domésticas y globales. Las caricaturas políticas se revelan como una potente herramienta que recurre a la parodia para transmitir mensajes políticos. Su eficacia reside en su facultad para simplificar ideas complejas, proporcionar humor y reforzar prejuicios. El enfoque diplomático de China ha cambiado hacia la diplomacia del "lobo guerrero", un uso del lenguaje autoritario para salvaguardar sus intereses. Los diplomáticos chinos utilizan cada vez más X (antes Twitter) para transmitir mensajes políticos y, cada vez más, sentimientos antiestadounidenses a través de representaciones negativas. Este artículo examina la relación temática entre los tuits del gobierno chino y las caricaturas políticas de propaganda antiestadounidense, y explora cómo los tuits de los funcionarios del gobierno influyen en la creación de representaciones negativas de Estados Unidos. Empleando una metodología de análisis de contenido, el estudio examina los tuits y las caricaturas políticas, revelando datos sobre el poder blando y los esfuerzos propagandísticos de China. Se constata que existe una correlación significativa entre el sentimiento antiestadounidense expresado a través de tuits y caricaturas políticas, con variaciones según categorías específicas de temas políticos y administraciones presidenciales.

Palabras clave

Partido Comunista Chino; propaganda; caricaturas políticas; medios sociales; X (Twitter); poder blando

1. Introduction

In the post-Chinese Civil War epoch, punctuated collaboration and discord delineates the historical trajectory of Sino-American engagements. The US refuted the legitimacy of the People's Republic of China's administration and pursued a containment policy toward communist states, leading both to endure an extended interval of diminished direct contact. Notwithstanding, in the early 1970s, the US embarked to ameliorate its ties with China, commencing with President Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972. Meanwhile, Sino-American relations oscillated, encompassing a *mélange* of alliance and enmity. The bilateral economic interconnections expanded expeditiously; however, schisms emerged referring to human rights, commerce, and the Taiwan quandary. As the twenty-first century unfolded, the subtleties and inherent tensions intensified, displaying pronounced strain. The two nations locked heads in a trade war, with unremitting conflicts arising in relation to human rights, intellectual property theft, and maritime altercations in the South China Sea. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated extant challenges, with Washington accusing Beijing of paltrily addressing the outbreak's inception and premeditatedly circulating disinformation. While both countries are not presently enmeshed in a cold war, an ostensible trend toward such a backdrop has surfaced, rendering this conclusion reasonable.

Stringent censorship, based on the party's defensive posture to defend its actions and legitimacy to govern, predominantly supports the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) propaganda structure. In the social media era, the internet developed as a vital channel for disseminating propaganda material related to the party's domestic and foreign policy achievements, as well as the purported deficiencies of democratic politics, to domestic and international audiences. Deploying sardonic cartoons constitutes a salient propaganda technique. Cartoons constitute an efficacious propaganda modality, stemming from an assortment of factors. Among these is the aptitude of cartoons to condense abstruse political notions into simplistic and visually engaging forms readily comprehensible to a diverse populace. Further supplementing their potency is the judicious agency of comedy and satire, optimising the appeal and retention of messages. Cartoons are adept in buttressing preexisting biases and stereotypes, thereby increasing the efficacy of the intended propaganda¹. The swift diffusion of messages through the

¹ In this study, propaganda is defined as a systematic and deliberate form of communication or information dissemination with the intent to manipulate, or influence public attitudes, beliefs and opinions, involving the selective presentation of information with a biased or persuasive slant, to advance a particular agenda or ideology

distribution and vast reach of cartoons across disparate media platforms yields an optimal degree of influence.

Concurrently notoriety for embracing an assertive mode of diplomatic interaction, dubbed “*wolf warrior diplomacy*”², distinguished by deploying verbal affronts or intimidating language tactics against violators of China’s vested interests, relative to territorial claims, economic, and political development. This diplomatic modus operandi witnessed an escalation in modern times. Despite its acclaim, the wolf warrior diplomacy approach led to deleterious repercussions for China’s international stature. Although proscribed in China, X (formerly Twitter) became a propitious platform for Chinese diplomats and spokespersons to laud China’s accomplishments and react to contemporary events. As Sino-American political relations continue deteriorating, it has become increasingly commonplace for Chinese diplomats to circulate anti-US³ messages and negative impressions of the US through tweets. The present study is committed to investigation the nature and frequency of political cartoons casting the US in an unfavourable light, with an aim to obtain a greater understanding regarding the degree to which the Chinese government and stateaffiliated media are synchronised in their corresponding messaging.

My study is inspired by current US-China relations, marked by growing consternations over propaganda influence on public attitudes. While past studies surveyed propaganda and political cartoons, this paper adopts a unique approach by focusing on the Chinese government and stateaffiliated media coordination. The prospective implications are substantial, as the findings could offer significant revelations into the Chinese government’s communication ploys and their impact on US perceptions. This paper aims to add to the current literature on propaganda and political cartoons by obtaining innovative understandings of the correlation between the Chinese government and stateaffiliated media and their impact on anti-US outlook. In doing so, this paper aims to bridge a void in the existing academic work on political communication. While prior research has explored miscellaneous facets of propaganda and political cartoons, there remains a scarcity of comprehensive analyses pertaining to the coordinated efforts of the Chinese government and stateaffiliated media through political cartoons. By

² ‘*Wolf warrior*’ diplomacy is named after a 2017 patriotic film series renowned for its confrontational and pugnacious style with diplomats and government ministers forcefully rebuking any perceived critiques of the CCP and its decision-making.

³ Anti-US propaganda is defined as a deliberate, systematic effort using communication channels to depict the United States negatively. This form of propaganda central to the study, refers to aims to shape public perception, generate distrust, and promote hostility. Such propaganda often encompasses exaggerations and distortions to serve political agendas, and is commonly used to influence public opinion both domestically and internationally.

highlighting this aspect of Chinese political communication, subsequent findings are expected enhance our understanding of how nations strategically employ visual media to influence global public opinion. What is more, this study not only aspires to discover the mechanics of Chinese political cartoon propaganda, but also to add to a broader discourse on international communication dynamics. In an era marked by intensified global information flows and diplomatic strategies, the discoveries gleaned from this research hold the potential to inform not only academic circles but also policymakers and practitioners in the field of international relations.

2. Political Cartoons

A pervasive element within editorial pages of magazines and newspapers, political cartoons serve as a medium to communicate delicate political predicaments from satirical images, summarising current events in a humorous visual form. Academic literature on political cartoons contains inquiries into their historical and cultural significance to direct public perception, utility in propaganda and satire, and efficacy in delivering political messages. Cartoon analyses observe their visual and rhetorical strategies, as well as their representation of complicated political matters, informed by a diverse cluster of disciplinary perspectives in communication studies, political science, sociology, and art history. Cartoons signify the political climate and future plans of politicians (Edwards, 1993), with the importance of language functioning as a means of sharing attitudes and developing cognitive and social aspects. Editorial cartoons are instrumental in agendasetting Walker (2003), functioning as a gadget for society's dominant elite, and reflecting the interests of media proprietorship. Cartoons can transcend mere commentary of political actors, events, and circumstances. Rather, their engagement reflects a profound acumen and cognisance of the political landscape in features and nuances by uncovering currents of hegemonic contention and the exercise of power dynamics (Ghilzai, 2020). A hegemonic appearance, epitomising ascendancy or dominion of a singular entity or societal faction over its counterparts, is emblematically encapsulated within their visual narratives. In this symbolic scope, cartoons adeptly articulate strenuous contestations and stratagems of political entities in their fervent pursuit of ascendancy and status within the political arena.

Political cartoons wield an unparalleled influence on their readers, frequently traversing cognitive barriers to exert a persuasive effect on opinions with those in positions of authority possessing an acumen for deciphering the covert messages

embedded within cartoons (Navasky, 2013). Contemporaneous political cartooning iteration is oriented by two objectives: amusement and edification (Kemnitz, 1973), with the strategic intent of tempering the inherent fervour in political sentiments. Streicher (1967) the literary satire concept finds its visual counterpart in pictorial art as ‘caricature’ or ‘cartoon’. Lamprooning conventionally involves presenting human vices or absurdities to deride or taunt individuals; conversely, graphic caricatures employ visual representation to satirise, and within the domain of political cartoons, the objective is to satirically deride, deconstruct, or unveil individuals, collectives, or entities embroiled within politics or society. Employing cartoons holds significance in illustrating the overriding political discourse climate and prospective agendas, involving individual interests of politicians as well as the broader national context (Edwards, 1993), with language functions acting as an avenue for conveying cognitive and social maturation, together with expressing distinct standpoints. Political cartoons fulfil multiple functions, including entertainment, aggression mitigations, agendasetting and framing (DeSousa & Medhurst, 1982), as well as defining political policies and historical narratives. Nonetheless, viewed from an alternative standpoint (Diamond, 2002), political cartoons have sustained a presence for well over two centuries; but this genre has encountered challenges in attaining genuine prominence.

Although sporadic cartoons documented the quandaries faced by CCP, these were eclipsed by portrayals of quotidian existence. Political cartoons appraisal underscores several techniques enacted by cartoonists to express their intended meanings (Langeveld, 1981), including diligent selection, misrepresentation, commentary, and prognostication. Growing anti-US emotions and turbocharged Chinese nationalism outlined three strands (Xu, 1998); patriotic education pointing out China’s historical humiliation, Chinese intellectuals’ reversion to traditional studies for solutions to domestic challenges, and a concatenation of events, including China’s economic expansion, the Yinhe incident, the unsuccessful Olympic Games bid, and the US’ Taiwan policy. Chinese nationalism was propelled by these factors, concomitant with anti-American thoughts in China. Throughout history, propaganda is utilised as a contrivance to distribute disinformation and fallacies. The internet fostered the evolution and expansion of such practices, exacerbating misinformation proliferation. Studies into Chinese propaganda revealed the government substantially raised investment in propaganda initiatives (Edney, 2014), particularly via state media organs, Xinhua and China Central Television. The basic argument for the Chinese government’s propaganda campaign is to elevate its global standing, negate adverse narratives about China, and advance its interests. Chinese propaganda aspires to maintain

national political unity and empower CCP by broadcasting a favourable party and government image. Propaganda efforts are tailored to domestic and international on-lookers, with contrasting messages and tactics deployed accordingly. Political scientists will be acquainted with the soft power theory (Nye, 2004), i.e. capacity to allure and coax as instrumental in influencing the preferences, behaviours, and decisions of others without resorting to force or coercion, can surely identify some of these elements in the so far recounted practices of the CCP. The partystate's bolstering soft power objective, akin to the broader work of the propaganda apparatus (Edney, 2012), incorporates policies targeting domestic and international spheres. The partystate views domestic and international political circumstances as interrelated and mutually influential. Successful foreign propaganda and soft power will further the partystate's realisation of domestic aspirations, while compelling domestic propaganda, including efforts to fuel its "cultural soft power", will fortify domestic cohesion, endowing China's international voice with augmented credibility and leverage.

3. Propaganda and Political Communication

Autocratic regimes frequently turn to propaganda as an instrument for shaping perceptions and steering sociopolitical outcomes. Propaganda targeting external audiences often reverberates within domestic spheres, tightening the autocrat's grip on power as regimes curate a version of reality framing their leadership as indomitable and righteous. Propaganda onto foreign terrains enables a normalisation of autocratic governance models. By promoting their successes, whether genuine, exaggerated, or fabricated, autocratic regimes can engage in soft power competition with the ultimate goal to mould mass opinion to view autocracy not as an aberration, but as a legitimate, effective form of governance. Autocracies habitually face an asymmetry of information, where dissenting voices within the nation are stifled but international criticisms persist. According to scholarly work provided by Shambaugh (2007), infrastructural ecosystems for the transmission and dissemination of propaganda within the People's Republic of China are inexorably subsumed under the bureaucratic aegis of CCP's propaganda bureau. By operating propaganda against external entities, autocratic regimes can obfuscate or dilute counternarratives that could threaten regime stability. Epistemological frameworks by Huang (2018) and Wedeen (2015), show that a distinct subcategory of propaganda exists, one diverging from conventional telos of persuasion, and instead instils trepidation. Academic conceptualisations put forth by Carter and Carter (2022) and Little (2017) distinguishes a specialised form of hard propaganda, which departs

markedly from conventional epistemological parameters that privilege credibility and persuasive efficacy. Hard power obviates the customary objective of engendering belief or conviction through the deployment of credible and convincing narratives. Propaganda possesses a dual role in autocracies (Mattingly & Yao, 2022), in effectiveness in manipulating anger and antiforeign sentiment by demonstrating propaganda can surpass ideology, serving also to strategically modulate emotional states in line with regime objectives.

Xi Jinping championed the diffusion of Chinese ideas during the National Propaganda and Ideology Work Conference on August 19, 2013, expounding on a calculated approach to propaganda and global messaging. Xi stressed an exhortation for increased ingenuity in China's transnational outreach under the "telling China's story well" (Jiǎng hǎo zhōngguó gùshì) slogan. In an empirical investigation, Huang and Wang (2019) revealed Chinese diplomatic agencies employed interactive methods on X, utilising @mentions and purposefully incorporating hashtags, to project Chinese political views and narratives in a varied manner, thereby establishing an interconnected online discourse. China's profile suffered deleterious detriments due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as the country initially faced criticism for its crisis management with accusations of withholding vital information. Beijing undermined its stature as a responsible global actor by tardily disclosing information to the international community and lacking transparency regarding case and fatality numbers. In a prominent analysis, Ayson (2022) found that China uses political cartoons to amend its image, identifying ubiquitous anti-Americanism themes. The results reflect China's commitment to preserving its face-saving culture and nationalistic narrative while simultaneously addressing the deteriorating US-China relations. China's presence on X is a subject of scholarly investigation. Studies by Huang and Wang (2019) and Jia and Li (2020) revealed that China's state news media made their initial foray onto X as early as 2009. Simultaneously, China's diplomats began utilising Twitter as a diplomatic tool in 2010. However, by late 2018, the number of active Twitter accounts representing Chinese diplomats was notably limited, with fewer than 20 such accounts (Huang & Wang, 2019). Stockmann's (2013) research highlights that Chinese propaganda serves a specific purpose—to influence public opinion on particular issues with the ultimate goal of expanding the government's policy space.

However, amidst this rich literature, there remains a conspicuous gap that warrants additional exploration. To gain a greater understanding of contemporary political communication, it is critical to investigate the synchronicity and alignment

between Chinese government tweets and the content of political cartoons. This gap demonstrates a need for a detailed analysis of how Chinese government tweets and political cartoons intersect, whether they share a correlational relationship in their messaging, and how this synchronisation impacts perceptions, especially in the context of deteriorating US-China relations.

4. Research Question

This investigation aims to explicate the thematic relationship between tweets from Chinese government ministers, with a unique regard to anti-US propaganda political cartoons promulgated by Chinese state media. As a fundamental precursor to any scholarly exploration intent on probing Chinese government and state media sentiment directed at the US within the social media domain, the illustration of “anti-US” tweets is of overriding importance. Within the framework, anti-US tweets are interpreted as expressions imbued with negative impressions geared towards the US, its policies, or its cultural values. Tweets may exteriorise US foreign policy, military intervention, economic practice, or social norm opprobrium, and evincing support for adversarial countries or groups esteemed antithetical to US interests. The demarcation of anti-US mindset is contingent upon context; thus, researchers are enjoined to delineate and operationalise coding categories with unerring exactitude when conducting content analyses of social media platforms. Given the booming gravity of social media within public discourse and political communication, anti-US opinion studies on X and analogous platforms, assumes academic significance by proffering knowledge into the widely held attitudes of the Chinese government towards the US.

By perusing tweet content, political cartoons, and assorted media sources, this paper aims to illuminate the eclectic relationship between social media, politics, and propaganda within the purview of USChina relations. The Chinese government perennially upheld a non-interference public posture in other nations’ domestic matters, a consistent position conveyed to the international community. However, situations arose wherein the Chinese government and stateaffiliated media engrossed in trenchant verbal and pictorial rejoinders to perceived provocations. This digression from its public stance is linked to China’s efforts to enrich its soft power and to offset its unfavourable renderings. While a non-interference policy benefitted China well in its own diplomacy, its surging global authority and attaining global superpower status aspirations, required a bolder approach in responding to hazards to its national interests. Consequently, the Chinese government and stateaf-

filiated media assumed a more proactive role in image construction and messaging, employing political cartoons as a means to attain this objective. An analysis into Chinese government tweets and published political cartoons confers awareness into the levels of coordination among the Chinese government's messaging and propaganda techniques across diverse mediums, ergo serving as an efficacious instrument for policymakers and analysts in acquiring an understanding towards China's soft power and propaganda initiatives, as well as prospective ramifications thereof for global politics. The following hypothesis is put forth: *The frequency and content of Tweets by Chinese government ministers will exert a significant positive impact on the generation of anti-US propaganda political cartoons.*

5. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical grounding of this paper rests on the interplay of soft power, propaganda, and political communication. Nye's (2004) concept of soft power, the ability of states to influence others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion, facilitates in our understanding of China's global communication strategy. Nations can affect international narratives not only through their tangible assets but also by leveraging intangible assets such as culture, political values, and foreign policies. Propaganda, as explored by Edney and Shambaugh has a paramount connection with soft power. Autocratic regimes usually use propaganda as a tool for domestic consolidation of power and for constructing narratives that suit their international ambitions. Political cartoons, as simplified yet potent mediums, act as conduits that can efficiently transfer the essence of these propagandised messages to the masses, as highlighted by Ghilzai and Walker. However, a gap exists in the academic literature. While much has been explored concerning propaganda and political communication, limited work has investigated governmental communications on modern platforms like X and their influence on mediums like political cartoons, particularly in the context of Sino-American relations. By juxtaposing the Chinese government's tweets with anti-US propaganda cartoons, this research aspires to unearth the symbiotic relationship that might exist between these two seemingly disparate mediums. I position this interrelation within China's evolving diplomacy, particularly its Wolf Warrior approach and its ambitions to sculpt global narratives in its favour. In justifying this theoretical framework, one must acknowledge the complex nature of political communication in the digital age. A holistic understanding requires considering not just traditional media but also newer platforms and how they might intersect and feed

into one another. This synergy between different channels of communication, coupled with the overarching strategies of soft power and propaganda, tenders a lens to discern China's diplomatic and communicative tactics in the global arena.

6. Variables & Data

The decision to designate biweeks as the constituent units of analysis derives from the exigency to survey trajectories and patterns germane to tweet frequency and content dispersed from members of the Chinese Foreign Affairs Department, and political cartoons. Biweeks deliver a more varied and granular dataset compared to shorter time intervals like daily analysis. The publication process for political cartoons involves multiple steps, from ideation to creation and eventual publication. Conducting a biweekly analysis accounts for the expected lag between posting a tweet and publishing a corresponding political cartoon. For this analysis, 76 were computed, spanning from 2020 to 2023, thus enabling the capture of a more extensive depiction into the dynamics and interchange between the variables over an extended temporal frame. This methodological decision is consonant with the best practices in research methodology, with the need to select apposite units of analysis congruous with the research question and objectives in order to attain precise and valid findings.

The independent variable comprises of tweets released by China's Foreign Affairs Department's members, which will be collated from the accounts of Hua Chunying (@SpokespersonCHN), Foreign Ministry Information Department Minister, and Zhao Lijian (@zlj517), who occupied the role of Deputy Director-General within the Information Department. Both individuals actively use X to publicise official statements and reply to worldwide events. Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian, hold prominent positions within China's Foreign Affairs Department, and their X activities are indicative of the Chinese government's approach to international communication. With high-profile positions and a significant number of followers, they frequently engage in tweeting, making their accounts focal points for conveying the official stance of the Chinese government. Moreover, their active presence in the media spotlight further solidifies their role as key representatives of China's foreign policy and diplomatic efforts. The research will extract tweets from the Spokesperson's 发言人 办公室 (fā yán rén bàn gōng shì), the official X account of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson's Office, tasked with communicating the Chinese government's official viewpoint on a panoply of global issues, as well as addressing queries from the media. To accurately gauge the variables' impact on the outcome in question, I will systematically amass and analyse data on the number and content of tweets originating from

these sources on a biweekly basis, thus enabling the detection of any detectable patterns and trends, as well as the production of credible findings supplementing our understanding of the connection between variables.

The dependent variables are political cartoons. In measuring the cartoons' volume and substance, data will be collated from the cartoons published biweekly in Chinese stateaffiliated media outlets. The People's Daily and Global Times are valuable sources for analysing political cartoons, both recognised as major Chinese stateowned newspapers. The People's Daily, as the official newspaper of CCP's Central Committee, is regarded as an authoritative source proffering official government policies and viewpoints on national and international issues, rendering the paper as an ideal source for understanding the Chinese government's official stance on a wide array of subjects and for analysing the published cartoons. *The Global Times* is renowned for its nationalist and anti-Western editorial outlook, operating a more confrontational tone. By dissecting political cartoons content, we can accrue an understanding into how China's propaganda apparatus casts the US in a pejorative light. The coding categories for the independent variables and dependent are, as follows;

- Coercion
- Democracy
- Military & Weapons
- National Security
- Human Rights
- Territory & Sovereignty
- Economy & Trade
- Social Issues
- Environment
- Public Health
- Individuals/Administration

The coding categories for the independent and dependent variables are determined by reading tweets and examining subsequent cartoons related to the US-China relationship. Each individual tweet and cartoon will be assigned at least one coding classification referring directly to the US either through text, or visual reference to the American flag, individual institutions and/or politicians. While the primary approach was to assign a single, most relevant code to each tweet or cartoon, a few instances required double coding. However, such cases were relatively rare and typically arose

when the content exhibited a significant overlap of themes or messages. The decision to double code in these rare instances was justified by the need to accurately capture the multifaceted nature of the content. This process ensured that neither theme was overlooked or underrepresented in the analysis, but above all, to uphold the integrity and comprehensiveness of the coding process when a single code would have inadequately reflected the content.

To guarantee consistency in the coding process, these clear definitions and guidelines are established to accommodate a systematic approach in sorting of themes and substance presented amongst the variables. Each tweet and cartoon will be manually checked without any software to increase accuracy, flexibility, and a more profound interpretation that will lead to more resolute and meaningful analyses. I meticulously carried out the coding process to ensure both intercoder and intracoder reliability. To maintain reliability throughout the process, I established clear definitions and guidelines for coding, allowing for a systematic approach in categorising themes and substance related to references to the US, including textual mentions and visualisations involving the American flag, individual institutions, and politicians. This approach increased the precision of the analysis. Attention was given to contextual factors such as framing techniques, textual analysis in the cartoons and captions, visual elements and character representations employed in the tweets. These granular details were crucial in capturing the subtle nuances in the presentation of anti-US propaganda. The coding groups held significant relevance within the context of the US-China relationship, and these themes were consistently expressed in political spoofs found in the tweets and cartoons analysed.

- **Coercion** involves the use of force, threats, or intimidation to dominate or exert control over convictions and behaviour of individuals or states.
- **Democracy** emerges as a key coding genre for anti-US propaganda analysis, owing to its intimate association with the values and principles undergirding the US' political system.
- **Military and weaponry** fashion recurrent themes in anti-US propaganda, as they are inextricably linked to the US's global military presence and foreign policy. Anti-US propaganda recurrently portrays the US military and weaponry as bellicose, violent, and imperialistic, casting the US as a menace to global peace.
- **National security** representation in anti-US propaganda looks to sustain pejorative stereotypes of the US as an aggressive, malevolent state, aiming to galvanise antipathy to US national security policies and actions.

- A common manoeuvre in anti-US propaganda germane to *human rights* is to publicise the US' historical trajectory of colonialism, slavery, and discrimination against marginalised cohorts.
- *Territorial and sovereignty* matters refer to a continually operated ploy to underscore US military interference or support for extrinsic military actions culminating in contraventions of other countries' sovereignty.
- *Economic policies* and dilemmas recurrently act as sources of tension and conflict and may be sketched in political cartoons to deride the US government's economic stewardship and its extant state.
- *Social issues*, individual rights and political ideology, are integral components influencing the global perception of the US, which may impinge China's own image and reputation.
- *Environmental* concerns increasingly assumed a central role in global affairs, particularly relating to climate change and sustainability. Political cartoons may depict these challenges as a conduit for dispensing commentary on the environmental policies or actions by the US government.
- *Public health*, a routinely exploited strategy, is to emphasise the US' substandard response to COVID-19. This may refer to mismanagement, misleading information propagation, and insufficient aid for disadvantaged groups allegations. Propaganda messages repeatedly claim the US' pandemic handling was prompted by politics rather than science, and the US' global standing in public health was impeded by its domestic failures.
- Political cartoons may also concentrate on explicit *individuals or politicians* embroiled in US-China relations, either as a means to censure their actions or highlight their role in shaping dyadic interactions between the two.

7. Methodology

A range of statistical techniques are employed to analyse the data and address the research question. These methods are guided by the need to answer distinct inquiries and to bestow a lucid understanding of the phenomena under investigation. I utilised descriptive statistics to facilitate the initial examination of the created dataset, and to quantify and evaluate tweets, cartoons, and their relevant classifications. This initial step aims to provide a foundational overview of the data's distribution and characteristics. A chisquare and Cramer's V analysis will assess the correlation between tweet classifications from the Chinese government and the varieties of political cartoons published by Chinese stateaffiliated media.

This analysis aimed to identify any significant associations between variables and insights into the relationships between different aspects of our data, and to answer the research question of whether there is a relationship between content tweeted by Chinese government officials and political cartoons subsequently published.

To enhance the robustness of the findings, I focused on the temporal periods during President Biden and President Trump's terms in office as control variables. Recognising that the president in power may influence anti-US sentiment and the production of political cartoons, this control variable allows to assess whether presidential policies or statements had an impact on our observed associations. The selection of these statistical techniques was driven by the specific research questions they were intended to address.

Several possible confounding variables must be considered in the analysis. The political climate in China, marked by changes in leadership, policies, and diplomatic relations during the terms of President Biden and President Trump, could significantly influence the content and tone of both political cartoons and tweets, potentially confounding their relationship. The occurrence of significant international events like trade disputes, geopolitical conflicts, or global crises might coincide with the study's time periods, impacting tweet classifications and the themes of political cartoons. Another confounding factor is how Chinese stateaffiliated media's media coverage, editorial decisions, and propaganda efforts can configure public perception and henceforth affect the content of tweets and political cartoons. Other domestic political events beyond the actions and statements of US presidents, such as changes in government policies or leadership transitions, may contribute to variations in anti-US sentiment and the production of political cartoons, adding complexity to the analysis.

8. Results

Table1: Descriptive Statistics for Tweets

	Observations	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Coercion	36	1	7	1.97	1.383
Democracy	76	0	7	0.42	1.07
Military & Weapons	44	0	15	3.27	3.6
National Security	43	1	8	2.07	1.8

	Observations	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Human Rights	40	1	5	1.9	1.15
Territory & Sovereignty	37	1	21	2.7	3.8
Economy & Trade	43	1	9	2.4	1.8
Social Issues	34	1	5	2.06	1.25
Environment	16	1	2	1.2	0.4
Public Health	35	1	7	1.6	1.2
Individuals & Administration	36	1	9	2.5	2.007

Note: *The dataset was generated by the author for the purpose of this study.*

From the empirical data (Table 1) one can establish an overwhelming proportion of anti-US tweets by Chinese governmental officials correspond to democracy. The impetuses behind these actions are manifold and subject to numerous interpretations. One feasible supposition surmises that the Chinese government detects democracy as an existential threat to its political system, thereby demanding attempts to discredit democracy. As an authoritarian regime, China precludes political dissent and transparent democratic processes, interpreting democratic tenets as possible challenges to its dominion. Spawning anti-US and democracy tweets may work to bolster the Chinese government's political legitimacy. A substitutive and conceivable motive suggests the US' support of democracy is a venture to exert control and influence over other sovereign states. In this context, the CCP pushes to neutralise US influence by subverting the credibility of democracy as a feasible political system. By posting anti-US tweets in connection to democracy, the Chinese government dedicates itself to corrode the US' image as a democratic paradigm for other states to venerate. Furthermore, the CCP may adjudge promoting democracy as an intrusion into its domestic affairs, hence instigating efforts to retaliate by spotlighting deficiencies within the US democratic system. This strategy could be inferred as a means for Beijing to counter castigations of its own political system by exposing shortcomings in the US' democratic apparatus.

The inducement underlying the Chinese government's tweets pertaining to military & weapons, national security, and human rights may be ambiguous, but intertwined. One logical theory is that the Chinese government works to consolidate its national security policies and refine its global standing by propagating its viewpoint on these

affairs via social media. These areas of interest are considered essential to China's interests and sovereignty; thus, it is persuasive the government hopes to advocate its outlook on these matters with a social media presence. Beijing may contend its military and weapons policies are integral to safeguarding national security and preserving human rights, particularly amidst external threats to its own security. For example, CCP may sense its efforts to suppress ethnic and religious minorities in Xinjiang to maintain national security and stability, which Beijing deems indispensable.

Furthermore, the Chinese government's tweets in respect to military & weapons, national security, and human rights may be aimed at shaping public's general consensus, and resisting negative narratives communicated by other nationstates, notably the US. Beijing may deem Washington as a rival and antagonist, who seeks to neutralise its influence, by transmitting messages on these topics via social media. Tweets surrounding military & weapons, national security, and human rights may be components of an overarching blueprint to advance China's interests and agenda within the global arena. These issues' interdependency suggests CCP judges them as interconnected and requisite to safeguarding its interests and sovereignty. Descriptive statistical methodologies to survey political cartoons published in stateaffiliated media will be provided. This analysis will produce insights into the prevailing political climate and mood apropos specific issues. Table 2 summarises the descriptive statistical measures for our examination.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Political Cartoons published

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Coercion	33	0	4	1.42	0.867
Democracy	76	0	11	0.39	1.44
Military & Weapons	49	0	11	2.6	2.52
National Security	24	1	7	1.75	1.35
Human Rights	33	1	3	1.3	0.58
Territory & Sovereignty	25	0	5	1.64	1.22
Economy & Trade	55	0	6	1.94	1.25
Social Issues	37	0	4	1.48	0.837
Environment	13	1	2	1.15	0.375
Health	41	1	9	2.4	1.88
Individuals & Administration	44	0	5	1.77	1.17

This scholarly investigation's empirical outcomes unveil recurrently broached themes in anti-US political cartoons include democracy, military and weaponry, economic and trade matters, individual and administrative figures, and public health-related matters. These revelations may be germinating from the prominence of these ideas within contemporaneous political dialogues and the collective consciousness. The profuse political cartoons' prevalence centred on democracy implies this question makes for a noteworthy focus and apprehension for the propaganda arsenal, potentially due to the recent political evolutions and discourses pertaining to democratic principles and institutions. The accentuation on military and weaponry could be indicative of the persisting US-Sino geopolitical frictions and hostilities, entailing various arms races and military escalations. The concentration on economic and commercial affairs may epitomise pecuniary issues in contemporaneous politics, such as US dollar prominences and menaces to decouple from China. Analogously, the attention on individual and administrative figures might signify public scrutiny and upbraiding of political dignitaries and their respective policies. Public health matters within political cartoons may be indicative of the ongoing global health calamities and the political reactions to these crises. In contrast, a relatively diminished frequency of political cartoons associated with themes of coercion, human rights, national security, social issues, environmental turmoil, and territorial and sovereign matters may exemplify the circumscribed public attention and discourse on these topics within the current political landscape.

Table 3: Chi Square Tests & Symmetric Measures

	Pearson Chi-Square	Df	Phi	Cramer's V	P-Value	N
Coercion	10.495	15	0.76	0.441	0.788	18
Democracy	94.521	25	1.11	0.5	0.001**	76
Military & Weapons	212.256	96	2.43	0.858	0.001**	36
National Security	23.080	18	1.20	0.693	0.188	16
Human Rights	44.159	8	1.30	0.922	0.001**	26
Territory & Sovereignty	12.000	9	1.22	0.707	0.213	8
Economy & Trade	49.116	30	1.13	0.508	0.015*	38
Social Issues	18.756	16	0.92	0.462	0.281	22

	Pearson Chi-Square	Df	Phi	Cramer's V	P-Value	N
Environment	6.519	1	0.77	0.7	0.011*	11
Public Health	13.310	15	0.76	0.44	0.578	23
Individuals & Ad- ministration	19.532	20	0.92	0.461	0.488	23

Note: Coding categories are explained in the text. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

This scholarly investigation's empirical outcomes unveil recurrently broached themes in anti-US political cartoons include democracy, military and weaponry, economic and trade matters, individual and administrative figures, and public health-related matters. These revelations may emanate from the prominence of these ideas within contemporaneous political dialogues and the collective consciousness. The abundant presence of political cartoons focused on democracy implies this question makes for a noteworthy focus and apprehension for the propaganda arsenal, potentially due to the recent political evolutions and discussions pertaining to democratic principles and institutions. The emphasis on military and weaponry may portend the enduring nature of US-Sino geopolitical frictions and hostilities, entailing various arms races and military escalations. The concentration on economic and commercial affairs may epitomise pecuniary issues in contemporaneous politics, such as US preeminence with the dollar and menaces to decouple from China. Analogously, the attention on individual and administrative figures might signify public scrutiny and upbraiding of political dignitaries and their respective policies. Public health matters within political cartoons may be indicative of the ongoing global health calamities and the political reactions to these crises. In contrast, a relatively diminished frequency of political cartoons associated with themes of coercion, human rights, national security, social issues, environmental turmoil, and territorial and sovereign matters may exemplify the circumscribed public attention and discourse on these topics within the current political landscape. The empirical outcomes unearthed herein suggest the presence of a correlative link between tweets posted by Chinese governmental accounts and political cartoons publicised in state-affiliated media (Table 3). Among categories, democracy, military & weaponry, human rights, economy & trade, and environmental concerns all reported a degree of significance evidenced by their respective p-values. Given the results, which indicate

statistical insignificance in conjunction with a high Cramer’s V, one infers a substantial association between the variables. But proportion of this association does not meet prescribed thresholds for statistical significance. Strikingly, observed strong association may be vulnerable to stochastic irregularities.

Table 4: Correlation (Democracy)

		Democracy (Tweets)	Democracy (Cartoons)
Democracy (Tweets)	Pearson Correlation	1	0.261
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.023*
	N	76	76
Democracy (Cartoons)	Pearson Correlation	0.261	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.023	
	N	76	76

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5: Correlation (Military & Weapons)

		Military & Weapons (Tweets)	Military & Weapons (Cartoons)
Military & Weapons (Tweets)	Pearson Correlation	1	0.953**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001**
	N	44	36
Military & Weapons (Cartoons)	Pearson Correlation	0.953**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001**	
	N	36	49

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6: Correlation (Human Rights)

		Human Rights (Tweets)	Human Rights (Cartoons)
Human Rights (Tweets)	Pearson Correlation	1	0.829
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001**
	N	40	26
Human Rights (Cartoons)	Pearson Correlation	0.829	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001**	
	N	26	33

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7: Correlation (Economy & Trade)

		Economy & Trade (Tweets)	Economy & Trade (Cartoons)
Economy & Trade (Tweets)	Pearson Correlation	1	0.44
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.006**
	N	43	38
Economy & Trade (Cartoons)	Pearson Correlation	0.44	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.006**	
	N	38	55

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8: Correlation (Environment)

		Environment (Tweets)	Environment (Cartoons)
Environment (Tweets)	Pearson Correlation	1	.77
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.006**
	N	16	11
Environment (Cartoons)	Pearson Correlation	.77	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.006**	
	N	11	13

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The principal logic for this phenomenon can be ascribed to an insufficient sample size or excessive variability within the dataset. The presence of a high Cramer's V and an insignificant p-value necessitates a sophisticated interpretation of the findings, highlighting the importance of a thorough inquiry into the data to attain a more thorough comprehension into the nature of the association between the variables. A bivariate regression analysis will dig deeper into the scale of the statistical link between variables demonstrated as statistically significant. While these findings signify a correlation between tweets and political cartoons, it's important to note that correlation does not necessarily imply causation. Further research should consider the limitations of the sample size and seek to employ larger sample sizes to strengthen validity. The generalisability of this study's results to other contexts or regions may require careful consideration, as factors influencing political cartoons and tweets may vary in different geopolitical landscapes.

The extant scholarly inquiry worked to assess the thematic interrelationship between content in tweets and recent cartoons, operationalised through five coding categories within the independent variable of interest: democracy, military & weapons, human rights, economy & trade, and environment. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to ascertain the magnitude and tendency of the association. The results show sizeable variances in the strength of the Pearson correlation coefficients across the different genres. Remarkably, military & weapons was the strongest positive correlation in cartoon content,

substantiated by a Pearson correlation coefficient of .953, followed in proximity by human rights at .829. A moderately sound correlation was discerned between environment and the content of the corresponding cartoons, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of .77. In contradistinction, democracy revealed a weak correlation with a Pearson correlation coefficient totalling .261, while economy & trade displayed a moderate correlation with a .440 coefficient. This scholarly inquiry worked to assess the thematic interrelationship between content in tweets and recent cartoons, operationalised through five coding categories within the independent variable of interest: democracy (Table 4), military & weapons (Table 5), human rights (Table 6), economy & trade (Table 7), and environment (Table 8). Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to ascertain the magnitude and tendency of the association. The results show sizeable variances in the strength of the Pearson correlation coefficients across the different genres

Fluctuations in the strength of the Pearson correlation coefficients among various categories may be attributable to the nature of the content under investigation, as well as the innate sociopolitical and economic determinants. The pronounced positive correlation between military & weapons and cartoon content can be reasonably connected to the pervasiveness of portrayals of former military disputes and weaponry in political cartoons. Similarly, the vigorous correlation between human rights and the cartoons presumably mirrors the prominence of alleged human rights breaches as a widespread focus in Chinese political cartoons. The moderate correlation between environment and the content of the corresponding cartoons can be accredited to the escalating significance of econoundrums in political discourse and political cartoons lambasting the US for neglecting its obligations to address climate change. Inversely, the correlation between democracy and corresponding cartoon content can be tentatively explained by visually representing faltering democratic institutions and processes.

Table 9: Controlling for President Trump

	Pearson Chi-Square	Df	Phi	Cramer's V	P-Value	N
Coercion	0.480	4	.200	0.141	0.975	12
Democracy	0.125	2	.58	0.58	0.940	37
Military & Weapons	20.000	6	1.414	1.0	0.003**	10
National Security	9.333	10	1.20	0.816	0.501	7
Human Rights	8.000	2	1	1	0.018*	8
Territory & Sovereignty	1.673	6	0.213	0.15	0.947	37

	Pearson Chi-Square	Df	Phi	Cramer's V	P-Value	N
Economy & Trade	14.000	6	1.0	0.7	0.03*	14
Social Issues	4.800	6	0.775	0.548	0.57	8
Environment	3.000	1	1	1	0.083	3
Public Health	12.750	20	0.86	0.43	0.88	17
Individuals & Administration	9.750	12	0.866	0.5	0.638	13

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 10: Controlling for President Biden

	Pearson Chi-Square	Df	Phi	Cramer's V	P-Value	N
Coercion	9.37	10	.79	0.559	0.323	15
Democracy	94.521	25	1.11	0.5	0.001***	76
Military & Weapons	142.86	96	2.34	0.82	0.001***	26
National Security	11.143	8	1.1	0.787	0.194	9
Human Rights	28.000	8	1.2	0.882	0.001***	18
Territory & Sovereignty	8.000	6	1.4	1	0.238	4
Economy & Trade	34.88	30	1.2	0.54	0.247	24
Social Issues	11.813	8	0.92	0.65	0.160	14
Environment	3.43	1	0.65	0.65	0.064	8
Public Health	8.400	4	1.09	0.77	0.78	7
Individuals & Administration	17.600	15	1.3	0.76	0.284	10

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

The empirical conclusions present a compelling argument for the existence of a more robust correlation between anti-US sentiment expressed through tweets and analogous political cartoons, contingent on categories of political subject matter. This interrelation varies considerably as it pertains to the administrations of President Trump (Table 9) and President Biden (Table 10). Upon a control variable implementation accounting for President Trump, the Chisquare test elucidates a statistically significant association between anti-US tweets and political cartoons in military & weapons, human rights, and economy & trade. This intimates that anti-US tweets posted during Trump's term as president exhibit a higher propensity for correlation with corresponding political cartoons addressing the aforementioned issues. A plausible justification as the bedrock of this observation is that the agonistic rhetoric and policy decisions espoused by President Trump in relation to these subjects sparked more vehement responses from political cartoonists and commentators. The amplified representation of anti-US political cartoons throughout President Trump's tenure, particularly within the military, human rights, and the economy, can be attributed to a confluence of salient factors and occurrences eliciting extensive international scrutiny and disapproval. These include the US withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and a subsequent reimposition of sanctions on Iran, aggravated regional hostilities; the enlargement of military personnel and resources in quarrelsome territories such as Syria and Afghanistan, alongside combative airstrikes yielding civilian casualties; and President Trump's incendiary language and reciprocal menaces exchanged with North Korea, exacerbating likelihood of a nuclear confrontation

9. Discussion & Conclusion

This research has explored the thematic connection between official Chinese government tweets and the development of anti-US propaganda political cartoons. The findings unveil a noteworthy statistical relationship between the expression of anti-US sentiment in tweets and the content of political cartoons, with variations observed across distinct political subject matter categories and different presidential administrations. This paper explored the reciprocity between Chinese government tweets and published cartoons in state media. The Chinese government's tweets and political cartoons in state media are interconnected in numerous ways. Both function as devices for the CCP to sway public sentiment and reinforce its messaging to its own citizens and the global community. The CCP stringently regulates state

media, and propaganda is created as a decisive governance strategy component. The party, through its propaganda machinery, aspires to sculpt mass opinion to procure support for its policies and retain a hold onto power. The propaganda engine supervises state media, encompassing newspapers, television, and online platforms, and controls the narrative presented to the public. Political cartoons represent one method by which the party and the propaganda ministry solicit state media to mould mass opinion. Cartoons function as an efficacious medium for imparting political messages in a primitive and easily digestible format. Political cartoons in state media allow the party to exploit the narrative, subtly sway domestic and non-domestic audiences, and endorse its policies and ideology.

The theoretical frameworks explored in the academic literature furnish constructive perspectives into the relationship between tweets and political cartoons within the context of the CCP's propaganda efforts. Propaganda theories underscore the role of both tweets and political cartoons as powerful tools for influencing public opinion and advancing agendas. Media effects demonstrates that the Chinese government strategically uses media forms to frame and dictate public debates, and fuels anti-US sentiment. Nye's (2004) soft power theory highlights the broader implications of communication strategies, emphasising their role in projecting China's soft power and shaping global perceptions. Cultural and visual communications imparts a lens through which we can analyse political cartoons as a unique aspect of cultural communication, making use of figures, humour, and visual metaphors to convey political ideas and sentiments.

Nonetheless, this paper is not devoid of its limitations. Employing coding categories in the probe of tweet and cartoon content garnered popularity among scholars endeavouring to glean discernment into intricate political and social issues. Yet, this methodology necessitates elaboration. A primary limitation of categories is reductionism as they are typically extensive and generalised, may lead to an oversimplification of complicated matters. For instance, categorising all economy-related tweets under a solitary group may omit crucial differentiations and subtopics. Consequently, this may impinge on the analysis' validity. Another constraint is that categories embody subjectivity, with divergent analysts potentially ascribing distinct categories to identical content, and can confine analysis' accuracy and cogency, as content interpretation can vary substantially contingent on the assigned genre. Categories may culminate in insufficient coverage of pertinent issues. Different topics may not fit neatly into existing coding categories, resulting in incomplete coverage of significant issues. For example, tweets applied to cultural or religious themes do not always align with any listed categories, leading to an incomplete analysis. The understanding of

tweets or cartoons is heavily dependent on the context presented and may not fully encompass the background or underlying motivations behind the content. Thus, content interpretation may lack profundity and therefore not wholly reflect the intended message. Finally, coding categories may prove insufficient in capturing the emotional or rhetorical impact of the content. These categories recurrently concentrate on the factual content of tweets and cartoons, therefore, they may not fully capture the emotional or linguistic effect of the content, inhibiting the analysis' depth. Leveraging subcategories and applying advanced text analysis techniques within aforementioned coding schemes will help mitigate some limitations observed in the current study. By breaking down broader categories into more granular subcategories, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of the content and themes within tweets and political cartoons. An advanced text analysis methods through natural language processing, and semantic analysis, will deliver more extensive awareness into the tone, sentiment, and contextual distinctions present in both tweets and political cartoons.

Notwithstanding, several avenues of future research merit attention. Subsequent research could explore the reception and impact of anti-US propaganda outflowing from China among diverse audiences. This analysis could explore the manners propaganda messages are construed and received, and the ways they affect dispositions and behaviours. A comparative analysis could be conducted to juxtapose China's anti-US propaganda with that of other nations exposed to disparagement by the Chinese government, including but not limited to Japan's military, the UK government's response to a mounting China threat, and Australia's hardline stance on Chinese expansionism. This analysis could aid in identifying commonalities and dissimilarities in propaganda as a statecraft utensil. Future inquiries should undertake a social media analysis with the objective of investigating how anti-US propaganda is transmitted and amplified. A longitudinal analysis may prove beneficial in monitoring changes in anti-US propaganda usage by the Chinese government over time to study the propaganda messaging evolution in adjusted domestic and international political dynamics.

References

- Ayson, M. E. G. (2022). Visual propaganda in the time of Covid-19: China's image repair in state media political cartoons. *Journal of Media and Information Warfare*, 15(3), 39-53.
- Carter, E. B., & Carter, B. L. (2021). When autocrats threaten citizens with violence: Evidence from China. *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(2), 671-696. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000575>
- Chu, Y. (2014). Political Cartoons in Contemporary China. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies*, 8(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-008X/CGP/v08i01/59369>
- DeSousa, M. A., & Medhurst, M. J. (1982). Political cartoons and American culture: Significant symbols of campaign 1980. *Studies in Visual Communication*, 8, 84-97.
- Diamond, M. (2002). No laughing matter: Post-September 11 political cartoons in Arab/Muslim newspapers. *Political Communication*, 19(2), 251-272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600252907470>
- Edney, K. (2012). Soft power and the Chinese propaganda system. *Journal of Contemporary Chi-na*, 21(78), 899-914. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2012.701031>
- Edney, K. (2014). *The Globalization of Chinese Propaganda: International Power and Domestic Political Cohesion*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Edwards, J. L. (1993). Metaphors of enmity in Gulf War political cartoons. *The Ohio Speech Journal*, 30, 62-75.
- Ghilzai, S. A. (2020). Exploring Power Politics and Hegemonic Struggles through Semiotic Analysis of Political Cartoons. *European Academic Research*, 8(3), 1354-1372.
- Huang, H. (2015). Propaganda as signaling. *Comparative Politics*, 47(4), 419-444. <https://doi.org/10.5129/001041515816103220>
- Huang, H. (2018). The pathology of hard propaganda. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(3), 1034-1038. <https://doi.org/10.1086/696863>
- Huang, Z. A., & Wang, R. (2019). Building a network to "tell China stories well": Chinese diplomatic communication strategies on Twitter. *International Journal of Communication*, 13, 2984-3007.
- Kemnitz, T. M. (1973). The cartoon as a historical source. *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 4(1), 81-93. <https://doi.org/10.2307/202359>
- Langeveld, W. (1981). Political Cartoons as a Medium of Political Communication. *International Journal of Political Education*, 4(4), 343-71.
- Mattingly, D. C., & Yao, E. (2022). How soft propaganda persuades. *Comparative Political Studies*, 55(9), 1569-1594. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140211047403>

- Navasky, V. S. (2013). *The art of controversy: Political cartoons and their enduring power*. Knopf.
- Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. Public Affairs.
- Shambaugh, D. (2007). China's propaganda system: Institutions, processes and efficacy. *The China Journal*, 57, 25–58. <https://doi.org/10.1086/tcj.57.20066240>
- Streicher, L.H. (1967). On a Theory of Political Caricature. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 9(4), 427-445. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S001041750000462X>
- Walker, R. (2003). Political cartoons: now you see them. *Canadian parliamentary review*, 26(1), 16-21.
- Wedeen, L. (1999). *Ambiguities of domination: Politics, rhetoric, and symbols in contemporary Syria*. University of Chicago Press.
- Xu, G. (1998). The Chinese Anti-American Nationalism in the 1990s. *Asian Perspective*, 22(2), 193–218.

Francesco Mancuso es catedrático de Filosofía del Derecho en el Departamento de Ciencias Jurídicas de la Universidad de Salerno. Sus intereses de investigación se centran en las relaciones entre derecho, política y violencia. Su última monografía es *Il limite del diritto* (Giappichelli, 2022). En 2022-2023 editó *Diritto e violenza* de Ch. Menke (en colaboración con G. Andreozzi); *Decisione e norma* de A. Catania (en colaboración con V. Giordano); *Conoscenza, volontà, diritto. Studi in memoria di Alfonso Catania* (en colaboración con G. Bisogni, V. Giordano, & G. Preterossi); *Pensare il nemico, affrontare l'eccezione* de J.C. Monod (en colaboración con E. Sferrazza Papa); *Il sole nero del parossismo* de Ch. Ingraio (en colaboración con G. Traina); actualmente está editando la edición *Leviathan: Body Politic As Visual Strategy in the Work of Thomas Hobbes* de H. Bredekamp.

Contacto: fmancuso@unisa.it

'JUGANDO' CON CARL SCHMITT: GUERRA, POLÍTICA Y DERECHO ENTRE JOHAN HUIZINGA Y GIORGIO AGAMBEN*

Francesco Mancuso

Università degli Studi di Salerno

'PLAYING' WITH CARL SCHMITT: WAR, POLITICS, LAW BETWEEN JOHAN HUIZINGA AND GIORGIO AGAMBEN

Resumen

Las páginas dedicadas al análisis de la relación entre derecho, juego, reglas y guerra por Johan Huizinga y Giorgio Agamben ayudan a iluminar no solo algunos aspectos decisivos del pensamiento de Carl Schmitt, sino también la cuestión más amplia que representa el nexo entre política, derecho y normas. Se trata de un nudo conceptual de gran importancia para comprender la relación profundamente dialéctica (aunque sin síntesis) entre derecho y violencia.

Palabras clave

Carl Schmitt; Giorgio Agamben; Johan Huizinga; derecho y violencia; juego; guerra

* Fecha de recepción: 12 de febrero 2023; fecha de aceptación: 30 de marzo 2023. Este trabajo es fruto de un proyecto de investigación desarrollado en el Dipartimento di Scienze Giuridiche de la Università degli Studi di Salerno.

El texto es una adaptación e integración de la ponencia "Jouer" avec Carl Schmitt: Johan Huizinga critique du "politique" presentada para el ciclo de conferencias Raison(s) pratique(s) organizado por el Centre de philosophie contemporaine de la Sorbonne (8/12/2022). La investigación fue apoyada por el PRIN 2017 The Dark Side of the Law.

Abstract

The pages devoted to the analysis of the relationship between law, play, rules and war by Johan Huizinga and Giorgio Agamben help illuminate not only some decisive aspects of Carl Schmitt's thought, but also the broader issue represented by the nexus between politics, law and norms. This is a conceptual junction of great importance for understanding the profoundly dialectical (yet synthesis-free) relationship between law and violence.

Keywords

Carl Schmitt; Giorgio Agamben; Johan Huizinga; law and violence; play; war

En las páginas finales de *The Myth of the State*, Ernst Cassirer decía que la filosofía no puede destruir los mitos políticos: el mito es esencialmente 'invulnerable'; y, sin embargo, la filosofía puede "hacernos conocer al adversario" (Cassirer, 2009). Desde mi punto de vista, adversario es todo aquello que va demoliendo progresivamente (por desgracia cada vez más tenues) vestigios de civilización: una visión del derecho que oblitera su tensión hacia la emancipación y la protección de la persona (piénsese en las solemnes Proclamaciones/Declaraciones de 1789 y 1948), su ser 'límite' y 'medida', su contrarrestar la fuerza de los 'poderes salvajes', es un poderoso adversario.

Incluso para quienes comparten una idea evolucionista del derecho, la *égalité* de Balibar es —y quizá siempre ha sido— más un ideal normativo que una realidad efectiva (Balibar, 2010). Esto, sin embargo, no solo no produce nuevas luchas "por el derecho" sino que acentúa, de este último, más el lado de la opresión o incluso de la estaticidad sistémica que el lado dinámico y transformador de la garantía y la promoción. Esto llega hasta el punto de crear una paradoja ya que el contraste con uno de los principales adversarios de la *égalité*, el neoliberalismo, resulta llamativamente ajeno, al menos, a las distinciones crucianas. El liberalismo *tout-court* propugna, tras una culpable omisión de la relación entre Carl Schmitt y el ordoliberalismo, y a partir de una remodelación de las orientaciones expresadas por el primero en *Die Geistesgeschichtliche Lage Des Heutigen Parlamentarismus*, una idea de democracia identitaria y antipluralista, prepopulista y reactiva, discriminatoria y fundamentalmente pro oligárquica y, por tanto, íntimamente contradictoria.

Esta constituye la estrategia, tanto consciente como inconsciente, adoptada por muchos de los corifeos pasados y presentes de Schmitt: hacer del hiperrealismo una especie de prenda de contención, negar todo universalismo emancipador, iluminando solo el lado mentiroso e hipócrita, rechazar la complejidad y abrazar la táctica de desdiferenciación que opera dentro de una lógica interna íntimamente simplista (Kervégan, 2021), característica del populismo y del plebiscitarismo (sería interesante investigar desde un punto de vista psicoanalítico cuánta ansiedad y angustia, malestar en el sentido del *Unheimlich* freudiano, hay detrás de este rechazo antimoderno, incluso metodológico, hacia la complejidad).

Schmitt nos ofrece una imagen de la juridicidad y de su relación con la política que no puede sino calificarse de esquizofrénica: más correctamente, se trata de una visión mitológica o teológica del derecho. Esta visión es a la vez poder absoluto e irresistible, "terrible" e impotencia desconsolada: *Katéchon*, es decir, aquello que frena al Anticristo de la disolución social; un Leviatán que mantiene a raya a Behemoth, el rostro deformado y aún más monstruoso de la estatalidad (para una comparación entre Hobbes,

Schmitt y Neumann sobre la estrategia visual de la estatalidad encarnada en la figura de Behemoth, véase Bredekamp, 2016).

Pero el derecho es y no puede dejar de ser, para Schmitt, un mero instrumento actuado por la política: *Der Führer schützt das Recht*, como reza el título de uno de los ensayos más comprometidos del jurista alemán. El derecho es, como subraya Schmitt en varios puntos de *Nomos der Erde*, un factor de secularización (de ahí la repetición de la orden de Gentili “¡Silete Theologi in munere alieno!”), pero también un vehículo de moralización discriminatoria. Dado que la unidad política soberana se funda en un “enemigo”, cualquiera que este sea, para Schmitt, el derecho es esencialmente legitimidad que supera, anulándola, la legalidad, en perpetua suspensión entre el orden y el desorden. Es un elemento que produce forma y estabilidad, pero que oculta en sí mismo el desorden más caótico e informe, el de la guerra civil. El derecho político es fundamentalmente inmediatez, decisión soberana, poder constituyente siempre potencialmente subversivo (pero haciéndose pasar por “defensor”) de los poderes constituidos.

La figura del enemigo, tan central en toda la obra del jurista alemán, expresa bien esta tendencia oscilatoria de las múltiples, y a veces oportunistas, visiones del derecho de Schmitt. Se ha argumentado con notable lucidez que Schmitt es víctima de un autoengaño al construir una figura del enemigo que es, por un lado, un elemento de “necesidad metafísico-política” (Sferrazza Papa, 2023): sin hostilidad no puede pensarse ni la política ni mucho menos el derecho; y, por otro, que tal figura pueda resistir el inevitable deslizamiento hacia los extremos (la figura vatteliana del *justus hostis*), hacia la “ferocidad de aniquilación” del Otro.

De estos péndulos de Schmitt, que son también oscilaciones entre el hiperrealismo y el normativismo igualmente extremo (por ejemplo, el “pueblo” no existe, sino que debe existir representado por un líder o un partido que lo haga “todo”) (Sferrazza Papa, 2022), derivan no solo un inagotable atractivo en su obra, que a pesar de las (malas) intenciones ideológicas del autor, proporciona útiles herramientas heurísticas, sino también la incubación de modelos fundamentalmente tóxicos del derecho (y de la política): la postura decisoria, la inclinación teológico-política y su impulso “a conformar una forma de gobierno total, basada en una concepción del mundo capaz de configurar por completo la subjetividad y la objetividad, la libertad y la necesidad, la ley y la conciencia, y así garantizar una adhesión íntimamente voluntaria a esa forma de gobierno que por lo demás se apoya en un sentido fuerte de poder” (Villacañas, 2020) alteran la orientación del derecho para ser, como decía el doctor Rieux en *La peste* de Camus y como sostenían positivistas jurídicos como Kelsen, un mero “instrumento de curación”, no un camino hacia la salvación o la condenación.

El molde de la teología política tiende a exagerar el alcance del concepto de excepción, confundiéndolo con el de emergencia y el concepto de “terrorismo”; tiende a amplificar las contradicciones haciéndolas insolubles, en lugar de mantener una vigilante atención crítica sobre los procesos de des-democratización y des-constitucionalización (Mancuso, 2022; Croce & Salvatore, 2022).

En resumen, la teología político-jurídica de Schmitt no es solo el registro de un “excedente” latente en la modernidad y en los símbolos de la estatalidad (Preterossi, 2022), sino que es también, y ahí radica la toxicidad fundamental de los residuos de Schmitt, la búsqueda frenética e imposible de un sucedáneo de este excedente, de una superlegitimidad que sustituya por la fuerza a la autoridad “desaparecida” y que, finalmente, habiendo constatado la inalcanzabilidad de “esferas de sentido” trascendentes, se contente con teologizar-personalizar el momento económico-naturalista.

Es por ello que la teoría de Schmitt requiere, como si se tratara de una droga potencialmente mortal, numerosas “advertencias preliminares”; es ambivalente, “críptica”, es el antecedente teórico de las negaciones a menudo sangrientas de los postulados democráticos, racionalistas y personalistas de la modernidad; es, además, un puro conductor de cortocircuitos conceptuales, pero es, también, un refinado instrumento interpretativo de las patologías tardías de la vida política y jurídica contemporánea. Y, sin embargo, y esta es la tesis principal de mi exposición, si el derecho es un intento de equilibrio entre dos extremos, el de la comunidad de discurso por un lado y, por otro, el de la no-comunidad de opresión, el pensamiento de Schmitt resulta ser íntimamente anti-jurídico porque devalúa y considera disparatada toda hipótesis de equilibrio posible, de mediación, de composición no violenta y no excluyente entre unidad y pluralidad, entre dentro y fuera, entre derecho y política, entre decisión y norma, entre violencia y reducción de la violencia. El resultado del antagonismo metodológico de Schmitt es precisamente el de producir no simples análisis científicos, sino *posiciones* polémicas (que, sin embargo, escapan al carácter complejo, histórico, ambivalente de muchos de los conceptos de derecho y política). Esto, sin embargo, acaba por convertirse, como mínimo, en el hundimiento de un pensamiento que quiere ser crítico, en la noche en la que todo parece negro.

Otra complicación: Schmitt fue a menudo un autor intelectualmente deshonesto. Pensemos, por ejemplo, en su reticencia ante la tercera edición de *Der Begriff des Politischen*, sobre la que Heinrich Maier llamó la atención. Reticencia comprensible y autocensura edulcorada repetida de manera totalmente acrítica (la edición de 1933, llena de anotaciones elogiosas para Hitler, sería para Schmitt “solo” una *editio minor*, “considerablemente reducida” de la de 1932), incluso en la edición italiana incluida en

el silogio, a cargo de Miglio y Schiera, *Le categorie del politico*, libro que lanzó el rotundo éxito de Schmitt en Italia. ¿Cuáles fueron las razones? La obra de Schmitt constituía un gran tesoro teórico plenamente funcional para llenar el vacío creado por la incipiente crisis del marxismo, en periodos (que recordaban, *mutatis mutandis*, las convulsiones y radicalizaciones ideológicas del periodo de Weimar) atravesados por fallas de conflicto y sacudidos por crisis de estructura y de sistema (Kervégan, 2013).

Nuestro tiempo es diferente, pero no menos conflictivo. Si hoy el derecho, de instrumento de pacificación parece reconvertirse en vector de teologías del bien y del mal absolutas, no mediadas, destinadas a luchar a muerte, el ambiguo Schmitt, jurista y pensador antijurídico al mismo tiempo, no puede sino —peligrosamente— volver a ponerse de moda.

El punto de partida del discurso es una (aparente) contradicción en un autor, Johan Huizinga, que fue uno de los primeros en someter la teoría de lo “político” de Schmitt a un minucioso escrutinio crítico, incluso ideológico. La cuestión de las primeras recepciones de Schmitt, que no fueron ni acriticas ni ideológicas, es un punto que merece un examen independiente que no puede llevarse a cabo aquí. Se trata de una vertiente de la investigación que hoy se descuida casi por completo: Karl Löwith y Leo Strauss (que es un crítico, por así decirlo, pero que capta perfectamente en la comparación Schmitt-Hobbes la clave para comprender la teoría de lo “político”), pero también Guido De Ruggiero y Hans Morgenthau. El primero, que lee en el paroxismo teórico de Schmitt el signo de su fundamental, oculto pero poderoso antihobbesismo (Alfieri, 2021); el segundo, teórico hiperrealista de las relaciones internacionales que traslada a lo ‘político’ una crítica a medio camino entre la de un jurista y la de un freudiano que ha leído a Norbert Elias. Escribe Morgenthau, en 2009, que la esencia de la sociedad es la medida y la limitación; entonces, donde coexisten múltiples esferas individuales de la vida, cada una libre de extender indefinidamente su impulso, y donde por tanto cada existencia, por el mero hecho de existir, pone en cuestión la existencia integral de la otra, el vínculo social no puede nacer ni perdurar.

Pero es en Huizinga donde podemos leer una estrecha comparación con Schmitt, particularmente en *Homo ludens* y *Crisis de civilización* (que apareció en español bajo el título: *Entre las sombras del mañana*). Así, el historiador holandés en *Homo ludens* (2007) argumenta con una referencia directa a la teoría del amigo-enemigo de Schmitt:

Es lógico que los partidarios de esta teoría, que sólo consideran como política seria la guerra y su preparación, sostengan la opinión de que se le debe negar todo carácter de competición y, por lo tanto, de juego. Es posible, dicen, que en

períodos anteriores el factor agonal haya operado intensamente en la guerra, pero la guerra de nuestros días está por encima de los viejos agones. Descansa en el principio de “amigo-enemigo”. Todas las relaciones políticas reales entre naciones y estados estarían dominadas por este principio. El otro grupo es amigo o enemigo. Enemigo no quiere decir propiamente inimicus, ἔχθρος, es decir el personalmente odiado, ni mucho menos algo malo, sino, sencillamente, hostis, πόλεμος, es decir, el extranjero que se cruza en el camino del grupo propio. Ni siquiera como rival o como contrincante se quiere considerar al enemigo. No es sino el contrario, en el sentido más literal de la palabra, es decir, el que contraría porque es un obstáculo en el camino, que hay que echar a un lado. Si algo, alguna vez en la historia, ha correspondido exactamente a esta forzada reducción del concepto de enemistad a una relación mecánica, ése sería el caso de la contraposición arcaica entre fratrias, clanes o tribus, en la que el elemento lúdico tenía todavía una gran significación y del que nos ha ido alejando el desarrollo de la cultura. Si en esa cavilación inhumana [de Schmitt, ausente en la traducción castellana] que es el principio amigo-enemigo existe alguna chispa de verdad, entonces la conclusión será que no es la guerra del caso serio [*Ernstfall*], sino la paz. Porque solamente al superar esa lamentable relación amigo-enemigo puede la humanidad pretender el pleno reconocimiento de su dignidad. La guerra, con todo lo que la provoca y la acompaña, permanece siempre enredada en el demoníaco círculo mágico del juego. (pp. 266-267)

Como es bien sabido, el juego constituye para Huizinga una función fundamental para la civilización de la sociedad, no solo en términos de canalización de las energías destructivas, sino también por la inseparabilidad del nexo entre juego y reglas (y sociedad), que se condensa en la idea de *juego limpio*. Y, sin embargo, no todo juego es en sí mismo un mecanismo regulador que limite el paroxismo destructor de esa guerra civil que Nicole Loraux juzgaba constitutiva de los mecanismos íntimos de formación y disolución de la polis. No obstante, sigue sin explicación la referencia a los “cordones demoníacos del juego”, que permanece un tanto misteriosa en la economía del discurso de Huizinga, enteramente centrada en el nexo cultura-regulación de la función lúdica: se explica sobre todo por la pluralidad de significados no solo del juego en sí, sino también de las figuras de los “jugadores”. De hecho, Huizinga establece una distinción fundamental entre *jugador tramposo* y *aguafiestas* (*Spielverderber: estropeajuegos*): el primero altera las reglas del juego, pero no lo subvierte, a diferencia del segundo. La relación entre legitimidad y legalidad podría ser útil a este respecto, ya que son distintas y se mantienen juntas en una relación (que Schmitt deconstruye, anulando el valor del

lado de la legalidad, de las reglas) de mutua dependencia (Mancuso, 2015). El adjetivo “*demoníaco*” indica, por otra parte, la radicalización del elemento dualista de la agonalidad, que es tan dura que no solo ignora, sino que destruye cualquier posible terceridad. En definitiva, también la guerra es un juego, pero demoníaco, burdo y primitivo destinado no a “reconocer”, sino a “quitar de en medio” a un adversario que ya no lo es: es un enemigo absoluto (Esposito, 2013). En sus matrices originarias está presente esa distinción absoluta y teológica entre el bien y el mal que extrema y sacraliza, legitimando todo conflicto, que se convierte así en una guerra absolutamente justa, en una cruzada.

De todo ello surgen una serie de problemas distintos pero decisivos que conciernen tanto a Huizinga como a Schmitt. Primera cuestión: la relación del derecho con la agonalidad. La agudísima respuesta de Huizinga nos dice que el derecho es más competencia que “conservación”, casi como para subrayar su naturaleza íntimamente democrática: el derecho es “el poder de una comunidad”, según la célebre expresión de Freud. Segunda cuestión, espínosa: el carácter extremo de la guerra (la guerra teológica de la que habla Schmitt en *Nomos der Erde*). ¿La guerra justa, teológica, se sitúa fuera de los códigos de la guerra, o es, como *bellum internecinum*, la guerra en su grado máximo? Con la guerra teológica primero, e ideológica después, al menos desde la Revolución Francesa, se salta toda relación posible, incluso la de hostilidad, y se disuelve toda posibilidad de reconocimiento: solo queda *la Vernichtung*. No solo *inter arma silent leges*, sino que la propia figura del enemigo se deshumaniza. El enemigo se convierte así en un absolutamente otro, un *extranjero*, con respecto al cual es imposible proceder a ninguna mediación: el extranjero solo puede ser eliminado. La relación hostil encuentra su sentido —como comprendió perfectamente Clausewitz— en el carácter extremo del ἀγών, que se convierte en una contienda “a muerte”; la paradoja es que *la montée aux extremes subvierte* el propio *juego*, trastocando incluso sus reglas mínimas: *la guerre en forme* es una ilusión, si la idea de guerra oculta la deformidad de la extremeización.

La tercera cuestión: la relación entre la guerra exterior y la guerra interior, destacando la perspectiva de Schmitt que parece privilegiar el primer tipo cuando, por el contrario, su teoría trata de la prevalencia de la guerra civil: el Leviatán aparece en Schmitt “no como un soberano hobbesiano que garantiza el orden con una aplicación justa y legal de la violencia y el miedo distribuidos entre todos los sujetos, sino como un mecanismo de consenso que unifica y orienta a los sujetos movilizándolos contra un enemigo al que no pueden vencer”, un enemigo imaginario, es decir, un elemento esencial de toda violencia persecutoria (Alfieri, 2021); cuarta cuestión, en mi opinión la más aporética: el tema (explorado pero no resuelto por Böckenförde y Chantal Mouffe) de los límites posibles que impiden la inversión destructiva, ante todo para la unidad política, del agonismo en antagonismo.

Por último, y preeminente sobre las demás, la cuestión efectivamente teológica de la relación entre unidad y pluralidad.

Giorgio Agamben, el más célebre conservador del legado de Benjamin sobre la ley “intrínsecamente podrida”, ha reparado en el entrelazamiento de problemas que surgen de la confrontación entre Huizinga y Schmitt, empezando por la cuestión del juego y su “seriedad”, hasta el punto de convertirlo en el tema principal de una densa adición a *Homo sacer*, titulada *Nota sulla guerra, il gioco e il nemico* (Agamben, 2018; Crosato, 2022). El ensayo es de una claridad impecable, y comienza con un análisis de las observaciones de Leo Strauss sobre lo “político” y la relación inseparable entre lo político y la guerra. A continuación, Agamben analiza la posición de Schmitt sobre la relación, que Huizinga niega rotundamente, entre “seriedad” y guerra. La conexión que establece Schmitt entre la seriedad de la guerra y la presencia de un lenguaje extremo que refleje la extrema seriedad del compromiso bélico es evidente. Se necesitaría la capacidad de análisis lingüístico de Jonathan Littell para cribar el enjambre, en el texto de Schmitt, de expresiones como “sacrificio”, “derramar sangre”, “tragedia”, “matar a otros hombres”.

Finalmente, Agamben concluye la exploración afirmando, con razón, que toda la teoría de Schmitt sobre lo “político” se vería socavada por el descubrimiento de actividades agonísticas que no terminan necesariamente con la destrucción del otro: desde las guerras ritualizadas también en los antiguos juegos griegos, estudiados por Vernant, pasando por los simulacros de batalla analizados por Brelich, hasta la idea de la guerra como “duelo” que, curiosamente, Schmitt tacha de “guerra de gabinete” (con una expresión que recuerda la sarcástica nota de Gramsci dedicada a Guglielmo Ferrero, sobre las “guerras de cicisbei”), salvo para luego —con una contradicción desarmante— convertirla en el eje del *jus publicum europaeum*, al identificar en la teoría de la *guerre en forme de Vattel* la cúspide de la civilización, la moderación, la limitación jurídica de la guerra moderna.

En la nota agambeniana, muy refinada, resuena el vacío de una ausencia, la del derecho, sobre la que no hay notación. En el análisis de la sutil, casi intangible distinción/implicación entre política y guerra, entre hostilidad y hospitalidad, entre reconocimiento y combate, no hay nada que intente identificar en el derecho (es decir, en las reglas constitutivas del juego) un posible freno al paroxismo de la lucha. Sin embargo, la lucha solo es tal, y no mera destrucción, si existen reglas reguladoras. Pero el derecho no son solo reglas: es lo que para Huizinga hace serio el juego, la interacción social, toda actividad humana como “relación”. De ahí la nota, que no es solo una observación polémica de Huizinga contra Schmitt, de que el verdadero caso decisivo y serio, *Ernstfall*, no es la guerra, sino la paz. El carácter constitutivo de las reglas —que crean el juego,

la relación— es lo que para Huizinga subyace a su carácter sagrado. Sin embargo, aquí estamos muy lejos del *topos* agambeniano, según el cual “el edificio jurídico-político de Occidente” produce, y no puede dejar de producir, vida que se puede matar, sagrada porque es prescindible.

Lo ‘sagrado’ del derecho reside, pues, en la horizontalidad de las reglas en una contienda esperablemente justa, cuya imparcialidad debe ser garantizada por terceros y por lo que el historiador holandés llamó las ‘formas consagradas’ de las reglas: una imagen de mediación necesaria para el juego y para las reglas mismas, si es cierto que la mediación es la forma químicamente pura del derecho (Quiviger, 2018). De la institución es importante pensar, con Paul Ricoeur, su devenir institución de mediación, sus prácticas instituyentes, su ‘componer’, no su ‘comenzar’ (Ricoeur, 2007). Por supuesto, no se trata de tener una fe ciega e incluso ingenua en la capacidad del derecho para neutralizar los conflictos y producir la integración social. Se trata simplemente de ir más allá de una perspectiva que en la imposibilidad del orden, de cualquier orden, disuelve cualquier perspectiva de emancipación de la dominación. Y, sin embargo, aunque uno no sea un ávido lector de Benjamin, es fácil que valore más el lado opresor del derecho que su lado emancipador.

Analicemos, para un pequeño *incursus* en el tema, la escena de la entrada de Josef K. —el protagonista de *El proceso* de Kafka— en el estudio del pintor oficial del tribunal Tittorelli. El acusado, que aún no conoce, ni conocerá nunca, su propia acusación, ve atraída su mirada hacia un cuadro en el que la Diosa de la Justicia resulta ser la de la Caza. De esta inquietante epifanía surge una imagen cinegética, asimétrica y depredadora de la imparición de justicia. El mecanismo de la caza, sin embargo, es ambivalente (Calasso, 2016): tradicionalmente se concibe y practica como un juego casi horizontal, dotado de reglas, constitutivo de la forma. En definitiva, un dispositivo de mediación y reconocimiento, nada irenista, a menudo sangriento, que tiene sus propias y sagradas reglas.

Ciertamente, el paradigma cinegético, el linchamiento o la violencia persecutoria pueden aplicarse al derecho penal. ¿Pero el derecho civil? ¿No es un juego, una apuesta, un concurso en el que al final hay un ganador y un perdedor? Sin embargo, lo importante es que ese ganador y ese perdedor lo son no en virtud de una justicia plena y absoluta, sino en virtud del resultado, aleatorio, afortunado, de una lucha que no pretende eliminar, sino solo ganar. Como escribe Huizinga muy claramente, evocando a Jhering, “el juicio es una lucha por el derecho, por ganar o perder”, aunque “el concepto de ganar o perder, es decir, el concepto puramente agonal, eclipsa en la conciencia de la comunidad el concepto de justicia o injusticia”, y más adelante afirma, “los conceptos de voluntad divina, de destino y de resultado de la fortuna se funden completamente. La balanza [homérica] de la Justicia (...) indica el riesgo de la empresa arriesgada. Y no

se trata aquí de un triunfo de la verdad moral, de la idea de que «la justicia pesa más que la injusticia» (Huizinga, 2007, pp. 106-107). De la falta de fundamento emerge la posibilidad del caso serio, aunque jugueteón, de la paz, con una inversión completa del modelo persecutorio de Schmitt, que ve el derecho *contra alterum, no ad alterum* (Cotta, 2018), la guerra como *ultima rabies, no ultima ratio* (la expresión no está presente en la traducción española de *Homo ludens*, pero sí en la italiana), el Estado 'muerto' si ya no es 'capaz de guerra ni de pena de muerte'.

Agamben es perfectamente consciente de la íntima contradicción del 'jurista' Schmitt, atrapado entre dos opuestos irreconciliables. Por un lado, la arbitrariedad elevada a fuente del derecho, el *Führer* que no solo emana, sino que 'protege' el derecho que es su presa, así como su producto; por otro, el *jus publicum europaeum*, con todo su tejido destinado a construir y al mismo tiempo a mitigar (exportando el corazón de las tinieblas más allá de los confines de *las líneas de amistad*), hasta el resultado de la autolimitación prevista por Georg Jellinek, el poder del Estado; cuyo "fin irrevocable" (la expresión es de Agamben) no reside en la neutralización pasiva del liberalismo y del parlamentarismo como pretendía Schmitt, sino precisamente en los "principios fundamentales del Estado nazi"; ese "doble Estado" del que hablaba Ernst Fraenkel y que operaba simultáneamente un proceso de destrucción de la estatalidad y al mismo tiempo de acentuación absoluta de su violencia y terror (Ginzburg, 2015). La cuestión del "terror" permanece y resurge incluso después del coloso nazi. Como ha señalado Villacañas (2020), "el neoliberalismo es la autopresentación del capitalismo como naturaleza divinizada dirigida por un poder invisible en toda la desnudez de su capacidad de producción de terror". Escribe Agamben, en la hermosa introducción a un silogio de escritos schmittianos que editó en 2012:

È per lo meno singolare – e questa contraddizione è uno dei tratti più oscuri dell'attività di Schmitt come giurista – che sia proprio quest'ultimo rappresentante dello *jus publicum europaeum* che nel 1933, scrivendo *Stato, movimento, popolo*, si assume il compito di delineare, nella sua veste di organo del diritto sostanziale del popolo tedesco, i principi fondamentali dello Stato nazionalsocialista, che di quel diritto rappresenta l'irrevocabile fine. Fra queste due identità contraddittorie, il giurista Schmitt non ha mai scelto, non ha mai «deciso» - o meglio, ha tentato fino all'ultimo di conciliarle, anche a costo di dover ricorrere a un mito. (p. 11)

El juego, como el juicio fallido o aplazado (pero no la ejecución, el "ajusticiado" Josef K.) o como el falso juicio de *La panne* de Dürrenmatt, puede convertirse en una máquina

penal despiadada, insensata, nihilista, trágica. Pero los procedimientos, las ritualizaciones procedimentales y procesales, la sacralidad misma del juramento, constituyen un conjunto de límites necesarios —ciertamente insuficientes, bizcos o ciegos respecto a la fuerza desnuda y a la injusticia— y que hay que preservar: se piensa en la representación de la justicia con los ojos vendados que no ve y no quiere ver la particularidad del caso concreto (Prosperi, 2008; Greco, 2023). No se trata, por tanto, de liberarse del juego, como paradójicamente parecía sugerir Huizinga, sino de esa demonicidad que produce cosmovisiones centradas en el *aut aut* (no et et), y que solo puede generar una política “absoluta”, en el sentido que da a este adjetivo Alessandro Pizzorno.

Para Schmitt, lo contrario de la política extrema es la despolitización extrema (jurídica y liberal). Nos encontramos así ante una elección imposible, casi un lecho de Procusto: hiperpolitización o despolitización. El derecho, región media entre estos extremos, parece no poseer para Schmitt ninguna capacidad morfogenética. Pero el derecho es, como ya dijo Jhering, no solo un elemento plástico que puede producir mediación, sino también una mezcla inextricable de guerra y paz: el fin del derecho es la paz, el medio para conseguirla es la lucha. Hay un pasaje esclarecedor en *Masse und Macht* de Canetti (1981) en el que parece condensar, frente al “estar por la muerte del político” de Schmitt, tan teñido de romanticismo y existencialismo, ansioso solo de concreción negativa (el sueño/pesadilla de la *Gran contienda*), todo el análisis nada ingenuo de Huizinga sobre el juego, las reglas y lo sagrado:

La elección del delegado está emparentada en principio con los sucesos en el parlamento. Se considera ser el mejor de los candidatos, el vencedor, aquel que se muestra como el más fuerte. El más fuerte es aquel que obtiene mayoría de votos. Si los 17 562 hombres que le apoyan se formaran como ejército cerrado contra los 13 204 que siguen a su adversario, deberían conquistar la victoria. Tampoco aquí ha de llegar a haber muertos. Con todo eso la inmunidad de los electores no es tan importante como la de las papeletas de voto que entregan y que contienen el nombre de su elección. Es permitido influenciar a los electores por casi todos los medios, hasta el momento en que se comprometen definitivamente con el nombre de su elección, en que lo escriben o marcan. El candidato opositor es escarnecido y entregado al odio general de todas las maneras posibles. El elector puede parecer que no se decide en muchas batallas electorales; sus cambiantes destinos tienen para él, si está orientado políticamente, el mayor encanto. Pero el instante en que vota realmente es casi sagrado; sagradas son las urnas selladas que contienen las papeletas de voto; sagrado el proceso del recuento. Lo solemne de todos estos quehaceres proviene de la renuncia a la muerte como instrumento de decisión.

Con cada una de las papeletas, la muerte, por decirlo así, se descarta. Pero lo que ella habría logrado, la fuerza del opositor, es concienzudamente consignado en un número. Quien juega con estos números, quien los borrona, quien los falsifica, vuelve a hacerle lugar a la muerte y no lo advierte. Los entusiastas amantes de la guerra, que de buena gana se burlan de las papeletas de voto, sólo confiesan con ello sus propias sanguinarias intenciones. Las papeletas de voto como los tratados son para ellos meros jirones de papel. El que no estén empapados de sangre les parece despreciable; para ellos sólo valen las decisiones por la sangre. (Canetti, 1981, pp. 236-237)

Institucionalización jurídica no equivale a inmovilización conservadora: partiendo ya de la dimensión democrática latente en la teoría de Hobbes (Alfieri, 2021), emerge una imagen de la juridicidad que no puede reducirse a la polarización. El derecho es algo que oscila entre la democracia y el poder absoluto (y el poder se convierte en absoluto cuando se transforma en obediencia legal, cuando existe el imperio de la ley. El derecho puede ser un límite, pero también un factor legitimador del positivismo ideológico: *justum quia jussum*); que oscila entre la comunidad de comunicación y la de avasallamiento, y no hay posibilidad de eludir uno de los dos polos, teniendo en cuenta la plurivalencia de significados, su naturaleza, suspendida entre la norma y la decisión, hiperdialéctica, en el sentido de la copresencia de contrarios: piénsese en el lenguaje.

La ley es lenguaje; la muerte de la ley es la muerte del lenguaje. Y la muerte del lenguaje es la muerte *tout-court*. Pero el lenguaje mismo puede ser muerte y portador de violencia. Blanchot señala que ne la palabra es 'siempre' orden, terror, seducción, adulación, resentimiento: es siempre violencia. Y, sin embargo, algo puede actuar como límite a este poder irresistible de lo negativo que adopta la forma de violencia absoluta: el rito de exorcizar la muerte, como ese conjunto de procedimientos jurídicos que dejan de lado la muerte como instrumento de decisión. La condición de existencia de lo político, como hemos visto en Canetti, no es la expulsión de la guerra sino su institucionalización; es decir, la extrema urgencia de que la frontera, el límite, permanezca sólido, y de que la masa no implusione en una trágica *montée aux* extremes. El hecho de que el derecho pueda estar "intrínsecamente podrido", que exprese una fuerza violenta intrínseca en su ser "deber ser", en su establecimiento de fronteras entre lo no jurídico y lo jurídico, no significa que haya que escapar de él y que esto, como parece decir Agamben en la breve intervención *Il lecito, l'obbligatorio, il proibito*, equivalga al "paraíso", a la ausencia de dominación (Agamben, 2022).

Se trata, en conclusión, de abordar las múltiples caras del derecho adoptando una perspectiva distinta a la de Benjamin y Agamben, que se limita a derrocar a Schmitt, sin salirse de sus polarizaciones (Mancuso, 2019). La corrección del error de paralaje podría ser esta: no se trata de *desestimar* el derecho, ni de seguir pensando las instituciones como un bloque compacto de pura represión, sino de salvaguardar su función (residual) garantista y emancipadora, hoy cada vez más cuestionada. La protesta contra la heteronomía y la jerarquía, en la que Kelsen leía la esencia de la democracia, debe convertirse en una actitud crítica y autocrítica ante un derecho estructurado precisamente sobre la heteronomía y la sanción negativa (en el sentido ofrecido por Christoph Menke en *Recht und Gewalt*). Salir del círculo mortífero (e hipnotizado por la muerte) del pensamiento “absoluto”, criticando los trucos conceptuales de Schmitt, puede ser un primer paso para pensar críticamente —sin quedar aprisionado por él— la interminable oscilación entre orden, conflicto y libertad, entre identidad, alteridad y terceridad.

Referencias

- Agamben, G. (Ed.). (2012). Introducción. In C. Schmitt, *Un giurista davanti a se stesso. Saggi e interviste*. Neri Pozza.
- Agamben, G. (2018). *Homo sacer. Edizione integrale*. Quodlibet.
- Agamben, G. (2022). *Il lecito, l'obbligatorio, il proibito*. <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-il-lecito-l-u2019obbligatorio-e-il-proibito>.
- Alfieri, L. (2021). *L'ombra della sovranità. Da Hobbes a Canetti e ritorno*. Treccani.
- Balibar, É. (2010). *La proposition de l'égaliberté: Essais politiques 1989-2009*. PUF.
- Bredenkamp, H. (2016). *Der Behemoth. Metamorphosen des Anti-Leviathan*. Duncker & Humblot.
- Calasso, R. (2016). *Il Cacciatore Celeste*. Adelphi.
- Canetti, E. (1981). *Masa y poder*. Muchnik.
- Cassirer, E. (2009). *The Myth of the State*. Yale University Press.
- Cotta, S. (2018). *Perché la violenza? Una interpretazione filosofica*. Morcelliana.
- Croce, M., & Salvatore, A. (2022). *Cos'è lo stato d'eccezione*. Nottetempo.
- Crosato, C. (2022). La politica (non) è una cosa seria. Prospettive di studio a partire dal paradigma del gioco. *Teoria e storia del diritto privato. Numero speciale Ombre del diritto*. Materiali dai seminari del PRIN 2017 'The Dark Side of Law'. https://www.teoriaestoriadeldirittoprivato.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022_NS_Crosato.pdf
- Esposito, R. (2013). *Due. La macchina della teologia politica e il posto del pensiero*. Einaudi.
- Ginzburg, C. (2015). *Paura reverenza terrore*. Adelphi.
- Greco, T. (2023). *Curare il mondo con Simone Weil*. Laterza.
- Huizinga, J. (2007). *Homo ludens*. Alianza.
- Kervégan, J.F. (2013). *¿Qué hacemos con Carl Schmitt?*. Escolar y Mayo. <https://doi.org/10.15581/009.48.1780>
- Kervégan, J.-F. (2021). Populism as a phenomenon of dedifferentiation. *Rechtstheorie*, 3-4, 175-186.
- Mancuso, F. (2015). La légitimité du premier usurpateur: violence, pouvoir, droit. In J.F. Kervégan, M. Plouviez, P.Y. Quiviger, *Norme et violence. Enquête franco-italienne* (pp.205-217). Olms.
- Mancuso, F. (2019). *Il doppio volto del diritto*. Giappichelli.
- Mancuso, F. (2022). *Il limite del diritto*. Giappichelli.
- Morgenthau, H. (2009). *Il concetto del politico. 'Contra' Schmitt*. Rubbettino.
- Preterossi, G. (2022). *Teologia politica e diritto*. Laterza.
- Prosperi, A. (2008). *Giustizia bendata. Percorsi storici di un'immagine*. Einaudi.

- Quiviger, P.Y. (2018). *Penser la pratique juridique. Essais de philosophie du droit appliquée*. Presses Universitaires d'Aix-Marseille.
- Ricoeur, P. (2007). *Etica e morale*. Morcelliana.
- Sferrazza Papa, E. (2022). *Il dispotismo della libertà. Schmitt e Kelsen interpreti di Rousseau*. Giappichelli.
- Sferrazza Papa, E. (2023). La barbarie del nemico. Una critica filosofico-letteraria dell'ostilità politica, *Itinerari*, LXII.
- Villacañas, J. L. (2020). *Neoliberalismo como teología política. Habermas, Foucault, Dardot, Laval y la historia del capitalismo contemporáneo*. Ned ediciones.

Ernesto C. Sferrazza Papa is currently a Senior Assistant Professor (with tenure) in Political Philosophy at the Department of Political Sciences of the University of Rome “La Sapienza.” His research interests include modern and contemporary political philosophy, critical theory, and legal philosophy. He published several scientific papers and three books: *Modernità infinita. Saggio sul rapporto tra spazio e potere* (Mimesis, 2019); *Le pietre e il potere. Una critica filosofica dei muri* (Mimesis, 2020); *Il dispotismo della libertà. Schmitt e Kelsen interpreti di Rousseau* (Giappichelli, 2022).

Contact: ernesto.sferrazzapapa@uniroma1.it

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5476-2594>

COMPROMISED TRUTH: POLITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL RELATIVISM IN HANS KELSEN'S *FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY**

Ernesto C. Sferrazza Papa
Università di Roma "La Sapienza"

LA VERDAD COMPROMETIDA: EL RELATIVISMO POLÍTICO Y FILOSÓFICO EN *LOS FUNDAMENTOS DE LA DEMOCRACIA DE HANS KELSEN*

Abstract

This essay briefly investigates the relationship between truth and democracy in Hans Kelsen's political philosophy. Especially in *The Essence and Value of Democracy* (1920–1929) and *Foundations of Democracy* (1955–1956), Kelsen discusses the connection between democratic pluralism and epistemological and moral relativism, arguing that one cannot be given without the other. In the essay, I analyze Kelsen's argument, focusing on the critical and problematic implications of the absolute relativism he defends.

Keywords

democracy; relativism; value; politics

* Reception date: 5th April 2023; acceptance date: 8th April 2023. The essay is the issue of a research project carried out within the Department of Political Sciences of the University of Rome "La Sapienza".

Resumen

El objetivo de este ensayo es investigar en breve la relación entre verdad y democracia en la filosofía política de Hans Kelsen. Específicamente en sus obras *Esencia y valor de la democracia* (1920-1929) y *Los fundamentos de la democracia* (1955-1956), Kelsen estudia la conexión entre el pluralismo democrático y el relativismo epistemológico y moral, argumentando que el uno no puede darse sin el otro. En el ensayo analizo el argumento de Kelsen, pero me enfoco en las implicaciones críticas y problemáticas del relativismo absoluto que defiende.

Palabras clave

democracia; relativismo; valor; política

1. Introduction

After a long season during which attention to Hans Kelsen's philosophy was almost entirely reserved for his jusphilosophical reflection, the perspective on this fundamental author for twentieth-century thought has profoundly changed in recent years. Scholar debate has acknowledged the importance of his philosophical-political reflection (Baume, 2007; Lagi, 2021; Ragazzoni, 2016; Scalone, 2008). We could say we are witnessing a *Kelsen-Renaissance*, thanks to which Kelsen enters fully into the pantheon of the classics of political philosophy.

The purpose of this essay is not to broadly outline his political thinking, which I believe is now largely captured by the debate. The aim is far more circumscribed and precise and consists in considering the function of the problem of truth within Kelsen's philosophical-political perspective. In particular, I will focus on some issues that emerge from the essay *Foundations of Democracy*.

As we know, politics and truth are old accomplices. Plato placed the question of truth at the center of the political *logos*, and for a long time, at least until Machiavelli and Hobbes, it was held that there was no politics worthy of the name outside of truth. However, the changed social scenario makes it necessary to rethink the politics-truth nexus. Today, circumscribing even more the issue, we might reconsider it as the democracy-truth nexus. How are these two elements articulated in light of today's mass media and social networks that tend to produce a "*bubble democracy*" (Palano, 2020)? How do democratic politics and truth come together in an era dominated by so-called "post-truth" (Ferraris, 2017)?

These questions are clearly of undeniable urgency, not only because we live in an age of endless truth manipulation, to the point of radically dismantling the chance to distinguish between true and false, as in the deep-fake phenomenon (Appel & Prietzel, 2022), but also because as a flipside of this risk of living in a world of lies, theoretical perspectives on truth that are naïve to say the least have flourished. Within this framework, many have unwisely assigned to twentieth-century philosophical perspectives that aimed to undermine the rigidity of truth, the blame for the spread of populism, authoritarianism, and illiberal regimes when not outright dictatorships. Within this often very modest conceptual framework, Hans Kelsen's political philosophy can provide useful theoretical tools for rethinking, in a certainly updated way, the relationship between truth and democracy.

Political compromise and relativism

For Hans Kelsen, the purpose of democracy is the maximization of individual freedom as “autonomy.” By autonomy, Kelsen means each person’s obedience to self-imposed rules. Only through this interdependence is “the agony of heteronomy” tolerable (Kelsen, 2013, p. 27), which means the acceptance of domination by ontologically equal individuals. However, decisive questions remain open: How is it possible to make the realization of the instinct of freedom and the acceptance of domination compatible? And, above all, how is domination justifiable in a highly specialized society in which political representation and, thus, mediation dominate? Kelsen’s answer is well known: What makes domination justifiable within a democratic society is compromise, which, as Adam Przeworski has written with ironic correctness, is “Kelsen’s favorite word about democracy” (Przeworski, 2022). This is not the place to go through all the stages of Kelsen’s theory of compromise (Baume, 2017; Sferrazza Papa, 2022, pp. 148–159), nor is it the place to analyze the merits and flaws of the idea of compromise itself (Bistagnino, 2018; Fumurescu, 2014). Suffice it to point out that Kelsen transforms the Rousseauian general will into a “directive general will,” that is, into the mediation of different instances and expectations (Baumert, 2014). Compromise is a midpoint, not so much of full agreement as of least possible disagreement. Compromise, within Kelsen’s sociology of democracy, is the abandonment of what separates in favor of what unites. And it would be a mistake to regard Kelsen’s theory of political compromise as pure utopia or to assume that it is based on a positive anthropology: The necessity of compromise arises, conversely, from Kelsen’s strong political realism, for which society is constantly shot through with conflict, and compromise is the only way to keep social conflict from exploding.

But the pragmatic necessity of compromise also rests on a precise theory of knowledge, as well as on a view of truth that we might call, using a term made famous by Gianni Vattimo, “weak.” If compromise is the practical act proper to the concertation of interests in democratic society, it finds a theoretical foundation in a conception of absolute truth as foreign to human cognitive procedures. This cross-reference between democracy and philosophy as a theory of truth is exactly what makes Kelsen’s political speculation philosophically relevant and, for this reason, open to critical consideration too.

Kelsen devotes the final part of *Vom Wesen und Wert der Demokratie*, first published in 1920 and then in an enlarged edition in 1929, to demonstrating this articulation between democratic politics and truth theory. In a similar form, the same arguments will be taken up in other places in his work and, above all, in a broader manner in *Foundations of Democracy*, an extensive essay published between 1955 and 1956 in the journal

“Ethics,” whose stated purpose is “to find out the connection which exists between politics and philosophy” (Kelsen, 1955, p. 14).

No doubt, Kelsen is aware that this connection does not arise as a law of fact but as a political necessity. Like everything that does not belong to nature, it falls within the realm of *Sollen* and not *Sein*. There can indeed be considerable distortions between an epistemological conviction and a political belief:

just because it is within the soul of the empirical human being and not within a sphere of pure reason that politics and philosophy originate, we must not expect that a definite political view will always and everywhere be combined with the philosophical system which logically corresponds to it. (Kelsen, 1955, p. 14)

However, it is possible to draw a rough equivalence between the two fields of human existence and demonstrate the existence of

an inner relationship between the antagonism of autocracy and democracy, on the one hand, and philosophical absolutism and relativism, on the other, that autocracy as political absolutism is co-ordinated with philosophical absolutism and democracy as political relativism with philosophical relativism. (Kelsen, 1955, p. 14)

Through his reassessment of the relativistic perspective, Kelsen shows that he is fully and consciously immersed in the scientific-cultural season that marked the twentieth century, a historical phase innervated by the “general crisis of the logical-epistemological foundations of traditional physics” (Cacciari, 1976, p. 29). Innovations in the field of theoretical physics, in particular Albert Einstein’s discovery of relativity (Tilgher, 1923, pp. 21–48), as well as the suspicion about the stability and integrity of consciousness insinuated by Freud’s work (Lijoi & Trincia, 2015; Losano, 1977), had demolished the idea of the objective stability of the world and the self. Having collapsed the certainties in a specific and objective representation of reality, everything becomes relative. Inevitably, this upheaval had influenced Kelsen’s thinking from the beginning, who had to strive to find reasons for reasonable politics that could not, however, be based on any absolute and indubitable truth.

The substance of democracy

According to Kelsen, democracy essentially has to do with the procedural aspect of choosing between competing options. However, if democracy is declined on the procedure, i.e.,

on its formal side, what remains problematic is the question about its substantive content. The problem can also be formulated as follows: What *should* be the content of democratic laws? If it is true that the People—which for Kelsen remains a theological-political fiction, a false concept—must obey laws that they have given themselves, will this imply that it is the People themselves who know what is Good for society and that, therefore, legislative procedures must be entirely handled by the People? This hypothesis, according to Kelsen, would invest the People with a kind of divine mandate and unmotivatedly assign to them the ability to know the Truth and directly experience the Good:

In fact, various apologists for the idea of popular sovereignty have made similar claims. Even Rousseau is not far from doing so, when he justifies the binding nature of majority decision, i.e., the authority of the majority, on the basis that the minority has erred regarding the true content of the *volonté générale*. (Kelsen, 2013, p. 102)

Similarly, Kelsen repeats the same argument in *Foundations*:

it is easy to show that there is no such things as an objectively ascertainable common good, that the question as to what is the common good can be answered only by subjective value judgments which may differ essentially from each other; and that even if it existed, the average man, and hence the people, would hardly be able to know it. (Kelsen, 1955, p. 2)

The Kelsenian solution to this problem lies in the recognition of the epistemological equivalent of political compromise. Indeed, only in a fully nihilistic horizon, that is, one in which ultimate truth is considered either nonexistent or unattainable, can compromise rise to the status of a practical principle of political reason. In an even more radical form, Kelsen argues that only in such a nihilist horizon is the very possibility of democratic government conceivable: “The [very] assumption that knowledge of absolute truth and insight into absolute values are possible confronts democracy with a hopeless situation” (Kelsen, 2013, p. 101). The idea, in short, is that the democratic form is not weakened but strengthened by the very disappearance of truth.

In this way, Kelsen shows himself to be part of a “postmodern” strand, for which truth can no longer be grounded in a definite “texture” of Being but is rather the continuous negotiation between different points of view. Indeed, “this is the big question: Whether knowledge of absolute truth and insight into absolute values are actually

possible” (Kelsen, 2013, p. 102). In line with the outcomes of the modern nominalist tradition, Kelsen rejects for both theoretical and political reasons the existence of such knowledge of ultimate truth, taking this thesis to its extreme consequences, as Francesco Mancuso pointed out: “If democracy is the culmination of the modern state, it cannot but be intrinsically incompatible with any form of totalizing value-truth” (Mancuso, 2019, p. 313).

Some critical issues become immediately visible. In the first instance, the Kelsenian democratic system appears indistinguishable from autocratic systems by its content; only the fact that democratic procedures are managed through rationalization processes separates them. Democracy, in fact, is not the absence of domination but rather its rationalization in a procedural system consistent with the division of labor proper to highly developed societies. From the point of view of substantive content, such a democracy involves, on the one hand, continuously falsifiable truths and, on the other hand, an ethical attitude of openness to the truths of others, namely,

the viewpoint that only relative truths and values are accessible to human cognition and that, consequently, every truth and every value must—just as the human individual who finds them—be prepared to abdicate its position and make room for others. (Kelsen, 2013, p. 103)

Philosophically speaking, such a conception

leads to a critical or positivist worldview, where the latter is understood as that philosophical and scientific school of thought, which takes the positive—i.e., that which is given and perceptible—and experience—changeable and constantly in flux—as its starting point. (Kelsen, 2013, p. 103)

At this point, the thesis that welds politics and epistemology can be made explicit: “the idea of democracy [...] presupposes relativism as its worldview” (Kelsen, 2013, p. 103). If there is to be democracy, there can be no absolute truth; if there can be no absolute truth, the most appropriate cognitive form consists of both epistemic and moral relativism.

Democracy and philosophy

The relationship between politics and truth is expressed in Kelsen as the relationship between politics and philosophy, that is, between a way of organizing power and a specific

worldview. Absolute truth conspires against democracy, which can thrive only in the pluralism of truths that recognize themselves as relative, precarious, contingent, and fallible. In both camps, the same rationality of domination is extruded in the sense that philosophical absolutism, which “may very well be characterized as epistemological totalitarianism” (Kelsen, 1955, p. 26), prescribes the domination of the object over the subject just as political absolutism provides for the domination of the sovereign over subjects who do not participate in the legislative moment. As in Kantian correlationism, a dialectic is established in Kelsen whereby the subject, within transcendental laws and schematics that determine its possibilities, is a book to self-determination in the cognitive process. The *silhouette* of cognitive freedom conforms to the political one and vice versa. Both, in fact, share the possibility of self-determination despite limitations. It is this oxymoron that simultaneously makes the exercise of possibility possible and ensures that it does not degenerate into absolutist solipsism: “Freedom of the knowing subject —not the metaphysical freedom of will but freedom of cognition in the sense of self-determination— is a fundamental prerequisite of the relativistic theory of knowledge” (Kelsen, 1955, p. 17).

In this way, the difficulty encountered by any relativism, i.e., the acceptance of a cognitive pluralism in which one runs the risk of having to accept the truth of those who are strong enough to impose it, is overcome by recourse to political categories, and this shows the very close connection for Kelsen between political reflection and the doctrine of knowledge. Indeed, guaranteeing the impossibility of the prevalence of one point of view over others is the recognition of the equality of individuals, as it were the principle, together with the one of freedom, on which the possibility of democracy is based:

taking into consideration —as true relativism— the mutual relations among the various subjects of knowledge, this theory compensates for its inability to secure the objective existence of the one and same world for all subjects by the assumption that the individuals, as subjects of knowledge, are equal. (Kelsen, 1955, pp. 17, 18)

This implies that freedom —both in a political and gnoseological sense— is such only in the reciprocal limitation dictated by the freedoms of others, whereby “the subject of cognition is not absolutely, he is only relatively, free, free under the laws of rational cognition; and this freedom is not incompatible with the equality of all the subjects of cognition” (Kelsen, 1955, p. 18). This is an extraordinary scientific achievement of Kelsen’s political theory, which restores its full philosophical depth: The limitation of political freedom, which thus makes it exercisable in empirical contexts, turns out to have the same structure as the freedom of the conscious subject; so,

freedom and equality turn out to be fundamental conditions of both real democracy and cognitive relativism, and from this thesis comes the idea of their mutual reinforcement.

Democratic personality and the limits of Kelsen's theory

Through the thesis of the constant parallelism between epistemology and politics, Kelsen identifies not only the transcendental structures of democracy but also goes so far as to find them in the interiority of the political subject, thus drawing a true profile of the democratic personality: "From a psychological point of view the synthesis of freedom and equality, the essential characteristic of democracy, means that the individual, the ego, wants freedom not only for himself but also for the others, for the *tu*" (Kelsen, 1955, p. 25). The democratic personality is configured as renunciatory: it lays down the claim to the absoluteness and sovereignty of its own freedom in the name of freedom *tout court*, that is, the very possibility that freedom can be given. Recognizing that freedom and equality must necessarily manifest themselves simultaneously, the democratic personality accepts being momentarily not politically free (i.e., it accepts as legitimate the gap between its own will and the *volonté générale*) because, in this way, it maintains the possibility that it can be so in the more or less immediate future:

only if the individual considers the undeniable differences which exist between himself and the others as not essential, only if the ego- or self-consciousness is reduced to some extent by the feeling to be equal with others, can the ego honor the claim of the *tu* to be also an ego. (Kelsen, 1955, p. 26)

To realize itself empirically, in short, democracy needs a relativist philosophy that ensures its pluralism and a dialectic of recognition that innervates the moral fabric of the social body.

From what has been said so far, it is clear to me that in Kelsen, the correspondence of epistemology and politics acts in the form of a reasonable confirmation of the preferability of the democratic option. This is because democracy makes possible the empirical realization of the innate drive for freedom and succeeds in mediating this freedom with the heteronomy of social life. However, the correspondence between the two fields is, in many places, problematic and exposed to criticism. While it is true that Kelsen's political relativism aims to preserve a scientific framework, in the sense that science proceeds by proving hypotheses and refuting provisional theories, nevertheless, the two fields do not overlap point by point. A scientific theory, in fact, does not have the same falsifiability

as a worldview, which involves values, beliefs, and moral expectations that subjects are often reluctant to question. A worldview is not falsified like a scientific theory can be: There are no paradigmatic anomalies (in Kuhn's sense) that undermine it once and for all. Moreover, a worldview does not bear the same relationship to truth understood in the broadest possible sense, that is, as a reflection of a state of affairs in the world. The falsifiability to which a scientific theory lends itself is not the sum of reasonable arguments that lead to making one worldview preferable to another.

Kelsen, in short, seems to devalue the existential bearing of worldviews, whereby even good reasons fail to exert an effective compulsion on the individual. To avoid introjecting an ideological view of politics, Kelsen ends up underestimating the power of ideology. Kelsen's naive relativism ignores the contradictions and antinomies of the concrete experience of social individuals.

Moreover, Kelsen fails to account for the progress of different sensibilities that determine one historical moment versus another. The emancipatory process that Kantianly consolidates into legal structures and the protection and preservation of certain rights means that certain positions and worldviews are seen as repugnant. Value relativism has its effective emancipatory scope only when values compatible with maintaining the social structure are at stake. Democracy, in order to safeguard itself empirically, must put values contrary to it out of play: It must, in short, activate its own immune system.

Kelsen's unlimited relativism seems to run into a threefold obstacle. First, it does not contemplate a *Verwandlung* of relativism itself, that is, an empirical limitation of it. This, moreover, contradicts the entire structure of Kelsenian political philosophy, which aims to demonstrate the need for a limitation of the Idea so that it can be applied concretely. Second, it unduly transports the plane of the falsifiability of a scientific theory into that of the preferability of a *Weltanschauung*. Third, where applied to the extreme, it carries the empirical risk of destroying the democratic form itself by a defect of the immune system.

Conclusions

Kelsen's political philosophy has the merit of highlighting the nexus between democracy and truth in an age when both are entering a crisis. Nonetheless, Kelsen seems to get entangled in a typical twentieth-century contradiction, which, by the way, is once again haughtily rising in an age of "post-truth"—a historical phase marked by what Alessandro Ferrara has acutely called "hyperpluralism" (Ferrara,

2014). On the one hand, a plural democracy necessarily seems to have to be based on epistemological and moral relativism (the latter, however, with the condition that the effects of a moral belief are not incompatible with the values traditionally accepted and sedimented in positive law). Relativism, in fact, does not impose truth since the truth imposed can only be the extrinsic expression of an authority not necessarily recognized as legitimate. On the other hand, the absence of grounding risks putting the reasonableness of different opinions back not to the free play of intellects in dialogue but to an equally unfounded force. I believe that Kelsen fails to resolve this contradiction, which remains open and is handed over to us as a task. He himself recognizes that the challenge of philosophical relativism and its political translation is to make coexist values that, strictly speaking, cannot coexist: “That value judgments have only relative validity —one of the basic principles of philosophical relativism— implies that opposite value judgments are neither logically nor morally excluded” (Kelsen, 1955, p. 38). The enterprise seems, for all intents and purposes, hopeless. But if we keep in mind the historical period in which Kelsen attempted it, the darkest years of the last century, the years of Nazi delirium, we can understand his distrust of any totalitarianism, be it even that of truth (Jacobson & Schlink, 2000).

Moreover, it is noteworthy that Kelsen in *Foundations* emphasizes that “modern democracy cannot be separated from political liberalism” (Kelsen, 1955, p. 27). This brief passage is extremely relevant for properly understanding Kelsen’s proposal. It means that for Kelsen, there is a minimum content of historical democratic laws since he speaks about modern democracy and not democracy in a general and vague meaning. This minimum content, namely the substance of modern democracy, could be expressed in the form of essential liberal rights that constitute the classic core of negative liberties (Berlin, 2002, pp. 166–217): “Freedom of religion, freedom of opinion and press, belong to the essence of democracy and above all belongs freedom of science, based on the belief in the possibility of objective cognition” (Kelsen, 1955, p. 28).

It remains to be decided whether this substantive concession can be derived from the idea of a purely formal democracy or is external to it. It seems to me that the formalist requirement of Kelsen’s democratic theory precludes substantive content. Strictly speaking, following Kelsen’s argument, even minimal liberal rights should be regarded as fallible and revocable. Kelsen, in short, contradicts himself. However, it is possible to integrate Kelsen’s political proposal with a perspective that sees positive rights as the sedimentation of historical processes. To free procedures from formalism is to think of them historically as part of processes of collective emancipation.

The democratic procedures provided by advanced constitutional systems, which Kelsen looked upon with extreme favor, are the sedimentation of historical rights achievements, not neutral rules that reject the idea of a common interest of all participants in the democratic game. It is possible, in short, to hold form and content together as long as we see the form as sedimented historical content. This perspective, which harks back to the most up-to-date forms of neo-constitutionalism, seems to me to be the horizon within which a plural democracy must move, both open to competing moral values and capable of defending itself against antidemocratic positions eager to cause its collapse.

References

- Appel, M., & Prietzel F. (2022). The detection of political deepfakes. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 27(4), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmac008>
- Baume, S. (2007). *Kelsen: plaider la démocratie*. Michalon. <https://doi.org/10.3917/micha.baume.2007.01>
- Baume, S. (2017). What place should compromise be given in democracy? A reflection on Hans Kelsen's contribution. *Négociations*, 21(1), 73–89. <https://doi.org/10.3917/neg.027.0073>
- Baumert, R. (2014). Kelsen, lecteur critique de Rousseau: de la volonté générale à la volonté collective. *Jus Politicum*, 6, 109–124.
- Berlin, I. (2002). *Liberty* (H. Hardy, Ed.). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/019924989X.001.0001>
- Bistagnino, G. (2018). *Compromessi di principio. Il disaccordo nella filosofia politica*. Carocci.
- Cacciari, M. (1976). *Krisis. Saggio sulla crisi del pensiero negative da Nietzsche a Wittgenstein*. Feltrinelli.
- Ferrara, A. (2014). *The Democratic Horizon. Hyperpluralism and the Renewal of Political Liberalism*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139565004>
- Ferraris, M. (2017). *Post-verità e altri enigmi*. Il Mulino.
- Fumurescu, A. (2014). *Compromise. A Political and Philosophical History*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139333689>
- Jacobson A. J., & Schlink, B. (2000). *A Jurisprudence of Crisis*. University of California Press.
- Kelsen, H. (1955). Foundations of Democracy. *Ethics*, 66(1/II), 1–101. <https://doi.org/10.1086/291036>
- Kelsen, H. (2013). *The Essence and Value of Democracy* (B. Graf, Trans.). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lagi, S. (2021). *Democracy in its Essence. Hans Kelsen as a Political Thinker*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lijoi, F., & Trincia F. S. (2015). *L'anima e lo Stato. Hans Kelsen e Sigmund Freud*. Morcelliana.
- Losano, M. G. (1977). Rapporti tra Kelsen e Freud. *Sociologia del diritto*, 4, 142–151.
- Mancuso, F. (2019). *Il doppio volto del diritto*. Giappichelli.

- Palano, D. (2020). *Bubble Democracy. La fine del pubblico e la nuova polarizzazione*. Scholè.
- Przeworski, A. (2022). *Kelsen and Schumpeter on Democracy*. SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4243533>
- Ragazzoni, D. (2016). *Il Leviatano democratico. Parlamento, partiti e capi tra Weber e Kelsen*. Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.
- Scalone, A. (2008). *Una battaglia contro gli spettri. Diritto e politica nella Reine Rechtslehre di Hans Kelsen (1905–1934)*. Giappichelli.
- Sferrazza Papa, E. C. (2022). *Il dispotismo della libertà. Schmitt e Kelsen interpreti di Rousseau*. Giappichelli.
- Tilgher, A. (1923). *Relativisti contemporanei*. Libreria di scienze e lettere.

Sandro Luce es investigador en Filosofía Política en la Universidad de Salerno, donde actualmente enseña Nuevos sujetos políticos y organiza un laboratorio en Democracia participativa. Ha publicado varios ensayos en revistas y volúmenes colectivos y algunas monografías que incluyen *Soggettivazioni antagoniste. Frantz Fanon e la critica postcoloniale* (Meltemi, 2018).

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8366-0770>

Contacto: sluce@unisa.it

EN LA RAÍZ DE LA POLÍTICA: ANTAGONISMOS, POPULISMOS Y NUEVOS MOVIMIENTOS*

Sandro Luce

Università degli Studi di Salerno

AT THE ROOT OF POLITICS: ANTAGONISMS, POPULISMS AND NEW MOVEMENTS

Resumen

La crisis de consenso del modelo de democracia liberal es, desde un punto de vista teórico, inseparable de la crisis del mecanismo de representación política, lo que ha resultado en el vaciamiento de su fundamento trascendental. El artículo realiza un análisis crítico de algunas propuestas postfundacionalistas (Rancière, Mouffe, Laclau) que, a pesar de su profundas divergencias, intentan radicalizar la política, poniendo en primer plano la cuestión del poder popular. Este poder activo no se apoya en los mecanismos clásicos de delegación, y actúa por su cuenta, antagonizando con las prácticas dominantes de la gobernanza neoliberal, cuya hegemonía se considera generalmente la causa principal de un amplio proceso de despolitización. Con respecto a estas propuestas, se destaca que el entramado político y social está atravesado por una multiplicidad de subjetividades sumamente heterogéneas. Estas rechazan ser “fijadas” dentro de los significantes políticos hegemónicos, para intentar actuar y encontrar espacios comunes de autonomía y expresión dentro de las mallas de la máquina neoliberal.

* Fecha de recepción: 13 de febrero 2023; fecha de aceptación: 31 de marzo 2023. Este trabajo es fruto de un proyecto de investigación desarrollado en el Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e della Comunicazione de la Università degli Studi di Salerno.

Palabras clave

pueblo; democracia; antagonismo; movimientos

Abstract

From a conceptual point of view the crisis of liberal democracy within contemporary society cannot be separate from the crisis of the political mechanism, resulted in the emptying of its transcendental foundation. The paper critically analyzes some post-foundationalist proposals (Rancière, Mouffe, Laclau) that, despite their profound distance, attempt to radicalize politics by foregrounding the question of the people's power, meant as an active power, not relied on traditional delegation mechanisms but able to act on its own by antagonizing with the dominant practices of neoliberal governance, whose hegemony is generally considered as the main cause of a broad process of depoliticisation. From the perspective carried out by this paper, these proposals run the risk of neglecting the specific connotations and the concrete conditions of the subjects involved. Indeed, the paper emphasizes how the political and the social framework are crossed by a multiplicity of extremely heterogeneous subjectivities which refuse any attempt to 'set' them within hegemonic political significant and try to pursue self-determination, finding common spaces of autonomy and expression within the meshes (o tangles) of the neoliberal machine.

Keywords

people; democracy; antagonism; movements

La democracia representativa y su crisis

Las democracias liberales que han gobernado la vida política occidental a partir de la Segunda Guerra Mundial atraviesan una profunda crisis, que se manifiesta en toda su evidencia en la intensificación de la desconexión entre gobernantes y gobernados. Rosanvallon (2006) ha definido esta fase como la “era de la desconfianza”, para subrayar el creciente sentimiento de apatía y la pasivización de los ciudadanos, cada vez más escépticos y desencantados con las instituciones democráticas. Su sensación de impotencia ante la imposibilidad de influir y dirigir concretamente las opciones políticas destaca la insuficiencia de los mecanismos procedimentales que sufren, en la actual fase de des-territorialización dictada por la racionalidad económica neoliberal, un mayor vaciado respecto de su capacidad de influir y decidir.

Sin embargo, esta crisis adquiere también un significado más amplio, de tipo ‘estructural’, cuando la ponemos en relación con la representación política, entendida como el lugar simbólico que configura la identidad colectiva de un pueblo. La representación remite más a una manera de investidura y ejercicio del poder —es decir, la delegación representativa— que a un dispositivo conceptual, que alude a la operación en virtud de la cual se constituye la *factio* de la totalidad del cuerpo político como distinta de la suma de las voluntades de los individuos que lo componen (Bazzicalupo, 2012). La persona *rapraesentativa* —encarnada en el cuerpo del Soberano— no se limita a ocupar el lugar de otro, recogiendo una voluntad ya existente y determinada, sino que, actuando en nombre y por cuenta de todos, crea una voluntad unitaria que antes no existía, reduciendo la pluralidad a unidad.

El paso de lo múltiple al Uno, que concibe al sujeto de la identidad política, marca la emergencia del protagonista de la acción política: el pueblo, que ya con Hobbes (1996) se presenta como el resultado de un artificio ordenador creado por la razón humana para sustraer al hombre mismo de los riesgos ligados a su naturaleza. En el origen del mecanismo sacrificial que se injerta en el mecanismo representativo hobbesiano, el pueblo como tal no puede existir antes del poder soberano. Solo con la unicidad del soberano creada por el pacto, de hecho, se crea la unicidad del pueblo, a partir de la multitud dispersa de los que negocian en el estado de naturaleza: el pueblo es artificial al igual que el soberano. La soberanía popular, sin embargo, nunca será ejercida directamente por el pueblo, quien, aunque se constituye como autor, está ausente y necesita representación. El profundo significado político de este concepto será retomado más tarde por Carl Schmitt (2010) quien, trabajando sobre la diferencia de significado entre *Repräsentation* y *Vertretung*, subraya cómo “representar es hacer perceptible y actualizar un ser imperceptible mediante un ser de presencia pública” (p. 232) pero en la representación

(*Repräsentation*) “adquiere apariencia concreta una alta especie del ser” (p. 233), es decir, la idea de que un pueblo existe como unidad política. El pueblo es, por tanto, el sujeto del poder constituyente, que se “autotrasciende” en el representante, que hace presente su ausencia y expresa su voluntad de forma unívoca y unificada. La representación es una puesta en escena, un hacer presente lo que está ausente en público y que de otro modo permanecería no expresado. Así, el centro de gravedad de la representación se desplaza del ámbito jurídico-formal —correspondiente al mecanismo técnico del mandato, es decir, ser el apoderado sobre la base de una relación fiduciaria— al ámbito mucho más delicado de la manifestación de la identidad, viendo en ello no tanto un procedimiento regulado por normas, sino algo existencial.

Es evidente que, desde esta perspectiva —afirmada como predominante en el curso de la Modernidad— la política, aunque “trata del estar juntos y los unos con los otros de los *diversos*” (Arendt, 2013, p. 45), no pretende en modo alguno realzar la dimensión de la acción, esto es, de la actividad compartida para manifestar la propia posición en el espacio público, como hubiera deseado una erudita refinada como Hanna Arendt, muy atenta a las reflexiones de los antiguos griegos sobre el sentido de la política. En cambio, la política se ha ocupado de crear orden y seguridad, que no se consideran en absoluto datos naturales, sino el resultado contingente y frágil de la creación humana. La máquina racionalista de la soberanía, al instituir un orden policial y garantizar la vida humana, pone de relieve la cifra técnica e instrumental de la política moderna, que no tiene sentido como actividad político-participativa —así como podría haber sido la *praxis* griega—, sino que tiene el objetivo preciso de borrar el conflicto desordenado del estado de naturaleza, eliminando al mismo tiempo también la riqueza y el desorden de las diferencias.

Es con la Revolución Francesa cuando, una vez anulada la idea jacobina de democracia directa, se realiza plenamente la concreción de esta instancia unitaria, consolidada por la idea de que la representación de la voluntad general no puede fraccionarse ni puede tener vínculos limitantes. Según Lefort (1981), la democracia se afirma como el proceso instituyente por excelencia que surge de una revolución, y es precisamente esta característica la que la hace tan innovadora y radical, inaugurando un cambio de paradigma decisivo. El poder del Antiguo Régimen necesitaba, en efecto, una figuración que encauzara la esfera de lo simbólico a lo real: la persona monárquica, su “inmortalidad” constituía lo que fagocitaba toda distinción en su interior, a partir de la separación entre simbólico y real, en un “todo” indistinto que disolvía las divisiones y los conflictos de los que estaba impregnado. Después de la Revolución, el poder aparece en cambio “como un lugar vacío y quienes lo ejercen

como simples mortales que lo ocupan sólo temporalmente”, ya no hay una ley fijada para siempre, gracias a la cual “los enunciados no sean contestables, los fundamentos susceptibles de ser cuestionados” (Lefort, 1981, pp. 172-173). El poder democrático ya no puede “encarnarse” en los sujetos reales que reclaman la soberanía: es un lugar “vacío” (Alagna, 2020) que no puede ocultar la ausencia de un fundamento estable y trascendente.

La sociedad, tal como la define el artificio moderno de la soberanía, deja de estar representada en un centro físico, y la definición de sus límites ya no puede recomponerse en una unidad capaz de superar establemente las divisiones sociales. Este es el deslizamiento puesto en marcha por la democracia moderna, inevitablemente inestable, en la que el pueblo, por soberano que sea, siempre estará “en vías de construcción” y cuya identidad será constantemente cuestionada. Es precisamente este cuestionamiento constante de la identidad del pueblo y de lo que se hace en su nombre lo que constituye el núcleo de la invención democrática. En otras palabras, el momento democrático inaugura un proceso en el que la autoridad política ya no goza de una legitimidad absoluta: quien ejerce el poder en la sociedad democrática está empeñado en la reafirmación constante de su legitimidad a través de la búsqueda de consenso, típica del sistema de partidos y de las elecciones. Este vaciamiento del fundamento trascendental abre un espacio público inédito, marcado por la emergencia de conflictividades múltiples y nuevas subjetividades políticas, en el que la política de las democracias representativas de los últimos años se ha limitado a registrar los deseos del pueblo tal y como son, sin contribuir a determinar cuáles podrían ser; reducida a un mero procedimiento en el que el pueblo no decide a través de sus representantes, sino que simplemente elige quién decide, radicalizando el mecanismo expropiatorio inherente al modelo de democracia representativa (Luce, 2016).

Radicalizar la democracia

Una respuesta a la crisis política de la democracia representativa, o al menos un efecto de esta en el plano filosófico-político, ha producido una serie de reflexiones cuya ambición explícita ha sido radicalizar la cuestión de la democracia, en el sentido literal de ir a la raíz de la democracia (Bazzicalupo, 2013, pp. 230-232). Este tipo de operación ha significado poner en primer plano la cuestión del poder popular, es decir, de un poder activo que no se apoya en los mecanismos clásicos de delegación y que actúa por su cuenta, luchando con las prácticas dominantes de la gobernanza neoliberal, a cuya hegemonía se considera generalmente la causa principal de un amplio proceso

de despolitización. La operación de radicalización de la democracia es también decisiva para hacer emerger la síntesis imposible entre el momento estatal y el momento popular de la soberanía. Muestra, esto es, la tensión teórica que se deriva de la pretensión, propia de la soberanía popular, de apretar en un Uno sin fracturas aparentes —la llamada *reductio ad unum*— al soberano y al sujeto político, es decir, el pueblo, que solo existe si está representado. Por un lado, el pueblo es la fuente de una necesaria legitimación desde abajo del poder político; por el otro, esa legitimación no puede constituirse sino a través de un mecanismo trascendente que crea el orden político de la soberanía. Como ha señalado Balibar (2001), esta tensión ha estado históricamente mediada por una serie de dispositivos —desde la referencia a la Nación como concepto y fuerza concreta, coagulante y esencialista, pasando por los instrumentos de la *Polizeiwissenschaft*, es decir, la ciencia policial (Foucault, 2004)¹, hasta los más recientes del Estado social— que han permitido atenuar y dislocar en el tiempo esta aporía interna en la construcción del concepto de soberanía popular.

Las crisis —económica, sanitaria, ecológica, alimentaria— que se han superpuesto en los últimos tiempos han, sin duda, acelerado la necesidad de repensar la política y las antinomias internas al mecanismo de conformación del pueblo y del poder político. Se trata, entonces, de comprender hasta qué punto las propuestas de radicalización de la democracia son capaces de emanciparla del espacio ordenante y lleno de la policía, en el sentido que Rancière (2005) le atribuye, y de hacer emerger el escándalo que constituye su esencia, es decir, “revelar que este título no puede ser más que la ausencia de título, que el gobierno de las sociedades no puede reposar en última instancia más que sobre su propia contingencia” (Rancière, 2005, p. 54).

Según Rancière, el problema con el que ha tropezado la teoría política de Platón a Rousseau, pasando por Hobbes, radica en una especie de paradoja que hace de la igualdad una ficción necesaria para hacer funcionar una sociedad profundamente desigual que, a través de la representación, ha encontrado una fórmula para organizar la política democrática en su peculiar declinación liberal-occidental. Evocar el escándalo democrático es arrojar luz sobre el entrelazamiento entre igualdad y desigualdad, mostrando cómo la representación no ha sido más que “una forma oligárquica, una representación de minorías que tienen título para ocuparse de los asuntos comunes” (Rancière, 2005, p. 60). La democracia representativa es, en el mejor de los casos, un pleonasma, que

¹ Según Foucault, se trata de uno de los dispositivos de la nueva racionalidad estatal destinada a salvaguardar no solo la mera supervivencia, sino la mejora de la vida.

remite a la posible aparición de un pueblo cuyo rasgo específico es que no coincide con el pueblo nombrado a nivel jurídico y sociológico. La *police* corresponde a este “estado de derecho oligárquico”, que define una disposición específica del orden social en la que los lugares, los tiempos, las funciones y las ocupaciones de los individuos están bien definidos. En la perspectiva de Rancière, la *police* no se limita a desempeñar una función puramente simbólica en la esfera social: a través de esta especie de encasillamiento jerárquico de los vivos, más bien define una distribución (*partage*) del mundo sensible que produce mecanismos de prepotencia y exclusión de la participación efectiva en las decisiones políticas, impidiendo una configuración alternativa basada en la distribución conflictiva del espacio común de la experiencia. El escándalo de la democracia consiste, pues, en la “naturalización” de la exclusión de la escena política de la “parte de los sin parte”, de todos los que no son contabilizados, de modo que “desde la Atenas del siglo V hasta los gobiernos de nuestros días, el partido de los ricos no dejará de decir *que no hay partido para los sin partido*” (Rancière, 1995, p. 34).

Según Rancière (2004), la política no tiene nada que ver con ningún principio o ley de la comunidad, no tiene *archè*, como indica el nombre mismo de la palabra democracia: “la singularidad del acto del *demos*, un *kratein* en lugar de un *archein*, atestigua un desorden o un error de cálculo originario. *Demos* es a la vez el nombre de la comunidad y el de su división, el nombre del tratamiento del *daño*. Más allá de toda controversia específica, la ‘política del pueblo’ hace daño a la distribución policial de los puestos y de las funciones porque el pueblo es siempre más y menos que sí mismo. Es el poder del uno más el que causa estragos en el orden policial” (Rancière, 2004, p. 114). La política, por tanto, no consiste en el ejercicio y en la lucha por el poder, ni mucho menos en la búsqueda del fundamento de su legitimidad, sino que debe entenderse como la reconfiguración conflictiva del espacio común en el que el movimiento de subjetivación produce, en primer lugar, una des-identificación, es decir, la alteración o la ruptura de ese reparto policial, que configura el orden político-social, de tal manera que una parte se presume incapaz de participar políticamente en él. Esta parte es capaz de hablar, sin embargo, a pesar de ser escuchada, no es entendida porque lo que quiere decir en su acto de palabra no está contemplado. El desacuerdo, de hecho, no es malentendido, “no es el conflicto entre quien dice blanco y quien dice negro. Es el existente entre quien dice blanco y quien dice blanco pero no entiende lo mismo o no entiende que el otro dice lo mismo con el nombre de la blancura” (Rancière, 1995, p.12).

Rancière, para subrayar las ambigüedades de la dinámica institutiva de la escena política, retoma de Tito Livio (1997) el famoso apólogo de Menenio Agripa pronunciado a los plebeyos en rebelión, que habían abandonado la ciudad y ocupado el Sacro Monte

en señal de protesta, porque “mientras fuera luchaban por la libertad y el imperio, en casa eran esclavizados y oprimidos por sus conciudadanos” (Tito Livio, 1997, p. 329). El problema que se plantea, más allá de la metáfora organicista propuesta por Menenio Agripa a los plebeyos, es ante todo saber si existe una escena común e igualitaria en la que patricios y plebeyos puedan debatir: una discusión que solo sería posible a través del reconocimiento de los excluidos como “parte” de la comunidad política. Según Menenio Agripa, los plebeyos tienen “una palabra que es un sonido fugitivo, una especie de mugido, signo de la necesidad y no manifestación de la inteligencia”² (Rancière, 1995, p. 46). Aun así, tienen un lenguaje que no es legítimo inscribir en el orden político porque procede de “seres sin nombre, privados de logos, es decir de inscripción simbólica en la ciudad” (Rancière, 1995, p. 45): no están incluidos en el orden político de lo visible y lo decible, sino solo en el lugar y el papel invisibles de la policía. Menenio Agripa les ofrece un reconocimiento que consiste en comprender sus reivindicaciones, esto es, sus “mugidos”, y en ser entendido en su discurso, haciendo que los plebeyos parezcan iguales a sí mismos y a los demás gobernantes. Pero su reconocimiento no es otra cosa sino el del señor que sin lucha reconoce al otro como un plebeyo, como un ser destinado a trabajar o a luchar en tierras extranjeras, pero incapaz de participar en los procesos de decisión de la ciudad: es un reconocimiento policial (Campalla, 2019). En este juego conflictivo, sin embargo, los plebeyos han transgredido, han huido de la ciudad y, autorrepresentándose como sujetos capaces de actos de palabra, han instituido una partición diferente de lo sensible, relanzando el enfrentamiento sobre la existencia de la escena política. El pueblo logra constituirse como sujeto fundamental de la política, causando estragos en el orden constituido de la desigualdad, erigiéndose como una “parte suplementaria en relación con cualquier recuento de las partes de la población” (Rancière, 2004, p. 234).

Siguiendo los pasos de Platón, Rancière subraya cómo, antes de representar el nombre de la comunidad, el *demos* se refería solo a una parte de la comunidad, los *aporoí*, es decir, los pobres, pero no en el sentido económico del término, sino por el hecho de que constituían “todos los que no cuentan, los que no tienen títulos para ejercer la potencia del *arche*, los que no tienen títulos para ser contados” (Rancière, 2004, p. 234). La emancipación, como movimiento de afirmación de una igualdad no ficticia, se da en la comunidad política solo reconduciéndola a la contingencia constitutiva del gesto de irrupción en la escena pública de los invisibles, los excluidos, las víctimas del agravio de no tener importancia, aunque estén representados como parte del pueblo. Un pueblo

² Rancière se enlaza a Ballanche (1830).

que, según Rancière, se presenta en la mala democracia como *ochlos* más que como *demos*, es decir, como una degeneración del mismo que deriva de la “pasión del Uno que excluye” frente a la cual el “*demos* no sea otra cosa que el movimiento por el que lo múltiple se arranca al destino inercial que lo arrastra a tomar cuerpo como *ochlos*, en la seguridad de su incorporación a la imagen del todo [...] habrá democracia siempre que el *demos* exista como poder de división del *ochlos*” (Rancière, 2004, p. 46). El *demos* constituye una garantía para la democracia en la medida en que le hace recuperar su rasgo antagónico, haciendo presente esa igualdad que solo se inscribe poderosamente en el orden social.

La tarea teórica de Rancière se concreta, pues, en la elaboración de un proyecto de emancipación trans-histórico y evenemenial que no quiere pasar por las herramientas clásicas del marxismo —la clase, el economicismo, etc.— conservando su elemento conflictivo. La radicalidad de su proyecto de emancipación, aunque se centra en la emergencia del *demos* —concebido como un suplemento que, al producir una desviación del orden constituido, instituye la igualdad contingente de los hablantes—, no lo implica sin embargo en las nuevas formulaciones teóricas del populismo, cuya preocupante capacidad para crear una síntesis entre un pueblo hostil a los gobernantes y a la élite económico-financiera y un pueblo hostil a los “otros”, negros, emigrantes, homosexuales, etc., reafirmando el rasgo excluyente de la representación política del pueblo típico de la Modernidad, que unifica expulsando a algo o a alguien.

El momento populista

En los últimos años se han construido muchos discursos en torno al pueblo, a menudo divergentes y provenientes de diferentes áreas políticas, pero convergentes en un aspecto: el pueblo es el sujeto decisivo de la política o, al menos, llega a serlo cuando se reafirma, es decir, se hace efectiva, su soberanía. Pero ¿cómo hacer que el pueblo sea concretamente soberano? ¿Cómo reafirmar su poder de decisión? A la luz de esta breve reconstrucción inicial, se plantea otra cuestión sobre las razones que llevan a relanzar una categoría totalmente solidaria con la lógica moderna de la representación en la que hemos encontrado los pródromos de la crisis política actual.

El proyecto populista de refundar la democracia restableciendo la centralidad de la categoría del pueblo se basa ante todo en el abandono de los análisis del mundo social en términos de clase. Los desarrollos de dos de los principales defensores del populismo de izquierdas, Ernesto Laclau y Chantal Mouffe, son muy esclarecedores a este respecto. Sus investigaciones, así como las de Rancière, a la vez que se sitúan en el surco de la

tradición marxista, han tenido que enfrentarse a los límites de una manera de ordenar la división social basada esencialmente en la propiedad privada de los medios de producción y en las relaciones de explotación que de ella se derivan, con la consiguiente edificación de un sujeto privilegiado de emancipación que aparece exclusivamente en el ámbito de la lucha de clases, donde la clase es esencialmente la clase obrera y se caracteriza por una profunda homogeneidad interna. La fragmentación de esa homogeneidad social constituida por clases, que ha caracterizado la extensión global de la dominación capitalista neoliberal en las últimas décadas, ha favorecido la proliferación de nuevos conflictos que atraviesan el espacio público y se extienden a nuevos ámbitos: relaciones de género, cuestiones identitarias, desigualdades territoriales, etc. Estos dos elementos —la explosión de lo social y la multiplicación de las luchas— han abierto una coyuntura histórica inédita marcada, según Mouffe, por una nueva frontera política, a saber, la que se ha establecido entre el pueblo y la oligarquía. En este contexto, la posibilidad de recuperar la fuerza emancipadora inscrita en el modelo democrático no puede prescindir del “momento populista”, entendido como “la expresión de un conjunto de demandas heterogéneas que ya no pueden formularse simplemente en términos de intereses ligados a categorías sociales específicas” (Mouffe, 2018, p. 6).

El problema, desde un punto de vista teórico, es poder construir una articulación entre estas diferentes reivindicaciones que no les haga perder su especificidad y que, al mismo tiempo, sea capaz de crear un frente antagonista. En otras palabras, nuestra época está marcada por un proceso de despolitización inducido por una progresiva colonización de la esfera política por la racionalidad neoliberal; de ahí la necesidad de un “retorno” a lo político que requiere la construcción de un populismo “transversal” capaz de reactivar “la dimensión antagonica intrínseca a todas las sociedades humanas” (Mouffe, 2013, p. 2).

El impulso hacia el conflicto se basa, para Mouffe, en una premisa conceptual fundamental: la distinción entre “político” y “política”. Mientras que esta última se refiere al conjunto de técnicas, actividades, prácticas y procedimientos que afectan de diversas maneras a la vida de la *polis*, es decir, el espacio público y las modalidades de su gobierno, y puede considerarse, por tanto, como el arte o la ciencia de gobernar, lo “político” se presenta más bien como la base profunda, íntimamente conflictiva y no racional que atraviesa las sociedades humanas. El referente es claramente Carl Schmitt para quien —como es bien sabido— lo político (*Politischen*) no se refiere ni a un ámbito, ni a una lógica, sino más bien indica el riesgo siempre presente de una radicalización extrema de las relaciones humanas. Lo político es por su propia naturaleza un concepto polémico, que tiene su propio criterio específico de distinción y cuya esencia no reside en la lucha

tomada en sí misma, sino en la posibilidad de remontar todo “contraste religioso, moral, económico, étnico o de otro tipo” (Schmitt, 1932, p. 25) a la oposición constitutivamente política amigo/enemigo (*Freund/Feind*).

El intento de Schmitt de autonomizar el campo de lo político a partir de esta oposición vertical entre amigo y enemigo constituyó una importante respuesta a la crisis de la autoridad estatal, alimentada por su creciente incapacidad para controlar las organizaciones económicas, que posteriormente tuvo un considerable número de interpretaciones y transposiciones, desde el ámbito estrictamente jurídico y politológico hasta el filosófico.

El objetivo de Mouffe va en la dirección de utilizar “Schmitt contra Schmitt” (Mouffe, 2005, p. 14) a través de la elaboración de un modelo de “pluralismo agonístico” en el que dentro del “nosotros” que constituye la comunidad política, el que se opone no es considerado como un enemigo a aniquilar, sino como un adversario cuya existencia es legítima y cuyas ideas podrán ser contrastadas, sin por ello cuestionar su derecho a defenderlas³. La insistencia en la importancia del conflicto y en su capacidad para captar pasiones a menudo divergentes constituye también el principal argumento utilizado para criticar los modelos teóricos liberales, cuya preocupación fundamental reside precisamente en eliminar el conflicto, reduciendo todo el discurso de la política a una cuestión de consenso. Sin embargo, para comprender lo “político” como una posibilidad siempre presente de antagonismo, es necesario reconocer la ausencia de un fundamento último y la indecidibilidad que impregna todo orden social (Marchart, 2007). Se trata, por tanto, de elaborar teóricamente el populismo como esquema de acción política democrática preocupado por la construcción de sujetos colectivos, en particular del sujeto colectivo artificial por excelencia, el pueblo, teniendo en cuenta estas premisas posfundacionalistas.

La formulación sin duda más completa y articulada es la ofrecida por Laclau, que relanza —también en la estela de sus experiencias latinoamericanas que vieron abrirse, a finales del siglo pasado, un importante ciclo progresista de matriz populista— el populismo como una manera de construir lo político. La necesidad de repensar filosóficamente la dimensión colectiva del “nosotros” significa, para Laclau, tener necesariamente en cuenta el carácter abierto de lo social, que, atravesado continuamente por fuerzas centrífugas y contrastantes, nunca podrá ser completamente “suturado” ni “totalizado” y, como tal, servir de fundamento universalizante (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985,

³ Sobre la recepción schmittiana de Mouffe, Palano (2008) señala una importante carencia ligada a la insuficiente importancia atribuida al fundamento “espacial” de la política, que conduce su discurso a un plano muy similar al que se mueve el “espíritu postpolítico”.

pp. 149-194). Pero, por imposible que sea el objeto, para Laclau la totalidad es necesaria: por eso la operación hegemónica es “catacrética”. La catacrisis consiste en “nombrar algo que es esencialmente innombrable” (Laclau, 2008, p. 71), es decir, el uso de un término figurado cuando falta uno literal. Como cualquier discurso político no es más que un ensamblaje contingente de elementos que no pueden entenderse conceptualmente, la atribución de un nombre sigue la misma dinámica inherente a la lógica hegemónica que a la hora de nombrar la totalidad del vínculo social excluye, incluyendo.

La unidad del pueblo se mueve, por tanto, a partir de una heterogeneidad, constituida por la multiplicidad de diferentes demandas —en el sentido de reivindicaciones sociales— que no son más que significantes, podríamos decir símbolos, que hacen reconocibles las pasiones, las exigencias, las necesidades de la *plebs*. El espacio social se concibe, así, como un campo discursivo abierto y políticamente negociable en el que cada identidad está recíprocamente sobredeterminada por las demás, independientemente de su posición dentro de los mecanismos capitalistas: su misma insatisfacción excavará una frontera antagónica con el poder y las instituciones. En consecuencia, el pueblo, que no existe antes de su denominación equivalencial, hegemónica y retórica, “no constituye una expresión ideológica, sino una relación real entre agentes sociales” (Laclau, 2008, p. 73). Es la articulación equivalencial de sus diferentes reivindicaciones lo que les permite “encarnarse” en un significante vacío, metáfora de una plenitud imposible y, sin embargo, necesaria. Precisamente esta “operación por la que una particularidad asume una significación universal inconmensurable consigo misma es lo que denominamos hegemonía” (Laclau, 2008, p. 71), que revela cómo —para Laclau— la trascendencia nunca deja de actuar sobre lo social, sin por ello determinarlo en alguna forma fija o estabilizable.

Esta operación teórica, que hace un uso refinado de conceptos procedentes tanto de la lingüística como del psicoanálisis postestructuralista, lleva a Laclau a hacer coincidir el pueblo con lo político: no hay política sin pueblo. El pueblo, que emerge a lo largo de una frontera dentro del campo social, no tiene ninguna “escayola identitaria”, no está esencializado ni puede referirse a ninguna presunta pureza, ya que siempre se forma en el curso del proceso político, agregando diferencias que se sintetizan en un “todo” provisional y precario. La elaboración de este proyecto de democracia radical deja claro cómo —según Laclau— para hacer política es necesario un sujeto unitario que, juntando diferencias frágiles y dispersas, se ‘autorepresente’ como una totalidad. Se trata de un proceso que alcanza su culminación contingente y provisional cuando la articulación de las diferencias se logra mediante la simple enunciación de una palabra que solo puede estar vacía, ya que no es portadora de ninguna verdad objetiva —la que aún inervaba

la lucha de clases marxiana—, pero en torno a la cual pueden aglomerarse las batallas más dispares.

La primacía atribuida al campo discursivo capta perfectamente la fuerza de los populismos actuales en los que, superado el esquema clásico ‘derecha vs. izquierda’, las oposiciones políticas nunca se fijan de una vez por todas, siempre dispuestas a agregar nuevas demandas, reabsorbidas dentro del significante maestro, cuyo carácter vago y retórico constituye el prerrequisito necesario para su éxito popular. En los populismos actuales, ese significante puede tranquilamente “encarnarse” en la figura de un líder, capaz de dar su nombre y voz al ‘pueblo real’ a través de una lógica mediática vacía e indeterminada. Laclau recurre a numerosos casos en los que el movimiento popular ha sido literalmente nombrado con el nombre del líder —del peronismo al berlusconismo, pasando por la larga marcha de Mao, etc.— con el que establece un vínculo libidinal que, como demostró Freud (2020), conduce a la identificación de la masa con el líder, pero también consolida el vínculo ‘horizontal’ entre los miembros de la sociedad. El líder, independientemente de sus capacidades carismáticas, consigue dar forma al mensaje capaz de agregar el mayor descontento posible, recogiendo y haciendo intercambiables y equívocas las diferentes demandas sociales. La equivalencia se construye a lo largo de una línea de antagonismo que, sin embargo, permanece completamente indiferente al contenido del mensaje, poniendo de relieve la contradicción interna del populismo, constantemente atravesada por la necesidad de ofrecer una mayor representatividad y el riesgo del nihilismo.

De las personas a los movimientos

Más allá del paradigma laclausiano, es evidente que en el marco político actual, marcado por la crisis de representatividad y la apatía de los gobernados cada vez más desvinculados de cualquier lógica solidaria, la eficacia del mecanismo populista radica en su intento de reavivar ese *plus* de politicidad ahora evanescente, que logra captar más fácilmente a ciudadanos a menudo indiferentes a los argumentos racionales y cada vez menos críticos frente al flujo de noticias y estímulos procedentes de los medios de comunicación. El populismo es lo “político” en los tiempos de la crisis de la “política”: aunque permanece dentro de un modelo tradicional de política democrática, quiere radicalizar la instancia de autogobierno y participación, manifestándose a través de un cuerpo unificado y compacto que a menudo se identifica en la figura del líder, juntando así la necesidad de ‘más política’ y de antagonismo con las posiciones de la antipolítica. Es precisamente en este movimiento contradictorio, en los márgenes pero dentro de la lógica representativa,

donde el populismo encuentra sus límites. Por un lado, se formula una nueva forma de trascendencia, de naturaleza discursiva más que sustantiva, que se desencadena por el mecanismo a través del cual el significante vacío —sea el líder o cualquier eslogan o discurso— hegemona el campo político mediante la denominación equivalencial de reivindicaciones insatisfechas que chocan con una alteridad. Por otro lado, se hacen totalmente irrelevantes, en su equivalencia, diferencias que también existen y que, en esta fase de crisis del orden neoliberal, desarrollan posibilidades inéditas de inestabilidad y transformación al margen de cualquier reafirmación autoritaria de un sujeto político.

Hemos visto que, para Laclau, la construcción del sujeto político siempre es contextual a la creación de una hegemonía; así, la democracia es vista como una construcción de parte: nunca se sale del mecanismo de realización de hegemonías y contrahegemonías. En Rancière, la subjetivación política es la presentación en escena de lo “no contados”. Solo el gesto de subjetivación política de los que no están contados en la esfera de la *police* gubernamental crea el corazón de la *politique* democrática: también aquí hay una subjetivación que fractura el espacio público y que, precisamente al fracturarlo, lo hace revivir. El riesgo común a estas lecturas es que la revitalización del espacio democrático pasa inevitablemente por un movimiento perpetuo de conflictividad, que prescinde de los contenidos y las condiciones concretas de los sujetos, sin imaginar ningún excedente ulterior respecto a este movimiento de continua ruptura y recomposición⁴.

Si intentamos ahondar la diferencia generada por la “razón neoliberal” en términos de producción de subjetividades, emerge un cuadro mucho más complejo, irreductible a la erosión de las identidades tradicionales y a la neutralización de la lógica decisional de lo político, en el que se multiplican subjetividades extremadamente heterogéneas y difícilmente resumibles en la gramática clásica del sujeto moderno. Se trata de formas y prácticas de resistencia que rechazan su ‘fijación’ dentro de los significantes políticos hegemónicos para intentar actuar y encontrar espacios de autonomía y expresión en el interior de las mallas de la máquina neoliberal.

Los movimientos que se han difundido en los últimos años, tanto los transnacionales como *Black Lives Matter* y *NiUnaMenos*, como los locales —desde los *gilets jaunes*, pasando por las movilizaciones de las comunidades indígenas amazónicas, hasta el movimiento de protesta campesina en la India contra la reforma agraria— han tenido como característica común, precisamente la de prescindir de liderazgos. No solo han rechazado sistemáticamente las formas tradicionales de organización política centralizada

⁴ Sobre los riesgos de construir un modelo exclusivamente formal que se contenta con replantear el conflicto por el conflicto mismo, véase Amendola (2010).

y representativa, sino que han introducido diferentes tipos de organización en los que el momento asambleario es la expresión del poder de unirse y actuar políticamente de forma concertada (Hardt & Negri, 2017). La política, en estas formas variables de asambleas, deja de estar en el orden de la representación y de sus instituciones, para pasar a estar en el espacio de lo “in-between” es decir, en el espacio de la relación entre cuerpos que se aparecen unos a otros. La especificidad de la presencia corporal y la relación que se establece entre esos cuerpos adquiere una dimensión política que, como señala Butler (2015), constituye una “forma performativa plural” (p. 8), ya que en esas asambleas toman forma como actos lingüísticos capaces de cambiar una realidad preexistente. No solo se abre un espacio de visibilidad compartida, sino que estar en presencia colectiva requiere un desarrollo ulterior, que es la elaboración de una reivindicación que necesita capacidades lingüístico-discursivas. No estamos en la escena de los “no contados”, y mucho menos en la de un pueblo que se identifica en un significativo vacío. No basta en absoluto la irrupción de un movimiento, que, además, se piensa haber brotado de forma espontánea para agrietar el escenario en el que prevalece el poder político constituido, ni ese movimiento tiene una ‘nominación’ preventiva que acabe por aniquilar las diferencias en su interior e, incluso, el sentido de sus reivindicaciones.

La multiplicidad de las instancias que atraviesan las movilizaciones requiere una salida tanto de un pluralismo que corre el riesgo de quedar inmovilizado en su fragmentación como de la subsunción de esa pluralidad en un significativo maestro y universalista. El encuentro de movimientos que expresan reivindicaciones diferentes y que a menudo proceden de lugares distintos no necesita ningún acuerdo de tipo nominalista, sino que adquiere un carácter procesual y abierto, como tan bien han ilustrado las luchas feministas. Verónica Gago (2019), relatando la experiencia de *NiUnaMenos*, subraya cómo lo que caracterizó a la huelga feminista, reinventada para politizar la violencia contra las mujeres, fue ante todo la necesidad de sacarla de su carácter de acontecimiento, para repensarla como un proceso en continuo desarrollo, con todo lo que ello conllevaba en términos de organización, coordinación, construcción de una red común y, por tanto, de utilización concreta del tiempo de vida. Evidentemente, esto implicó el rechazo del modelo de temporalidad del capitalismo neoliberal, instruido en la maximización de las performances dictadas por los dispositivos neoliberales, y la necesidad de implementar prácticas de sabotaje de todas aquellas formas de explotación y extracción de valor vinculadas no solo a la esfera productiva, sino en particular a la reproductiva. La importancia atribuida a las prácticas es decisiva —sobre todo en contraste con la prioridad reconocida por los populismos al campo discursivo— junto con otro aspecto, a saber, la creación de una red de intersecciones entre las luchas transnacionales.

Se trata de alianzas, a veces insólitas (a menudo entrelazan prácticas relacionadas con reivindicaciones salariales con activismo relativo a la orientación sexual, con iniciativas sobre la violencia contra las mujeres y los menores, hasta antirracistas, ecologistas, de descolonización epistémica, etc.) que germinan en el seno de los espacios asamblearios. Coaliciones insurgentes que son cada vez más importantes no solo para introducir un análisis crítico de las formas de opresión que valore sus interconexiones y las ‘comprenda’ como mutuamente constitutivas, sino también y sobre todo porque de esas alianzas pueden nacer subjetividades inéditas, sincréticas, no esencializadas, ciertamente precarias, y sin embargo necesarias para romper la narración dominante de la razón neoliberal y ofrecer una alternativa al deseo de comunión y participación política.

Referencias

- Amendola, A. (2008). Democrazia radicale, biopolitica e soggettivazione. En A. Amendola (Ed.), *Biopolitica, bioeconomia e processi di soggettivazione* (pp. 363-376). Quodlibet.
- Alagna, L. M. (2020). *Le lieu vide. Democrazia e Totalitarismo in Claude Lefort*. Aracne.
- Arendt, H. (2013). *¿Qué es la política?* (1933). Ediciones Paidós.
- Balibar, É. (2001). *Nous, citoyens d'Europe?* La Découverte.
- Ballanche, P. S. (1829). Formule générale de tous les peuples appliquée à l'histoire appliquée à l'histoire du peuple romain. *Revue de Paris*, I(2), 138-154.
- Bazzicalupo, L. (2012). La rappresentazione politica dopo la sua decostruzione. En M. Baldassari, & D. Melegari (Eds.), *Populismo e democrazia radicale. In dialogo con Ernesto Laclau* (pp. 99-111). Ombre Corte.
- Bazzicalupo, L. (2013). *Politica*. Carocci.
- Butler J. (2015). *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. President and Fellows of Harvard College.
- Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2017). *Assembly*. Oxford University Press.
- Hobbes, T. (1996). *Leviathan* (1651). Oxford University Press.
- Foucault, M. (2004). *Sécurité, territoire, population. Collège de France (1977-78)*. Seuil/Gallimard.
- Freud, S. (2020). *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse (1921)*. LIWI Verlag und Wissenschaftsverlag.
- Gago, V. (2019). *La potencia feminista. O el deseo de cambiarlo todo*. Edición Tinta Limón.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. Verso.
- Lefort, C. (1981). *L'invention démocratique. Les limites de la domination totalitaire*. Fayard.
- Luce S. (2016). Il simulacro democratico. Forma e pratica democratica. En L. Bazzicalupo, V. Giordano, F. Mancuso, & G. Preterossi (Eds.), *Le trasformazioni della democrazia* (pp.163-174). Mimesis.
- Marchart, O. (2007). *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Mouffe, C. (2005). *On the Political*. Routledge.
- Mouffe, C. (2013). *Agonistic. Thinking the world politically*. Verso.
- Mouffe, C. (2018). *For a Left Populism*. Verso.
- Nencioni, T. (2019). Crisi e populismo. Nota sulla fortuna di Ernesto Laclau. En F. M. Cacciatore (Ed.), *Il momento populista. Ernesto Laclau in discussione* (pp. 11-31). Mimesis.

- Palano, D. (2008). Il «politico» nell'era «Postpolitica». Alcuni appunti sulla proposta teorica di Chantal Mouffe. *Teoria politica*, 24(3), 89-132.
- Rancière, J. (1995). *La Mésentente. Politique et philosophie*. Galilée.
- Rancière, J. (2004). *Aux bords du politique* (1998). Gallimard.
- Rancière, J. (2005). *La haine de la démocratie*. La Fabrique Éditions.
- Rancière, J. (2013). L'introuvable populisme. En *Qu'est-ce qu'un peuple?* La Fabrique Éditions.
- Rosanvallon, P. (2006). *La contre-démocratie. La politique à l'âge de la défiance*. Édition du Seuil.
- Schmitt, C. (1932). *Der Begriff des Politischen*. Duncker & Humboldt.
- Schmitt, C. (2010). *Verfassungslehre* (1928). Duncker & Humblodt.
- Tito Livio. (1997). *Storie. Libri I-IV* [edición bilingüe latín- italiano]. Utet.

ARTÍCULOS

Damiano Palano is Full professor of Political Philosophy, Director of Political Sciences Department at Catholic University of Sacred Heart (Milan) and Director of Polidemos (Centre for the study of democracy and political change). He is currently engaged in a research project on the transformation of democracy and the rise of populism. Recent publications include the books: *Animale politico. Introduzione allo studio dei fenomeni politici* (Scholé-Morcelliana, 2023); *Towards a Bubble Democracy? Notes for a Theoretical Framework* (Educatt, 2022); *Bubble Democracy. La fine del pubblico e la nuova polarizzazione* (Scholé-Morcelliana, 2020); *Il segreto del potere. Alla ricerca di un'ontologia del "politico"* (Rubbettino 2018); *Populismo* (Bibliografica 2017).

Contact: damiano.palano@unicatt.it

THE WORKER'S KATECHON: MARIO TRONTI'S THEORETICAL CHALLENGE IN THE LABORATORY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY*

Damiano Palano

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore – Milano

EL KATECHON DEL TRABAJADOR: EL DESAFÍO TEÓRICO DE MARIO TRONTI EN EL LABORATORIO DEL SIGLO XX

Abstract

This article examines the primary sequences of Mario Tronti's reflections over approximately sixty years. Following a singular suggestion from Tronti himself, it argues that within the story of Italian workerism (and in that of post-workerisms), two different perspectives can be recognized: an eschatological perspective, with Antonio Negri as its main exponent, and a 'katechontic' perspective, which Tronti himself would embody. Although this distinction is recent, this article shows how traces of the katechontic perspective can already be found in Tronti's early works, which began to study capitalist development in the wake of the 1956 crisis. The subsequent theoretical turns — represented by the 'autonomy of the political' and the arrival at 'political theology' — should therefore be interpreted as consistent developments of a reflection that, even in historically diverse contexts, always proceeds from the same vision of the relationship between the factory and society and from the same image of capitalist *Verfassung*.

* Reception date: 28th March 2023; acceptance date: 3rd March 2023. The essay is the issue of a research project carried out within the Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore – Milano.

Keywords

Mario Tronti; Italian workerism; Italian Theory; the political; political theology

Resumen

Este artículo examina las secuencias primarias de reflexión llevadas a cabo por Mario Tronti durante aproximadamente sesenta años. En particular, tomando una sugerencia del propio Tronti, argumenta que dentro de la historia del obrerismo italiano (y en la de los post-obrerismos), se pueden reconocer dos perspectivas diferentes: una perspectiva escatológica, con Antonio Negri como su principal exponente, y una perspectiva “catecónica”, que Tronti mismo encarnaría. Aunque esta distinción es reciente, este artículo muestra cómo ya se pueden encontrar rastros de la perspectiva “catecónica” en la forma en que el joven Tronti, a raíz de la crisis de 1956, comenzó a analizar el desarrollo capitalista. Los giros teóricos posteriores, representados por la “autonomía de lo político” y la llegada a la “teología política”, deberían interpretarse como desarrollos coherentes de una reflexión que, incluso en contextos históricamente diversos, siempre parte de la misma visión de la relación entre la fábrica y la sociedad y de la misma imagen de la *Vermassung* capitalista.

Palabras clave

Mario Tronti; obrerismo italiano; teoría italiana; lo político; teología política

A Conservative Revolutionary

Over the past half-century, the reflections of Mario Tronti —deceased at the age of ninety-two on August 7, 2023— has been the subject of very different reinterpretations, often marked by strong polemical connotations, in which the weight of *Workers and Capital* almost always ends up being theoretically and politically overwhelming¹. For decades, those who reproach Tronti for the role of the ‘father of Italian workerism’ have considered his entire reflection to be marked by this indelible stigma and the consequences that resulted from it, while those who stand as custodians of the purity of the paradigm cannot forgive the theoretical ‘betrayal’ by the ‘founder’ of that radical interpretation of Marxism. Since the Sixties, some readers of *Workers and Capital*, developing an interpretation to some extent suggested by Raniero Panzieri himself, have also identified in Tronti’s pages the presence of a Hegelian matrix (Panzieri, 1973; Bigalli, 1967; Cazzaniga, 1967). In the following decades, other readers instead emphasized the weight exerted by Galvano Della Volpe’s method, the Leninist tradition, the robust connection with the Communist Party and its Togliattian imprint, the ambiguous relationship with Carl Schmitt’s thought, and the philosophies of Giovanni Gentile and Ugo Spirito (Mangano, 1978; Preve, 1984; Sbardella, 1980; Meriggi, 1978; Tomassini, 1976 and 1977). Almost twenty years ago, in his scathing pamphlet on ‘Italian Difference’, Antonio Negri indicated in Mario Tronti’s reflection one of the few exceptions capable of escaping the recurrent theoretical and political fragility of Italian philosophy. ‘The first exception that the Italian XX century has known, the first philosophical and political force that has managed to lay hands on reality and grasp the resurgent and anticapitalist powers of the beginnings’, wrote Negri, ‘this exception was workerism, the work of Mario Tronti’, and together with the thought of sexual difference outlined by Luisa Muraro, Tronti’s proposal thus constituted one of the few “elements of theoretical innovation in the Italian ontology of the XX century” (Negri, 2005, p. 13). According to Negri, Tronti’s and Muraro’s proposals both moved ‘from the consideration of the fundamental forms of the constitution of exploitation, of man over man and of man over woman’, and furthermore, they were born, in the Sixties and Seventies, from “new subjectivities formed in the worker’s struggle against wage labour and in the female uprising against patriarchal domination” (Negri, 2005, pp. 13–14). Even according to the interpretation advanced by Roberto Esposito, Tronti’s reflection represented a crucial stage of Italian Theory, presenting a

¹ Regarding Mario Tronti’s radical theory, see for example: Anastasi (2020), Cavalleri (2016), Cavalleri, Filippini & Mascari (2017), Cerutti & Dettori (2021), Cortés (2018), Farris (2011; 2013), Filippini (2011), Filippini-Macchia (2012), Mezzadra (2008), Milanese (2014), Palano (2009; 2015b; 2020a; 2020b; 2023), Serra (2016).

specific way of looking at reality identified by the interweaving of the three paradigms of the “immanentization of antagonism”, the “historicization of the non-historical”, and the “worlding of the subject” (Esposito, 2010, pp. 25–30). Despite the controversy surrounding such interpretations, Pier Paolo Portinaro also identified the “original nucleus” of Italian Theory “in Italian workerism” (Portinaro, 2018, p. 12), attributing to Tronti the responsibility of a “cold fusion” between authors like Marx and Schmitt, aimed at generating “a hyperrealistic polemological paradigm” (Portinaro, 2018, p. 113).

The discussion on the originality and internal coherence of Italian Theory is likely to continue in the coming years (Gentili, 2012; Gentili-Stimilli, 2015; Toscano & Chiesa, 2009). Nonetheless, it is hardly contestable in Negri’s thesis that precisely in the pages of *Workers and Capital* lies an authentic rupture in the history of Italian radical thought. There can be no doubt that Tronti constitutes the authentic foundational pillar of the entire workerist theoretical strand, not only for the role he played within experiences such as *Quaderni rossi* and *Classe operaia*, but primarily because in the essays of *Workers and Capital*—perhaps the most important work stemming from the heterogeneous panorama of Italian Marxism— all the elements of the ‘Copernican revolution’ carried out by workerism can be found, as well as a significant portion of the subsequent post-workerist or neo-workerist hypotheses (Borio et al., 2002; 2005; Filippini, 2011; Gentili, 2012; Roggero, 2019; Trotta & Milana, 2006; Virno & Hardt, 1996; Wright, 2002).

Over the years, Tronti’s judgements about the workerist experiment have become almost proverbial. “Within the sixties, we were all happily mistaken,” he wrote in ‘Politics at Sunset’, right at the turn of the twentieth century: “To us, to many, it seemed [...] that an era was opening up. [...] The red on the horizon was there: it’s just that it wasn’t the glow of dawn, but of dusk” (Tronti, 1998, p. 22). Such judgements only reinforce the impression that Tronti’s journey is marked by some distinct ruptures: more specifically, the impression is that, initially, at the beginning of the Seventies, the workerist approach was abandoned, and after the crucial turning point of 1989–1991, the hypothesis of the ‘autonomy of the political’ was definitively set aside, leading Tronti decisively towards the direction that leads to political theology (through more than a few episodic forays into the terrain of spirituality). Such impressions have some basis, particularly because the milestones found in Tronti’s thought are indeed these. And it is very difficult to deny that there is a substantial change in the way of looking at society and the transformations of capitalism. Nevertheless, it might also be possible to find in Mario Tronti’s theoretical reflection often overlooked elements. In particular, it is possible to trace elements that suggest questioning the internal coherence of Italian workerism and to find,

already in the same foundational phase of the Sixties, traces of the divergence destined to emerge later.

In a conference held in June 2015, Mario Tronti evoked some notes by Musil, in which the author of *The Man Without Qualities* spoke of progress as something very much like a dream. “You dream of riding a horse, the horse walks, because the beast never stops. And so the dream becomes a nightmare. Progress makes sense only if it has an end. If it has no end and, I add, if you don’t give it an end, it becomes meaningless. To go where? To do what? The old question demands a new answer” (Tronti, 2015a). Contesting the image of that endless progress destined to turn into a nightmare, Tronti claimed for himself the formula of a ‘conservative revolutionary’: a formula that was certainly a provocation to reject the qualification of a ‘democratic reformist’ but was also a true programmatic statement, capable of summarizing an attitude towards the world and, above all, the logic of his theoretical journey. When he defined himself as a ‘conservative revolutionary’, Tronti intended to emphasize his criticism of the entire tradition of the workers’ movement. In the pages of *Dello spirito libero*, for example, he wrote about the October Revolution that it “was not an eschatological event” and that it “did not prepare a recipe for the future kitchen”; rather, it was “an attempt, desperate and successful, to hold back an intrusive ugly present, stop the war, find a remedy for the peasants’ hunger, an answer to the exploited workers’ fatigue” (Tronti, 2015b, p. 21). Its defeat was thus due to succumbing to the logic of modernization, and the main mistake that Tronti attributed to Marx and the entire movement was therefore that of cultivating the illusion of being able to pursue capital on the grounds of modernization.

The criticism that the ‘conservative revolutionary’ directed at the workers’ movement and Marxism was also a self-criticism that retrospectively involved the season of Italian workerism, of which Tronti —due to his role in *Quaderni rossi* and in *Classe operaia*, as well as for *Operai e capitale*— remains the father and one of its main exponents. “The limit of workerism”, we read again in *Dello spirito libero*, “was being excessively Marxian” and that “having to always be absolutely modern in that radically antagonistic training school, in the end, proved to be a subordinate act” (Tronti, 2015b, pp. 26–27). Moreover, it was a self-criticism that Tronti had already outlined long before. In *Noi operaisti*, he suggested recognizing, within the body of workerism in the Sixties, a sort of genetic ambivalence, defined by the simultaneous presence of an ‘eschatological’ tension and a ‘katechontic’ vocation. “Workerism, as it was expressed in the first half of the Sixties, had an eschatological sign: it certainly

did not aim to conclude the salvation story at its best, but, more modestly, aimed to give political direction to workers struggles” (Tronti, 2009, p. 63). Nevertheless, its political merit, in retrospective terms, appeared quite different: in fact, “its function of active opposition stands out more, consisting in restraining, delaying the humanitarian-philanthropic drift of the very figure of the factory worker, now the last bastion to be conquered by bourgeois universalism” (Tronti, 2009, p. 63). In contrast to Negri’s ‘eschatological paradigm’, Tronti thus evoked a ‘katechontic paradigm’, which conceives history in terms far removed from those of determinism and the industrialist fascination of a good part of the socialist tradition (and of Marxism). “I think we can no longer say or believe that there is a linear idea of history, therefore, in any case, we must move forward in development because it will entail new contradictions, [...] we must hold back, not let the river of history flow [...], we must slow down the acceleration of modernity”, because “this slower time allows us to recompose our forces” (Tronti, 2009, p. 111).

Naturally, the idea of the distinction between an eschatological paradigm and a katechontic paradigm is the fruit of Tronti’s more recent reflection, and it would be naive to make casual use of it to reinterpret the history of workerism. However, a faint trace of that divergence was perhaps already present in the Sixties, although it emerged later, increasingly distancing paths that began from the same origins. The Roman thinker’s conclusions —precisely those conclusions that led Tronti to define himself, in his later years, as a ‘conservative revolutionary’— were not merely the theoretical consequence of the political defeat suffered in the Eighties by the workers’ movement. The thesis of the ‘decline of politics’ indeed had deep roots, probably rooted in the same assumptions of Tronti’s theory, and referred to the foundation of *Workers and Capital* and, above all, to the relationship between factory and society that the young Tronti had placed at the base of his vision of capitalism.

The following pages aim to retrace the main sequences of Mario Tronti’s reflection over about sixty years, focusing on those elements that can be interpreted as traces or anticipations of the katechontic paradigm. In addition to recalling Tronti’s figure after his passing, this article seeks in particular to show how the traces of the ‘katechontic’ perspective were already present in the way the young Tronti began to look at capitalist development in the aftermath of the 1956 crisis, as well as the relationship between factory and society and the autonomy of the ‘worker’s point of view’. The subsequent theoretical shifts —represented by the ‘autonomy of the political’ and the arrival at ‘political theology’— should therefore be interpreted not so much as retractions but as coherent developments of a reflection that, despite historically different contexts, always emerges

from the same vision of the relationship between factory and society and the same image of capitalist *Verfassung*. And the search for a political transcendence becomes the indispensable step in giving the worker's katechon the ability to resist the overwhelming march of capitalist *Zivilisation*.

The Point of View

In Mario Tronti's final theoretical phase, the melancholic surrender to the reasons for the economy echoed, albeit with a changed sign, the celebrations of the victory of the global market over politics. According to Tronti, the end of class struggle and the workers' movement meant that politics —the 'grand politics'— had been irreversibly set, leaving the logic of the economy as the sole mistress of the field. Moreover, according to his interpretation, it was not capitalism that defeated the workers' movement: "The workers' movement", he wrote, "was defeated by democracy" (Tronti, 1998, p. 195). For Tronti, the workers' movement had been the synonym of the struggle against the destiny of the economy, a fight precisely against the advent of the 'democratic mass man' (Tronti, 1998, pp. 142–134), while the end of the twentieth century had sealed the irredeemable defeat of that struggle. In *Politica e Destino*, echoing *Also sprach Zarathustra*, he further wrote that the 'people' were dead, and this was precisely the '*novum sub sole*': "The people, individuals, citizens, the multitudes, are what remains after the victorious global processes of neutralization and depoliticization" (Tronti, 2006, pp. 19–20). Thus, the 'democratic mass man' emerged increasingly as the 'last man' of whom Nietzsche had written. "After the sunset of the glorious days of class struggle", Tronti affirmed, "neither the great bourgeois —à la Rathenau that we liked so much when we were young— nor the petty bourgeois we always hated, won. It's the average bourgeois: this is the figure of democracy" (Tronti, 2005, p. 22). In other words, in Tronti's view, the 'mass man' and democracy converge in the fatal embrace of depoliticization: "Democracy is this: it's not the tyranny of the majority, it's the tyranny of the average man. And this average man fits into the Nietzschean category of the last men" (Tronti, 2005, p. 22).

In many of Tronti's writings published in the twenty-first century, the figure of the 'mass man' indeed became the distinctive mark of the era of 'depoliticization'. Such pessimism was naturally the result of the political defeat suffered in the 1980s, but perhaps it was also the outcome of a perspective that could be recognized as far back as the distant pages of young Tronti's work. On closer examination, when Tronti, in his later writings, found the dominant trait of the present in the hegemony of the democratic man, in the victory of the 'last man', in the centrality of the

‘democratic mass man’, he placed at the heart of the discourse an aspect that was anything but residual, an aspect that was perhaps even foundational in the writings of the 1960s and 1970s. While it might be somewhat forced to read the aversion of the twenty-first-century Tronti to the ‘democratic mass man’ in terms of faithful continuity with the young Tronti, it is highly probable that continuity exists, at least in terms of underlying assumptions (not always explicitly stated) that guided the ‘Copernican revolution’ of the 1960s. From the moment Tronti outlined the project to redefine the Marxist perspective by breaking away from the Italian historicist tradition, his attempt was to use *Capital* to criticize neo-capitalism and its myths, as well as to transform Marxism into “a populist ideology, an arsenal of banal commonplaces to justify all possible compromises in the course of the class struggle” (Tronti, 1966, p. 34). To some extent, it could be argued that Tronti not only found distorted the representations spread in American sociology at the time and among enthusiasts of the Frankfurt School, who began shaping the image of a society of passive consumers subdued by the seduction of mass media and the spectacle of commodities. Rather, Tronti —while recognizing the formidable grip of consumer society— sought to stem the *Vermassung* not at the level of ideology but, following Marx, within the laboratory of production. And following the path indicated by *Capital*, he found himself intersecting with those young militants who, gathered in Turin around Raniero Panzieri, were discovering the first traces of what would later be defined as the ‘mass worker’, namely a layer of workers far from passive or integrated within the ‘one-dimensional society’ (Palano, 2009; 2015b; 2020a; 2020b).

The beginning of Mario Tronti’s theoretical research largely coincided with the shock of 1956. As Tronti himself acknowledged on several occasions, that year represented a crucial turning point, a fundamental ‘strategic transition’ that contributed to determining a veritable ‘epistemological rupture’ (Tronti, 1998, p. 18). Indeed, for the young Roman militant, 1956 was the starting point of a profound disillusionment with the reality of realized socialism that, in a short span of a few months, led to a critical re-examination, often demolishing, of all those pillars on which the political culture of the Italian Communist Party had been founded: “The passage of ‘56”, as Asor Rosa recalled, “meant the breaking of the materialistic historical-socialism realized paradigm, and thus the idea that it was necessary to seek a different path than that of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy” (Trotta & Milana, 2006, p. 660). And, as Tronti himself wrote more than half a century later, it was the transition “from a party truth to a class truth” (2009, p. 18).

Almost coinciding with the crisis of 1956, in which he was prominently involved as the secretary of the Roman university cell, Tronti graduated in philosophy under

Ugo Spirito, discussing a thesis dedicated to Marx's early writings. The choice of the topic evidently revealed the desire for a 'return to Marx', in more or less explicit disagreement with the canonization of Marxism provided by Stalinism (Asor Rosa, 2011, p. X). However, alongside the return to engaging with Marxist texts, the intellectual encounter with Galvano Della Volpe was also decisive— probably facilitated by Lucio Colletti (who, as Spirito's assistant, had followed the writing of Tronti's thesis). Indeed, this encounter with Della Volpe —coinciding fatally with the shock of '56— directed the small group of communist university students, including Tronti, Asor Rosa, Umberto Coldagelli, and Gaspare De Caro, towards a clear break not only with the 'orthodoxy' canonized by Stalinism but also with the historicist tradition of Italian Marxism.

In the structure of his thesis —titled *Marxism as a Science of Society* and defended in November 1956— Della Volpe's influence was evident, even though the approach already showed the intention to use Marx's method for an investigation of capitalism (Tronti, 1956–1957, pp. 1–2). The echo of Galvano Della Volpe's Marxism, mediated by Colletti, was apparent not only in the thesis but also in Tronti's first two theoretical essays, published at the end of the 1950s, mainly dedicated to Gramsci's Marxism (Tronti, 1958 and 1959). In both of these works, a severe critique of the Italian historicist tradition was already quite clear, which had unfolded in Italy along a fundamentally linear path from Labriola to Gramsci, passing through Croce. Tronti's first essay, *Alcune questioni intorno al Marxismo di Gramsci* [*Some Questions about Gramsci's Marxism*], was an intervention at the Gramscian Studies Conference held in Rome in January 1958, attended by Togliatti himself with a report aimed at specifying the contours of the interpretation of Leninism in the Sardinian thinker and politician. Cautionary but quite evident, the 'tendentious interpretation' proposed by Tronti was markedly critical of Gramscian reflection. "The interpretation that Gramsci gives to Marxism in general", he wrote right at the beginning, "is integral philosophy and absolute historicism" (Tronti, 1958, p. 305). In this sense, there was no substantial divergence between the youth's positions of the 'Revolution against Capital' or 'New Order' and the later ones in the *Prison Notebooks*. The need to re-evaluate the 'creative' element within the historical–social relationship, which marked Gramsci's thinking, indeed reflected the need to abandon and deeply criticize any positivist and evolutionist temptation (together with their gradualist and reformist political implications). However, at the same time, according to Gramsci —based on Tronti's interpretation— it became crucial to overturn especially what Croce had done when he 'translated' the realist historicism of Marxism into speculative language (Tronti, 1958, p. 308). "The idea of an Anti-Croce", Tronti wrote then, "is not an occasional, contingent task dictated by

particular cultural, national developments, but represents the current global moment of Marxism; it's the historical task of Marxism of our time" (Tronti, 1958, p. 308). But the 're-translation' of Croce's philosophy into the 'philosophy of praxis' —the task that the author of the Notebooks constantly set for himself during his journey— ended up becoming the very 'limit of Gramsci's thought' (Tronti, 1958, p. 309).

The work conducted by the young Tronti in the concluding years of the 1950s still largely fits within the framework of the narrow circle of Della Volpe. However, there soon began a detachment from that school, requiring a reorientation of research towards different themes (Pavone, 1980). Moreover, at this stage, Tronti had resumed direct study of Marx's texts, which would later merge into the essays of the 1960s and *Workers and Capital*. Nonetheless, an article appeared on *Società* at the end of 1961 dedicated to recent studies on the logic of *Capital*, which was extremely important not only because it visibly testified to Tronti's changing interests but also because it showed a clear departure from Della Volpe's positions. In relation to the need to analyse capitalist transformations, Tronti diverged from Della Volpe's school in the sense that such approach appeared to him 'no longer sufficient', and its limits would be overcome only when the method was redirected towards 'concrete investigation' again: "when the materialist logic of *Capital* becomes, once again, the tool for a Marxist analysis of capitalism" (Tronti, 1961, p. 901). The 'workers' science' evoked by Tronti was not just a reflection of theoretical criticism but had already sprung from the viewpoint of the working class. In other words, it was scientific knowledge exercised from a specific standpoint. And precisely in this manner, by a move that effectively broke with the logic of Della Volpe, Tronti foreshadowed the idea of the theoretical centrality of the 'workers' point of view', explicit in the essays of *Quaderni rossi* and at the heart of the 'Copernican revolution' of *Workers and Capital*.

The consequences of this theoretical shift, and therefore the full break from Della-volpism, would only emerge in the essays of *Quaderni rossi*. But it is quite evident that the pivot upon which *Factory and Society* would stand was already fully announced by the operation suggested at the end of the article on the logic of *Capital*. Tronti's key argument revolved around the distinction between 'social production' and 'society', the same distinction that would become the dichotomy of 'factory' and 'society', upon which Tronti roughly anchored his hypothesis. In a truly crucial passage to understand the development of his reflection, after defining capitalism as 'the first social organization of production' and specifying that 'this sociality of production serves to sustain the entire society in function of production', he wrote:

The 'society' is the medium that allows production to subsist for production's sake.
Society is the sociality of capitalist production. Capitalism is truly bourgeois society:

in the sense that it is forced to position itself, at the same time, as an organizer of capitalist social production and as a system of bourgeois private property. From the societal perspective, one can view capitalism as a second nature, an artificial nature, a historical premise of a future social nature. (Tronti, 1961, p. 902)

It was probably not coincidental that, when introducing Marx's unpublished writings on political economy (roughly during the same period in which he was preparing essays for *Quaderni rossi*), Tronti wrote that "the civilization of the liberal individual is precisely the historical premise of mass democratic civilization", or that "the hypothesis of the abstract individual could only be overturned into the cult of the empirical undifferentiated mass" (Tronti, 1963, p. XXXIV). In that passage, where he had already outlined the new reading of Marx articulated in *Workers and Capital*, Tronti reaffirmed the validity of *Capital* as the key to critiquing neocapitalist society because, after a century, the 'nature of capitalism' had remained unchanged. In this context, the 'alienation' brought back into debate by sociological research was not a novelty but simply the extension into the realm of intellectual production of the mechanism that "the modern worker [...] has experienced in his material production ever since capital and alongside capital, the capitalist class, exist" (Tronti, 1963, p. XXXIV). But perhaps the crucial point lay precisely in the substantial homogeneity perceived from then on between 'the civilization of the liberal individual' and the 'mass democratic civilization', and thus between the celebrated 'abstract individual' of eighteenth-century liberalism and the subsequent 'cult of the empirical undifferentiated mass'. In other words, already for the young Tronti of the Sixties, 'mass democratic civilization' coincided in many ways with the realm of the 'undifferentiated empirical mass', just as, in Tronti's late maturity works, the victory of 'political democracy' coincided with the historical victory of the democratic mass man. The difference between the young Tronti and the Tronti of the twenty-first century should not be sought in this respect because, for Tronti, the 'bourgeois society', in which individuals move as consumers, had coincided since the Sixties with the sphere dominated by the 'undifferentiated empirical mass'. The distance between the Tronti of *Workers and Capital* and the author of *Dello Spirito Libero* should instead be sought in the type of force entrusted with the task of 'restraining' the impetuous advance of the 'mass democratic civilization'.

Class and Mass

The 'braking power' that the young Tronti had in mind was naturally the working class of the large factory. Even in this case, it can be useful to reread some famous passages from *Factory and Society*, Tronti's first essay published in *Quaderni rossi*,

perhaps finding in them the embryonic forms of both subsequent workerism and the post-workerism that continues until today. In that essay from *Quaderni rossi*, traces of the eschatological soul of workerism (and hence the premises of the main variants of post-workerism) as well as signs of the ‘katechontic’ perspective can indeed be found. “When the whole society is reduced to the factory, the factory, as such, seems to disappear”, wrote Tronti (1962/2019, pp. 27-28). Despite the tertiarization, despite the apparent disappearance of the factory, it was indispensable for Tronti to re-oppose those two dimensions. Following this path, Tronti would continue to represent the relationship between factory and society as fundamentally contradictory; the factory, therefore, came to identify the moment of productive cooperation within the work process, while society coincided with the site of commodity exchange, where the valorisation process could close its cycle every time. ‘Seeing’ the factory in society, therefore, equated to recognizing—even in neo-capitalism, even in a society where the ‘empirical undifferentiated mass’ apparently triumphed—the working class as a conflicting subject capable of breaking the apparently unbreakable nexus of production–reproduction–exchange–consumption. The factory vs. society couple revealed the two faces of capitalist production: on the one hand, the work process, and on the other, the valorisation process. These were two moments that, from the ‘worker’s point of view’, needed to be opposed to each other because only within the factory could the working class gain the strength that was otherwise destined to be lost in society in the sphere of exchange and consumption. Only within the work process could cooperation make possible the aggregation of workers’ antagonism and the use of wages as a battleground. Conversely, in the valorisation process—or, better said, outside the factory, in society, in the sphere of commodity exchange and consumption—workers had to return to being simple individuals, isolated atoms, defenceless consumers entirely devoid of instruments of struggle. Precisely to the extent that society coincided only with the site of market mediation, it was (politically) essential to root the conflict within the factory, that is, as Tronti wrote with one of the famous phrases from his youthful texts, “to root the general struggle against the social system within the social relation of production; in other words, to pitch *bourgeois society* into crisis from within *capitalist production*” (Tronti, 1962/2019, p. 30).

In many ways, it was with the leverage of that formidable theoretical and political intuition that Tronti could find at the core of Marx’s operation the discovery of the *Doppelcharakter* of labour power in *Workers and Capital*. For Tronti, the ‘double character’ of labour power indeed became the key to unlocking the mystery of the transformation from labour power to the working class (or, if you will, from a ‘mass’ of individuals to

a 'class'). It was only the socialization and objectification of labour power that could allow the transition from passivity to conflict because only integration made it possible for the working class to simultaneously be 'part' of capital and to show its estrangement by refusing to be a passive factor of production. The intuition of taking the 'worker's point of view' as a strategic reading key led Tronti to propose that theoretical inversion characterizing the 'Copernican revolution' of *Workers and Capital*. At the heart of this operation was, of course, a conscious 'forcing' of Marx's texts, largely playing out in the opposition between factory and society, hiding implications that would weigh heavily on the theoretical outcomes of workerism. By placing the valorisation process and the work process not only as distinct but as contradictory from the 'worker's point of view', Tronti somehow had to assume that even the process of extending the factory to society could never come to a conclusion. Since the factory and society essentially coincided with two different modes of social synthesis —the first based on productive cooperation within the factory and the second based on market exchange— a solution to the conflict could only be imagined by following the suppression of one of the two poles, namely, after the senescence of the production mode based on exchange or through the complete dissolution of the factory into society. But these were hypotheses that Tronti did not consider; indeed, he explicitly dismissed them in relation to the socialization of the factory. So much so that in a famous passage of *Workers and Capital*, he wrote that although the process of socialization tended to lead the production relationship to coincide with the social relationship, there would never be "a gap between capital as a *production relation* and capital as a *capitalist society*" (Tronti, 2019, p. 207). In other words, even if integration was completed, a substantial contradiction would always remain between the two moments. "Even if factory and society were to become perfectly integrated at the economic level, at a political level they would, nonetheless, forever continue to be in contradiction", he wrote, and based on this schema, he predicted that "one of the highest and most mature points of the class struggle" would consist of the "frontal clash between the factory as working class and *society as capital*" (Tronti, 2019, p. 241).

The idea of opposition between factory and society —in many ways a truly crucial intuition for workerism— paradoxically began to reveal problematic dimensions when the opposition seemed to take shape explicitly in the workers' struggles of the late Sixties. This was when wages became a clear instrument of struggle 'within' capitalist development. However, it was precisely the intensity reached with the 'Hot Autumn' of '69 that led Tronti to question not only the dichotomy of factory and society, but how their conflict had been represented. Until then, Tronti had not considered the hypothesis that class conflict within the factory could reach heights capable of challenging the

functioning of capitalist society. In other words, until then, Tronti seemed to assume as a premise of his discourse that society —the institutional mechanisms external to the factory but also the dynamics of consumer society— would continue to operate according to its own logic, even if the working class had gained immense power within the production sites. Class conflict was therefore understood as the ‘engine’ of capitalist development, but conflict and development were always seen as poles of an irresolvable conflicting relationship (just as the conflict between factory and society was irresolvable and perhaps even that between class and mass). However, it was the level of the demands in the factory —at the same time as the eruption of radical conflicts ‘beyond’ the factory gates in society— that put this scheme into crisis. The different outcomes of workerism continued largely within the coordinates identified by Tronti in the Sixties, although with different modifications proposed.

One solution to the puzzle posed by the relationship between factory and society consisted of the elimination of one of the two poles, namely, the elimination of society. Since the opposition between factory and society had been presented by Tronti as a contrast that contained the workers’ struggle only within the confines of the factory, a solution could come —to put it bluntly— from the ‘suppression’ of society, namely, from the logical suppression of social synthesis based on market exchange and therefore from the complete ‘socialization’ of the factory. In this way, once the highest level of integration was achieved, the factory and society could finally cease to oppose each other; the factory would have extended to the entire society, and thus there would be no more distinction between the two. A consequence of this solution was the recognition that the working class tended to coincide fully with the entire labour front (wage-earning and non-wage-earning) and that therefore all labour tended to become ‘productive’. It was along this path that Negri, beginning in the early Seventies, began to move, picking up the suggestions from the famous *Fragment on Machines*, already appearing in the fourth issue of *Quaderni rossi*. From a certain point of view —although the discussion is obviously more complex— the introduction of a series of passages can be considered consequences of the need to logically ‘dissolve’ society: the idea of the ‘end of civil society’, the idea of the exhaustion of the law of value, the conviction that life transforms entirely into labour (Palano, 2008; 2013; 2015a; 2020a).

Certainly, this was not the only possible option. Another path was to reconsider the schema centred on the two poles of the factory and society, to add a perspective capable of understanding how the dimensions external to the factory were not always reducible only to the dimension of commodity exchange. In other words, it was about widening

the perspective, recognizing how the domains of social reproduction external to the work process could become sites of conflict, insofar as within them, the reproduction of labour power in the form of a commodity was at stake, even though it was not wage labour (and therefore, the conflict was not about wages). In other words, this solution did not imply resorting to the idea of the full extension of the factory at the societal level but rather suggested an analysis capable of discovering the dynamics with which, outside of production in the strict sense (but in an area that was not that of commodity exchange), the 'premises' of the capitalist mode of production were being produced: a workforce available to sell itself in the market. This was the main innovation because, even in this domain, often 'microscopic' conflicts could mature, capable of influencing the definition of socially necessary labour. In many ways, it was precisely in this direction that both the historiographical work of *Primo maggio* and Sergio Bologna and the 'feminist' reading of workerism developed, for example, by Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Silvia Federici, and Leopoldina Fortunati in the Seventies, albeit with contradictions with the hypothesis of the 'socialization' of the factory, Negri himself, with his theory of 'self-valorization', would move along this direction (Palano, 2008; 2013; 2020a).

The adoption of these two solutions —which in simplified terms proceeded to both recognize the transformation of the entire society into a factory and to rediscover the capital-labour conflict also in society (thus outside the strict wage relationship but also outside the work process)— can be considered a crucial turning point in the history of workerism. Indeed, it is around this passage, roughly at the beginning of the Seventies, that one might place the rift between workerism proper and post-workerism, whose events whose events extend until today. Tronti did not adopt either of these two solutions. Even though in some passages of *Factory and Society* in 1962 he had prefigured the idea of a complete extension of the factory to society, he subsequently abandoned this option, even explicitly. In the *Postscript of Problems* published in 1971 as an appendix to the second edition of *Workers and Capital*, he unequivocally excluded the idea of relinquishing the political centrality of factory workers and an 'objective' definition of the working class. "The problem is how to find new definitions of the 'working class' without abandoning the domain of objective analysis and without falling back in ideological traps", he wrote then (Tronti, 1971/2019, p. 325). Precisely for this reason, to him, "to broaden the sociological boundaries of the working class in order to embrace all those struggling against capitalism from within, such as to reach the quantitative majority of the social workforce or even of the active population" was a serious theoretical error, as well as "a serious concession to democratic traditions" (Tronti, 1971/2019, p. 310). Tronti would therefore seek another key to

solving the ‘enigma’. In many ways, he would continue to retain the idea of structural opposition between factory and society. However, alongside —or, better said, between these two dimensions— he would begin to glimpse a terrain at least relatively (and potentially) ‘autonomous’: the terrain of the ‘political’. That conviction would then lead Tronti to turn towards a new dimension and to articulate the project of ‘critique of politics’ and ‘political democracy’.

The Autonomy of the Political

In *Quaderni rossi* and *Classe operaia*, as well as in *Workers and Capital*, the dimension of political institutions and the role of the State were not entirely absent, especially because, even in that period, the ‘political programming’ of economic development was considered one of the components of ‘neo-capitalism’. Nevertheless, the discourse was focused on factory struggle, viewing a substantial equivalence between wage conflict and anti-capitalist struggle, while almost no attention was given to the mediation occurring in the realm of ‘civil society’ by the organizations of the workers’ movement. It was clearly a simplification, the consequences of which would be felt later. To thrust “hegemony under the presses of Mirafiori” —in Sergio Bologna’s famous wording (1974, pp. 3–8)— was, however, an indispensable prerequisite for reinterpreting Marx’s works in a ‘subjectivist’ way, as well as a necessary provocation against the Gramscian view canonized by the theorists of the PCI.

As elsewhere, the Sixties marked a clear turning point on this front. After the student protests, the ‘Hot Autumn’ and the ‘strategy of tension’, the State returned as an unavoidable object of theoretical reflection. After 1969, for the heirs of *Quaderni rossi* and *Classe operaia* who chose the ‘movementist’ solution, the ‘discovery’ of the State took on the dark colour of repression and direct confrontation, occasionally even the face of the paradoxical revival of the analytical instrumentation of Marxist–Leninist orthodoxy (Berardi, 1998). For Tronti and those who decided to re-enter the institutions of the workers’ movement, it became essential to start grappling with political logic and institutional dynamics. The starting point for this season can be found in *The New Synthesis: Within and Against*, a lecture given by Tronti in 1967, soon after the dissolution of *Classe operaia*. In that lecture, the objective was explicitly stated: to use —from within— the party institution as a means of asserting working-class interests (Tronti, 1967). Subsequently, in the pages of *Contropiano*, a much stronger interest in the action of the State emerged, within a logic aimed at consistently exploring the hypotheses about the ‘State-plan’ and its action formulated in the Sixties. However, the political level —throughout this period— remained

predominantly determined by the party, understood as an organization and as a political mediation ring for class composition (Cacciari, 1972; 1978; Tronti, 1970). It was mainly between 1972 and 1980 that the more articulated hypotheses were outlined and, concerning Tronti's path, the hypothesis of the 'autonomy of the political' began to be outlined and investigated (Tronti, 1977; 1980a; 1980b; 2023; Palano, 2023).

In the Seventies, that hypothesis became the subject of a fiery theoretical-political discussion, not immune to polemical distortions. In particular, the intellectuals close to the extra-parliamentary left sought to show the close relationship between Tronti's idea of the 'autonomy of the political' and Berlinguer's strategy of the 'historic compromise'. Despite some acute observations amidst that debate, many polemical passages hindered an understanding of why Tronti turned to the 'political' and, most importantly, what 'political' corresponded to. In many ways, Tronti's new research phase, stemming from the need to find a different solution to the puzzle of the relationship between factory and society, was evident. Since the framework inherited from the Sixties was marked by the (ultimately irresolvable) opposition between the factory and society, and since he had rejected the path of 'socializing' the factory, Tronti had to look for a potentially 'neutral' area, where the fate of the conflict could be decided. The attempt to define politics as 'autonomous' also arose from the need to address this opposition, as it was in the face of the conflict between two equal forces that emerged as a possible terrain for resolving the conflict. Perhaps it is only by considering this aspect that it is possible to understand, beyond the autonomy attributed to it, what the 'political' truly represented for Tronti at that time.

Starting from the Seventies —especially when Carl Schmitt's famous *Begriff des Politischen* was reintroduced into the debate— referring to the 'political' became familiar inside and outside of Italy, claiming the notion to be the often-elusive realm where the 'heart' of politics itself, if not its 'essence', could be found. Tronti engaged in a lengthy dialogue with Schmitt's reflections, reaching its culmination in the Eighties and Nineties. Despite such a close and emphasized relationship, it would be incorrect to interpret Tronti's 'political' of the Seventies in a Schmittian sense (Cortés, 2018; Palano, 2023). The explicit formulation of the first hypotheses on the 'autonomy of the political' dates back to the end of 1972, during a seminar held by Tronti at the University of Turin (Tronti, 1977). In the discourse of that seminar, the expression 'autonomy of the political' was adopted in a meaning quite different from Schmitt's. For Tronti, the 'political' did not simply coincide with the State, because it encompassed both 'the objective level of power institutions' and 'the political class, the subjective activity of doing politics', and therefore —to put it more clearly— it identified 'the state plus the political class'

overall (Tronti 1977, p. 10). Defined as such, Tronti's problem was to understand what relationships it had with capitalist development. His hypothesis, in this regard, was that in certain historical phases the field of political institutions did not faithfully reflect the changes occurring in the economic sphere. Therefore, transformations that characterized capitalist development sometimes seemed 'out of sync' with the 'political', which was forced to 'chase after'. The 'political's delay' was not due to insufficient economic development, but primarily to the peculiar nature of political institutions. The discovery of the 'political's delay' suggested to Tronti the need to reinterpret certain passages in the history of capitalism, recognizing, alongside the continuity of economic development, political ruptures, understood as breaks in the rigidity of institutional structures and the ruling class, as 'political discontinuity' and 'political leaps' (Tronti 1977, p. 11). Above all, it also suggested the idea that, faced with a capital cycle, one should speak of a veritable 'political cycle of capital', a cycle linked to tradition, culture and the experience consolidated in the political ruling class and the rigidity of governmental institutional and administrative structures. The model from which Tronti's considerations took shape was naturally Roosevelt's New Deal, because during that period the autonomy of the political terrain had become clear, allowing the State to intervene in the economic sphere. But even Italy in the Seventies seemed to present similar conditions. Hence, Tronti then indicated the indispensable task of exploring the "laws of movement of the modern state" (Tronti, 1977, p. 16).

Even in 1980, Tronti revived the idea of the 'autonomy of the political', this time in an explicitly political context. In the face of the widespread social conflict, well beyond the factory, Tronti argued that it was essential for the party—obviously the PCI—to ensure an institutional relationship between the factory working class and the new social forces. He recognized that the centrality of the working class itself was in crisis and could no longer function in the same way as in the Sixties. However, this 'block' did not imply the decline of centrality but rather its shift to the political level. Through a chain of subsequent mediations, the working-class centrality could now only function 'politically'. "To produce government, the ideological mechanism of a dominion machine is no longer enough", he wrote. "What is needed is a reference to a real point of strength, to a real power capable of winning consensus, and this is no longer anywhere on the capitalist side, it is now only in the historical body of the working class"; thus, to overcome the 'bourgeois autonomy of politics', the "centrality of the factory worker shifts from social to political" (Tronti, 1980b, p. 82).

Just a few years later, Tronti's evaluations would change abruptly, and the new scenario would lead the 'thinking political' to close an entire season. In the early Nineties,

he did not hesitate to recognize in the just-passed decade, culminating in the dissolution of the USSR, the trajectory of a momentous historical passage. “The epochal data, the core of the need for a new synthesis, the element that links events and explains outcomes”, he wrote then, “is “ultimately” just one: it is called the decline of the working class”, the “conclusive episode of that decline of the West, which has precisely traversed the century and now concludes it by plunging, not with the surge of deliberate actions but with the decline of inevitable facts” (Tronti, 1992, p. X). Apart from marking the historical endpoint of the ‘autonomy of the political’, the Eighties also set a moment of strong discontinuity in Tronti’s research on the ‘political’. The hypotheses of the Seventies were born from a logical development —perhaps even a forced one— of the same premises that had generated the ‘Copernican revolution’. Above all, they represented an attempt to integrate new hypotheses into that schema centred on the dichotomy between factory and society elaborated in the Sixties and, in many ways, historically realized in the phase between the ‘Hot Autumn’ and the workers’ defeat at Mirafiori in October 1980. In the Seventies, the ‘political’ essentially appeared to Tronti as that articulated terrain —where the institutional level and political action, the State and the party, the apparatus and the political class were combined— that could potentially show itself to be ‘autonomous’ from capital and the logic of its development and could therefore be used ‘by the working class’. However, Tronti’s premise was that a sort of balance existed between the factory and society; that is, the working class could exert real power in the factory. Only a presumption like this —a reality that genuinely marked Italy in the Seventies— could make a working-class use of the autonomy of the political terrain credible or at least conceivable. Once the decline of this data and these real power relationships was recognized, the conditions that —in Tronti’s reasoning— could bring forth the autonomy of the political level in relation to capitalist development dissolved. This did not mean that Tronti truly accepted the thesis of those who welcomed (even enthusiastically) the advent of the ‘post-industrial’ society or the emergence of a complex society irreducible to any centrality. In fact, when Tronti acknowledged the ‘decline of the working class’ back then, he probably did not mean to assert that the working class had truly disappeared and that the conflict between capital and labour had ended. According to Tronti, the class struggle had not been exhausted at all. In his reasoning, the point was that the capital–labour conflict was no longer capable of triggering, in the dynamics of development, the same mechanisms that operated in the Sixties and Seventies. Put in the language of young Tronti, the ‘factory as the working class’ no longer seemed capable of opposing the ‘society as capital’, while in today’s terms, the class no longer seemed capable of functioning (either economically or politically) as an alterna-

tive, as a 'braking power' in the face of the eruption of the 'mass man', the triumph of the *homo democraticus*. This is precisely why the 'political' for Tronti could no longer be, or not only be, as it was in the Seventies, 'the state plus the political class'.

Critique of Political Democracy

It is unlikely to be a coincidence that, at a certain point in the Trontian journey, the intended title of *For the Critique of Politics* changed to *For the Critique of Political Democracy*. What prompted Tronti to make that change was probably the *Zeitgeist* of the Eighties and Nineties, as democracy was starting to be celebrated as the pinnacle and unsurpassable 'ideological evolution' of humankind. However, 'critique of politics' was an authoritative, even foundational, formula, as it echoed Marx's work and, in particular, the texts from which Tronti's research had started in the Fifties, following in the footsteps of Galvano Della Volpe: the youthful critique of Hegelian philosophy of public law, as well as the Introduction of 1857 and the subsequent *Critique of Political Economy*. The decision to set aside the 'critique of politics' formula probably had other motivations, not purely formal or stylistic, which stemmed from the usage that had spread in the Seventies, especially within that radical theory linked to the operaismo of *Workers and Capital* (but not to Tronti's 'autonomy of the political'). The debate at that time arose from the crisis of the left-wing groups and the quest for 'a new way of doing politics' (Gruppo Gramsci, 1973). In this context, the 'critique of politics' translated, for example, into the idea of valorising the 'spontaneous' forms of conflict expression and the 'autonomy of needs' that they expressed. But above all, underlying that reflection—often strongly marked by the urgency of action—was also the idea that the stark division of labour between top and base, leaders and militants, needed to be overcome, along with the form of 'political alienation' inevitably produced by the classic party organization. Facing that discussion, Tronti cautioned against conflating the 'critique of politics', whose necessity he was arguing for, with a discourse that, by exalting needs, led only towards a 'rejection of politics' (Tronti, 1980a, pp. 259–279). Eventually, the widespread usage of the term in a context so distant from the logic of his research on the 'political' likely suggested to Tronti the opportunity for a title change that, at that point, in the new scenario unfolding in the Eighties, also demanded a clarification of the object of investigation.

This seemingly slight variation—shifting the analytical focus from 'politics' to 'political democracy'—reveals a substantial point of the Trontian position: a point that also helps explain Tronti's insistence, in the last years of his life, on '68 and the movements.

In a conversation with Pasquale Serra, for instance, Tronti explicitly distanced himself from the formula invoking ‘another way of doing politics’, a formula judged to be substantially analogous to contemporary anti-political rhetoric. For Tronti, this maxim was “at the origin of the current crisis of politics, which practically blocks the possible ways out”, while “there is no ‘other way of doing politics’ because ‘the politics we deal with is modern politics’, ‘a closed, cohesive universe, logically self-contained, with rules and laws, not scientifically exact, that’s the beauty, but mutable and interpretable in contingency, with a foundation, within, of irrationality, chance, opportunity, and exception’” (Tronti, 2011, p. 32). What Tronti reproached the contestation movements for was essentially what he reproached for the ‘critique of politics’ articulated by the theorists of ‘needs’ in the Seventies: a discourse on politics that translated into a ‘rejection of politics’, in a refusal that ultimately neglected the necessity of constructing and preserving every collective identity, thereby accepting the logic of individualization permeating capitalist civilization. Freed from material rooting in a part — a part that is obviously a contrast to another, an ‘enemy’, but a part that is always also a ‘we’, not an ‘I’, just as the hostis is never an inimicus— freedom resolves only into the freedom of the ‘last man’, into the selfish freedom of the democratic human, in the endless pursuit of individual happiness of the ‘mass man’ lost in the spectacle of merchandise. In this vein, attacking one of the most classic slogans of the Sixties and Seventies movements, he said, “The private is not political. Never. To become public, it must transvaluate, transcend itself, move out of the individual to become collectivity” (Tronti, 2015b, p. 34). It is precisely from this perspective — a perspective calling into question the mysterious process by which the individual must ‘transcend itself’ to ‘become collectivity’— that Tronti’s interest in political theology and the dimension of spirituality can be fully understood.

Tronti clarified the roots of this choice, not just stylistic but also thematic, which leaned towards spirituality: “Capitalism has made a desert inside the human being, has severed the roots of the soul in the person: this is the cultural reason for conflict, a new political form of struggle, that none of the few remaining anti-capitalist forces engage in” (2015b, p. 224). Faced with the triumph of the democratic human, spirituality constitutes for Tronti the only cultural force capable of making it known that “there is something immeasurable, unquantifiable, not subject to instrumental reason, infinite even as indefinite, not expressible in numbers, laws, codes, and especially today in images” (Tronti, 2015b, p. 227). Spirituality then truly becomes the last katechon, the “last and definitive frontier of resistance to the aggression from the outside world [...] the first, deepest, incisive, and effective cultural point of attack against its current sense of order, against the present democratic domination of consciences” (Tronti, 2015b, p. 227).

The Destiny of 'My Part'

In the pages of *Workers and Capital*, Mario Tronti wrote, 'the working class is not 'the people'. But the working class comes from the people. And this is the basic reason why all —like ourselves— who adopt the working class viewpoint no longer need to "go out among the people: We ourselves come from the people" (Tronti, 2019, p. 253). Many years later, he explained that this was not just a metaphor but also an autobiographical reflection. "The 'rude pagan race' is me", he wrote. Tronti was born into a working-class family, a family 'of the Roman people' that worked at the General Markets and lived in the Ostiense District. And, as he recalled, if his 'political-theoretical' roots lay in the Turin workers, his 'historical-human' roots lay instead in Roman workers: "present workers' struggles come from the distant past of the popular tradition, and I'm with them" (Tronti, 2006, p. 19). "All revolts, insurrections, heresies, social, political, even religious, all insurgencies of insubordination from below, stand behind me as my own past" (Tronti, 2021, pp. 23–24).

Throughout his theoretical-political experience, Tronti never wavered in claiming his original belonging and never failed to qualify his perspective as a perspective of his 'part'. Therefore, when he wrote that his 'own destiny' was "that of my part, that of the part I belong to, its historical determinateness, its situation in the world, and therefore its time-now, against which I measure myself daily" (Tronti, 2006, p. 17). Tronti is not simply expressing a political belonging or the centrality of a militant commitment preserved throughout a lifetime. The comprehensive enquiry into the tasks of the 'free spirit' cannot be understood without recognizing that, in Tronti's discourse, the presupposition is always the assumption of partiality, the claim of belonging to a part. Recognizing one's destiny and reflecting on 'one's own destiny', for Tronti, was always the assumption of the historical conditions of a part, a collective 'we', which is never, and cannot be, a 'whole' in the Hegelian sense. Thus —precisely because Tronti was not a 'political thinker' but a 'thinking politician'— the acknowledgement of 'one's own destiny', the acknowledgement 'of my part', was the prerequisite for any reflective work. It was the only gateway through which the 'free spirit' could pass.

The destination Tronti arrived at in the last phase of his reflection left many of his most passionate readers and even his most convinced admirers dissatisfied. In a passionate confrontation with Tronti, Negri recently pondered the "Tronti enigma", that is, the reasons that led Tronti to abandon the theoretical framework of *Workers and Capital* to arrive at the autonomy of the political in the crucial transition between the late Sixties and the early Seventies. The solution to the 'enigma', according to Negri, does not seem difficult to unveil: 'It consists of the shift in the 'point of view' from inside/against

capital, to inside the Party with the proposal to impose its hegemony on capitalist development; in the profound discontinuity between the Tronti of *Workers and Capital* and that of the 'autonomy of the political', essentially, then, "shifting the source of power and the initiative of class struggle from bottom to top" (Negri, 2022, p. 48).

Perhaps the 'enigma' Tronti faced in the Sixties and Seventies was not just about the relationship between class and the party. Perhaps, as seen in the previous pages, Tronti's real 'enigma' was represented by the relationship between the factory and society and, therefore, the insoluble contrast between a dimension in which the working class could demonstrate its autonomy from capital and a dimension in which, instead, the workforce returned to fragment into a myriad of 'mass men', incapable of opposing any resistance to the advancement of capitalist civilization. In a passage from *Workers and Capital*, it was stated, "*Spontaneism* belongs always and only to 'the masses' in a generic sense and never to the workers of the big factories" (Tronti, 1963/2019, p. 62). This phrase fit organically into the proposal based on the idea of the political centrality of the factory working class and could therefore initially sound like a simple variation on the workerist (and anti-Gramscian) theme of the specificity of factory struggle compared to the 'popular struggle'. However, behind that provocatively 'workerist' formula, and beyond the seemingly conventional homage to the iron discipline of the working class, one could recognize a crucial motif of all Tronti's reflection, which the Roman thinker revisited, especially in his most recent writings. Reflecting again on the ambivalences of the workerist experience, Tronti invited to recognize in the working class of the large factories in the Sixties and Seventies —and thus what, not without paradoxes, was defined as the 'mass worker'— a bulwark against 'massification', as a barrier against the emergence of the 'mass man' entirely shaped by the consumer society, as a brake against the march of the Nietzschean 'last man' (Tronti, 1998, p. 201). In *Noi operaisti* [*We Workerists*], for example, providing a definition of 'worker aristocracy' far removed from the derogatory one inherited from tradition, he wrote:

The large factory is the opposite of the non-places, which configure the consistency, or rather the inconsistency, of the post-modern. The large factory is the classic of the modern. The concentration of workers in the workplace determined the masses, without making a mass. What was called the working masses, both unionally and politically organized, were in turn the opposite of the processes of massification, induced by productions, consumptions, communications, precisely of mass. The working class has been called, and has truly been, the avant-garde of the working masses. In this sense, it can be talked about, more precisely, concerning

the use of political concepts, as the aristocracy of the people. The symbolic image of the collective worker directly led to this idea because it implicitly held it within itself. It escaped the tragic alternative that the twentieth century had historically materialized: either the authoritarian personality or the democratic mass. (Tronti, 2009, p. 95)

These motifs emerged openly only much later in his writings, but as seen, it is not entirely improper to hypothesize that they were already present at the foundation of Tronti's reflection in the Sixties or that, even earlier, they had directed the break with historicism. Perhaps only by recognizing how the terror of the 'mass man' and the nightmare of the massification process have constituted the constant problematic of Tronti's research is it possible to reinterpret the entire theoretical experience of the father of Italian workerism from a new perspective. The shock of 1956 shattered the framework of historicism and the myth of Soviet socialism, indicating to the young Tronti the necessity of thinking about social transformation in a different way than how it had been conceived by Leninism. More than a testimony of the failure of the Bolshevik Revolution, 1956 represented the confirmation of socialism's inability to transcend the logic of the capitalist mode of production. If such an acknowledgement led other intellectuals to detach themselves from Marxism, moving towards liberal or 'neo-Enlightenment' positions, for Tronti, it meant instead giving up conceiving the worker conflict within an (at least entirely) eschatological perspective. And perhaps, starting from such a shock, the young Roman theorist began to conceive of the antagonism between capital and the working class—as well as between society and the factory—not in terms of a contradiction destined to be dialectically overcome, but rather as an unsolvable opposition, as a conflict destined to reproduce constantly. Many champions of workerism and post-workerism would not have shared (and perhaps not even grasped) Tronti's rupture with this passage, thus continuing to conceive social transformation and the capital-labour conflict largely in line with the eschatological and Promethean declination of the Marxist tradition. All of Tronti's reflection—and therefore not only the phase of 'political autonomy' but even the properly workerist phase of the Sixties—seems constantly marked by the recognition of the idea that the conflictual polarity between capital and the working class cannot be dialectically surpassed by a superior synthesis guaranteed by the 'rational' management of society. Precisely due to such a rupture, Tronti had to acknowledge the immanence of the capitalist social organization and thus the process of 'massification' that emanated from it. And the nightmare of the 'mass man'—a nightmare that emerged only very late in Tronti's writings—was somewhat the inevitable consequence

of the image of a capitalism capable of penetrating society, manipulating individuals, subjugating them with the spectacle of commodities.

Read from this perspective, the different sequences of Tronti's thought can be interpreted as new theoretical–political solutions, all internal, however, to the same vision of social dynamics. And perhaps all those different sequences can be considered filiations originating from a common katechontic matrix, according to which the revolution is not a 'going beyond' capitalism or a development of its productive potentialities for the benefit of the entire society but rather an attempt to 'restrain' development and its destructive tensions, and therefore a process that must be thought 'within' capitalist development, or better, parallel to it. In this way, it could indeed be understood that even the workerist season was an operation aimed at recognizing in the working class the consequence of capitalist development but at the same time, the possible katechon, the force capable of restraining capital, of holding it back, of 'civilizing' it. Without being able to find the socialist revolution as the terminal point of development, the Roman theorist sought, in the face of the advance of massification, different answers from those provided by the Marxist tradition, which largely assigned the 'rational' management of social organization to capitalist contradictions. For Tronti, 'science' could not aspire to conquer a neutral point of view but rather had to recognize the structural and ineliminable antagonism of capitalist society and position itself within that partial viewpoint expressed by the working class. Above all, it had to rediscover in the factory working class the barrier that had to prevent the victory of the Nietzschean 'last man.' The subjectivist reinterpretation of Marx, in which Tronti would have engaged starting from the essays published in the *Quaderni rossi*, can perhaps be interpreted as a sort of extreme heretical attempt to oppose the decline of European Kultur and to erect an extreme bulwark against the unstoppable *Zivilisation*. For this reason, one can glimpse in Tronti's reflection a fabric constituted by the nightmare of the 'new world,' by that nightmare that constituted the exact reversal of the Fordist vision of a society permeated by the logic of the factory. If it was the power of the economy and the impetus of *Zivilisation* that reduced the individual to an anonymous mass, Tronti would have constantly sought the antidote to *Vermassung* within the factory, in the working class of the large factories, in the collective force planted in the heart of the production relationship, conceived as the ultimate barrier to the advance of the 'last man.' And when the assumption of the 'concentration' of the workforce in large factories began to wane, Tronti inserted into his perspective a new reflection on the symbolic dimension of politics, a dimension that was essentially absent before but which, especially from the second half of the Eighties onwards, came to significantly enrich —and also complicate— the enquiry on the 'political'.

The solutions that Tronti offered throughout his reflection may appear unsatisfactory, inadequate and even counterproductive to many. Nevertheless, the enigmas that Tronti posed remain unavoidable. If one truly wants to take the challenge of the ‘sunset’ of politics seriously, and if one intends to traverse the ‘post-political’ (and ‘anti-political’) landscape marking the new millennium, the path to follow most probably remains the one that the ‘conservative revolutionary’ Mario Tronti indicated, starting with the necessity of rethinking the autonomy of the political by proceeding ‘beyond’ the dimension of the State and the grounds of institutions, but without renouncing the deposit of experiences that the past hands down to us. Without the ‘long knowledge of past things’ and the ‘detached understanding of present things’, Tronti wrote in 2021, “political action becomes dependent on the course of its time” (pp. 32–33). “Only if one comes from afar can one go far”, and—in Goethe’s words— “to be born again, looking at one’s past ideas as childhood shoes” is “the right way to be modern and ancient at the same time”, “free spirits against the present, armed with the memory of everything subversive that has existed in the past” (Tronti, 2021, pp. 32–33).

References

- Anastasi, A. (2020). Experiments and Explosions. Tronti's Work of the 1960s. In M. Tronti, *The Weapon of Organization. Mario Tronti's Political Revolution in Marxism* (pp. 1-41). Common Notions.
- Asor Rosa, A. (2011). *Le armi della critica. Scritti e saggi degli anni ruggenti (1960-1970)*. Einaudi.
- Berardi, F. (1998). *La nefasta utopia di Potere operaio. Lavoro tecnica movimento nel laboratorio politico del Sessantotto italiano*. Castelvechchi – DeriveApprodi.
- Bigalli, D. (1967). Due figure hegeliane: in margine a Tronti e Marcuse. *Classe e Stato*, 4, 121-134.
- Bologna, S. (1974). Il rapporto società-fabbrica come categoria storica. *Primo Maggio*, 2, 3-8.
- Borio, G., Pozzi, F., & Roggero G. (2002). *Futuro Anteriore. Dai «Quaderni Rossi» ai movimenti globali: ricchezze e limiti dell'operaismo italiano*. DeriveApprodi.
- Borio, G., Pozzi, F., & Roggero G. (2005). *Gli operaisti*. Derive Approdi.
- Cacciari, M. (1972). Sul problema dell'organizzazione. Germania 1917-1921. In G. Lukács, «*Kommunismus*» 1920-1921 (pp. 7-66). Marsilio.
- Cacciari, M. (1978). Problemi teorici e politici dell'operaismo nei nuovi gruppi dal 1960 ad oggi. In F. D'Agostini (ed.), *Operaismo e centralità operaia* (pp. 45-79). Editori Riuniti.
- Cavalleri, M. (2016). Cristianesimo e rivoluzione nel pensiero politico di Mario Tronti. Una prospettiva antropologica. *Filosofia e Teologia*, 3, 555-565.
- Cavalleri, M., Filippini, M., & Masciat, J. M.H. (2017). Introduzione. In M. Tronti. *Il demone della politica. Antologia di scritti 1958-2015* (pp. 11-63). Il Mulino.
- Cazzaniga, G.M. (1967). I giovani hegeliani del capitale collettivo. *Giovane critica*, 17, 28-33.
- Cerutti, A. & Dettori, G. (2021). *La rivoluzione in esilio. Scritti su Mario Tronti*. Quodlibet. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2gz3xjg>
- Cortés, M. (2018). Mario Tronti, pensador de lo político. In M. Tronti, *La autonomía de lo político* (pp. 9-28). Prometeo Libros.
- Esposito, R. (2010). *Pensiero vivente. Origine e attualità della filosofia italiana*. Einaudi.
- Farris, S.R. (2011). Workerism's Inimical Incursions: On Mario Tronti's Weberianism. *Historical Materialism*, 3, 29-62. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156920611X594731>
- Farris, S.R. (2013). Althusser and Tronti: The Primacy of Politics versus the Autonomy of the Political. In K. Diefenbach, S.R. Farris, G. Kirn, P. Thomas (eds.), *Encountering Althusser. Politics and Materialism in Contemporary Radical Thought* (pp. 185-203). Bloomsbury.
- Filippini, M. (2011). Mario Tronti e l'operaismo politico degli anni Sessanta. *Cahiers du GRM*, 2, 76-132. <https://doi.org/10.4000/grm.220>

- Filippini, M. & Macchia E. (2012). *Leaping Forward. Mario Tronti and the history of political workerism*. Crs-Jve.
- Gentili, D. (2012). *Italian Theory. Dall'operaismo alla biopolitica*. Il Mulino.
- Gentili, D., & Stimilli, E. (2015) (eds.). *Differenze italiane. Politica e filosofia: mappe e sconfinamenti*. DeriveApprodi.
- Gruppo Gramsci (1973). Una proposta per un diverso modo di fare politica. *Rosso*, 7.
- Mangano, A. (1978). *Autocritica e politica di classe. Diario teorico degli anni Settanta*. Edizioni Ottaviano.
- Meriggi, M.G. (1978). *Composizione di classe e teoria del partito. Sul marxismo degli anni '60*. Dedalo.
- Mezzadra, S. (2008). Senza lacrime per le rose. «Operai e capitale» di Mario Tronti e l'operaismo italiano. In M. Baldassarri & D. Melegari (eds.) *La rivoluzione dietro di noi. Filosofia e politica prima e dopo il '68* (pp. 61-77). Manifestolibri.
- Milanesi, F. (2014). *Nel Novecento. Storia, teoria, politica nel pensiero di Mario Tronti*. Mimesis.
- Negri, A. (2005). *La differenza italiana*. Nottetempo.
- Negri, A. (2022). L'autonomia del politico. In E. Balibar, A. Negri & M. Tronti, *Anatomia del politico* (pp. 45-56), ed. J.M.H. Mascot. Quodlibet. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2gvdnhw>
- Palano, D. (2008). *Dioniso postmoderno. Classe e Stato nella teoria radicale di Antonio Negri*. Multimedia Publishing.
- Palano, D. (2009). *I bagliori del crepuscolo. Critica e politica al termine del Novecento*. Aracne.
- Palano, D. (2013). The «excesses» of cognitive capitalism. *Historical Materialism*, 3, 229-245.
- Palano, D. (2015a). *Politica nell'età postmoderna. Teoria e critica nella trasformazione sociale*. Aracne.
- Palano, D. (2015b). *L'ultimo lampo del Novecento. Appunti di lettura intorno a «Dello spirito libero» di Mario Tronti*. Tysm. <http://tysm.org/mario-tronti>
- Palano, D. (2020a). Leggere Il Capitale dal “punto di vista operaio”. Il “ritorno a Marx” dell'operaismo italiano. In L. Basile, C. Paolini & G. Zingone (eds.). *Attaversamenti di Marx* (pp. 103-140). Ets.
- Palano, D. (2020b). Nietzsche a Mirafiori. Il giovane Mario Tronti e la critica dello storicismo: note di rilettura. *Rivista di Politica*, 11(4), 171-198.
- Palano, D. (2023). Critica della politica, conquista della politica. In M. Tronti. *Hobbes e Cromwell. Con un'appendice di scritti sul politico* (pp. 7-54). Mimesis.
- Panzieri, R. (1973). *La ripresa del marxismo-leninismo in Italia*. Sapere.

- Pavone, C. (1980). Le contraddizioni del dopo Ungheria: «Passato e Presente» 1858-1960. *Classe*, 9 (17).
- Portinaro, P.P. (2018). *Le mani su Machiavelli*. Una critica dell'«Italian Theory». Donzelli.
- Preve, C. (1984). *La teoria in pezzi. La dissoluzione del paradigma teorico operaista in Italia* (1976-1983). Dedalo.
- Roggero, G. (2019). *L'operaismo politico italiano. Genealogia, storia, metodo*. DeriveApprodi.
- Sbardella, R. (1980). La Nep di «Classe operaia». *Classe*, 9(17), 239-263.
- Serra, P. (2016). Tradizione e libertà. Il pensiero politico di Mario Tronti. *Rivista di Politica*, 6(1).
- Tomassini, R. (1976). Nuova sinistra e autonomia del bisogno proletario (analisi delle posizioni di Panzieri, Tronti, Asor Rosa). In P.A. Rovatti, R. Tomassini & A. Vigorelli, *Bisogni e teoria marxista* (pp. 81-172). Mazzotta.
- Tomassini, R. (1977). *Ideologia, intellettuali, organizzazione. Note sul «neomarxismo» degli anni Sessanta*. Dedalo.
- Toscano, A., & Chiesa, L. (eds.) (2009). *The Italian Difference. Between Nihilism and Biopolitics*. Re.Press.
- Tronti, M. (1956-1957). *Il marxismo come scienza della società*. University of Rome.
- Tronti, M. (1958). Alcune questioni intorno al marxismo di Gramsci. In Istituto Gramsci, *Studi gramsciani. Atti del Convegno tenuto a Roma, nei giorni 11-13 gennaio 1958* (pp. 305-32). Editori Riuniti.
- Tronti, M. (1959). Tra materialismo dialettico e filosofia della prassi. Gramsci e Labriola. In A. Caracciolo & G. Scalia (eds.). *La città futura* (pp. 139-186). Feltrinelli.
- Tronti, M. (1961). Studi recenti sulla logica del «Capitale» di Marx. *Società*, 17(6), 881-903.
- Tronti, M. (1963). Introduzione. In K. Marx, *Scritti inediti di economia politica*. Editori Riuniti.
- Tronti, M. (1967). La nuova sintesi: dentro e contro. *Giovane critica*, 17, 17-27.
- Tronti, M. (1970). Classe operaia e sviluppo. *Contropiano*, 3(3), 465-477.
- Tronti, M. (1977). *Sull'autonomia del politico*. Feltrinelli.
- Tronti, M. (1980a). *Soggetti, crisi, potere. Antologia di scritti e interventi*. Cappelli.
- Tronti, M. (1980b). *Il tempo della politica*. Editori Riuniti.
- Tronti, M. (1992). *Con le spalle al futuro. Per un altro dizionario politico*. Editori Riuniti.
- Tronti, M. (1998). *La politica al tramonto*. Einaudi.
- Tronti, M. (2005). Per la critica della democrazia politica. In M. Tari (ed.), *Guerra e democrazia* (pp. 15-24). Manifestolibri.
- Tronti, M. (2006). *Politica e destino*. Sossella.

- Tronti, M. (2009). *Noi operaisti*. DeriveApprodi.
- Tronti, M. (2011) *Dall'estremo possibile*. Ediesse.
- Tronti, M. (2015a). *In nuove terre, per antiche strade*. Centro di Riforma dello Stato.
<https://doi.org/10.3280/DED2015-003001>
- Tronti, M. (2015b). *Dello spirito libero. Frammenti di vita e di pensiero*. Il Saggiatore.
- Tronti, M. (2019). Factory and Society. In M. Tronti, *Workers and Capital* (D. Broder, Trans.) (pp. 12-35). Verso (Original work published 1962).
- Tronti, M. (2019). Postscript of Problems. In M. Tronti, *Workers and Capital* (D. Broder, Trans.) (pp. 277-326). Verso (Original work published 1971).
- Tronti, M. (2019). The Plan of Capital. In M. Tronti, *Workers and Capital* (D. Broder, Trans.) (pp. 36-64). Verso (Original work published 1963).
- Tronti, M. (2019). *Workers and Capital*. (D. Broder, Trans.) Verso.
- Tronti, M. (2021). *La saggezza della lotta*. DeriveApprodi.
- Tronti, M. (2023). *Hobbes e Cromwell. Con un'appendice di scritti sul politico. Mimesis*.
- Trotta, G. & Milana, F. (2006) (eds.). L'operaismo degli anni Sessanta. Da «Quaderni rossi» a «classe operaia». DeriveApprodi.
- Virno, P. & Hardt, M. (1996) (eds.). *Radical Thought in Italy. A potential politics*. Minnesota University Press.
- Wright, S. (2002). *Storming Heaven. Class composition and struggle in Italian Autonomous Marxism*. Pluto Press.

Antonio Cerquitelli. PhD candidate in political philosophy from the Università di Padova. He graduated in philosophy from the Università di Roma Tre. His master's thesis entitled "Lavorare con le parole. Per una critica del capitalismo contemporaneo" focused on the linguistic turn of the labour process in the post-Fordist age. Currently, he is writing his doctoral dissertation examining the philosophy of the young Marx and, in particular, the Marxian notion of human nature, reworked from the notion of "transindividual". His main research interests are the philosophy of Marx and Marxisms, in particular Althusserism and Italian Operaismo.

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3175-5103>

antonio.cerquitelli@phd.unipd.it

MARXISM AND THE CITY: A HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE*

Antonio Cerquitelli
Università di Padova

EL MARXISMO Y LA CIUDAD: UNA PERSPECTIVA HISTÓRICA Y CONCEPTUAL

Abstract

The contemporary city, as David Harvey argues, is the privileged place that permits the realization of surplus value through continuous processes of reorganisation of urban space. Metropolises play a key role as nodes in global value chains, and this aspect brings to the surface the function that the medieval city played in facilitating the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Space has long been the forgotten dimension of Marxism; the following article will therefore attempt to emphasise the function that urban spaces have played in facilitating the industrialisation process of modern society. Finally, the article will attempt to reformulate the question of the “right to the city,” considering the break between the idea of city and the idea of metropolis.

Keywords

medieval city; Engels; *ville*; *cité*; *polis*; *civitas*

* Reception date: 25th March 2023; acceptance date: 29th March 2023. The essay is the issue of a research project carried out within the Dipartimento di Filosofia, Sociologia, Educazione e Psicologia Applicata (FISPPA) of the Università di Padova.

Resumen

La ciudad contemporánea, como sostiene David Harvey, es el lugar privilegiado que permite la realización de la plusvalía a través de procesos continuos de reorganización del espacio urbano. Las metrópolis desempeñan un papel clave como nodos de las cadenas de valor mundiales y este aspecto pone de relieve la función que desempeñó la ciudad medieval para facilitar la transición del feudalismo al capitalismo. El espacio ha sido durante mucho tiempo la dimensión olvidada del marxismo; por ello, el siguiente artículo intentará hacer hincapié en la función que han ejercido los espacios urbanos en facilitar el proceso de industrialización de la sociedad moderna. Por último, el artículo intentará reformular la cuestión del “derecho a la ciudad”, considerando la ruptura entre la idea de ciudad y la idea de metrópolis.

Palabras clave

ciudad medieval; Engels; *ville*; *cité*; *polis*; *civitas*

The Medieval City as a Take-off of Commercial Society

The reflection on the contemporary city is set in the context of an increasingly multi-polar and globalised world. The computerisation of productive relations, developments in telecommunications, and the expansion of the information industry make it possible to work at any point on the globe and instantaneously transmit information across territorial boundaries. However, this representation of globalised reality characterised by the spatial dispersion of economic activities is only partial. National and global markets require centres capable of concretely directing and coordinating globalisation; the information industry wants essential infrastructures to realise productive activity. Consequently, the spatial dimension and, most of all, that particular space represented by the city constitute a vital element for reproducing social and economic relations (Harvey, 2013). The enormous concentration of capital and material infrastructures in cities demonstrates the role played by metropolises in the context of globalisation, which increasingly appear as command centres in the organisation of the world economy and seats of technological innovation:

It is precisely the combination of the global dispersal of economic activities and global integration—under conditions of continued concentration of economic ownership and control—that has contributed to a strategic role for certain major cities. These I call global cities. (Sassen, 2000, p. 4)

Global cities are thus recognised as the driving forces behind the restructuring of the economy and cultural innovation, the centres of the global world: They are the protagonists of change and are breaking free from the traditional chains hinged on national governments. By framing the city's problem from a historical perspective, focusing particularly on the medieval city, we will discover that the city we live in today can be thought of beyond the state precisely because its origin preceded it. Likewise, the fact that today's metropolises play a key role as nodes in global value chains draws attention to medieval cities' role in providing the transition from feudalism to capitalism. In general, we affirm that the historical evolution of urbanisation constitutes the secret of industrialisation; it informs its meaning. On the other hand, industrial production shapes urbanisation, provides its conditions, and establishes its possibilities. The issue then becomes one of urban development (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 130).

For Adam Smith, the city's development throughout history is deeply embedded in a larger theory of the progress of the division of labour between agricultural producers and manufacturers, the latter concentrated in town. According to Smith, this process

was characterised by a progressive commercial expansion of the urban economy over the countryside. The social division of labour marked the spatial division of labour: merchants and artisans, when the link with the land gradually broke down, found it convenient to concentrate in the urban space to organise their craft skills:

Without the assistance of some artificers, indeed, the cultivation of land cannot be carried on but with great inconveniency and continual interruption. Smiths, carpenters, wheelwrights, and ploughwrights, masons, and bricklayers, tanners, shoemakers, and tailors are people whose service the farmer has frequent occasion for. Such artificers, too, stand occasionally in need of the assistance of one another; and as their residence is not, like that of the farmer, necessarily tied down to a precise spot, they naturally settle in the neighbourhood of one another, and thus form a small town or village. The butcher, the brewer, and the baker soon join them, together with many other artificers and retailers, necessary or useful for supplying their occasional wants, and who contribute still further to augment the town. (Smith, 1977, p. 503)

Smith underscores that a pivotal precondition for developing medieval towns is producing an agricultural surplus. The augment of the surplus fostered exchange processes with the manufacturing products of the cities. The demand for manufactures created by this new surplus made it possible to extend the division of labour, increasing productivity in several spheres. The division of labour and the increased productivity permitted to absorb the higher transport costs of long-distance trade, enabling an increase in commercial transactions and allowing the system to be reproduced on an ever-expanding scale.

The surplus that settles and grows in cities is explained by Smith on the basis of the division of labour, which enables the needs of each individual to be met. Thus, the surplus deposited in medieval cities arose from the marked human tendency to exchange and barter and the development of the division of labour to satisfy diversified individual needs.

However, the agricultural surplus cannot be explained simply by referring to the division of labour as a “transcendental category” divorced from social and, above all, geographical conditions. For the process of capital accumulation in cities, David Harvey argues that “the role the city plays in this process depends upon the social, economic, technological and institutional possibilities that govern the disposition of the surplus value concentrated in it” (2009, pp. 232–233). The spatial organisation of the medieval city, namely its natural resources, infrastructure, geographical position, and, in general, the

control of space, played a fundamental role in the development of the commercial society. In this sense,

this conception of the space economy is more instructive than the conventional one extant in geography and regional science which rests on Adam Smith's notion that everything can be explained by an insatiable consumer demand and mutual gains from trade. (Harvey, 2009, p. 238)

The method of the “division of labour,” which Smith places as a determining factor of the historical course, fails to capture the historical development of the city in all its complexity; however, he underlines the capacity of physical geography to influence the fluctuation of economic surplus: The city's location, navigable rivers or canals, transportations costs, climate, and soil have a crucial role as factors of economic growth, including the determination of profit and prices¹ (Smith, 1977, pp. 500–555).

In the urban context, spaces of freedom gradually opened up for their inhabitants, which “became really free in our present sense of the word Freedom” (Smith, 1977, p. 526). The condition of freedom from feudal obligations was instead achieved thanks to economic and political conjunctures. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the European cities were mainly inhabited by merchants and artisans, who were in servile conditions and legally dependent on the feudal lord. They made up a very poor section of the population, used to travel and move from one fair to another, and for their travel, they were forced to pay taxes imposed on physical persons and goods (Smith, 1977, p. 524). Taxation became later collective, no longer a tax on the physical person, and the cities themselves were charged with collecting taxation. They were thus authorised to create magistracies, at first with purely fiscal functions and later also with functions of administration of justice, constituting themselves into guilds and endowing themselves with their own municipal council and army. In addition to the economic factor, there was also the political issue: At least initially, European sovereigns saw the city dwellers as allies against the feudal lords. In the cities, “order and good government” (Smith, 1977, p. 531) were established, and the capital formed on the land, as well as that deriving from foreign trade, flowed into the city.

“A revolution of the greatest importance” (Smith, 1977, p. 549) happened. Exchange and commerce had succeeded where the king's action had failed. The dissolution of the

¹ For an analysis of the reflections on economic geography present in the work of Smith, see Arrighi (2007) and Ioannou and Wójcik (2022).

feudal system and the progressive erosion of the indiscriminate power of feudal lords, who from masters became customers for their inclination to dissipate goods and who, in order to guarantee an adequate income, were forced to accept long leases on their lands and eventually “sold their birthright [...]. They became as insignificant as any substantial burgher or tradesman in a city” (Smith, 1977, p. 548). The exchange, apparently harmless and beneficial for both parties, contributed to upset pre-existing power relations, succeeding where even the sovereign’s strength had been shattered: “What all the violence of the feudal institutions could never have effected, the silent and insensible operation of foreign commerce and manufactures gradually brought about” (Smith, 1977, p. 543).

Adam Smith’s analysis highlights the intertwining of the division of labour and the economic division of town and country. This aspect constitutes a significant caesura point in the medieval context because it is at this stage that the juridical, as well as economic, separation between city and country occurs.²

In this regard, Max Weber, in his work *The City* (1966),³ emphasises the role of the city walls, which separated those living within the walls, the *burgenses*, from the *rurales*. This separation was still unknown in antiquity. The function of the walls is therefore relevant in highlighting the discontinuity of the medieval city from the ancient city. Obviously, walls were also present in ancient cities; what changes is the symbolic meaning: Medieval fortresses divide man from the land, making it possible to increase manufacturing and craft activities within the city walls and contributing increasingly to the decoupling of social reproduction from land management (Weber, 1966, p. 71). Emancipation from the bond with the land sets in motion a process of change in collective and individual identities. In the feudal system, the land is the dominant social synthesis. Therefore, it makes possible forms of sociability (*Vergesellschaftung*) and commonality (*Vergemeinschaftung*). The expression *Nulle terre sans seigneur* precisely emphasises that the feudal lord’s role of power and honorary titles were based on the possession of the land. Not only that: The land, as a dominant social synthesis, defines roles and functions within the associated life, fundamentally marked by the immobility of the countryside, by patriarchal relationships, and above all by the fact that it is the ownership of a plot of land that defines the figure of the feudal lord.

On the contrary, inside the medieval walls, with the development of commercial trade, social identities become increasingly mobile. These are no longer constituted from the

² On the juridical and economic separation between city and countryside as an innovative element within the medieval context, see Brunner (1968).

³ I have largely based my analysis on Max Weber’s text through the study of Basso (2020).

reference to the land, but they are shaped by the *commercium* (Basso, 2020, pp. 69–93): It is the mobility of city life that makes it possible to affirm that “city air makes free.”

The land in the urban space is no longer treated solely as a place of sustenance, but now becomes an “accessory” element: it constitutes an object of exchange on which commercial activities are established (Weber, 1966, p. 74).

The emergence of a world centred on objects and no more on land defines individuals no longer through ties of land, blood, and family membership but rather through juridical abstraction; they begin to be considered as proprietary individuals capable of producing and selling things. Thus, we arrive at a time when it is possible to be part of the urban space as an individual citizen, regardless of family or land ties. As Weber affirms:

In new civic creations, burghers joined the citizenry as single persons. The oath of citizenship was taken by the individual. Personal membership, not that of kin groups or tribe, in the local association of the city supplied the guarantee of the individual’s personal legal position as a burgher. (1966, p. 102)

The revolutionary character of the medieval city is based on an oath, a conjuratio (*Verbrüderung*), which arrogates to itself the right to violate seigniorial law. It configures a new type of law, a law proper to the city and exclusively typical of the Western city, a conscious, illegitimate, and revolutionary political association:

The urbanites therefore usurped the right to violate lordly law. This was the major revolutionary innovation of medieval occidental cities in contrast to all others. In Central and North European cities the principle appeared: ‘City air makes man free.’ The time period varied, but always after a relatively short time, the lord of a slave or bondsman lost the right to subordinate him to his power. (Weber, 1966, p. 94)

Citizenship becomes a right common to all those who legitimately inhabit the city, a common right that coexists with the pre-existing differences, for example, differences of corporative affiliation or religious confraternity.

The town soon becomes “an autonomous and autocephalous institutional association” (Weber, 1966, p. 106). The characteristics of autonomy and independence to which Weber refers are the consequence of a “revolutionary usurpation” that adds elements of incalculability, indefiniteness, unpredictability, and irrationality to the definition of the city: irrationality that is, however, paradoxically intertwined with the process of rationalisation.

According to Weber (1966), it is the distinctive element that marks Western development and the city represents the privileged point where this occurs.⁴

The traffic triggered within the urban context reached such an expansion that cities would no longer be able to govern. A broader, extra-city political structure was needed to manage the city's network of powers in a unified manner: the State.

European cities, on the basis of historically and economically differentiated processes, will progressively lose their autonomy and independence. In central Europe, city autonomy was largely eroded as early as the 16th century: the flow of taxation from city administration to state administration and the loss of an autonomous city army constituted crucial factors in the dissolution of municipal independence. Those aspects that Weber indicates as characteristic of "municipal autonomy" (autocephaly, namely own courts and autonomous administrative capacities, an autonomous capacity for taxation, the presence of a market, and autonomous forms of association) became the prerogative of the State (Weber, 1966, pp. 181–192).

The medieval city was destined to lose not only its economic autonomy, but also its political autonomy to the benefit of the State and the market, a combination that, as Weber (1966) points out, has its genesis in the city. The process that arose in the urban space was, in any case, irreversible: The city economy (*Stadtwirtschaft*)⁵ is preserved and will even expand.

In this regard, Henri Lefebvre speaks of the city as a "projection of society on the ground" (1996, p. 109): modern society will be constituted as such in the form of the city, and the space becomes the symbolic materialisation of the social order. The medieval city, Lefebvre (1966) notes, still retains the character of a work (*oeuvre*). When we talk about the production and circulation of objects in the medieval city, we mean *das Ding*, not the commodity, *die Ware*. *Das Ding* is still a hybridisation of man and thing; in the object, the medieval craftsman deposits a "piece of soul," his capacities and abilities, because it is an individual work through his means of production and personal working techniques (Sombart, 1902, p. 116). *Das Ding* does not yet have that fetishist character proper to the commodity (*die Ware*), narrated by Marx in *Capital*, which has a life independent and separate from the producer.

The generalisation of the commodity form produced by industrialisation will transform the city from work (*oeuvre*) to product (*produit*); exchange value will tend to subsume and subordinate the city and urban reality (Lefebvre, 1966, p. 67).

⁴ On the problem of the city as a symbol and contradiction of rationality, see Domingues (2000) and Gianola (2021).

⁵ About the concept of *Stadtwirtschaft*, see Bruns (2014).

From Commercial Society to the Spatial Division of Social Classes

It would now be interesting to thematise the historical process that would lead commercial society to transform into a capitalist society, divided into social classes, and the role that cities played in this historical “transition.” In the 1950s, there was an important debate on the question of the “transition” from the feudal to the capitalist economy, with Paul Sweezy and Maurice Dobb as the main protagonists. Continuing the analyses of Adam Smith and Max Weber, Paul Sweezy (1978) emphasises the commercial development of cities and, therefore, the work of dissolution that the growing circulation of goods and money would have brought about on the feudal system (pp. 33–56). Sweezy’s analysis has been criticised by Maurice Dobb, who stresses instead that the feudal system would have imploded for “internal” causes due in particular to the “class struggle” between feudal lords and peasants and not through “external” elements such as the development of monetary and commercial transactions. The reasons for the disintegration of the feudal economy are, therefore, to be found within the feudal system, taking into account the resistance and revolts of the rural world and the struggle of small producers to loosen the constraints of feudal exploitation (Dobb, 1950, pp. 33–82).

Aside from the strictly historical debate, it is certainly crucial to stress that the model based on the commercial development of cities does not explain why we arrived at a political and social system based on the class division of society, the private appropriation of the means of production, and the extraction of surplus value based on free wage labour. On the other hand, the model of historical development based on the simple contradiction between capital and labour poses the risk of outlining a historical determinism that prevents us from highlighting the plurality of political, cultural, economic, geographical, and urban elements that have determined the conditions for the development of a society based on the division into social classes and on the extraction of surplus value.

Analysing the historical picture of the English cities of the nineteenth century, it is evident that the concentration of capital has by now accompanied the concentration of the proletariat within the urban space. The idea of conceiving urban space as a political stake in the conflict between social classes emerges in the work of Marx and Engels, although not systematically.

In the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, in the notebook focused on land rent, Karl Marx describes what has already been emphasised above: the fundamental bond, in the feudal age, of individuals with the land, the subservient relations of serfs with landowners, immediately transparent and “intimate” (Marx, 1988a, p. 64). This personal and transparent relationship between landowners and peasants ceases when

the land is reduced “to the status of a commercial value, like man” (Marx, 1988a, p. 64). The process of industrialisation supplants the economy based on land ownership; the land is fragmented and exposed to competition, continually sold to different owners, and its productivity is increased in order to export agricultural products in international trade.

Moreover, there are references to the phenomenon of urbanisation linked to the transformation of the production process, dependent above all on the peasants who, in the cities, constituted the first nucleus of the working class. The German philosopher also describes the malnourished conditions of workers in the Irish cities (Marx, 1988a, p. 117).

In *German Ideology*, Marxian reflection on the city is set in the broader context of the division of labour. As Adam Smith had already pointed out, the separation between industrial and commercial labour on the one hand and agricultural labour on the other leads to “the separation of town and country and to the conflict of their interests.” (Marx, 1998b, p. 38) Reflecting on the role of cities, Marx stresses that everything necessary for the reproduction of social life, both politically and economically, is condensed in them:

The advent of the town implies, at the same time, the necessity of administration, police, taxes, etc., in short, of the municipality [*des Gemeindewesens*], and thus of politics in general. Here first became manifest the division of the population into two great classes, which is directly based on the division of labour and on the instruments of production. The town is in actual fact already the concentration of the population, of the instruments of production, of capital of pleasures, of needs, while the country demonstrates just the opposite fact, isolation and separation. The contradiction between town and country can only exist within the framework of private property. (Marx, 1998b, p. 72)

Marx recognises the associative capacity of medieval cities, especially when they emerged from their isolation and began to enter into relations with each other: products, new needs, and thus trade developed, but also knowledge, techniques, and inventions of various kinds. The development of social traffic (*Verkehr*) will lead to the emergence of manufacturing.⁶ The conflict between city and country, which reflected that between the city bourgeoisie and landed gentry, would drive many cities to unite (but also to fight each other). Out of this complex and tortuous historical process would arise something larger

⁶ The notion of *Verkehr* captures both the economic and communicative dimensions of the social relationship. Within *German Ideology*, it plays a fundamental role. For further deepening, see Basso (2012, pp. 76–103) and Ricciardi (2019, pp. 42–48).

and more far-reaching than the cities: on the economic level, big industry, and on the political level, the State.

The work that nevertheless remains pioneering in Marxist studies on the urban question is Friedrich Engels' *The Conditions of the Working Class in England* (1987). Despite the embryonic stage of a materialistic theory of history, the novelty of this work lies in the fact that it analyses the condition of the working class in England not through a mere sociological survey but provides a general theoretical framework of the development of capitalism, the impact of technological innovations on the population, and the political and social implications. Engels gives us above all a picture of 19th-century urban space: The dissolution of the feudal economy generated an influx of huge numbers of peasants in English cities, who formed the first nucleus of the working class together with immigrants from Ireland. The cities were thus characterised by an enormous concentration of population and capital. What makes Engels' writing interesting is the fact that he describes the exploitation of the urban proletariat not only in the places of production (the factory), but also in the *ensemble* of everyday life in urban space. Engels based his investigations on official records, parliamentary commissions, statistics, newspapers, and factory inspectors' reports.⁷ In addition to studying archive material, he immersed himself in the everyday life of English working-class people by walking along the streets, little travelled by the well-to-do class, walks that allowed him to become intimate with the domestic life of the urban proletariat.

Walking through the streets of London, Engels was fascinated by the grandeur of the English capital, the majesty of the naval buildings, and the majesty of the palaces. The price of all this splendour, however, is hiding the mass of people living in the working-class neighbourhoods from the eyes of the regulars in the city centre and the more upmarket districts. The best forces, those who helped build London's urban splendour, "have been suppressed in order that a few might be developed more fully" (Engels, 1987, p. 106). The walks make Engels discover the emotional tones of metropolitan life: isolation, indifference, selfishness, a sense of frustration due to the lack of recognition from other inhabitants of the metropolis, the loss of the social dimension itself caused by the feeling that metropolitan individuals have

nothing in common, nothing to do with one another, and their only agreement is the tacit one, that each keeps to his own side of the pavement, so as not to delay the opposing streams of the crowd, while it occurs to no man to honour another with so much as a glance. (Engels, 1987, 106)

⁷ The fullness of Engels' insight into the nature of the capitalist method of production has been shown by the factory reports, the reports on mines, etc., that have appeared since the publication of his book (Marx, 1973, p. 240).

Engels introduces the theme of the “lonely crowd,” the sense of loneliness multiplied in the relations mediated by money that unites and divides individuals at the same time.⁸ Feelings of indifference and loneliness, for Engels, depend first and foremost on the mechanism of competition, which involves especially the working class, in order to be able to obtain a wage to reproduce its life (Engels, 1987, p. 177). The spatial division of the city reflects the tendency of the bourgeoisie to “shut out of the working class from the thoroughfares, so tender a concealment of everything which might affront the eye and the nerves of the bourgeoisie” (Engels, 1987, p. 139).

Urban development was possible through a spontaneous and “unconscious” removal of working-class neighbourhoods. Space is organised according to a “distribution of the sensible” (Rancière, 2004) that divides the complex of individuals according to what can be seen, said, and done, distinguishing social subjects worthy of being seen and heard when they take the word and those who do not have this privilege so that it is impossible “to catch from the street a glimpse of the real labouring districts.” (Engels, 1987, p. 139) The “crowd” inhabiting the metropolis is forced to live in the same space, but this promiscuity is a diriment fact capable of transforming social relations: The urban proletariat and the bourgeoisie are two antithetical worlds,⁹ forced to share one, the same city. Despite the division of spaces and functions, Engels (1987) affirms that the proletariat and bourgeoisie share not only the same space but also the same capacities, the same right to speak and be heard, the same right to decide on the city, as well as the same right to personal fulfilment:

After roaming the streets of the capital a day or two, making headway with difficulty through the human turmoil and the endless lines of vehicles, after visiting the slums of the metropolis, one realizes for the first time that these Londoners have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature, to bring to pass all the marvels of civilization which crowd their city; that a hundred powers which slumbered within them have remained inactive, have been suppressed in order that a few might be developed more fully and multiply through union with those of others. The very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels. The hundreds of thousands of all classes

⁸ The questions of metropolitan habits and emotional experiences in the town will be developed in particular by George Simmel (1971) and Walter Benjamin (2002).

⁹ “The enemies are dividing gradually into two great camps—the bourgeoisie on the one hand, the workers on the other.” (Engels, 1987, 253). The radically binary schema opposing the proletariat to the bourgeoisie becomes a dichotomous schema between what is defined by Engels as opposing “races.” On the problematic intertwining of class struggle and race struggle and, in general, on the problem of “race” in the Engelsian text, see Kouvelakis (2018, 207–211).

and ranks crowding past each other, are they not all human beings with the same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy? And have they not, in the end, to seek happiness in the same way, by the same means? (106)

Engels' investigation of the working-class condition in city life captures another interesting aspect: Exploitation continues well beyond the time spent within the enterprise, extending into the ensemble of everyday metropolitan life. "The manner in which the need of a shelter is satisfied furnishes a standard for the manner in which all other necessities are supplied" (Engels, 1987, p. 164).

Engels emphasises the high cost of living that consumes wages, poor housing and hygienic conditions, and unsafe dwellings, forcing families to live in cramped spaces where diseases proliferate. The unstable wage conditions of the workers and the destitution of the unemployed Irish immigrants foster phenomena of delinquency and criminality, which Engels does not analyse from a moralistic point of view but sees as a result of the way cities are organised in economic and spatial relations.

However, the workers' condition can only be transitory insofar as it is untenable and impossible to bear; the struggle for emancipation aims at liberation from this impossibility, not on the basis of a moral imperative, but because of this internal impossibility of existing social relations (Engels, 1987, p. 356). The workers realise that both crime and revolt against the machines only contribute to keeping alive the very structure of social injustice they are protesting against. The unique stratagem the proletariat adopts to disidentify itself from its assigned social role, the only way to demand a dignified human condition is to organise itself into associations, the "trade unions". These associations do not only have as their aim the economic struggle for wage improvements; the economic demands are combined with political demands that aim to radically transform social relations by abolishing competition in general (Engels, 1987, p. 367).

In this way, workers "begin to perceive that, though feeble as individuals, they form a power united" (Engels, 1987, p. 239). According to Engels, cities play a crucial role in emancipatory struggles because "in them the workers first began to reflect upon their own condition, and to struggle against it; in them the opposition between proletariat and bourgeoisie first made itself manifest" (Engels, 1987, p. 367).

From the City to the Metropolis

Engels thus traces two fundamental lines of research: the becoming-world of philosophy as a critique of everyday life, that is, a critique of the everyday dimension, and a

critique of the social and individual experience produced by capitalism in its spatial dimension (Brenner, 2009). The second aspect is that urban space is where class conflicts appear, manifest, and materialise.

These two lines of development were developed systematically in the 20th century by the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, who assumed the urban space to be the privileged point from which to observe the evolution and restructuring of capital (Lefebvre, 2016).

Through the analysis of the expansion process of the city that materialises its contradictions in space and, above all, through the gaze cast on the degraded conditions of the Parisian proletariat, Lefebvre formulates his proposal of the “right to the city.”

C'est en pensant à ces habitants des banlieues, à la ségrégation, à l'isolement que je parle dans un livre du 'droit à la ville'. Il ne s'agit pas d'un droit au sens juridique du terme, mais d'un droit semblable à ceux qui sont stipulés dans la célèbre Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme constitutive de la démocratie. (Lefebvre, 2000, p. 144)¹⁰

Lefebvre places the question of the “right to the city” in continuity with Marxian reflection, seeking to test Marx’s categories within the social laboratory constituted by urban space. The “right to the city” is a political-philosophical question that Lefebvre poses only after having problematised the “Marxian proletariat,” which, in the eyes of the French philosopher, no longer coincides solely with the space of the factory, but exudes from the place of production and disperses in the places of the metropolis, in the suburbs and in particular in the neighbourhoods deprived of access to essential services. “Right to the city” then means, first and foremost, a theoretical and practical battle for emancipation conceived from the spatial context, as the urban has always stood for Lefebvre as a place of expression of social conflicts.

Cette expansion des villes s'accompagne d'une dégradation de l'architecture et du cadre urbanistique. Les gens sont dispersés, surtout les travailleurs, éloignés des centres urbains. Ce qui a dominé cette extension des villes, c'est la ségrégation économique, sociale, culturelle. La croissance quantitative de l'économie et des forces productives n'a pas provoqué un développement social, mais au contraire une détérioration de la vie sociale. Les banlieues sont des villes éclatées et ruralisées. Il ne s'agit pas seulement de Paris. L'urbanisation de la société s'accompagne

¹⁰ “It is with these suburbanites, segregation, and isolation in mind that I am writing a book on the ‘right to the city.’ This is not a right in the legal sense of the term, but a right similar to those set out in the famous Declaration of Human Rights, which is the foundation of democracy.”

d'une détérioration de la vie urbaine : éclatement des centres, désormais privés de vie sociale — gens répartis ségrégativement dans l'espace. Il y a là une véritable contradiction. Je l'appelle une *contradiction de l'espace*. D'un côté, la classe dominante et l'État renforcent la ville comme centre de puissance et de décision politique — de l'autre, la domination de cette classe et de son État fait éclater la ville. (Lefebvre, 2000, pp. 144–145)¹¹

According to the French philosopher, urban space is a social product; it cannot be thought of simply as an epistemological condition of departure detached from social reality. Physical and material space is always the entirety of social relations; it is the ground for unfolding the “common being” of the human species. Space is a “product” but also a “precondition” of social relations, as it makes possible encounters and clashes of individuals, composition and decomposition of bodies and discourses (Lefebvre, 1991). The city represents “the projection of society on the ground”; it is a social totality (*ensemble*) that captures society in its entirety, in spatial declination.

For Henri Lefebvre, the Paris Commune of 1871 represented the most concrete attempt at a political struggle for space, the figure of a political action rebelling against a class-based spatial organisation and the discursive-ideological space represented by the functionalist architecture of Georges Eugène Haussmann. Haussmann's architecture is the perfect expression of a process of abstraction from concrete space, reducing the concreteness and vitality of urban spaces in favour of homogenisation of the urban territory, functional to facilitate the unity of the process of production, distribution, and consumption of commodities¹² (Stanek, 2008).

As Engels had already pointed out, the “Haussmann method” was also intended to prevent the construction of barricades after the insurrections of '48 (p. 71).

In *Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century*, Walter Benjamin comprehends that the desire for balance and rationalisation of urban space pursued by Haussmann implies

¹¹ This urban expansion was accompanied by a deterioration in the architecture and urban environment. People are dispersed, especially workers, far from urban centres. Economic, social and cultural segregation dominated this urban expansion. The quantitative growth of the economy and productive forces has not led to social development, but on the contrary to a deterioration in social life. The suburbs are fragmented, they are rural towns. It is not just about Paris. The urbanisation of society is accompanied by a deterioration in urban life: the fragmentation of centres, now deprived of social life—people spread segregated across the space. There is a real contradiction here. I call it a contradiction of space. On the one hand, the dominant class and the state strengthen the city as a centre of power and political decision-making—on the other, the domination of this class and its state causes the city to break up.

¹² See Stanek (2008, pp. 62–79), who underlines the intrinsic connection between the notion of abstract work, historically determined by the development of the commodity form and the process of homogenisation of space carried out by functionalist architecture.

an attempt to defuse the conflicts and collisions that run through Paris. The philosopher speaks of “strategic embellishment” to indicate a precise urban planning strategy that assumes political aims of social stabilisation to guarantee security through the imposition of a new urban order:

The true goal of Haussmann’s projects was to secure the city against civil war. He wanted to make the erection of barricades in Paris impossible for all time. With the same end in mind, Louis Philippe had already introduced wooden paving. Nonetheless, barricades played a role in the February Revolution. Engels studies the tactics of barricade fighting. Haussmann seeks to neutralize these tactics on two fronts. Widening the streets is designed to make the erection of barricades impossible, and new streets are to furnish the shortest route between the barracks and the workers’ districts. Contemporaries christen the operation “strategic embellishment.” (Benjamin, 2002, p. 12)

What is at stake has become, for the Parisian insurgents in 1871, the capacity to organise a constituent power, that is, a new way of organising city spaces and, therefore, a new way of relating to urban space (Lefebvre, 1965). The Vendôme column was the symbol of Bonapartist’s power: the Communards, by knocking down the column, realised what Marx had predicted in 1852: “When this imperial mantle falls at last onto the shoulders of Louis Bonaparte, the bronze of Napoleon, high on the column in the Place Vendôme, will plunge to the ground” (Marx, 2002, p. 109). Revolutionary urbanism imagines an environment aimed at producing a continuous hub of possible encounters, organising space as an opportunity for play and festival rather than as a function of exchanges and goods. A social space that enhances the realisation of the individual requires an adequate symbolic articulation. Fighting for the “right to the city” also means taking into account the psychic effect that certain architectural and urban planning theories have on the inhabitants.

In her analysis of the days of the Paris Commune, Kristin Ross (2015) calls “Communal Luxury” the process of

transforming the aesthetic coordinates of the entire community [...]. The demand that beauty flourishes in spaces shared in common and not just in special privatized preserves means reconfiguring art to be fully integrated into everyday life [...]. It means an art that will no longer live ‘this poor thin life among a few exceptional men.’ [...] Making art lived, not superfluous or trivial, but vital and indispensable to the community. (pp. 91–92)

The social imaginary of space and time draws the horizon of meaning, hopes, and contradictions of the Communards. Therefore, Marx defines the experience of the Commune as a “working existence” (Marx, 2009, p. 46) because it displaces

political onto seemingly peripheral areas of everyday life [...]. Revolutionary struggle is diffuse as well as specifically directed, expressed throughout the various cultural spheres and institutional contexts, in specific conflicts and in the manifold transformations of individuals rather than in some rigid and polar opposition of capital and labor. (Ross, 1988, p. 33)

Lefebvre recounts the last days of the Commune, writing that the Parisian people, now overwhelmed by Thiers counter-revolutionary forces, decided to “*mourir avec ce qui est pour lui plus qu’un décor et plus qu’un cadre: sa ville, son corps*”¹³ (Lefebvre, 1965, p. 22). The Parisian proletariat has the same relationship with its city that the artist has with his own work: a relationship of hybridisation, in which the city stands as an extension of the human body, in the sense of a city that takes on a body, becomes a body, with cells and tissues that continually regenerate, as new places of experimentation, as a response to the uses and needs of the rising urban proletariat.

The metaphor of the city as an extension of the human body also renders the image of cities marked by wounds and scars as a place of profound inequalities, discrimination, and proliferation of diseases (Harvey, 2003, pp. 25–46).

Lefebvre defines the city as a work of art (*oeuvre*) to describe the continuous process of hybridisation between the city and its inhabitants. The city as an *oeuvre* is distinct from the city as a product (*produit*), which instead suggests the reduction of urban land to mere exchange value, leaving it to the manipulation of technique and calculating rationality (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 66).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (2002), in *The Social Contract*, poses a distinction between the “*ville*” understood as a mere material space and the “*cit *” as a place of citizenship and political rights.¹⁴ This distinction is borrowed from Richard Sennett, and it is useful to grasp the consequences on the style of life of citizens when we conceive the city not as an *oeuvre* but as a product.

¹³ “Parisian people decided to die with what is for them more than a decoration and more than a frame: their city, their body.”

¹⁴ “The real meaning of this word has been almost completely erased among the moderns; most people take a town (*ville*) for a city (*cit *), and a burgess for a citizen. They do not know that houses make the town (*ville*), and that citizens make the city (*cit *)” (Rousseau, 2002, p. 164).

Sennett interprets the *ville* as the built physical space of the territory and the *cit * as the lived space of citizens, namely the way citizens inhabit and experience this territory (Sennett, 2019).¹⁵ Haussmann’s urban design, for Sennett, is a perfect example of strategic intervention “from above” on the *ville* in order to modify the *cit *: Haussmann places mobility at the centre of the project, the inhabitants’ movements must be as fluid as those of commodities (Sennett, 2019, p. 42). Places thus become the intensification of the *Nervenleben*, the nervous life of the city—the planning of physical space influences lived space.

The Rousseauian distinction between *ville* and *cit * is also taken up by Etienne Balibar (2004), who reformulates the proposal of the “right to the city,” meaning not only the processes of material re-appropriation of urban spaces (in the sense of the *ville*) by the urban proletariat but also the recognition of “the part of those who have no-part” within the public sphere, the active transformation of processes of exclusion into processes of inclusion within the city (*cit *).

The question of the “right to the city,” for Balibar (2004), must face not only the need for material re-appropriation of urban spaces, but it must also address the demand for political recognition by “those who have no part”: workers, unemployed, poor, women, immigrants. Considering the case of migrants, we note that the space of European cities is crossed every day by those who have the right to freedom of movement and those who are instead excluded in the regulatory framework based on the Schengen agreements. The claim for the right to citizenship is based on an idea of equality that is never given or presupposed but always actively produced as an imagination, transgressing the limits imposed by nature and traditional forms of life. It is, therefore, a matter of eradicating the issue of the right to the city and citizenship from principles linked to nationality, especially when this is understood as a mechanism for excluding foreigners.

According to Balibar (2004), *Le droit de cit * emerges to the fore through the struggle of immigrants *sans papiers*, without papers, who demonstrate to reject the notion of clandestinity that has been forcibly attributed to them by political power and pose the question of the right of entry and residence for foreigners.¹⁶ The action of the *sans papiers* is an example of a right to the city “constructed from below” (Balibar, 2004, p. 48); their demonstration is first and foremost about gaining visibility, taking the floor, and demanding the right to argue their case, also making visible the mechanisms of discrimination

¹⁵ Sennett develops the distinction already elaborated by Martin Heidegger between building and dwelling. In this regard, see Heidegger (1971).

¹⁶ In 1996, a group of “undocumented” foreigners occupied the church of Saint-Bernard in Paris in order to claim their legalisation. In March 1997, Balibar read a text at a meeting organised in favour of the “Sans-Papiers de Saint-Bernard.” See Balibar (2004).

linked to immigration policies. The problem is therefore that of overcoming the model of citizenship considered as a status in order to re-think citizenship as a social relation capable of “democratizing borders” and establishing a model of right to the city in which the dimension of reciprocity prevails over territorial belonging.

The struggles of migrants redefine city boundaries again and again through a dialectic of conflict and solidarity, reactivating the original meaning of the noun “citizen,” which in Latin and ancient Rome pointed out the dimension of relationship and reciprocity that defined Roman citizenship.

Emile Benveniste (1974, pp. 272–280) has in fact shown that, from a philological point of view, the Latin binomial *civis-civitas* indicates the priority of the relational element over territorial belonging, which emerges instead in the Greek binomial *polis-polites*. Benveniste points out the error usually made when translating *civis* with “citizen” since it would mean considering the term “citizen” derived from that of the city, *civitas*; such a translation operation, however, turns out to be a *hysteron proteron*. The word *civis*, in common linguistic usage in ancient Rome, was always accompanied by expressions such as *civis meus civis nostri*. The word thus acquired meaning only as a “reciprocal value” (Benveniste, 1974, p. 274) and not as an objective designation. One was only *civis* for another *civis*, so Benveniste proposes to translate *civis* as concitoyen, “co-citizen” or “fellow citizen”.

The city, *civitas*, as a derivative of *civis*, then indicates the “having-place” of relations between the “ensemble of cives” (Benveniste, 1974, p. 276). The parts, the *cives*, will always be more than the whole, the *civitas*, a surplus to the constituted space of the political community.

On the contrary, in the Greek context, the relationship of territorial belonging prevails over that of reciprocity. In this case, the noun *polites*, citizen, is derived from the fundamental term, *polis*, the city. The primary datum is the territorial space of the city, in which a specific *genos* has its roots. The polis constitutes that organic “whole” on which the parts depend and to which certain roles and functions are assigned. The Roman *civitas*, on the contrary, is a pure “having-place” of relations; it is an insubstantial reality, open to multiple ways of being together that take shape and unity through laws, beyond any ethnic-religious determinacy, as was the case instead of the Greek polis.

This linguistic difference signals an original tension in the idea of the city. The *civitas* is not the origin but the result of a process in which the relation has priority and precedence over the constituted term, the city. From here, the idea that the city is not a fixed entity but a dynamic one, marked by uninterrupted encroachments and global dissemination. Mobility is linked to the idea of *civitas augescens*, a city that grows

continuously, that constantly develops thanks to its capacity to accept “*peregrinos, hostes et victos*” (Cacciari, 2009). The *polis* is the seat of the rooting of the *genos* within certain boundaries; the peculiar characteristic of the *civitas*, on the other hand, is that of being “*augescens*,” of growing, developing, expanding, and going beyond its limits.

This ability to overflow the borders, embedded in the genetic code of the *civitas*, tells us something important about the transition from the Fordist city to the contemporary metropolis. The metropolis represents a moment of rupture from the idea of the city precisely because the metropolis, like the Roman *civitas*, continually exceeds its boundaries; its “*augescens*” and space can no longer be planned.

This process depends first of all on the transformation of labour, after the increasing integration of linguistic, cognitive, affective, and relational elements in the production of wealth (Marazzi, 2008; Virno, 2004). The city studied by Lefebvre was conceived and organised on the factory model marked by the Taylorist labour organisation. Lefebvre criticised the functionalist architecture of Le Corbusier, a pupil of Haussmann, who applied Taylorist principles in the planning of the city: Le Corbusier attempted to tame urban space by conceiving it as a “concrete abstraction” (Stanek, 2008). In the same way as abstract labour, urban space is considered abstract insofar as it is quantifiable, homogenous, and standardised, and it is concrete because it conditions and alters social relations; it functions as a technology of power pursuing certain political aims, as we have already noted in analysing Haussmann’s renovation of Paris.

To comprehend the city’s transformation into a metropolis, it is therefore decisive to focus on the changes that have occurred in the production of wealth. Production in the metropolis is no longer concentrated in specific spaces, such as the factory in the Fordist city. Rather, it is everywhere, disseminated: it incorporates the metropolis itself (Negri, 2018). It is interesting to ask how common goods are produced, organised, and appropriated on a metropolitan scale; economists call “externalities” factors that are external to the work process taking place within the companies and are capable of producing effects on the work process itself. Externalities are, for example, the high level of education of a population that can produce positive externalities for companies; negative externalities are, on the other hand, pollution, traffic congestion, and crime levels, which may influence the value of a property. In this respect, says Harvey:

In urban systems it seems reasonable to suppose that the larger and more complex they are the greater is the significance of externality effects. In what follows I shall tend to the view that much of what goes on in a city (particularly in the political

arena) can be interpreted as an attempt to organize the distribution of externality effects to gain income advantages. (Harvey, 2009, p. 58)

In a broader sense, externalities are also the affective, linguistic, and cognitive networks established in the interaction between the individuals who inhabit the metropolis. Since the *ensemble* of social relations has become an indispensable element from which capital extracts profits, it becomes difficult to plan the logic behind the unpredictable and aleatory interactions between individuals.

In the metropolis, it is impossible to fix boundaries *a priori* because the boundaries are posed by the communicative interactions between the different singularities. At the same time, urban planning can no longer claim to assign specific functions to urban elements according to the model of the organic totality, of which the Greek polis represents the conceptual genetic root and the Fordist city the modern realisation.

Rem Koolhaas (1995), in his writings, shows the disenchanted portrait of this space that can no longer be planned—unplannable because it is delirious, dislocated, deterritorialised, and accumulative. Koolhaas calls “Bigness” the metropolitan excess that can no longer be controlled by a single architectural gesture, or even by any combination of architectural gestures. “Bigness” depends on regimes of freedom; it is the assembly of maximum difference (Koolhaas, 1995). It becomes an instrument of other forces, which depend on the encounters and exchanges between metropolitan singularities, and these forces overcome the dichotomies of city/periphery, inside/outside, *ville/banlieue*. There is no such thing as an “outside,” but only folds, overlapping and proliferating planes. For example, the banlieues are not an exterior of the metropolis but rather a folding of it, lines of flights (Revel, 2012). Koolhaas then declares the end of the desire for balance and planning expressed by Le Corbusier’s architectural ideas.

The metropolis is excess, disproportion. It is “Bigness,” says Koolhaas (1995). The boundary of the metropolis can only be established by communicative networks, but it is clearly a boundary that is in permanent crisis, existing only to be surpassed. The metropolis unleashes an energy that is de-territorialising anti-spatial; the spatial dimension is absorbed by the temporal one.

The rhythm of the metropolis demands speed, bustle, and mobilisation. This produces an exaltation of the virtual, understood as pure *dynamis*, intellectual energy, and immaterial communication at the detriment of the spatial dimension (Cacciari, 2009, p. 38). Yet, this time/space compression can only be achieved through a continuous production, reproduction, reconfiguration of space. In this regard, space is an opportunity for capital, but it is also a “limit”—its fixity is a problem for the capital’s need for

movement and flexibility. Focusing on the multiple meanings of the English verb “to fix” (“to pin down, “secure something in space,” “to solve a problem”), David Harvey argues:

While these disparate meanings of “to fix” appear contradictory, they are all internally related by the idea that something (a thing, a problem, a craving) can be pinned down and secured. In my own use of the term, the contradictory meanings can be played out to reveal something important about the geographical dynamics of capitalism and the crisis tendencies that attach thereto. In particular, I use it to focus on the particular problem of “fixity” (in the first sense of being secured in place) versus motion and mobility of capital. I note, for example, that capitalism has to fix space (in immovable structures of transport and communication nets, as well as in built environments of factories, roads, houses, water supplies, and other physical infrastructures) in order to overcome space (achieve a liberty of movement through low transport and communication costs). This leads to one of the central contradictions of capital: that it has to build a fixed space (or “landscape”) necessary for its own functioning at a certain point in its history only to have to destroy that space (and devalue much of the capital invested therein) at a later point in order to make way for a new “spatial fix” (openings for fresh accumulation in new spaces and territories) at a later point in its history. (2001, p. 25)

Our body also occupies a place; it has a certain spatial form. Even more importantly, the living body is the substratum of labour-power (the *ensemble* of linguistic, cognitive, and affective faculties of the human mind); it becomes an object to be governed precisely because it is the material support of labour-power, which is the very crucial element for the reproduction of capital (Virno, 2004, p. 83).

On the basis of an inclusive/disjunctive dynamic, labour-power is incorporated by capital, including the entire population in the metropolis as a productive space (inclusive dynamic); continuous movements and radical nomadism force the labour-power into precariousness, and it often has to face exclusionary barriers and borders when it is forced to migrate (disjunctive dynamic).

However, the metropolis is also a possibility for encountering and constructing struggles from the exploitation of the urban proletariat, capable of transforming exploitation and suffering into emancipatory power. The excess of potential and forces that innervate the metropolis, “Bigness,” as Koolhaas says, is included in the process of capital valorisation but can also trigger a transformative process. The urban proletariat acts in a situation of ambivalence, in the *decalage* that constitutes both block and poten-

cy of the productive forces (Negri, 2018).

The politics of the metropolis is then the organisation of encounters capable of transforming “Bigness” into emancipatory power. The metropolitan labour force thus represents not only an obstacle but also a factor of resistance to the processes of “creative destruction” of space by capital, constituting that “metropolitan body” which is an alternative to the attempts for the resurgence of territorial communities and to the yearning for a return to the ancient spaces of the Greek *polis*.

References

- Arrighi, G. (2007). *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First Century*. Verso.
- Balibar, E. (2004). Droit de cité or apartheid. In E. Balibar, *We, the people of Europe? Reflections on transnational citizenship* (pp. 31–51). Princeton University Press.
- Basso, L. (2012). *Marx and singularity. From the Early Writing to Grundrisse*. Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004234420>
- Basso, M. (2020). *La città, alba dell'occidente. Saggio su Max Weber*. Quodlibet. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1cdxg2m>
- Benjamin, W. (2002). *The Arcades Project*. Harvard University Press.
- Benveniste, E. (1974). Deux modèles linguistiques de la cité. In E. Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale 2* (pp. 272–280). Gallimard.
- Brenner, N. (2009). What is critical urban theory? *City*, 13(2), 198–207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810902996466>
- Brunner, O. (1968). Stadt und Bürgertum in der europäischen Geschichte. In O. Brunner, *Neue Wege der Verfassung- und Sozialgeschichte, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht in Göttingen* (pp. 225–242). Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Bruns, H. (2014). Max Weber: Ville et capitalisme moderne. *SocietàMutamentoPolitica*, 5(9), 123–141.
- Cacciari, M. (2009). *La città*. Pazzini editore.
- Dobb, M. (1950). *Studies in the development of capitalism*. Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD.
- Domingues, J. M. (2000). The city: rationalization and freedom in Max Weber. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 26(4), 107–126. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019145370002600406>
- Engels, F. (1987). *The conditions of the working class in England*. Penguin Classic.
- Engels, F. (2021). *The Housing Question*. Foreign Language Press.
- Gianola, D. (2021). City and democracy in Max Weber. *Topoi*, 40, 435–449. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-019-09687-w>
- Harvey, D. (2001). Globalization and the “Spatial Fix.” *Geographische Revue*, 3(2), 23–30.
- Harvey, D. (2003). The city as a Body Politic. In J. Schneider & I. Susser (Eds.), *Wounded cities* (pp. 25–46). Berg. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003087465-2>
- Harvey, D. (2009). *Social Justice and the City*. The University of Georgia Press.
- Harvey, D. (2013). *Rebel cities*. Verso.
- Heidegger, M. (1971). *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Colophon Books.
- Ioannou, S., & Wójcik D. (2022). Was Adam Smith an economic geographer. *GeoJournal*, 87, 5425–5434. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-021-10499-y>
- Koolhaas, R. (1995). *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large*. Monacelli Press.
- Kouvelakis, S. (2018). *Philosophy and revolution. From Kant to Marx*. Verso.
- Lefebvre, H. (1965). *La proclamation de la Commune*. Éditions Gallimard.

- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Basil Blackwell Ltd.
- Lefebvre, H. (1996). *Writing on cities*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Lefebvre, H. (2000). *Espace et politique*. Economica Anthropos.
- Lefebvre, H. (2016). *Marxism thought and the city*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Marazzi, C. (2008). *Capital and language*. Semiotext(e).
- Marx, K. (1973). *Capital*. International Publishers.
- Marx, K. (1988a). *Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844*. Prometheus Books.
- Marx, K. (1988b). *German Ideology*. Prometheus Books.
- Marx, K. (2002). *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Pluto Press.
- Mumy, G. E. (1978). Town and Country in Adam Smith's "The Wealth of Nations." *Science & Society*, 42(4), 458–477.
- Negri, A. (2018). *From the factory to the metropolis*. Polity Press.
- Rancière, J. (2004). *The Politics of Aesthetics. The distribution of the sensible*. Continuum.
- Revel, J. (2012). Banlieu. In F. Brugère, M. Foessel, M. Gaille, G. le Blanc, J. Revel, & P. Zaoui (Eds.), *Dictionnaire politique à l'usage des gouvernés*. Bayard.
- Ricciardi, M. (2019). *Il potere temporaneo*. Meltemi.
- Ross, K. (1988). *The emergence of social space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Ross, K. (2015). *Communal Luxury*. Verso.
- Rousseau, J. J. (2002). *The Social Contract and The First and Second Discourses*. Yale University Press.
- Sassen, S. (2000). *Cities in a World Economy*. Pine Forge Press.
- Sennett, R. (2019). *Building and dwelling*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Simmel, G. (1971). Metropolis and mental life. In D. Levine (Ed.), *Simmel: On individuality and social forms*. Chicago University Press.
- Smith, A. (1977). *An Inquire into the Nature and the Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Sombart, W. (1902). *Der moderne Kapitalismus*. Verlag von Dunker und Humboldt.
- Stanek, L. (2008). Space as concrete abstraction. Hegel, Marx, and modern urbanism in Henri Lefebvre. In K. Goonewardena, S. Kipfer, R. Milgrom, & C. Schmid (Eds.), *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Henri Lefebvre and Radical Politics* (pp. 62–79). Routledge.
- Sweezy, P. (1978). A critique. In M. Dobb & P. Sweezy, *The transition from feudalism to capitalism* (pp. 33–56). Verso.
- Virno, P. (2004). *A Grammar of the Multitude*. Semiotext(e).
- Weber, M. (1966). *The City*. Free Press Paperback Edition.

NOTAS Y DISCUSIONES

SHAPING THE PROFESSION – AND RESHAPING SOCIO-POLITICAL INCLUSION

Tiziana Faitini

Università di Trento

The figure of the “professional” looms large in contemporary neoliberal societies as an ideal for economic activity and socio-political inclusion, and even as a model for individual self-development, in spheres of existence extending far beyond the limited circle of the specific types of (traditional and liberal) occupations. But how and when did this figure arise? What has led professional activity to become such an essential part of our personal, social, moral, economic, and political life?

In an attempt to address these –more than vaguely Weberian– questions, I propose to look at professionalism as an *experience*, that is –to recast the definition of the latter notion and overlapping given by Michel Foucault in his genealogical studies on sexuality– as the correlation “of fields of knowledge, types of normativity and forms of subjectivity” (Foucault, 1984/1985, p. 4). The research presented in this book tries indeed –*si parva licet componere magnis*– to remake Foucault’s philosophical move by shifting its focus and investigating the conditions under which professional activity has become the object of a wide problematisation, which involves different fields of knowledge (as law, philosophy, sociology and theology), specific norms (legal and ethical), and a distinct way of conceiving one’s own identity, duties, and abilities (the skilled professional, acting with professionalism). In so doing, the book aims at contributing to a genealogy of professionalism, that is, to a historical investigation of the stratified valorisation –at a moral, legal, social, economic, and epistemological level– which has shaped the “professional” as a form of existence and an object of study.

The “professional” has indeed become the linchpin of different discourses and studies, and has even undermined the figure of the “worker” which was key to the political and sociological debates of the twentieth century. Professional values and duties are themselves minutely scrutinised, as attested by the current discourse of professional ethics. On the one hand, this discourse is developed within a recently consolidated field of academic research geared toward shaping professional conduct and moralising behaviours; on the other, with a steadily growing number of codes of conduct and norms produced by professional bodies, it is also a legal source of normativity and soft law. Max Weber and, more recently, distinguished scholars as Luc Boltanski, Ève Chiappello, and Andrew Abbott have famously investigated these aspects. However, a comprehensive historical inquiry into the discourse of professional ethics as such (in different professional areas), and the historical conditions of possibility of both this discourse and the very figure of the “professional,” is still lacking. And starting to fill this gap is precisely the immediate goal that this book hopes to achieve.

Italy, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom provide most of the corpus of philosophical, juridical, and theological sources discussed throughout a long journey from Ancient Rome to the present. In taking a *longue durée* approach, the proposed account cannot but offer a sketchy review of some examples and historical passages. A partial map that enables intelligibility is the only possible outcome, established by pointing to a few incidents of conceptual crystallisations, the reciprocal reinforcement of ideas, the close intertwining of juridical, religious, and economic notions, and the dialectics between theorisation and practice.

In sketching this map, Max Weber is an unavoidable reference and inspiration. In his interpretation of the Protestant elaboration of the *Beruf*, the sociologist sums up the idea that a central role was played in the genesis of modern economic rationality, not by the Enlightenment and secularisation, but by the internal process of rationalisation that took place within religions, Protestantism and Calvinism in particular. This perhaps “unproven, yet unrefuted,” thesis (Whatmore, 1998) remains an extraordinary model of historical and philosophical understanding. *Beruf* is, unquestionably, a concept of enormous analytical power, as the profound impact it has had on all our historical readings of professionalism, on the philosophy of work, and even on the actual history of capitalism testifies.

Its analytical power notwithstanding, it is a concept which does not comprehend the entire history of the semantic field of professionalism – although it is fully a part of such a field. In particular, I believe it is reductive to claim that “profession” and *Beruf* are equivalent. Surely, because *Beruf* encompasses a semantic, and practical, richness that

makes it untranslatable —always caught between “profession” and “vocation” as it is— but also because the “profession,” in its historical development, exceeds the *Beruf*. It is precisely this exceedance that allows us a valuable insight into the political implications of an investigation into professionalism —and, for what it is worth, of this book.

Long before it came to indicate, in contemporary society, the type of occupation analysed by the sociology of the professions, or before it found itself being equated with the Protestant and Weberian *Beruf*, the “profession” was something very different. Entwining semasiology and onomasiology, the research outlines a more nuanced history of the concept of “profession” and “professional duty” in their relationship to the notions of “status (*status*)” and “office (*officium*)”, showing that “profession” first emerged as a concept in the semantic field of citizenship and inclusion. Only much later did it enter the semantic field of economic-acquisitive activity and occupation, and, as a result of a slow and multifaceted process, a close link between socio-political position, the carrying out of an economic/professional activity, and the fulfilment of a moral and legal duty is established. The proposed analysis may thus complete Weber’s reading of modern rationalisation by drawing new maps for the historical atlas of modernity and its “iron cage.” Within these maps, a specific model for the profession —deeply rooted in the classical and Christian tradition de *officiis*— can be clearly discerned, and the political implications of professionalism better grasped. These implications are indeed very complex: far from being reduced to questions related to the social and political rise of professional groups, or to their monopoly of expertise, they touch on the social and political apparatus of inclusion.

The profession (*professio*), in fact, originated in the Roman Republic as a conceptual —and indeed practical— tool in the semantic field of citizenship. Echoing the Roman legal institution of the census, it had an inclusive (and precise legal) value, and directly influenced the conceptualisation of the religious profession. At first, being “placed on the register” of a community led to participation in military and spiritual wars, as well as in the destiny of the whole community. In this sense, it signified inclusion and, conversely, exclusion. Over the centuries, the concept of profession has evolved to a point where it indicates something about a person’s occupation (understood as an economic-acquisitive activity), hence operating in the semantic fields of both occupation and citizenship. Through this evolution, a significant connection between those fields has been established. They are both, of course, intertwined and overlapping with the contemporary notion and practice of socially organised work. In other words, our notion of work seems to encompass two different —and historically separated— dimensions: on the one hand, an “economic-acquisitive dimension,” related to an activity carried out

in order to ensure one's means of subsistence, but which has not traditionally been the main basis for a person's socio-political inclusion or citizenship; and, on the other hand, an "inclusive dimension" which, until the end of the middle ages, had little to do with the economic-acquisitive sphere.

As remote as it might seem, this fact proves meaningful in identifying a cornerstone of European social and political rationality, that is, the crucial nexus between occupation and socio-political inclusion, which eventually led to work-democracies and their social conceptualisation of citizenship. The fact that a person's occupation is nowadays key to their standing as a citizen —and that a Republic can even be "grounded on work," as in the Italian case— is testament to the semantic implications of the notion of "profession". A genealogy of the experience of professionalism is not, then, a simple exposition of the evolution of the discourse of professional ethics, nor is it limited to an exploration of the ethical valorisation of work and the genesis of the "iron cage" of capitalism. On the contrary, it is hoped that such a genealogy can contribute to the intelligibility —and, thus, modifiability— of contemporary socio-political thought and the apparatus of citizenship and attribution of political and social rights that lies at its heart.

Not only is this dutiful apparatus (also) Eurocentric, gendered-biased, productivist and environmentally unsustainable. It is also challenged by the current radical transformation of the world of work and professional experience. Information technology has revolutionised the organisation of work and the skills and qualities required of workers, regardless of sectoral or geographical borders, threatening many positions, and affecting the work-life balance and standards of professional conduct in the others. Even more, the dramatic increase in the precariousness of employment —across fields and skill levels— is undermining the Fordist myth of full employment and work-related welfare measures.

Reshaping our work-democracies is therefore crucial: their social protections, their apparatus of citizenship, and their valorisation of professional duties bear the hallmarks of a long history, and of a world of work which belongs to the past. Decent working conditions must undoubtedly be claimed and fought for sternly. But this move alone will hardly be sufficient. Other forms of welfare, protections of rights, valorisation of personal capabilities and activities need to be imagined with the same resolve. The political and philosophical task before us is to recast the vocabulary of socio-political inclusion that we have become accustomed to over the last few hundred years. And a thorough understanding of the historicity of this vocabulary is but a necessary step in this direction.

References

- Foucault, M. (1985). *The History of Sexuality, vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure* (R. Hurley, Trans.). Penguin Books. (Original work published 1984).
- Whatmore, R. (1998). The Weber Thesis: Unproven, Yet Unrefuted. In W. Lamont (Ed.), *Historical Controversies and Historians* (pp. 95-108). University College London Press.

ON WORK AND CITIZENSHIP: ABOUT A BOOK BY TIZIANA FAITINI

Michele Nicoletti

Università di Trento

With the aim of presenting an overview of the history of “professional ethics” in Western societies, Tiziana Faitini ends up offering us a powerful fresco of the forms of self-realisation and social inclusion linked to the sphere of work and professional activities that have developed from ancient Rome to the present day. The study of the theme of “professionalism,” which at first glance seems to indicate nothing more than the commitment to “doing one’s job well,” turns out, in this patient genealogical analysis, to be a treasure trove of information and suggestions on the great themes of ethical-religious vocation, political identity, social inclusion, and the realisation of the individual’s innermost aspirations and desires. Beneath the tip of the iceberg of Max Weber’s investigations on the *Beruf* and its inextricable intertwining of “vocation” and “profession,” the book *Shaping the Profession* sheds light on a fascinating web of spiritual, philosophical, political, and juridical texts spanning over two millennia. Orations, sermons, and treatises alternate with constitutional norms, laws, and deontological codes to “shape” the human activity of daily toil or creative genius. From the common heritage of Medieval Latinity and Christianity to the different national traditions (from Italy to England, from France to Germany), the universe of “arts” and “crafts,” or rather of “making art” and “practising a craft,” is investigated through an analysis of the voices of protagonists and performers. *Shaping the Profession* succeeds

in transforming an apparently secondary issue such as “professional ethics” into a major theme of philosophical-political inquiry and in placing us, once again, in front of the crucial philosophical questions of the meaning of work and its role in mediating the individual’s belonging to society and a political community.

Among the several issues raised and inspired by the text, the question of the role of work and professional activity in the dynamics of political inclusion, exemplarily represented by the theme of citizenship, is, in my view, the most meaningful. And a *longue durée* approach proves to be extremely fruitful in this regard.

At first glance, one would be tempted to hold that the centrality of work/occupation in political dynamics mainly concerns the modern and contemporary age. We are accustomed to considering previous societies, from the Neolithic to the Industrial Revolution, as societies founded on *land occupation*—a fact providing a *radical title* for the constitution of the main social and economic structure and the dominant political subject. From this perspective, the “political” would be formed on a social basis characterised by the possession of the means of production and the means of coercion in that mixture of *dominium* and *imperium* typical of large or small military land aristocracies. On this social basis, the “political” took either the republican forms of association or the seigniorial forms of domination. Yet, in either case, the binomial “land and (military) power” is the pillar on which political power has rested for centuries and on which the dynamics of political inclusion are forged, both in terms of the ruling class and in terms of citizenship. The social experience of the “political,” with its concepts, takes form on this pillar and has at its heart the experiences of occupation, conquest, and appropriation of spaces and bodies. This way of being, trained by a centuries-old practice in the Middle Ages, spills over outside Europe in the modern age in the *occupation of the lands* (and control of the seas) that marks the conquest and colonisation of non-European territories.

Alongside, and in the shadow of, this primacy of the military (and the social practices accompanying it), commercial exchange and industrial activities develop, which do not deny but presuppose material and spiritual appropriation. These activities are progressively portrayed as inheriting another logic, opposed to the logic of the “soldier,” that is, the logic of the “bourgeois,” aimed at replacing the peaceful, rational, and commercial exchange with war. The contrast between the two models was clearly exemplified by Herbert Spencer (1898) with the distinction between “militant societies” and “industrial societies.”¹ Militant societies were those that, for reasons related to the mode of production, were organised for war as their primary purpose. They were constantly

¹ See Spencer (1898 [1876], pp. 568–642). On the role of labour and the professions in industrial society within Spencer’s theory, see Offer (2019, p. 77).

engaged in fighting for their own existence or in predatory raids on others. Success in fighting ultimately depended on internal cohesion: the greater the cohesion, the stronger the hierarchies and discipline, and the greater the lack of true freedom for individuals. The eternal quest for security also created the need for material self-sufficiency, which implied protectionism and an aggressive foreign and colonial policy. Every aspect of life in these societies was imbued by the crucial worry of struggle; goodness was equated with courage and strength, love of one's country with hatred of the enemy; and the highest duties of the individual were unquestioning and unreasoning obedience to authority and the sacrifice of one's life for the good of the community. The "industrial societies," on the other hand, were not simply those with a large number of manufacturing enterprises—a militant society could well contain a highly productive manufacturing sector dedicated to warfare—but were rather those in which human beings' aggressive instincts were sublimated into work. Here, the production of socially useful goods became the main purpose of human work, and voluntary cooperative effort replaced state coercion as the motivating force.

Notwithstanding the apologetic accents on the voluntary cooperative effort that, to his eyes, replaces coercion, Spencer clearly grasps how labour is not opposed to military activity; rather, it is its "sublimation." This is why the former often retains the logic and vocabulary of the latter. Production is the new means of appropriation after the conquest; hence the need for compulsory conscription (forced labour) and reserve industrial armies. The sheer fact of *occupation*, however, does not disappear. Not in terms of spaces, because there are always new markets to conquer. Not in terms of *bodies*, because there are always new bodies from which to extract value. Not, above all, in terms of time. If in traditional society it was mainly a matter of occupying spaces, here it is also a matter of occupying time. Life-time. Human beings go from being *occupants to occupied or unoccupied*, and any compartmentalisation of time—into work-time or life-time, into *negotium* or *otium*—disappears. The fight against idleness was won, thanks also to the mobilisation of religions and moral philosophies.

Both these aspects—the "sublimation" of aggressive instincts into work and the shift from the occupation of space to the occupation of time—deserve further investigation. Certainly, the modern "political" bears the hallmarks of this process. Think of the conclusion of Chapter XIII of *Leviathan*, where Hobbes gives the reasons for exiting the state of nature:

The passions that incline men to peace are: fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace upon which men may be drawn to agreement. (Hobbes, 1965, P. I, c. XIII)

Here, the means to achieve prosperity is *industry*, not conquest, and the hope is that a political system is affirmed, which might ensure for this industry to be that this industry is adequately recognised, appreciated, and remunerated. The transition to “industrial society” is underway and will take a step forward in Locke and his labour/property theory.

The age of the bourgeoisie culminating in the age of the Revolutions is undoubtedly the age of industry and industriousness with respect to the traditional myth of military valour; it is within this framework that the valorisation of work and profession as a factor of social and political inclusion takes place. But we should not forget that in between the feudal society based on the land/military power, and the modern society of individuals, there is the long historical experience of the estate societies, with their articulations of corporations and estates, organically based on a plurality of activities and crafts, in which work and profession play a fundamental function in social and political inclusion. The overbearing presence of the theme of labour within the constitutionalisation process of the modern state has to do with the rise of the bourgeoisie and the industrial proletariat, but it also feeds on, and coexists with, the lasting experience of the estate society and its trespassing into the corporative state of the twentieth century. In following this constitutional path, we do not only see the inclusion of the right to work in the French Constitution of 1793,² and subsequently in the Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,³ but we also trace the thread going from Hegel to the fascist corporative state. And, from a social point of view, the building of the modern state is not only the result of landed aristocracies, commercial bourgeoisies, and military classes, but also of professional groups. In this regard, one may recall the fundamental role played by jurists in medieval and modern times: a typical example of the intertwining of knowledge, profession, and social and political roles.

Great novelties go hand in hand with underlying continuities, as *Shaping the Profession* shows. And these continuities also concern the persistence of language, metaphors, and military practices. Consider, for example, the exaltation of work and industriousness with activist overtones echoing the traditional epic of combat and struggle. Speaking of a victory of the “bourgeois” over the “soldier” —as Schmitt does in a 1934 essay (Schmitt, 2011)— it is only possible if one has in mind the rhetoric

² *Constitution of the French Republic* (1793), Art. 21: “Public relief is a sacred debt. Society owes the subsistence of unfortunate citizens, either by providing work for them or by assuring the means of existence to those not in a position to work.”

³ *Constitution of the USSR* (1936), Art. 12: “Work in the USSR is the obligation and honour commitment of every citizen fit for work, according to the principle: ‘He who does not work, does not eat’. In the USSR, the principle of socialism is implemented: ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his work.’”

of the petty bourgeois, the parasitic merchant or financier, wanting peace at all costs in order to be able to do their business; certainly not if one recalls the rhetoric of the producer, conceived as the modern “fighter” par excellence.

Not only is work a “struggle” with nature and the production of value, but workforces are also at war with each other in a class struggle that retains —from the revolutions of 1848 to the Russian Revolution and beyond— all of a military and militant character, with its rationality and mythology. Underneath the liberal “peaceful” narrative —according to which the industrial age would replace war and violence with trade and negotiation, and the society of military authoritarianism would be replaced by the society of the free expression of labour powers— the military dimension persists. In the processes of progressive and stratified politicisation of society, it spreads into all social groups. Every individual is involved, on an existential and social level, in this struggle.

It is not by chance that the twentieth century radicalises and exacerbates both this militarisation of labour and this remilitarisation of politics. New political leaders like to wear the military uniform. In Schmitt’s reading, this attests to the soldier’s revenge on the bourgeois. The process, however, remains highly ambivalent, to say the least. Work has become the means of inclusion. As militarily organised as it might be, its emancipatory myth cannot be eliminated. But *der Arbeiter* and *der Soldat* walk hand in hand, one the mirror of the other, and concentration camps are labour camps. *Arbeit macht frei*. Work is conquest *and* liberation. Not for Schmitt, to tell the truth, whose distance from the workist myth is clear:

Much can be held against me. They can insult me by calling me a crown jurist. But I have never fallen into the trap of the workist myth. I have not written any book entitled *Der Arbeiter*, neither have I mistaken an employee only greedy for a pension and public benefits as an ‘imperial type.’ (Schmitt, 1991, 1.3.1951)

Today, we see, perhaps, the beginning of a post-work era. Attempts to go beyond the work-centered apparatus of social and political inclusion are multiplying. The work-citizenship binomial has revealed, alongside its formidable potential of liberation, also discriminatory traits—against women, young people, the elderly, and foreigners. Overcoming the simplistic binomial worker-citizen or citizen-worker, we are pushed back to the dialectic between *Bürger* and *Citoyen*. It is still too early to tell if the attempts to dis-articulate or re-articulate the relationship between work and citizenship will succeed in being more inclusive. For sure, the issue of occupation has not disappeared from the horizon. International conflicts are still, and increasingly,

expressed through *occupations of spaces*. Real and virtual spaces. And the systematic *occupation of life-time* does not seem to decrease. Mapping the genealogy of the concepts of work and profession, and the history of their relations to social and political citizenship, provides a sound basis for addressing the present transformations.

References

- Hobbes, T. (1965 [1651]). *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill* W.G. Pogson Smith (Ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Offer, J. (2019). Herbert Spencer, Sociological Theory and the Professions. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 4, 77. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2019.00077>
- Schmitt, C. (1991 [1951]). *Glossarium. Aufzeichnungen der Jahre 1947-1951*. E. F. von Medem (Ed.) Duncker & Humblot.
- Schmitt, C. (2011 [1934]). *Staatsgefüge und Zusammenbruch des Zweiten Reiches: Der Sieg des Bürgers über den Soldaten*. Duncker & Humblot. <https://doi.org/10.3790/978-3-428-52362-7>
- Spencer, H. (1898 [1876]). *Principles of Sociology* (Vol. II). D. Appleton and Company.

GENEALOGIES AND ARCHIVES OF THE POSSIBLE

Federica Giardini
Università Roma Tre

This is a particularly interesting text, not only for its opening up of research perspectives, but also —and this is something I would like to emphasize— for the way it contributes to the definition of the tasks of political philosophy in its specificity.

A first contribution in this direction comes from the genealogical approach that was adopted. References to Michel Foucault's research are anything but occasional —I recall, for example, the recent article devoted to the theme of labour in Foucault's *Truth and Juridical Forms* and *The Use of Pleasure* (Faitini, 2022)— both in method and, conversely, in the original choice to distance herself from some analyses of the contemporary that use Foucauldian categories. Indeed, the author declares that she does not want to “equate ethics, governmentality and ideology” (Faitini, 2023, p. 32), thus grasping a limitation of those critical theses that, while moving away from the intention of clarifying the dynamics of the contemporary, end up producing a reinforcement of the iron cage in which we would find ourselves.

In order to counter this outcome in particular, Tiziana Faitini puts to work another trait of the Foucauldian genealogical approach which can be found in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* (1971/1991), particularly in the French philosopher's reinterpretation of the concept of *Herkunft* (descent). Descent not only as an object but also, and above all, as a research posture and a disposition toward historical sources which allows for “the

discovery, under the unique aspect of a concept, of the myriad events through which —thanks to which, against which— it was formed” (p. 81).

The author does not, however, simply assume this indication operationally. She also puts to work another indication related to the genealogical approach, namely the emergence of her own research question, in this case professional ethics, in a non-linear nor preliminarily acquired cross-reference between source inquiry and the urgencies of the present. On this matter Faitini is clear in reformulating what is at stake in the text's conclusions: "rethinking our work-democracies is an urgent task," she declares (2022, p. 224).

Such purpose is instantiated in Faitini's work in two forms. The first is to outline a field of inquiry that acts as a counter-history —in the author's terms, as a counterpoint— to Max Weber's hegemonic thesis on solidarity, on the "elective affinities" between Protestant ethics and capitalism, condensed in the professional ethics of Protestantism. By sticking to the same intersection of theology, economics, and politics, Faitini shows another history of the profession and its ethical dimension. More precisely, their relationship is not approached as that between productivity and virtue, between the attainment of wealth through labour as a sign of divine grace, but rather a nexus between profession and citizenship, as well as between profession and social and political inclusion. In this perspective, which, I repeat, works on the same dimensions of the economic, the political and the theological, the chapters devoted to *professio* in Roman and medieval culture provide an entirely different framework for orientation.

I thus arrive at the second form in which the above purpose is realized. The sources consulted by Faitini (2022), in resonance with the urgency with which her research moves, transform history in an archive of the possibilities for the present. I believe I move in consonance with her intentions, having found confirmation of this impression in a sentence of the text, where she hopes to set the conditions for other possibilities (Faitini, 2023, p. xix). Thus, it is research that, precisely because it foregrounds the nexus between labour and citizenship, provides tools for investigating the crisis of the contemporary in the specific declination given within the tradition of not liberal but social democracies, that is "postwork society in which political bonds are no longer forged through productive work" (Faitini, 2023, p. xvi).

This aspect is often neglected when addressing the new neoliberal reason, in favour of a homogeneous ratio that would be exercised at the global level. While from a critical point of view this thesis can be problematically fruitful, it ends up concealing the specific, situated resources that different political cultures might offer. In this sense, Faitini (2022) proceeds:

The codification of ethical precepts in each country and field has been influenced both by the history of the bodies and professional associations, and by different legal frameworks. Nevertheless, and although the timing and contents are distinct, a general and somewhat homogeneous diffusion of the tool of ethical codification in the twentieth and twenty-first century is clearly evident. (p. 31)

I want to underscore a final contribution to the definition of the tasks of political philosophy. From what has been said so far, it seems clear how that if politics refer to an investigation of the forms of associated life in their historical becoming, the term philosophy decisively indicates a work on concepts, which themselves become the subject of critical inquiry. Not inconsequently, the question of how the work of critique is exercised arises, taking into account its characteristics of conceptual articulation, historical differentiation, and affirmative capacity. The answer to such question, I would say, should encompass its capacity to open up alternative perspectives to the dominant ones.

I now come to an internal aspect of the discussion. In the first chapter, where the field of scholarly debate is circumscribed, a proliferation of self-made codes "often classed 'as soft law'" (Faitini, 2023, p. 24) is indicated. This codification enterprise is then distinguished into a prudential level, a disposition to work where codes, anthropological and ethical models are produced; and a metaethical level—less investigated by ethics studies—which deals with the relationship between professional ethics and widespread morality.

I take occasion from the sentence in which the objectives of the work include an investigation of the "multifaceted valorisation" (Faitini, 2023, p. 101) of professional activities in contemporary Europe. In fact, a further interest of this volume is the fact that it does not settle on the canonical partitions of modern, pre-modern and the related partitions between public and private, and thus between ethics and politics—in this regard, the passage refuses to place ethics in a heteronormative or transcendent dimension, as it assumes the ambiguity of immanent regulations, is very interesting (Faitini, 2023, p. 23).

Thinking about the use of premodern sources for the analysis of the contemporary—for example, about S. Sassen's *Territory Authority and Rights* (2006), but also about Paolo Grossi's work on medieval juridical pluralism (2017) or, in contrast, about the emergence of "civil", that is, private and non-state constitutions, recorded by G. Teubner (2012)—I consider that there is the opportunity for rethinking the issues at stake in the intertwining of ethics, economics, and religion: on the one hand, this tripartition needs

to be abandoned to identify a field of different regulatory and normative regimes that come into tension but may also offer unexpected alliances; and, on the other hand, the question of value, which participates in the ethical and economic by performing different regulatory functions, is a concept that we have to address anew with a genealogical approach (Thomas, 2002).

References

- Faitini, T. (2022) Michel Foucault. Dalla costituzione del soggetto lavoratore al lavoro su di sé. *Lavoro, Diritti, Europa*, 3, 1-10.
- Faitini, T. (2023), *Shaping the Profession. Towards a Genealogy of Professional Ethics*. Brill U Schoningh.
- Foucault, M. (1991). Nietzsche, Genealogy, History. In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (pp. 76-100). Penguin. (Original work published 1971).
- Grossi, P. (2017). *L'ordine giuridico medievale*. Laterza.
- Sassen, S. (2006). *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*. Princeton University Press.
- Teubner, G. (2012). *Verfassungsfragmente. Gesellschaftlicher Konstitutionalismus in der Globalisierung*. Suhrkamp.
- Thomas, Y. (2002). La valeur des choses : Le droit romain hors la religion. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 6, 1431-1462. <https://doi.org/10.3406/ahess.2002.280119>

SKETCHES FOR A NEW SOCIOLOGY OF INTELLIGENZ: ABOUT TIZIANA FAITINI'S SHAPING THE PROFESSION

Massimo Palma

Università Suor Orsola Benincasa – Naples

Professional Experiences. Not a Ritual Formula

In Chapter VII of Kafka's (1925, p. 286) *Trial*, Josef K. finds himself exhausted in front of the "court painter," Titorelli, who goes on at length to explain to him how his paintings depicting moorland landscapes, all identical, are liked or disliked by buyers. In the usual vitiated air of the entire novel, sweating and anguished in the painter's small room, K., the author tells us, "did not have the head to listen to the professional experiences of the beggar-painter" (*für die beruflichen Erfahrungen des Bettelmalers*). Curiously, Kafka uses a lemma such as "professional experience" and associates it with an outcast social figure, the *Bettelmaler*, whom we would hardly identify at first glance with a "worker" capable of listing his professional background. Both roles attributed to Titorelli are, in fact, far from the ordinary conception of work framed and declared on the basis of skills and studies. Art and begging are hardly identifiable with "professions." They represent moments of *otium* rather than *negotium*. And yet Kafka, with subtle irony, connects them—pointing to a beyond of professionalism precisely in the experience of the idler, of the artist who asks, "prays", for some compensation for his street works. Perhaps it is precisely this interweaving of idleness, precariousness, and judgments on the works of those who make idleness and precariousness a way of life that can provide a starting point for tackling a reconstruction as complex as the one that Tiziana Faitini tackles on

a philosophical-political level, but armed with extensive historical documentation, of the concept of “profession,” in *Shaping the Profession: Towards a Genealogy of Professional Ethics* (Faitini, 2023).

What does it mean, in fact, to connect “professionalism” to experience, as the author asks in the introduction (Faitini, 2023, p. XIII)? What does it mean to link two self-defining terms (profession *and* experience) of our era and see one as the other? The initial effort of *Shaping the Profession* lies in restoring conceptual and historical depth, in a tone of a *Begriffsgeschichte* reread in the light of certain Foucauldian intuitions, to the actual millenary formula of professional experience. This means, first of all, that “being inside a profession” is an experience of the constitution of subjectivity, which intersects with the construction of widespread normativity —ethical and legal. Strong in the conviction that this very experience must be historicised, that is, it must be categorised according to its historical persistence and mutations (p. 21), Tiziana Faitini’s book shows the *longue durée* profile pertinent to the concept of “profession.”

A foreword is in order. In the background of the essay, of course, is Max Weber’s investigation of the *Beruf*. Weber appears several times as a model, as a support, and as a “conversational partner” (Faitini, 2023, p. xv). Nevertheless, the book’s interest is, if anything, to propose a *countermelody* to Weber, as it says twice (pp. 78, 145), that is, to carve out a specific role, and one that is substantially autonomous from the *Beruf* and the complex Weberian genealogy inscribed in the Protestant Ethics (a genealogy that is also lexical), of the *professio*, with its Roman origins: *professio* from *profiteor*, to declare officially. If the history of the profession originates as a linguistic function, more precisely declarative, the idea of “profession,” always conveyed by the Latin language and culture, evolves over the centuries to connote a binding relationship of those who “profess” with a specialised education (what in German will be called the *fachmässige Schulung*).

The Roman device of *professio* functions as the root of a subsequent ramification that always holds the declaration and the discriminating judgement together. The pater *familias*’ *professio census* was entrusted to the censors who had a dual task of assessing the economic and the ethical: It was up to them to assess properties and *mores*. To “profess” meant, in the first place, subjection to the ruling and censorious power (Faitini, 2023, p. 87).

The Economic Ethics of World Professions

Although Faitini masterfully describes a much more complex picture than what can be rendered here (see, for example, the pages on the *professio monachi*, the taking of vows of

poverty, chastity and obedience, where the *professio* “coincides with an act of inclusion in a hierarchical and salvific order”; Faitini, 2023, p. 74), one can suggest that starting from the ancient Rome, the *professio* gradually takes on a *lato sensu* cultural guise. That is, it signifies a “liberal” activity or, with several nuances, an activity remunerated not with a salary but with an honorarium, received “for the noble service freely and magnanimously rendered” (p. 77). In essence, those who receive the honorary compensation are those who teach: “teaching, in fact, was the field that united those activities in a somewhat homogeneous category” (p. 63). The officials of the imperial bureaucracy first, then the physicians, the *sacerdotes juris*, actually lay jurists, and many *clerici vagantes* are just as many examples of this intellectuality that studies and teaches, professing science and earning moderate remuneration.

It is, however, through the concept of *officium*, as an embodiment of the duties derived from the status one occupies in society, as a function that always aims at the common good (Faitini, 2023, p. 111), that the *professio* takes on an entirely economic guise while being ethical. The office in a tone of ethical-economic synergy serves the modern reappraisal of the *vita activa*, but at the same time, contributes to a taxonomy of professional sins, which takes hold, especially following the Counter-Reformation. If Samuel Pufendorf (1673), with his *De officio hominis et civis* marks the way for elites throughout Europe to recognise the social world as a network of duties to be performed, professionalism gradually asserts itself as a synonym of “honour”: The *Rechtschaffenheit* of which Hegel (1821) speaks in the *Grundlinien zur Philosophie des Rechts* is precisely the honesty recognised in the exercise of the profession. In general, Faitini explains, it is a moral theology that indicates and “censures” the more or less legitimate conduct in the sphere of status that functions as a prerequisite for an ethics of office intertwined with the many professional ethics. It is a “social theology” that sanctions the charitable constraints of giving advice (for doctors and jurists) and equally legitimately expecting remuneration in this regard (p. 163). One has the rank and the dignity of *doctores*, if and when one gives opinions and advice; at the same time, the *consilia* become an opportunity to exchange information and scientific data. Later, in early modernity, this entanglement of morality and economics will emerge on the Puritan and Protestant side in the concept of “calling” as a choice of a “status vitae”: Moral duty coincides with economic fulfilment.

Precisely from the recognition of the link between ethics and economics, Faitini’s study feels the need to descend along the branches of the contemporary proliferation of the lemma in ethics between individuals and society (or meso-ethics), applied ethics that open deontological strands, that substantiate codes of *berufsethisches* shape. Codes

and applied ethics all seem to feed on ideological food, on an underlying assumption that sees in Talcott Parsons a coherent source with a functionalist sociology's tone of a (vague, and often distorted) Weberian matrix: the organisation of work is the central element of the human being (Faitini, 2023, p. 34), but at its summit are the specialised professional classes, at the same time “resolute defenders of the privileged status” (p. 38). For Parsons, the “professional” is the one who possesses skills that place him in an asymmetrical position in relation to his fellow citizens. In his vision, a sort of professional charisma is created, which endows those who possess it with authority over those who lack it. The culture certified by being a professional is disseminated in society and requires a specific ethic. More ethics.

Certainly, despite the different degrees of formalisation, professional ethics still show traces of the intertwining of ethics and economics highlighted as early as the subtitle of Weber's sociological-religious research: “the economic ethics of the *Weltreligionen*.” Nonetheless, the Weberian perspective needs to be supplemented, deepened, and sometimes corrected, in Faitini's vision.

Work for Work's Sake and *art pour l'art*

At the heart of Faitini's investigation is actually a further, necessary, main instance: to reread the political, inclusive-exclusive slant that the concept of “profession” has held since Latin times, and which returns, more or less surprisingly, even in the contemporary. Work functions as the social “great integrator,” and profession is its first agent. To work in order to be a citizen is the formula, the precept, the quasi-dogma that accompanies the not-always-simple path of professional integration. Our “work-democracies” (Faitini, 2023, p. xvii) more or less lazily settle on these foundations whereby “work is considered valuable for its own sake” (p. 4), but the next step, the “glorification of work” (so says Arendt (1958), in *Human Condition*) in theory and its constitutional value has to be historically determined.

Not to be underestimated in this respect is the focus of 19th- and 20th-century Catholic thought and doctrine on work as an ennobling instance, from Leo XIII to John Paul II. Conversely, the sacredness of work was contrasted with the ethical unsustainability of idleness: “idleness was the foundation of every moral decay” (Faitini, 2023, p. 30). This happened while on the German and Protestant side, a notable fringe of theologians (from Holl to Barth to Bonhoeffer) —not by chance lined up in opposition to the Nazi regime— began to blur the *Arbeitsfreude* as the keystone of innerworldly action, undermining the plasticity of the idea of the *Beruf*. And it is

precisely on the ethics (or amorality) of idleness and its connection to intellectuals and artists that some concluding reflections must be made.

In this regard, a preparatory note by Aby Warburg needs to be quoted. The note stems from his studies on the 1907 essay on Francesco Sassetti, which he sent to Max Weber and which was publicly praised by him in one of the *Antikritiken* to the *Protestant Ethics*—albeit without quoting the author's name (Warburg was only mentioned as “a very gifted art historian”).

Sassetti, a merchant in the second half of the 15th century, who commissioned a family sepulchral chapel frescoed by Ghirlandaio in Florence, is studied by Warburg, through his requests to the artist, as a typical representative of an era of transition from the Middle Ages to the figure of the bourgeois worker (it should be noted that “bourgeois” is a term that appears only fleetingly in Faitini's book). A faithful bourgeois who finds a balance by giving art the task of representing the labour energy that was developing

with the emancipation of the modern individual from the oppression of the past, and with his impulse to divest himself of what is traditional by developing work energy (thanks to the influence of the Ancient); work for work's sake does not tolerate *art pour l'art*. Work and despair not. (Appunto WIA, 69.7, as cited in Ghelardi, 2022, p. 113)

As we have seen, Kafka, Warburg's contemporary, speaking of the professional experiences of a beggar-painter, places himself at the opposite focus of the ellipse of the modern, when the line framed by Sassetti's aspirations to find art that expresses the tension of work seems to break. Kafka's singular formula—the professional experiences of an artist-beggar—is a further nuance of that moment when “professional” becomes the antonym of dilettante, and the “professeur” gets opposed to the “amateur,” as Faitini (2023, p. 197) explains. That is the moment when bourgeois society explicitly begins to stigmatise, sometimes to expel, to exclude, the practitioners of inoperativeness. But it is useful to remember that the division of social labour, specialisation, the partition of the knowable and practicable into autonomous, compartmentalised sections, as Emile Durkheim (1897) teaches, should be studied at exactly the same time as suicide, that is, the tension towards anomie, the deviation from the social norm.

And if so much has been recently said about inoperosity, about *désœuvrement*, in the wake of Bataille and then Nancy, and finally Agamben, if we ask ourselves what the role of the negative is at the end of history, when it is unemployed (*sans emploi*), it is appropriate to ask, with Faitini, whether *during* history there has been negativity without employment.

And the answer is positive, though admittedly very nuanced because there have been eras of *loisirs*, of *Freizeit*, of recognised idleness, of *scholé* identified as a specific sphere of intellectual existence. There have been moments in which Fichte could determine the vocation of the scholar in a universalist key, and others instead, closer to our era, in which this existence has once again been framed in a status grid, with its contour of probity, *cursus honorum*, and tight lists of “professional experiences.”

It is possible then, as Faitini does, to write a historical sociology of the intellectual, to clothe it in the most serious garb of political genealogy, and to move through historical semantics in a Foucauldian garb. And one can ask oneself, together with the author, when and how it happened that the economic-acquisitive-lucrative activity became morally normative, and the other, the less lucrative yet certainly “official” one—in the long-term historical lexicon that Faitini studies—turned out to be disqualifying, even idle. The theme of recognition thus emerges subterraneously: What stood behind the Mannheimian formula of the “sociology of *Intelligenz*” was the “penultimate” outcome whose history Tiziana Faitini narrated and problematised. The vicissitudes of the *professio* could be somehow interpreted as the prehistory of present-day cognitive capitalism and the precarious intellectual, which is the ultimate outcome. If the medieval ideology was the dissemination of culture through *professiones*, if teaching was the lowest common denominator of the *profession*—hence the beginning of universities after the year 1000—today *Geistliche Arbeit* is almost entirely professionalised, contractualised, or silently made for free. The intellectual, the specialist in “intermediate knowledge,” must to, all intents and purposes, show themselves to be industrious, active, someone involved in *negotia*. They must show themselves as such, *Bettelmalers*, while begging for compensation by displaying their works.

References

- Arendt, H. (1958). *The Human Condition*. University of Chicago Press.
- Durkheim, E. (1897). *Le suicide. Etude de sociologie*. Alcan.
- Faitini, T. (2023). *Shaping the Profession. Towards a Genealogy of Professional Ethics*. Brill U Schoningh. <https://doi.org/10.30965/9783657790197>
- Ghelardi, M. (2022). *Aby Warburg. Uno spazio per il pensiero*. Carocci.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1821). Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts. In *Werke in Zwanzig Bände*. Suhrkamp.
- Kafka, F. (1925). *Der Prozess*. Die Schmiede.
- Pufendorf, S. (1673). *De officio hominis et civis iuxta legem naturalem libri duo*. Cambridge University Press.
- Warburg, A. (1907). Francesco Sassettis letztwillige Verfügung. In H. Witzsäcker, M. Semrau, & A. Warburg, *Kunstwissenschaftliche Beiträge. August Schmarsow zum fünfzigsten Semester seiner akademischer Lehrtätigkeit gewidmet* (Kunstgeschichtliche Monographien, I. Beiheft, pp. 129-152), K. W. Hiersemann.

DEL TRABAJO A LA PROFESIÓN DEL NO TRABAJO

Antonio Tucci

Università degli Studi di Salerno

Desde mediados del siglo pasado, la ética profesional ha asumido una centralidad nunca antes experimentada en las prácticas jurídicas y políticas. Junto a una ética del trabajo que se connotaba a sí misma como dispositivo de control social y aseguramiento del orden, la ética profesional adquirió una connotación más sensible: por un lado, a las dinámicas de estabilización en el seno de las categorías profesionales, que garantizaban derechos y estatus; y por otro (pero se podría decir que al mismo tiempo y en consecuencia), a los procesos de subjetivación social y política ligados a ellas.

Los límites relacionados con la fundamentación del trabajo han encontrado, en muchos aspectos, su base en el pensamiento político moderno y encuentran plena legitimación antropológica y política en el mundo contemporáneo neoliberal. No obstante, el libro de Tiziana Faitini que aquí comentamos tiene el mérito de poner de relieve una serie de cambios en las perspectivas sobre el tema de la profesión que se han afirmado en la *nueva razón mundial*:

Hannah Arendt, in her 1958 essay on the human condition, judged it urgent to deplore the “theoretical glorification of labor”. Sixty years later, however, it is instead the “theoretical glorification of profession” which has gained momentum. The knowledge economy and neoliberal rationality – the *nouvelle raison du monde*, as

it has been called – emphasize the value of a free, innovative, intellectual occupation, usually referred to as a “profession”. (Faitini, 2023, XIII)

Mientras que la crítica del trabajo, especialmente en el sentido arendtiano —cada vez más omnipresente en las sociedades de posguerra—, adquiere aspectos claros y distintos que son absolutamente compatibles en la era del neoliberalismo “parasitario” (Bauman, 2009), la ética de las profesiones, en cambio, se presenta de una manera más ambigua y ambivalente.

El resultado de la reflexión de Faitini es particularmente fructífero por varias razones. En primer lugar, porque la autora sustrae el objeto de su investigación de un enfoque, por así decirlo, tradicional y lo sitúa en la perspectiva de interpretaciones del gobierno que van más allá de la racionalidad estatista y se refieren a la lógica y la racionalidad gubernamentales: la influencia del método genealógico foucaultiano aparece evidente y crucial en su investigación (Foucault, 2004). En efecto, Faitini, a través de una reconstrucción de las prácticas históricas y sociales, reconstruye el concepto de profesión en relación con los contextos más diversos con el fin de poner de relieve las posibilidades plurales de lecturas que, más que contradecirse, se superponen y contribuyen a una lectura global del fenómeno.

El tema del trabajo, por tanto, aunque no es central, no deja de tener importancia. El trabajo, vinculado a una justificación ética y ligado a la productividad, encuentra su propio fundamento en la religión, como demuestra la *doctrina del trabajo del Opus Dei*:

Whatever the real impact of religious beliefs may be, explicit attempts to valorise industry, promote work ethic, and support workism abound within the plurality of Christian traditions. *Opus Dei* [...] provides a vivid example of a strenuously proclaimed work ethic, with the celebration of virtues of productivity and the unquestioning position of work as central to the realization of salvation of humankind. (Faitini, 2023, 9).

Así, trabajo y productividad connotan visiones de la ética de la responsabilidad, delineando formas de poder y subjetivaciones políticas, que obviamente remiten a formas de la vida *buena*. Junto a una moral, por así decirlo *ordinaria*, a la que se refieren el trabajo y la productividad, la ética profesional implica visiones éticas particulares y específicas de la sociedad, por las que los profesionales se representan a sí mismos como *agentes puente* entre las instituciones y los ciudadanos, fomentando la participación y la deliberación públicas, elevándose así (los médicos y los juristas en primer lugar) al

papel de *transmisores de* una moral de la sociedad captada en su totalidad. Ciertamente, estas visiones, evidentemente tomadas con pinzas por el autor, son el testimonio —en opinión de quien esto escribe— de visiones sin duda productivas de discursos de *conocimiento* y, por tanto, de *verdades* parciales que reivindican la universalidad frente a la pluralidad y las contradicciones de los sistemas de valores a los que se refieren las distintas profesiones. En otras palabras, se configuraría un papel *elitista* de los profesionales, que podría representar un límite a las formas de hacer política que solemos preferir imaginar como política desde *abajo*. Esto daría lugar a espacios de agilidad, autonomía controlados e informados a la lógica e intereses de grupos y centros de poder e intereses circunscritos y limitados. Aunque el adjetivo *profesional* parece referirse cada vez más a situaciones que remiten al interés y la utilidad públicos (Faitini, 2023, p. 198).

Lecturas de este tipo podrían inducir a visiones aristocráticas y en muchos aspectos conservadoras de la sociedad, como se desprende de las palabras de Zanardelli, que Faitini relata con gran eficacia: manifiestan un intento de elevarse por encima de la sociedad y presentan —yo diría que heroicamente— a los juristas como individuos, profesionales, que miran al interés general y a la moralización de la sociedad más que a sus propios intereses. Se trata de una *Orden, la Orden* de los Abogados, que remite a una visión comunitaria para la que funcionan consignas como *el honor, la dignidad, la integridad*, etc., todas ellas orientadas al bienestar de la sociedad civil.

Una vez liberada la categoría de profesión de connotaciones elitistas, se plantean dos cuestiones en el breve espacio de esta intervención. La primera —relativa a un pensamiento de la profesión que puede desvincularse de las connotaciones éticas y orientarse hacia una dimensión más política— cuestiona la instancia inclusiva de las políticas actuales. Las profesiones, sin embargo, parecen connotarse en todo caso en términos identitarios (excluyentes, diría yo): la cuestión de la raza, de la pertenencia a clases económicas y sociales fuertemente diferenciadas, o del género siguen desempeñando un papel decisivo como dispositivos de posicionamiento social y político. Sólo a título de ejemplo, las profesiones se declinan siempre en masculino, salvo casos concretos en los que la profesión específica se refiere a las funciones de cuidado de las mujeres, reiterando así imágenes y representaciones cosificadas de sujetos y grupos específicos.

Pero además de este papel, o más bien resultado, de moralización y normalización, la profesión podría ser también un dispositivo de *creación de* derecho, de una normatividad (ya no inédita) como la que se deriva de la cada vez mayor omnipresencia y autonormatividad del *soft law*; ciertamente se trata de un aspecto importante y de un resultado (una propuesta) absolutamente interesante en el contexto de lo que convenientemente podemos llamar *gobernanza* global. Pero, en mi opinión, es necesaria cierta cautela con respecto a las

lecturas entusiastas (este no es ciertamente el caso de Faitini) de la afirmación cada vez más evidente de modos de producción jurídica en las formas del *soft law*, aunque también de la *lex mercatoria*. Se trata, en efecto, de nuevos modos de producción normativa que, por un lado, tienden a hacer que el derecho (y las instituciones) sean cada vez más inclusivos, es decir, a desvincular el nivel de eficacia del de validez, potenciando las prácticas, que en términos foucaultianos se hunden en la autonomía normativa portadora de lo social; pero también hay que decir que todo ello se produce con evidentes problemas relacionados con la legitimación democrática de los actores de la toma de decisiones jurídicas y políticas. De hecho, la gobernanza tiende a representarse de manera presuntiva (y normativa) mediante una estructura horizontal, mientras que es fácil ver que más bien se presenta como el lugar de la reiteración de las desigualdades y también de las formas de explotación; así, asistimos en ella a una correspondencia no efectiva de formas adecuadas de representación política: la elección entre *hard law* y *soft law* no es binaria (Abbot & Snidal, 2000). Este último se presenta de forma variada, rompe el orden, pero se arriesga a definir otros, aunque más móviles y provisionales, ciertamente representativos de intereses y particularidades.

Y así pasamos a la otra cuestión, que también está directamente relacionada con el tema de la identidad ya mencionado. En un ensayo con un título particularmente evocador, Tiziana Faitini subrayaba cómo la centralidad antropológica, social y política del trabajo (como expresión de lo humano) ha representado un dispositivo de control y disciplina, de desobjetivación: “Un diffuso convincimento che vede nel lavoro, se non l'essenza dell'essere umano, di certo un fattore ad esso consustanziale, naturalmente connesso alla realizzazione di sé e altrettanto naturalmente incuneato al centro dell'interazione sociale” (Faitini, 2022, p. 2). Esta afirmación tan clara y precisa puede considerarse, en muchos sentidos, una premisa útil para las conclusiones a las que llega el autor en el libro que nos ocupa. El quid, al que conduce una reflexión y genealogía de la profesión, es la crítica de la centralidad del trabajo como constitutivo de las sociedades capitalistas: la propia constitución italiana, que ciertamente no puede reducirse a una connotación política en términos neoliberales, marca evidentemente un límite (histórico y social) al situar el trabajo en su base. Por lo tanto, nuestras democracias basadas en el trabajo deben ser repensadas, afirma Faitini, y por lo tanto las categorías de inclusión sociopolítica y ciudadanía deben ser repensadas (Faitini, 2023, p. 224). Se trataría de *inventar un nuevo bienestar* que podría, en nuestra opinión, al invalidar la ecuación exacta trabajo/salario, abrirse a otras formas (renta universal) que marcan el paso de la desobjetivación por el trabajo, a la objetivación por la profesión, a la objetivación política y autónoma, libre de las ataduras del trabajo.

Referencias

- Abbot K.W., & Snidal, D. (2000). Hard and Soft Law in International Governance. *International Organization*, 54(3), 421-456. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2601340>
- Bauman, Z. (2009). *Capitalismo parassitario*. Laterza.
- Faitini, T. (2022). Michel Foucault. Dalla costituzione del soggetto lavoratore al lavoro su di sé. *Lavoro, Diritti, Europa*, 3, 1-10. <https://iris.unitn.it/handle/11572/356321>
- Faitini, T. (2023). *Shaping the Profession. Towards a Genealogy of Professional Ethics*. Brill U Schoningh.
- Foucault, M. (2004). *Sécurité, territoire, population. Cours au Collège de France (1977-1978)*. Gallimard.

RESEÑAS

THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION: ALGORITHMIC GOVERNMENTALITY AND WORKERS' RIGHTS

Anna Cavaliere

Università degli Studi di Salerno

The Cyberspace

In recent decades, the exponential development of new technologies, particularly in the areas of information and communication, has brought about a series of political and socio-economic changes so significant as to suggest the use of an evocative expression: there has been talk of a “digital revolution” (Floridi, 2017).

“Revolution”, as is evident, is by no means a neutral term. It evokes radical and at the same time inescapable upheavals in society, as were those brought about by the French Revolution, for example. It is legitimate to suspect, then, that the emphasis on the revolutionary character of new technologies may conceal a specific ideological intent: to represent a certain technological development as a destiny, or even as a prognostic sign of constant progress toward the best of humanity (Balbi, 2022).

There has been no shortage, especially in the past, of readings along these lines, which have betrayed an overconfidence in the ability of new technologies to renew society by conveying rights and freedoms.

Emblematic in this regard can be considered the Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace, presented by essayist John Perry Barlow during the 1996 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland: a kind of manifest of the faith reposed, still in the late 1990s, in

the cathartic character of technology. Addressing the governments of the world, defined as “weary giants of flesh and steel”, John Perry Barlow proclaimed:

I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather. We have no elected government, nor are we likely to have one [...]. I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us. You have no moral right to rule us nor do you possess any methods of enforcement we have true reason to fear. [...] Cyberspace does not lie within your borders. Do not think that you can build it, as though it were a public construction project. You cannot. It is an act of nature and it grows itself through our collective actions. [...] We are creating a world that all may enter without privilege or prejudice accorded by race, economic power, military force, or station of birth. We are creating a world where anyone, anywhere may express his or her beliefs, no matter how singular, without fear of being coerced into silence or conformity”. (Barlow, 1996)

Nearly three decades later, Barlow’s expectations have been largely unfulfilled: virtual space has proved neither free (Frosini, 2019; Rodotà, 2012, Cap. XIV), nor equal (Sartori, 2006; Van Dijk, 2020; Vantin, 2021), nor even democratic (Barberis, 2020; Sunstein, 2017; Vitale & Cattaneo, 2018). It is not necessarily the theatre of the free circulation of ideas and is moreover riddled with several dangers to individuals (Stazi, 2019; Murino, 2021, Cadoppi et al, 2019; Di Tano, 2019, 2021; Bello, 2021). In addition, it does not at all escape the conditioning put in place by existing powers. The network continues to suffer from the strong conditioning by political power that Barlow had already denounced. For example, as documented in the Freedom on the net report produced by the Freedom House Research Center, the network is subjected to various forms of censorship by governments, which have even intensified in the last three years (Freedom House, 2021). Some of them are radical, such as Internet shutdown, that is the total blocking of the net; others are more targeted and capillary, such as those put in place in some Western democracies, which nevertheless prove to be decidedly invasive. Even more constraining, however, turn out to be some powers that Barlow's statement did not consider at all: private ones.

This is the main reason why much of the scientific community in recent years has increasingly manifested a more disenchanted attitude toward the digital revolution, identifying its potential, but also signalling the need to critically equip itself to assess its risks. Legal science has actively participated in this reflection (Rodotà, 2014; Brighi &

Zullo, 2015; Amato, 2020; Casadei & Pietropaoli, 2021; Sartor, 2022). In this direction, the book of Giacomo Pisani (Pisani 2023) addresses one of the most relevant effects of the digital revolution, namely the development of the platform economy.

Algorithmic governmentality

The platform economy consists of an economic model in which individuals, organizations and resources connect and interact with each other through the use of new technologies within a system. This process enables the creation and exchange of value. Platforms today are countless and, as Pisani's mapping documents, different from one another, not only in their intent but also in the way they operate through digital infrastructures governed by algorithms. The latter represents a series of calculations performed by a computer after being translated into a machine language called programming language (Vecchi, 2017).

The algorithm works schematically in this way: it takes input data and, through a series of calculations, translates them into output data. It may be more or less articulate, that is, it may achieve a different degree of autonomy from the person who programmed it (Nuzzo, 2019). The algorithms that govern the economy of platforms are all very complex and refined: that is, they manifest a high capacity for self-learning, often using ideas and concepts from an area called "machine learning". This means that the outcome they arrive to is given by the interplay of the implemented algorithm and the learning part, usually obtained given some training input data. This leads to a sort of "black box"¹ not immediately traceable even for the best-equipped observer by a kind of almost inaccessible.

The degree of autonomy achieved by algorithmic rationality and at the same time the pervasive character it manifests in society calls into question many disciplines, including legal theory, for the following reasons.

Firstly, algorithms are used extensively in the legal sphere, such as in the courts. However, there is no guarantee that they are neutral technologies. Indeed, one cannot underestimate the risk that their black box may incorporate several subjective biases, which are conveyed by the programmer in the construction phase of the algorithm (Kahneman, 2011). As is evident, this could lead to severe effects.

¹ These processes can be so complex that they mimic the mechanisms of human neural networks. For more details, the reader can refer to Wang & Siau, 2019; Amato Mangiameli, 2019.

This has already happened in the COMPAS case (Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions): a software produced by a private company to assess the risk of recidivism through statistical analysis. An independent investigation showed how the software was discriminatory against people of colour, due to a bias transmitted during its design. But there is more. An algorithm, before it goes live, is generally set through a sort of training on a limited sample of people.

It may happen, however, that the sample turns out to be misleading and that this leads to a series of chain errors in the development of algorithmic rationality. Giacomo Pisani cites as an example the case of Skynet, a system developed to identify members of terrorist groups linked to Al-Qaeda using the mobile traffic data of about 55 million Pakistanis. It was calculated that the algorithm's error rate, in that case, was 0.18 per cent: a seemingly negligible figure, but when projected onto a population of 55 million, it would be equivalent to about 99 thousand people falsely accused of terrorism (Sabelli, 2018).

Secondly, legal science cannot ignore that algorithms determine the risk of reproducing or exacerbating strong power asymmetries on the social level. This issue is one of the crucial matters discussed within Pisani's text. The author highlights how the platform economy poses a load of exploitation and conditioning at different levels. First, the retrieval of big data takes place, that is, a gigantic amount of sensitive data that is provided (for free) by users every time they access a platform.

This could be interpreted as a kind of original 2.0 expropriation on the global level of a property intangible but not for this reason without value: personal data, which contemporary capitalism is storing on a colossal scale. Due to their sheer volume, these data make it possible, through processes of statistical inference, to effectively interpret and use it to predict preferences, habits, moods, behaviours, and lifestyles of a very large number of subjects.²

This, however, is but the first part of the platforms' work. In fact, algorithmic rationality is not limited to a data cataloguing function or even to predictive work concerning users' choices. It increasingly turns out to be able to condition, through more or less surreptitious strategies, the choices of subjects. In other words, platforms are a device, perhaps the best performing of those tested so far, of "surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff & Schwandt, 2019), whose primary objective is to replace autonomy, a possible matrix

² On the exploitation capacity of platform capitalism, the reader can refer to Cuppini et al, 2022.

of instability, with heteronomous action, that is, to limit users' freedom of choice to the point of making it only apparent, illusory (Orrù, 2021).

Using a Foucaultian reading key, Pisani highlights how algorithmic orientation devices exert on subjects what can be called a governmental power, which functions to the extent that it recognizes freedom but at the same time shapes it, that is, molds it into the most advantageous form (Luce, 2023).

Pisani states that “the devices included within algorithmic relationality tend to produce an immediate adherence of the subject, through stimulation of his unreflected impulses, which allows him to bypass the moment of decision [...]. At stake in data management is the ability of users to exercise their right to self-determination, the protection of which can only take place within algorithmic rationality” (Pisani, 2023, pp. 40-45).

Between users and platforms, an osmotic relationship is determined that prevents one from understanding whether a decision put in place by the subject can be said to be truly autonomous. For this reason, there is no possibility of resistance concerning algorithmic governmentality, except by reckoning with the full extent of its power over the lives of subjects.

Any critical reading on the platform economy must consider that algorithmic rationality does not merely condition users, rather it determines them, makes them subjects, and “any hypothesis of subjective emancipation that claims to place itself ‘outside’ algorithmic power relations is doomed to failure. Any reflection on the possibility of protecting the right to self-determination in the digital age can only start from the assumption of the constitutive exposure of the subject's identity to the digital horizon, marked by algorithmic data management” (Pisani, 2023, p. 44).

On-demand economy

Platforms promise the disintermediation and self-determination of the individual, but at the same time they prove capable of exercising widespread social control, which affects every aspect of life: from education, consumption, health, the sentimental and sexual life of subjects, to the world of work.

The latter is the subject of a particularly meticulous analysis by Pisani, who highlights how the model of algorithmic governmentality proves suitable for interpreting platform-mediated work: work in the times of the on-demand economy.

The function of platforms is, in many cases, to allow individuals to “sell” their workforce (Raimondi, 2019). This is, apparently, a possibility that expands the freedom of

choice of the individual, who can skip all forms of intermediation (except for the “invisible” one of the platform itself) and choose when and for whom to work, accessing an alternative recruitment system (apparently more welcoming and rewarding) than the traditional ones.³ As Pisani highlights in the volume, the freedom granted to the worker in the on-demand economy, however, is more apparent than real (Donini, 2015).

This appearance of freedom and the mechanisms of exploitation it veils can be made explicit in the following examples. First, platforms play the role of work designers, putting in place a series of “hegemonic control strategies, with sometimes very pervasive effects” in the lives of workers (Pisani, 2023, p. 50). They govern every stage of the labour relationship: from selection to disciplining and controlling personnel. The contractual condition recognized on paper to the subject — who remains, formally a self-employed worker — in many cases does not leave him with greater margins of freedom than those of an employee: for example, the platforms ensure employees forms of control (such as GPS) and determine reward and punitive measures that can go as far as account deactivation: a euphemism for termination of the employment relationship. They also devise very stringent shift patterns by providing various grey times when workers, while not formally on duty, are still found to be on call. This is the case, for example, with riders, who may sometimes be logged into the platform even when their shift is over. This, of course, contributes to blurring the boundary between work time and free time for workers⁴ and, in general, to limiting the tools of defense against possible harassment and injustice suffered by the employer (Armano et al, 2017).

Second, the on-demand economy presupposes that everyone is operating in a labour market characterized by an inexhaustible labor pool, within which the worker is in a condition of constant competition with others, often exacerbated by wage poverty, extreme contractual precariousness and the expectations of stabilization that he legitimately cultivates (Mazzetti, 2021). It becomes de facto obligatory, for anyone who wants to endure in his or her job position, to continually adapt to the standards dictated by the degree of satisfaction manifested by the customers that the platform records and reworks (Bano, 2019; 2021). Every worker, we could say, must become “entrepreneurs of themselves.” This formula, a true mantra of the neoliberal age, indicates in this case the need on the part of the individual to carry out his or her job performance not merely by using normal diligence, as required in a traditional labor

³ Some authors have interpreted this “governed freedom” of digital workers through the interpretation of voluntary servitude illustrated by Étienne de la Boétie. For more details, the reader can refer to Messinier, 2022.

⁴ These gray areas between work time and life time often exist for remote workers as well. For more details, the reader can refer to Senatori, 2021; Balzano, 2021.

relationship, but by capitalizing on all the resources at one's disposal. The worker is especially required to have so-called soft skills: empathy, emotional skills, personal relationships, and lateral thinking (including making up for errors attributable to the operation of the platform).

Hetero-organized collaboration

The innovations introduced by the on-demand economy highlight the transformations that labour has undergone in organizational models since the crisis of Taylorism-Fordism. The Taylorist model fits quite neatly into the pattern identified by Marx in the *Grundrisse*: it presupposed the sale of the creative force of the worker (capable of producing wealth) to capital. In this scheme, the greater the creativity sold to capital, the greater the profit the latter could make. In the age of the on-demand economy, things become more complicated: it is insufficient for workers to simply work longer hours to produce more wealth, instead they must work in a different manner that demands they put their entire existence in service of profit.

The primary problem to be addressed on the legal level, then, is to rethink the forms of protection offered to the worker. Many of them have been elaborated using the Marxian-Taylorist framework as reference, that is, dwelling on the degree of exploitation that the worker may be subjected to in a physical place (e.g., the factory) and at a precise time (the working hours, precisely). In a reality in which the physical boundaries between work and home environments or the temporal boundaries between work time and life time are becoming more blurred, the law must equip itself to read the new forms of subalternity or exploitation that the worker may suffer. Pisani carefully analyses the interventions that legislature and jurisprudence have so far accomplished in this direction. He carefully illustrates, for example, how L. 128/2019, through the notion of hetero-organized collaboration, has allowed platform workers to be differently framed, bringing their status (and the protections attached to it) closer to that of employees in Italy (Forlivesi, 2022). The author also dwells on the case law that, starting with the Palermo Court ruling N. 3750, 24/11/2020, has realised an avowedly evolutionary interpretation of the concept of subordination, using it “as a possible scheme through which to arrive at the qualification of platform labour relations” (Pisani, 2023, p. 85).⁵

Algorithmic governmentality seems so unbridled, however, that individual corrective interventions in a general framework of rules that remain unchanged will

⁵ Pisani, 2023, p. 85. For more details, the reader can refer to Perulli, 2021.

not suffice to protect people, nor will the work of enlightened jurisprudence that proves particularly diligent in the vigilant care of rights. Rather, the goal for the future remains to rethink not only the catalogue of workers' rights to thwart old and new forms of exploitation but, more radically, to review the very conditions of the social compact (Carrà, 2020). This, as is evident, cannot be an endeavour for jurists and scholars alone. To fulfil it will require collective action, recognizing the indispensable role of citizens "both as individuals and in social formations" (Art. 2 Const.). Because, as the author says, only "Subjects, acting within collective organizations that assume a regulatory function within the legal system, can become active participants in the construction of the digital horizon in which they now lead much of their existence" (Pisani, 2023, p. 170).

References

- Amato Mangiameli, A. C. (2019). Algoritmi e big data. Dalla carta sulla robotica. *Rivista di filosofia del diritto*, 1, 107-124.
- Amato, S. (2020). *Biodiritto 4.0. Intelligenza artificiale e nuove tecnologie*. Giappichelli.
- Armano, E., Murgia, A. & Teli, M. (Eds.) (2017). *Platform capitalism e confini del lavoro negli spazi digitali*. Mimesis.
- Balbi, G. (2022). *L'Ultima ideologia. Breve storia della rivoluzione digitale*. Laterza.
- Balzano, S. (2021). *Contro lo smartworking*. Laterza.
- Bano, F. (2019). Il lavoro povero nell'economia digitale. *Lavoro e diritto*, 33, 129-148.
- Bano, F. (2021). Quando lo sfruttamento è smart. *Lavoro e diritto*, 35(2), 303, 320.
- Barberis, M. (2020). *Come internet sta uccidendo la democrazia*. Chiarelettere.
- Barlow, J. P. (1996). *A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace*. <https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence#main-content>.
- Bello, B.G. (2021). I discorsi d'odio in rete. In T. Casadei & S. Pietropaoli (Eds.), *Diritto e tecnologie informatiche. Questioni di informatica giuridica, prospettive istituzionali e sfide sociali* (pp. 247-262). Cedam.
- Brighi R., & Zullo, S. (2015). *Filosofia del diritto e nuove tecnologie. Prospettive di ricerca tra teoria e pratica*. Aracne.
- Cadoppi, A., Canestrani, S., Manna, A., & Papa, M. (2019). *Trattato di diritto penale – Cybercrime*. Utet giuridica.
- Carrà, S. (2020). *Non solo lavoretti. Verso un nuovo statuto del lavoro*. Rosenberg & Sellier.
- Casadei T. & Pietropaoli, S. (Eds.) (2021). *Diritto e tecnologie informatiche. Questioni di informatica giuridica, prospettive istituzionali e sfide sociali*. Cedam.
- Cuppini, N., Frapporti, M., Mezzadra, S. & Pirone, M. (2022). Il capitalismo nel tempo delle piattaforme. Infrastrutture digitali, nuovi spazi e soggettività algoritmiche. *Rivista italiana di Filosofia politica*, 2, 103-124. <https://doi.org/10.36253/rifp-1686>
- Di Tano, F. (2019). *Hate Speech e molestie in rete. Profili giuridici e prospettive de iure condendo*. Aracne.
- Di Tano, F. (2021). I reati informatici e i fenomeni di cyberstalking, del cyberbullismo e del revenge porn. In Th. Casadei & S. Pietropaoli (Eds.), *Diritto e tecnologie informatiche. Questioni di informatica giuridica, prospettive istituzionali e sfide sociali* (pp. 165-178). Cedam.
- Donini, A. (2015). Il lavoro digitale su piattaforma. *Labour & Law Issues*, 1, 50-71.
- Floridi, L. (2017). *La quarta rivoluzione. Come l'infosfera sta cambiando il mondo*. Raffaello Cortina.

- Forlivesi, M. (2022). La L. 128/2019: in direzione ostinata e contraria a fianco dei lavoratori del food delivery. In M. M. Bidetti, C. de Marchis Gómez, & S. Vacirca (Eds.), *Quo vadis rider. La lotta umana e sindacale dei ciclofattorini* (pp. 201-211). Futura.
- Freedom House (2021). *Freedom on the net 2021, The Global Drive to Control Big Tech*. <https://freedomhouse.org/>
- Frosini, T. E. (2019). *Liberté, égalité, Internet* (2nd edition). Jovene.
- Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Ferrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Luce, S. (2023). Verità e soggettivazione nell'odierna governamentalità algoritmica. Una riflessione a partire da Michel Foucault. *Ragion Pratica*, 61, 373-390.
- Mazzetti, M. (2021). Amazon: taylorismo digitale e diritti dei lavoratori. *Lavoro e diritto*, 2, 359, 371.
- Messinier, T. (2022). La servitù volontaria nella società algoritmica. *Filosofia politica*, 1, pp. 85-100.
- Murino, F. (2021). *Dalla firma elettronica agli smart contract*. In T. Casadei & S. Pietropaoli (Eds.), *Diritto e tecnologie informatiche* (pp. 71-90). Wolters Kluwer.
- Nuzzo, A. (2019). Algoritmi e regole. *Analisi giuridica*, 1, 39-46.
- Orrù, E. (2021). Verso un nuovo Panottico? La sorveglianza digitale. In T. Casadei & S. Pietropaoli (Eds.), *Diritto e tecnologie informatiche* (pp. 203-218). Wolters Kluwer.
- Perulli, A. (2021). Il rider di Glovo: tra subordinazione, eterorganizzazione e libertà. *Argomenti di diritto del lavoro*, 1, 37-70.
- Pisani, G. (2023). *Piattaforme digitali e autodeterminazione. Relazioni sociali, lavoro e diritti al tempo della governamentalità algoritmica*. Mucchi editore.
- Raimondi, E. (2019). Il lavoro nelle piattaforme digitali e il problema della qualificazione della fattispecie. *Labour & Law Issues*, 5(2), 57, 94.
- Rodotà, S. (2012) *Il diritto di avere diritti*. Laterza.
- Rodotà, S. (2014). *Il mondo della rete. Quali diritti, quali vincoli*. Laterza.
- Sabelli, C. (2018). *Smettiamo di credere ciecamente agli algoritmi*. <https://www.scienzainrete.it/articolo/smettiamo-di-credere-ciecamente-negli-algoritmi/chiara-sabelli/2018-09-12>.
- Sartor, G. (2022). *L'informatica giuridica e le tecnologie dell'informazione. Corso di informatica giuridica*. Giappichelli.
- Sartori, L. (2006). *Il divario digitale, Internet e le nuove diseguaglianze sociali*. Il Mulino.
- Senatori, I. (2021). “Remoto” e “Multilocale”: l'impatto della trasformazione digitale nei mondi del lavoro. In T. Casadei & S. Pietropaoli (Eds.), *Diritto e tecnologie informatiche* (pp. 91-103). Wolters Kluwer.
- Stazi, A. (2019). *Automazione contrattuale e “contratti intelligenti”. Gli smart contract nel diritto comparato*. Giappichelli.

- Sunstein, C. S. (2017). *@Republic*. Princeton University Press.
- Van Dijk, J. (2020). *The digital divide*. Polity.
- Vantin, S. (2021). Digital divide. Discriminazioni e vulnerabilità nell'epoca della rete globale. *STAMPA*, 233-245.
- Vecchi, B. (2017). *Il capitalismo delle piattaforme*. Manifestolibri.
- Vitale, E., Cattaneo, F. (Eds.). (2018). *Web e società democratica. Un matrimonio difficile*. Academia University Press.
- Wang, W., Siau, K. (2019). Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Automation, Robotics, Future of Work and Future of Humanity: A Review and Research Agenda. *Journal of Database Management*, 30(1), 61-79. <https://doi.org/10.4018/JDM.2019010104>
- Zuboff, S., & Schwandt, K. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism: the fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*. Profile Books.

SOBRE LA REVISTA

Soft Power es una revista que nace del trabajo conjunto de estudiosos del sur de Europa y de América Latina, con el objetivo de solicitar la investigación sobre el nuevo paradigma de poder gubernamental, que hoy organiza el mundo, con especial atención a la zona geopolítica.

En respuesta a la urgente necesidad de repensar las categorías jurídicas y políticas tradicionales de la modernidad, tiene como objetivo el análisis crítico y reflexivo, centrado en resaltar el carácter problemático de actualidad.

Soft Power es publicada semestralmente. Asume un lenguaje interdisciplinario para garantizar la pluralidad de puntos de vista sobre el enfoque temático elegido, dando espacio a las contribuciones de filósofos políticos y del derecho, politólogos e historiadores del pensamiento político, pero también economistas y sociólogos.

La revista también tiene una sección, un *forum* de discusión, que le abre paso a la lectura de un libro de gran resonancia y analiza su tema desde diferentes perspectivas.

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

Soft Power is a review born from the joint work of scholars of the South Europe-Latin America, with the aim of hastening the research on the new paradigm of governmental power, which organizes the world with particular attention to that geopolitical area. Responding to the urgency of a rethinking of the traditional legal and political categories of modernity, it intends its analysis as critical as reflective, focused as it is onto highlighting problems of the present time.

Soft Power is published semi-annually. It adopts an interdisciplinary language to ensure the plurality of perspectives on the theme proposed from time to time, giving room to the contributions of political and law philosophers, political scientists and historians of political thought, as well as economists and sociologists.

The review also has a section, a discussion forum, that moving from the reading of a book of great resonance and importance, and it analyzes its topic from different perspectives.

NORMAS PARA LOS AUTORES DE LA REVISTA

Indicaciones para los artículos

Los artículos deben ser enviados como archivo al correo electrónico softpower.journal@gmail.com. Con cada contribución enviada a *Soft Power Journal* se debe adjuntar una carta donde el autor declara que el artículo no se ha presentado a otra revista y que no lo será mientras que la dirección no haya rechazado su publicación (Declaración de originalidad y de exclusividad). Después de la recepción, el Comité Editorial evaluará si el artículo cumple con las condiciones básicas requeridas por la revista. Posteriormente a este primer proceso interno de evaluación, el artículo se someterá a la evaluación de árbitros anónimos externos con un procedimiento de *blind peer reviewed*. El resultado de la evaluación será comunicado al autor en un período inferior a seis meses de la recepción del artículo. Si se requiere, el autor deberá tomar en cuenta las observaciones del evaluador, aportar los ajustes solicitados y reenviar la contribución correcta en un plazo no superior a los quince días. Al momento de recibir el artículo modificado, el Comité Editorial le informará al autor de su aprobación. Se asume que los artículos tienen el consentimiento de los autores para la publicación a título gratuito. El Comité Editorial se reservará el derecho de decidir en qué número aparecerán los manuscritos aceptados.

Los artículos enviados deberán respetar los siguientes requisitos:

- El texto no podrá tener una extensión superior a 40/50 000 caracteres (tamaño DIN A4), incluyendo resúmenes, cuadros, gráficos, notas de pie de página y referencias al final de cada artículo.
- El texto irá en letra Times New Roman tamaño 12, a espacio 1,5 líneas; las notas de pie de página irán en letra Times New Roman tamaño 10 a espacio sencillo.
- En la primera página debe figurar el título centrado y en mayúsculas. Más abajo se escribirán, también centrados, el nombre y apellido del autor o autores, así

como el centro o la institución a la que está(n) adscrito(s). En seguida debe figurar un resumen (*abstract*) con una extensión de entre 100 y 150 palabras y una lista de palabras clave (*keywords*) de 3 a 5 términos. Tanto el título como el resumen y la lista de palabras clave deben tener una versión en español y otra en inglés, para facilitar su inclusión en las bases de datos internacionales y en los repertorios bibliográficos.

- El artículo debe venir acompañado de los datos que permitan contactar al autor (dirección de correo electrónico), así como de un breve currículum indicativo (datos académicos, líneas de investigación y principales publicaciones). Se debe especificar el número de líneas o renglones o número de palabras o caracteres.
- Para las citas, estas se entrecomillarán “al comienzo y al final del texto”. Las citas largas (más de tres líneas) deberán ir sangradas dejando una línea en blanco antes y otra después de la cita. No deberá ser así cuando el texto largo venga citado como nota o dentro de ella.

Las citas bibliográficas se basan en pautas establecidas por la American Psychological Association (APA) 7 edición. Los autores deben adecuarse estrictamente al esquema presentado a continuación:

- **Para citar libros (un autor):**

En el texto: (Hart, 1961, p. 15)

Referencia al final de cada artículo:

Hart, H. L. A. (1961). *The Concept of Law*. London: Oxford University Press.

Si el libro tiene más de una edición o volúmenes o se cita algún tomo (t.) o volumen (vol./vols.) en particular, la referencia es la siguiente:

En el texto: (Basadre, 1983, VI, p. 57) que equivale al tomo sexto, página 57, de la obra de Basadre del año 1983.

Referencia al final de cada artículo:

Basadre, J. (1983). *Historia de la República*. 7.ª ed., t. 11. Editorial Universitaria.

- **Para citar libros (dos o más autores):**

En el texto: (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 185)

Referencia al final de cada artículo:

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1980). *Mille Plateaux Capitalisme et Schizophrénie*. Les Editions du Minuit.

- **Para citar capítulos de libro, artículos de monografías colectivas, prólogos, epílogos:**
 En el texto: (Rosenau, 2004, p. 19).
 Referencia al final de cada artículo:
 Rosenau, J. N. (1992). Governance, Order, and Chang in World Politics. En J. N. Rosenau & E. O. Czempiel (Eds.), *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (pp. 1-29). Cambridge University Press.
- **Para citar artículos de revistas científicas y de diarios:**
 En el texto: (Bazzicalupo, 2016, p. 59)
 Referencia al final de cada artículo:
 Bazzicalupo, L. (2016). Populismo y liberalismo: la pretensión de la inmanencia. *Soft Power. Revista euro-americana de teoría e historia de la política y del derecho*, 4(2), 57-70.
- **Para citar documentos de internet:**
 En el texto: (Rosanvallon, 2004)
 Referencia al final de cada artículo:
 Rosanvallon, P. (2004). La democracia en América Latina. En PNUD. *Contribuciones para un debate. Comentarios*. www.ndipartidos.org/es/node/1336.

Eventual indicación del traductor irá al final del texto.

Los artículos que no se adecuen a estas características serán devueltos.

Indicaciones para reseñas y ensayos bibliográficos

Las reseñas y los ensayos deben enviarse como archivo al correo electrónico softpower.journal@gmail.com. El texto, acompañado de los datos que permitan contactar al autor, deberá presentarse a espacio sencillo y en letra Times New Roman tamaño 12; las notas de pie de página, en letra Times New Roman tamaño 10. Las reseñas deben constar de máximo 4 páginas; los ensayos bibliográficos, de un máximo de 10 páginas.

El Comité Editorial evaluará la publicación de los textos y decidirá en qué número se publicarán.

EDITORIAL RULES FOR AUTHORS

Recommendations for articles

The articles shall be sent as an archive file to the e-mail softpower.journal@gmail.com. The authors have to add a paper stating that the article has not been sent to another journal and it will not until the direction will take a decision about the publication (Declaration of originality and exclusivity). After receiving, the Editorial Board evaluates if the article is in line with the basic conditions requested by the journal. After this internal evaluation, the article will be submitted to an external anonymous referee with a process of *blind peer reviewed*. The result will be communicated to the author not later than six months after receiving the article. If requested, referee's remarks shall be taken into account by the author, which shall make corrections and send again the text within fifteen days. When receiving the amended text, the Editorial Board will inform the author about the approval. It is assumed that the publication of the articles is free of charge. The Editorial Board reserves the right to decide the issue in which the article will be published.

The articles shall fulfill the following requirements:

- The text shall not exceed 7 000 words (A4 sheet), including abstracts, tables, graphics, footnotes and bibliography page at the end of each article.
- The text shall be written in Times New Roman, 12 points, 1,5 line spacing; footnotes shall be written in Times New Roman, 10 points, single spacing.
- The title shall appear on the first page, centered and in capitals. Then the name and surname of the author or authors and their affiliation, also centered, shall appear and then an abstract (among 100-150 words) and a list of keywords (among 3 and 5). The title, abstract and the keyword list shall have both a Spanish and an English version, in order to facilitate the inclusion in international databases and bibliographic indexes.
- The articles shall be accompanied by information for contacting the author (e-mail address) and by a short *curriculum* (academic information, research topics and main publications).

- Quotes shall be written in double quotation marks “at beginning and at the end”. Long quotes (more than three lines) shall be preceded and followed by a blank line (not if the text is quoted as a footnote or inside it).

Bibliographic references are based on guidelines established by the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition. Authors must strictly adapt to the scheme presented below:

- **Book (one author):**

In the text: (Hart, 1961, p. 15)

Reference to the end of each article:

Hart, H. L. A. (1961). *The Concept of Law*. London: Oxford University Press.

If the book has more than one edition or volume, or a book (bk) or volume is cited (vol./vols.) in particular, the reference will read as follows:

In the text: (Basadre, 1983, VI, p. 57) which means volume six, page 57 of the 1983 work of Basadre.

- **Reference to the end of each article:**

Basadre, J. (1983). *Historia de la República*, 7.^a ed., t.11. Editorial Universitaria.

Book (two or more authors):

In the text: (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 185)

- **Reference to the end of each article:**

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1980). *Mille Plateaux Capitalisme et Schizophrénie*. Les Editions du Minuit.

- **Book chapter, articles of collective monographs, prefaces and epilogues:**

In the text: (Rosenau, 2004, p. 19).

Reference to the end of each article:

Rosenau, J. N. (1992). Governance, Order, and Change in World Politics. En J. N. Rosenau & E. O. Czempiel (Eds.), *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (pp. 1-29). Cambridge University Press.

- **Articles of scientific journal and newspaper articles:**

In the text: (Bazzicalupo, 2016, p. 59)

Reference to the end of each article:

Bazzicalupo, L. (2016). Populismo y liberalismo: la pretensión de la inmanencia. *Soft Power. Revista euro-americana de teoría e historia de la política y del derecho*, 4(2), pp. 57-70.

- **Internet documents:**

In the text: (Rosanvallon, 2004)

Reference to the end of each article:

Rosanvallon, P. (2004). La democracia en América Latina. En PNUD. *Contribuciones para un debate. Comentarios*. www.ndipartidos.org/es/node/1336.

Any indication of the translator will go to the end of the text.

Articles not fulfilling these requirements will be rejected.

Recommendations for reviews and bibliographical essays:

Reviews and bibliographical essays shall be sent as an archive file to the e-mail softpower.journal@gmail.com. The text shall be accompanied by information for contacting the author and shall be written with single spacing in Times New Roman, 10 points. Reviews shall not exceed 4 pages; bibliographical essays shall not exceed 10 pages.

The Editorial Board will evaluate the publication of the text and will decide the issue in which it will be included.

CÓDIGO DE ÉTICA

Prevenir publicaciones negligentes es una de las importantes responsabilidades del Consejo y del Comité Editorial. Este código describe la política de *Soft Power* para asegurar el tratamiento ético de todos los participantes en la revisión entre pares y en el proceso de publicación. Editores, revisores y autores están invitados a estudiar estas directrices y dirigir cualquier pregunta o duda a los correos: vgiordano@unisa.it o softpower.journal@gmail.com.

Esta guía se aplica a los manuscritos presentados a *Soft Power* a partir del 1.º de enero del 2014 y podrán ser revisados en cualquier momento por el Editor y el Consejo Editorial.

Deberes del Editor

El Editor es responsable del contenido de la revista y de garantizar la integridad de todo el trabajo que se publica en ella.

- **Las decisiones sobre la publicación:** El Editor tiene el derecho de tomar la decisión final sobre si aceptar o rechazar un manuscrito en referencia a la importancia, originalidad y claridad del manuscrito, y su relevancia para la revista.
- **Revisión de los manuscritos:** *Soft Power* sigue un proceso de revisión de “doble ciego”, por lo que los autores no conocen a los revisores y viceversa. El Editor se hace responsable de obtener la revisión oportuna, independiente y anónima de revisores debidamente cualificados que no tienen intereses en competencia de descalificación, de todos los manuscritos enviados a la revista. El Editor se hace responsable de asegurar que la revista tenga acceso a un número suficiente de evaluadores competentes.
- **Justa revisión:** El Editor y el Comité Editorial deben asegurarse de que cada manuscrito recibido por *Soft Power* sea revisado por su contenido intelectual sin distinción de sexo, género, raza, religión, nacionalidad, etc., de los autores.
- **Confidencialidad de la documentación presentada:** El Editor y el Comité Editorial asegurarán adecuados sistemas de control para garantizar la confiden-

cialidad y la protección contra el uso indebido del material enviado a la revista durante la fase de revisión; la protección de las identidades de los autores y evaluadores; además, se comprometen a adoptar todas las medidas razonables para preservar la confidencialidad de las identidades de los autores y revisores.

- **Divulgación:** El Editor debe garantizar que los manuscritos presentados se procesan de manera confidencial y que ningún contenido de los manuscritos será compartido con nadie más que el autor correspondiente o los revisores.
- **Conflictos de interés:** El Editor debería excluir de considerar manuscritos que tienen un real o potencial conflicto de interés que resulte de las relaciones o conexiones competitivas, de colaboración, financieras o de otro tipo con cualquiera de los autores, empresas o instituciones relacionadas con el manuscrito.
- **Autoridad:** Al Editor pertenece la decisión última y la responsabilidad de la revista. El Editor debe respetar los componentes de la revista (lectores, autores, revisores, equipo editorial) y trabajar para garantizar la honestidad e integridad de los contenidos de la revista y asegurar una mejora continua en la calidad de la revista.

Deberes de los revisores

- **Justa revisión:** Los revisores deben evaluar los manuscritos de manera objetiva, justa y profesional. Los revisores deben evitar prejuicios personales en sus comentarios y evaluaciones, y deben expresar sus opiniones claramente con argumentos de apoyo. Los revisores deben proporcionar revisiones fundamentadas y justas. Estos deben evitar ataques personales y no deben incluir ninguna opinión que sea difamatoria, inexacta, engañosa, obscena, escandalosa, ilegal o de cualquier otra forma objetable, o que infrinja los derechos de autor de cualquier otra persona, derecho de privacidad u otros derechos.
- **Confidencialidad:** La información relativa a los manuscritos presentados por los autores debe ser confidencial y será tratada como información privilegiada. Los revisores no deben discutir del manuscrito con cualquier persona que no sea el editor, ni deben discutir cualquier información del manuscrito sin permiso.
- **Certificación de las fuentes:** Los revisores de los manuscritos deben asegurarse de que los autores hayan señalado todas las fuentes de datos utilizadas en la investigación. Cualquier tipo de similitud o coincidencia entre los manuscritos

considerados con cualquier otro documento publicado de los cuales los revisores tienen conocimiento personal debe ser inmediatamente comunicada al Editor.

- **Puntualidad:** En el caso de que el revisor perciba que no es posible para él/ella completar la revisión del manuscrito en el plazo estipulado, debe comunicar esta información al Editor, de manera tal que el manuscrito pueda ser enviado a otro revisor.
- **Derecho de rechazo:** Los revisores deben negarse a revisar los manuscritos: a) cuando el autor ha formulado observaciones escritas sobre el manuscrito o sobre su versión anterior; b) cuando aparecen conflictos de interés que resulten de relaciones de colaboración, financieras, institucionales, personales o conexiones de otro tipo con cualquiera de las empresas, instituciones o personas ligadas a los artículos.
- **Quejas:** Cualquier queja relativa a la revista debe, en primera instancia, ser dirigida al Editor de *Soft Power*.

Deberes de los autores

- **Originalidad:** Los autores deben garantizar que ninguna parte de su trabajo es una copia de cualquier otro trabajo, ya sea escrito por ellos mismos u otros, y que el trabajo es original y no ha sido previamente publicado en su totalidad o en parte sustancial.
- **La autoría del artículo:** La autoría se limita a aquellos que han dado una contribución significativa a la concepción, diseño, ejecución o interpretación del estudio presentado. Otros que han hecho una contribución significativa deben estar inscritos como coautores. El autor debe asegurarse de que todos los coautores hayan avalado la versión definitiva del documento y acordado su publicación final.
- **El plagio y autoplagio:** El trabajo en el manuscrito debe estar libre de cualquier plagio, falsificación, fabricaciones u omisión de material significativo. El plagio y el autoplagio representan un comportamiento editorial poco ético y son inaceptables. *Soft Power* se reserva el derecho de evaluar los problemas de plagio y redundancia en una base de datos, caso por caso.
- **Reconocimiento de las fuentes y de los conflictos de intereses:** El autor debe

indicar explícitamente todas las fuentes que han apoyado la investigación y también declarar cualquier conflicto de interés.

- **Puntualidad:** Los autores deben ser puntuales con la revisión de sus manuscritos. Si un autor no puede cumplir con el plazo establecido, debe escribir a los correos vgiordano@unisa.it o softpower.journal@gmail.com tan pronto como sea posible para determinar la posibilidad de prorrogar la entrega del artículo o su retirada del proceso de revisión.

El Código de Ética de la revista *Soft Power* se basa principalmente en las siguientes fuentes en línea:

- COPE - Committee on Publication Ethics, 2011. Code of conduct and best practice guidelines for journal editors.
- Ethical-Guidelines, 2011. Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2011.

CODE OF ETHICS

The prevention of publication malpractice is one of the most important responsibilities of the Editorial Board. This Code describes *Soft Power*'s policies for ensuring the ethical treatment of all participants in the peer review and publication process. Editors, Reviewers and Authors are encouraged to study these guidelines and address any questions or concerns to the vgiordano@unisa.it or softpower.journal@gmail.com.

These guidelines apply to manuscripts submitted to *Soft Power* starting January, 1, 2014, and may be revised at any time by the Editorial Board.

Duties of Editor

The Editor is responsible for the content of the journal and for ensuring the integrity of all work that is published in it.

- **Publication decisions:** The Editor has the right to make the final decision on whether to accept or reject a manuscript with reference to the significance, originality, and clarity of the manuscript and its relevance to the journal.
- **Review of manuscripts:** *Soft Power* follows a double-blind review process, whereby Authors do not know Reviewers and vice versa. The Editor is responsible for securing timely, independent and anonymous peer review from suitably qualified reviewers who have no disqualifying competing interests, of all manuscripts submitted to the journal. The Editor is responsible for ensuring that the journal has access to an adequate number of competent reviewers.
- **Fair Review:** The Editor and their editorial staff must ensure that each manuscript received by *Soft Power* is reviewed for its intellectual content without regard to sex, gender, race, religion, citizenship, etc. of the authors.
- **Confidentiality of submitted material:** The Editor and the editorial staff will ensure that systems are in place to ensure the confidentiality and protection from misuse of material submitted to the journal while under review and the protection of authors' and reviewers' identities and will themselves take all reasonable steps to preserve the confidentiality of authors' and reviewers' identities.

- **Disclosure:** The Editor should ensure that submitted manuscripts are processed in a confidential manner, and that no content of the manuscripts will be disclosed to anyone other than the corresponding author, reviewers, as appropriate.
- **Conflicts of interest:** The Editor should excuse themselves from considering a manuscript in which they have a real or potential conflict of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, financial or other relationships or connections with any of the Authors, companies or institutions connected to the manuscript.
- **Authority:** The Editor must have ultimate authority and responsibility for the Journal. The Editor should respect the Journal's constituents (Readers, Authors, Reviewers, Editorial Staff), and work to ensure the honesty and integrity of the Journal's contents and continuous improvement in journal quality.

Duties of reviewers

- **Fair reviews:** Reviewers should evaluate manuscripts objectively, fairly and professionally. Reviewers should avoid personal biases in their comments and judgments and they should express their views clearly with supporting arguments. Reviewers must provide substantiated and fair reviews. These must avoid personal attack, and not include any material that is defamatory, inaccurate, libelous, misleading, obscene, scandalous, unlawful, or otherwise objectionable, or that infringes any other person's copyright, right of privacy, or other rights.
- **Confidentiality:** Information regarding manuscripts submitted by authors should be kept confidential and be treated as privileged information. Reviewers should not discuss the manuscript with anyone other than the Editor, nor should they discuss any information from the manuscript without permission.
- **Acknowledgement of Sources:** Manuscript reviewers must ensure that authors have acknowledged all sources of data used in the research. Any kind of similarity or overlap between the manuscripts under consideration or with any other published paper of which reviewer has personal knowledge must be immediately brought to the Editor's notice.
- **Timeliness:** In the event that a reviewer feels it is not possible for him/her to complete review of manuscript within stipulated time then this information must be communicated to the Editor/Guest Editor, so that the manuscript could be sent to another reviewer.

- **Right of refusal:** Reviewers should refuse to review manuscripts: a) where they have provided written comments on the manuscript or an earlier version to the Author, b) in which they have any conflicts of interest resulting from collaborative, financial, institutional, personal, or other relationships or connections with any of the companies, institutions, or people connected to the papers.
- **Complain:** Any complaint relating to the journal should, in the first instance be directed towards the Editor of *Soft Power*.

Duties of Authors

- **Originality:** Authors must ensure that no part of their work is copied from any other work, either authored by themselves or others and that the work is original and has not previously been published in whole or substantial part.
- **Authorship of the paper:** Authorship should be limited to those who have made a significant contribution to conception, design, execution or interpretation of the reported study. Others who have made significant contribution must be listed as co-authors. The author should ensure that all co-authors have affirmed the final version of the paper and have agreed on its final publication.
- **Plagiarism and self-plagiarism:** All work in the manuscript should be free of any plagiarism, falsification, fabrications, or omission of significant material. Plagiarism and self-plagiarism constitute unethical publishing behavior and are unacceptable. *Soft Power* reserves the right to evaluate issues of plagiarism and redundancy on a case-by-case basis.
- **Acknowledgement of Sources and Conflict(s) of interests:** The author should indicate explicitly all sources that have supported the research and also declare any conflict(s) of interest.
- **Timeliness:** Authors should be prompt with their manuscript revisions. If an Author cannot meet the deadline given, the Author should contact to vgiordano@unisa.it or softpower.journal@gmail.com as soon as possible to determine whether a longer time period or withdrawal from the review process should be chosen.

The Code of Ethics of *Soft Power* draws heavily from the following on-line sources:

- COPE – Committee on Publication Ethics, 2011. Code of conduct and best practice guidelines for journal editors.
- Ethical-Guidelines, 2011. Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2011.

