

## Politics's genealogy: a theoretical approach

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### Abstract

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

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

### Introduction

The relationship and performance of citizen life in Polis meant active engagement and dedication of all citizens for the progress of the city life, emphasising the creation of a public space in which citizens should participate and live in liberty, because their participation guaranteed the chance to avoid any type of violence that any citizen that took care only for his property could suffer. The house plot represented the private space and there the citizen was easily an object of physical violence and working for the mere fact of fulfilling the principal biological needs and care to his family. But with the appearance of rhetoric in the Polis and with the enlargement of the economic and trade activity, military- political and political activity of one of several groups in the Middle Ages ( such as the Gilds, *confreries* and *compagnos* in Italy: the Gulfs and Ghibellines in France or the Whigs and the Tories in England) politics changed its structure and functions, creating a path for an enlargement of the private sphere. Based on the ideal type of the Greek Polis and in the creation of these small pre-capitalist groups, this article will create an analytical model that will delineate in one side the birth and development of Polis (the public sphere) and the limitation of public space through the exercise of rhetoric and the enlargement of these private economic, military and political activities on the other side. This means that with the inclusion of rhetoric in the Polis space and with the beginning a mediaeval times, is noticed the influence of personal decisions within the public sphere (as is the case of rhetoricians in Polis) and the exercise, occasionally, of personal economic and trade activities out the private space or out of the city that led to a limitation and segmentation of the public sphere and the competition of private individuals to grow and enlarge their economic activities that later on were configured in military armies or in political parties with the aim of preserving and adding more their properties. Based on this argument, for the sake of citizens well-being and their economic, academic, professional and cultural activities, it is more convenient that the space of the city to be understood and assessed as a common space where people try to solve their problems together.

### The birth and development of politics (The Polis)

Before the appearance of Polis, the organization of human life in the Ancient Greece was natural, divided in units such as phratria and phyle (kinship) that were based on physical work that was "the activity that best corresponds to the biological process of the human body, the growth of which, metabolism and disbanding are connected by the needs produced by the physical works that feeds the vital process" (Arendt, 2006, pp. 30). However, this structure dictated by the principal condition

of physical work, led to the continuous increase of needs and desires in function of improving life standards through the acknowledgement of working as a second conditions formulated as below:

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

Due to their nature, these two conditions, led to the translation of this natural organization in a new form that had to do with the natural organization of humans towards material property. Obligated to be developed within the house boundaries, the physical work would carry in the same time the exercise of imposed limitations on family individuals by the needs of the biological life and working would be captured by the individual desire to fall victim of extra physical tiredness of his own hands within his house, - where, - "the husband was obliged for individual attention (providing food for the family), while the wife had to take care for the survival of the species (birth and growth of the baby)" (Arendt, 2006 b, pp. 56). All these would be judged by the Greek philosophers (of that period) as a pre- political phenomenon because the ownership from these needs would justify the use of means of violence with the aim of owning them. That is why "the Greeks did not choose to employ their agile wits in devising aids to physical comfort" (Robinson, 1933, pp. 71). This did not only enforce the fact that "the foundation of Polis was preceded by the destruction of all organized units based on kinship such as phratry and phyle" (Arendt, 2006, c, pp. 49-50) and revealed the third human condition of "Bios Politicos that mean acting (praxis) and speaking (lexis) by which took life the sphere of human works (ta ton anthron pragmata as Plato used to call it) and from which is excluded everything that was necessary or useful" (Arendt, 2006 d, pp. 50). But in order to be a consequence of the third human condition was necessary to own the first two conditions and not being owned by them, because having a house plot or owning necessary objects for living in the house would be a condition for the freedom of Polis that means:

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

Even though the physical work and working could have a location, they were considered as no free activities, because only the exit out of the private sphere of the house and leading towards the human multiplicity (the public sphere), "reveals exactly for the world how much it is common for all and notable by the place we privately occupy on it" (Arendt, 2006 f, pp. 81). This organization was that natural that the activity of public life for a middle class citizen of Athens had to be as diverse as possible for each of them "was a practical politician, an administrator of the law, very possibly a speaker, and quite certainly a soldier or a sailor" (Robinson, 1933 a, pp. 150). Being out of the house and the engagement there where everybody was noticeable and listened from the others, made people to expose themselves to another way of living where speaking and only speaking held meaning till that point that "thinking came after speaking, while speaking and acting were equal in the same range and level and that finding the right words in the right moment, apart the information of the communication they can emit, is acting" (Arendt, 2006 g, pp. 51). According to Pericles, as Thucydides (as cited in Robinson, 1933 b, pp. 152) record of him, "our citizens attend both to private and public duties, allowing no absorption in their own affairs to interfere with their knowledge of the cities. The man who holds aloof from public life, we regard as useless". This configuration of multicity would not stay as such if it would not be characterized by the double nature of equality and extinction among people, because "everywhere there was an atmosphere of genial sociability, very different from the life of our great towns and suburbs where the neighbours often scarcely know one another to speak to" (Robinson, 1933 c, pp. 71). "We have no sour looks for those around us", would say Pericles (as cited in Robinson, 1933 d, pp. 71) in a speech he held in honour of the Athens' character. This means that if people were not equal they would not understand each- other and if they were not different they would not need to speak or act. So, Polis was the place of public sphere: where people did not reign and were not reined by others; where the meaning of words was dictated by the common majority: where the destruction of every deprived life by the need, usefulness and individual attention- that was similar to the animal life without any glory or success due to the isolation within the house walls- would compound "the perpetuity" of human life in the public sphere with the aim of gaining every common good for the time the world will exist. Despite that the mechanical flaw of writing the term Polis differentiates from Politics, the last one stands identically to the meaning of Polis and will serve as a referent for the analysis of following arguments.

### **Restricting Politics through the appearance of rhetoric and the enlargement of personal activities (economic, military, political)**

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

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

The stress shifted from action to the word, as a mean of manipulation more than a specific human way to converse, discuss, rank and resolve problems that could rise in the city space. The focus of rhetoricians' discourse on words and the vocal emphasis on specific terms, created a clash in the discourse content, - that in reality aimed to use words in line with what they expressed and in function of achieving a common goal-, leaving place to its possession by themselves. At this stage, it was important to keep alive their rhetoric and legitimizing a special status of public admirer. For them, the glory and success of the public show shouldn't be displayed in the common majority of people, but should be defined only in some special individual to create ground for their prestige that would manifest not only the fulfilled need of this status but also the need to consume it in a public space as the slave consumed his food to be able to work. Despite the frequency of these shows even during the Roman Empire, where the emperor had the privilege to be the head of state but this does not mean that the public sphere was deleted, because as Abbot (1909) arguments, Respublicca gave to each citizen the right to enjoy the status of citizenship, to participate and decide in issues that dealt with the collective interests in three spaces that were: Contio (gathered for public discussions), Comitia (gathered for the popular assembly) and the one gathered during the gladiators fights. "That is why the language of romans, maybe the most politicized people that we have known till today, used as synonyms the words "live" and "I am among people" (*inter homines esse*) or the words "die" and "cease to be among people" (*inter homines esse esinere*) (Arendt, 2006 i, pp. 31). However, politics starts to feel its destruction during the Middle and Modern Age: even though the moral of the Christian political philosophy, legitimated under the postulate "as long as the world will exist"- meaning that what people had to divide among them was to be in a common world within a given time, - saved its conceptual terrestrial clarity of attention for the common good. Meanwhile, the enlargement of economic activity within the house clenched the public sphere in the private one. The construction of feud systems on public spaces and the dedication of all economic activity in favour of material earnings of the feudal, transformed the natural organization of human life in favour of an economic liberty, that as Taylor (1913) puts it, was seen as an important right of individual activity and permitted to them to own a private property and to initiate financial enterprises according to their choices. "A main feature for this enlargement of private sphere and somehow for the difference between the head of the house in antiquity and the feudal, is that the feudal could decide for justice with his reign boundaries while the head of the house in antiquity, even though he could exercise his power, did not take into consideration any law or justice coming out of the political sphere" (Arendt, 2006 j, pp. 61). These attributions within the house and leading all activities within its boundaries, enforced the feudal that through the rational nature, to specify the role of work or "the profession" for each farmer that worked in his property, with the aim of increasing the material resources and the creation of a dominant – submissive relationship, because the power of a man is the mean that he owns, his present to gain some materials goods in the future (Abbott, 1909 a). "Leading all human activities in the private sphere and modelling all human relationships according to the domestic example took place in the typical medieval professional organization in the cities, *as the Gilds, the konfrenies and compagnons*" (Arendt, 2006 k, pp. 61). Their continuous enlargement would shape that type of human organization that today is called society, but laid its strands in Middle Ages and that meant "an alliance among people for a special purpose" (Arendt, 2006 l, pp. 49), given that it could not have good laws ( economic-political connections) where did not exist a good organization and discipline (Russell, 1962). Even though they resulted successful in weakening and later on the destruction absolute monarchies, giving chance to the foundation of modern states compound by modern societies, the effects of capacity enlargement of this mini societies achieved to fade out the division line between the public and private sphere, "because the structure of citizens and the political unities are known in accordance with the image of a family, the daily works of which should be under the custody of a gigantic administration, all national, same as the house government" (Arendt, 2006 m, pp. 54), while "the easiest way to govern a city that was free before the invasion is to leave its governance to his citizens" (Machiavelli, 2003, pp. 30). This fact for the Greeks could be understood as a falsification to

lose the presence of public sphere, because “the natural socialization, pure social of the human species was considered as a imposed limitation on us by the needs of biological life that are similar as for human animals as for other forms of animal life” (Arendt, 2006 n, pp. 49). The lays of the modern state through the strategic ideologies sustained and calculated efficiently in the division of work and the productive efficiency of small professional mediaeval companies has to do the fact that “scientific thought related with this development is no longer the political science, but the “national economy” or “social economy” or Volkseirtschaft that show a kind “of inclusive domestic economy”” (Arendt, 2006 p, pp. 54). This means that for the ancient Greek, people who believed that a good life lied on material patrimony, would agree with the idea that the state would be happy if it was materially rich, while who accepted that the virtue was the source of individual happiness would require a virtuous state to have a bigger happiness (Taylor, 1913 a). In a way, all this is related to the fact that “these unities of economically organized families are similar with the super human family called “society”, while the political form of its organization is called “nation”. That is why is difficult for us to understand that the term “political economy” in antiquity would be a contradictory word: everything economical, related with the individual life and its survival, as a rule, was a non-political domestic matter” (Arendt, 2006 r, pp. 54-55). The richness of the rational thought in the private sphere – feed by ideas to divide the political sphere and its translation in private space that would function as units for the regulation of “the collective interest”- legitimized the use of means of violence because as it is known from the Greek thought, power and violence are legitimized in this space as the only mean to own the need. Moreover, for not losing the control of means of violence, “the society” delegated them to the nation- state, making the modern state a ruling structure based on institutions and that tried successfully to monopolize the legitimate use of physical violence (Weber, 2007). This doesn’t mean that the state owned an infinite economic power and that the exercise of violence, even on individual of the state or out of the state, required economic capacities, similar as the absolute monarchies where the kings asked for money to their feudal to handle the expenses of wars, offering to them a place in the court or the chance not to pay taxes (Taylor, 1913 b). Liberated by the economic advantages, these societies had not reason not to surrender to the relation of interest that the state could offer, because this mean a higher security of their economic activity. The expansion of the activity and its transformation from pre-capitalist societies in capitalist societies surpassed not only the administrative performance but also the economic performance of the state that according to Russell (1962 a), the principal concept of society was power that appeared in the form of patrimony, armament, influence etc... This made possible for them to perceive themselves as direct rivals of the state that motivated a number of people to engage directly in political life and to have their say in the political power (Weber, 2007 a). The division of the modern society in groups, where the privilege to participate in the so called political life pertained to a minority of people that later on where organized in political parties in defence of their interest as is the case of the Gulfs and the Ghibellines that were known as pure personal groups or as in England the Whigs and the Tories that were known as representative parties of the aristocracy (Weber, 2007 b). Clearly the unique and final aim of these political parties in the modern era that served as an axiom for the development of future political parties with an ideological, social – cultural and physiological nature etc., had to do with the attempt to share a part of power or to influence in its distribution among states or among small groups within the state (Weber, 2007 c).

## Conclusion

We cannot deny the fact that the political actor managed to destroy the space where was exercised participation and common decision taking of citizens that were part of the Polis, in the moment that happened the transition from the interactive politics towards an active politics and its individual expression as a correction of personal life out of the citizen community. The development and continuous revival of Politics as rhetoric, based only on words, even towards participants that took part in the Agora, started to change not only the natural identification and solving daily problems in the city life, but they achieved to create new conditions of doing politics and its functionality. Finding these new accepted conditions by all members, for example bring a new expression as would be the invention of formula that surpassed the needs of citizens and leaving aside their daily problems – eliminated the critics and resolution of common problems, but changed the true content nature of Politics in the city, giving these attributions to the innovative to the political rhetoricians. Even these citizenship elements that made possible to distinguish the truth and critic against rhetorical politics, are set back before the nomination, affirmation and its repetition, for the mere fact that finding those formulating conditions are considered as expressive utterances established as such. This means that the entrance on public sphere of these utterances and the support of the discourse on the self of the rhetorician would leave place to its emphasis as a testimony of equality, equity, systemic motivation of thought and affirmative utterances according to the rules or corrections decided before in accordance with all parties, numbing the critical approach of the citizens. Such a political show, similar in form, but not in content with

the ancient Greek dramas that were used to criticise and reflect the mistakes of political actors in the common space of the Polis, led path later on to the disconnection from participatory decision making and the direct fulfillment of the citizens requests, towards an active logical in favour of division of the private sphere (the family). This means that, in difference with the Polis where was found the public sphere and where the glory of each of the citizens lied on the fact of being equal among equals thanks to the fact the problems were resolved within this space, Politics in Middle Ages and later on followed the principle personal material properties. Said this, the principal and ultimate value of individual meaning on life and himself had to do only with the increase of financial and material capital. Even the modern states were created as a mean or justification to preserve and increase the capitals created by the small pre- capitalist societies, as the Gulfs and the Ghibellines in France or the Whigs and the Tories in England. No matter of the era in which we live, where activities and relationships among people and different socio-cultural contexts are characterized by material physical, physiological and metaphysical interests etc., it is important to say that the Polis should be conceptualized as the common space where citizens participate in identifying and solving their common problems because the more one knows, accepts and understand the city as a public space the higher will be the awareness and attention on interactive relationships and common economic, cultural, political, artistic enterprise etc., among people in this common space.

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### Short bio

Orges Zani is a doctoral student at the European University of Tirana, Albania. His thesis is focused on the activity of political parties and the similarities they share with social movements. He has finished his BA studies in Political Sciences and has Msc. Degree in Political theories. He is the translators of a number of books in the field of Political Philosophy; one of them is them is book written by Jonathan Wolf, *An introduction to Political Philosophy*. He is a teaching assistant and teaches the subjects of Political Philosophy and Discourse Analysis.