



Prologue: Philosophy, Democracy, Freedom and Humanity

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Introduction

There are a great variety of societies, but one common feature is their rule: one group is dominant – usually a minority – and another is subservient. Thus we have autocracies, monarchies with the “divine right of kings”, but also societies where “money is the law” in the hands of one class, and also theocracies, ruled by a group of shamans. It is usually the case that theocratic elite supports the ruling group of a given society. The usual change in societies is “at the top”: who takes over the ruling position. A prince poisons his father, the king, and becomes a king; one corporation wins against another, and joins the class of the ruling class. Yet there is another revolution which is the most dangerous and despised by ruling powers in any society: democratic and philosophical. The first such revolution happened among the Greeks around 500-400 B.C. This revolution was promoted by writers of plays, such as Aeschylus, depicting a society ruled by autocracy. The autocrat is the law and he is supported by his divinities. The problem is that other segments of that society are supported by opposite divinities. Such that divinities seem to demand of humans sacrifices and thus are involved in tragedy.

To solve the tragic life, the writers offered a solution: humans must recognize who they are in essence: first, in comparison to their all knowing and all powerful divinities, they are powerless and fallible. But since autocracy, supported by divinities, results in tragedy, then the only solution is for humans take charge of their own life and establish their own rules based on mutual and free agreement. Why this is necessary? Being fallible, humans are responsible to correct their mistakes and to do so, they require a “dialogical public space” in which they can correct their mistakes. But his public domain must be accessible to everyone where any claim can be investigated, contested and changed. This dialogical condition is the ground of philosophy, since any authority, regardless how important, can be fallible and thus exposed to questions and corrections through others. This means that philosophy is not what someone thinks as the criterion, but being in dialogue with others about any issue.

Revolution

In principle, without democracy and its dialogical space, there is no philosophy and without philosophy, which, as dialogical must question every claim and reveal its limits. This is the context in which the search for truth without any obstructions is philosophical, and such a search requires the defense of democracy. *Here is a revolution which discards any dogmatic and unquestionable position and every position must admit its limitations. In this sense being truthful, respecting others and their dialogical contribution is a practice which coincides with human essence of having self and other worth, respect for others who must be honest and responsible just as I must be honest and responsible for what I say. Without democracy-philosophy, without “political” public space, the only truth is what serves someone’s interests. Moreover, without freedom to present one’s views and freely accepting dialogical questioning by others, that one can be responsible for one’s mistakes and to accept criticism of others. The defense of this dialogical public arena is also a defense of philosophy, just as philosophical demand for public dialogue is a defense of this political, public arena.*

This means that any philosophy, demanding the right to present its case for public questioning in dialogical fashion, is “political”. If there is one dogma, imposed by the power of autocracy, theocracy or any other system, then that unquestioned dogma is not philosophy since it rejects any dialogical space in which everyone can question, modify and even reject dues to its fallibility. For contemporary

understanding, it must be mentioned that political society must be secular, and must defend itself against any effort for one or another group to impose its divinities as the basis of such a society. If such an event is allowed, then humans become playthings for the demand of different gods and goddesses and the result is tragedy.

We witness such a tragedy globally where the constant emergence of theocracies as the power of society leads directly to the intolerance of those who think otherwise. As the classical writers of stories pointed out, the democratic citizens can have images of gods and goddesses not to worship them, but to be reminded that if one introduces such divine beings into the public domain, tragedy will follow. The divinities can have a form of any dogma, whether it is nationalism-fascism, or "dialectical materialism – they allow no dialogical space.

So far, our discussion suggested a revolutionary transformation of society into "political society" where humans, in a free dialogue with each other, establish the common laws by which they will live as free and responsible citizens. Such responsibility is depicted in a direct human way in the myth of Prometheus, who rebels against Zeus' edict that forbids fire to humans. The supreme authority, Zeus, in his anger, denies humans the use of fire. Divine intervention initiates human suffering, if not tragedy. Prometheus, moved by the unnecessary suffering of humans, steals fire from the gods and gives it to humans. Here we have practical assistance for which Prometheus does not ask anything. He does not wish to rule or to have others follow his way of life. He does not form a party or demands to be a judge on the court. There is no revenge present against anyone or an obedience to some divine command. He simply regards Zeus' law as unjust and, indeed, premised on one aspect of tragedy: revenge by Zeus against humans. What is interesting is that the Greeks accepted the action of such a rebel as a noble violation of bad or even unjust laws. Although speaking formally the act of Prometheus was "bad" or illegal his personal nobility and his positive attitude and qualities outweigh his formally bad act. His aim was to help others, but with this help he changes the notion of justice. Even Zeus accepts this change by admitting that his edict prohibiting fire to humans was a bad law.

This means that there arises a possibility to challenge any authority, law, to interrogate them sensibly, and thus to change them. Every position, tradition, even the thinking of the highest figures, can be interrogated openly and reasonably, can be investigated, analyzed, and requested to justify themselves in a full light of public and poly-logical debate or in a public gathering. If a given position, and even an accepted tradition cannot be justified by reason and by the wellbeing of humans, then they can be openly rejected. This is the reason that classical Greece comprised an arena of intellectual tension among multiple positions, views, all calling for an open public in whose context such a tension could be maintained.

This composition of awareness comprises the ground of every person's rationality and responsibility. It must be noted that this architectonic also founds the modern Western democratic understanding, although articulated by different cultural symbolic designs. The worldly secularism of Prometheus in his personality which is independent from any authority. If he makes mistakes, he admits them and corrects them. After all, Prometheus had decided to support Zeus in the battle against the Titans, but after the battle he recognized that Zeus had become a tyrant. Thus, he decides to correct his mistake by rebelling against Zeus' laws simply because he decided that such laws are practically unjust. Here the highest authority is negated as unacceptable in principle without any question concerning one's own benefits. Humanity here is in charge of its own affairs and demands that gods no longer intervene. In this classical Greek mythology, one develops the notion of personal

responsibility for one's own action. Although one can make mistakes, he takes full responsibility for such mistakes and deems it his duty to correct them. While not having ultimate wisdom, humans are depicted as capable of managing their own affairs as long as they can exclude the cosmic, clashing forces from their *Polis*.

For classical thinking, so well expressed by Athenian philosophers, such as Aristotle, man is *zoon politikon*, a political being. In this context, there is another designation by Aristotle: human beings are *zoon logon echon*, a being who lives in accordance with *logos* and thus man is a being of communication – *logos* is both, reason, and the order of the world. Life in a political community is coextensive with the above-mentioned political *ethos* which, despite such variations as habit, nature, and even morality, is a principle whose denial is a contradiction. We are to be reminded that this *ethos* includes the recognition of human fallibility and thus a need for dialogical space in which open discussion of any subject matter both can reveal and correct our mistakes.

This space is where our human essence is manifest, and in classical thinking, to be human one must participate and maintain this space where freedom and its resultant responsibility can flourish. This means that *the very existence of a person is identical with public participation in all matters. For Athens, anyone who is not participating in public affairs is not “apolitical” but incapable of being.* Meanwhile any thesis, any claim made in public can be interrogated, accepted, rejected and asked to be rationally justified. This brings us to the famous case of Socrates.

While Socrates participated in official public duties, such as courts, he also engaged Athenians in discussions about many topics, from poetry, love, leadership, power, justice and truth. Some might see a difference between his participating in official duties and his engaging citizens in conversations in the market place or in private gatherings, such that the latter were regarded as “private” while the former as public – political. Such a distinction is modern and does not apply to Socrates. This is evident in the famous trial of Socrates. He was accused of “corrupting” the young and many other discursive misdeeds, such as questioning the authority of some Homeric texts, and others. It is obvious that his questioning “bothered” various citizens, since Socrates disclosed that their claims could not withstand rational interrogation. This means that Socratic public debates “at the market” exhibited his duty, as a free and responsible citizen, to freely speak and debate in any public setting, any question.

Such activity was, in principle, any citizen’s responsibility, and to prohibit such an activity was to deny citizen’s freedom to act responsibly and thus to be political. In his trial, Socrates did not add some kind of meta domain, but reminded the citizens that they too must exercise their duty to engage in dialogue on any subject matter as free and responsible. To forbid this exercise to one person – Socrates – is to contradict this responsibility and thus to destroy Athens as democracy. In principle, Socrates pointed out that his “search for truth” anywhere and anytime is identical with the maintenance of Athenian *polis*. *Thus, Socrates was the citizen who did not rise above the ethos of the polis, but was a responsible reminder to Athenians as to their duty as citizens. In brief, for Socrates his freedom of speech as a form of engaging in dialogue was identical with Athenian political ethos.*

It is a common and mistaken mixture of society with political society. The principle of the former is that “man rules over man by power” such that in most cases there is a minor autocratic or even theocratic group which rules over the population without any public domain or rights – not even the right to speak, since even speech was restricted to the “lords”. Societies are, in principle, based on power, and to call

such societies “political” makes no sense. It is like saying Organized Crime is political.

Thus, when Machiavelli separated politics from ethics, he did not realize that one can have numerous ethics in political society without abolishing political ethos. The Prince had power and perhaps his “ethics” was a claim that he knew what is “good” for society, but his society was not allowed to be political. Any tendency toward autocracy is a tendency to abolish democracy and thus to destroy political ethos. Such autocrats might have their specific ethic, such as is the case in Poland, but political ethos is abandoned. Moreover, autocrats are neither free nor responsible; they are driven by power and selfish motives. Indeed, purely in social power confrontations, there are no laws which would restrict the power of autocrats. Lenin was laughing about the killing of ten million kulaks, and no one could tell him that his actions were illegal. Autocratic “ethics” is “might makes right”. This is also the case with theocracies. When Machiavelli separated “politics” from ethics, he did not say that a population can have its ethics; all he allowed that the might of the prince will not tolerate some ethics separated from his power.

Meanwhile, in the context of political ethos, the unconcerned activity allows the Athenian to be open to the presence of the world. It is the ground of their *theoria as presentational thinking*. To think, is to think the presence of the very Being, given in its immediacy, untainted by any hint of utility. Wisdom is the effort to capture the world, for its own sake, in a carelessness that overlooks any interest in knowledge as a useful weapon, as power, a means to preserve oneself in face of a threatening tomorrow. In brief, it has nothing to do with modern *representational episteme*. This wisdom consists of total freedom to create and to debate, and yet this spontaneous freedom seems to dance within strict rules.

While this might suggest a paradox, for Athenians it followed their conception both of democracy and their respect for the presence of the variety of forms of beings. Thus freedom can be maintained by following the freely established laws and rules, and wisdom must respect the parameters of beings. Classical notion of freedom is coextensive with unrestricted disclosure of things and events in their essence – and coextensive with dialogical freedom and thus responsibility to speak the truth about any subject matter, and if mistaken, to accept responsibility and correction.

While the *ethos* of public life and philosophy is an open domain where everyone has a right and a duty to speak reasonably and impartially on any subject matter, such rights and duties are not arbitrary. Any issue to be addressed in public must respect the subject matter or the things which are being discussed. At the outset the notion that “man is the measure of all things” is excluded. Thus, the subject matter that is at issue is one of ontology. The latter is reserved for the quest to disclose the basic principles - the *arche* that constitute the very essence of nature, including humans and even a just society.

Arche, for Greeks, was a *principle* which cannot be denied without a contradiction, and the proof for it had to include it in the very demonstration of its validity. In brief, in its denial and its affirmation it was and is a given presence. Such a principle has one mode of manifestation: essence which is a limit of some entity. *Human arche is being truthful, including truthful about one’s own fallibility, respect for others and thus oneself, honorand recognition of the freedoms and responsibilities of everyone. This arche calls for human life with all others as equal and worthy. Yet it also means that this arche is completely tied with the public, dialogical and open arena – the polis.*

The maintenance of a *polis* requires fortitude and ability of the citizen to set aside the diverse activities and interests in order to remain open for the concerns of

common affairs. Those who did not participate in the *polis* were not called unpolitical, but useless people, in a way incapable of being, of contributing to the common good. While enjoying the benefits, they are really parasitic on a free life. Moreover, if freedom is an essential aspect of humans, then a failure or non-participation in its maintenance is a rejection of one's humanity. In turn, such a freedom can only be acquired in the *polis*. Freedom permits actions and relationships to remain open toward others who are different. When diverse activities are dimensions of freedom, humans can participate in and manage such activities and can disregard the threat stemming from such activities.

Juridical state

What constitutes the founding of a political community wherein human rights are located. What should be emphasized is that the term “founding” does not necessarily imply some historical set of conditions or some specific interests. Rather, this idea refers to a necessary institution on which other political institutions can be built. This is a grounding and not a historical relationship. Most human relationships rest on a variety of similar and conflicting interests, whose resolution too often depends on power. Although such interests may become a part of such an institution, there is a difference between interests and the creation of an institution that we call the *public sphere*. This is to say, the founding and the existence of such a *sphere* are tied inextricably together. While there are diverse purposes which depend on interests and require appropriate means, the public sphere is its own means, purpose, and requires each citizen for its maintenance.

The rationale for human relationships in a public sphere is this very relationship which is identical to its own purpose. It should be obvious that this delimitation of *polis* is identical with the classical notion of *arche* covering an entire region of awareness. Both, its affirmation and denial will require its inclusion. We shall see this *arche* with the question whether this public sphere can be abolished by a revolution.

The activity of founding the public region as its own purpose, is not an activity of the past, done once and for all by the so-called founders but must be responsibly and continuously maintained by every citizen. One cannot speak of the public sphere as if it were some gathering place or a “system” which perpetuates itself without individual participation and support or merely with the periodic participation of voters. It is “everywhere”, at home, in the market place, schools, commerce, human mutual relationships, literature, even debates about the demands of divinities.

The public region, as the first institution of a democratic community, is a perpetual process of self-founding, and not a structure either imposed on a community or derived from some abstract needs and interests. In a public sphere the equality and autonomy of humans are maintained for their own sake. This means that the source of human equality and autonomy is coextensive with and sustained only in a public sphere. In principle, any other form of community may be based on heterogeneous interests and purposes, resulting in the domination of one social group by another, but such a situation would disallow the equality and autonomy of every individual. The very notion that humans act socially on the basis of their own interests leads to a structure of society whereby either individual or group interests are pitted against the interests of others, thus leading to the exercise of power, inequality, and the abolition of autonomy. Yet what is meant by autonomy and equality needs to be delimited.

The freedom of autonomy is analogous to logic wherein the rules that are established logically and rationally do not result from imperatives but from respect for rational and free debate. Accordingly, equality of all persons stems from autonomy. If rules, logics, and rational discourses are not derivable from natural states of affairs, then there are no inherent criteria for elevating one possible proposal for rules over another. In this sense, all proposals are equal. Autonomous freedom, as rational in the above sense, leads to the equality of persons who are in a position to posit rules by which they will govern their lives and deal with the environment.

Each individual is an equal “law giver”. If there are to be common rules, they will not be found in some sort of psychological, genetic, physiological “human nature” or even in some “material forces”, but posited and decided on in a public, i.e. political, debate. Third, the establishment of rules based on autonomy also means that such rules are free and individuals are duty bound and responsible for living under such rules. Only autonomously established rules demand of a person to be responsible for his adherence to them. If rules were derived from any other source, such as nature of whatever description, then one would be compelled by natural forces and could not be held responsible.

This is counter to a traditional conception of freedom: not the freedom of autonomy but a freedom of choice. While at one level this freedom presupposes autonomy as a foundation for constituting rules, at another level the choice of rules is determined by interests and power. This means that one may have a choice to steal money or food in face of hunger, but one’s choice is subtended by a natural compulsion and in this sense such a person could not be held responsible. Here we have a social system called capitalism, with its claim of freedom of choice.

But the latter is not autonomous, since one can choose to invest money into one or another economic venture, but such a choice is determined by greed and struggle for profit. *Polis* requires an autonomous freedom wherein the very rules, stemming from such autonomy are our duty to maintain. But it is to be emphasized that such an autonomy and its resultant equality of persons is founded by, and is coextensive with, the public region where everyone is equal and free to propose and, through dialogue with others to establish rules of common action.

One misunderstanding must be avoided: the autonomy and equality of each individual, as the unconditional source of law, does not imply unrestricted activities. This means the freely posited rules are not causes that restrict human life, but are rationally analyzable structures that can be modified and even rejected. Autonomous freedom implies a life under freely posited, debated and rationally examined rules.

This achievement is a matter of public debate and consensus. This is another way of saying that the political is identical with the continuous activity of maintaining, or founding the public sphere as its own purpose is equally the maintaining and founding of autonomy, responsibility and equality of persons. This region is *the most basic institution of a polis*, on which all other political institutions - including specific constitutions and human rights - rest. Here freedom limits freedom without any force. Unless each member of society is able to participate in the public arena as an autonomous, equal, and hence responsible source of rules, the meaning of the political disappears.

No doubt, one could contend that by living with others, the autonomous individual is limited, specifically where one group’s interests are given primacy over another’s. This is a thesis advocated by both capitalists and communists. Nonetheless this arrangement may split society into classes, thus resulting in class conflicts. In this case, the public, autonomy, responsibility and equality framed as political society

vanish and the public domain is reduced to a clash of irrational motives and causes, while publicly appointed servants operate on the basis of their own interests and support those who can best satisfy these interests.

Here autonomous freedom as a source of public rules also disappears. How can this abolition of the political and the public be avoided? In the face of numerous relationships, the autonomy of every member of society must accept the following principles. First, everyone is an autonomous source of law; second, all laws are proposed and discussed by citizens in order to reach a reasonable consensus; third, all laws must be applied equally to everyone, i.e. they must be designated as universal; four, as autonomous and equal, all members in the public domain have universal rights and duties to be the sources and the subjects of laws. These features outline the rights of every member of the public, and thus rights are secured by mutually obtained laws. The latter regulate the freedom of everyone in relationship to others.

But how does one guarantee autonomy? The first requirement is that each person respect the laws. First, a person respects freedom and is not subject to blind causes and impulses; second, the law is not founded upon threats of punishment but draws nourishment from the autonomy of all in the public arena and thus upholds the rights of everyone. As a result, laws are not simply given, but are necessary for the maintenance of the public region and individual freedom. Third, autonomous freedom is a condition that is actively established and maintained. Fourth, the maintenance of both political freedom and the public sphere requires legitimate force that is capable of protecting the polity against private interests and persons who reject the freely established laws. These persons have surrendered their own autonomy and have become subject to impulses and irrational forces. Indeed *universal human rights are coextensive with autonomy, responsibility in an open public region accessible to all.*

This rejects some views which would want to maintain a right to overthrow the *polis*. The rejection cannot be easily justified in an age of "revolutions" where one or another group keeps "taking political power." Yet what has become quite obvious in the age of revolutions is that they do not constitute political revolutions; rather, they manifest social struggles of one group against another, each taking for a while the position of rulership over the other, without in any way establishing a *polis*. *The arche of polis with its institutions which guarantee universal human rights - with freedom and autonomy - does not allow its overthrow.*

First, the overthrowing of *polis* would reduce the community to a society of social struggle for power without a requisite region for common adjudication. One either has or does not have this region. If one fails to have it, then fundamentally man rules over man. Second, given the social power confrontations, there is no instrument of adjudication within social parameters. Struggling social groups cannot become "impartial" judges, i.e. neither of the groups can be a judge. Each would want to judge in favor of its own interests and hence would not resolve diverse power confrontations. A *polis* is necessary not only as a fact but also as a principle for the adjudication of differences without the intrusion of social status or power. Third, the rights of every citizen are possible with the *polis*, and its abolition would mean the abolition of the citizen as a political being and his rights.

This is to say, the more recent conceptions of revolution, claiming that the population has a right to revolt against any society, including political one, makes very little sense. If such a society is a de jure and de facto a *polis*, then it is accessible to all. In case of other forms of revolutions, where the people are "led" to overthrow a dictatorship and thus to establish a social system in which the revolutionaries rule

in the name of the people, there in fact was not a political but a social revolution of one group against another for power; here one will not find a political revolution, since no *polis* was overthrown and none came into existence.