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Phenomenological critique of representative democracy

Paula Cristina Pereira¹

paulacristinap@sapo.pt

Fernando Evangelista Bastos²

fembastos@gmail.com

Universidade de Porto, Portugal

Abstract

Considering that representative democracy has today ensured stratification at several levels, bolstered by economy as an ideology which maintains the dominating and the dominated in their rightful place, this paper intends to highlight a number of totalitarian tendencies, from a phenomenological perspective, that have revealed the limits and challenges of the power mechanisms of representative democracy. Contending that democracy is experienced and not simply a regime, we have highlighted the need for a critical attitude that deconstructs totalitarian discourses or narratives.

Keywords: democracy; power; economic ideology; totalitarian phenomenology.

¹Professor of the Department of Philosophy, Director of the Doctoral Programme in Philosophy and Principal Researcher of the Research Group Philosophy and Public Space of the Institute of Philosophy (UI&D/502/FCT), Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto, Via Panorâmica s/n; 4150-564 Porto, Portugal.

² Researcher of the Research Group Philosophy and Public Space of the Institute of Philosophy (UI&D/502/FCT) – Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto, Via Panorâmica s/n; 4150-564 Porto, Portugal.

Por uma crítica fenomenológica da democracia representativa

Resumo

Considerando que a democracia representativa tem assegurado, nos nossos dias, uma estratificação, exponenciada pela economia como ideologia, que mantém dominadores e dominados nos seus lugares próprios, procura-se evidenciar neste texto, numa perspectiva fenomenológica, algumas tendências totalitárias que revelam os limites e desafios dos mecanismos do poder da democracia representativa. Na defesa que a democracia é uma vivência e não apenas um regime, tenta-se sublinhar a necessidade de uma atitude crítica baseada numa reflexão capaz de desconstruir os discursos ou as narrativas totalitárias.

Palavras chave: democracia; poder; ideologia económica; fenomenologia totalitária.

Para una crítica fenomenológica de la democracia representativa

Resumen

Considerando que la democracia representativa se ha asegurado, en nuestros días, la estratificación, exponenciada por la economía como ideología, la cual mantiene dominadores y dominados en sus propios lugares, se busca poner de relieve en este texto, desde el punto de vista fenomenológico, algunas tendencias totalitarias que revelan los límites y desafíos de los mecanismos del poder de la democracia representativa. En la defensa de que la democracia es una experiencia y no sólo un régimen, se trata de subrayar la necesidad de una actitud crítica basada en la reflexión capaz de deconstruir los discursos o narrativas totalitarios.

Palabras clave: democracia; poder; ideología económica; fenomenología totalitaria

If, conceptually, human beings rights and duties are equal, then democratic societies should be able to ensure this core evidence. If we (many among us) can see that the democratic regime has not evolved enough to improve this situation or even eliminate crystallized ways of keeping rudimentary power relations contrary to the universal concept of human being, in which some are *enlightened* and occupy management positions and others are doomed to settle for an apathy that reproduces unfamiliar models, perhaps we will find in this strategy one of the possible reasons why democracy, as a system, has not evolved as much as would be expected since it appeared. There are at least two reasons for this. The first reason is a problem of will and of maintaining a tight power structure, that is, if democracy opens the power to all citizens, by being stagnant it can maintain that privileged and atavistic power, under the disguise of democracy – based on the law of the strongest, on belonging to a certain case, or on other forms of legitimacy. The second reason somehow intersects with the first reason, in that it claims that man and humanity have not evolved. If man does not change, the modes of power remain unchanged and, in that sense, the concept of democracy is contrary to the ancestral nature of powerⁱ.

Democracy is in crisis in the hearts and minds of man. The firm belief that equality of citizens before the law, as a conquest of the developed western world, is probably more of a rhetorical-legal-political formalism than what is actually embraced in the experiences of human societies. Contemporary transformations are, therefore, presented uncritically shaped compared to values that in the past regarded political action as an ideal, because they did discriminate according to social class or economic wealth. In this context, all actions contrary to this assumption were considered unacceptable in a society that was meant to be fair and in which each man on its own claims his dignity and social and political rights.

Democracy seems to collapse before the many contaminations **that distort it. As a people's government system, whose** phenomenology highlighted the importance of its majority will (and defined the principle of popular sovereignty), democracy does not really exist because it is not rooted in the anthropological and political realities of societies, even if it is recognized that as a phenomenon democracy is the expression of the will of the peopleⁱⁱ:

Ultimate power does not belong to any dynasty (...).

It lives within the people or nation (as a community that transforms a people into a historical and political subject). This principle is crucial to break away with all archaic concepts, including those that considered **the “social contract” as an agreement between the** people and the dynasty that governed them. The people (organized number of citizens), which is not to be confused with crowd (a chaotic number of individuals), are the genetic entity of all political order. The people concentrate the demiurgic forces of construction, reconstruction and reform of political regimes (Soromenho-Marques, 2014: 282–283).

The concept of power in its relation with other concepts associated thereto, or those that have been associated to it due to historical, social and economic circumstances, still assumes that some human beings deserve to exert power over others (the majority)ⁱⁱⁱ. It is under this disguise, and on the grounds of operational difficulties of a direct democracy, that the democratic regime based on representativeness is offered to us (with its known success). But the idea of representativeness can be fragile. First, because it is the reshaped heir of the monarchical/dynastic system: the king embodied the wishes of the nation and of the people; he was its legitimate representative. Second, because, as a phenomenon, representativeness is none other than the transfer of the subject to another subject who speaks on my behalf, who conveys my will, so that what I am can only be stated by mediation of the other^{iv}. In this sense, each self is always hostage of what the

other decides to do or defend. Being, through the other, can ontologically cancel out the self^V.

Representative democracy was often used as a bourgeois strategy to maintain and legitimize power, ensuring the same relations of dominance between classes and assuming that some are fit to decide while others are not. A full society is the one in which everyone is involved in politics, in which the same subjects decide on the issues that concern us. Incidentally, the idea behind this position is not to omit the difficulties behind a democracy exercised on a first-person perspective:

Libertarians cannot accept power to be delegated to politicians. For them, this is bourgeois alienation. The revolutionary hope of emancipation of society allowing everyone to take part in decisions is very beautiful. But this vision of “bourgeois democracy”, giving way to a “democracy of councils”, where a large number of factory, neighborhood or school councils flourish, is utopian. Most people are not willing to enter into politics permanently, they would rather delegate and control. Consequently, this makes politics a profession (Cohn-Bendit, 1999, p. 26).

If we do accept this position, however realistic it may seem to us, then not only will the totalitarian systems always be legitimized *a priori*, but also will all the concepts of perfect political and human stances be compromised. We create utopias based on the assumptions that the world can work in a better, fair and respectable way. There is one mobilizing feature of utopias that we cannot overlook, which in turn results from the non-conformist attitude of the utopian task. Although representative democracy is, indeed, a step forward, a transitory moment, it has also suffered from inertia because some men have used to continue to enforce despotic rule under the illusion of the best political system possible.

Who should exercise power? Some will say that it is those who know how to! Those who have prepared themselves to wisely manage public matters! This Platonic *sophocracy* has come together with the even more exclusive and divisive view presented

by Aristotle: not everyone can rule for the simple fact that, although we are all humans, some were born to rule and some to obey. We can, therefore, almost anticipate what genetics today seeks to transmit: what we are, bio-psycho-socially is hostage to the **information inscribed in everyone's distinct genes**.

A natural slave is anyone who may belong to another (and this is the reason why it belongs to it) and also anyone who participates in the reasoning enough to learn without, however, having it; the animals different from man are not even capable of participating in the sensitive form of reason; they only obey passively to impressions. As to utility, slaves and animals are similar; they both help the body according to our needs (Aristoteles, 1998, L. I, 1255a, p. 65).

When we recognize, leniently and with a limitation of perfection, that the democratic regime is the best of imperfect systems, our reference is still the idealized principles, what should be, and not what conditions us as humans. These circumstances overcome our visions and our concrete situation in society^{vi}.

Consequently, by persuading us through idealizations that are meant to form a reality under construction, democracy subjects us to conditions which, in another context, would be seen as unworthy of man and often incompatible with the exercise of citizenship. This servile society, which is also promoted by democracy, is the consequence of the balance between what is perfect and what is imperfect, between the real and the utopian, between human imperfection and divine perfection.

If we want to build a truly democratic society, if we want to overcome the theoretical and practical constraints of historical and philosophical assumptions of concepts it is not enough to critically dig up the past. Moreover, it is imperative that we address what we really want from a democratic society of the future, and of a future democratic society^{vii}. The answer should be able to overcome the commitments, the individual interests, *the pains*. In other words, we should be able to think critically *beyond* ... reasonably. One possible method is based on our ability to rationally deviate, of a

learned ignorance that not only predisposes us to the real research, but also puts us primarily in an epistemological position founded on a universal and, therefore, impartial rationality:

The principles of justice are chosen from behind a veil of ignorance, ensuring that no-one is helped or harmed the choice of those principles by the results of natural chance or by the contingency of social **circumstances**. (...) **Given the circumstances of the original position**, the symmetry of relations established between everyone, this initial situation puts the subjects, seen as moral entities, that is, as rational **beings with their own purpose and (...) capable of a sense of justice**, in an equal footing (Rawls, 2001: 34).

If we are able to transpose Rawls's ethical concept of justice, applied to politics, to an original position, we will ensure **impartiality and universality of equity**: "each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty with a similar liberty for others" (*Idem, ibidem*, p. 68).

Our heritage – in particular the modern one – has sought to answer these questions through enlightened proposals that have regained the trust in a reason which had hitherto been sidelined. The ideals of the French Revolution or of the American Declaration of Independence showed the motivation to overcome the rigid power structure that belittled most citizens and ensured the *status quo* and perpetuation of a minority caste:

Democracy does not rely on democratic institutions alone: it also depends on a rich and complex civic and political life. Otherwise, votes lose their meaning, assemblies are manipulated, politics focus on the **parties' staff, elites** in power cease to be controlled.

In short, democracy has not reached its end or its **finished formula**. (...) **We are not in a time of democratic endings**, rather of beginnings (Morin, 1988, p. 167).

The right to freedom and dignity become universal ideals (or supposedly universal), equality being the foundation conditions of *being* human. Everything seemed to be going in the right direction, **but it wasn't. The desire for power** is one of the most intense instincts of living organisms. The history of power notes the attempts to satisfy that impulse as an incomplete teleology which are evident in behaviors, strategies and institutions. According to this history, two conditions and efforts collide: of power, as an attempt to expand endlessly, and of the individuals who react to that expansion (cf. Marina, 2009, p. 122)^{viii}.

Little by little this power instinct creeps in again and settles back in, reshaped, and immerses itself in apparently tolerable idiosyncrasies. In this sense, we believe that all political systems that in some way distort, in phenomenological terms, the relations of the concepts intrinsic to democracy conceal totalitarian intentions. More than their justified functionality, all indirect democracies aim to protect the difference between who should rule **and who should submit to another's ruling. Democracy can**, therefore, be merely instrumental, in that it is used as a means to legitimize the impulse of domination^{ix}.

Power, participation, totalitarianism, globalization, flexibility, submission, dignity, utopia, minorities, crisis, public, private, freedom and democracy are some of the concepts closely related to the interests and directions of research on the systems of governance. However, because the mechanisms of power have always depended on context (cf. Nye, 2012, p.15), the salience, or not, of how each of these concepts is manifested in each historical period is not surprising.

All the attempts to understand the phenomenon of political power can benefit more from the deconstructions and disagreements than from justifications of how power is expressed (where consensus is practically widespread). The essence of democracy does not reside in unanimous positions or in the lack of discussion. Quite the opposite, it lies in ideological confrontation^x:

A disagreement is not a quarrel about personal interests or opinions. It is a political process that

withstands legal disputes and opens a gap in the sensible order by confronting the imposed configurations of perception, of thought and of action **with something “inadmissible”, i.e., with a political subject** (Rancière, 2012: 91).

The authentic democratic process opens gaps, even if this may cause insecurity and controversy, but it is precisely from that point that democracy becomes an experience rather than a mere regime, supported by the sense and action of philosophy. The democratic process is achieved by coordinating the political and philosophical projects.

“Philosophy appears especially at times of abandonment (Hölderlin). During the thought experience, cognitive performance is not primarily at stake, rather the construction of knowledge by enriching our experience of the world, by the interest and provocation it raises. It means looking *beyond* whatever exists already, *beyond* what is there, *beyond* what we see and *beyond* what has already been thought, since thinking implies embracing a divide in our innermost self; a difference in relation to what we are and to what we know to affirm thought in articulation with the qualitative continuity of wanting: the alternative to think in a different way, the alternative to devise and imagine in a different way, disrupting the *logologies* we have inherited and those still to come (Pereira, 2011:98).

There were times when the political power outweighed economic and financial power, unlike today when the instrumentalization of power as a control mechanism has created osmosis between politics and the economy, the latter being more substantial^{xi}. This is why holding political and economic power is just a public show of a private power, almost secret, based on economic and financial surpluses that are distributed within a restricted group. In our time, economy has been uncovered as an ideology, as a resource strategy and as the implementation of the

old feudal power, since in the political, ethical and civilizational spheres it is no longer justifiable. The values of this new economic liberalism – which imposes submission as a condition to a lesser evil, imposes fear (especially fear of the future) and takes hope away – are incompatible with the great values built and touted by western civilization. The dignity of the human being expressed in the safeguarding of *isegoria* (equal rights of speech), *isonomy* (political equality under the law) and *isocracy* (equal access to political positions). Against this antagonism, discourses continue to uphold those great values and, at the same time, practical and day-to-day life is still hostage to the impositions that belittle working citizens. It did not take long for a strategy to justify this. By defining austerity and impoverishment as being a moral value, the idea was to suggest the morality behind such austerity and impoverishment to save the people and the world as we have always known it^{xii}.

This conveys an idea that the promotion of ruptures is immoral because we stand as obstacles to those who want to save us. By obeying and being blind to power and politics we are engaging in the salvation of society, as in the case of those who become poorer can increase their wealth.

While to many of us, citizens of western democracies, slavery and exploitation of man by man are intolerable, evident feudalisms and democracies masked under the cloak of absolutism are nevertheless being relaunched. The absence of norms, stagnation, domestication, subjugation, impoverishment, democracy without **Democracy are, therefore, the concepts that best define today's society**^{xiii}.

It might tentatively be said that the dignity and quality of life of men can be attacked if it is in any way an act of salvation, that is, if it guarantees the food of future humanity, or even of the hero generation, in the sense that we are told that the present generation must be inevitably sacrificed so that we can have a viable future. The idea behind this is that a savior generation becomes poorer and declines so that future generations can experience well-being.

This strategy can be found in economic and political globalization processes. This economic imperative, transversal to all human activities, not only deceives the ontological status of man, but also spreads the impression that it is the only means to save humanity. This idea of *salvation of civilization* has brought about a continuous instrumental dichotomy between *lords* and *slaves*, legitimizing the maintenance and exploitation of the latter as basic pillars of society, but nevertheless disposable because they are easily replaceable.

Mark Blyth describes the concrete focus of these strategies:

What begins as a banking crisis ends with a banking crisis, even if it goes through the **states' accounts**. **But there is a politics of making it appear to be the states' fault such that those who made the bust don't have to pay for it.** Austerity is not just the price of saving the banks. It is the price that the banks want someone else to pay" (Blyth, 2013: 24)^{xiv}.

We must not forget that the ideology of the schools of economic thought is biased and almost always compromised. These schools aim to legitimize political interests under the wing of (pseudo) economic scientificity. Their first objective is to make a profit (the more the better), and the second one, depending on how they stand in a formal democracy, is to legitimize those profits when the majority of the population lives on the threshold of survival.

As Chrystia Freeland exposes:

The age of mass production required a mass market – as Henry Ford put it, he needed workers, including his own, to make enough money to buy his cars.

For the plutocrats, globalization may be reducing both this political incentive and this economic one to **support inclusion**. **That's** because in **today's** interconnected economy, Western democracies can import economic demand from the emerging markets, and the emerging markets can import democracy from the West. To put it another way, Western

businesses are less dependent on a prosperous domestic middle class because they can now sell to the rising middle class of the emerging markets (2014: 370).

This is one of the signs of the times in which we live and which we need to learn how to read; the world is changing, what is *common* no longer belongs to men because being *common* implies that these very same men know what it is and the social purpose it aims to achieve. The end is no longer *common*, it is now limited to a teleonomical action in the hands of a group of techno-politicians or plutocrats.

In this respect, the *common* no longer exists because it is no longer the *lieu* in which the wills of men come together and intercross with other wills, where the visibility of some no longer guarantees the building of a fair society. Consequently, or because of it, the effectiveness of public manifestations is internalized with skepticism; no changes in direction are expected nor renewed hopes in the future, just a constant individual atonement *collectivized* by fear, especially the fear of the future.

The rhetoric of fear and danger has generated not only a **“culture of fear” but also a “politics of fear”**, that is, an anti-politics, since it erases politics so that it can exist.(...) **Fear and danger are manufactured to justify** abuses of power, uses of material and symbolic violence, and discursive and material constructions of terror that, in turn, promote the agenda of neoconservative authoritarianism. They seriously close the universe of politics and shrink public spaces, ultimately resulting in the creation of an anti-politics. (...) **At the same time, fear and danger also legitimize** and ratify measures, policies and practices that, ultimately, cater to the interests of a small group of the privileged hegemonic class (Gounari, 2009: 54–58).

In this context, we can see that the day after goes by as if the previous day had never existed; what happened was just the atonement of the tragedy experience by citizens, because the future cannot be desired against a fear that is felt, internalized, where the uncritical acceptance of all changes people and their lives into a fatalist view of the future (cf. *idem, ibidem*, pp. 68–70).

All the negative reality produced by the globalization of the markets, controlled by **the “liberalization of selfishness” confirms the need to claim the primacy of politics** (and ethics); the construction of a concept of politics based on a sympathetic rationality that **recovers and deepens the citizen’s protagonism and responsibility**, insofar as citizenship should be regarded as the political relationship between the individual and the community, that is, in that the human being assumes itself as a fully-fledged member of the community, participating in the various decision-making levels of life and political power (Pereira, 2012 p.12).

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- i. "Today, humanity lives in the 21st century with symbolic, mental and emotional structure that do not seem to have evolved. If one conclusion is to be drawn from previous research is that *humanity does not evolve*. As the human being is what it has always been, there is no reason for thinking that by relying on external support, in particular scientific and technical, he may one day become a Sweet and peaceful mammal, naturally driven by love of nature, by generosity, honesty or even rationality" (Farouki, 2005, p. 210).
 - ii. "We must not forget that the democratic spirit of power is only executive, since the person behind the decisions is not he who works at the institutions that organize and maintain the democratic regime, but rather the people in their majority (for good and for bad). If this is not the case, and indeed this is what happens, it is because not even the democratic promise was able to, or did not want to be better than the formula of power that governs nature. For that reason, we should also reflect, within political philosophy, on the *nature of political power*. The great problem of democracies does not really lie in their formal contents, but rather in the persistent background that *dwells in our impulses*" (Bastos, 2012, p. 252).
 - iii. Reflections about power tend to focus on who exercises it. However, "power is an asymmetrical relation. Someone forces their will and someone else, for good and bad, obeys. What characterizes a relationship is that both sides are reciprocal. There is no father without a son, a subject without an object, or a buyer without a seller. In a relationship of power the subject imposes itself and the subject obeys. However, studies have often focused only on one of the sides of the relationship – he who has and executes the power –, so half of the phenomenon will be lost, namely how the subject is submitted. (...) When studying the forms and strategies of dominance, we need to study how the reigning subject and the subordinate subject are formed" (Marina, 2009, p. 43). It is therefore essential to characterize the aspects that define the dominated subject beyond the simplistic view of the dominating subject in order to understand the concept of power.
 - iv. We should nevertheless avoid all forms of eulogy and promote a reason moved by the presence of the otherness, which replaces – going back to Levinas's idea – "sovereignty with vulnerability that is reflected in the sensitivity needed to interrupt and question what is already established and, therefore, to break away from the sameness. Levinas recognizes, along with Kant, the subjection to the categorical imperative; but whereas in Kant the categorical imperative embraces the idea of an autonomous will, the origin of law, Levinas advocates the *heteronomy* of ethical obedience. The order is given by the face and not by force or coercion" (Pereira, 2011, pp.99–100).
 - v. This psycho-political masochism is "a way to achieve that target. The different forms taken by masochistic impulses only have one target: *dispose of the individual ego, lose itself, in other words, get rid of the burden of freedom*. (...) The other is the attempt to become part of a larger and more powerful whole, extrinsic to the individual, and to submerge in and share it. (...) By becoming part of an unshakably stronger, eternal and fascinating power, the person participates in its glory and strength. It The person renounces to its self and to all pride and vigor associated thereto, loses its integrity as an individual, and gives up freedom, but nevertheless gains a new security and pride by taking part in the power in which it is now embedded" (Fromm, 1981, pp 126–128).
 - vi. Idealization is, thus, a form of illusion. "We disguise our lust for power as wolves in the most easy to find sheep's clothing. We hide the extent to which the exercise of power depends on a social and camouflaged limitation. We teach youngsters that in a democracy the power lies with the people and that in a market system all power is based on the sovereign consumer and on an impersonal offer and demand mechanism, without explaining that those truths only apply to "perfect democracy" situations or "perfect market", which do not exist today. And, especially, we hide the fact that political power is founded on a necessary fiction that we all

want to forget **that it is fiction, to reassure ourselves**" (Marina, 2009, p.14), even if it is protective and mobilizing.

- vii. We must not forget that although power is based on an atavism structural to the human being, today it is distributed across the world in such a complex and diffuse way that in many cases the largest percentage of power is not in the hands of the states. The power of many non-state actors in certain areas, for e.g., information, is inexorably greater than most states. For this reason many of the states are learning to share power, or to empower others, so that together **they can compete in this new paradigm of power: "in a world where borders are becoming more porous than ever to everything from drugs to infectious diseases to terrorism, nations have to build international coalitions and build institutions to address shared threats and challenges. In this sense, power becomes a positive sum game. It is not enough to think in terms of power over other. One must also think in terms of power to accomplish goals that imply power with others. On many transnational issues, empowering others can help us accomplish our own goals. In this world, networks and connectedness become an important source of relevant power"** (Nye, 2012, p. 17).
- viii. There is always an underlying tension between who wants to exercise power and the target thereof. **"What teleology tells us is that this struggle between expansion and limitation does not seem to satisfy anyone. The powerful, because it forces him to be always on the alert and startled. The weak, because he feels out of the competition. To solve this natural discontent, intelligence plays a trick by inventing something that seems to please everyone: the legitimacy of power. (...) Secondly, because it also satisfies the subordinated, who used the legitimacy of power to be free from the oppression of illegitimate and purely factual powers. We must obey the legitimate powers and rebel against the illegitimate ones. This is a generally accepted dogma that forces all the power – whatever its origin – to quickly find some sort of legitimacy"** (Marina, 2009, pp. 122-123).
- ix. **"Animals act as far as their desires and strength allows them, while men have the desire to have more desires and strengths to satisfy them, which triggers a long and cruel history. (...) because a triumph gives us much pleasure, and in this anxious journey some people believe that the domination of others is the climax of affirmative dynamism. This is precisely where the direction of the impulse changes. Power ceases to be the expansion of one's own energy to convert into the will to dominate"** (*Idem, ibidem*, p. 20).
- x. Thus, today the search for possible consensus has more to do with strategies to impose these consensus aimed primarily at setting aside any objections, confrontation and disagreement, turning them into attitudes contrary to the democratic principles. Consensus and unanimity have been used as stereotypes of salvation of democratic societies, but we forget that **accepting them passively is a recipe for ending democracy. "Democratic renewal will not be instigated by the drive for consensus but rather under the auspices of reasonable disagreement. Although democracy is impossible without a certain degree of consensus, it must nonetheless be open to the expression of diversity and to the articulation of collective identities rooted in different traditions. To declare that antagonisms of identity or ideological differences have been overcome indicates not wanting to take seriously the pluralism of values"** (Innerarity, 2005, p. 128).
- xi. To the common citizen, the subordination of political power to economic power is so evident **there is not a thinker today who does not contend "one of the most dramatic problems of contemporary societies, which has manifested as an indicator of the operational weakness of representative democracies, is the disorder and excess granted the economic and financial sphere over the last thirty years, as governments lowered their guard in relation to the financial system"** (Soromenho-Marques, 2014, p. 314). This situation is gravely serious, **placing not only today at risk. "No sustainable path can be followed in the European Union without a political consensus which is able to retake the primacy of politics, as the sphere of goals and liberty, putting economy and market in their rightful place, respectable and indispensable, but complementary"** (*Idem, ibidem*, p. 317).

- xii. This Judeo-Christian moral rationale has come to be more or less accepted passively, to *impoverish to save*, and has landed up today as the *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth*.
- xiii. **"The idea of a single democracy is a void abstraction or an expression of the dangerous imperial utopia, founded on the dream of planetary empire governed by super-oligarchies, a race of supreme imposters celebrating the cult of Democracy, after having confiscated the name and interdicted real practice (...). The power of the people without power or people. An unthinkable Democracy without *demos* or *kratos*."** (Pierre-André Taguieff, 2002, *Résister au bougisme*, in Baumier, 2007, pp. 45-46).
- xiv. Being absolutely crystal-clear, the strategy has locked the states and government under its thumb. The disproportionate importance, influence and consequences of banks is such that they became too big to fail and too big to bail. This means that the states became so hostage **of the banks that they managed to get the status of impunity.** The "reason why these ideas are so powerful is very material. It has to do with how a 'too big to fail' banking crisis in the United States became a 'too big to bail' banking crisis in Europe, and why this drives us all down the road to austerity" (Blyth, 2013, p. 11).