

The modes of thinking, the ways of speaking. NRU HSE

Dir. Prof. Alexander Marey LL. Dr.

Communication proposal  
*Logic of the political: Ancient Tragedy, Modern Farce and Universal Drama.*

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Is there something like a “political truth”? And what do we refer to when we say that something is “true”? What does it mean to assert that an object, a proposition or an historical event is “true”? To be sure, it has something to do with certain “correctness,” with a pre-existing order of reference. For example, in Law, we have customs, precedents, written statutes, the natural law and in general a juridical logic. Also in Economics, we have some given foundations, even if those are not usually very clear and ultimate there is no reigning consensus about what they are. In such disciplines, scholars as well as participants share a common ground to which they may refer, even if only to deny any reason or legitimacy to the opposite side in a discussion.

But when we come to politics, is there any common ground other than the fact that some people engage in this kind of activity? Is there a “logic” that could be named “political logic”? Is there a “political way of thinking,” different from the legal or economic? Can we affirm that a political decision is right or wrong? Is there such a thing as “good politics”, or “right politics”? And if so, what is the internal logic, the immanent legality of such “good” or “right” kind of politics?

*Plan*

We propose to explore the meta-logic of politics through an exercise in the *History of Ideas*, first by characterizing the ancient (pagan, extra-Cristian) way of thinking about politics, and secondly, by confronting it with what we call here “protestant modernity”, that is, the civilizing logic and *ethos* dominant in Western nations today (and the one that provides a content to the globalization

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process underway). Following this we will attempt to describe a *third way* that can integrate and go beyond the paradoxes of the former kinds of logic. We think, by the way, that this possibility may be related to Russia's geo-political and spiritual struggle in the international stage following the fall of the Berlin wall.

*Method and core proposal: Towards a rediscovered logic of politics: dramatic logic.*

If from the “internal” perspective of the agent, the logic of politics is related to aesthetics (“rhetoric”), from an objective or “external” point of view, the logic of politics is that of History: the *dramatic necessity* of events happening as if arranged inside a play. We base this proposal on a particular application of the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar, one of the most prominent theologians of the XXth century. The second part of his monumental trilogy (*Theo-dramatics*, 5 volumes out of 16 in total) is based on the drama of salvation. Balthasar devotes an entire volume (*Prolegomena*) to the development of a conceptual *organon* which he then applies to the various parts of his theology in order to introduce a *dynamic* version of the mysteries of the Christian faith. A theological drama by the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish playwright Calderón, *El gran teatro del mundo* (*The great theater of the world*), becomes for Balthasar the archetype of this intellectual enterprise.

Other contributions of Balthasar can be found in three further works of his: his monograph about the Austrian author Reinhold Schneider (*Tragedy under Grace: Reinhold Schneider on the Experience of the West*)<sup>2</sup>; *All in a fragment. Aspects of a theology of History*<sup>3</sup>; and *A Theology of History*<sup>4</sup>.

The philosophical implications of Balthasar's perspective have been studied, for example, by David C. Schindler (*Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth: a Philosophical Investigation*)<sup>5</sup>. We propose here to apply these ideas analogically (not univocally or equivocally) to the apex of human participation in historical time: political activity.

*The logic of the tragic in politics: ancient politics*

Quoting Hegel at the beginning of his *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx stated that “all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce”. So, the logic of ancient politics is, in a way, the

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<sup>2</sup> San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> *El todo en el fragmento*, Madrid, Encuentro, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> New York, Fordham University Press, 2004.

logic of a tragedy: an internal tension that cannot attain a solution, and ends in at least a partial loss. The Greeks and the Romans were political civilizations, but they were destined to fail for - as Saint Augustin pointed out in *The City of God*- their *teloi* were either material gains (riches, honor, human glory) or false gods (myths). We will try to understand why the political was born with such a fragile constitution in the extra-Christian civilizations and explore the internal contradictions that turned such politics a *tragic cycle* (Polybius).

*The logic of farcical politics: the (protestant) modern*

The counterpart of tragedy as stated above is that which has resulted ultimately in our modern-day protestant—mainly anglo-protestant—politics: a farce. Western rationalism has become cynical <sup>6</sup> by turning simply into a *latrocracy*<sup>7</sup>. If this could be deemed the material side of the farce, its spiritual side is a permanent and ideological machine of anti-common sense: *secular religion*<sup>8</sup>. And so, the enemy of political truth becomes political correctness, whereby the drama of our *political Geist-geschichtlich moment* turns into a *cultural-symbolical* struggle. *Quod, precisely, erat demonstrandum.*

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<sup>6</sup> P. Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1988

<sup>7</sup> “Government of thieves”, vid. P. Sloterdijk, *Die nehmende Hand und die gebende Hand (The hand that takes and the hand that gives)*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Vid. D. Negro Pavón, *El mito del hombre nuevo (The Myth of the New Man)*, Madrid, Encuentro, 2009.