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## НЕСТАНАК ПОЛИТИЧКОГ?\*

### Сажетак

У овом чланку аутор аргументише да савремена политичка пракса надилази политичку теорију и политичку филозофију које још увек нису у могућности да разумеју и артикулишу њено кретање. Аутор аргументише да оно што недостаје није само „име“ за нови политички субјективитет већ разумевање његовог смисла и могућности настанка. Супротстављајући биополитику – као антиполитику – политичком, у другом делу рада аутор разматра савремене теоријске трендове биополитике (неолиберализам и пост-модерну) и трага за условима који су потребни да би се на њих адекватно одговорило.

Кључне речи: Политичко, биополитика, политичка филозофија, нестанак, знање, моћ.

What motivates this investigation is both the contemporary situation of the disappointment of politics and the disappearance of the political as questions of and for political philosophy *par excellence*. It is a response to such a situation, a possible response that calls for responsibility. As such, its character cannot be anything less than controversial and challenging, in hopes of provoking further responses in the pretty much empty space of serious philosophical-political dialogue. This analysis appears at the moment in which not only pro-Marxist theorists but also economists such as Stiglitz and political figures such as president Sarkozy admit that a form of neoliberal capitalism, and with it linked globalization, has collapsed and lived up to not only an economical but political and ethical compromitiation as well. Whether this will lead to a breakdown of an entire system in Western-liberal societies that undergo the name of Western democracies or not is a matter of

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different analyses, but that a rethinking and reconfiguration of existing paradigms and practices will certainly be needed is almost indisputable. Our question now is what does this mean for the political? If it is to be admitted that in the last two decades the struggle between „right“ and „left“ was not a serious matter for the most part, that it was often replaced by different names but appeared as unconvincing or even not as a political struggle at all, can it be said that the ongoing crisis will enhance such possibilities and therefore the possibilities for democracy? Can the economic be connected to the political in such a way? Moreover, if it was the case that, regardless of the fact of the missing political struggles in recent times, political philosophy was going through its own crisis of meaning, are the chances of reconstituting its possibilities enlarged by the global economic crisis?

To say that today the appearance of the new political seems more likely is to say exactly that. To recognize that the changes and transformations of empirical events, the movement of concrete political struggles that we often tend not to associate with the political, leaves implications and opens up possibilities for theory – exactly in the sense in which the political is a response to events.<sup>1)</sup> It means to say that something has happened in politics and that it might happen in the sphere of the political. These differences in politics, leaving aside the preferences, orientations, problems, confrontations, which are more matters for political science investigations, bring a rising change from a unipolar to a multipolar world - and many is always, by its concept, a *sine qua non* of democracy, its necessary but still not sufficient condition. Another example can be found in the election of Barack Obama, although again, as a first but not final precondition for pursuing different politics. All of this, however, as is most times the case with the field of politics and practice, is unpredictable and a matter of events. What this signifies for the political is the emergence of conditions for its creation. What it names for political philosophy is its chance for articulation. What it means for concrete politics is something that remains to be seen.

How does the global economic crisis reflect this movement and the possibilities for the appearance of the political? What is it in theory that changes with world economic processes? Does it come down to a significant empirical phenomenon or can it also be given a name of condition in this way? To affirm the standpoint that the creation of a new paradigm is what will be needed means to accept either a strong in-

1) See the epigraph from Dante in Arendt, H. *The Human Condition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958. Arendt's view of the political is a matter for a different occasion, but part of her analysis, especially the interpretation of meaning of „new beginnings“ and the investigations from *The Origins of Totalitarianism* as a critique of biopolitics, are relevant for our investigations here.

terrelation between the economic and the political and/or between economy and politics. What is of interest and importance here is the way in which the prevailing neoliberal paradigm was strongly articulated and practiced both as a form and formula of contemporary materialism (Badiou:2006) and economic prosperity, establishing itself through the dominance of instrumental reasoning. This, however, can go in favor of the interpretation of a strong bond between the political and the economic or, the other way around, to be interpreted as that such economism was precisely the reason for the disappearance of the political. In order, therefore, for this relation to be reflected and analyzed, as well as the theses about the emerging of possibilities for the creation of the political, the very crisis of both political practice and political philosophy needs to be investigated.

The disappearance of the political? Why does one speak of a crisis of political philosophy, when it is evident that never in history has more been written on liberty, justice, the individual and the community, the role of the state, the public in contemporary societies? Or why would one argue for the disappearance of the political in ongoing politics at all? The crisis of theory regarding the political, as we see it, comes forth precisely as a lack of discussion about what constitutes the political and what it is that characterizes its main protagonist, namely, political subjectivity. The political and political subjectivity are questions of political philosophy par excellence, and it cannot be legitimately argued that different themes that are addressed for the most part can be reflected upon without previous reflection on them.

Leaving aside for the moment liberal discourses, in contemporary (existing) left-oriented political philosophy the crisis of political subjectivity has most often been articulated as the situation in which „what is lacking is the name“ that could replace Marx’s proletariat, including now groups marginalized by the system or entirely excluded from it. In response, we are now surrounded by a multiplicity of new names such as Agamben’s refugees, Hardt’s and Negri’s multitude, Laclau’s concept of hegemony, Nancy’s plurality, different thoughts on asylum seekers and prisoners without rights and so forth, which all attempt to fill the empty space of political subjectivity and the political, but without fully articulating what it is that constitutes them or what the conditions are of their appearance and existence - the conditions of the possibility of the political. That is why this important ongoing dialogue about names sometimes resembles more of a rhetorical gesture or at other times creates the impression that there already is a „political substance“ which we only have to name, because everything is there and ready to move, and it is as if history were already on our side.

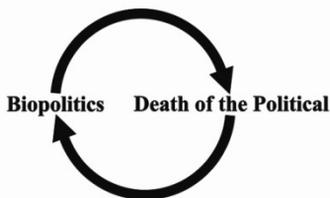
What, however, this implicitly does say is, again, that something of the necessary empirical conditions for a different politics is being fulfilled, that the reality of politics crosses over itself, unable to calculate all the political practices of its entire production, and that a time for politics might happen. If the empirical today goes beyond the conceptual this, on the other hand, does not mean that „all we need is a name“. To conceptualize is much more than to name, even more than to undertake the difficult task of finding the „proper name“ for potential political movements and their motivational strength. It means articulating a discourse on what the political is and what its conditions of possibility are, and from which the structural and constitutive moments of political subjectivity will then emerge.

It would be somewhat of a paradox to speak of a „fulfillment of empirical conditions“ *per se* (since the distinctive characteristic of concrete politics and different phenomena which occur regarding events in this field are contingent, changeable, fluctuating and rarely hold a single meaning), if such thought were not directed towards an articulation of a common signifier and, moreover, a finding of its conceptual theoretical impulse. If we call this political synthesis, then such political synthesis of the conditions of the disappearance of the political can be called antipolitics proper, while the fulfillment of empirical conditions for a future politics signals that something was missing in the articulation itself. Although long awaited, anticipated, formulated and practiced as if it was already there, the end of history did not happen.<sup>2)</sup>

Contrary to such neoliberal conceptualization, history not only continued to move on, but simultaneously in a short period of time brought about a diametrically opposed reality in fragments, together with „the end of the end of history“ (Kagan:2008). Global international terrorism and the „war“ against it through a number of military interventions all around the world, and a strong insistence on both economic and cultural globalization only contributed to speed up this process of „the end of the end“, but we take it that they are in no way to be regarded as excesses, much rather as exactly the implications, manifestations and realizations of antipolitics, therefore as its most immanent and constitutive characteristics. Contemporary liberal politics in the last decade, exactly by affirming itself through different types of politizations of li-

2) While in works *The End of History and the Last Man* (Free Press, 1992), and to certain extent also in *State-Building, Governance and the World Order in the 21 Century* (Cornel University Press, 2004), Fukuyama attempted to make the strongest case for the theses of „the end of history“, in his last work even he himself significantly revised his thinking. See Fukuyama, F. *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power and the Neoconservative Legacy*, Yale University Press, 2006.

fe, affirmed that we are not through with biopolitics, as antipolitics that signifies the death of the political.



The relation between biopolitics and the disappearance of the political in this way can be regarded as a two-way process of the production of the other. Its structure remains the same, regardless of whether we are dealing with forms of totalitarianism such as Fascism and Stalinism, or neoliberal totalitarianism as antipolitics in which the politization of life takes place. What does it, however, mean that in order to analyze the death of the political in contemporary neoliberalism we ought to turn to rethinking the relation between power over life and the politization of life (biopolitics) and the disappearance of political subjectivity?

The first possible and significant meaning (1) comes forth from a thought of Agamben: „Once their fundamental referent becomes bare life, traditional political distinctions – such as those between Right and Left, liberalism and totalitarianism, private and public – lose their clarity and intelligibility and enter into a zone of indistinction.“<sup>3)</sup> This is to say that the differences between the ongoing political practices, due to expansion, and the implications of the politics of globalization in which the politization of life takes on multiple forms, lose their immanent qualities, becoming less recognizable and, moreover, less existent, precisely because they are for the most part involved and sometimes even articulated as various types of „politics of life“, as parts of the same antipolitical discourse. By all means, this resembles the thought about the system producing its own critique, which is formulated in a way that only contributes to its strengthening, but the idea here is somewhat different. It means that the distinctive characteristic of antipolitics as biopolitics is seen in the destruction of traditional political and philosophical discourses and the entire conceptualization of politics and the political. The implication of such a process is that political differences

3) See Agamben, G. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1998. p. 122.

can no longer appear. This brings us to the second aspect (2) that biopolitics as politization of life is both articulated and practiced not only in a way of a neoliberal „regime of truth“ and its „governmental rationality“ (Foucault), but through seemingly different and sometimes opposed discourses, of which the common signifier is to be found in reference to life and the production of a crisis of political subjectivity, as the agency of politics and the mediator between politics and the political.

What this further implies is that this is the reason why the dialogues around the name for a new political subjectivity appear as insufficient, since the thinking missing here is a response to how it is that political subjectivity in contemporary politics disappeared in the first place, and what the conditions for its existence are (3). In recent theory, aside from the rare attempts to analyze this matter, but in specific contexts (Badiou: 2005, Critchley: 2006), there has been practically no investigation between the knowledge/power relation, on the one hand, and the motive of the (dis)appearance of political subjectivity, especially in the context of contemporary biopolitics, characterized by military interventions and different types of politizations of life.

The knowledge/power relation can be regarded as somewhat structural and constitutive for political subjectivity and, as we will argue, as the decisive condition for both the death of the political and the possibility of articulation of future politics. That is also why this analysis cuts across the tradition of political philosophy, especially Modernity, and explains why it was necessary for antipolitics as biopolitics to destroy political differences as well as the conceptualization of the political. One of the significant manifestations of realizing the power of antipolitics in this sense, can be found in the de-conceptualization of certain concepts and the production of new „conceptual differences“ that perfectly substitute both political reality and the political, somewhat analogous to Baudrillard’s metaphor of „the perfect crime“. Such examples can be found in conceptual oppositions between totalitarianism and democracy, terrorism and democracy, liberal and illiberal democracy<sup>□</sup>, just and unjust wars, sovereignty and human rights, and the friend and enemy distinction. How has the production of these differences so strongly affirmed itself that today it appears almost as an unquestionable discourse, or a discourse where at least one of these „differences“ is not to be brought into question? Is it not the case that in order to unfold and articulate the genealogy of the present (Foucault) of the contemporary politization of life, these binary oppositions need to be reflected on? And is this not precisely a Foucaudian task *par excellence*?

Disagreeing with Žižek's and Badiou's suggestion that the name of democracy has become abused to the point that we should perhaps take the risk of abandoning it, the investigation that follows aims precisely to articulate that democracy might be the proper name we are searching for in the future new politics and, more importantly, regardless of names, that the political itself in an imminent sense is democracy, and that therefore it is not a matter of coincidence that contemporary liberal biopolitics has theoretically and politically engaged so much on its destruction. Moreover, our idea here is that sovereignty and democracy need to be rethought together, and that the critique of biopolitics today, before and above anything else, appears as the investigation of the unspoken, almost silent difference between sovereign-democratic understanding of the political, political constitution, law, freedom and life, on the one hand and (neo)liberal antipolitics on the other, provided that they are not taken as diametrical counterparts and contradictions, let alone binary oppositions, but rather as possible movements that come forth from the philosophical tradition of Modernity and then in regard to contemporary political practices, as discourses and events, as conditions of possibilities and impossibilities...

Another meaning (4) why the analysis of the (dis)appearance of the political is to be rethought through the relation between the politization of life (biopolitics) and political subjectivity lies in the two-foldedness of the contemporary end/return to history, in which globalized unification coexists with the strengthening of particular identities, both on the conceptual level and in political practices. Globalization and its „other“, de-globalization, both within themselves, theoretically and politically, in different ways appear as ultimate manifestations of the politization of life, and therefore potentially and actually destruct democracy and freedom, while on the other hand, both refer to moments that are constitutive for the emergence and articulation of a new political subjectivity and the political. This again will have something to do with interpretation of Modernity and its possibilities in contemporary practices.

There is one more reason why we might be searching for democracy -- or something that sounds almost as a *contradicio in adjectio*, the principles of democracy -- as the most constitutive for the political. Democracy, if not the proper name, is the concept in which the political and politics come together, which is neither external to the tradition of philosophical thinking nor a name for only one of many contemporary empirical phenomena, as is the case for instance with Agamben's refugees. Nor does it require ontology for the meaning of its name, as is the case with Hardt's and Negri's multitude. Democracy is one of the rare

concepts that at the same time engages in itself the philosophical tradition from Greek philosophy, Modernity to post-Modernity and contemporary thinking, with different interpretations of the concept itself, while on the other hand it is a concept of and for political practices, one of the practical politics that is neither ontologized nor theoreticized to the point of being unable to encounter events. Democracy in an important sense is the space of events, but as such it is precisely the concept that perhaps in an exemplary way speaks of the relation between the political and politics, theory and practice and the possibility in which subjectivity can be seen as the agency of politics.

To turn our question around, what would it mean to claim that politics is not a matter of theory at all, but exclusively of practice, and that its agency is not subjectivity? In a radical or a moderate form, this would be to say that politics can either be reduced to techniques of governing and pragmatism or, moreover, that politics is nothing else but a blind sequence of contingent events with no agency at all, as the final implication of radical individualism. Our argument is that these types of discourses are exactly the ones that are decisive for biopolitics as antipolitics and, in last implication, for discourses of totalitarianism. But if we oppose the idea of democracy to such a reflected idea of totalitarianism, are we not again at the beginning of the affirmation of this and other binary oppositions, which previously were regarded as a non-existing produced difference on the basis of which biopolitics operates? This is where the idea of political subjectivity, democracy as political subjectivity, and the relation between politics and the political comes in. The moment here is that exactly when rethought from the tradition it comes forth, the concept of democracy appears as one that in an important sense is neither constituted on nor constitutive for binary oppositions, it knows differences, but again is not a „politics of difference“, and certainly not constructed on the emotional quasi-ethical discourse of the friend and enemy distinction and its different appearances.

The characteristic of the idea of democracy and political subjectivity is, in other words, not only the relation between, on the one hand, the political and politics but between what in the tradition of Modernity was named as self-consciousness and more widely undergoes the idea of reason, and on the other hand, empirical forms of constitution of different political identities. If the category of „life“ (bios) is to retain any meaning at all in a discourse of future new politics and in contrast to the politization of life, then it is to be rethought on the basis of the meaning of political identities.

What is it to say that political subjectivity refers to the ideas of self-consciousness and reason, on the one hand, and to the question

of identity on the other? It means to say something about the relation between politics and philosophy, in a specific and perhaps constitutive determination, namely that subjectivity as subjectivity is „always already“ in itself political subjectivity, in the sense that one of its constitutive moments refers to reasoning, while the other refers to different modes of how otherness is lived up to in concrete practices. This is to say that the question of subjectivity as the question of theory par excellence finds its necessary supplement (necessary in terms of its own justification and self-realization) in its own immanent aspect of being at the same time political subjectivity – for its political moment faces the challenge of taking up the reflection on how self-consciousness and reasoning appear in the construction of empirical political identities in different forms of understanding the meaning of community and society, and how otherness is articulated and lived up to, as the only way in which the category of „life“ has a place in the political and politics. If there is a common signifier for thinking the political in different theories from Aristotle to Hegel, Marx, Foucault, Arendt and Habermas, then it lies just in such attempts to rethink reason and otherness.

While on the one hand biopolitics as the instrumentalization of life appears in the form of binary oppositions, such as its articulation in a „quasi-Schmittian“ language,<sup>4)</sup> on the other hand it can also appear as postpolitics, as a mode of antipolitics articulated and realized in some contemporary discourses. Biopolitics depoliticizes the political, creating a new contemporary postpolitical space, by production (of the new meaning) of concepts of individuality, community, human rights, freedom, democracy, friendship, and otherness. To recognize the difference between thinking of the political and its concepts in the tradition of political philosophy and its appearances in contemporary political practices and discourses means to understand why it was a necessary condition for biopolitics as a politization of life to articulate itself as postpolitics and antipolitics, as destruction of the political. A theoretical and practical urgency surrounding the concept of biopolitics comes forth, therefore, as a sense of tracing the missing link in contemporary discussions about the crisis of political subjectivity, the missing link between the common elements in doubtlessly very different theories from Plato's *Laws* and *The Statesman* to Aristotle's *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, to Rousseau's *The Social Contract*, Hegel's *Phenomenology* and *Philosophy of Right*, Marx's *Early Philosophical Writings*, Foucault's *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Habermas's *The Communicative Action*, as the missing link on

4) For analysis how a crypto-Schmittianism was applied in political practices of the Bush administration in US see Critchley, S. *Infinitely Demanding*, Verso, New York, 2007.

how it is that reason and otherness appear as constitutive moments of the political, in contrast to both a condition of postpolitics (sometimes replaced by ethics) and politics as war, and politization of life as biopolitics.

The conceptual difference between the political and biopolitics refers, therefore, to the differences between self-consciousness and instrumental reasoning, between life as a subject and life as an object of politics, and above and beyond all reflects the two-foldedness of the knowledge-power relation. The question of biopolitics in that sense is the question par excellence on how the phenomena of war, of instrumental reason and techniques, come forth together with a postpolitical appeal to ethics. How is it that all of these different phenomena appear as antipolitical, and precisely due to something missing among the moments of reason and otherness that constitute the political? How is it that the structure of the knowledge-power relation implies both biopolitics and possibilities for new future politics?

### **POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY, SUBJECTIVITY, KNOWLEDGE AND POWER**

If the first question of the political, and therefore of political philosophy, is the tracing of political subjectivity, and subjectivity articulates and manifests itself through different forms of the knowledge/power relation, and is both constitutive and constituted by them, then the condition of saying something about the political lies in a response to how it is that knowledge/power appear in such a form and reason and otherness as moments of the political in politics. Foucault's „introduction“ of power into the analyses of political philosophy is then only an implication of what the entire philosophical tradition of thinking the political was engaged in, its *raison d'être* and its own genealogy, particularly the genealogy of Modernity as its critical reflection on itself. Is this to express an almost heretic thought that in Foucault's different writings the most immanent line is the one of his political philosophy and that the disturbing silence about it, together with favoring the idea of „care of the self“ and a certain „retreat“ to aesthetics is again not another chance, a contingent misunderstanding, a missed dialogue?

What would be the implications of concluding that the knowledge/power relation is the condition of the political and, moreover, in a certain sense the political itself? Is it a possible final separation of ethics from politics that is so disturbing here? Or is it the very idea that Foucault's genealogy at the same time presents a paradigmatic, exemplary par

excellence critique of Modernity, but a critique that is not, as Habermas would have it, directed toward its destruction and the destruction of the Enlightenment, but rather at Modernity's own self-critique, as a possibility for its actual realization? Is this perhaps the reason why in spite the hyperproduction of works on Foucault it is not customary to say or attempt to say what Foucault did mean by the political? And why does Foucault's critique of biopolitics speak precisely of it? And why does Foucault's critique of biopolitics appear as „the critique“, a synthesis of Foucault's entire project of genealogy and critique? Or can the most simple and banal reason be that Foucault himself says very little, almost nothing about the political proper? To miss these moments is to miss not only the role of critique in Foucault but to remain silent about the subtle yet strong voices, and sometimes very explicit voices indeed, about what the political is and can be in a new future politics.

One aspect in which the knowledge/power relation unfolds itself in contemporary thinking and political practices can be followed in an analysis of what today goes under the name of political philosophy, such as, for example, neoliberal<sup>5)</sup> „political philosophy“, particularly that part that still continues to celebrate the status quo, that leads wars against (in)humanity and presents itself as the philosophy of freedom. The second example is postmodern „political thinking“ that, in a similar way in which the first comes together with biopolitics as politics of war and antipolitics, comes forth with postpolitics, a production of postpolitical space (of appearances) that founds itself on a rethinking (ethics) of singularity. The self-constitution of neoliberal political philosophy does not lie in self-legitimization (in which justification of a discourse comes from reason itself), but rather in the acceptance of moments external to philosophy as constitutive moments, and therefore in an instrumentalization of knowledge in the interest of power. Such is the case with the acceptance of the motive of negative freedom as the leading principle of society (since it already presupposes and is derived from the concept of property) as the unquestioned value which with the liberalization of the market presents the decisive point of reference of

5) Since the 1990s „neoliberalism“ has mostly been used to refer to global market-liberalism/capitalism and for free-trade policies, therefore frequently used interchangeably with globalization, and exemplified in institutions such as the World Bank, the WTO, the IMF. The significant moment here is that neoliberalism does not attempt to appear as economics proper, but attempts to articulate itself as a political, social and moral philosophy and, moreover, that liberalism from its beginnings in the late 18th century was constructed in a similar way, as a synthesis of economics and politics, as inseparable economic/political liberalism, decisive for contemporary neoliberal discourse.

contemporary liberal discourses, and in authors as Nozick and Hayek is accompanied by the theory of the minimal state.<sup>6)</sup>

The point here lies above all in the liberal belief in market forces as both an unquestioned main value and end in itself, which finally resolves not only the economic but also all political and social matters, both in the public and the private spheres, articulating itself as an ideology of human existence. This is why, regardless of its „content“ it cannot be recognized as political philosophy par excellence, somewhat similar to the reason why an „ethics of content“ has trouble with Kant’s critique of it. Would that mean that to a „politics of content“ we oppose a „political formalism“? Certainly not in such a strict sense, but inasmuch as the political and the concept of the political implies universalism, and the only meaning of such universalisation in it is freedom, as the condition of the possibility of the political, then the „political formalism“ of political philosophy consists precisely in critique as its immanent moment.

This is to say both that the political in a philosophical sense cannot exist if it cannot be brought into question, that the possibility of critique is imminent to political philosophy, that its self-critique opens the possibilities of the political, and that if there is a difference between the political and the ideological, then such difference is to be found in such „political formalism“, as a movement of reasonable (self)critique, which precisely as such is the condition for thinking of the political and politics as both a field of possibilities and a field of creation. In Foucault’s political philosophy such „political formalism“ is articulated as genealogy (of the present), a political „method“ that surpasses every other methodology but remains strict in a philosophical sense, and precisely in the role of permanent critique affirms the tradition of Modernity and of thinking the political in its strongest aspects of the question of the Enlightenment as its own questionability. This thought, that in a different tradition of critical theory, especially of the first generation of the Frankfurt School, was articulated through the idea that „philosophy is always directed against the status quo“, does not in its immanent meaning present either the banalized or sophisticated form of the parole „philosophy is revolution“, for that form of engagement and involvement would again disrupt the difference between the political and politics, in such a way that it itself could become subject of ideological thinking and practices, but rather appears as the thought of political philosophy’s immanent critique which, however, does not remain a negative conceptualization of the political but in itself articulates the political as the field of possibilities and creation, of the moment of the

6) For analyses of these moments see Nozick, R. *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Basic Books, 1974. and Hayek, F.V. *Constitution of Liberty*, The University of Chicago Press, 1978.

new, in which the field of the imaginary and the field of reasonability meet up in an ongoing dialogue. Something appearing about the political? A „political formalism“, an artistic creation, a critique, a possibility of possibilities, or its condition...

If the identification of the common signifier in (neo)liberal theories and practices led to the implication of why it is problematic to name this discourse political philosophy, and this articulation, in return, implied saying something of the political as well, then the question is how this relates to knowledge/power as constitutive moments of the political and as articulations of contemporary antipolitical discourse. Roughly speaking, as for the antipolitics of neoliberalism, it demonstrates the movement of the transformation of the knowledge/power relation into (the primacy of) power, as a specific form of forgetting and/or destructing the very ideas of Modernity, inasmuch as they signify the questionability and critical/creational potential<sup>7)</sup> as political philosophy par excellence, as a taking of a stand on the side of (political) power even when in contrast and distinct from reason, as the end of the dialogue on a „best of all possible worlds“, the end of theory, the end of history, the end of events. Moreover, it has also displayed that the political cannot be entirely reduced to the economical, and that a reduction of this kind (such as a reduction of human action to market transactions) implies an instrumentalization of knowledge (reason) in favor of implementation of certain ideology.

The antiphilosophical impulse of neoliberalism, however, perhaps because it has taken as its basis matters external to philosophy, positioning itself in this externality, in the field of the economical, of political power and ideology, was able further to remain in the externality of the meaning of concepts, moreover, to produce new meanings and differences, by instrumentalizing knowledge, instrumentalizing theory for its own purpose of achieving and constituting global power structures.<sup>8)</sup> That is why it could not have been structured otherwise but as antipolitics. (Political) philosophy's only responsibility - if there is any ethical moment in the political - lies in its own response to itself, as the response(ibility) to and for its own concepts, their articulation and

7) The motive of critique of Modernity is one of its decisive characteristics from its beginnings, whether one thinks of the role of „methodological doubt“ in Descartes or Kant's projects of „three critiques“, or the role of critique in Hegel, and can be analyzed regardless of other conceptions in either early modern or idealistic tradition, and its presence followed practically throughout its philosophical tradition.

8) One of the examples (of the winner who writes history and affirms its political power in theory) is the massive production of schoolbooks, especially in the last decade, titled „Political Philosophy“, where liberalism was nearly always presented as the only way of thinking. For recent examples see Swift, A. *Political Philosophy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2006 or Miller, D. *Political Philosophy*, Oxford, 2003.

practices. This is also to say that the antipolitics of contemporary neoliberalism could not have been produced otherwise but by an antiphilosophy that presents its theoretical (dis)articulation, and is manifested constantly in all its practices. Democracy has been replaced by „democratic use of force“ and „democratic wars“, freedom has been replaced by „our value of freedom“, violence by „fighting for the right cause“, justice by „stable functioning of the system“ and law by „exceptions“. Contemporary neoliberal power and its techniques of governing (Foucault) in its immanent structure is constructed as a philosophy of violence in different forms, which is a possible reason for saying that the name of political philosophy is inappropriate for it.

But if our point here is to say that, aside from perfect „empirical conditions“ for the rise and global dominance of neoliberalism in the last two decades (such as the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe), there is something within the liberal discourse itself that enabled the appearance of contemporary neoliberal practices, and that this debt of antipolitics which today appears as biopolitics is a debt to Modernity, both in the sense of its forgetting and destruction and as realization of one of its possibilities (for liberalism appeared exactly as and in the production of Modernity), then what is to be said about postmodernity<sup>9)</sup> in this sense?

Is it not the case that postmodernity in theory appeared exactly with the idea to open up a new space, a different, free space of theory as the space of freedom of thinking and doing, of recognition of multiplicity and differences as the human condition? Has postmodernity not disclosed and reintroduced the role and significance of otherness and irreducible differences, through which precisely moments such as dialogue, creativity, new beginnings, the field of possibilities and potentialities arise? Are not the writings of Liotar, Derrida, Levinas, Nancy contemporary philosophical works at their best, a possible pathway for thinking democracy and perhaps an answer to biopolitics as well?

This, however, and unfortunately, is the moment in which this line of argumentation becomes somewhat paradoxical in itself. By all means, and differently than neoliberal discourse and its acceptance of moments external to philosophy for its own foundation, postmodernity, in all its different appearances, is philosophy par excellence, above and beyond all a theoretical analysis and a theoretical critique of metaphysics and ontology. But this is just exactly where the question

9) The concept „postmodern“ appears around 1870 in England, in relation to the „progressivistic“ critique of French impressionism in painting, then in Germany in 1917 in the work *Die Krisis der europaischen Kultur* (Pannwitz), and as an articulated philosophical concept with Liotar's work *La condition postmoderne* (1979).

appears: where is politics in postmodernity? And what is postmodern political philosophy? Does not politics appear as something set aside, almost forgotten, insignificant, in the last implication even exterior to postmodern thinking? What has postmodernity exactly affirmed by giving and building on the primacy of ethics in the field of practical philosophy? The question is where the possibility for postmodern political philosophy lies.<sup>10)</sup>

One possible interpretation, a theoretical possibility, would be to say that through its focus on singularity and individuality, on otherness and ethical relations, on individual relations as primarily ethical in structure, postmodernity has both constructed and affirmed a postpolitical space and in that sense is not to be regarded as political philosophy par excellence. A postpolitical ethics of postmodernism, on the other hand, still does not exclude it from analysis of any eventual political implications of such a discourse. For what are the implications of a discourse that, for instance, situates all phantasms of violence into philosophical tradition, cultural tradition and political tradition? And, moreover, in this respect appears to be somewhat close to neoliberal thinking and its relation to tradition? Furthermore, postmodernism in this sense of articulating a „politics of life“ and/or „politics of survival“, that posits all violence and preconditions for totalitarianism as exclusive thinking and events of the past, appears to be even more radical in its „all-inclusive“ attack on (Western) culture/civilization/tradition. Does not this very gesture by itself open up exactly the space for a contemporary politics of violence?

The moment any alternative is valued as the „one and only“ and as a choice „for or against humanism“, one reopens the friend-enemy discourse and the path for totalitarianism. In other words, there is something in the very sayings and articulation of postmodern discourse that not only does go in line with trends of creating a global, progressive, urban space (i.e. of creating new differences and producing new concepts), or declaring the end of history, but something that resembles a creation of antipolitics of life/survival, or dec(on)struction of politics of life/survival that happens on the margins of its own postpolitics. The theoretical and political impulse of a Nietzschean moment and/or a certain reconciliation with the (justification of) the status quo with a search for ethical singularity are different accents which make postmodern politics either a politics of survival (this world is, if not

10) See for example Derrida, J. *Specters of Marx*, Routledge, New York-London, 1994 or Derrida, J. *The Gift of Death*, University of Chicago Press, 1995 and Derrida, J. „The Deconstruction of Actuality: An Interview with Jacques Derrida“, *Radical Philosophy* 68/1994. Also see Liotar, J.F. *Political Writings*, University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

the best, then the least worst) or a politics of life (as good as it gets). In other words, while on the one hand there doubtlessly is something in the characterization that postmodernism, with its end of metanarratives, brings with it attitudes of doubt, resentment or even nihilism (and in that sense at best represents a series of strategies of survival), at the same time it carries something of a Dionysian celebration, of the feast in which the idea that nothing stands transforms itself into the thought that everything is possible.

Postmodernism as a vision of a posthistorical society of global individualism, of pluralism and multiplicities therefore appears either as an implicit affirmation of the „politics of difference“ and its crypto-democratic political stance, or by its focus on the ethical dimension as primary and constitutive for intersubjectivity, opens up a postpolitical space, de(con)structing the further possibility for new politics. The other moment is that postmodernism can also present itself as an explicit affirmation of and for the (neo)liberal discourse, a justification of the status quo in the sense of living in the „best possible world“ that is not qualitatively or systematically to be brought into question and where critique limits itself mostly to marginalized matters. This is the subtle differentiation between authors such as Lyotard, Derrida, Levinas, Nancy and Ranciere, where the postmodern postpolitical possibility is articulated, and authors such as Rorty, Habermas and Giddens, who directly call for the implementation of a contemporary Western model of politics, in most cases with the argument about its comparative strength.<sup>11)</sup>

In other words, in terms of the knowledge/power relation as constitutive for thinking the political, postmodernism appears either as a rationalization of dominant Western antipolitical discourse, i.e. as the instrumentalization of knowledge, making a case for power and its theoretical and practical implementation (what Foucault calls „techniques of governing“), or as a radical refusal of reason and the entire tradition of Modernity on the basis of its identification with violence.<sup>12)</sup> The point here is that while it is doubtlessly possible and significant to thematize the discourse of domination in Western philosophy, and moreover it belongs as a possibility precisely to a theoretical request of political

11) See for example Giddens, A. *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*, Polity Press, 1994 and Giddens, A. *The Third Way*, Polity Press, 1998.

12) In *Conditio Moderna* Manfred Frank articulated the ways in which postmodernism attempts to make a strong case between rationality and violence, and importantly through the concept of legitimation as a „pathology of Modernity“. While Frank's views on postmodernity as „prefascistic anti-modernism“ certainly remain arguable, Frank's further argument that it is not rationality which justifies violence but rather a total critique of rationality that enables it can hardly be disputed. For detailed analysis see Frank, M. *Conditio Moderna*, Reclam Leipzig, 1993. pp. 5-20 and 90-120.

philosophy, the further move of de(con)structing reason *per se*, by its equalizing with violence is what appears as problematic, as a theoretically illegitimate move that de(con)structs itself, reaches up almost to a metaphysical claim *sub specie aeternitatis*, and one with political implications. Moreover, the question then arises: was it because of such a move that the idea of legitimacy needed to be dismissed? What is dismissed with the idea of legitimacy? By de-legitimizing knowledge in such a sense of movement of the political, at the same time the idea of power in relation to knowledge, as a possibility different from power as violence is disrupted.

What might be named as a „democratic pluralism“ of political philosophy certainly remains open for a postmodernism, inasmuch as it attempts to articulate a response to what the political is, how political subjectivity and new politics can appear, and precisely how its individualities, singularities, differences and otherness can arise and manifest themselves as constituted by the political, as the political itself. In this sense, Aristotle’s writing that „the will should follow what reason confirms“ but that *phronesis* is never only knowledge „of the general“ but also always „of the particular“ for it refers to action<sup>13</sup>), remains instructive and, even more when recognized as a moment later articulated and developed in Modernity, presents a way to understand the idea of legitimacy in political philosophy. In terms of the relation between the political and politics this moment has to do precisely with articulation and affirmation of political subjectivity in political identities.

The concept of political subjectivity, in distinction to concepts of political action or political practice, in itself already carries all the ambivalences, potentialities, multiplicities of the knowledge/power relation in Modernity (which explains both the postmodern and liberal discourses and their uses of concepts of singularity and individuality and never subjectivity in saying something about the political), and exactly as such appears as a possible response to biopolitics. Biopolitics as antipolitics, manifested in the „politics of (democratic) wars“, in a politization of life that takes on many different forms in contemporary contexts of the instrumentalization of knowledge, destroys the very idea of political subjectivity as immanent, critical knowledge, produced and articulated in intersubjective ongoing dialogue and its movement between politics and the political, while as postpolitics appears as individual self-creation, that becomes in and through the ethical and aesthetical of some different form of encountering non-conceptualizing otherness, an otherness that, like singularity, can only be lived up to,

13) See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139a, II-2 and 114b, VII-7.

but never articulated and brought into relation with knowledge, which it structurally opposes.<sup>14)</sup>

It can perhaps be articulated that political identity, when not conceived as a „politics of difference“ but in relation to the political, always presents a certain form of political subjectivity, but in such a way that subjectivity does not occupy a different, transcendent sphere but refers to conditions of appearances of different political identities. How is such a discourse possible? If such a discourse is reflected as the very possibility of political subjectivity and therefore of the political, and if thinking the political signifies the attempt to reflect the questions of knowledge and power and the ways in which they appear as constitutive for politics in terms that it has something to do with reason and something with otherness, then political philosophy by its concept is the very possibility of such a discourse and in that sense is always a response to the challenges of Modernity and its entire tradition. Moreover, it is the question of the political.

Another thought here is that what is unique about political subjectivity is that it not only importantly refers to the constitution of the political with reason as its agency, but that the political itself presents the very immanent condition of subjectivity in the sense that it refers to intersubjectivity as its decisive condition. What can be concluded from the fact that regarding this moment there is very little difference in theories as different as Hegel's dialectic of recognition as becoming of self-consciousness in *Phenomenology* and Levinas's phenomenology of otherness, in the sense that in both subjectivity comes into being with and through intersubjective relations, and identity becomes possible by otherness, the only difference being that the first case occurs through rationality and the second through more of an ethical and emotional sense of such a relation.<sup>15)</sup> It seems that the only possibility here is to say that the political structure of subjectivity, in the sense of otherness being its constitutive condition, creates a tension of different, multiple moments, revealing its own possibility in and through complex encounters. While on the one hand, knowledge appears as a *sine qua non* of both political subjectivity and the political, in its differentiation from biopolitics as either a dismissal of reason (what in final implication leads to an anarchic cryptodemocracy) or its instrumentalization (as in contemporary liberal power politics), and in that respect constitutive for political identities as well. In practically the entire tradition of political philosophy (what postmodernism sometimes overlooks) we find also

14) See for example Levinas, E. *Totality and Infinity*, Kluwer Academic Publisher, Boston, 1980.

15) For detailed analysis see Hegel, G.V.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford University Press, 1977 and Levinas, E. *Entre Nous*, Columbia University Press, 1998. and also Levinas, E. *Humanism of the Other*, University of Illinois, 2006.

the significant moment of different „political emotions“ that emerge in and with the very same subjectivity. Aristotle’s friendship, Rousseau’s pity, Sloterdijk’s anger, Levinas’s trauma, Butler’s vulnerability<sup>16)</sup> are articulated precisely as political emotions that appear as both motivational potentials and binding moments, and can sometimes appear even as the basis for constructing political identities.

But if biopolitics destroys the conditions of the possibility of the political, if it destructs the possibility of its appearance through the politization of life, has this not to do with the construction of political identities on the basis of political emotions, with political emotions becoming a basis for politics, and different ways in which both biological life and its characteristics and the psychological life of individuals become a basis for political identities? And is this not the decisive reason for reason, and its very legitimation? For what would happen in a different case?

Let us remember here Schmitt’s friend-enemy distinction, as an example of the way in which political emotions appear as constitutive. What were the implications of such a positing? Above all, it was the theoretical implementation of a decisionistic model of sovereignty, of power that becomes through and founds itself on the one who decides, of the one who appears as the sovereign, as where the political is constituted.<sup>17)</sup> But has not Schmitt’s thinking of the political and precisely his theory of sovereignty had its source in philosophical tradition, especially the tradition of Modernity and theory such as Hobbes’s? Doubtlessly, this seems to be exactly the case and is the line in the tradition of Modernity on the basis of which the appearance of biopolitics in a certain sense was possible, as one possibility of theorizing and manifestation of the knowledge/power relation that enabled a form of understanding and practicing sovereign power (what in postmodernism is named the „Western discourse of domination“). The way in which this moment was taken over, then modified and articulated so as to enable the appearance of the contemporary phenomena of biopolitics together with contemporary discourses of domination and power politics has to do with neoliberal policy and its combining of these moments of the prevalence of political emotions (particularly suitable in „the time of

16) Sloterdijk goes so far as to argue that if affects were not reasonable in their own way they would not be constitutive for the human being, insisting that a rethinking of thymos for understanding politics is of decisive importance. For detailed analysis see Sloterdijk, P. *Zorn und Zeit. Politisch-psychologischer Versuch*, Suhrkamp, 2006. For analysis of other political emotions see Aristotle, *Politics*, Penguin Books, 2000, Levinas, E. *Otherwise Than Being: Or Beyond Essence*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998, Rousseau, J.J., *The Social Contract*, Penguin Books, 2007, and Butler, J. *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*, Verso, New York, 2004.

17) See Schmitt, C. *The Concept of The Political*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996.

pictures“, media expansion and development of information technologies), and other external moments such as the economy and ideology of contemporary materialism. Constituting political identities on other, different emotions is, although perhaps different in terms of possible empirical political implications, structurally the same in the sense that it disables exactly the possibility of human freedom and in that way the possibility of the political.

The implication that follows is that, although political emotions can appear to be significant in the entire space of the manifestation of the political and can certainly contribute and play a role in the construction of political identities, and finally are a part of subjectivity, and therefore political subjectivity inasmuch as it stands for the relation to otherness and movement of intersubjectivity, when taken as a condition *per se* and as a constitutive moment of the political, it can lead directly to biopolitics. The response, however, is perhaps either not to be constructed one-sidedly, as an „alternative to reason“ that by itself resolves all difficulties, that as an unexpected force arrives and sorts out all difficulties, but maybe lies somewhere along the lines of Foucault’s question „What is Enlightenment today?“ This is to say that the response is above and beyond all a question, and questions in plural and never a definite answer, and that only as such does it at the same time present the moment of both critique and creation as moments of the political. Furthermore, it makes something of Modernity and therefore the tradition of political philosophy live by making it alive, and rethinking its question of how reason and otherness encounter each other in the political and how a new politics can be thought about if it is the reasonable (and then other) relation to otherness that is freedom. If political philosophy is fundamentally a philosophy of human freedom, how is it that knowledge and power, together with the „formula“ of Modernity that knowledge is power, play out in a way that such freedom can be actualized and the political appear?

Can the remembrance of philosophical tradition from the Grek polis and its further articulation and movement through Modernity, especially in the sense of the publicity, debate and becoming of the political, and the liveliness of such a moment in rethinking the relation between knowledge and power be a possible response, or rather the question posed of the political? Can a Rousseauian tradition of thinking association and sovereignty be the other, the very other moment of Modernity that can appear as a response to contemporary phenomena of biopolitics? Can the possibility of rethinking freedom and democracy appear in a different form of thinking about sovereignty, as a way in which otherness, multiplicities; subjectivities constitute themselves in the act of constituting the political?

In *The Social Contract* Rousseau writes: „When scattered men, regardless of their number, are successfully enslaved to a single chain, I see in this nothing but masters and slaves, it is, if you will, an aggregation but not an association, there is neither public good nor body politic.“<sup>18)</sup> If the difference between Hobbes and Rousseau (and Locke on the third side) precisely relate to the question of thinking sovereignty and moreover to thinking the political, and if thinking of the political and political subjectivity in that sense cannot be viewed without rethinking sovereignty in a way that has to do something with its very appearance, could it not be that popular sovereignty, as the act of „how a people become a people“ in itself implies the possibility of politics as freedom and democracy? Is it not that beginning from such an act an understanding and construction of political identities different from biopolitics can be articulated?

Could it be that the unrealized and forgotten possibility of Modernity that can be rethought in the context of contemporary antipolitics, a response to rethinking the constitutive moments of reason and otherness, a challenge of the role of critique, questionability and openness, a possibility of living principles of democracy as the field of human freedom and human creation, a movement of becoming politics as power in a different sense, where the knowledge/power relation appears in and through the subjectivity of the political? And could this then be the moment of ethics in new politics, in the very sense that in contrast to the appearance of biopolitics in which politics is always objectified, made an object or instrument, here it arises as the enabling of dialogue, as the condition of possibility of the political, that unlike the „politics of difference“, its cryptodemocratic production of differences that rest on binary thinking and binary oppositions, articulates freedom as democracy?

Does not Foucault's genealogical analysis that reflects not only on the form of appearance of biopolitics as Fascism and Nazism but on the way in which biopolitics appeared in a new form in civil society and liberalism (as the very reason why Western-liberal ideals of peace, freedom and democracy were not realized) at the same time present the possibility of such articulation?

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**(DIS)APPEARANCE OF THE POLITICAL?\***

**Summary**

In this article the author argues that contemporary political practice supersedes political theory and political philosophy that are still not able to comprehend and articulate its movement. The author argues that what is lacking is not only „the name“ for political subjectivity but understanding of its meaning and possibility of appearance. Contrasting biopolitics – as antipolitics proper – to the political, in the second part the author discusses current theoretical trends of biopolitics (neoliberalism and postmodernity) and traces the conditions necessary to answer it.

*Key words:* the political, biopolitics, political philosophy, disappearance, knowledge, power.

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