



1ST INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM “ETHICS IN KNOWLEDGE”

ROUND TABLE “ETHICS IN POLITICAL ACTION”

“ETHICS AND PEACE IN GOVERNMENTAL POLITICAL ACTION”

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In the origin and development of human communities, violence has manifested itself as an instrument to conquer the community of nature, and of some human groups against others, dominating them by military conditions, slavery, exploitation or political imposition. The superior state of the human being is peace, in its conscience, spirit, and its social environment and natural surroundings. Transcendental ethical values manifest in the democratic construction of a State and a historical society of citizens, when the governmental political action is constituted as a permanent experience of humanity with the absence of violence.

Transcendental ethical values have had references in classic enunciations. The Aristotelian philosophy developed in “Ethics to Nicómaco”, “Ethics to Eudemo” and “Magna Moralia”, defines ethics as the compendium of the virtues; and, that the citizen in the *polis* develops it for the plenitude of the human groups. Plato presents his four fundamental virtues: prudence, justice, strength and moderation; Saint Agustin dazzles us with his virtues elevated to the order of love “ordo amoris”; likewise the sublime abstractions of Kant with his “doctrine of the virtues”. The philosophers and political thinkers of contemporary societies have established the ethics of principles and rights as the basis of the constitutional democratic values for the operation and organization of the States.

However, the concept of peace in the political thought of different epochs has undergone an unequal and combined formulation process. From Aristotle, Socrates and Plato in the origin of Western thought, to the Eastern philosophy, which maximum expression of political action was the application of Mahatma Gandhi's principle of “Nonviolence”.

Between these two categories of peace and ethics which are the essence of humanity; prehistory marches by as Tomas Hirsch would say, referring to the configuration of the political power of the State and the role of the citizens in the *Polis*. Let us apply then the “satyagraha” that we inherited from Gandhi and humbly make the decision to build the truths over the political power of the State, to re-discover ourselves in this “time of change” that Latin America is living and sing with John Lennon: “let's give peace a chance”.

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The exercise of power in Ancient and Contemporary Societies has been the history of the use of violence. According to Moses Finley; professor emeritus of Ancient History at the University of Cambridge; in Ancient Times all the writings of its historians or philosophers had the "underlying presupposition that war is inevitable, a consequence of the nature of man, as opposed to the history of the constitutions and the constitutional struggles, that were made by man, and therefore are subject to change by means of human action"². Ironically, violence was instituted as a value category by many human societies, as a generator of "human virtues" linked to the formation of the "character", "customs" and "culture" defined by ethics. Under this assumption, the anti-history of Fascism, the perpetual dictatorships in Latin America, the wars of domination, the imperialistic wars against Iraq, Afghanistan and more expressions of institutionalized violence against peoples and nations, have tried to be justified.

The "anti-history" we have referred to, is related to the satire; according to Basil Willey when one imagines asking a boy about the meaning of the terms peace or democracy the result is "the condemnation of society in relation to an ideal" because it allows "to measure the monstrous aberrations of the ideal"³. In Classic Ancient times the anti-Persian feeling of the Athenians was accentuated by the writing of Socrates titled "About Peace"; the Gods at Mount Olympus built their omnipresence over mortals through the smaller Gods by exacerbating war; the Achuar, Amazonian natives, according to their traditions managed to be in contact with the forces of nature and therefore, closer to their spiritual realization, when the warriors killed their enemies assuming the energies of emblematic elements in nature, like the puma, the boa, the tiger, the eagle; Bush, turned the exfoliation wars against the peoples of the planet into a mission of redemption of civilization and Christianity. And, with the same motives, more than five hundred years ago illustrate conquerors marched the land of our indigenous America, presenting the Christian cross to us... and later they killed us, and in the best case scenario yelled at us "why don't you shut up"?

When primitive societies generated surplus through the original exploitation of nature, arose the basis for the tribal organization to organize a coercive power, where the monopoly of the force legitimized by institutionalized violence gave birth to the organization of the State. As centuries went by, in contemporary societies the social politicians and scientists created categories of analysis to interpret that inexorable recurrence of violence in mankind. Lenin told us that wars were the continuity of politics by other routes. Weber constructed his theory of power establishing that political power is the coercive power par excellence, "that is to say, of the means of coercion, of the economic power, based on the possession of goods and wealth, or on the means of production, as well as the ideological or cultural power based on the control of the ideas and knowledge, therefore, of the means of persuasion and information"⁴.

Power being the stepbrother of violence, never managed to debilitate the aspiration of humanity to freedom as the precondition of democracy and peace, because in the exercise of freedom the citizens can interact with different beliefs, cultures and values, and "transform potential conflicts into dialogue and nonviolent competition"⁵. Moreover, the four fundamental freedoms of modern politics: personal freedom, freedom of mobilization, freedom of opinion, and freedom of citizens to meet; converge with the ethical values of the "Live well" which are fairness, solidarity, equality and human coexistence.

² Finley, Moses I. "Historia antigua, problemas metodológicos" editorial CRITICA, 1986. Pp. 109.

³ Willey B. "La cultura inglesa del siecento e del settecento". Il Mulino, Bologna, 1975, pp. 402-406.



⁴ Bovero Michelangelo, "Una Gramática de la Democracia, contra el Gobierno de los peores". Editorial Trotta. 2002. Pp. 152.

⁵ Bovero Michelangelo, "Una Gramática de la Democracia, contra el Gobierno de los peores". Editorial Trotta. 2002. Pp. 49.

Allow me to make a testimonial parenthesis regarding human coexistence. This past Wednesday November 12, in the fraternal home of Dario Ergas and Ana L'Homme in Santiago, Chile, we shared a beautiful dialogue with Latin American friends who are with us today; and at that time Rodrigo Carazo, ex-president of Costa Rica, told us of a beautiful anecdote arising from the election of Obama as President of the United States of North America. Rodrigo, who has a white complexion and clear eyes, told us that as a child he shared the school classrooms with Afro-American classmates and he had arrived to the conviction that racist differences are not surpassed by tolerance but by being "indifferent to the difference". We affirmed then, that freedom is an exercise in agreement for human coexistence.

This freedom, from the point of view of the political theory, identifies personal freedom as guarantor of the independence of the private individual from the State; and the public or political freedom of the individual citizen, with equal political rights in relation to the State. But the history of political rights in Latin America has been unfair, as in many regions of the world, and since their history as European post conquests, they drag three hundred years of colonial monarchy regimes and two hundred years of an enunciated democracy with permanent violent struggles with tyrannies, **oligocracias**, dictatorships and an infinity of variations of oppressive political regimes.

The first Constitution of Ecuador in 1836, established the political rights circumscribed only to the people that proved that they "had a real estate property, with a free value of two hundred pesos, or practiced a profession or useful industry, without subjection to another, i.e. servant, domestic or day laborer; knew how to read and write"^[6]. These citizens were the equals between equals as in Ancient Greece, because "it excluded a great number of individuals from the scope of *equal* to, mainly the slaves and women"^[7]. Later on, in Latin American contemporary societies the holders of the political power unabashed assumed decisions related to the economic, social or cultural powers, in the name of the "Sovereign"; thus perverting the democratic ideal of balance and counterbalance of the powers of State: Executive, Legislative and Judicial.

In the first decade of the XXIst century a new ghost crosses America right before the eyes of the violent and patrimonial holders of Power, pacific citizen revolutions are marching with giant steps, building more democracy in the inherited democracies. In Ecuador on September 28, 2008, the referendum to approve the new Political Constitution of the Republic, established the guidelines for citizen participation, the organization of the political power and the superior exercise of democracy: "*The participation of the citizens in all the subjects of public interest is a right that will be exerted through the mechanisms of representative, direct and communitarian democracy*"^[8]. The democratic political system established in the new Political Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador projects itself within a historical scenario of changes in the territorial configuration of the political power of the State, the structuring of regional autonomous societies, the democratization of the system of parties and the **ciudadanización** of the State with a new Fourth Power, which greatest expression is the Council of Citizen Participation and Social Control, that among other competences chooses the members of the organisms of control of the State.

We close then. The governmental political action is the challenge of the action from the civil society to the Political Society, from the private to the public, where the purpose of the revolutionary weapons of the heroic decades of the XXth century, has become the new and hopeful XXIst Century, with the force of reason, democracy, peace, ethics and the planetary vision, for the brotherhood of the communities of human beings and of these with the community of Nature and the Cosmos.

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⁶ Ayala Mora Enrique. "*Lucha política y origen de los partidos en Ecuador*". Quito, Corporación Editora Nacional, 1988, pp. 61.

⁷ Bovero Michelangelo, "*Una gramática de la democracia*", editorial Trotta, S.A., Madrid, 2002, pp. 30.



⁸ Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador. "Constitución Política de la República del Ecuador". Art. 95