

VBNTR – TRACCIA AMBITO POLITICO

Positive freedom as the final aim of the State

The association of human beings in the concept of State is one of the fundamentals of society and of the relationship between humans themselves. Since the very first beginning of the human race, the possibility of interactions and advantages represented the main reason of a cooperation between diverse individuals with different interests, intentions and aims. However, the human intrinsic tension to individuality and the animal instinct to survive brings in the problem of a will to predominate that represented a problem for ages. As we will deduce later, the concept of State is intended to fulfil the necessity of safety of humans, letting every individual live at the best of the possibilities, offering independence, but also completing the individual's needs.

According to Baruch Spinoza, the final purpose of the State is to set humanity free from fear and not to dominate it, so as to offer everyone security, independence, a true protection of the right to live and to take action freely. In this context, the State's function does not convert people in beasts in order to control them, like what would be possible with computer or machines, but represents instead the protection of freedom and personal will. A similar opinion was given by Rousseau, whose concept of State during the Enlightened age had to represent the "general will" of people, and be the interpretation of the majority, in order to establish a free society in which pluralism could be protected, as well as the same freedom Spinoza copes with.

Competition and individualism as intrinsic forces of society

Spinoza's interpretation is strongly founded on the concept of freedom and liberty, which are an unavoidable base of the life in contemporary age, but are obviously a field of multiple opinions and views of the world. In fact, the freedom Spinoza talks about is separated from complete anarchy, and each one's freedom terminates when it consumes and creates damage to someone else's freedom. The possibility of competition between humans is not just a theoretical option, but a truth recognized for centuries, and the State is the exact institution that avoids a prevalence of hatred, anger and every other hateful behaviour, since it represents the interest of the multitude, and not the individual.

This specific same tension of the individual to its personal interests as a base of the modern concept of State was also supported by Hobbes, who interpreted the State of Nature as a human condition of complete, continuous and indistinct fear related to the strong competitiveness present in nature, to which the only solution is a strong State that is able to protect who is weaker from the major and powerful aspiration of the stronger. The principle of a humanity completely submerged by the presence of fight is a truth that cannot be denied, since humans are animal and respond to the same principles of the animal life, that we tend to forget in our modern world, but are still a recondite and very true aspect of ourselves.

Under the same concept of existence of the State, however, we can find the different interpretation of John Locke, whose view created the philosophical bases of liberalism and the interpretation of a less intrusive function of the State, that cannot interfere in an extreme and inconsiderate way with personal will, liberty and individual's necessity. We could interpret Locke's estimation as an "auto-regulating" society, that obviously has to protect who is particularly weaker, but cannot overthrow the natural order. However, exactly like sustained by Spinoza, the aim of the State is not that of transforming people in computers or machines unable to think and act on their own, but more that of benefit and support their personal auto determination and their use of free reason. We can see practical examples of prevarication and unfairness in every single place of the

world that abandons the concept of a regulated State, causing the prevalence of the law and the decision of who is stronger or detains the most power, both in a practical and intellectual way.

The conception of alienation of a non-regulated environment was also brought by Karl Marx, who underlined the faults of the liberal State of the 19th century, bringing to a society governed by capital and an unsustainable difference of conditions between bourgeoisie and proletariat. For this reason, the theoretical idea of a communist society proposed the important principle of equity, responding to a freedom and a desire of a society in which everyone is able to express their functions. Marx' response to a society based on a continuous sense of fight and unfairness promised an institution able to stay above everything, guaranteeing the respect of everyone's needs and possibilities.

The State, for these reasons, is not just a utopian concept, but has to be strongly connected to necessities of humans, and nowadays this institution is part of the life of humanity in almost the entirety of the world. It lets people believe in the possibility of an advocacy, of justice, universal fairness reserved to all, that everyone can rely on.

A State, a country, a nation, can sometimes transform into a simple formality, that exists on a geographical map but does not find a corresponding and concrete entity on the actual territories, like what happens in many places of what we call the "South of the World", or underdeveloped countries. This scary epilogue is a sad reality, that shows in a practical way how the domain of strength and power immediately and sadly represent the answer to the absence of institutions, as it is clearly visible with the disrespect of human rights and the absence of justice in those parts of the world.

The idea of an oppressive State

A very common argument against the idea of a State is derived by the pragmatic and sadly renowned experience of authoritarianism, both in the past and in the present. The possibility of a State that dominates every single aspect of human life, especially regarding ideas, personality, individual and thoughts, is the case of a State becoming actual oppression, elimination of liberty and a similar fear, even though different in the structural base, that Spinoza and Hobbes underline in a context of absence of the State. This case represents the concept of a State transcending its limits and prevaricating every other need of humanity, but is a situation that represents the absolutely antithetic structure of the original concept and intention of State we underlined before.

George Orwell, in *1984*, perfectly represents how the State, through its bureaucracy and strong oligarchic organization, can overthrow any precedent system, any desire and take control of the single, from actions to the very inner side of opinion and personal attitude. The torture and the complete obliteration of the interior self are the signals of a complete loss of individuality in the case of absolute prevalence of the State on every idea, concept, personal necessity.

In my personal view, however, the situations described are the exact misconceptions of a State that we should fight and fear with the entirety of our sentiment. In fact, human awareness of what is around humans themselves is necessary and needs to exist, making people able to understand that there are limits to the power of State, and democracy is the key to understand them. It is absolutely impossible to accept and consider correct and just a State that serves the ideal of a total domain of humanity, transforming individuals in machines to control, subjected to the will and the personal desire of who rules. The wrong interpretations of power and government led to authoritarian political context mostly because of the absence of a strong legal protection of democracy, that is nowadays usually considered a standard, but unfortunately not in every part of the world.

The error of the State as a concrete institution

Corruptions, errors, voluntary faults of the legal system, problems with the administration of justice are some of the most pragmatic examples given to support their idea from people who lost any form of trust in the idea of State, but this condition is immediately derived from single examples of authority not protecting ideals and the majority of people, but just personal interests and the single's will.

The state, because of its human and immanent expression in the human history – as a consequence – is continuously associated and subjected to the possibility of both human errors and intentional, unfair behaviours. However, what should be considered is indeed the continuity and the moral base of the project of a State, the trust of who believes in it, the system wanted by the multitude and majority of people. Concrete inadequateness, the experience of errors and problems are elements that it is not possible to avoid, but the intention of a better and fairer world is the base of the solution and the principle of taking action against the mistakes of who misconceives the bases of State. This idea certainly evokes Max Weber's ideology of a separation between moral and ethical intentions and concrete consequences of their action in the exertion of their political views and intents, that should still be judged, differently from Machiavelli's will to only evaluate the intentions and the final aims.

For these reasons, as we have seen, the ambition itself of the State is a fairer existence, and the aim is to protect people from abuses and problems of this exact kind. So, the answer to this loss of faith in the State is certainly not simple, but finds its bases on the idea of collaboration, common effort and determination to eradicate problems and fight for a protection of every individual.

The true aim of a State: positive or negative freedom?

The natural consequence of these reflections underlines that the true ambition of the State is to be a protection of freedom, going back to the perspective of Spinoza. This institution needs to be interpreted as an extension of humans, as the fundamental part that completes them and lets them be saved from hatred.

Isaiah Berlin, for instance, proposes a difference between positive freedom and negative freedom, that are not completely opposed concepts, but perfectly represent the balance that a State has to offer when talking about its purposes. The negative freedom is closer to an absence of the State's intervention or a reduced one, in which humans regulate themselves without superior entities, as we already saw with Locke; conversely, the positive freedom corresponds to an active role of the State, that protects from fear and offers a defence from the possible brutal consequences of a State of Nature.

To avoid this possibility, so, we need to base our reflection on a concept of States that represents us in the best way possible, defending values of justice, morality and identity, avoiding pure individualism and understanding the true needs of humans. However, the freedom protected by nations and governments needs to be impartial, avoid inequalities, be the true expression of the State as an idea and – despite the imperfections of the practical application – must tend to it in the best way possible.