

# Introduction

## Passion(s) for Politics

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I would like to introduce Issue 12 of *Humana.Mente* by explaining first the meaning of the title: *Passion(s) for Politics*.

I will start from the last word, “politics”, which is perhaps the least ambiguous in the tradition of philosophical thought. Politics could be roughly defined as the social activity that makes possible a distribution of material and/or relational goods and resources which are scarce or unfairly allocated. Furthermore, politics operates in the society by relying, as its last mean, on the monopoly of the legitimate force. This is, more or less, the definition of politics provided by Max Weber<sup>1</sup>, which sums up the widespread idea of politics in the Modern age. As we can see, this definition refers to the political activity as seen from the point of view of the sovereign state and implies a top-down neutralization of effective or latent conflicts in the society. Furthermore, it refers to the domestic side of sovereignty, firstly recalling the relationship between the State and its citizens. Traditionally, the State exerts its sovereignty also on the international arena, by presenting itself as a fully legitimate political actor involved in several, potentially conflictual, relationships with other nation-states. So, since the Peace of Westphalia (1648), the international framework has been understood as a competitive and anarchical realm, characterized by the absence of a *tertium super partes* power able to neutralize the competition (actual – war –, or latent) among nation-states. Hence, we can roughly say that the concept of *politics* provided by the Modernity, both in the domestic and international arena, has been overlapping with the notion of *State*. The State was the principal political actor and the main object of interest of political philosophy, especially in the political realist tradition.

During the last century, in particular after the Second World War, something has changed and the sovereign state started to lose its absolute preeminence both in the domestic and in the international realm. What happened during late modernity? Briefly, we could say that several new political actors started to affirm themselves both in the domestic and in the international sphere, in competition with the nation-State, aiming to get a full and shared sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, two global threats seem to challenge the nation State and its pretence to defend its citizens: nuclear weapons and global warming. As Cerutti illustrates in *Global Challenges to Leviathan*, reviewed by Thomas Madonia in this Issue, nuclear weapons and global warming represent two challenges whose effects are potentially dangerous well beyond the boundaries of a single state. They potentially affect every human being in every part of the world, making humankind really exist as a matter of fact, and not just as an abstract concept. So, global challenges seem to support a realistic more than a cosmopolitan and universalistic approach, which is rooted in a prudential attitude to strive for humankind survival more than on a moral imperative to a peaceful cohabitation of the world.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Weber (2004), *La scienza come professione* [1917]. *La politica come professione* [1919], Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, Torino.

<sup>2</sup> On the internal side, the proliferation of bottom-up movements in the civil society, such as parties, groups of interests, of consumers, economic lobbies and so on and, on the international side, the presence of international organizations (ONU), NGOs, multilevel governance and polity (such as the European Union) make the social and political environment even more 'crowded' and complex.



In conclusion, during late Modernity, the nation State seems to lose its status as the main political actor, and political philosophy begins to be even more interested in other political actors. Following this intellectual path, several philosophical-political approaches show a growing scientific interest for the *individual level* and the anthropological inquiry (i.e., Pulcini, reviewed in this Issue by Erbosi). I would like to make the point that by ‘anthropological inquiry’ I do not intend to refer to ‘human nature’, which can be seen as a metaphysical concept. Perhaps, instead of human nature, I could better say ‘human condition’, which refers also to the historical, cultural, social and geographic conditions that contribute to define certain features of human beings. Briefly summing up the above presentation, this volume aims at inquiring about the individual level of political analysis for two reasons. Firstly, the study of politics cannot be overlapped with that of the sovereign state and, secondly, the potential effects of global challenges, going beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, seem to refer directly to *individuals*.

While the above presentation can be understood as the answer to the imaginary question “Why should we refer to individuals instead of states?”, I would like to explain now the first part of the title of the Issue, ‘passions’, that aims at answering to a second imaginary question: “Why, on the individual level, should we refer to passions instead of, for example, reason?”. Passion(s) – with the final ‘s’ intentionally between parentheses – has a twofold meaning. On the one hand “Passion for Politics” refers to the individual attitude to shape the way of living together according to political dynamics; on the other, it refers to the multiplicity of passions involved in the political sphere, defined from an anthropological point of view – passions for politics. The philosophical interest in studying the passion(s) for politics arises from the hypothesis that the strategy of overlapping the notion of human being with its rational faculties is not sufficient to explain the multiplicity of individual attitudes in the political sphere. Moving from a political realist approach, my aim is to put the individual ‘as a whole’ at the very centre of the philosophical inquiry: the hope that human reason could fully control every human action and that the “theory of rational choice” could be exhaustive in explaining individual political decisions and actions represents, to my opinion, a chimera of the modern liberal thought. On the contrary, I think that reason is usually influenced, more or less consciously, by passions, and that their role and way of acting is more difficult to be mapped and understood than the rational one.

Moving from these theoretical premises, the aim of this Issue is to provide a tentative recognition of the passions involved in, and related to, politics. Obviously, this volume does not claim to present a complete framework of the political passions of individuals, neither a reconstruction of the development of each passion during historical periods, or through the intellectual production of selected authors. On a more basic level, the volume intends to provide the conceptual space for a brainstorming about the role of passions in politics, trying to develop a dialogue between different philosophical perspectives.

This volume’s aim is to sketch a conceptual path of the development of the role of passions in politics from the very beginning of the Modern age (Hobbes) to the post-modern tradition. Through this ideal reconstruction, we will see that the topic of passions is usually intertwined with the analysis of other relevant philosophical milestones, such as the concept of individual and of subject, of state and civil society, of body and gender issue. Following this plurality of perspectives and schools of thought, each one of the papers develops the topics of passion(s) according to a peculiar point of view. So, some papers will be focused on one (or more than one) classic author, examining her/his own anthropological analysis, while some others will be centered on a specific passion, trying to sketch its influence on individuals and societies during the centuries. Finally, most of the papers refer to some of the most famous and well-known philosophical approaches (such as political realism, feminism, post-modernism, biopolitics,



etc.), which the reader can recognize or guess through the lines of each paper.

The volume starts with Erizi's paper, which introduces the general issue – the passion for politics – by analyzing (through the comparison between Max Weber and Carl Schmitt) the modern subjectivity as inherently political, as devoted to, or possessed by, the 'daemon of politics'. Moving from this statement, the three following papers are related to those passions representing the conceptual pillar of the modern political thought. So, while Vassalle inquires into the nexus between the curiosity and the anxiety for the future time in Thomas Hobbes' anthropology (which is further developed by the book review provided by Fabbri who analyzes the evolution of Hobbes' concept of human nature through the study of Hobbes' translations of Homer and Thucydides), Berni's paper represents the other side of political realism arguing for a biological and natural foundation of the idea of justice. In opposition to the abstract and normative rationalization of the idea of justice, as presented by stoicism and the Christian tradition, the author shows the real foundation of this concept in some human feelings such as 'rage' and 'revenge'. Moving away from a narrowly defined anthropological inquiry, Alagna's paper focuses on 'rage' and 'satiation' through the comparison between Sloterdijk and Weber. By doing that, the author opens to an alternative understanding of the individual level which can be described through the concept of 'images of the world' more than through the notion of 'human nature'. Following this theoretical approach, Spini deepens the relationship between what images we may have of the world around us and how we articulate the world within us, also by referring to the present situation. The rationale behind this perspective could be summed up as this: the different visions of the world strongly influence the self-perception of individuals and groups, and hence their political decisions and actions. Even democratic organizations, grounded in the values of freedom and equality, or better, in the idea of an equal freedom for every citizen, exert their influence in shaping the self-representation of society. As Sissa points out, the ancient idea of democracy has been fostered as a model of society which is not as inclusive as it claimed to be. Slaves and women were usually shut out from the political and social life of the *polis*, and nowadays democracy retains its own ambiguity. In fact, on the one hand, democracy creates the conceptual conditions of the equality between sexes, while on the other it fears the sexual difference and it provides a masculine paradigm presiding over social life. Following the conceptual path of gender issues, Birulés starts from the above mentioned contradictions of the democratic and liberal traditions to inquire into the hiatus between political freedom and equality of rights through the lens of the violence against women. Finally, on the link between passions, politics and gender perspectives, Durante takes into consideration the feeling of melancholy in Butler's reflection, and examines it in relation to the process of the emergence of subjectivity and the connection between life and norms. Moving from Hobbes to late Modernity, from the consideration of the anthropological perspective to the notion of 'images of the world', passing through the gender reflection on politics and society until the biopolitical approach, from the notion of 'individual' to that of 'subject', the volume ends with Fadini's paper, which is focused on Deleuze's point of view on 'subject' and 'relationship'. Through Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza, Fadini highlights the intrinsic normativity of the relationship between human beings, which is represented by the conjunction 'e' ("and", in English) and grounded on a 'thin' notion of political subject sharing the common 'substance' of life with everyone else, and hence open to 'the other'.

The theoretical foundation of this volume was, at the very beginning, to undertake a critical analysis of some Modern understandings of the political thought, such as the reduction of politics to the theories of nation-state (realism) and the emphasis on the role of reason (liberalism). Starting from this critical analysis, the Issue tries to develop and seek alternative points of view and theoretical perspectives, aiming at providing a conceptual space for a kind



of basic brainstorming on the relevance of passions for the political thought. Hence, as the theoretical framework of this volume was starting to take shape, some remarks became even more relevant. First, the modern point of view on politics seems to be not fully convincing and obsolete, especially concerning the concept of State as the main political actor and the understanding of human nature as the very core of the anthropological inquiry about individuals. Nonetheless, and this is the second point, there are some difficulties to go really beyond the modern paradigm, mainly because of the political vocabulary and the conceptual categories it provided, which still remain at the very centre of the political philosophical thought.