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Editorial: Power and community

Power and community are among the key issues concerning human social life, and both hold significant importance from theoretical and practical perspectives.

In the philosophical reflections of ancient Greeks these issues emerged as central themes in considerations on humans and the state. They placed particular emphasis on the unique nature of human social life when contrasted with the behaviour of other social creatures. Aristotle, for example, argued that human social life transcends mere utilitarian or material needs. People associate with one another not only for material gain but because of an inherent need for friendship. He also argued that human communities at every level of development (*oikos*, *kome*, and *polis*) are grounded in a rationality unique to humans (as their *differentia specifica*). This rationality, expressed through speech, allows them to discern between what is useful and harmful, as well as what is just and unjust. In this way, according to the founder of the Lyceum, human communal life is not only aligned with human nature but also acquires an ethical character through the very actualisation of that nature. The factor that determines justice within communal life is political power. Consequently, Aristotle viewed a political community, or *polis*, as the most perfect form of community, which encompassed all other communities.

However, even in antiquity, opposing ideas challenged this perspective. The most prominent alternative came from the Sophists, who viewed justice as a construct of convention, devoid of any absolute or objective foundation. Furthermore, they infused their notions of power and truth with both relative and utilitarian dimensions.

During its development, Christian thought, though diverse, largely integrated Aristotle's framework albeit with significant modifications. The state was no longer regarded as a community that fully encompassed all others, as the Church, with its autonomy in many areas, transcended the state in certain respects. The Church was a factor that defined the Supreme Good. Thus, the Church's position was unique: while it upheld the theses of the naturalness of the political community, its links with rationality, and its role as a factor that defined justice, it also laid the groundwork for discussions on the autonomy of other communities and individuals. The role of a political community as a factor that formulates the principles of justice in law (*lex humana*) was subject to limitations as it required conformity with natural law (*lex naturalis*) and divine law (*lex divina*).

The Reformation and the Renaissance brought new intellectual currents that questioned the supra-political nature of the Good (N. Machiavelli). Subsequent developments in philosophical and political thought further challenged the natural status of human communal life, including the naturalness of political life itself (T. Hobbes, J. Locke, and J-J. Rousseau). In this way, modern thought, which underpins most contemporary currents of philosophical and political reflection, dismantled the previously dominant naturalistic and naturalistic-theological paradigms and replaced them with the concept of a social contract (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau). Consequently, debates about the status of a political community, other forms of community, and the individual, along with their interrelations and hierarchies, were reignited.

This issue remains relevant today, not only in academic discussions but also in the socio-political sphere. The consequences of adopting a specific paradigm for understanding community, power, their origins, and interrelations can lead to far-reaching social, political, economic, legal, and ethical outcomes. Thus, we believe that addressing this topic, even by examining its select aspects, is an essential and timely endeavour.

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