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ORIGINAL ARTICLES

Political Science, Political Anthropology and Pluricultural Democracy Amancio Vázquez 1

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Resumen

Desde la convergencia epistemológica entre ciencia política y antropología política el autor reflexiona sobre la naturaleza y los contenidos de la democracia pluricultural, aportando algunas consideraciones críticas.

Palabras clave: Ciencia política; Antropología política; Pluralismo cultural; Ciudadanía; Democracia pluricultural.

Abstract

Taking into account the epistemological convergence between political science and political anthropology, the author reflects on the nature and contents of pluricultural democracy, providing some critical remarks.

Keywords: Political science; Political anthropology; Cultural pluralism; Citizenship; Pluricultural democracy

Resumé

Depuis la convergence épistémologique sur Science Politique et Anthropologie Politique, l'auteur réflechie sur la nature et les contenus de la Démocratie Pluri-culturelle, en apportant quelques considérations critiques.

Mots-clé: Science politique; Anthropologie politique; Pluralisme culturel; Citoyennet; Démocratie pluri-culturelle.

Reception Date: September 2009 Assessment Date: October 2009 The emergence of nationalisms; the massive migrations of impoverished populations towards European and American countries; the ethnic "minorities" inserted within more inclusive societies; and the indigenous peoples agenda have all raised awareness about old phenomena: how different ethnics coexist under the same State; group-differentiated rights and multicultural democracy issues.

Social sciences are then compelled –especially political science and political anthropology– to address their common difficulties, but they have do so from a broader perspective. Such new theoretical-practical necessities –undoubtedly increased by the so called "globalization"– strongly question political science and many a time find its scientists in a stubborn position. They are locked in the traditional view of thinking categories and concepts from a Western-centered perspective, which slightly differs from a liberal conceptual matrix.

Political Science

Political science is one of the last social disciplines that attained scientific status. In fact, it is no necessary to go back further than late XIX century to see the very first efforts to tackle the study of political phenomena from a closer approach to science rather than to philosophy. It was also by that time that political science started to be introduced into universities. The same attempts before XX century only succeed in the United States, which may explain the well-nigh connection between the country and political science.

The resistance of traditional university structures in other countries, particularly in France —which led the way in social science— prevented some attempts from flourishing: among them, the creation of faculties of political science and administration or the expansion of syllabuses from existing faculties by including subjects strictly related to political studies.

It is between 1890 and 1914 that the new science is at last officially incorporated into the American universities. This was more due to practical necessities regarding public administration than to a purely intellectual speculation. At that

time, the country was urged to create political "frameworks" and to advance in different basic aspects identified as "efficiency" during the period of Maurice Duverger (1996).

It was not until mid XX century, after WWII, when political science already institutionalized was consolidated as a scientific discipline worldwide. By that time, developed countries incorporated it into their universities, and consequently it was no longer only an American science. From a theoretical-methodological perspective, it meant many contributions and also the endowing of the discipline with its own method, which was an idea strongly formulated, as it enabled the creation of a general theory in politics. Such efforts to achieve a unifying paradigm have continued since that time, although the discipline characterizes itself as multiparadigmatic these days.

Even if multiple views did exist, by mid XX century political science had achieved considerable agreement as regards its subjects of study, and the notion of power outlined as a common ground. As social power, it is the basis of political science, thus leading to overcome the focus on the State but without leaving it completely apart. Therefore, political science, although still closely linked to studying the State, achieved autonomy from constitutional law, coming apart from a purely legal approach and taking since then a more sociological direction.

In 1948, a group of experts called together by the UNESCO determined that the main subjects of political science should be: 1) Political Theory; 2) the State; 3) Political Parties, Groups and Public Opinion; and 4) International Relations.

In 1949, UNESCO created the International Political Science Association (ISPA), which helped to confer reputation to political science worldwide, putting it on the same level as that of social sciences.

As Sartori pointed out (1989), the so called "behaviorist revolution" was a significant contribution for political science to count on a scientific method by the 50s. Along with the comparative, statistical and historical methods, political science was finally acknowledged within the scientific field.

Nowadays, it seems to be quite clear which are the topics this discipline is concerned with, although there is some controversy regarding its theoretical rationale and methods. The controversy shows the clash between objectivist and subjectivist positions and the reaction not only to hyper factualism (over theorization), but also to mere speculation. Despite the fact that political science is in full development, this situation causes it to be epistemologically questioned.

There is a need to give answers to the issues mentioned at the beginning of the article, which appear even more urgent as the new century opens. There must also be a rupture with the traditional thought patterns that led us to look for a new start: in this particular case, a disciplinary confluence with political anthropology.

Political Anthropology

Contemporary political anthropology went further beyond the study of political, social and cultural organizations of traditional societies to start analyzing power structures within the group of contemporary societies. As Marc Abelés stated (1997), political anthropology is interested in different processes, such as globalization, local and global interrelations; processes of nationalistic and political identities constructions; and of multicultural bureaucratic structures. It is also concerned with different modalities of citizen participation in political systems; how multi and pluricultural processes start and develop; the way means of communication impact on building collective conceptions and how political power relations are drawn. Of course, political anthropology is involved with such issues as sexual, ethnic and cultural diversity. Also about how group-differentiated rights are acknowledged according to cultures, intercultural dialogue and Intercultural Bilingual Education, which actually promotes political anthropology. It is concerned with multiculturalism, pluriculturalism and multicultural democracy, as well as sociocultural exclusion.

There are crossings between political science and political anthropology, but also epistemological convergences. The mutual methodological-theoretical influences, and above all, their syncreses are embodied –more or less – into the interior of epistemology and social science.

Diversity and Cultural Pluralism

On the one hand, while *cultural diversity* refers to the actual existence of a multiplicity of differentiated groups and ethnic, religious and linguistic communities, *cultural pluralism* relates to how such diversity can be positively assessed in ideological terms.

On its 31st session, 10 September 2001, UNESCO issued the Universal Declaration on *Cultural Diversity*, which is in fact known as *Cultural Heritage of Humanity*. Therefore, *cultural diversity* and *intercultural dialogue* are promoted for the purpose of constituting a key strategy to achieve sustainable growth and international peace. The notion of *cultural pluralism* finds support on this acknowledgment of cultural identities and cultural rights, as well as on the diversity of cultural contents and their artistic productions.

The issue of interethnic relations has been made clear by the immigration processes from African and Asian countries towards European states and Canada, and from Latin America towards the United States. The formation of ethnically differentiated communities into receiving countries also had an impact on it. Other issues that arose were how to protect ethnic values, ethnic adscription and politically differentiated rights.

"Cultural pluralism is not an objective in itself; it becomes an objective as it contributes to building coexistence in a political project that settles down disputes. To make cultural pluralism a project consists of defending a controlled opening, the right to exercise collective and individual actions under sufficiently autonomous conditions, without any external determining restrictions or infringements —always respecting others and their fundamental values. Cultural pluralism can also consist of the possibility of producing and exchanging own cultural expression in its diversity". Jean Tardif (2003)

Democracy

From its origins until today, the term "democracy" refers to a particular form of government: it is then one way of governing. Controversy initiates with the attempts

to specify the content given to the term. Nevertheless, although it varies and has varied according to the different approaches that deal with it, there is a common ground for the different conceptions of the term: its own etymology, "government by the people". However, such definition does not answer any of these questions: Who are the people? How do the people govern? What is the democratic ideology? How is democracy mainstreamed to other forms of social organization, such as capitalism? Is a multicultural democracy possible?

From the Greeks' until the new conceptions of multicultural democracy, including Rousseau, Tocqueville, Republicans and Liberals' thought, democracy and its "mass" component have found support in two fundamental values: equality and liberty. In this sense, apart from being a specific form of government, democracy is also seen as a guiding principle: an ideal to attain.

In such a sense, Cornelius Castoriadis (1999) stated that democracy never existed; according to this idea, for democracy to actually realize as a form of government, it should be a self-installed, autonomous and self-governed system, in which the mass (free and well-educated individuals) take part in the lawmaking process and share a real equality in the distribution of power. This, in his view, has never happened.

Individuals are in such an extent conditioned by the capitalist system that their liberty has been reduced to no more than the possibility to choose among the different consumption options imposed by the market, which at the same time is oligopolistic. Moreover, the representative system is delusive as politicians do not comply with their voters' will and stay in power for long periods of time, since they obtain irrevocable terms or change any dispositions when having to renew them.

Moreover, every important decision is not made by the Parliament, but behind closed doors:

"(...) we note that present democracy is anything but a democracy because the public/public sphere is in fact private, it is in the hands of political oligarchy, not of the political body". Cornelius Castoriadis (1999).

This is the reason the author claims current Western societies are wrongly called "democratic", as they are actually "liberal oligarchies". Is it possible to call democracy a regime conducted only by politicians? This is the question José Nun (2001) poses in his essay "Democracy: Government of the People or Government of the Politicians?"

Undoubtedly, it depends on how the issues about representation, citizenship, social rights and political parties are tackled. Beyond the previous statement, the main criticism is referred to the so-called "formal democracy". That is democracy understood as a group of procedural laws (periodic elections) underpinned by a group of civil liberties. Could democracy, in fact, be no more than this minimum aspect?

This conception of restricted democracy –so much at the forefront nowadays– is the result of a fake identification between liberalism and democracy. Norberto Bobbio pointed it out (1989) by explaining that current developed States are the result of the Theory of Liberal States as well as the Theory of Democracy. However, neither both terms have the same meaning nor they are mutually dependant. Actually, liberalism is limited power (in its functions and in its scope) and democracy is distributed power (among the mass).

There is an enormous debt with current societies as regards democracy. In the sense of civil liberties, the liberal aspect is much more developed than the democratic aspect, in the sense of power distributed among the mass following the value of equality. The main innovative proposals —made from democratic and progressive political perspectives— are based on a more democratized_political system, as they are an attempt to reach the minimal levels of equality by ensuring certain social rights.

Multicultural Democracy

On the inside of every Nation-State, multicultural democracy must respect the rights of every citizen by taking into account their ethnic, gender diversity, cultural

and social distinctions. Their legal protection must be embodied in the corresponding laws, and there must be an administrative decentralization regarding indigenous peoples and rural communities.

(...) "local and regional governments must be based on the real respect of the forms of self governance of indigenous peoples and Andean and Amazonian communities. Moreover, they must participate at supra communal level of government (provincial, regional)". Raquel Yrigoyen Fajardo (2001).

As regards power relations, it is well worth reminding the situation of those social segments excluded from the political system or in such a situation that impedes them from exercising their civic rights. This is the case of almost any ethnic "minorities", or women's situation and sexual "minorities". In this context, women marked by their gender (afro descendent women) or their culture (Islamic women) conform a special case.

Among the cultural practices of several African countries, such as Yemen, Kenya or Senegal, clitoral ablation and infibulation can be mentioned. Female genital mutilation is not accepted by many women so they escape from their communities towards others in which such practices are forbidden.

One of the most dramatic issues these women must face when in Europe is that such practices migrate with the ethnic group to the new residence places. Although they are prohibited by law, these practices are conducted the same.

Domestic violence and physical abuse is also common among Gypsies and some indigenous peoples from Latin America. They strongly tend to overestimate female submission and machismo. Although it is true that Gypsies and Latin American native peoples are discriminated by the hegemonic society, it is not novelty that their women also suffer from sexual abuse and submission inside their own ethnic groups.

Democracy and Indigenous Citizenship

Each indigenous group that had to migrate and is grounded as ethnic "minority" into a more inclusive society that acts as a community referent: the notion of "ethnicity" is manifested and redefined. The fight for being acknowledged into their ethnic rights conveys their political expression of organization. Indigenous organizations stand up for making visible their ethno politic needs. This is the reason the symbolic rhetoric on native identity is lavished and oversized.

According to Guillermo De la Peña (2000:59) such symbolizations are used to create a space of negotiation with the dominant political power. Thus, ethnic and political demands cross ancestral symbolic contents and real demands, such as the right to land, or housing, intercultural bilingual education, ethnic rights, rights to health, to work, to being autonomous and exercising political rights as citizens by acknowledging their ethnic specification of indigenous ethnic identities. In this sense, the strategies of indigenous organizations acquire more legitimacy.

It is possible especially since September, 13th 2007, when the UN National Assembly acknowledged the indigenous people the legal status of Indigenous People by means of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is well worth mentioning that the indigenous ethnic identity refers to a collective, a community group, thus to a social construction in which kinships are structured. It is also a cultural tradition transmitted by an own language. Its social relations are strongly reinforced by a solidarity and exchange system which enables economic and social reproduction in the group, and a constituent ground from which intercultural dialogue becomes feasible.

"The analysis and study of the movements featured by indigenous peoples, that is to say, by native cultures and societies from Latin America, has emphasized their current aspects and their ability or inability to transform the situation of economic domination and cultural subordination. However, even when this current analysis –too tied to specific contexts that may lose focus on its historic legitimacy, its continental dimension and its common issues— our intention is to characterize such movements as "processes of nationalitarian construction", understood as the search to form collective individuals

who look for a shared social identity, based on an own or taken cultural tradition that aim to relate in equal terms to another cultural groups which make up a same State". Miguel Bartolomé (2006:223)

Nation-States are not made up of a single ethnic group: they are a mix of different ethnic plural groups, so it is necessary to vindicate this situation. Indigenous peoples —each with their pertinent cultural heritage, modified according to their ethnic and political project built as an ethnicity— interact with Nation-States. From this ethnical belonging, indigenous peoples assume their citizen status of Nation-States.

Special Rights and Political Representation

It is obvious that multicultural democracy only makes sense inside a multiethnic State that respects "minority" cultures and rejects "assimilationist" policies to the hegemonic culture. Therefore, the sociocultural and political interactions are then redefined within the Nation-State as regards their intentions, the concept of citizenship, and political representation, of course. It is an advance for communitarian views over the liberal ones, it suggests a new concept for citizenship and hence, political participation.

There has been an extensive debate on the limits to cultural specification, ethnic identities and their acknowledgment. The very concept of "acknowledgment" has been questioned since "the one who acknowledges" is placed on a socio-cultural situation above "the acknowledged one".

"Acknowledging what is different and the difference carries an implicit ethic attitude which has nothing to do with identifying the category of inequality. On the contrary, it assumes an assessment attitude towards acknowledging the "cultural other". Defending the rights of "minorities" converges with the need to broaden the idea of equality by means of defending specific rights able to "adjust" differences and correct inequalities. It is about rights which favor inclusion for those excluded social groups, or those which are about to be excluded. Tylor (1993), Walzer (1998), Kymlicka (1993), and several authors hold that the concept "equality" is totally compatible with that of "diversity" and / or "plurality". This is exactly our criterion. Political anthropology has to

assume the rationale of this quasi assimilation". Héctor Vázquez (2000:23)

In the case of an immigrant ethnic group grounded into a Nation-State (which acts as receiving and different culture), those ascribing to the "minority" ethnic group find in the culture of such ethnic group a framework to mediate, to build their citizen identity in the interactions with the members of the dominant culture and its institutions. Special rights are aimed to protect the rights of ethnic "minorities", "adjusting differences and inequalities" in order to establish, in a distributive conception of justice, a real base for equal opportunities.

"Positive Differentiation" distributes opportunities and rights –in a dissenting and uneven way– according to groups of belonging with the purpose of correcting such inequalities. As example, there is the case of women's inclusion into the political system due to the necessary quota of participation, i.e. it is mandatory to leave an important place for women as regards political participation.

"Some forms of representation of broader scope have been suggested. For example, during the constitutional negotiations celebrated in Canada, different proposals to assure groups' representation have been presented. For decades the reform of the Canadian Senate has been one of the priorities, mainly because it is still a non-elected organism. Recently, the reform proposals have been focused basically on electing senators, but also on electing senators for the less represented ones. The National Action Committee on Women Status (the most powerful Canadian lobby) suggested that 50% of the seats must be left for women, and that a proportional representation of ethnic minorities must also be ensured: The Francophone Association of Alberta suggested that at least one of the six elected senators proposed for each province must represent their minority's official language and different governmental commissions, as well as the House of Commons". These kinds of proposals are not only from Canada, in many countries there are forms of group representation" (Will Kymlicka 2003: 167).

The concept of "group representation" opens a complex debate on political systems and some other issues, such as the nature of deliberative democracy and procedural democracy, the classical conception of representation, the nature of group representation, the selection of groups which must be represented, the

quotas of representation or seats such groups should hold, as well as the nature and scope of the representatives' responsibility.

The protection of indigenous peoples' rights, community places, and the acknowledgment of their legal identity, the decentralization and delegation of administrative roles in a multiethnic and multicultural sense are clearly established in the Constitutions of Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela. In these texts, the representatives of indigenous peoples are elected, designated and named according to their own norms and proceedings.

Conclusions

The internal connections between political science and anthropology enable an epistemological interdisciplinary articulation in different levels as regards the topics they share and their content. The treatment given to power relations and the nature of multicultural democracy are the most evident ones. In Argentina, multicultural democracy is still a goal to attain. Some steps towards such direction have been taken, but these are still hesitant.

The debate on "minorities" rights has been going on for almost two decades. In Argentina, however, it has just arisen. The core of such debate is focused on the possibility to broaden the liberal conception of the individual as legal subjects within a mono cultural State by including the ethnic minorities' rights and acknowledging their real cultural, social and collective rights, procuring the construction of a multicultural State. Moreover, in a different but convergent way, there has been a lot of advance on acknowledging the rights of sexual "minorities".

Multicultural democracy does not run out in the act of representing. It is also necessary to implement a lot of public policies in order to strengthen it.

Such policies refer to implementing programs like Intercultural Bilingual Education. Complemented with other action plans, they would disseminate the values of "minorized" cultures (instead of minority cultures $\frac{4}{2}$) among the demographically bigger populations. There must be health care plans specifically designed to treat

ethnic minorities, with the corresponding epidemiologic profile and health professionals trained to receive and treat patients marked by their ethnics, genre, age and socio economic status.

Creating –and promoting– an intercultural space of communication which enables dialogue, mutual understanding and an approach towards cultures is fundamental for the process of building a multicultural democracy.

Whether the speeches addressed to the cultural and social excluded are accepted or not, it is paramount to encourage a reform of the political system in order to build a sustainable multicultural democracy.

In Argentina, to incorporate the socially excluded sectors to the political system is as urgent as vital. An effective distribution of wealth is required and it would lead to encumber big corporations' interests.

The new Law on Audio-Visual Communications breaks the monopoly of information, and it represents a big step towards multicultural democracy. However, both of them need social organizations and actors to open to a great debate on it. It should also be implemented among the different provinces of the Republic and other Southern States, and eventually in the rest of the Latin American States.

Multicultural democracy must necessarily be participative and has to redefine legal and political terms of representation, that is to say, the links between "represented" and "representing" ones.

Notes

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- 2 It is interesting to highlight that 143 countries voted positively. Only 4 voted negatively, Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand. These countries have more advanced legislations defending Indigenous Peoples. However, they opposed the Declaration surely due to fear of consequences derived from Indigenous Peoples' free determination, their rights to land and natural resources.

Eleven countries retained: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russia, Samoa and Ukraine.

- 3 Following María de los Ángeles Barrere Unzueta's perspective, we use the term "Positive Distinction" instead of "Positive Discrimination".
- 4 Using the term "minority" for characteristic different groups makes necessary to clarify this: We refer to "minority" (ethnic, ethnolinguistic or linguistic) to subaltern groups having cultural-linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the dominant societies of contact. Generally, the term "minority" is used for politically dominated societies, even when these are demographically bigger. In this sense, we prefer the term "minorize", as it is more precise. Margot Bigot (2007:165)

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