

DANIEL DOBIAŠ

Department of Political Science, Faculty of Arts,
Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Košice, Slovak Republic



Irrational Attraction of Rationality¹

The content of political doctrines and dominant lines of practical politics is legitimised by the effort to implement the ideal of a good, free society by applying the idea of reason. At the same time, its performance not only defines the conditions for the theoretical justification of the idea of power, but also becomes a tool for its implementation. The primary goal of this paper is in an endeavour to place the normative nature of current (democratic) political regimes where we encounter the need for a more fundamental theoretical argument that would enable us to respond to their dynamic, often contradictory development. One of the consequences of such fixation is in the division of sciences into the realms of nature and society, the independence of their methodological orientation, or the factual and theoretical division of human reality into rationalism (means, technology, efficiency) and human values and meanings which become the domain of irrationalism. Therefore, from the perspective of modern political systems, irrationally conditioned modelling of reality under the guise of rationality may be considered an important aspect of the ideological compromise between politics, economics, and the media sphere on the lasting continuity of prosperity for the rich ones.

Key words: rationalism, irrationalism, reason, knowledge, power

Introduction

Everything alive keeps pursuing a better world. This is one of the ways for us to formulate a basis for an anthropologically conditioned possibility of conceptualising the substantive core of the evolutionary dynamics of humanity at the level of the coding system of signs. Processes whose character determines the content of political doctrines and dominant lines of practical policy in the implementation of the ideal of a good, just, and free society by applying the idea of reason. At the same time, its performance not only defines the conditions for the theoretical justification of the idea of power, but also becomes a tool for its implementation.

The history of the development of human communities opens up a large number of chapters of the alliance of rationality and power. The determining power of the implementation of elements of purposeful rationality at the political level is almost always represented by the legiti-

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mation of a certain type of interest associated with the greatest power to enforcing them. In fact, the undisputed component of progress makes it possible to seek, create and, where necessary, adapt legitimacy practices to justify the content and exercise of political power, subject to the author's ability to change his or her perception of their specific application. Therefore, the primary goal of this paper is in an endeavour to place the normative nature of current (democratic) political regimes where we encounter the need for a more fundamental theoretical argument that would enable us to respond to their dynamic, often contradictory development. Productivity of this effort is enhanced by the situational framework of quite specific conditions, within which and through which solutions to various problems of a political, economic and legal nature are specified, including the variable classification of historical experience.

The theoretical background of this approach develops monitoring the content turbulences in the political systems of liberal democracies, what we have outlined as general framework of our concept - irrationally conditioned modelling of reality under the guise of rationality may be considered an important aspect of the ideological compromises. In the arena of current ideological confrontations, the fixation of the line not only leads to a systematic cultivation of citizens' belief in the ideal of democracy, open society, liberal virtues, and authentic citizenship, but intensifies the feeling of deep disillusionment with (non) functioning state or supranational power structures, often shifting perceptions of content and scope of politics to the position of a failed cartoon. The diagnosis of this condition therefore raises a fairly legitimate question: according to what (who) does the world actually work? If at all, what type of rationality² does this idea fit to? Who is the subject of the administration and inspection of its effectiveness?

The Role of Values and Power in the Evolution of Rationalism and Irrationalism

Experiments with projects to transforming man, society or the world with a universal form of government, legitimised by a rationally conditioned interest in the highest good represent an impressive part of the history of political doctrines. Their theoretical starting points may be identified already in the ancient tradition at the level of the relationship between thinking and reality, where reason was understood as a basic identifying factor for a unified picture of reality. Its essence was in a unique combination of the belief that the world is lawful and rational, that it is within the power of reason to understand and control future trajectories, with an irrationally conditioned notion of a good, happy life, consisting in the ability of reason to know the highest virtues - the idea of the good. For example, *Plato* in his conception of the ideal State assumed that by thinking (*noésis*) and reasoning (*dianoia*) we can capture the ideal beings and attain knowledge as the highest form of true knowledge. The ontological determination of what is

² Rationality as a specific feature that individuals and groups of people display in their thinking, actions, language or institutions has several historical forms. In addition to the ancient (6th century AD - 17th century) and modern type of rationality (17th century - mid 20th century), we can also talk about the so-called non-classical type of rationality, which seeks to overcome the fundamental limiting aspect of the modern type, consisting in the demands of reason for its own unlimitedness and the possibility of creating artificial nature.

and what can be both unique and unchanging and even thought presupposes here the agreement of thought and reality, the truth understood as wisdom, the highest good. At the same time, the knowledge of the noblest idea predestines its bearer to rule, so that the political capacity to exercise power is conditioned by wisdom.

In the ancient tradition, however, we may also note the roots of another way of thinking, which is the product of realising the limits of one's own knowledge, or the cognitive imperfections of the person knowing. It connects with knowledge based on searching, exploring, considering, in which the idea of error is contained in the idea of truth as standard. Accordingly, our knowledge, more precisely our belief that in knowledge we touch reality, is always just improvisation, is of the most probabilistic nature. Cognition works on the principle of reflexivity - people's thoughts, feelings, actions are part of the reality they are thinking about, so their opinion will never fully coincide with the world as it really exists. It is precisely the absence of agreement between the rational subject and the actual state of affairs that brings an element of uncertainty, unpredictability into the participants' understanding, as well as into the events in which they participate. Such an attitude not only corrects the resistance of any opinion in terms of its exclusivity, but paradoxically points to the fact that a basic rational attitude is the result of a belief in reason. Free choice in favour of a rational position admits its origin in an irrational decision, it is even conditioned by the presumed *irrational belief* in reason. The same is true of the irrational *belief* in progress based on the development of knowledge.

Optimistic visions of the highest as the substantial core of politics, in their Renaissance - humanistic form, have been transferred to the level of planned use of scientific knowledge. The acquisition of knowledge gradually acquired the character of a tool for controlling nature, transforming the human destiny, and promoting conflicting goals in gaining and maintaining power. In the indicated contexts, together with the separation of reasoning and deepening the considerations from the knowledge gained through activities and experience, we thus have the opportunity to reflect on the situation when individual scientific disciplines in different time periods and in different ways are pushed to defend their legitimacy by modifying theoretical production in favour of social (political) orders. At least in terms of the classical modern idea of the unity of science, it is especially the field of humanities that does not have a goal *in itself*, but must prove its practical usefulness.

The transformation of the irrationally conditioned Christian vision of universal salvation into the universal liberation of man through politics has opened up a wide range of possibilities for the practical application of universalist conceptions of the world in the name of abolition, oppression, tyranny, injustice, unfairness, social inequality or war. The ethos of progress gradually gained its expression by projecting into the position of human personality development as a spiritual being, endowed with consciousness and will, the ability to act rationally and freely, in close correlation with transcending the current givenness by reason and opening to what man is not yet, but can become. The primary ideological feature of the special emphasis on the role of knowledge here is in the unique combination of its two components: perfect knowledge as a possibility and perfect knowledge as a necessity.

However, when projecting the horizon of the future in the struggle to creating a better world by applying the idea of reason, we reach an imaginary crossroads. The belief of Western mono-

theism is gradually beginning to be alternated by a belief in infinity, the infinite possibilities of human knowledge, and the belief in the cumulative replicability of progress. The dream of *regnum homini* in the perspective of modern, secular Enlightenment ideologies embodies a new type of “ordinary” man who, by reason (knowledge) transforms his destiny, creates a new, better world. The situational complexity of the modernisation era is completed by a coordinated causal chain from individualisation, industrialisation, economic development, social mobilisation to the transformation of values, and the requirement to participate in political life in most developing industrial societies. Paradoxically, however, man becomes a reality here only by becoming a member of the system, he is only real as long as he is reducible to the function of the system, as long as he may be defined by his needs. It is by entering the area of (economic) relations that he is, independently of his consciousness, drawn into the regular context of his own realisation. What appears - as K. Kosík points out - is the transformation of the *subjective into the objective*, when man is no longer defined “*by himself.., but becomes a definable element of the construction and operation of the system* (Kosík 1966, pp. 71 – 74).³

The basic premise of the idea of the system as fixable, subsequently knowledgeable regularities is represented by the ideologised essence of the idea of the common good (well-being) that we follow. If man is to be a functioning part of this system, he must be equipped with the characteristic features necessary for his proper functioning. Reason in fact belongs to one of them, but it is not primarily an immanent part of an individual’s consciousness to develop rational abilities, but rather a necessity of life, something that is a tool of mediating a reasonably shaped reality (system). The reason of classical rationalism of the 17th and 18th centuries, which created a modern civilisation with the technology and conveniences of science, formed a reasonable individual with the ability to think exactly, paradoxically has the potential to create a reality that it can neither rationally organise nor rationally understand. Political rationalism, accompanied by the demand for a direct rule of reason and the gradual expansion of institutions (political, economic, legal) falling under this rule, also offers the summarisation and glorification of technical knowledge, full of rules and principles.

The political objective of the ultimate triumph of reason in establishing social harmony thus set in motion the forces for which rational behaviour leads to the efficient use of resources, to the attainment of the objective with minimal effort or the maximum degree of benefit. Reason is a technique of behaviour and action, a technique of its most perfect expression, and science is a guide to how to use resources rationally (effectively) to achieve an objective. Thinking about the legitimacy and rationality of the objective is actually precluded by science, which leads to a symbiosis of two split ontological spheres – the rationalisation of irrational and irrational consequences of rationalisation. One of the consequences of such a fixation in the line we follow is in the already proclaimed division of sciences into the field of nature and society, the indepen-

³ The concentrated expression of the logical structure observed represents the intellectual heritage of one of the greatest representatives of the Enlightenment period, I. Kant. He thought of man as a free being who could autonomously determine his will by rationally transforming natural lust. The postulate of freedom is, in Kant’s view, determined by a general moral law, the subject of which is *man as a purpose for himself* (a noumenal being), capable of autonomously directing his will in accordance with the general requirements of practical reason.

dence of their methodological orientation or the factual and theoretical division of human reality into rationalism (means, technology, efficiency) and human values and meanings, which in a paradoxical way become the domain of irrationalism. An adequate solution to the researched issue seems - once again in the words of K. Kosík - a dialectical reason as a higher kind of rationality, as a universal and necessary "*process of knowing and formation of reality which leaves nothing outside and is therefore the mind of both science and thinking and human freedom and reality ... So it knows in itself that its activity is in raising and resolving the contradictions, ... it does not exist outside reality, nor does it leave reality outside itself. It exists only by realising its reasonableness, i. e. it is created as a dialectical reason only as long as it creates a reasonable reality in the historical process*" (Kosík 1966, pp. 73–74).

The idea of a definitive push of rationalism-based theories in the transformation of nature, man and society according to the universal model gained in magnitude in the golden era of modernity by connecting scientific knowledge and the accumulation of capital (profit) with political and military power. The new logic of shaping the political, legal or economic reality of (not only) Europe according to the capitalist formula was further accentuated by the compromise between the feudal lords, the bourgeoisie and the industrialists, bound together by the institution of private property. The legitimacy of open, critical science has also grown in line with the idea of positive performance dynamics, which only confirms the already proclaimed connection between science, power, capital, and technology. The production and usability of knowledge was gradually conditioned by their transferability into the language of numbers, technological features that are a tradable commodity. In fact, knowledge itself has become an information commodity, a necessary precondition for the production of things that humanity wants, so - as we have already indicated - it is not (cannot be) just pure good, because it ceases to be an end in itself. One of the rarest contributions to the good of humanity, made for social and political progress, has gradually become an immanent part of ideological struggles for the liberation of man from the fate that makes him human over the centuries.

Behind the entire, almost exclusively optimistic rhetoric of people who have power, there is the idea of a bright future. However, when analysing the ways of enforcing the abstract principles of truth in science, the general good in politics, or the improvement of the exercise of power in the State, we come across another issue that seems theoretically unresolvable. This contradicts the inner meaning of our regulatory concepts in relation to reality. The tradition of their content fulfilment is based on the determination of a certain pattern - the concept of its own, which determines what is right, good, just *in itself*, i. e. what it "*should be*"! This "*should be*" characterises unambiguity, immutability in time, can be only one and does not contain any opposing parts. It acquires an abstract nature, it becomes a general, absolute, but an unusable principle from the point of view of addressing specific situations. Man's behaviour in the real world is influenced by the factual ambiguity of the conditions in which it takes place, which predisposes him to the necessary improvisation in choosing between the various options. Thus, a practical guide to action in terms of a specific situation requires an intermediary article to develop the content of the abstract concept, which is its interpretive interpretation. But the concept in itself, due to its abstractness, has no content, so it cannot be developed theoretically (interpretatively). Addressing the issue of developing the content of the concept of its own on a practical level means giving

it, more precisely inserting in it, “*subjective preferences into the abstract idea*” (Valach 2001, p. 33).

This contradiction in the indicated contexts further complicates the paradox of the interpretation itself, because due to the absence of the content of the idea of good - as productively recalled by M. Valach - is not “*able to proceed in developing the idea of good ... , it becomes a process in which the interpreting entity inserts their own ideas and beliefs in the answer, which, however, should have been completely non-subjective in nature, that is, a simple expression of the idea of good*” (Valach 2001, pp. 37-38). The observed argumentative trajectory, especially in the context of modern political theory of democracy, leads us to a relatively absurd realisation that the plurality of political principles and the absence of a universal, generally binding criterion of what is good (right) legitimises not only content dispersion but also dispersion of interpreters. Completing the ideological development of humanity by accepting a State establishment that presupposes multiple interpretations, followed by the choice of performers in legitimising power means not just a departure from the original idea of good, but also chaos from the perspective of legitimacy of one (generally acceptable) single binding interpretation (of the interpreter) of what is good, right. The personification of the will of one, several, most or all (if such a thing is really possible at all) is basically identical to the idea of perfect good in itself, we will just “fill” its original, abstract concept with rational content. Due to its reasoning, its essential essence is therefore in a *manipulative function* in the reproduction of a system that has a certain value potential. Therefore, in the long run, the legitimacy of democracy stands and falls with the possibility of maintaining an irrational belief in the ability of each individual to understand the essence of political decisions based on rational argumentation in implementing the ideal of the common good, through elected representatives fulfilling the will of the people.

Alliance of Rationality and Power in the Process of Forming Modern Liberal Democracies

The charming illusory nature of simplistic arguments, expressing the relativisation of the axiological core of democracy, leads the object of our collective devotion to the gradual shifting of ideological limits to its extreme forms. We are pleased that the essence of modern liberal democracies is the fidelity of the whole (majority) society to a general principle, but we are not able (willing) to understand the present precisely because of “inherited” irrational belief in a modern plan of thought based on the ideas of infinite progress, rationality of a world with universal and cosmopolitan values, of which the political projects of the transformation of man (of the world) with a universal form of government were (and still are) its immanent part! Conscious projection of social reproduction to a single, universal idea of globalisation (global civilisation), transformation of world order according to liberal model or universal civilisation, organised according to trade and capital movements, experiments with biotechnology on human transformation (transhumanism), human leaders (engineering of human souls), these are just some of the fragments of an endless mosaic of attempts to “remake” man or the world according to a model that are doomed to failure. We do not have the tools to attain the objectives that we cannot even

agree on, and the world is not a homogeneous political and economic system ruled by a single ideology. Rather, it is a laboratory where there are many parallel attempts to improve the quality of human life, victory over hunger, disease, wars, but still mixed with the ambition to meet basic necessities, ensuring strategic access to energy resources or consciously managing evolution through technology. The idea of the “end of history” in the form of continuous development of human societies from simple tribal communities to modern liberal democracy and technology-driven capitalism, resolution of historical conflict by general mutual recognition through State-guaranteed rights, universal industrialisation, global economic expansion - these are new (not just) conceptual opiates, creating new shortcomings, inciting new conflicts and putting a greater risk of destabilisation from global dependence.

The starting point of our classification of the normative nature of politics is one of the modifications of the idea of the doctrinal unity of faith (irrationalism) and reason (rationalism, science) in justifying power legitimised by the interest in the highest good. The basis for understanding humanity as a moral ideal in overcoming evil with good, the relentless revolutionary logic of ordering by man, in which good, freedom and happiness would prevail, was in the orientation towards the exclusive position of the human self in the hierarchy of creation, the determination of man as an objective contained in everything else. In accordance with the ethos of the Renaissance, the Reformation and the theory of natural rights, the bearers of the proclaimed optimistic perspectives were gradually becoming middle-class members (townspeople, craftsmen) for whom criticism of monarchy, absolutism and traditional spiritual elite was the regulatory ideal of creating a new world and expressing their own political or economic interests. The social hierarchy was violated by its growing competences, ambitions and wealth, as well as by the increasingly economically independent bourgeoisie with a new morality, attributing to the economic system (industry, capital flow, economic freedom, rationality) much higher value than the prevailing value orientations. The political, economic and moral appeal of the rules offered to the general population, and subsequently their codification by legal acts, have led to a huge increase in the number of people who have sought to improve their living conditions. They made it possible to create a layer known as the “people”, represented by parliament, where man - the citizen gained the status of a universal enemy of any tyranny and a human rights defender. The modernisation enlightenment policy project further strengthened this tendency by combining the ambition to improve the exercise of power by exercising representative and liberal procedures in a democracy, with an irrational belief in the productive and distributive power of the market.

In the process of forming free competition capitalism, we therefore consider it very important to point to a potential ideological loop, set not only by the eschatological perspective of emphasising unlimited human possibilities, which does not respect the dichotomy between politically impracticable and empirically verifiable reality with appropriate enforcement of political ideals, but especially the increasing conflict following from the need to satisfy the different needs of social groups with different statuses! The relationship between the vision of political (freedom) and social (equality) rights, which puts the basic orientation guidelines of politics in the context of the classical doctrine of democracy in a completely different light, seems to be problematic here. The process of concentration of private power, the economisation of all spheres of human life, combined with its legitimisation in the logic of democratic and liberal principles ultimately

created a state of semantic emptiness of authentic ideas of democracy and liberalism, when the social and economic power of a privileged minority alongside with the political ones reinforcing them form an almost impenetrable barrier for the effective exercise of the social, political, and civil rights of the discriminated majority! Concerns of several nineteenth-century conservatives (Disraeli, Main) about the pernicious, inhuman and mechanical influence of political rationalism, utilitarianism, pragmatism or positivism on definition framework of politics have already indicated much in this regard, while Marx spoke of the contradictions of material productive forces with existing production and ownership relations, which eventually resulted in a struggle for social, political rights, emancipation from property inequality or the exploitation of workers. The alienation of the producer from the results of his work in the process of exchange on the labour market, the transformation of the producer into goods for the owner and the resulting oppression, asymmetry, inequality, these are - in the words of J. Lysý – “*real, past and present shackles of exploitation*” (Lysý 2011, p. 289).

It is not at all surprising, then, that even the current moments in history are marked by an ever-increasing asymmetry between the political eschatology of the elites and the logic of the basic (natural?) life connections. Changes in the global distribution of power are destroying the middle class, labour market segregation has resulted in segregation based on social inequality (*social apartheid*), the primary target group for investment (concentrated capital power) is global “*plutonomy*” (about twenty percent of the population the remaining eighty percent are employees without any economic (social) security. The market reduces the freedom to choose to buy goods, individual consumption, not to the area of solidarity or care for others, but perhaps the most obvious manifestation of the (old) new division of modern societies is the multicultural nature of their metropolises, which literally embodies an *oligarchic paradox* - their nature does not determine the people who live there, but the “global billionaires” for whom these are places to save their money. Thus, one of the most striking consequences of globalisation and the technological revolution is the “non-national” elites, loyal to global economic growth (*success*), self-interest (*prosperity*), but the power of which remains thoroughly hidden. The main idea of the democratisation wave in Europe (“*you can’t develop economically unless you have democracy*”) is thus “logically” turning into thinking about capitalism (liberalism), which does not necessarily need democracy (open society) for its development, because they are mutually incompatible.⁴

Some Words by Way of Conclusion

Thus, modelling reality under the guise of rationality obviously helps. Despite the many indisputable signs of progress in the organisation of power, politics, society still remains in the hands of representatives of private supranational financial and bureaucratic centres, standing above the powers of national parliaments. The State is basically controlled by groups of investors who have

⁴ D. Rodrik speaks of a *global “trilemma”* - a state in which democracy, national self-determination, and economic globalisation cannot be pursued at the same time, because once the territories of sovereign nations are now limited by international law and global guidelines (Rodrik 2011).

enough resources (private power) to set the agenda according to the rules of trade also in the field of ideological direction - due to their share of power, market and profit maximisation. Modern liberal democracies can actually be understood as “*zones of conflict between different groups of private capital*” (Chomsky 2019, p. 61), embodying undemocratic, absolutist structures, because they function without the possibility of exercising public, democratic control from the bottom up. The consequence of this situation is in the cognitive retardation of the representatives of the power elites, the separation of control and management from politics, and the determination of the nature of the social system by the people who “own” it and thus to a large extent also control it. They preach democracy on behalf of the public, but in fact they control the public on behalf of democracy.

Politics is the technology of manipulating people. It has its own rules, because of it there is a huge number of institutions, organisations and symbols to guide the potential that lies in human nature. When they function properly, they use various conceptual constructions to classify this condition, which can obscure the fact that the vast majority of members of society are controlled, economically, socially and politically disadvantaged and does not decide anything. Even the emancipation of civil and political rights at the expense of social rights and the constant increase in property inequality can only be considered a useful illusion, a tool for buying social peace. So according to what (who) does the world actually work? If at all, what type of rationality does this idea correspond to? Who is the subject of the administration and control of its effectiveness? Or else: what do people want from the State? Where is good, freedom, democracy? Where did man stay in all this (rational or irrationally conditioned) chaos?

There is a lot of answers, almost unlimited ambitions. “*Panem et Circenses*”, because it is easiest to blame democracy for one’s own failures. Rationalism, the functionality of modern principles of values or pluralism are not what the most pressing problem in democratic liberal societies is. Maybe it’s the unreality of human ambitions in formulating their regulatory ideals in the realm of justifying (natural?) Inequalities, maybe it’s the resignation to project a simple, understandable vision of a good, decent and friendly environment for all. But we must not forget the idea that if liberal democracy is the definitive form of State establishment, the “*culmination of the ideological development of mankind*” (Fukuyama 2002, p. 11), then in the context of our storyline reversing the idea of representative democracy to the idea of representative oligarchy completing the development of social, property and economic inequalities of mankind, a compromise between politics, economics and the media spheres on the lasting continuity of prosperity for the rich.

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