



Political Ethics & Pandemic

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Abstract

A real and functional relationship is established between political behavior and situations of social disaster such as the current pandemic that is shaking the world, with extreme variations in attitude that fluctuate between the cynicism of deceit, violence and the circumstantial advantage in attacking the adversary, up to forms of truly ethical and rational conduct to control the situation. Contradictory forces are then unleashed that disorient the citizenship, provoking various reactions that further complicate the context, with the appearance of new and collateral problems with multiple and difficult solutions, not always well faced by those who govern and have the power to decide.

Introduction

The reality of the world, as a historical consequence, facing current situations and future projections, is diverse and changing, without ever having been able to establish a sustained balance that favors permanent conditions of peace, justice and social welfare, with sustainable and irrevocable advances. In this regard, the opinion of Michel Foucault is very demonstrative, when in some part of his book *Microphysics of Power* he tells us: "Humanity does not progress slowly, from combat to combat, until a universal reciprocity in which the rules will forever substitute war; it installs each of these violence in a system of rules and thus goes from domination to domination"¹. However, the formality that Foucault raises when referring to a system of rules is not a constant either, unless it is that of those countries that have achieved frankly democratic societies with a high degree of culture and education or, in contrast, that of those countries completely subjected to totalitarian political regimes, with certain stability imposed more than real.

Scenario

The constant change in human society due to a number

of factors that is irrelevant to analyze, has deepened in a dizzying and dramatic way in ascending periods of the last 100 years, thanks to scientific-technological development in all fields of knowledge; provoking a radical change in the way of thinking, feeling, acting and projecting of contemporary man, with replacement of his traditional values, more or less linked to ethics and his two main concepts of good and just according to Rawls², by others directly linked to the pragmatic and utilitarian satisfaction of their real existential needs, or their strong fancies for novelty, glamor, hedonism and well-being linked to the craziest technological sophistications—as happens with the wealthiest, strongly promoted by the consumer market, and the media of a globalized world.

All these situations led us at some point to sadly imagine the an-ethical society³, where a selfish human being indifferent to the "categorical imperative" of Kant morality or ethical precepts, allows himself to be carried away solely by his interest and convenience in that gray scale of itself reality, where good and bad become relative and cease to have the sharpness of the pairs of opposites postulated by

2 Rawls, John. *Teoría de la Justicia* (p. 36). Fondo de Cultura Económica. Segunda Edición en español, sexta reimpresión. México (2006).

3 Luna Orosco, Javier. *A sociedade an-ética* (p. 161-186), en *Bioética e Laicidade de Mocellin-Gutiérrez* (coordinadores). Editora Prismas. Curitiba-Brasil (2014).

1 Foucault, Michel. *Microfísica del poder* (p. 17). Editorial Planeta-De Agostini, S.A. (1994). Barcelona-España.

Manichaeism, coming closer to the philosophical cynicism of Nietzsche, who, by postulating that “Life itself it is the will to power” without objections that interfere or deviate from the objectives to be achieved⁴, a clear statement that “life is not, after all, an invention of morality; wants deceit; lives off deceit and man fluctuates in all his actions between good and evil”, recognizing, however, by his own affirmation, the existence of both as options for life and conduct.

The events of society therefore depend on that correlation of forces inherent to human nature itself and that, by losing its fragile balance towards one side or the other, depending of the circumstances or the actions of social and political leaders, generates conflicts of various nature, like those that humanity permanently suffers.

The pandemic

Now, in that fragile and unstable society that I have just described, the pandemic emerges in an unusual and rapid way as humanity has never faced before, causing a worldwide challenge, for which few countries were prepared; to the point of being the US of North America, “the country with the greatest scientific and technological potential on the planet, the most affected and with the highest number of deaths, in a kind of tragic paradox that proved very hard that said potential did not have the resources necessary to resist and overcome the onslaught of an aggressive virus”⁵. The alarm and fear spread causing a kind of collective psychosis with contradictory and in many cases unusual manifestations, which to a great extent were attenuated with the establishment of quarantine and the same abstraction of the population that focused its attention on the medical-health and epidemiological components of the pandemic, leaving aside other problems. However, as time went by, “the respite” of the quarantine, to the extent of its prolongation, severely affected all the activities of the social dynamics, causing various forms of discontent, mainly in those population sectors most vulnerable due to the poverty and marginality, whose daily subsistence depends on a dysfunctional economy, based on temporary jobs or the execution of simple service tasks, minority sales of various products, and small businesses, sometimes impersonal, if not from public charity or activities on the fringes of the law.

Political Ethics

Of course, the panorama described is highly variable

depending on the social reality and the degree of development of each country, as well as variable according to its ideology and political orientation, State structure, type of government that it adopts and what it is conduct of the leaders who lead it; latter factors these that are directly related to political ethics, understood as the most influential form of social ethics, and on which the destiny of all organized society with State characteristics depends. To them, beyond amalgamation of capacity and knowledge based on what to do in a framework of freedom, full respect for human rights, rule of law and frank democracy prevails the genuine vocation and duty to serve their respective country, with justice, honesty and transparency, based on the health and well-being of the entire population, without exception.

Undoubtedly, crisis situations are those that put social ethics and political ethics to the test, the current pandemic being an event with multiple consequences and difficult treatment, as it has been perceived since its appearance; even more so if the lives of all people without distinction are at risk, regardless of all the other destructive effects it has caused and will continue to cause in the medium and long term. This implies, therefore, a greater depth and care in addressing the problem, with the fewest possible mistakes, which can mean loss of life and greater severity of the situation with all its repercussions, which have not been addressed until the present, as long as there is no safe vaccine with universal and unrestricted distribution.

However, this whole situation, which could not be more serious, has caused astonishment throughout the world, the unusual behavior of some leaders of densely populated countries and of significant international gravity, who have not shown even the ethical behavior of governance that demands his high investiture, nor the necessary capacity to lead the crisis, arriving in some case to hide information or minimizing it, with cynical and provocative speeches. This behavior, of extremely irresponsible actions or omissions, caused thousands of infected and dead, without being able to apply vigorous and timely mechanisms to stop such a situation, bordering on some form of paranoia, which is equally astonishing.

In the case of my country, Bolivia, the lack of political and social ethics in the face of the pandemic has reached inconceivable and unacceptable extremes, despite the fact that the racial, social, cultural, political and economic confrontations of a complex and variegated society, motivated that it was always so, in a kind of historical fatalism since pre-Columbian times with the dominance of the Inca Empire over other ethnic groups, followed by the Colony with the heavy oppression and exploitation of Spaniards, Creoles and mestizos over the original misnamed Indians or indigenous people, until 195 years of republican

4 Nietzsche, Federico. Más allá del bien y del mal (p. 39). M. Aguilar-Editores. Buenos Aires-Argentina (1947).

5 Luna Orosco, Javier. Reflexiones en torno al coronavirus. Boletín No 1 Comité Nacional de Bioética-Bolivia, Comisión de Ética de la Investigación. La Paz-Bolivia (junio 2020)

life, in which and despite liberating “revolutions” for the dispossessed such as that of 1952 the serious social scourge of mutual racism always prevailed⁶, generating unsurpassed hatred between social classes, derived from subjugation and exploitation of the natives, especially in the work of mines and land; to which were added others misfortune of equal severity such as poverty and ignorance with all its derived evils; marginality; prebendary leadership in an always unstable political scene; corruption in the management of public affairs and with especially alarming characteristics criminal drug trafficking increased in the fourteen years since the previous government, as well as femicide locate Bolivia like the country with major number of deaths of violence against women for 100.000 inhabitants at all South America⁷; infanticide and trafficking in women, all of them with high statistical indicators, despite the fact that its population does not reach twelve million inhabitants, so much minor that other countries of the region.

With this quick historical synthesis that tries to exemplify the dramatic consequences of what the lack or ethical weakness can mean in a Latin American country, and by extension in any human society, I now approach the final part of this writing, referring to the reality of the pandemic situation that I know best and that I witness daily with even clearer demonstrations of the extremes that can be reached when there is no political or social ethics and maleficence is rampant.

Bolivian Political Situation and Pandemic

The malaise that was experienced in Bolivia for the last 14 years of a delinquent and nonsensical populist government, was increased by the fraud it committed in the general elections of October 20, 2019, in its alleged desire to perpetuate itself in power. Said fraud was demonstrated in a reliable and unobjectionable manner by the international observers of the Organization of American States (OAS), caused at the beginning of November of the same year, a social outbreak of proportions in different cities of the country requesting the resignation of the President of the Republic, to which the Armed Forces of the Nation joined as a “suggestion”. The truth is that as a result of strong citizen pressure, particularly from civic committees in different cities of the country, both the president and the vice president, fled Bolivia in the aircraft expressly destined for that purpose by the government of Mexico, from a non-main airport located in a remote area with great coca production. Such a

surprise situation plunged the country into uncertainty and a dangerous power vacuum that was neither assumed by the President of the Senate or the President of the Deputies Chamber, as corresponded to the order of priority according to the constitutional norm, both prominent members of the same movement politician of the escaped president, and who, in the same way, disappeared in moments of crisis. It was then that, following the same order, and in the absence of the aforementioned, as well as the parliamentarians also belonging to said movement (who did not attend any convoking meeting despite having been summoned), an express congressional session was held, in which he took charge of the presidency the 2nd Vice President of the Senate, with the subsequent endorsement of the Constitutional Court. It is this interim Constitutional President that governs the country up to the present time, with strong opposition from the Legislative Power that was strengthened and re-articulated with the parliamentary majority of its two thirds belonging to the political movement of the previous government, in a similar way to the recovery that occurred in many of the so-called “social movements” and fractions of the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB).

Due to all the circumstances described, it was not easy for the current government management to prosecute the country, all the more so because of the presence of the pandemic in Bolivia as of March 10, 2020 with the first imported case, under conditions of great institutional weakness of public health and medical-health care, which were seriously neglected by many governments, including the penultimate one that, as already mentioned, ruled for 14 consecutive years. With all these antecedents, aggravated by strikes, street demonstrations, and other actions that disturb public order in the midst of the pandemic; the field of politics, dispersed and disoriented in various political groupings, but exacerbated by the situation of tension that exists, demands general elections with particular pressure from the political movement that left power in November 2019, obviously backed directly by the Legislative Power, which does not lose the opportunity to interfere with the actions of the Executive Power.

However: the general elections that were to be held under high pressure in September were postponed by an autonomous decision of the National Electoral Court until October 18 of this year, in view of the severity of the pandemic with exponential growth in the number of infected and deceased. However, such a postponement decision, quite reasonable when it comes to protecting the health and life of the population, unleashed incredible acts of violence against the same population, with roadblocks in various parts of the country by groups native peasants who live in rural areas, instigated by the national leadership of the COB and the candidate for president who was financial minister of the

6 Baptista Gumucio, Mariano. *Historia contemporánea de Bolivia, 1930-1978* (p. 197-255). Gisbert y Cia. S.A. Libreros-Editores. La Paz-Bolivia (1978).

7 noticiasfides.com/nacional/sociedad/bolivia-es-el-pais-de-sudamerica-con-mas-feminicidios.

previous regime who left the government in November 2019.

The most tragic thing about this whole situation was that the blockade of roads prevented the transfer and provision, not only of food, fuel and other essential elements for the support of the population as a whole, but also oxygen and medicines to the hospitals, saturated with inpatients in intensive care units with COVID-19, and who depend on oxygen to survive. Like results of these criminal action 40 inpatients die⁸, including the sister of the ex-president deposed.

These unusual and criminal acts are camouflaged in the gregariousness of anonymous groups that act in certain places on the long roads where police control is not present and that, subsidized by illicit resources, most likely from drug trafficking, obey clear political slogans of the regime fallen by abandonment of power in November 2019, showing us a whole perverse plot that takes advantage of the irrationality,

8 <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/internacional/20200814/bloqueos-carreteras-bolivia-muertes-oxigeno-medicinal-8075042>

ignorance, unsurpassed racism and poverty of indigenous people who live in rural or marginal urban areas; to carry out their criminal purposes that, for the case, had characteristics of genocide.

Everything related, starkly expresses the total absence of political and social ethics in the habitual behavior of a subliminal human society, where hundreds or thousands of people live with similar behavior; all the more so if there are conditions of extreme necessity such as those caused by the pandemic. All this due to the lack of formative education in individuals, subsequent to poverty, injustice, absence of opportunities, and the precarious conditions of existence that, almost naturally, induce them to commit crimes or commit illicit acts without being aware of them or feeling repentance. The sad thing is that all these people are easily exploited by other more sagacious with interests well directed towards goals that are equally or mostly forbidden, among which are, of course, and in a preponderant way, those who lack political ethics, as has been tried to demonstrate throughout this writing.

