

PRESENTATION

The Dossier of this issue of the *International Journal of Philosophy and Social Values* addresses the present crisis of the democratic regimes and their traditional and widely accepted forms of legitimation. Until the end of the 1980's there seemed to exist a consensus, at least in the majority of the European countries and the United States, upon some basic political principles, namely, those that came to be known since the end of the 18th century under the label "the rule of law". Those principles showed their strength in the fact that they seemed compatible, for decades, with economic growth, minimal social justice and political debate between confronting parties with clear programmatic differences. The independence of the judicial system and the freedom of the press were also an important part of the aforementioned consensus. Those regimes were also successful addressing important 20th century political issues, such as immigration, the integration of racial and religious minorities and the empowerment of women.

Things have changed since the end of the 20th century. The consensus seems to be broken for an increasing part of the population, and the electoral growth of parties that don't share it anymore – especially in the far-right – is one of the most visible expressions of it. At the same time, parties that, not long ago, confronted their respective political programs and occupied in turn the government (social-democrats, liberals, conservatives of several kinds), seem, to an increasing number of voters, to share the same ideas. The increasing mixture between political programs and economic interests, the growing cases of corruption, the decline of the public debates on important political issues, the impoverishment of large parts of the population, have increased the distrust of democratic regimes based in the "rule of law".

Demagogues, now baptized “populists”, took the foreground, taking advantage of the impact of the social media and social networks on public opinion. At the same time, in some countries of Eastern Europe, the fall of the communist regimes gave birth to new forms of authoritarian regimes, basing their authority in ethnical, national particularities or historical rivalries that go back far beyond the 1st World War. The apparent triumph of these regimes was so much easier as those countries had no real democratic experiences in the past.

In their paper, Anthony Vecchio and José Colen reckon that doubts about the viability of “democracy” as a political solution frequently arose in the past and concerns still come to the foreground regarding its well-known imperfections. While some theorists and political philosophers believe that the solution to the current problems of democracy is more *democracy*, an idea that finds expression in books about how democracies die, others, instead, fear the excesses of democracy, and out of concern they speak of the myth of rational voters, of illiberal democracies, of minority rights, etc. However, notwithstanding the variety of outlooks, the authors acknowledge that almost no one seriously questions political democracy as *the* only legitimate regime. The goal of their paper is to show that these problems and imperfections of democratic regimes have not been recently discovered but were acknowledged as inherent to democracy in its first experiments in the modern era; in fact, they were already emphasized in the 18th century, namely in the works of Rousseau and Condorcet. Against this historical background, the authors contrast the opinion of some contemporary economists and sociologists – like Richard Dahl and Arendt Lijphart – that question some basic assumptions of democratic thought, namely, the majority rule.

Júlia Alinho argues that cosmopolitanism is inevitable and necessary in view of the enormous global challenges facing humanity, such as climate change, resource scarcity, multiculturalism or migration. The transformation of the world order into a cosmopolitan order is an ongoing process set in motion by globalization. Ensuring that mankind will arrive at fair global political institutions to balance the power of global economic structures is a key test for humanity. The author argues that revisiting some classic theories about cosmopoli-

tanism – such as the ones of Adam Smith and Kant – will help us understand what is at stake in our times.

Luís Lóia offers an analysis of the representative procedure of participation in the public sphere of life in Western liberal democracies, which determine a self-ruled form of political regime, affirm the sovereignty of the people in a specific territory; an economic welfare system; political institutions that administrate and organize public life based on their citizens' confidence; public security and order. Yet, as the author argues, the lack of political representation of local communities, or at least their sense of the ineffectiveness of the representative system to respond to their needs, promotes their alienation from the political systems and weakens them. In the wake of authors like W. Kymlicka and M. S. Williams, Luís Lóia sustains that considering individuals only as individuals and not as members of groups or collectivities is the main reason for the lack of response of the democratic institutions to claims of social discrimination by racial, linguistic or religious minorities. To break a dangerous vicious circle – the system does not represent minorities and these refuse to participate in representative institutions – the paper offers some proposals, namely, strengthening democracy with new mechanisms of political representation, in particular with the consideration of a second or third chamber in parliament that can overcome the insufficiency of rival proposals, such as random, quote or lottery political representation.

Outside the Dossier, Acílio da Silva Estanqueiro Rocha offers a paper intitled “Morcegos, pangolins, e os humanos: lições duma pandemia”. As the author stresses, this title is not intended to assess the origin of the coronavirus, but to express the global connectivity of living beings and nature, already evident in the initial analysis of the poem of the Roman poet Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*. The pandemic also showed how science works in the face of the unknown, capable of producing new vaccines only a few months after the beginning of the pandemic. The author looks at the emergence of this new virus as a kind of mirror of the society we live in: the effects of climate change – that can be even more devastating than the pandemic –, the human vulnerability, which common existence structures, whose intensity can increase unevenly, in certain contexts, the cases of “problematic vulnerabilities”.

The pervasive feelings and anxieties due to the pandemic are already raising new themes and philosophical analyses. These same feelings and anxieties were addressed by the Roman poem of Lucretius and the existentialist novel *The Plague*, of Albert Camus. Notwithstanding, they permeate a series of 20th century philosophical writings engaged in what the author labels a “we phenomenology”.

Finally, this issue of the *International Journal of Philosophy and Social Values* offers three Reading Notes, by Carlos Morujão, Mendo Castro Henriques and Eugénio Lopes, of Chung-Chi Yu’s book *Life-World and Cultural Difference: Husserl, Schutz and Waldenfels*, Tom Holland’s *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World*, and Francesco Russo’s *Antropologia delle relazioni. Tendenze e Virtù relazionali*, respectively.

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