THE WORLD OF THE POLITICAL

МИР ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОГО

Research article / Научная статья

Eschatology of the post-Christian Republic

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Abstract. The author analyzes the development of the political and philosophical concept of republic as a common cause in the conditions of transformation of the value system of Western society. The main problem of the research is the reason why the existence of the republic in the conditions of modern ideological and theoretical foundations of the society of individual consumerism faces the impossibility of achieving the common good as the goal-setting of a common cause. The study traces the ontology of the republic in the political thought of ancient philosophers, medieval thinkers and modern representatives of Western political theory. The central role, in this sense, is played by Christianity, which for many centuries has been a systematic representation of the essence of the common good. In the conditions of modern Western society, it has ceased to be a transcendent system of values, giving way to relativistic concepts that are unable to act as a foundation for social harmony. The author comes to the conclusion that the modern era has led to the deprivation of the republic of goal-setting, replacing the collective essence of society with the individual egoism of a citizen, while postmodernism, rejecting any form of collective self-identification of a person, deprives him of the opportunity to act as a citizen.

Keywords: republicanism, Christianity, common good, political culture

Эсхатология постхристианской республики

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Аннотация. Автор анализирует развитие политико-философской концепции республики как общего дела в условиях трансформации ценностной системы западного общества. Основной проблемой исследования являются причины, по которым существование республики в условиях современных идейно-теоретических основ общества индивидуального потребления сталкивается с невозможностью достижения общего блага как целеполагания общего дела. Исследование прослеживает онтологию республики в политической мысли античных философов, средневековых мыслителей и современных представителей западной политической теории. Центральную роль в данном смысле играет христианство, которое долгие столетия являло собой системное представление о сущности общего блага. В условиях же современного западного общества оно перестало быть трансцендентной системой ценностей, уступив место релятивистским концепциям, неспособным выступать в роли фундамента для общественного согласия. Автор приходит к заключению, что эпоха модерна привела к лишению республики целеполагания, заменив коллективную сущность общества индивидуальным эгоизмом гражданина, в то время как постмодерн, отвергая любую форму коллективной самоидентификации человека, лишает его уже возможности выступать в роли гражданина.

Ключевые слова: республиканизм, христианство, общее благо, политическая культура

Introduction

The theme of political culture and its influence on political processes and institutions was detailed in Alekseeva's works [Aleksyeva 2012, Alekseeva 2016], in which a retrospective analysis of political and philosophical thought aimed at studying culture as the most significant part of the political sphere was carried out. Mchedlova [Mchedlova 1999] made one of the most important contributions to the study of the cultural foundations of civilization. Rykhtik [Rykhtik 2012] devoted his work to the analysis of the collapse of the multiculturalism policy in modern Europe.

Glinchikova [Glinchikova 2017] considered the issues of the interaction of religious values and sociopolitical factors during the transition from pre-modern to the modern era. It is also important to note the importance of Durkheim's fundamental works [Durkheim 2001], which drew attention to spiritual factors in the formation of society and its culture.

Marey [Marey 2017] examined neo-republicanism in terms of its relationship with Foucault's concept of "governmentality". Kharkhordin's work [Kharkhordin 2009] immensely influenced the domestic research on republicanism, which provided a systematic consideration of this ideological and theoretical movement. The work of Skinner [Skinner 2006] was devoted to the systematization of neo-republicanism and the ideological and theoretical concepts that preceded it, while Pettit [Pettit 1997] was engaged in the development of the concept and its addition.

The study of fundamental theoretical state science disciplines, as a rule, begins with determining the content of the concept of the form of a state. Two of the three institutions traditionally attributed to it—the political regime and the political-territorial structure—have been causing controversy among established scientists and young researchers for centuries. What to do with the diversity of democracies, and is the whole world capable of fitting into artificial alternatives to authoritarianism and totalitarianism? How can most European countries, where regions have greater independence than in many federations, be included in the classification of a unitary state? The third component, the form of government, usually seems more constant and supported by specific criteria. Everyone, even the least diligent first-year student, should be able to distinguish a republic from a monarchy, a parliamentary republic from a presidential and mixed one.

However, the 140 republics of the modern world differ from each other and widen the ontological gap at a rate that allows one to doubt the epistemological certainty of this form of organization of state power. In some republics, it is rare for a government to remain in power for more than a calendar year, while in others, power is transferred to the third generation of representatives of the same family. For some republics, political crises have long been a form of existence, while for others, most of the fundamental procedures characterized by this form of government have become symbolic rituals. As an invention of purely Western political thought and the result of its 2,000-year transformation, the republic is facing one of the greatest challenges in its own history, capable of causing it a historic defeat.

Researchers have traditionally enthusiastically examined, criticized, highlighted, and dismissed the mechanisms and institutions of republican government. It is the illusory determination of the republic as a set of procedures and institutions that distracts attention from its ontology, which is based not on mechanisms but on the axiology that determines the purpose to which the state should serve.

In this regard, the key problem of the modern republic is not how to ensure the functioning of formal institutions but why the value paradigm of individualism and then the postmodernist disintegration of the personality can lead to the decline of its ideological and theoretical foundations and its swift destruction as an effective political model.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand why the ancient and medieval republics were quite capable state entities, while the modern model of republicanism after World War II has gradually entered a phase of political and philosophical crisis, having systemic issues and leading to the sinking of the common cause. This determines the imperative of researching the causal relations of the transformation of value orientations in Western society, depriving the modern model of the republic of the values that underlie its existence.

The Ancient Axiology of the Republic

It would be justified to begin the study of the axiology of the republic with its goal-setting. Many researchers use historical analogy to look for rational causal relationships, bringing economic [Ruffin 2008], class [Isaac 1990], and political-technological [Kellow, Neven 2016] motivations to processes, casting a scientific gaze on events spanning several millennia of human history. In some cases, this seems justified; in others, it is similar in its meaninglessness to the assessments of historical figures in terms of their conformity to the norms of modern ethics.

It is believed that in ancient Rome, the republic had to solve the problems that arose during the monarchy [Showerman 1925]: the class stratification and ethnic rejection of the Etruscan kings, who had held power since the beginning of the reign of Lucius Tarquinius Priscus in 616 BC, which was a strong stimulus for the aristocracy. It is likely that such a view has a right to exist and is justified from the point of view of modern conceptions of the political process. However, it is more important to understand not how such processes are perceived by modern political science and what challenges they could solve based on modern epistemology, but why they took place from the point of view of contemporaries and what value content they had in terms of the ethics of their era.

It is known that behind the fall of royal power there was a myth about the immorality of Tarquinius's son, Sextus, who subjected the virtuous Lucretia to violence. Her lifeless body was brought to the square by members of her family; it raised an uprising, demanding the expulsion of the king and the establishment of republican power. Naturally, the change in the political model of the state could not have been caused by the insult of a representative of the royal family, especially in Rome, where this event could not be the first of its kind. However, it is important that the history of the kingdom came to us from the sources of that period of time, and all subsequent generations of Romans, in their understanding of the ontology of the republic, proceeded precisely from this mythology, in which the republic was opposed to the monarchy not because of greater rationality, efficiency, or economic feasibility but solely based on the ethical categories of virtue. The republic was not supposed to solve problems of "how", but was aimed at achieving "in the name of what". The meaning of the republic is virtue, which is a purely ethical category and is based on the value paradigm of its period.

It is perhaps no coincidence that Marcus Tullius Cicero's first two major philosophical works were devoted to political philosophy, given the crisis facing the republican system of government during his period. "De Re Publica" and "De Legibus" [Cicero 2022] challenge the idea in Plato's Republic that political philosophy should develop in isolation from consideration of actual political structures and societies, which Cicero considered utopian.

As is well known, the Stoic philosopher Panaetius, along with the Greek historian Polybius, are mentioned in the main part of the dialogue, discussing political issues with one of the main speakers of the work, Scipio. In their dialogue, there is immediately a contradiction between the stoic political thinking that people share with the gods dominion not only over themselves and their habitat but also over the Earth, on the one hand, and the peculiarities of Rome, which exceptionality cannot be harmoniously combined with these cosmopolitan conceptions, on the other.

Cicero is deeply aware of the impossibility of ideal universal models. At the very beginning of his work, he defined theories of good governance as useless activities until they proved that participation in public life was the right thing to do. That is, ethics, and consequently the values that define it, are the basis of the purpose of the republic. In "The Laws", he argues that people are born for justice and that what is right depends not on opinion but on nature, based on a tradition dating back to Plato in which nature opposes arrangements. Cicero determines that the fact that a man-made law states that something is right or wrong does not mean that the claims are true.

In other words, for an ancient republic, the achievement of a just order should not be based on rational arrangements that determine the most effective way of the state but on a metaphysical idea of the due, which in this era is represented by an abstract nature that defines key ethical categories. The common cause, which is a republic, does not exist in itself and does not represent an end in itself, but is merely a mechanism for the achievement of the common good, determined by ethics and not subject to the will of the individual.

Medieval Republic and Christianity

The Middle Ages brought to the republic not only the fundamental institutional basis reflected in the works of Machiavelli [Machiavelli 2021], but also a much more important ontological content. For the first time, a common cause has a non-abstract ethical goal-setting in the form of natural justice, which is difficult to define precisely and which, in the end, becomes the subject of interpretation by thinkers who, contrary to Cicero's position, are individuals that define ethics. The common cause acquires a systematic idea of the common good expressed in Christian teaching.

The fundamental work of Aurelius Augustine of Hippo, a Christian theologian and philosopher, one of the fathers of the Christian Church, and a saint of the

Catholic, Orthodox, and Lutheran Churches, "On the City of God," explains why the ancient model cannot be considered a republic in the true sense. What musicians call harmony is called compliance in the state, which is the lasting and best foundation in any republic for prosperity and justice [Augustinus Aurelius 1998]. He proposes the definition of a republic as a people's cause, in which the people are not an abstract crowd but a group of people united by agreement in the sense of defining rights and mutual benefit. Augustine concludes that the Roman Republic was never a republic because it was deprived of justice, in view of the fact that there is no true justice anywhere but the republic whose founder and ruler is Christ. In his view, it is impossible to govern a republic without justice because there can be no law, and it is unacceptable to consider the unjust decisions of people as law. Where there is no true justice, there can be no group of people united by mutual agreement in law; therefore, there cannot be a people, and if there are no people, there is also no people's cause.

Thomas Aquinas, a church teacher, notes in his work "On the Government of Princes" that "it often happens that people living under a king are less concerned about the common good, believing that what they sacrifice for the sake of the common good will benefit not themselves but another, under whose power, as they see, the common goods lie. When they see that the common good is not under the authority of any person, they do not treat it as something that belongs to another, but each one treats it as his own" [Thomas Aquinas 2016].

That is, the republic, in the works of medieval church teachers, continues the ethical tradition of its goal-setting as a fair structure of the state, but it acquires a very specific axiology that defines this justice, in the form of Christianity, which serves as the value basis for ensuring the consent necessary for the existence of a common cause. Like their predecessors, the greatest thinkers of this period reject the possibility of the existence and functioning of the republic and its laws solely on the basis of the will of the ruling class, even if it is determined through mechanisms in which the decisive role is given to the people, because in this case the total population of the state is not the people.

This seems to be the most important ontological issue in the development of the political and philosophical content of the republic, which can be a common cause only if its citizens are a common thing and not a set of individuals. The idea that the people are citizens united by agreement in matters of law was also voiced by Cicero. However, he himself argued that the law cannot be fair if it relies solely on the will of man and does not carry ethical content, which he believed was established by nature. But, as noted above, since nature is abstract, could its definition not answer the ontological question of what is justice? Medieval philosophers found a system in Christianity that determined this content and made it possible to establish the goal-setting of the republic. If the republic, being a common cause, presupposes the imperative of readiness to sacrifice the

personal for the sake of the general, then Christianity defines the metaphysical category, not subject to human intervention, of the need to care for one's neighbor, sacralize sacrifice, and the sublimity of spiritual ideals over the material well-being of an individual person.

Post-Christian Republic

The exact moment of the formation of republics in Western countries based on the denial of the Christian ideological and theoretical axiological foundation is quite difficult to determine. In the period before World War II, most European states were totalitarian or authoritarian dictatorships, which were either formally monarchies or only nominally declared themselves republican countries.

The period after World War II can be divided into two stages. In the first decades after 1945, republican states were established and functioned in Europe, in which the ruling parties were Christian Democrats, who proclaimed themselves to be promoters of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. The European Union itself, in the form of the European Coal and Steel Community, was founded by six countries: Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, who saw in the new formation a prototype of a "Christian republic". The constitution, legislation, and political program of the ruling party in these states were largely based on the political and social doctrine of the Catholic Church.

By the 1960s and 1970s, we could speak of the beginning of a process of cultural revolution that began to significantly reduce the number of Christians among the citizens of European countries. This also led to a substantial change in the policies and actions of the Christian Democrats. A striking example is Italy, where a referendum on the prohibition of divorce was held in 1974. Italians were asked to decide whether they wanted to repeal a law passed three years earlier, allowing divorce for the first time in modern Italian history. The initiators were Christian Democrats who actively advocated a ban on divorce in order to preserve the traditional family model and Catholic doctrine. Left forces, such as the Italian Socialist Party and the Italian Communist Party, abstained from agitation. The prohibition was opposed by the liberals, the "Italian Radical Party", which has been petitioning for the right to divorce in Italy since the early 1960s.

The results of the referendum shocked Christian Democrats, who did not expect 60 % of the population to vote in favor of the right to divorce. As a result, they initiated the process of destroying their own platform and changing their own political rhetoric in the hope of gaining an even greater electorate by abandoning Christianity as the direct source of the values and political foundations of their policies.

A similar process is taking place internationally. Back in 1925, delegations from the Catholic Christian Democratic parties of Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Germany, Spain,

Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, France, Czechoslovakia, and Switzerland created the "International Secretariat of Christian Democratic Forces" in Paris. In 1961, the World Union of Christian Democrats (WUCD) was founded; in 1982, it changed its name to the Christian Democratic International (CDI).

However, very soon, due to the fact that political parties from states with a non-Christian population, primarily Islamic (Albania, Algeria, Morocco, etc.), were accepted into it, it changed its name to "Centrist Democratic International". At the same time, these parties constituted a fairly small share and did not play an effective role in the activities of the organization, which did not prevent the organization from, in fact, blurring its own ideological and theoretical field and ideological orientation.

Behind the real political processes, there was a process of large-scale political transformation of the philosophical content of republicanism. Most modern Republicans reject the model of democracy, in which laws and policies must express the collective will of the people to be considered legitimate [Maynor 2003]. Instead, they tend to endorse some form of "adversarial democracy" [Pettit 1997]; the idea is that well-designed democratic institutions should provide citizens with an effective opportunity to challenge the decisions of their representatives.

An important criterion for such a model is the requirement that discretion be governed by a norm of deliberative public debate, i.e. that the relevant decision-makers should be obliged to provide reasons for their decisions, the highest of which is open public debate [Sunstein 1993].

Skinner, Sunstein, and Pettit, in fact, create an alternative interpretation of the republican philosophical tradition. Classical Republicans were committed to the importance of active political participation and civic virtue. For classical republicanism, they were seen as integral components of the public good. It is common for the modern authors mentioned above to regard them as useful tools for ensuring and preserving political freedom.

In other words, for modern republican political philosophy, a key characteristic feature is the desire to reject not only the Christian value foundation of the state, not only the metaphysical nature of the fundamental norms that are not subject to revision by man, but also the consideration of the "collective" as defining the civil common as a good achieved through a common cause.

The most striking example is Pettit's metaphor of negative freedom, or "freedom of laissez-faire", where he draws the analogy of a slave and a master. Pettit argues that a slave cannot be considered free, even if his owner is kind to him, does not use violence and coercion, and does not offend his honor and dignity, since he depends on the good will of the owner, which is unlimited and subject to the possibility of change.

However, modern Republicans offer a purely instrumental solution to this problem through proper legal regulation that does not allow the arbitrariness of one person against another. In this regard, it seems obvious that this is only a form of transferring the possibility of arbitrariness from the level of the citizen to the level of the political elite. In the end, if the good attitude of the master toward the slave does not make the

latter free because it depends on the will of the former, why can the same dependence on the lawmaker's will restrict the citizen from arbitrariness?

The paradox of the modern political and philosophical content of republicanism lies in two key contradictions. Originally a doctrine of the common cause of citizens, it today believes that the only reason why democracy is important is the possibility of promoting the idea of freedom as non-domination. However, this freedom is reduced to a purely liberal atomization of the population and its transformation into a group of selfish people who are incapable of expressing their collective will and have no agreement on anything.

The second contradiction is that it was absolutely obvious to the predecessors of modern authors that a republican common cause could not be achieved without consensus in a society based on principles beyond human interpretation, to which the norms expressed in the laws had to conform. The difference between them was only in the metaphysics that underlies axiology. For Cicero, it was nature; for the Middle Ages and later republicans, it was Christianity.

John Milton [Milton 1962], so often quoted and cited as one of the pillars of republicanism, says that "no man can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were born free, being the image and resemblance of God himself".

Marchamont Nedham [Nedham 1767], one of the leading Republicans of the period of the English Revolution, who also attracted the attention of Skinner and Pettit, points out that "we are not only endowed with a few 'natural rights and freedoms' by God, but the aim of any government is (or should be) the good and convenience of a people who safely possesses their rights, without pressure and oppression from rulers or fellow citizens".

Conclusion

The development of Western political philosophy was based on principles of secularism and individualism and, within the framework of postmodernism, on the deconstruction of the individual as an indivisible subject, which put the republic in an extremely difficult position. The deprivation of key values of a transcendent nature has led society to relativity in everything, which is the first step towards depriving it of consensus on key issues of being. Having lost unanimity in the ontology of the good, the republic has lost the purpose of the common cause, giving its place to mechanisms and institutions, raising them to the status of final meaning. Christianity was the defining teaching for the millennial conception of good as a genuine moral order, expressing the absolute due and absolute desirable attitude of everyone to everything and everything to everyone [Solovyov 2021]. In Christ's parable of the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:3–4, the Bible), six works of mercy are listed, the fulfillment of which leads to salvation, and the failure to fulfill them leads to condemnation. The seventh cause of mercy, the

burial of the dead, was introduced by one of the Fathers of the Church, Lactantius: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, ransom the captive, and bury the dead.

A community that accepts such imperatives as transcendent a priori seeks political self-organization in the form of a common cause, using the mechanisms of the republic to form such institutions that are capable of achieving the common good. A state in which elected bodies and fair voting are goals themselves, and the dominant one is exclusively individual selfishness, is not only unable to achieve the common good but, in fact, tends to self-destruction. Elections become a cause of polarization rather than an expression of the will of the people. Governments are no longer driven by long-term goals, replaced by political technologies that produce short-term results to serve the momentary preferences of electorate groups. The citizens themselves, ceasing to recognize themselves as part of the general, gain not personal well-being but infinite alienation, as a result of which the people as a subject become a population, as an object.

What awaits the common cause in the next picture of the world, presented by the postmodernist idea of the disintegration of the individual, seems quite obvious. From the first days of its existence, the Republic was not a goal, but a means. None of its mechanisms is capable of leading society to the good if it is not the unconditional subject of the consent of citizens. If modernity has quite successfully coped with the task of depriving the republic of goal-setting, making its meaning not society, but the citizen, then the postmodern desire to deprive a person of any form of collective self-identification should already destroy the mechanisms and institutions of the republic, in which there is no place for the citizens themselves.

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