

“The common good pursued by politics: The happiness of citizens?” “Is the European Zoon Politikon, “Political Animal” Dead?”

The Need to Regenerate Political Life

By [Germán Gorraiz López](#)

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The Greek philosopher Aristotle in his treatise “Politica”, defined man as “ political animal” (zoon politikon), to indicate that “man is a social and rational being who lives in societies organized politically and in whose public affairs participates to a greater or lesser extent, with the aim of achieving the common good pursued by politics: the happiness of citizens.”

Historically, the party idea was inherent in the conception of shared power (antagonistic to the monarchy’s idea of monopoly power) and responsible to the various parts of society that over time was consolidated as a means of expression of the citizen’s will and government action.

Initially, the primary role of the parties was to promote the participation of citizens in democratic life and to contribute to the integration of national representation; But the bleeding cases of corruption of the majority of the parliamentary parties combined with the transformation of these parties into entities totally refractory to the basic needs of the citizenry, would have provoked the disaffection of broad layers of citizens.

Thus, the political ruling caste would have been transformed into a power clique (equivalent to a mini-state within the state), which would use nepotism to perpetuate itself in the party for life and in turn, would be choked by the pressure lobbies of the establishment.

Likewise, the political parties would be afflicted, according to Ortega and Gasset, by the “aristophobia or fear of the best” because “the sentimental rebellion of the masses, the hatred of the best and the scarcity of them in politics would be the real reason for the great Hispanic failure”. As a solution, at the end of the essay “Invertebrate Spain”, Ortega points to the “imperative of selection that should govern the spirits and orient the wills and using it

as a chisel, get to forge a new type of Spanish man”.

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The German philosopher Hannah Arendt in her book “On Revolution”, 1963 states that

“the party system has prevailed in Western societies, imposing representation as the only form of government. They also present defined political programs, which prevent citizens from exercising their abilities to form and express their own opinion”.

For Arendt, “the representative government has become oligarchic: public freedom and happiness have become the privilege of a few”. The political parties would therefore be part of an obsolete and fossilized system, so it advises the council system as “the only form of organization of a large political community that ensures the right to participation of all its members in the public sphere as they constitute real political spaces, suitable to serve as scenarios of action”.

In conclusion, it is urgent to renew the internal structures of political parties to ensure a transversality that allows the implementation of channels of dialogue with citizens and facilitates the creation of spaces available for free interaction. This would facilitate their participation in the preparation of the electoral programs of the parties as well as the lists of candidates for the various elections, combining representation with action to avoid that the citizenry is condemned in eternis to be only “political animal” in his private life.

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Germán Gorraiz López is a political analyst. He is a regular contributor to Global Research.

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