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The Ontology of Zoon Politikon

Abstract

The democracy ideal of the Modern Age is grounded on an abstract humanity category, which is based on universal values and on the equity of people who are bearer of these values. The distinctive characteristic of such an abstract person is related to rationality. However, the modernity's understanding of democracy, which equalizes individuals through abstracting them from all of their functional/historical characteristics, left its role to the discourses of "differences" and "identity" and became obvious especially after the 1980s' atmosphere of uncertainty.

Therefore the main axis of the contemporary political philosophy debates is determined by a bipolarity of particularity and universality. On one side of the axis there is a concept of universality which emphasizes the being as being bodiless and totally conceptual, however on the other side there are particularisms that revitalize the ontology of essence which renders themselves a slave of the particular. In this study I aim to unfold the relationship between universality and particularity on the path of the critique of ontology of essence. The problem I handle here is not one of choosing between universal and particular; rather it is one of depicting the indestructible mutual connection between universal and particular.

Key words

universality, particularity, modernity, identity, differences

Freedom, as a principle, has been steering politics for at least two centuries. The various demands of individual and social liberation wishes, such as eluding from colonial powers, eluding from class tyranny, eluding from social and government pressure, eluding from the social perception of male superiority, and eluding from sexual oppression, become its significant within the demands of freedom.¹ In this respect, for the last two centuries 'freedom' has been the meaning of politics; on the other hand, politics is the way of self-asserting this meaning. Hannah Arendt, whose ideas have recently been expressed gradually more often and who has showed politics as the leading way of war against totalitarianism, actually assigns the meaning of politics saying that "politics is freedom". Though freedom gains particular meanings in contemporary debates, it never loses being an objective of politics.

A human being is *zoon politikon*, in other words a social being.² For human beings, predestined to live together, the meaning of freedom implies some

¹ Ahmet Insel, "Tikelci Evrensellik Mümkün mü?", *Evrensellik, Kimlik ve Özgürleşme*, Birikim, Istanbul, 2000, p. 8.

² See Aristotle, *Politics*, ed. John Berseth, Dover Publications, New York, 2000. Aristotle does not separate politics and society. Thus, *zoon politikon* defines people both in terms of politics and society.

ambiguities. Questions such as “freedom to what extent?” and “freedom to do what?” are still expected to be answered. Thus, an additional concept that can unveil the definition of freedom is needed: “equity”. Though their results are different, all political and social revolutions seek the harmony of equity and freedom. Especially, since the 18th century, the reflection of social demands into the political area makes equity a political ideal. In this period, “a self-governing public” as liberation from absolutist governments of democracy has been matured by equal access and representation. The equation of democracy and equity, clearly defined by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, becomes the primary ideal of the Modern Age.³ The democracy ideal of the Modern Age requires an order equity based on universal definition.

This perception of democracy specially asserts universal values, and an abstract category of humanity based on the equity of the people carrying these universal values. The main characteristic of this abstract human category is related to be a rational being. The universalist approach formulates abstract individuals through detaching their identities. That construction becomes the target of a particularistic discourse in the ambiguity atmosphere evoked by ethnic or religious conflicts, which has turned to be apparent especially after 1980s.

The universalist democracy perception of modernity equates individuals by alienating all their contingent/historical characteristics. This consideration of the universalist democracy perception of modernity has given room to “difference” and “identity” discourse since the beginning from the last quarter of the 20th century. The discourse of absolute difference which cannot be reduced to a common ground replaces equity in this new wave of democracy demands. From the political perspective, this shift can be summarized as the clash of identities replacing the perception of freedom which is based on universal equity deteriorates by its internal contradictions; in other words particularity succeeding universality.

This introduction puts forth the outlines of the study that will be presented in this paper. The main line of the contemporary political philosophy is constituted by the tension of the particularism, which on the one hand restrains itself to particularity and, on the other hand, today recalls the essentialist ontology, with a universalist approach that drives forward those existing absolutely conceptually without a body. My aim is to emphasize the connection/relation between universality and particularity considering of the critics of essentialist ontological approach. The problem I represent here is not choosing either universal or particular but introducing the inseparable ties of the universal and the particular.

The relation between the universal and the particular appears through history in different types. While Plato, who is accepted as the inventor of the differentiation between world of act and world of thought, in other words *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, totally eliminates the tension between the universal and the particular by granting superiority to *contemplativa*, he also determines the destiny of the Western world of thought. According to Plato, universals are not void or solely nominal values; on the other hand they are completenesses on all thinkable ways and include the particular. In this respect, according to Plato who tends to lean towards conceptual realism, there are not any “ontological differences” between the integrity of the society apprehended in universal sphere and the sphere of political and social arrangements.⁴ The universal is created in this world by the philosophers who can meet the ideals and establish the political structure according to these ideals. The particular, on the other hand, is nothing other than failure.

The completeness relation between the universal and the particular defined by Plato goes against the grain in the Christian Middle Ages and becomes an unbridgeable ontological gap. The border line between the universal and the particular in the Ancient thought is a synchronized relation. Moreover, as we have indicated above, the universal includes the particular and blurs the differentiation line between them. However, there is a consecutive persistence between rational and irrational in the Christian philosophy. First come those belonging to mortal, particular and finite world, and then come those belonging to the other world that is the real world. As the plans of God cannot be matter of objections, atemporal forms of the rational as in Plato are not involved in Christianity. In this way there emerges a gap between man and destiny. The human being does not have either the knowledge about the sequence of events or a rational reference point. Thus it is impossible to comprehend this world of orders through reasoning. In that case there is a thought of the other world which is universal and reasonable contrary to the particularity and historicity of this world, and since there are temporal differences between these two worlds, it is impossible to comprehend this “other” world through reason. The relationship between the universal and its materialized form is no longer a relation that can be formed by a human being. The one who forms the mediation between the relationship of the universal and the particular is God. As the universal comes only with divine inspiration, it is impossible to comprehend it with reason. The postulate of Augustine says “I believe, to understand”, and it is the best formulation that sums up the prerequisite between understanding and faith that appears in Christian philosophy. Thus a difference which deeply affects intellectual development settles up comprehensively: the privileged actor of the history who goes beyond the particular/concreteness.

Modernity – not in a Euro-centric view, but in the context of the change in ways of thinking –can be an attempt of closing the gap between reason and body. The human reason, which has an idiosyncratic logic, replaces the universal reason of God, and this reason carries its own power of making rational groundings within itself. The renewals in science in the Modern Age and self-control over destiny are each the outcomes of this reason. As now the reason is pulled to the world, the incommensurability of the body and reason are to be exceeded. Thus to realize the idea of the universal reason, a universal body is needed.

However, revealing this body is the outcome of a long process. Though Descartes, the human reason drives forward, the relation between the body and the reason continues to be a problem. Moreover, this reason is still far from directing social and political events. Reason is introduced as the unique managing principle of social and political spheres by the philosophy of Enlightenment.

The trust on reason sustained by the Enlightenment has made a sharp distinction between unreasonable past and reasonable, organized future that is constructed through progress. This trust on reason turns act into realizing reason itself or into a representation of reason. In this respect, there seems to be no gap between the universal reason and body. A relation of unity is constructed

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See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract or Principles of Politics Rights*, trans. G. D. H. Cole, Cosimo, New York, 2008.

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Ernesto Laclau, “Siyasetin Öznesi, Özne Siyaseti”, *Evensellik, Kimlik ve Özgürleşme*, trans. Ertuğrul Başer, Birikim, Istanbul, 2000, p. 40.

between the reason and act. This result underlines the need for the social and political to concede to reason. That is, act is the midpoint for the reason to realize itself.

In this point, the universality of the reason will require the particular body to become universal as well. However, this claim causes troubles. While the reason of the Enlightenment declares its universality, it still arises in the body of the 19th century European culture. This body is a particular body which declares itself universal. The modern period has not been convenient to differentiate between the Europe's particularity and its universal indication yet. All in all, in this period, Europe's imperialist expansion is inevitably presented as a universal civilization/civilizing and modernization/modernizing processes. Thus the claim of universality legitimates the right to judge partial perceptions by putting forward transcendental categories to the historical and to the social.

Though the political and social trends of the carriers of modernity have different arguments regarding the central concepts in the universalist projects they methodologically share, they cannot appreciate the values of belongings based on the identity and moreover regard them as out of modernity.⁵ This results in the fact that Europe transforms its own particularity to a universal criterion, and that Europe reproduces the non-European particulars' decisions by filtering them according to its own evaluation criterion. This kind of a project is not seen as the conflict of particularities but as the conflict of the universal and the particular. In the process in question, the limited fidelity focuses, formed by the ignored, such as religion, gender, or ethnicity, are seen as the pathological phenomena and are drawn out of politics.⁶ The discourse of Europe, as the carrier of the universality, materializes "the ethos of modern and modernizing world"⁷ in itself and eliminates the survival chances of the thesis regarding the particulars related with our historical and social immanence. While Europe attributes civilization as its mission, it also positions itself as the unique representative of humanitarian interests.

However, there are still crucial differences between the universalist discourse of Europe and the universalist discourse of Christianity. The universal state in Christianity, as stated above, is related both to absolute difference between a supernatural reason and a body to perform its decisions; and with the fact that all human beings are equal regarding the transcendental power in question. However, the state produced by the modernity depends on the absence of the transcendental. Thus, while the modernity was refusing the tradition, it also refused engaging in a transcendental power or it put forward the secular thought. Thus, in the secular eschatology, the source of the universal is actually in this world. However, this kind of an acceptance requires an essentialist difference between the positions of social actors. In other words while some of the social actors represent the universal, others represent the particular. To accept that one end of this inequality is universal means refusing that the existing power relations are historical or contingent. Europe takes a privileged role against other actors as the carrier body of the universal. In the historical process of Europe the concepts that are produced in terms of going beyond nominal values are ontologically introduced themselves as genuine and universal values.

Those stated insofar can be summarized as the following: the discourse of universalism produced by Europe is not more than a particular discourse appeared at a particular time in history. While the world is going through a dramatic change especially after 1980s, the values with the claim of universality

that belongs to dominant point of view started to be questioned. Classical values of the Enlightenment go through deconstruction especially under multiculturalism, and as Ernesto Laclau puts “one cannot give (...) those more value than the cultural conservation of the Western imperialism (...).”⁸ As of this date, while universalism is gradually “(...) put aside as an out of date totalitarian dream, new social and political struggles (...) appear as a blow up of particularity”.⁹ Many theoretical and practical reasons for this dramatic change can be counted.

Theoretically, debates on postmodernism decode the language of politics, and on the other hand, they indicate the procedural renewal of positivism that exceeds its certainties. Categories that are not welcome in positivist understanding such as history, collectivism and meaning, become key concepts of methodological renewal as for social sciences with the criticisms of modernity. This renewal brings about the implication that the universal is the outcome of the historical relation.

In practice, immanent and transcendent criticisms towards liberal democracy which became political language of especially European modernity call the universalist language of Europe back in question. At the head of the immanent criticisms comes the liberal theorist John Rawls and his criticism aimed at the concept of liberal justice. The significance of Rawls’ representation is that the justice promises of the liberalism are not carried out is highly important because it starts the questioning of the universal truths of Europe and the confession of the problems. The following brings about big political changes and discussions:

- a) being negligent to politics caused by the vote-centered perception of citizenship of liberal democracies seen especially in the United States of America;
- b) nationalist and ethnic mobility arising in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics;
- c) Europe’s transformation into a multi-ethnic society;
- d) the politics of welfare state deadlocking the liberal economies;
- e) the dependence relations caused by the ideals of charity that requires the voluntary cooperation of citizens;
- f) globalization and the beginning of questioning the nation state.

While the “atmosphere of uncertainty”¹⁰ caused by the ethnic or religious conflicts, which became visible after the collapse of the USSR, underlines the need for new perspectives, it also crystallizes the inadequacy of traditional explanation models.

The biggest deficiency of traditional explanation model is related with the inability to appreciate the ontological position of individual and ignorance

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Fusun Ustel, *Yurttaşlık ve Demokrasi*, Dost, Ankara, 1999, p. 10.

6
Ibid., pp. 10–11.

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Alasdair MacIntyre, *Erdem Peşinde*, trans. Muttalip Özcan, Ayrıntı, İstanbul, 2001, pp. 10–11.

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E. Laclau, “Siyasetin Öznesi, Özne Siyaseti”, p. 21.

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Ernesto Laclau, “Evrenselcilik, Tikelcilik ve Kimlik Sorunu”, *Evrensellik, Kimlik ve Özgürleşme*, trans. Ertuğrul Başer, Birikim Press, İstanbul, 2000, p. 81.

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F. Ustel, *Yurttaşlık ve Demokrasi*, p. 9.

of the value of community. In other words, the discourse of universality is problematic in terms of anthropological and normative perspectives. The universalist construction of individual is free from all economic, social, ethnical, sexual, cultural, political and religious belongings. Thus, this individual sets the rationality as a criterion so that all individuals in universalist construction targeted by the social, economic and political perspectives; and decide whether to attend or not into a definite social or group activity by their free will. It is to say that there is a break between the identity and choices of the individual.¹¹ This indicates that the construction of individual made by universalist discourse defines the individual without history and society. This kind of a claim mentions that an individual never exists. This individual that Kant calls “transcendental subject” is “unencumbered self” according to Micheal Sandel. According to Sandel, that universalist discourse, which assumes individuals assessing only by reason while deciding their own purposes and values, has a deficient and imperfect anthropological perspective,¹² is a result of ignoring the social dimension that forms content of the identity of an individual. However, individuals do not precede social institutions; moreover, they are constructed by them.¹³ In this respect the answer of “who am I?” is related with the personal history of the individual rather than a universal image. In other words, a real individual is the carrier of the World of values that precede him/her. The identity of the individual, according to Charles Taylor, is “already-there”.¹⁴ For this reason, historical and social values and purposes precede the identity of the individual and exist immanently in the identity of the individual. The choices of the individual are a sort of approval of the pre-existing social norms.

To sum up, the image of individual in universal discourse “includes an ontological problem.”¹⁵ Taylor argues that universalism ignores existences of identities regarding an individual without ontological dimension. In fact, the source of this situation can clearly be followed through the theories of social contractarians. The universal character of the contract causes the individual to lose its relations with the place and society by introducing a defined nature for the human. Thus particularity against universalism points out identity problem that is formed with collectivism and historicity.

The other side of the identity problem is seen in normative criticisms towards universalism realized by particularistic perspectives. The construct of universal values lets individuals consider universal ethics at the moments of organizing their behaviors. This, on the other hand, makes the individual deprived of ethical verifying possibilities.¹⁶ In spite of this, the particularists define the ethics as substance according to an Aristotelian approach. A community is “shared practices and understandings rather than a society of equal and free people”.¹⁷ In this respect, individuals are consequences of cultural and ethical structure of the community. Ethical completeness reveals itself in a tradition unique to a partial community with a definite history and its behaviors convenient to its definition of virtue.

At that point, while the criticism of European universalism leads to a particularistic discourse with which it is in a total contradiction, it also turns concepts drawn out of politics by the predecessor paradigm such as culture and identity again into the center of politics. Especially in the ‘90s, particularity suddenly burst out and in line with this new meaning categories and right demands come out related with identity. According to the particularists, it is required to identify the individuals that are discussed as a value-in-itself without a history and a society, because each individual is a carrier of a particular culture, at

the same time. In this respect, culture and tradition constitute an essentialist value in the identity formation process of individuals. The essentialist value in question causes the discourse of “difference” or “other” to replace “equity” in the center of contemporary debates. As a matter of fact, approaches of contemporary political debates that criticize a perspective of universal foundationalism, such as multiculturalism, communitarianism and feminism underline the essential value of “difference”. The new form of democracy says that differences are actually values to be interpreted from nominalist approach and requires that in contemporary world democracies should be explained by the motto called “the equity among differences”.

However, the insight of unity among differences is not always as innocent as it seems at first sight. That these differences are explained as the essentialist founder element of identity brings about threats such as exclusionism and apartheid. In other words, the discourse of difference arises an inner contradiction at the point of its existence. While the fact that the identity expresses itself inherently generates its own particular universe, it also realizes a characteristic that shares by the all members of the group and differentiates them from others. Thus, in the discourse of multiculturalism the equity of differences replaced realist understanding of differences.

The critiques of particularity to universality are quite important as they break down the foundationalism of the universalist approach and they cause a methodological renewal in the social sciences. Moreover, the concept of “difference” shows some paradoxical features in itself. In Laclau’s words; “(...) a pure particularity claim that does not condescend to universalism is a self-denying attempt.”¹⁸ In other words, a particularity that denies any kind of universalism of thought is not possible; i.e. policy on difference cannot be constructed without exceeding the lines of pure particularities. In this respect multicultural societies can exist by defending both universalism and particularity rather than defending solely particularity. There are various answers for the question of “why do claims of cultural identity need the discourse of universalism?”

First of all, claiming a separate and different identity is equal to say that identity is constructed through cultural pluralism and distinctness. However, communities living in a big society also do not have the chance to survive in a reserved way. Each particular culture needs to develop grift relations with the society in a broader sense. These relations necessarily require normative principles that exceed the particularity of the group. In this respect, it is in-

11 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 450–456.

12 Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limit of Justice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982, p. 167.

13 Norman Barry, *An Introduction to Modern Political Theory*, Palgrave, New York, 2000, p. 26.

14 Charles Taylor, *Sources of Self: The Making Modern Identity*, Harvard University Press, Harvard, 1989.

15 Charles Taylor, “Yanlış Anlaşmalar: Cemaatçi-Liberal Tartışması”, *Liberaller ve Cemaatçiler*, trans. Çağla Tanyar, Dost, Ankara, 2006, pp. 79–80.

16 Alasdair MacIntyre, *Erdem Peşinde*, Ayrıntı Yayınları, İstanbul, chapter 2 & 17.

17 F. Ustel, *Yurttaşlık ve Demokrasi*, pp. 66–67.

18 E. Laclau, “Evrenselcilik, Tikencilik ve Kimlik Sorunu”, p. 81.

evitably required to obey the set of principles that all groups will accept. For instance, if an ethnical group advocates cultural autonomy, that group can put this argument forth under the obligation of consulting to universal justifications. Thus, a demand of particularity can only be expressed depending on an unparticular foundation.

Another significant reason of the particular's need for the universal is that the definition of the particular stipulates necessarily the universalism, because these concepts are dialectically co-requisite. Thus the difference policy requires immanently equivalent differences. The claim of a different identity stipulates the assumption that other equivalents have different identities as well. According to this assumption the group can put forward its own identity. Those inequivalent differences will lead to hegemonic relations. Therefore, each particular group is in need of other equivalent groups. In this point, as stated above, a particular group, demanding a right for itself, is actually asking for this right on a universal level. To illustrate, a group demanding to be protected may be accepted as asking for the same right for other groups, as well. In opposite, if a group is asking for a right only for itself, apartheid will be valid.

That each identity needs equivalent other identities indicates explicitly that any identity has an introvert completeness. Thus, as long as the identities do not exist in a system where they can highlight their differences, one cannot talk about self-enclosed identity. Defining this conceptuality requires defining cross-borders. The paradox here is that as the identity specifies what is beyond itself while defining itself, it will also learn about what aims to destroy it. In a sense, the system where the particular exists is the prerequisite of the existence of identity; in another sense, it is a threat against identity. In this case, the borders and existence of identity appears in its relation with the "other" rather than its self-enclosed structure or its self-characterization as having a quiddity. Thus, the importance of hybridization in the logic of contemporary social sciences stems from this assumption.

From the same point forth, it can be said that defining a teleological common good which Aristotle claimed for the societies is in fault in both universal and particular levels. On the universal level, a teleological common good may ignore the particularity; a theological common good on community level is oppositely inconsistent since no identity has completeness. However, the contemporary discussion in terms of social and political sciences are about the strategies tending to fill the predefined blank, i.e. "the common good". Then, the common good should appear in the strategies improved in order to protect our political goal – freedom.

Now that is appropriate to ask: if we need universality, and the particularity is far from performing a consistency, so why is the universality discourse of modernity criticized or should it be criticized? Above all, it is a premise that as long as the society survives heterogeneously, the differences exist. However, the existence of the differences accompanies the universality idea since universality vital by the incompleteness of the identities stem from the differences. As an axiomatic system universality cannot be expected to defend particularity, but it should work as a prerequisite warrant factor for the existence and continuance of particular cultures.

However, it is not possible to consider our universal projection as a void space. In other words, universality is not an emptiness that combines all equivalent demands. On the contrary, it is a medium through all these demands are being articulated to each other and indicates a content which is composed of these

articulations. If the universality was considered as a ground where the particularities exist, we would have constructed an essentialist ground in accordance to the impossibility of considering a ground out of content. It is remarkable that the dialectic between the universal and the particular exceeds the rational of a basic negation.

In this context, new issues arise regarding the universality. This is the fact that the content of the universality historically changes. The historical shift is related to the articulated way of these particularities. However, it becomes impossible for the contingent powers to connect to the universal ground if the particularities are connected to each other according to any universal chain of rules.¹⁹ Besides the contingent articulation of all particularities, a ground endowed with content creates a phenomenon that may be labeled as hegemonic. Two choices appear before a particular culture; whether it may totally turn in on itself and will be subject to ontological difference each time it tries to contact with the system in a broader sense, or it will fight in the name of the political power in order to acquire of what it asks for. In this position either the particularity of the particular will be suppressed by the universal or the particular will gradually become hegemonic via announcing itself universal. However, in both cases the particular culture will disappear and the identity ties will weaken.

As a result, whether the particular may protect itself or does not depend on the existence of the universal system which is open to flexible expansion and sustaining conflicts. Contrary to the tendency of the particular to be transformed to be dogmatic, the universal always needs to be included in the dynamic rules in order to avoid becoming a hegemonic power. That the universal is temporarily provided with content with the contingent power relations all the time results in the change of the particular encountering new right demands. In this circumstance, the hegemonic powers of the universality and the right demands of the particularity are always mentioned in a conflicting relation. Moreover, the persistent conflict, i.e. the unsolvable of the particular-universal relation is the prerequisite of democracy. If an accepted demand gains a victory, it becomes an element of universal system and a category of right for all particulars.

The singular existence condition of the contemporary multicultural societies is that in order to refrain from obscurity the particulars have to meet in a universality anticipated by the democratic system.

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The result does not depend on whether universality is specified as an essence, or a particular culture, or an act of “communication” as Habermas states. Probably, the mentioned

specification will also intimately deduce that some rules have been pre-established the differences.

- MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Erdem Peşinde*, trans. Muttalip Özcan, Ayrıntı, Istanbul, 2001.
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Ahu Tunçel

Ontologija zoon politikona

Sažetak

Novovjekovni ideal demokracije temelji se na apstraktnog kategoriji humaniteta, koja svoje uporište nalazi u univerzalnim vrijednostima i jednakosti ljudi kao nositelja tih vrijednosti. Prepoznatljivo obilježje takve apstraktno osobe je vezana uz racionalnost. Međutim, razumijevanje demokracije u modernosti, koje izjednačava pojedince apstrahirajući od svakog funkcionalnog/povijesnog obilježja, predalo je svoju ulogu diskursima »razlike« i »identiteta«, što je postalo očitim naročito nakon atmosfere neizvjesnosti u 80-im godinama prošloga stoljeća.

Stoga je glavna os suvremenih rasprava u političkoj filozofiji određena bipolarnošću partikularnosti i univerzalnosti. S jedne strane osi nalazi se pojam univerzalnosti koji naglašava bivanje kao bivanje bestjelesnim i potpuno konceptualnim, no s druge strane se nalaze partikularizmi koji revitaliziraju ontologiju biti, koja njih same čini robovima partikularnog. U ovom radu nastojim otkriti vezu između univerzalnosti i partikularnosti na putu kritike ontologije biti. Problem s kojim se suočavam nije onaj odabira između univerzalnog i partikularnog, već je onaj prikazivanja neuništive međusobne veze između univerzalnog i partikularnog.

Ključne riječi

univerzalnost, partikularnost, modernost, identitet, razlike

Ahu Tunçel

Ontologie des Zoon politikon

Zusammenfassung

Das neuzeitliche Ideal der Demokratie gründet auf der abstrakten Kategorie der Humanität, die auf universalen Werten bzw. der Gleichrangigkeit der Menschen als diesbezügliche Werteträger aufbaut. Das Unterscheidungsmerkmal einer solchen abstrakten Person steht im Konnex mit der Rationalität. Das modernitätsbezogene Demokratieverständnis hingegen, welches die Individuen mittels deren Abstrahierung von sämtlichen funktionellen/geschichtlichen Charakteristika gleichstellt, übergab dessen Rolle den Diskursen der „Gegensätze“ bzw. der „Identität“ und wurde insbesondere augenfällig im Anschluss an die Atmosphäre der Ungewissheit der 1980er-Jahre.

Dementsprechend wird die Hauptachse der zeitgenössischen Debatten in der politischen Philosophie durch Zweipoligkeit der Partikularität und Universalität determiniert. Auf der einen Seite der Achse ist der Universalitätsbegriff positioniert, der das Sein als körperlos und durchweg konzeptuell akzentuiert, während auf der gegenüberliegenden Seite Partikularismen ruhen, welche die Ontologie des Wesens neu beleben, die alsdann sie selbst zu Sklaven des Partikularen macht. In dieser Arbeit ziele ich darauf ab, das Verhältnis zwischen Universalität und Partikularität abzuhandeln, und zwar auf dem Wege der Kritik der Ontologie des Wesens. Das

Problem, das ich hiermit behandle, figuriert nicht als jenes der Wahl zwischen Universalem und Partikularem, sondern vielmehr als jenes der Veranschaulichung des unverwüstlichen gegenseitigen Zusammenspiels zwischen Universalem und Partikularem.

Schlüsselwörter

Universalität, Partikularität, Modernität, Identität, Gegensätze

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L'ontologie du *zoon politikon*

Résumé

L'idéal démocratique de l'époque moderne est ancré sur une catégorie abstraite d'humanité qui trouve son fondement dans les valeurs universelles et dans l'égalité des hommes qui portent ces valeurs. Le caractère distinctif d'une telle personne abstraite est lié à la rationalité. Cependant, la compréhension moderne de la démocratie, qui égalise les individus en les extrayant de toute caractéristique fonctionnelle/historique, a laissé place aux discours de « différences » et d'« identité », ce qui est devenu évident notamment après l'ambiance d'incertitude dans les années 80.

Ainsi, l'axe principal des débats de philosophie politique contemporains est déterminé par la bipolarité de la particularité et de l'universalité. D'un côté de l'axe se trouve un concept d'universalité qui met l'accent sur l'être comme étant immatériel et complètement conceptuel, mais de l'autre côté se trouvent des particularismes qui revitalisent l'ontologie de l'essence qui les assujettit au particulier. Dans cette étude, je vise à découvrir le lien entre universalité et particularité sur la trace de la critique de l'ontologie de l'essence. Le problème dont je traite ici n'est pas celui de choisir entre l'universel et le particulier, mais plutôt de décrire la relation réciproque indestructible entre l'universel et le particulier.

Mots-clés

universalité, particularité, modernité, identité, différences