

Reflections on the Problematic of Citizenship – An Odyssey from Premodernity to Postmodernity

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Abstract: This article envisions the evolution of citizenship in the way in which premodernity, modernity and postmodernity have marked this complex reconfiguration process. Thus, starting from pinpointing which are the most eloquent ideas which these three periods of time underline, this paper aims at making a correlation of the resulting aspects with the idea of citizenship, emphasizing this way the theoretical evolution of the concept, exactly as it was highlighted by the salient elements of each of the approached segments of time. Intrinsically, premodernity is exponentially represented by the impact of both mythical precepts and religion, fact that changed with the advent of modernity, which switched directions and proposed reason as being fundamental to answering to the questions raised by the individual, reaching in the end postmodernity, which delimitates itself by the previously mentioned segments and promotes diversity, inclusion. Consequently, the paper tries to underline the notion of citizenship as it is seen from an evolutionary perspective, the concept being approached by constantly rallying it to the features which characterized premodernity, modernity and postmodernity, thus particularizing sui generis varieties of citizenship.

Keywords: *citizenship; premodernity; modernity; postmodernity; conceptual evolution.*

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1. Introduction

Citizenship can be analyzed in different ways, starting from the conceptual evolution to the historical or philosophical one and even reaching to the way in which contemporaneity relates to it under the dome of human rights. Thus, whether we are referring to the manner in which citizenship has reconfigured over time under the auspices of social and political changes that have left their mark on it as well as on the building of the catalog of associated rights and obligations, or that we intend to detect the most important trajectories that the notion has captured in its fundamental conceptualization process, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that the idea of citizenship has obviously undergone changes at the level of structure, an approach that was visibly delimited by the emergence of specific periods of time which have as well been marked by elements resulting from a vast, multi-faceted evolutionary approach, with obvious social, political, economic, legal, religious and cultural implications.

Therefore, it is of paramount importance to theoretically clarify a series of aspects without which this approach would lack in substance, that is why this paper aims to observe what characterizes each of the three levels we draw attention to – premodernity, modernity and postmodernity. Thus, exposing the main approaches that have taken shape over time in terms of citizenship, perceived through a philosophical and legal evolutionary perspective, this paper tries to synthetically outline how the portrait of citizenship, with all its implications, develops under the premodernity – modernity – postmodernity triad.

Following this taxonomy, the approach highlights the defining aspects that contributed to the shaping of the previously mentioned periods of time, the ideas that arise and distinguish them ideologically and in matter of paradigm, as well as the way in which each period in particular contributed to the shaping of the idea of citizenship, as it evolved up until postmodernity.

2. Implications of premodern, modern and postmodern culture

Practically creating a preamble for the ideas that will follow and aiming for an in-depth understanding of the issue of citizenship, we begin by mapping the many changes that have taken place at the societal level - as they have influenced the evolution of the notion of citizenship. This way, synthetically passing the notion through the filter of premodernity, modernity and finally, postmodernity, we appreciate that a first step for a

good understanding of the logic of the approach would be to define the concept of premodern culture and reveal the main characteristics. Therefore, the doctrinaires state that „*premodernity or premodern culture is distinguished by the involvement of mythical and religious components in an attempt to explain fundamental issues related to nature and societal space, with all that they entail, starting from fears related to creation, the universe or the cosmos*” (Olivier, 2007, p. 2).

Starting from this construct, modernity comes and proposes a model that would depart from the sphere of premodernity, which was lacking in rationality and embraces a new approach of „*demystification and desacralization of knowledge and social organization in order to liberate human beings from their chains*” (Harvey, 1989, p. 13). This „project of modernity”, as the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas called it, arises as an effort „*to develop objective science, universal morality and law [...] in order to pursue human emancipation and the enrichment of daily life*” (Harvey, 1989, p. 12).

In other words, modern culture replaces the idea of religion, abolishes the mythical acceptance regarding the answers given to the problems that trouble the individual and introduces a new model of thinking based predominantly on reason and science, where a great emphasis is placed on the logical and discursive sphere, on issues related to thought, ethics, politics, technological advance and, of course, on the reconfiguration of cultural space and art (Olivier, 2007, p. 2). In the same vein, Marshall Berman stated in one of his writings that „*modern environments [...] cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense modernity can be said to unite all mankind*” (Berman, 1988, p. 15).

It has also been held in doctrine that an essential aspect of modernity concerns the fact that „*on the basis of reason, individuals can organize, relate and coexist, based on a negotiated agreement, unlike the premodern era when religion and aristocracy imposed other coercive forms of human relationship*” (Piquer Pallarés & Bartoll Chiva, 2018, p. 836). Therefore, this mechanism appears as a result of the impact that reason, as a fundamental component of the individual, placed under the aspect of the evolution of his thinking, has on the entire social construct.

The theorists of modernity positioned themselves in such a way that they promoted the modernist idea of a „*rational, autonomous and unified subject*”, approach which, however, was intensely criticized by the followers of postmodernity who marched for the idea of a „*linguistically and socially decentered subject*” (Villadsen, 2011, p. 312).

By contrast to the previously mentioned ideas, postmodern culture appears as a reaction to the validity of universal principles, as they were promoted by the followers of the modern period. The postmodernist

discourse has French origins and appeared in the second part of the 1970s, being promoted by Roland Barthes, Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard etc (Berman, 1988, p. 9). As Bert Olivier underlines in one of his writings, this paradigm opposes the endeavor to universalize the concepts with which the individual operates, both in terms of his relation to nature and to the inclusion in the societal space, and tries to emphasize the idea of distinctiveness. Therefore, it is stated in the doctrine that postmodernity provides and shapes a culture based on diversity and plurality which, of course, once installed, can make it difficult to find identity (Olivier, 2007, p. 2).

Ultimately, postmodernity brought with it numerous changes in the optics of the times so that, starting from a culture centered on the religious or mythical foundation, we gradually arrive at the approach of the individual by reference to the modern space, where issues concerning reason and universality are addressed, finally reaching postmodernity where all ideas outlined under the spectrum of previous cultures are rejected and diversity is emphasized. Applying these ideas to the central element of the present approach - citizenship - we will see in the following section the way in which the concept has gradually reinvented itself under the dome of premodernity, modernity and postmodernity.

3. Citizenship – the journey of a concept

We cannot talk about citizenship without trying to understand the mechanisms underlying such a controversial and volatile concept, given the many changes that have occurred at a society level over time. It has been written that the citizen represents „*the source of the social bond*” (Schnapper & Bachelier, 2001, p. 6) and by referring to the previously exposed features we can also emphasize that starting from premodernity to modernity we are no longer dealing with an eminently religious bond or a strictly related to the leader one, to whom the individual was obliged to obey.

Gradually, the idea of citizenship takes shape under the dome of laws, of the social contract, of politics, a context that changes until the period of postmodernity and afterwards. Seen through an evolutionary perspective, citizenship has been perceived and defined in different ways, depending on the reference period so that, as far as the Greek philosopher Aristotle is concerned, he perceived citizenship as „*an instrument of virtue*”, therefore „*it was not granted to workers, slaves or women, categories he considered unworthy, lacking in virtuosity*” (Ivic, 2016, p. 67). In antiquity, especially in Ancient Greece, citizenship had a limiting character, in the sense in which only that individual who was part of the *demos* was called a citizen. More

precisely, you could call yourself a citizen only if you were born or belonged to the Greek *polis*, fact that emphasized the „*ethnic conception*” of citizenship which placed it in a closed tier, thus being almost impossible to acquire this status as long as you did not belong to the Athenian civilization (Schnapper & Bachelier, 2001, p. 8).

Along the way, the entire theory of citizenship was reconfigured under the auspices of societal changes so that while Aristotle promoted the idea of active citizenship and, implicitly, that of participation in the life of the city, a context in which the individual represented a main pawn in the decision-making process, what characterized the Roman citizenship was the fact that the one who acquired this status possessed a palette of legally established rights (Heater, 2004, p. 2)

Later, citizenship acquires distinct valences so that modern citizenship is underlined in terms of „*homogeneity and sameness and transcends cultural, historical and other particularities*” (Ivic, 2011, p. 5). Therefore, modern citizenship represents the prerogative of the individual without constraints, who can make decisions without racial, ethnic, religious barriers, that reconfirms the idea of inclusion and autonomy understood under the spectrum of the rights conferred to him. Practically, modern citizenship is closely related to the „*ethics of participation*”, this concept not being an eminently legal one but enriched by the social component, between these two levels being created a symbiotic relationship, a context in which the status of a citizen implies both rights and correlative obligations (Faulks, 2000, pp. 4-5).

As far as postmodern citizenship is concerned, it differs from the previously stated approaches and the doctrine underlines the fact that „*perceived as based on the notion of identity [...] it is a state of mind, a mental construct, which is founded on the subjective feeling of belonging*” (Ivic, 2011, p. 9) A relevant approach in this matter is also emphasized by Robert Keith Shaw who underlines in one of his writings Keith Faulks's perspective regarding the idea of citizenship, in which the latter states that: „*a developed sense of citizenship demands that each citizen develops empathy and understanding for other cultures and sensitivity to the interests and needs for others*” (Shaw, 2003, p. 3).

Thus, mapping postmodern citizenship, it emerges that it is based on a different approach from the premodern or modern one, in the sense that citizenship comes to be perceived as „*a form of consciousness that can be expressed anywhere, at any time, under different situations*” (Pedro Sebastiao, 2018, p. 1817). In other words, postmodern citizenship appears as a concept where the well-defined space, as well as the borders fade, thus reiterating the idea that that it

is based on the idea of identity, by contrast to the way in which citizenship was perceived in premodernity or modernity.

4. Conclusions

Although the work is intended to be a short foray into the issue of citizenship, this proposal is a novel perspective, that of treating the subject of citizenship through the prism of the ideas revealed by premodernity, modernity and postmodernity. Practically, the approach of the ideas is a mapping of each of the three levels announced, where the main markers were delimited, these being later applied in the sphere of the issue of citizenship where, through the analogy of information, the characteristics of citizenship are revealed, by reference to the individual and the way in which the concept evolves under the spectrum of the passage of time and the changes produced at the societal level.

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