

Aesthetic Tension between Politics and Government

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to study conceptually the classic tension between politics and government, and the role of the aesthetic in this tension. The main interest in the article is in the concept of government: why do we generally need ruling and governing, what is the 'ultimate' purpose of government, why do we, on the whole, understand the concept of government similarly in different political cultures, and, accordingly, experience governing in the same way? In getting to know the concept of ruling and governing, we at the same time learn the basic language and words, images, emotions, and aesthetic principles and codes, which are closely engaged with the concept or, vice versa, without which the concept cannot exist. The concluding argument in the article is that the 'ultimate' purpose of good ruling and governing (including also administration and governance) is to evoke the sentiment according to which everything appears to be in order. This conclusion brings us to a well-known and widely used argument according to which one of the basic ideas of politics is, contrary to ruling and governing, to bring about changes in the social order by politicising common currencies and 'natural' unanimity.

The Concepts of Ruling and Governing

A self-evident fact in studying the conceptual history of ruling and governing is that the phrase 'conceptual history' entails an idea of many conceptions of what ruling and governing has meant in history and what it means even today. The second fact is that there have been historical changes and ruptures in these conceptions. However, since we live in the same Western civilisation and European political culture, there must be something common in our conceptual history even if there are differences in the timetables of conceptual changes. Otherwise, we would not live – broadly speaking – in the same civilisation, and we would have significant problems in understanding each other. I think that – even if we live in national political cultures of the Western world and speak different languages – we do not have immense problems in understanding in the same way basic characteristics of the concept of ruling and governing.

My argument is that concerning the conceptual history of ruling and governing, we, as members of the Western civilisation, really have a basic common understanding of these concepts. It seems to me that there are at least two basic grounds for the common understanding: Plato's metaphors and the idea of the concept itself.

1. Two Metaphors of Good Ruling

The first common starting point we can identify are Plato's two well-known metaphors of good ruling and governing. He describes the role of a good ruler and his successful action by comparing him with a shepherd of a flock and a helmsman steering his vessel. The latter metaphor is presented in *The Republic* where he considers the criteria of a good ruler. Plato's book is one of the first known attempts to describe what good ruling means more concretely and how we can describe it. According to the metaphor, a good and competent ruler resembles a competent captain of a ship who, despite many dangers in an unknown sea, such as stormy weather and underwater ranges of rocks, is able to navigate and steer the ship, its crew, and its passengers to the intended harbour.

The other metaphor of a good ruler Plato presents is that of a good shepherd who takes care of everyone in his flock. According to Plato, the ruler's art is like the shepherd's art in caring for each individual sheep in his flock. This metaphor hints at one of the most ancient layers of the concept of governing and ruling: paternal and patrimonial governing and ruling in which the ruler is described as a good father who takes care of his children.

Plato's metaphors have been widely used in describing the basic idea of what good and beneficial ruling and governing means.¹ They have been very powerful and persistent both in directing people's imagination and thinking about what ruling means and in defining more generally the overall idea of Western culture and world-view (for more on the latter argument, see Ankersmit 1996).

In order to consider the topical situation in our conception of ruling and governing, we can start with the metaphor of steering a boat. The first problem concerns, of course, what has happened to the boat. There were no problems in the era of strong national states: it was thought that the boat was the national state. Today, we are, however, living in an ever more internationalised and globalised world. Frank Ankersmit (1996) argues that the metaphor of the navigation of a boat, at least since national states came into being, has been of the utmost importance in Western civilization and thought. He argues that behind the ship metaphor is a dimly visible broader fundamental Western philosophy of governing and governance, which always has striven for continuity, steadiness, straightforwardness, and obscuring sharp contours. This basic inclination has, of course, been challenged many times and from many philosophical points of view. I take up only two well-known examples here, Nietzsche's and Heidegger's.

¹ This can be seen in the etymology of the words hinting at ruling and governing in many European languages. A few illuminating examples will be presented later in this article

Friedrich Nietzsche (1882; 1886) did not believe that we can tame contingency and chance in human life. He argued that instead, we live unavoidably in a stormy sea where we cannot totally predict and govern surging waves and ranges of rocks. According to Nietzsche, human life is always and in the last instance ungovernable: in the end, we are not masters of our life. On the other hand, he claimed that seeking after a steady and regular life makes people too 'kind', too sheep-like, who in fact are afraid of life in such a way that they do not have the courage to take risks in life. Behaving like sheep meant to Nietzsche that people do not have the will to power, which is necessary for becoming a subject in life, i.e. an individual who at the end of his or her life can claim 'thus I willed it'.

The other well-known tradition is the way Martin Heidegger criticised the Western idea of governing. According to Georg Steiner (1977), Heidegger argued that it is our hope, and that we at least pretend, to be masters of nature. He saw this as the basic idea in Western technology: technology that has raped the globe by subduing nature to practical values. Heidegger thought that in technology, human beings challenge nature and chain it to their own purposes. Even the value of knowledge in our technological worldview depends on how viable it is in our endeavours to govern. Heidegger's conclusion was that in the end human beings become alienated from nature and from themselves when they see nature as an opponent or even as an enemy. Instead of striving for domination and governing, human beings should be *der Hirt des Seins* (the shepherd of being).

What is also of utmost importance here is that both of Plato's metaphors start with and presuppose the idea of a subject. There must be someone who rules and governs and without that subject, we cannot speak about ruling and governing. This is exactly the idea that has been challenged in the conceptual history of governing and ruling. This holds especially true in the topical conception of governance and the idea of governmentality (for more on this, Pekonen 2005). A topical and trendy concept of governance has been replacing or rather complementing old conceptions of ruling and governing. Governance must be understood here both as a socio-political steering system and as a new semantic and political slogan as it is adopted in the EU, for instance. Wording and conceptions of governance have rapidly spread throughout many languages: *Regieren* and *die Gouvernanz* in German; *hallinta* in Finnish; *styrelseformerna* in Swedish; *nye styreformer* in Danish. But what does this complementing mean when we consider the term governance from the viewpoint of conceptual history?

We must first observe that the word governance does not in itself have a verb form. I think that this simple observation is important and also illuminating. It seems to me that the traditional sovereign subject of ruling and governing, the idea according to which there were some sovereign subjects who could be able to govern in this internationalised and globalised world where main problems are both difficult and global, has been discarded in these new conceptions of governance. Accordingly, modern governance rather means both trying to find mutual agreements between many subjects and interested parties, and, secondly, step-by-step readjustment, not steering, in ongoing processes.

We first admit in governance that in modern democratic society, nobody can rule or govern the other without the consent of the latter. Second, we are, resulting from

integration and globalisation, in a situation in which the ideas of a common boat and captain of the boat have become problematic: what is the ship – Finland, Sweden, the EU, or the whole world? Who could be the captain of a new big boat or can we imagine any captain for us at all? Third, the picture becomes more problematic when we try to imagine who could be a competent captain: a captain who would be able to steer us amid topical global problems of population growth, the widening gap between the rich and poor countries, environmental pollution, etc. I think that in the concept of governance we, in fact, admit that we are in the situation in which we no more imagine that there is a subject (captain, shepherd, or father) who could steer us. Instead we live in a world in which, on the one hand, no one is a sovereign subject, or, on the other, we all have become subjects.² We can claim that in governance, there is either no subject at all, or many subjects with whom we must try to deal with these problems. Instead of a few, we all are responsible for the future of the globe.

2. The Concept of Concept

The second reason why ruling is commonly understood is the idea of concept itself and the relationship between concept and language in particular. This takes us to a difficult problem: what do we mean by concept? I will start by describing more concretely these two grounds and their significance in directing our thinking. First, I look very briefly at the concept of concept and then at the words ruling and governing in different languages from the viewpoint of etymology.

There are, of course, different kinds of approaches and schools in studying concepts. I like to describe the way I interpret concept by a citation from Hobbes's *Leviathan*. I take up this citation because, in my mind, it is very clear and easy to understand. Hobbes wrote (*Leviathan*, Book 1, Ch. 4, 28): "All our names are imposed to signify our conceptions; and all our affections are but conceptions; when we conceive the same things differently, we can hardly avoid different naming of them."

Following the logic in Hobbes's definition of concept, we are not interested in language and words as such in conceptual history but in the basic ideas words express. These basic ideas are concepts. Therefore, especially the word "affection" in the citation is very interesting and important, because via affections we can attain and retain a bond between language, world, and the acting human being. Affections are also closely connected with the problem of aesthetics. The question is in no way merely about language, words, and rhetoric as such but about life in the social and political world, the relationship between language and world, and about how people experience matters and what people think they are doing. The question is unavoidable.

² Michel Foucault's idea of the governmentalisation of the state whereby the art of government is separated from the theory and practice of sovereignty has been very influential here. According to Foucault, the government of the state has become autonomous from notions of sovereignty invested in the prince, or in the people. Accordingly, the separation of government from sovereignty entails the development of a notion of government as an activity, or an 'art', that is plural and immanent to the state. (Foucault 1991, 103-104) The aim of the governmental art and activity is in the end 'the idea of bio-politics, i.e. a form of politics entailing the administration of the processes of life of populations' (98) in which traditional rulers have very little to do.

ably also about tensions and ruptures between language, world, and speaking and acting human beings.

3. The Etymology of Ruling and Governing

The vocabulary of governing and ruling resemble each other in many European languages demonstrating their common Latin birthplace. *Regera*, *regerare*, *regering*, *styra*, *styrelse* (in Swedish), *Regierung*, *Regent*, *Regime*, *regieren* (in German), *régime* (*gouvernement*), *régner* (*gouverner*) (in French), *rule* (*govern*), *ruler*, *government* (in English). The common background in many languages is Latin. The Latin words *Rego*, *Regno* and *Guberno* are the etymological starting point for modern governing vocabulary:

Rego, steer

Regimen (*rego*), meton. helm; government

Regno, be a king, govern as a king (later reign)

Regnum (*rego*), meton. kingdom; power of the king; territory

Guberno (Gr.), be at the helm; steer.

Gubernator, helmsman

In addition to the terms *rego* and *guberno*, other words have been used too: the vocabulary based on Latin *dominus* (master, lord) (*dominate*; *dominera* in Swedish), as well as *herrschen* (German), *härska* (Swedish), and *herruuttaa* (in Finnish), connote patriarchal supremacy. Naturally, there have been other national curiosities.

What can we learn about the Latin etymology of the ruling and governing vocabulary, remembering that we are not interested in mere words but in the images, ideas, affections, and even aesthetics which these words have been used for? At least the etymology shows very clearly that the first image behind the concept of ruling and governing was *an idea of steering a vessel* (*die Steuerung und Lenkung eines Schiffes* in German; *styra statskepp*, *sitta vid styret* in Swedish).

Plato's metaphors and the etymology of the words *rule* and *govern* in different languages show very clearly that in their capacity of ruling, a successful helmsman and shepherd need to have the power to command and the capacity to lead, to keep up discipline by commanding and leading, and, in the last instance, a good ruler must also have a good ethical objective in their role as commander and leader, that is, the best for the ruled, and that the ruler takes care of the ruled.

So far, we have described our common understanding of the concept of governing by hinting at common etymological heritage in the vocabulary and common basic metaphors depicting the role of good ruling and governing. We also have some idea of affections that good ruling can arouse. However, we do not yet know how and why some are more fit to be rulers than others. Plato has tried to answer this question, too.

The Necessity of Ruling and Governing and, Accordingly, Rulers and Governors

Plato picked up the problem of the indispensability of rulers and government in Book III of the *Laws* (689e) when he stated that there naturally must be rulers and ruled in states. Plato puts forward seven reasons for government and hence being governed. The first four grounds describe authority that is linked to natural differences, differences in birth. According to Plato, the difference in birth grounds the power of parents over children, old over young, masters over slaves, and nobles over serfs. The fifth ground is the power of the stronger over the weak (690b). It is evident that all these five grounds have historically had close ties with patriarchal and patrimonial domination and aesthetic principles, rules and conventions typical to it.

The most important ground is, according to Plato (690b-c), the power of those who know over those who do not. For this reason, the question is more generally about the power of knowledge and those who know over those who do not have the necessary knowledge. As we know, emphasising the power of knowledge has been of utmost importance in the history of government. The authority and legitimate status of rulers and political leaders have been justified by their knowledge and know-how – the more consistently used, the more we approach modern representative democratic systems. The power of knowledge has also played an important role in the division of labour in the history of government – in the divide between government and administration, for instance.

The seventh ground is very different from the previous six. The seventh possibility Plato characterises as that through the choice of god and based on fortune (690c). Plato refers to the drawing of lots as an example of this kind of power. According to Plato, those to whom the lot is favourable become rulers and those who lose step down to the group of the ruled.³

Plato justifies through these seven grounds why ruling and governing are essential and why some are more fit to be rulers than others. Aesthetics has always played an important role in the concrete justification of ruling because parenthood, age and seniority, domination based on mastery or noble rank, and power of knowledge must necessarily have their ‘genuine’ features and signs, which must be both re-presented and represented in a credible way so that the status of authority can be obtained. Re-presentation and representation usually have had given aesthetic rules and conventions. The word ‘seniority’ is an illuminating example here. The etymological starting point of the word seniority is the Latin word *senior* (older), which later came

³ Jacques Rancière (2001), whose definition of politics we come to later in this article, sees Plato’s seventh reason to describe three things in particular: contingent phenomena in general, democracy when the people really use power, and the phenomenon of politics. The contingency of politics and democracy means that in principle, it is possible that almost everyone, even a civil servant, can become a politician, political leader, and modern ruler. The meaning of Plato’s first six grounds of governing is to minimise contingency which means that the rules dictating who can be a ruler are strict and strive for predictability in the sense that everyone does not have the same possibilities of becoming a ruler. This logic concerns also the predictability of the aesthetic principles and rules in politics and governing. In politics, aesthetic rules are more contingent than in governing.

to mean ‘Sir’ in Latin (in the sense of gov’nor and overlord) (Italian *signore*, French *seigneur* and *sire*) connoting both old age (going etymologically back to a person’s grey hair in many languages) as the basis of authority and the rulers’ sex which usually has been male.

We have not yet cleared the concept of governing because governing power and authority have other purposes and only through these other purposes we can get a better idea of why we generally need governing authority. For example, what are the basic affections at which conceptions of governing hint, and what aesthetic rules and conventions are typical of governing?

Basic Conceptions of Ruling and Governing: Why do We need Ruling and Governing?

It seems to me that we can find at least the following five basic conceptions of ruling that are grounded in basic conceptions and affections upon which governing rests. I describe these conceptions by somewhat eclectically choosing citations from selected classics of political thought.

(1) The objective of beneficial ruling and governing is the ethical standard: *salus populi suprema lex* (John Locke 1689)

The most important idea of good ruling is that its intention should always be aiming at the best for all. This is the way ruling has always been justified. Ruling and governing have been argued to be necessary for realising the safety of the people and the best for all. That is why ruling and governing also has had a flavour of paternalism.⁴

The idea of the best for all is included in the metaphors used by Plato and in explicit statements. However, as an illuminating illustration of this idea, I cite Hobbes here, who states in his *Leviathan*: “The OFFICE of the Sovereign, (be it a Monarch, or an Assembly) consists in the end, for which he was trusted with the Sovereign Power, namely the procuration of the safety of the people” (1973, 178). According to Hobbes, and most other classics of political thought, good ruling and governing only can guarantee peace and the rule of law.

Generally speaking, we can say that governing and ruling has been understood to be a desired and necessary instrument because its objective is to pursue and guarantee security and safety. These were understood to be basic to society and political institutions because they were necessary to mankind’s resurrection from the state of nature to social and political society. As far as I can see, most classics of political thought have agreed upon this.

⁴ There are differences between political cultures with respect to the flavour of paternalism. According to the idea of paternalism, there are always some who know better than others what is the best for all. Scandinavian political cultures and Finnish political culture in particular have been argued to be slanted towards paternalism with strong patriarchal characteristics.

If rulers forget and give up the ethical standard of good ruling, the best for all, and instead seek after the best for themselves, we can call them tyrants and despots.

(2) Successful ruling demands obedience

We can speak about the realisation of ruling and governing merely when the ruled and governed follow the rulers. In order to illustrate this idea, I cite Thomas Hobbes, Edmund Burke, and John Stuart Mill.

For he only is properly said to Reign, that governs his Subjects, by his Word, and by promise of Rewards to those that obey it, and by threatening them with Punishment that obey it not. (Hobbes 1973, 190)

Obedience is what makes a government, and not the name by which it is called. (Burke cited in Platt 1895)

Those who are unable to make their ordinances obeyed, cannot be said to govern. (Mill 1998)

Hobbes, Burke, and Mill agreed that one main criterion for successful ruling is that the ruled in one way or another respond to the instructions of the rulers. Rulers do not really rule if the ruled do not – freely or from necessity – comply with their instructions. Disobedience causes disorder, which puts in danger the freedom of the people.

(3) Ruling also means the performance of ruling

Securing obedience is a difficult task in ruling because there are always two parties: rulers and ruled. As Rodney Barker laconically states: “Government is always by somebody, of somebody. It requires both rulers and ruled.” (2001, 107) “Successful ruling requires, in one way or another, acquired legitimacy. Legitimacy requires that rulers have confidence in their capacities as rulers and that the ruled trust in the rulers. When subjects lose faith, government becomes difficult. When rulers lose confidence in themselves, it becomes impossible.” (Barker 2001, 68)

(4) Ruling and governing mean successful solutions to acute topical problems

Concrete challenges posed to ruling and governing naturally vary according to time and place. In any case, however, successful ruling always requires grasping the demands of the time and handling them in a proper way. A good ruler cannot trust in fortune – as Machiavelli taught – but he or she must have a capacity to understand what is significant at the time and have the courage and capacity to grasp the main problems.

(5) The overall objective of successful ruling and governing is to guarantee order

According to classics of political thought, the main characteristic of a good political society is a good prevailing order. Good order is the opposite of war and disorder because war and disorder always jeopardise the safety and welfare of the people. Accordingly, order and freedom were thought to go hand in hand. Individual freedom and freedom of the people have been argued to be best realised under good order in a well-organised political society.

I have described the traditional concept of good ruling and governing as a combination of five strategic objectives and as *affections* produced by the successful realisation of these strategic objectives:

- 1) Ruling and governing as a capacity for convincingly taking actions to be aimed at the best for the ruled.
- 2) Ruling and governing as a capacity for getting the ruled to obey the instructions of the rulers.
- 3) Performing ruling in such a way that the ruled are convinced of the preconditions for successful ruling.
- 4) Ruling and governing as the capacity for handling problems posed by the challenges of the time.
- 5) When the challenges posed by items 1, 2, 3, and 4 have been handled successfully, good ruling and governing can produce and be materialised in a good and legitimate order, and in the end, in conviction and the sentiment that everything is in order. Accordingly, basic affections of ruling and governing are in the end connected with the successful realisation of the strategic objective of a good legitimate social and political order. A sentiment according to which everything is in order and that governing is legitimate, requires the creation and ‘dispersion of the sensible’ characteristic to ruling and governing, that is aesthetic principles and codes favourable to ruling and governing.⁵

Ethically good and successful ruling and governing have always had the potential of transforming into something else; there are always counter-concepts of good ruling and governing. If good and successful ruling and governing, generally speaking, means that everything is in control and therefore in order, the *counter-concept* of good ruling and governing is, accordingly, the loss of these qualities. According to Hobbes’s well-known phrase, it is war in which everyone is at war with each other. Later a widely used counter-concept has been anarchy. *An archy* literally means ‘without power,’ and it was thought that not having governing power results in disorder. In *unruliness*, basic affections are that power is misused, being adrift has

⁵ Here we again collide with the classical problem of ruling, politics and democracy: we should at the same time be both rulers and ruled. The problem is the tension inside us. The tension has close ties with our affections and, accordingly, (aesthetic) experiences that mould our affections.

taken the place of leading, care has been replaced by negligence, and despotism has taken the place of democracy. Today, the idea that nobody is in fact ruling and governing means that nobody can control what will happen; in other words, contingency rules.

Good ruling and governing cannot be carried out without necessary instruments. What instruments does a good ruler – helmsman or shepherd – need to have so that he or she can be said to really rule and govern? What instruments does a good ruler need to have in his or her aspirations to realise the safety of the people and other important strategic objectives described above? Plato's metaphors, and the etymology of the vocabulary of ruling and governing, amount to the same thing. A ruler must have the power and capacity to command, to lead, to take care of the ruled, and, in the last instance, to secure necessary discipline.

My concluding argument is that in the end, good ruling, governing, administration, and governance aim at producing social order. The criterion of a good society, built into the concept of governing, is a stable, good, and legitimate social order. Since Plato, many have again and again argued that we cannot live without order; ruling and governing are indispensable. Plato and many others after him have also argued that ruling and governing, in the sense of creating a good social order, presume the division of people into rulers and ruled because people are differently equipped in their abilities. However, some political theorists also understand politics as a break and fracture in a prevailing order, as a counter-concept of ruling and governing. According to this tradition of political thought, government as the creation of order, and politics as the breaching of order, result in the creation of a new order, necessitating different aesthetic principles, rules and codes. Power and authority in politics, when politics is understood in the sense of creating something new with respect to a prevailing order, is not as easily accepted as power and authority in government based on the differences in birth and knowledge and on interwoven aesthetic rules. Jacques Rancière (2004) argues that power and authority in a moment of politics is a contingent phenomenon very difficult to predict in advance. However, most important in a contingent phenomenon is a contradiction with the prevailing order which politics brings forth. The same holds true for the aesthetics of politics. In politics, prevailing aesthetic rules are pushed into motion and, accordingly, rules become contingent. A contradiction between prevailing aesthetic rules is a very important way to represent the aspired by talking about it and showing it. Re-presenting the aspired must have new aesthetics.

The Aesthetic in Politics and Government

I already hinted at the problem of the aesthetic when the words, concept, and affection were juxtaposed, and aesthetic experiences were argued to be those that generate affections. Contrastingly, I have also tried, by following Plato's and other classics' formulations, to show the essential characteristics of good government and basic affections that are tightly engaged with the concept of governing. In generating its basic affections, culminating in the end in the idea and affection that everything is in order, four interlinking means are used in ruling and governing:

- 1) *Grounds* that legitimise the divide between rulers and ruled.
- 2) *Re-presentation* of reality so that both rulers and ruled become convinced that problems are handled in a proper way.
- 3) Ruling and governing successfully requires a convincing *presentation* of governing, which is the performative aspect of government.
- 4) Legitimate *representation* of the ruled is necessary in a way that all are convinced that governing is for the best for all.

As we know, grounds, presentation, re-presentation and representation have very much to do with the problem of aesthetics. (For more on aesthetics in political representation, see Ankersmit 1996; 2002)

I have also hinted at the grounds of ruling and governing presented by Plato and shown that they have generally and broadly been used in Western civilisation in generating order in a socio-political system by ‘pre-coding’ principles of authority and people’s places in authority structures. What is interesting from the perspective of aesthetics in these seven grounds is that they – at least partly – also form the logic and the way we see power and authority and how we sense it⁶. Their ideas, which have their own specific aesthetic principles, create certainties that help establish legitimate authority and, through this, order.⁷

However, social and political order is not static – in fact it should not be – but it is changing all the time. So, the question is ultimately about tension between stability and change. It is already a classic argument that ruling, governing and administration usually mean and aim at stability. Politics, on the contrary, has classically been seen as a means to change. This dichotomy and tension between government and politics has its effects in the aesthetic principles of these two aspects of human action.⁸ In the following, I describe this aesthetic tension between government and politics by using as a case in point the writings of Jacques Rancière.

Jacques Rancière defines aesthetics both in a narrow or restricted and a very broad sense. In the latter he refers to “the distribution of the sensible that determines a mode of production between forms of action, production, perception, and thought.” (2004, Glossary of Technical Terms, 82) This general definition extends aesthetics beyond art to include “the conceptual coordinates and modes of visibility operative in the political domain.” (2004, 82)

“Distribution of the sensible” or “partition of the sensible” refers to “the implicit law governing the sensible order that parcels out places and forms of participation

⁶ Knowing to know and sense power and authority in society takes effect in the “distribution of the sensible,” the phrase used by Rancière. (2004)

⁷ Successful ruling requires in one way or another acquired legitimacy. Sean Wilentz underlines the role of ‘master fictions’ in providing legitimacy. According to Wilentz, ‘master fictions’ operate as the unchallenged first principles of a political order, making any given hierarchy appear natural and just to rulers and ruled. (1985, 4)

⁸ The question is not about a hierarchy between politics and government but about the division of labour. We need both and cannot manage without them. Politics and government merely have slightly different tasks and roles to play eliciting all the time necessary and natural tensions between them.

in a common world by first establishing the modes of perception within which these are inscribed. The distribution of the sensible thus produces a system of self-evident facts of perception based on the set horizons and modalities of what is visible and audible as well as what can be said, thought, made, or done.” (2004, Glossary of Technical Terms, 85) The ‘sensible’, of course, ‘does not refer to what shows good sense or judgement but to what is *aisthēton* or capable of being apprehended by the senses’. (2004, 85)

Rancière has studied especially the relationship between social order, which he calls ‘the police’ or ‘the police order,’ and politics. He views the police and politics as counter-concepts. According to Rancière, “the police is first and foremost an organisation of ‘bodies’ based on a communal distribution of the sensible” in the way that it “purports to provide a totalizing account of the population by assigning everyone a title and a role within the social edifice.” (2004, Glossary of Technical Terms, 89) Politics, on the contrary, means the disturbance of the police distribution of the sensible by “the subjectivisation of those who have no part in it.” (2004, 85) The tension between politics and ‘the police’ comes from the essence of the latter as not being repression but a certain distribution of the sensible that precludes the emergence of politics. Politics, and even democracy, are, according to Rancière, feasible, vivid and real only momentarily in the moments in which ‘the police order’ is *pro tempore* derailed.

When we think about Plato’s seven grounds in explaining the necessity of government and his reasons for some people being more fit to govern than others, and following the logic of Rancière’s argumentation presented above, we cannot avoid the conclusion that the first six grounds are usually in the service of ‘the police’, and only the seventh, with its contingency, hints at politics. To Rancière, the essence of politics resides in acts of subjectivisation that separate society from itself by challenging the natural order and by polemically reconfiguring the ‘distribution of the sensible’. The logic of disagreement so essential to politics opposes the logic of ‘the police’ and its natural order – if not all the time and permanently, at least in the moments of politicisation. During those moments, “those who have not had any part” put conventional meanings in motion and by doing so try to both define boundaries anew between the visible and the invisible and give voice to that which thus far has not been expressed.

Conclusion

Rancière’s presentation of politics and the tension between ‘the police’ and politics has many interesting points of reference. First comes to mind Max Weber and his ideas of the conflicting relationship between politics and bureaucracy and the concept of charismatic politics in modern politics, in particular. According to Weber (1964, 361-362), charisma is both revolutionary and irrational. Charisma is *revolutionary* when it ‘repudiates the past’ and *irrational* in the sense of being foreign to all rules.

We can easily find similar descriptions from artists when they define their art. Paul Klee, for example, defines his idea of good art as that which does not only describe what can be seen, but visualises hidden visions, that is, makes them visible.

According to Klee (1987, 57), artwork does not only – more or less temperamentally – portray anew the seen, but it makes visible the hidden.

By using Rancière's definition of politics, Weber's idea of charisma in modern politics, and Klee's vision of modern art, we can draw a comparison and argue that politics, which creates something new, is aesthetically 'artistic politics' and, accordingly, the charismatic politician is aesthetically an innovative 'artist'. In order to be that kind of innovative artist, she or he must be in contradiction with the normal, routine, and self-evident quotidian life (Nietzsche 2000, 117). These formulations again lift to the forefront the concept of the aesthetic in its etymological sense: the aesthetic (*aesthesis* hinting at bodily sensation) is not only that which we are capable of apprehending through the senses, but, in particular, it is the extraordinary which stimulates the senses. In conclusion, we can argue that Rancière's politics – as well as Max Weber's charismatic politics – are, after all, substantially aesthetic phenomena in the sense that their materialisation presumes innovative aesthetics. Through innovative aesthetics, politics concretely shows its contradiction with the existing order. Ruling and governing have their own aesthetic rules and codes that differ from politics. Aesthetics in governing does not usually strive for contradiction but for 'apple pie order'.

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