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Aristotle's methodology for political culture of XXI century

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In the article the Aristotle's basic methodological issues of political organization of society are analyzed in the context of problems of political development in XXI century. Article substantiates perspectives of personalism as paradigm of sociocultural development of modern epoch.

Methodologically, the thesis about the primacy of ideas in relation to the material world, and the philosophical orientation to the allocation (separation) of ideal originals from the chaos of real life Aristotle inherited from his teacher Plato.

However, the distinguishing feature of Aristotle's teaching consists in the concept of realizing of individual and society **thelos** as the main meaning of politia (a reasonable political arrangement).

It is a central thesis of Aristotle's political philosophy. Obviously, the richness of Aristotle's political ideas is not limited to these theses. Yet they represent the core of his political thought and ethics.

Keywords: Aristotle, thelos, common blessing, politia, man, freedom, democracy, personalism.

Somebody says that Aristotle's views on democracy are hopelessly out of date as almost twenty-four centuries have passed from the era when the great philosopher lived and worked.

However, in the great philosophical systems, and in the great religions there are thoughts and ideas that belong to eternity. They compose the axis around which the entire world history revolves. Not by chance the outstanding German philosopher existentialist Karl Jaspers put forward the concept of "axial time" that permeates the whole history of mankind, and the great French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre coined the term "world time". The political ideas of Aristotle, the father of modern European knowledge, communicate to this "axial time" and "world time". These ideas were formulated in his great work "Athenians Politia".

Methodologically, the thesis about the primacy of ideas in relation to the material world, and the philosophical orientation to the allocation (separation) of ideal originals from the chaos of real life Aristotle inherited from his teacher Plato. Plato demonstrated that the path to truth is to purify the key notions from local, present in the day-to-day experience, from variations and distortions with the subsequent identification of internal "ideal" essence of

each subject and each event. This process did not require attention to the outside world. The meaning of this method was the following: through brokenness and disorder of the present world to see the ideal world. According to Plato this goal can be achieved only by people with high considering, who can discuss their ideal issues separately from the real world.

Aristotle followed this method. On the basis of Plato's political philosophy, he has transformed a special study of social relations to the independent science of politics. In his perception, the science of politics has become the science about the way to the best organization of joint lives in the State. However, in doing so, he strongly disagreed with Plato's views on the political organization of society. When Democritus in his time had argued that the order and freedom could coexist side by side, Plato strongly rejected freedom in favor of the total control. Using a method inherited from Socrates, he created the image of a society in which poets cannot write poems for fear of offending authorities, in which only the philosophers have the right to rule, where the future members of the ruling class are produced and brought up solely for their sublime vocation.

In 1945 in a book "The Open Society and Its Enemies" with shattering criticism of the Plato's political ideas came out C. R. Popper, philosopher and refugee from occupied by nazis Austria. Popper asserted that the implementation of Plato' ideas to a policy and his method of ideal society construction are the direct way to the totalitarianism [See.: 5].

Aristotle went another way. The central idea of his political philosophy was the idea of thelos, according to which every thing contains not only static essence but also that, in what it can develop potentially (“natural destiny” or “thelos”). An acorn contains the essence of an oak tree, a child - the essence of a grown man. An acorn and a baby grow up, submitting each to his own thelos, as to natural genetic reason. They must pass from the enclosed potential to realization; they must be realized accordingly, as the oak tree and as the grown man. Motion, thus, is not only the mechanical moving. It also is the realization and actualization of potential, which exist in living organisms.

Human society submits to the thelos as any living organism. Thus most proper to its thelos is that society, in which the thelos of every separate person is opened up most completely. The aim of benefit life – in execution for the thelos. It consists in going to the best activity which is more corresponding to the concrete person, to her capabilities, her temperament and way of life. In the political life the city-state or “polis” is the realization of potential, which is concentrated in the association of virtuous people. A “polis” must aspire to execution of its destiny – to arrange the society in which every citizen can find possibility to realize his personal destiny [See: 4, 129].

This Aristotle’s thesis directly corresponds to the political practices of XXI century. The sharp social conflicts, explosions of violence, assassinations and wars, shaking the modern world, testify that in this world there is a great number of societies and states, which have lost their “nat-

ural destiny”, their thelos. They are the sick societies, staggered by hatred, envy, callousness and lie. In such societies it is extraordinarily difficult for persons to realize their natural destiny, based on honest self-examination. Their thelos is exposed to frightful deformations.

The modern politicians must understand that not state of the market, not electoral success of one or another political party is their super task. Their super task must be the awareness of “natural destiny” of societies which they present, their supporting of millions of men and women in their search and realization of their “natural destiny”. Not populist campaigns, but laborious “psycho-analysis” of all the societies of the world, searching for their authentic “I” and their authentic “theos”.

The second major thesis in the political views of Aristotle is his teaching about a public benefit. As an analogue of the Aristotelian understanding of idea of benefit there is a modern concept about quality of life. Benefit life is the life of high quality – well-to-do, spiritually saturated, virtuous and happy. Space of public life is limited by Aristotle to the limits of “polis”. Thus the “polis” has an ethical setting. It exists for the sake of good, kind, morally valuable life. The Aristotle’s thesis about relations between life theoretical and life political is based on anthropological criteria. So the criterion of reasonableness of theoretical ideas embodiment to the political life is a man, and only he. So that Aristotle applies the Protagoras formula “A man is the measure of all of things” to a full degree.

Aristotle adds politics and ethics to “practical” disciplines. He does not perceive a policy as exceptionally race for power (as it was afterwards done by Machiavelli). Policy must be opened and free of prejudices, co-operation during which people mutually formate and enlighten each other, and also aspire to attain just and good decisions [See: 7, 134]. Hanna Arendt, Jorgen Khabermas and their colleagues applied this position to the policy of the end of XX – beginning of XXI centuries.

A theory, which Aristotle understood as clean cognition, unconnected with any benefit, was primary. Exactly from this sphere, unconnected with a search of any mercenary benefit, the practical policy must ladle ideas for practical activities. Here the special role is taken by philosophy, through which the realization of the state aims is going.

Exactly these two moments: ethical setting of “polis” and necessity to ladle from the independent and clean theoretical source the ideas for achievement to the public benefit, have the most direct relation to political practices of XXI century. Aristotle teaches: the state can arise up only when it creates fruitful intercourse between families, generations, and separate citizens for the sake of perfect and well-to-do life for all free people. Nature of the state stands “ahead” of family and individual. Perfection of citizen is stipulated by quality of society to which he belongs. Who wish to create perfect people, must create perfect citizens, and who wants to create perfect citizens, must create the perfect state.

Unfortunately, this thesis is forgotten by the modern political world, which is oriented not to creation of the perfect state and perfect citizens, but to manipulation of citizens in interests of ruling elites. Modern political communication in any way does not remind Aristotelian intercourse between citizens for the sake of good life, it rather reminds the systematical process of “mind-making” for the sake of maintenance of unfair and inhumane social and political organization.

Was forgotten that part of Aristotelian thesis, in which it was said that the source of society perfection could not be considering of momentary political benefit. The source of society perfection must be free theoretical cognition, must be free of profit search of truth. Unfortunately, modern political practices are practices, which utilize so-called “advantageous” theories and quite ignore true theories, which help society to find its “telos”.

Essence of policy is opened up through its purpose, which, in opinion of Aristotle, consists in achievement of public benefit, in giving citizens high moral qualities, in making up them the people, acting justly. Attaining this purpose is not easy. A politician must take into account that people possess not only virtues but also vices. Therefore, the task of policy is education of virtues in citizens. Virtue of citizen consists of ability to carry out the civil debt and in ability to obey authorities and laws. Thus, society must search the best that can be most answering to the indicated purpose of political system. Policy is necessary for people to organize public life correctly, but not to disorganize it.

Here we go to the third major thesis of Aristotle – thesis, that the society must not submit blindly to any casual forms of rule, but must tirelessly search the politia, its unique form of political organization which can answer to the telos of this society, indissolubly related with the idea of benefit. A man is born as a political creature and carries in himself the instinctive aspiring to joint life. And his instinctive aspiration must be supported by a reasonable policy.

The innate inequality of capabilities is the reason of people`s association in separate groups which determine distinction of functions and position of people in society. Different combinations of these separate groups can generate different public devices. Aristotle undertook the giant research of “constitutions” of political device of 158 states. Totally was born the typology of the states depending on aims, which are put up by rulers of these states. Aristotle distinguished correct and wrong political systems.

A correct formation from Aristotle`s understanding is the formation in which the general benefit is pursued, regardless of whether one person, a few persons or many persons govern:

Monarchy (from the Greek “monarchia” – autocracy) it is a form of ruling, in which all of the sovereignty belongs to the monarch. This form of ruling can be correct under condition, that a monarch does not subjugate interests of society to his own interests, but governs on behalf of the general benefit. Aristocracy (from the Greek “aristokratia” – power of the best) it is a form of state ruling, in which sovereignty belongs to the nobility, privileged estate, in in-

heritance. It is power of several. For such formation to be correct, an aristocracy must subordinate its high origin and high culture to the achievement of universal benefit.

A wrong formation in Aristotle's opinion was such public organization, which has inferior to the personal aims of rulers. To the type of wrong formation Aristotle attributes:

Tyranny – such monarchist power, which has inferior to the egoistical interests of authoritarian ruler.

Oligarchy, which observes the benefits of small group of well-off citizens.

Democracy which observes the benefits of poor, in a counterbalance to interests of society in general. However among the wrong forms of the state Aristotle gave a preference exactly to democracy, considering it as more tolerable. In general, reviews of ancient philosophers about democracy were very skeptical.

Plato considered that the democracy was the power of incompetent people. Aristophanes ridiculed a “spiteful, touchy, obstinate old man by name of Demos”. As a result, democracy did not hold out in a country which was its cradle, and over thousand years almost nobody reminisced about it [See. 1, 96].

On a background of all these types of public device *politia* in Aristotle's opinion was the best type. But he was forced to acknowledge: *politia* take place extremely “rarely and not for many”. In *politia* majority governs in behalf of the general benefit. In *politia* Aristotle searched a “golden middle” – “middle” form of the state, where the aspiring to

the middle prevails over everything: in dispositions must be moderation, in property – middle sufficiency, in ruling – middle level. “The state, consisted of middle people, will have the best political system”. Some specialists observe pre-conditions of “middle class” ideology in these judgments of Aristotle.

As an important element of Aristotle’s “Athenian *politia*” was his thesis about the fact that, the positive types of public device are not assured from deformation and erosion:

A monarchy can degenerate to tyranny,
Aristocracy – to an oligarchy,
Democracy – to ochlocratia (power of crowd),
Politia – to democracy, with subsequent degradation to ochlocratia and tyranny.

The unique method to attain, save and strengthen *politia* – is the permanent joint aspiration of citizens with all varieties’ of their statuses, – to the common benefit, to the opened dialog, to realization of their *telos* in public service.

At any political system the general rule must be followed: not a single citizen can be enable to increase his political force over proper measure. Aristotle advised to look after rulings persons, so as not to allow them to convert a public place into the source of their personal enriching.

So, realization of the *telos* personality and society, aspiring to the general prosperity and achievement of *politia*, are the central theses of Aristotle’s political philosophy. Obviously, the richness of Aristotle’s political ideas is not

limited to these theses. Yet they represent the core of his political thought and ethics.

These three Aristotelian principles are extremely actual as possible imperative of political life in XXI century. The modern world, in spite of the fact that it is engulfed by the process of globalization, exists as the pluralistic world, which presents the bright mosaic of independent sociums, ethnics and cultures. And every element of this bright mosaic is intended by the Creator to realize its unique potential, its *telos* to a full degree.

And in every socium a fundamental moral imperative must become the aspiring to the common benefit. Extremely actual is Aristotle's appeal to the members of every socium to tirelessly aspire to the searching of the original form of social harmony, to such *politia* which would pave the path for free and happy self-realization of every citizen in the concrete terms of his cultural and historical life.

All of it conduces to that the banner of XXI century would be not dying off ideologies of socialism, liberalism or nationalism. They are more and more actively ousted by the global ideology of personal self-realization, ideology of personalism. After two and a half thousand years in a radically new global situation and in a fantastically new information-technological interior we go back to the great wisdom of Protagoras: "A man is the measure of all of things" - to that wisdom which was incarnated to the political ideas of Aristotle.

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**Методологія Аристотеля для політичної культури
XXI століття**

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У статті аналізуються основні методологічні підходи Аристотеля до політичної організації суспільства в контексті

проблем політичного розвитку в ХХІ столітті. Дається обґрунтування перспектив персоналізму як парадигми соціокультурного розвитку сучасної епохи.

Методологічно Аристотель продовжує розвивати платонівську тезу про первинність ідей по відношенню до матеріального світу а також філософську орієнтацію на поділ ідеальних прототипів та хаосу реального життя.

Однак відмінною рисою вчення Аристотеля є концепція реалізації **телоса** особистості і суспільства як головного сенсу політії (розумного політичного устрою).

Цілком зрозуміло, що все багатство політичних ідей Аристотеля не вичерпується цими тезами. Але вони становлять ядро його політичного вчення та етики.

Ключові слова: Аристотель, телос, суспільне благо, політія, людина, свобода, демократія, персоналізм.

Методология Аристотеля для политической культуры XXI столетия

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В статье анализируются основные методологические подходы Аристотеля к политической организации общества в контексте проблем политического развития в ХХІ столетии. Дается обоснование перспектив персонализма как парадигмы соціокультурного развития современной эпохи.

Методологически Аристотель продолжает развивать платоновский тезис о первичности идей по отношению к материальному миру а также философскую орієнтацію на разделение идеальных первообразов и хаоса реальной жизни.

Однако отличительной чертой учения Аристотеля является концепция реализации телоса личности и общества как главного смысла политики (разумного политического устройства).

Вполне понятно, что все богатство политических идей Аристотеля не исчерпывается этими тезисами. Но они составляют ядро его политического учения и этики.

Ключевые слова: Аристотель, телос, общественное благо, политика, человек, свобода, демократия, персонализм.

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