



HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE “TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY”: THE DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Chiara Sargiotta

Università degli Studi della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli
chiara.sargiotta@unicampania.it

ABSTRACT

The present work aims to investigate the evolution of the value structures of the individual from the Christian age to today's digital age, with particular regards to the category of digital citizenship as a new form of subjectivism of contemporary societies. The analysis concerns the history of the personalistic principle, the development of the concept of the person and the discovery of its new frontiers in the digital State. It must confront itself with the progressive crumbling of the personal identity that would seem to lead to a new metaphysics of the existing: the “network.” In this sense, digital becomes the projection of the human desire to transcend its essence through the construction of an electronic “body” in which it can recognize itself. The profiling of the individual through digital platforms transforms the existential structure of the individual, whose *geometria corporis* is punctuated by “data”, a bridge between real and virtual, between physical and metaphysical. It is a transformation that involves not only man and his characteristics but also his socio-political projection and, therefore, the form of state within which he is called out to operate as a citizen.

KEYWORDS: Person, Digital citizenship, Electronic democracy, Profiling, Posthuman

1. THE DISCOVERY OF THE CONCEPT OF PERSON AND ITS POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The personalistic paradigm has historically anthropological and theological roots that identify among the factors of the development of the individual not only the economic and socio-cultural ones, but also those involving his intimate sphere. The “sacralization” of the concept of the person (Milan 1984) depends on its cultural substratum that originates from the affirmation of

Christianity. It was indeed Christianity the very first to explore the value horizon of the subject, emancipated from the naturalistic conception of the classical world. The great revolution of Christianity was the introduction of a new *Weltanschauung* (Cesaro 2009) capable of affecting the construction of a new political and legal order. The self consciousness that the individual acquires and, therefore, the awareness of his own individual dimension allows us to imagine an institutional system in which man is the center of interest and speculation of politics and law. Some premises concerning the Greek world are necessary for a thorough historical-critical reading of the concept of person and of the binomial person-citizen, as the base of Western thought and the first structured forms of politics.

Nature, in the pre-Christian era, was the center of philosophical speculation, a higher order endowed with an intrinsic regulatory capacity. Nature was mostly understood as a predetermined and presupposition order, indifferent to human destiny and capable of overwhelming everything, including humanity. The Greek world, in fact, saw man as a temporary manifestation of nature's becoming, which made him a transitory character. The human being was, as such, completely immersed in the complexity of the cosmos. This conception of the world did not prevent the birth of Athenian democracy in the fifth century B.C.¹ but still limited the possibility of ascribing the human being to a unitary paradigm as a complex subjectivity. The birth of the polis, therefore, has allowed, a first form of representation of human being in his capacity as citizen committed in the dynamics of politics but not defined in his existential singularity. The term “person”, on the other hand, comes from the Etruscan *Phersu* that for the Romans meant the mask used by the actors during theatrical performances, that is what in ancient Greece was called *pròsopon*. In this sense, we refer to the idea of a citizen who is able to play a role on the public scene, a sort of acting capacity that makes him the protagonist of the decision-making dynamic and allows him to emancipate himself from a merely individualistic dimension of existence. The person-citizen binomial recalls precisely the role that the individual, stripped of its purely private dimension, assumes in the public dimension. It is necessary, therefore, to look at the person not only as such but also considering the *telos* in charge. This means that the reconstruction of the origins of the personalist principle and the person-citizen binomial takes on a strong political significance. Although it seems particularly interesting to discover the origins of a personalistic dimension in the sense of community typical of Greeks, it is necessary to underline the absence, in this historical phase, of a system of values connotative of the person in his individual essence. The

¹ Among the cultural factors permitting the emergence of democracy in Ancient Greece one may mention music and military art (Campa 2023).

doctrine of Plato's soul and the introduction of the dualism of body and soul have represented a fundamental but not yet sufficient passage to the consecration of the concept of person, turning out to be mere speculations still embedded in a cosmocentric vision of the world. For these reasons, it is possible to argue that the concept of person is the outcome of a long and complex historical-philosophical process which originates from the fusion both pagan and christian ideas: this blend has provided an unprecedented value substrate to human existence.

Christianity introduced, in a first place, a theocentric vision of the world in which the person emerged as a new center of speculation in the theological and philosophical debate such that nature was conceived as a place delivered by God to men for the exercise of their dominion. The need to explore new boundaries stems from the relationship between God and humanity, and man becomes a singular individual, determined in his essence. The concept of the person must, therefore, include the relational aspect as an essential characteristic of being. A relationship that man establishes with himself and with others as a projection of the relationship with God of which man is the image in the earthly world. In this sense, it can be stated that the Christianity, thus outgrowing an exclusively cosmocentric view, has contributed to a new conception of existence. The conception of God-person inaugurates a primeval anthropocentric mindset such that the category of person becomes the key to discovering the social dimension of the human being. This also happened for the historical context of reference. If it is true that the Greek world is characterized by the exaltation of critical thought and the power of the word, the Roman world is characterized by the predominance of law (Guarino 2001). The discovery of the person has, therefore, allowed not only an enhancement of the individual sphere of the subject but also of his ability to act in the legal system as a subject of law. This interconnection between the philosophical, political and juridical spheres becomes of particular interest for the reconstruction of the historical, political and theoretical categories of reference. Precisely in Roman times, in fact, the affirmation of the concept of the person, as an abstract concept aimed at indicating the human, had two main effects. The first was on the strictly juridical level considering that the first book of the *Institutiones* of Gaius² opens with a reference to *ius personarum*, considered as the set of all rules concerning the legal conditions of persons. The use of the term *persona*, instead of *homo*, allowed to widen the situations referable to the individual by virtue of the ampliment of his val-

² The *Institutiones* are an educational work in four books composed by the Roman jurist Gaius between 168 and 180 A.D. It is one of the most important works of Roman because it is the only collection of classical Roman jurisprudence to have survived to our days without the medium of compilations that could have altered its meaning.

ue horizon (Albanese 1979). From a strictly political point of view, however, the discovery of the concept of the person has inaugurated a process of enhancement of the dual face of man as an individual and as a citizen. This was also possible through the subsequent philosophical speculations undertaken by the Patristics and the Scholastics.

Rationalis naturae individua substantia, a definition that, first, codified, on the linguistic level, the revolution brought by Christianity. This definition goes back to the intuition of the philosopher Boezio (V secolo A.D.) who questioned the qualification of the person as a substance, that is, endowed with a permanent existentialist component that makes man a singular entity, distinct and unrepeatable in time and space. The concept of a person depends on the ontological assessment of his status and characteristics. This reference to nature evokes a spiritual dimension that is connected to the reasoning capacity, which separates man from other species. This definition was taken up by Tommaso D'Aquino during the Middle Age who added to the term rational, intellectual, emphasizing that while reasoning is typical only of the human being, intuition is proper to God (*Omne subsistens in natura rationali vel intellectuali est persona*). Speaking of intellectual nature meant, therefore, coinciding not only the dualism between human and divine nature but also between reason and faith. The Christian revolution found its full meaning thanks to the medieval philosophy that provided with a method to the study of the concept of the person (Amerini 2019). The roots of scholastic philosophy, on the other hand, were fundamental for the development of the concept of the person in the following centuries. During the Renaissance Humanism man becomes free and creator of himself precisely because considered in his being a singular and autonomous subject. The greatest difference from medieval Christian philosophy, however, lies in the insertion of the human being in a new value horizon in which his rational ability to build, design and conquer his own future plays a central role. It does not depend, indeed, on its belonging to a providential and divine plan. This secularization of the concept of the person is not meant to deny its origins linked to Christianity but to exalt the consequences that those intuitions have had in history even within a necessary process of secularization of man and political institutions. It was then modernity that secularized the concept of the individual and placed it at the center of the juridical and political order.

A historical reconstruction of the concept of the person, considering its political philosophical implications, requires a reflection on the relationship between the birth of liberal thought and the affirmation of the subject as a social and rational individual. John Locke was the father of liberalism who, in 17th century England, was commissioned to write the constitutional manifesto of the new emerging political order. The Glorious English Revolution of 1688-89 had redefined the balance between Crown and Parliament and

abandoned the old absolutist aspirations of Hobbesian matrix. Liberal thought is based, in fact, on the conviction that only the law can stabilize the legal order because it limits the exercise of public power and a source of guarantee of the rights and freedoms of the person, including religious freedom (Campa 2014). The individual is considered as a subject of law, the holder of situations and interests worthy of protection by the State. This reconciliation between the private and public dimension through the law is a conquest of liberal thought but also a natural development, on the political level, of the philosophical speculations that have arisen around the concept of the person. Private and public existence is considered as a projection of the multiple masks that the individual can, from time to time and in different situations, wear³.

The ideas of person and citizen are, as meant to be introduced, intimately connected because they reflect the process of emergence of subjectivism as a fundamental perspective for the construction of a rational and secular political and juridical order. If we try to connect the value structures of the past with those of the present, it is also important to remember that in the light of reflections, the spiritual vocation to self-realization⁴ is, in this case, re-read in a secular sense in order to qualify the principle of self-determination of the individual, in his social function, as an indispensable foundation of liberal democratic systems. In this sense, the citizen cannot be a mere spectator of the public resolution but an “actor dynamically involved” (Cesaro 2014)⁵ in defining the democratic process (Sargiotta 2022).

³ Making a pindaric flight, Pirandello (a famous Italian author) in the comedy *Il berretto a sonagli* (Pirandello 1916) reflects on the different possibilities that the human mind envisages for the life of individuals. In the human mind there are three strings, the crazy rope, the civil rope and, finally, the serious one: the mad rope represents the instinct, the desire to act without brakes, it is what of us appears without control, that tells the truth or rebels in contravention to every rule of the civil rope; the civil rope is the opposite pole of the crazy rope, that is, the rules the social conventions, the morals that force certain behaviors; the serious rope intervenes in aid when one of the other two tends to have the upper hand and tends to find mediation between the two drives.

⁴ The translation of all quotations are mine.

In this sense, we refer to the concept of the integral development of the person: «The development of peoples must be integral, which means aimed at the promotion of every man and of the whole man», Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum progressio*, 14, 1967. The present work recalls the concept of the integral development of the human race which, at the beginning of the 1960s, animated the debate around the multiple dimensions of the person.

⁵ It is an expression borrowed from a reflection that the author conducts on the relationship between subject (interpretant) and work of art (object interpreting). The A., in that center, is shown in favor of a pedagogical approach "active" in the fruition of the cultural heritage in order to promote a conscious reading of the art, able to investigate the meanings even more hidden. The use of the artistic metaphor is useful for a wider reflection on the dynamics of

2. NETWORKED PROFILING: A NEW GEOMETRIA CORPORIS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The great technological transformation changes the framework of civil and political rights, redefines the role of public authorities, changes personal and social relationships, and affects the anthropology of people. What are the dimensions of freedom in the age of science and technology? It is right to invoke the protection of private life, but it is not enough. Our way of life has become a continuous flow of information, unstoppable, that we feed ourselves to have access to goods and services. Social transparency surrounds us. Information technologies not only take over our lives, but build an electronic body, the set of our personal information stored in infinite databases, which lives next to the physical body. The double body is no longer just that of the medieval king, of whom Ernst Kantorowicz told us. It is now the attribute of every citizen (Rodotà 2005)⁶.

The great challenges posed by globalization and the hypertrophic use of new technologies require a reflection in philosophical-political and legal terms on the risk of de-subjectualization (Sciacca 2013) of contemporary societies, with particular regards to the progressive loss of value of the personalistic dimension in the digital transition process of the State and its institutions. The person represents the speculative centre of any political organization as a complex subjectivity which, having rights and duties, manifests itself within civil society as a citizen. Citizenship, in fact, constitutes the socio-political projection of individuals and depends on the extension of the possibilities attributed to them by the legal order. The prevalence of a person-centric vision, around which the entire architecture of contemporary democracies was built, affects the way in which citizens are called to interact within the system: the individual is not considered as an isolated monad⁷ but

politics and on the need to build an institutional awareness in the citizens that allows an active social and institutional participation.

⁶ The reference to the theory of the two bodies of the King by Ernst Kantorowicz is of particular interest. In the Middle Ages, in fact, it was believed that the sovereign was endowed with two bodies: a natural one destined to perish and a political one, capable of transcending the human person. If it is true that death looms over the finitude of the human being, instead power is not consumed, making that body immortal. «The physical and visible reality of the natural and mortal body therefore assumes, in the royal figure, a symbolic structure, bearer of the invisible meanings of immortal royalty» (Cesaro 2020).

⁷ The term monad is borrowed from the philosophy of Leibniz who in his *Monadology* - a work written in 1714 and published in 1720 - formulates the c.d. theory of monads as autonomous, indivisible and substantial forms of being. The monads are closed worlds - Leibniz says them "without windows" - and therefore they cannot be influenced by each other, or the modification induced from the outside; the monads are a sort of psychic atoms that, although closed in themselves, are linked to each other as all are aspects of the world. In the present

as a subject capable of self-determination through the relational dimension. On the other hand, the quality of democracy is closely linked to the quality of the citizen because the state of health of democratic institutions depends on the characteristics and institutional awareness of individuals (Cesaro 2021; Pulcini 2014; 2011)⁸ which make up the social fabric and which move within a constitutionally determined legislative framework. If we consider the Italian "case", for example, the principle contained in Article 2 of the Constitution (Alvazzi del Frate 2020; Fioravanti 2017; Ruggeri 2013) could be considered as a general clause of the system allowing the personalist principle to be applied to the social dimension of the individual, closely linked to the rights and duties of the contributing citizen, according to his own possibilities and by his own free choice, to the material or spiritual progress of society (art. 4 co.2 Constitution). These premises appear essential to understand the role that the person, as a citizen, is called to play within the legal system, postulating its necessary participation in the public deliberative process that is an expression of the principle of popular sovereignty (art. 1 co.2 Constitution).

It then becomes of particular interest to reflect on the new frontiers of the personalist principle that, in the nascent digital State, must confront the progressive crumbling of personal identity that would seem to lead to a new metaphysics of the existing: the "network." New technologies are transforming public activity as a whole, economic and social relations to such an extent that a reorganisation of public functions and structures is required. It is an inevitable transformation that makes obsolete even that initial indifference or neutrality of public power with respect to the dissemination of new technologies, given their absolute pervasiveness in all areas of associative life. It is an irreversible process of radical transformation of individual habits and forms of social interaction that affects human life on the global level. The pervasiveness of new technologies raises questions about the actual democratic value of the virtual space within which the individual is transformed into its mirror reality: the data. Digital citizenship incorporates, in this perspective, a new dimension of contemporary subjectivity, a new "mask" for the individual who, discarding his corporeality, seeks new spaces and new ways of exercising his rights. The eruption of digital has determined, as it has tried to introduce, an anthropological change (Ricci 2020) involving the existential structures of the individual and its modes of action

case, the choice of the term monad wishes to emphasize that the citizen represents a necessary structure for the very existence of the democratic process.

⁸ The A. proposes an investigation of the value conflict that characterizes the individual in the modern era: before the laws of the economy that dominate the social conception of the subject, it proposes a rediscovery of the values of the person for the preservation of democratic institutions.

in the relationship with the surrounding world. The fading of digital humanity into an a-spatial and a-temporal world has transformed the Net into a kind of secular religion which the individual relies on to recognize and rediscover himself. The representation of the individual in the digital world would seem to evoke a sort of a *geometria corporis* which takes the form of a synecdoche (Cesaro 2009, 143)⁹, that is, as the rhetorical figure recalled suggests, a representation of the person which, through some parts, claims to indicate the whole. While in the pictorial style of the geometric period of the Mycenaean age, the representation of the human body as a whole took place with the artistic representation of some of its parts, in contemporary society this *reductio ad unum* takes place through the profiling¹⁰ of the individual in the network. This syntax of multiplicity is, to date, punctuated by data that, just like the individual parts of the body, contribute to define the human being. Following the terms of reasoning, to personal identity is added the digital one, to the bodily dimension that of the data that becomes a bridge between the real and the virtual, between the physical and the metaphysical.

The 2016/679 Data Protection Regulation qualifies (art. 4) the profiling activity as “any form of automated processing of personal data consisting in the use of such personal data to evaluate certain personal aspects relating to a natural person, in particular to analyse or predict aspects of performance at work, the economic situation, health, personal preferences, interests, reliability, behaviour, location or movements of that natural person.” Data have become the new subject of contention, the new point of concentration of public power also in the exercise of sovereignty by States. In this sense, it is possible to speak about digital sovereignty as a new form of control over the information that comes from the dematerialization of the person in the net-

⁹ An attempt has been made to actualize, here, an intuition of the scholar Antimo Cesaro that in one of his writings reflects on how the representation of the individual is closely connected to his process of self-consciousness and progressive awareness of his individuality. The A., in particular, through some vessels of the Mycenaean age questions the roots of the personalist principle in the pre-Christian age.

¹⁰ A natural person may be subject to an automated decision-making process, including profiling if: 1) the processing is necessary for the conclusion or performance of a contract between the data subject and the data controller (The need must be interpreted restrictively, even if European guarantors state that reasons for efficiency are considered sufficient to justify the use of decision-making systems based on profiling, provided that there are no less intrusive methods that achieve the same result, but this exception does not apply in the case of processing of health data; 2) the processing is authorised by a law or regulation, which also provides for measures to protect the rights of data subjects; 3) there is explicit consent to processing. According to the European guarantors (Guidelines on automated processes and profiling, WP29, 2018), profiling can also be based on the legitimate interests of the data controller, in the same way as direct marketing. However, it is always necessary to balance interests in order to assess the possible prevalence of those of the holder.

work. It is the control of data that has become the new instrument of exchange and political contention also because the spread of new information and telecommunications technologies, together with the high degree of pervasiveness and convergence of these, makes the individual daily immersed in the magma of electronic communications (Mancarella 2019, 155-178). Digital citizenship (Torchia 2023; Martoni 2020; Faini 2019) incorporates, in this sense, a new dimension of contemporary subjectivity that, breaking away from corporeality, seeks new spaces and new ways of exercising its rights. Talking about digital citizenship means abandoning the classic categories that led the identity factor of an individual to his belonging to a geographically defined territory. However, this also means analyzing the pathology of the phenomenon if we consider that the collection and use of biometric data involves risks for the fundamental rights of the individual (Pajno & Violante 2021; Micklitz et al. 2021; Pollicino 2021; Simoncini 2020) especially in the absence of adequate regulation. These phenomena require regulation, not only in terms of control, use and abuse that are made of these instruments but also *ex ante* so that a constitutional dimension of the rights of the subject as a factor of containment of its possible distortive effects. The issue is complicated by the fact that the use of data is not limited to public commercial activity but extends to political propaganda in order to condition the formation of public consent. One of the most famous scandals is the case involving Cambridge Analytica in 2018. The company dealt with political communication strategies for electoral purposes through the use of data mining techniques (Tan et al. 2019; De Luca 2018)¹¹, that is, the collection of information left in the network by users when they do research, carry out activities or buy services on the platforms. This data was used to create psychometric profiles of categories of individuals and, therefore, models that identified the behavioral trends of the different types of users who surf the net. This means that, thanks to the use of the data, it is possible to evaluate the personality of users and influence their choices and opinions, using advertisements that are modulated on the basis of their personalities.

This profiling activity is called psychographic microtargeting and was born from the intuition of the English researcher and psychologist Michal Kosinski who, in 2013, published a study entitled “Private traits and attributes are predictable from digital records of human behavior”, in which he demonstrated the ability to predict the emotional and behavioral characteristics of a user, based solely on the number of likes left by a single user in

¹¹ Data mining began to develop during the eighties of the last century and consists in the extraction of data, that is, in the activity of selection, exploration and modelling of large quantities of data, through statistical techniques, in order to identify regularity or relationships not known a priori and translatable into clear and relevant information for the interpreter and user.

their browsing activity on Facebook. The researcher promoted the collection of this data through the use of an application “This is your digital life” that allowed to produce psychological profiles. The application itself was free of charge but required access via Facebook and thus allowing access to the relevant database of individual users. The scandal broke when information, illegally collected, was shared with Cambridge Analytica, in breach of the terms of use prohibiting the sharing of data collected for scientific purposes with companies that use that data for commercial or political purposes. The algorithmic treatment described allowed, according to the company, to predict not only the type of service or product but also to filter the political message that would more easily influence the user as a voter. Apart from the issue as such, it is important to emphasise the danger of the instrument for possible manipulation of political consensus. The algorithm, if so used, allows to carry out completely contradictory election campaigns because you can show a message only to voters who, according to algorithmic statistics, will welcome it positively without the user being able to verify the factual truth of the individual message and the consistency of the candidate’s positions.

The electorate is thus divided into small homogeneous groups within them in order to avoid confrontation. It is the search for a peaceful consensus that risks excluding the conflictual matrix from public debate. This means preventing the establishment of confrontation between affiliates in dialectical terms and compressing the relative possibility of manifestation of dissent (Chiodi 1990). It is the latter that is the driving force behind democratic living, the restriction of which would impose a reflection on the real degree of democracy of the new technologies, especially if they interfere with the area of freedom constitutionally guaranteed.

3. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN E-DEMOCRACY

The digital “revolution” has affected not only the existential dimension of the individual but also the *quae dat esse rei* of democratic state and, therefore, the relationship between citizens and institutions (Bellini 2020; Zuboff 2019; Sunstein 2017). It is good to remember that the person is a factor of self-limitation of democratic regimes (Castoriadis 2022) that exalt the freedom of self-determination of the individual and the ability to relate to themselves and the surrounding world.

The expression “e-democracy” aims to qualify the possible redefinition of the democratic structure in the face of the pervasive activity of new technologies in the various sectors of socio-political life and in the management of public affairs. The main objective should be to increase the efficiency,

equity and quality of democratic participation¹² through “remote” access to various categories of services, public data or public interest. The question, however, concerns the framing of e-democracy among the phases that mark the vital parable of democracy (Cesaro 2020, 11-12; 2012, 23-36)¹³ to understand if it can represent a perspective of degeneration or development. The construction of a “network” in which the categories of space and time know no boundaries has erased that distance that has always been an essential perimeter for reflection and weighting, in particular, deliberations in decision-making processes (Ricci 2020, 2; Copernich 2017; Urbinati 2013). On the other hand, “space tells us about the ways of determining reality, and a change in anthropological space is always also a change in the hierarchies of power” (Marchetti 2003), a change, that is, “of the tools of understanding and controlling political action” (Ricci 2020). This tendency to hyper-connectedness has gradually put pressure on the intermediate structures, connecting civil society and democratic institutions in the belief that they were, in some ways, expendable in the face of an already established crisis of the party system (Cfr. Staiano et al. 2020; Lanchester 2019; Curreri 2018, 10; Staiano 2018, 1-8) and a displacement of the representative body towards new centers of interest (Ronga 2019; 2018). In the twentieth-century narrative the party was the guardian of different worldviews, but today it seems to chase - in a rather disorderly way - emotionality and easy enthusiasm increasingly changing of a “liquid society” (Bauman 2011), symptom of a process of “deconsolidation” (Palano 2020) that is characterizing the democracy of the 21st century. Contemporary democratic systems (Giannone 2019; Harvey 2007), in fact, are increasingly dominated by the laws of the financial market or by the economic empires of multinationals that render ineffective, in many areas, the action of institutions, especially because they

¹² Art. 9 of the Italian Code of Digital Administration (CAD) on Electronic Democratic Participation promotes the use of new technologies for “greater participation of citizens, including those living abroad, in the democratic process and to facilitate the exercise of political and civil rights.”

¹³ The Author, analyzing a potential scenario of democratic crisis, proposes the theory of the anacyclosis of the forms of government of Polybius of Megalopolis. The Greek historian, in the sixth book of Histories, “uses the concept of ‘decadence’ to explain the cause of the inevitable alternation of forms of government. Since everything lives according to a natural sequence of birth, development and decay, one cannot doubt this about the States. All political regimes, by necessity of nature, follow a vital parable (*fúseos oikonomía*) according to a scheme that includes the following phases: ‘formation’ (*sústasis*), ‘growth’ (*aúxesis*), ‘maximum development’ (*akmé*), ‘decadence or corruption’ (*fthorá*), ‘fall or end’ (*télos*). In this organic conception of history, it appears altogether congruent that, alongside the three fundamental political constitutions, Polybius also considers the respective degenerations: the kingdom and its counterpart, tyranny; the aristocracy and oligarchy; democracy and the olocracy.”

are part of a multi-level system of competences. In this scenario, the populist movements and parties have emerged, promising to defend the interests of the people and fearing a substantial reform of democracy.

Political identity is based on the emotionality that, being a structural component of the symbolic policy (Cesaro & Lombardo 2011; Chiodi 2006-2010; Bonvecchio 1995), acts as a fundamental glue to build the identity of a people. The word consensus, in fact, comes from the Latin *cum sensu* that evokes the dual dimension of politics imbued with sensitivity and reason. The consensus was born in Greece to trigger processes of recognition and justification of power through the wise use of rhetoric (Storace 2017) and, for these reasons, the discourse on the legitimacy of a State is not merely rational but also emotional because it refers to the founding myths of political organizations as an identity factor of citizenship. The word makes it possible to give a guise to reality, to codify a language through which it is possible to communicate, dialogue and, therefore, to recognize oneself (Irti 2020). In this sense, within a political-institutional community, semantic reliance expresses precisely the ability to rely on a linguistic system through which individuals are able to belong in a defined space and time. If on the one hand the emotionalization of political discourse (Lombardo et al. 2019) represents a factor of legitimacy of political power precisely because it aims at the search for consensus, However, it must be balanced with the rationality of the law that cannot be short-sighted and without prospects (Lombardo 2018) for the future. Political immediacy becomes, in the digital scenario, a technical form of communication that degrades the potential of the interlocutor (citizen), its possibilities to establish a contradiction and, therefore, to express a structured and reasoned dissent, result of a deep understanding and reworking of the guidelines proposed by the policy.

Authoritative doctrine (Cesaro 2020) has identified, precisely in cultural decay, one of the possible causes of degeneration of the form of democratic state, expression of a hermeneutic catastrophe that has called into question the very relationship between representatives and representatives in the terms in which, today, we know it. Politics, according to these reflections, has begun to search for increasingly simplistic linguistic and cognitive structures, lacking further horizons of meaning that inevitably narrow the margin of conscious participation of the citizen/voter. The massive use of new digital communication channels, since governed by algorithms, not only allow you to predict the choices and tastes of the user but create the cd. “filter bubble”¹⁴ (Pariser 2011), a bubble that filters information from the outside world,

¹⁴ The expression was coined by Eli Pariser who, as is well known, has strongly contributed to the election campaign of Barack Obama, precisely because he knows the dynamics of the network.

making us get to us only what conforms to our opinions (...) obviously also political” (Palano 2020). This is the already mentioned strategy of profiling in the network of the individual that encloses the subject in an “echo chamber within which our beliefs can only strengthen” (ibid.). It is no coincidence that this type of communication, based on the instantaneity and the polycon-tuality of the “network”, looks precisely to emotional contagion as a desirable source of greater consensus because it can shape “digital swarms (...), victims of the manipulation of clever demagogues and unable to distinguish the true from the false” (ibid., 158). In this perspective, electronic democracy could become a form of collective self-government of the people in which new technologies become the means to promote procedures of direct participation of citizens in public life. In fact, the suggestions linked to direct democracy as a new mode of social legitimation against political power are recalled.

Electronic democracy becomes, in this sense, a technique of production of binding collective decisions and formalized in laws or other regulatory acts through digital technologies. A mere indexing of the opinions in favour or against, which does not aim to educate citizens on the issues in advance, achieves, however, as the only objective, to orient the dynamics of public opinion, demand consensus and trigger dysfunctional mechanisms of legitimization of political power potentially detrimental to the fundamental rights of freedom of individuals (Sunstein 2017). The dynamics of the digital state reflect, in this sense, the crisis of citizenship, understood as the capacity for self-determination of the individual in the domain of the public scene.

4. CONCLUSIONS: DIGITAL IDENTITY AND POST-HUMANIST DRIFT

The aim of the research was to understand the margins of validity of the personalist paradigm from the origins to contemporary digital societies. Personal identity has undergone a profound transformation, projecting itself into the virtual dimension as a new possibility representative of the existence of the individual. The profiling of the subject in the network and the addressing of its actions by the algorithmic technique makes this inexorable syntax in becoming as a reality to take note of. The aspiration of a “body” that transcends the human, finds in the virtual dimension a new geometry corporis that encodes a language of recognition of the subject that, rid of physical corporeity, is projected in the metaphysics of the “network.” It is interesting to understand how these reflections on the perception that the individual has of himself, also condition the exercise of the rights and freedoms that revolve around the concept of the person. On the other hand, the quality of democracy is closely linked to the quality of the citizen because the state of health of

democratic institutions depends on the characteristics and institutional awareness of the individuals who make up the social fabric and who move within a constitutionally determined legislative framework. The diffusion of technologies, and with it the bursting of new instances of protection, requires a regulatory approach that is able to guarantee freedom of access and freedom of individual choices by the citizens of the digital world. In fact, the individual is not only seen as a user of platforms but is also considered as the holder of legal situations that require specific safeguards, which the European Union promotes. From this point of view, it is possible to envisage a digital citizenship of the Union, structurally distinct from citizenship established by the Maastricht Treaty, which tends, for the protection provided by the Union itself, to be universal in nature, confirming the fact that the technological era has been the harbinger of a conceptual reshaping of the notion of personal identity that is now enriched by the new facet of virtual identity. In this sense, technological invasions oblige philosophy to a redefinition of the concepts of death, species and individual offering possible ways of articulating ethics, politics and life taking into account a post-anthropocentric approach.

The digital transition, if so considered, could turn into a post-humanism (Braidotti 2020) born from the need to abolish traditional categories and classifications to develop a new type of nomadic identity, fluid, hybrid: a relational subject determined in and by multiplicity, a subject able to operate on differences but also internally differentiated, yet still rooted and responsible. In the name of that model, we define the identity of what is human, to which alterity is opposed, what is different from the chosen parameter. Posthumanism could, in a dystopian scenario, describe the new cultural phase of contemporary man in the light of the development of new knowledge that deeply affect the existential structure of the individual and determine a deconstructed perception that man begins to have of himself (Bonito 2022). This scenario should awake the dormant Legislator and promote a regulation of the phenomenon by principles that do not deprive him of stopping the progress but rationalizes its progress through a futuristic vision of the system that, to maintain its integrity, it cannot be separated from a traditional concept of person, even in his multiple capacities. Only the valorization of the person can preserve the essential value of the human singularity which, although reduced to the given and dissolved in the infinite of the net, remains the most important propulsive source of ordering.

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