

The Occasional Politician



A CASE OF POLITICS FOR POLITICS

Jean-Paul Sartre's Existential Apology of Politics as an Alternative to the Republican One

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By "politics for politics" I mean the opposition and contest between pro-political and anti-political rhetoric. Politics itself is, as we know, at least since the French Revolution, often treated as **politicum**. The dominance of the pejorative tone is so obvious that it is difficult to imagine an inversion of this famous dictum of Carl Schmitt:

In Wahrheit ist es ... eine typische und besonders intensive Art und Weise, Politik zu treiben, dass man den Gegner als politisch, sich selbst als unpolitisch ... hinstellt. (Schmitt 1932, 21)

Just the exceptional character of pro-political rhetoric calls for closer attention. When, where and in which forms do apologies of politics appear? Who resort to it and to whom do they appeal? How is it related to the appearance of demands of politicization? (Cf. Palonen 1989a). How is the history of pro-political rhetoric related to the history of the concept of politics?

I will here discuss the history of pro-political rhetoric on the basis of a case study and then speculate on its significance for the history of the concept in general. The case study draws upon French texts from the 1950s and 1960s, from the context of the **dépolitisation** controversy. I argue that within the horizon of the pro-political rhetoric Sartre's apology of politics radically differs from the apology in the French republican tradition as actualized by Mendès France and his followers. Is this replacement comparable to one between "languages" in the Pocockian sense (cf. e.g. Pocock 1972; Pagden (ed.) 1987)?

1. THE REPUBLICAN "DEFENCE OF POLITICS" IN FRANCE

Claude Nicolet's *L'idée républicaine en France* (1982) proposes a republican reinterpretation of French history, especially that of the early Third Republic. The author is not only a specialist in the Roman Republic (Nicolet 1976) but also a **mendésiste** from the fifties, e.g. as editor of the monthly review *Cahiers*

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de la république, (cf. Nicolet 1957/83; 1983), and it is not surprising that just he has been the initiator of the renaissance of "republicanism" in French historiography. Oddly enough, he does not make any references to the corresponding Anglo-American renaissance initiated by Pocock (1975) and others some years earlier.

Nicolet emphasizes the republican commitment to pro-political rhetoric. "Tout commence et tout finit avec la politique" (Nicolet 1957/83, 7; cf. Nicolet 1982, 264). The commitment to a classical republican view of politics distinguishes the "Founding Fathers" of the Third Republic from their liberal contemporaries:

La politique des républicains est une politique à l'ancienne, une politique de la participation au pouvoir, même si c'est, sous la République, par l'intermédiaire des représentants; ce n'est pas une politique de limitation du pouvoir, comme celle des Anglo-saxons ou des libéraux. (Nicolet 1982, 357, cf. also 411)

Nicolet's discussion also provides the background to the contest between pro- and anti-political rhetoric since the Dreyfus Affair, a period characterized by the decline of republican rhetoric and the rise of the Maurrasist pro-political monarchism (Cf. also Palonen 1989c).

The decline - "Le Français se désintéresse de la politique, depuis qu'il la fait lui-même" (R. de Jouvenel 1914, 237) - manifests itself above all in the contempt of *les politiciens*. This does not concern only such anti-parliamentary thinkers as Georges Sorel or Charles Péguy. Even the pro-political rhetoric contributed to it by using another term for the honourable politicians:

Le politicien et le Politique sont des gens différents, comme sont choses différentes la politique et l'intrigue. (Barthou 1923, 106)

The rhetorical situation was complicated by Maurras' famous slogan **Politique d'abord!** (Cf. a quotation from 1900 in Maurras 1933, 93). This slogan is intelligible if "politics" is understood in the sense of *raison d'Etat* with the king as a specialist in governing, i.e. in a manner diametrically opposed to the participatory politics of the republicans. But republican apologies of politics were opposed as well by the "Maurras-formula" and especially by apologists of the *vita contemplativa* such as Paul Valéry and Julien Benda. For Benda la *trahison des clercs* consisted largely of their contribution to turn the contemporary period into *l'âge du politique* (esp. Benda 1927 183).

A republican politics for politics in this situation was liable to receive the blame for being a mere defence of existing institutional forms of politics. The two most important republican ideologists of this period, the philosopher Alain and the publicist Georges Guy-Grand, tried to avoid this dilemma by rethinking a participatory conception of politics that is independent of institutions and organizations and by referring to the moral or even religious dimensions present

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in the older French republicanism (Cf. Nicolet 1982, 358; 1957/83, 5). Let me take just one quotation from each of them.

La politique réelle, c'est un effort continu contre le despotisme militaire et le despotisme politique qui ne font qu'une. (Alain 1925, 18)

Par delà la politique des partis il y a la politique tout court, la belle, la grande, la vivifiante croyance politique qui est la croyance religieuse humaine, comme par delà l'Eglise il y a la religion. (Guy-Grand 1911, 309-310)

Both Alain and Guy-Grand tend to include the Maurrasist apology of politics among the variants of "le mépris le plus superbe de la politique" (Guy-Grand 1928, 4). Their commitment to the rhetorical situation of the Dreyfus Affair tended, however, to make also these attempts to revive republicanism outmoded already in the thirties.

The constellations of the Third Republic for the politics of politics were no longer valid for the Fourth. The Maurrasian neo-monarchism was eclipsed on account of its alignment with the Vichy regime and even the Right accepted, at least formally, the republic. The decline of the Radicals destroyed the traditional basis for republican rhetoric. The Communists, however, were committed to a practice of party militancy which could serve the rhetoric of **Politique d'abord!**, reinterpreted as **raison du parti** (cf. Verdès-Leroux 1983, 58). In the late forties demands for **dépolitisation** appear to have arisen first among the Gaullists, while the independent left was most eager to condemn depoliticization. With the ascent of the charismatic figure of Pierre Mendès France in the fifties a revitalization of republican pro-political rhetoric is obvious.

In an international perspective the French **dépolitisation** controversy is a variant of the "end of ideology debate." *Fin de l'âge idéologique?* is also the title of the last chapter of Raymond Aron's *L'opium des intellectuels* (1955). In spite of this the French debate was conducted rather in terms of politics than in those of ideology (cf. Vedel (dir) 1962; *Dépolitisation et consensus...* 1962; *Le problème...* 1963; Touchard 1962; Foygeyrollas 1962, 1963; Ellul 1965).

The **dépolitisation** thesis above all challenges the formal, institutional paradigm of participation that is proper to older republicanism. But it is also directed against its extension into the kind of party militancy practiced in the Fourth Republic above all by the Communists. Depoliticization was, in both respects, something quantitative, measurable, and for this reason eagerly taken up by the academic fashions of election studies and party sociology.

The **dépolitisation** thesis was criticized for identifying "le politique et le partisan" (Foygeyrollas 1963, 250; cf. Duverger in *Dépolitisation et consensus...* 1962;). The Mendésist Pierre Emmanuel sees also, however, the transformation of the parties into an apparatus serving their clients and demands: "il faudrait que les partis fussent politisés" (Emmanuel 1958, 65). The socialist André Philip sees "à la fois une dépolitisation vis-à-vis l'Etat et une politisation

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à l'intérieur de la société" (*Le problème...*, 1963, 38). He also reinterprets the experience of politicking through a replacement of intension by extension:

La politique est à recréer, non plus comme activité globale, gouvernant toute la personnalité de l'individu, mais comme un prolongement des expériences de la vie quotidienne ... (Philip 1962, 62; cf. also Philip in *Dépolitisation et consensus...* 1962; Mendès France 1959.)

De Gaulle's rise to power and the first years of the Fifth Republic made manifest the inability of the traditional left wing parties for political action. Around 1960 there arose diverse **Clubs** combining the republican language of *civisme* with a modernizing or even technocratic rhetoric of planning (cf. e.g. Touchard 1969, 319-323; *Le problème...* 1963). Pierre Mendès France's *La république moderne* (1962; cf. also the debate on it in *Cahiers de la république* 1962) can be read as a manifestation of this tendency: he rejects depoliticization claims with an explicit reference to the **Clubs** (219, 248), and his programme for "democratization" proposes an extension of the classical republican model:

La démocratie ne consiste pas à mettre épisodiquement un bulletin dans une urne.... Elle est une action continuelle du citoyen, non seulement sur les affaires de l'Etat, mais sur celles de la région, de la commune, de la coopérative, de l'association, de la profession.... La démocratie n'est efficace que si elle existe partout et en tout temps. (Mendès France 1962, 25-26, cf. 155, 232-233)

This kind of extended republican rhetoric appeared to be, in the early years of Gaullist power, a "modern" alternative. It did not require a radical re-thinking of the phenomenon of politics, but a return to the classical model of *citoyen* combined with an extension of the "public sphere" from "state" towards "society." But it was not the only apology of politics present in the context of the *dépolitisation* controversy.

2. THE SARTREAN APOLOGY OF POLITICS

Depuis quinze ans je cherche quelque chose: il s'agit, si vous voulez, de donner un fondement politique à l'anthropologie. (Sartre 1960b, 9)

This passage sounds strange. But the commonplace that politics should be given an "anthropological basis" misses Sartre's provocative point which involves the rejection of the contemplative bias of philosophy and science by insisting the priority of *vita activa*. More specifically, the formula is a clear indication of the *paradigmatic role of politics in the whole Sartrean philosophy of man*. Max Weber's thesis *Politik ist Kampf* is also valid for Sartre and concerns all action on inter-individual relations (cf. Palonen 1988a, 1988b, 1989b).

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While my "Weberian reading" is based on a new interpretation of some central formulas (*lutte, rareté, contre-finalité, l'Autre* etc.) in *Critique de la raison dialectique*, my approach here is more historical, combining a textualist and a contextualist reading. I concentrate on Sartre's explicit use of the "politics-vocabulary" (for the term cf. Palonen 1985), which occurs both in his essays as well as in the historical excursions in *Critique* and *L'idiot de la famille*. This essay relates Sartre's apology and conception of politics to the "contemporary linguistic conventions" (cf. Skinner 1978, Introduction) and thus complements my study on the thematization of the concept of politics in France (Palonen, 1989c) with a chapter on Sartre (cf. also Palonen, 1988b).

The formula quoted above is not accidental. In the texts of Sartre, at least from the early fifties to the early seventies, there are several explicit apologies of politics. They are relatively independent of the policies advocated by Sartre for the moment. The apology of politics is often opposed to moralism. In his address to the Vienna Peace Congress Sartre wants to replace a moral with a political pacifism: "À l'inverse de Gary Davies, nous savons *qu'il faut faire de la politique*" (Sartre 1953, 25). For Sartre politics appears to be an existential condition of human beings and in *Les communistes et la paix* more specially of the workers:

Mais pour l'ouvrier, la politique ne peut être une activité de luxe: c'est son unique d'efense et l'unique moyen dont il dispose pour s'intégrer à une communauté. Le bourgeois est d'abord intégré, la solitude est sa coquetterie, l'ouvrier est d'abord seul, la politique est son besoin. (Sartre 1952-1954, 242)

In the language of *L'être et le néant* human beings are condemned to politics. Considering the constitutive role of the need in *Critique* (Sartre 1960a, 194-197; Sartre 1985, 397-401), the passage is well suited to an interpretation which sees in politics the foundation of the Sartrean anthropology. Politics appears here as a constitutive dimension of "the lived experience" (*le vécu*). With his existential perspective on politics Sartre has also a sharp eye for the factual *apolitisme*. Already in the early fifties he refers to the poor quality of the available forms of politicking and to the absence of alternative policies as well as reasons which render the apolitical position intelligible:

Qu'importe alors que mon bulletin contribue à faire accéder tel parti ou tel autre 'au pouvoir'? Qu'importe puisque justement il n'y a plus de pouvoir, puisque tous les gouvernements feront la même politique? (Sartre 1952, 71)

The polemics against *les apolitiques* appears in its most militant version in Sartre's essays against de Gaulle's rise to power. I will only quote two passages from September 1958, just before a *referendum*:

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Indifférence ou impuissance, tous ces apolitiques votent pour l'apolitisme, comme si c'était un programme qu'ils voulaient imposer. En disant 'oui', ils poussent leur attitude à l'extrême jusqu'à renoncer à tous leurs droits civiques. Ils se démettent du soin de la chose publique entre les mains d'un homme qui fera tout pour eux. Les voilà simplifiés: ils demeurent époux, fils, champions de billard - mais ils ne seront plus citoyens. (Sartre 1958, 133-134)

Quant au républicain gaulliste, politique d'un jour et contre la politique, il retournera, le 29 septembre, à son fidèle silence, à sa tremblante liberté, aux sages desordres de sa vie privée. (Op.cit., 138-139)

The marks of a republican language are obvious in this text, published in the pro-Mendésist weekly *L'Express*. Sartre may well have played the role of a famous journalist appealing to a wide public in a language familiar and acceptable to it rather than in the technical language of his proper philosophy. But the text also makes a parody of one of the corner stones of French republican ideology, of the act of voting itself. Even if Mendès France says, as quoted above, that voting is not enough, and even if he rejects de Gaulle's bonapartist practice of taking recourse to *referenda*, he still remains within the republican horizon, sanctifying the universal suffrage.

Le suffrage universel est donc la condition fondamentale de toute république digne de ce nom. (J. Barni 1872, quoted by Nicolet 1982, 411; cf. also Nicolet 1962)

The opposition between Mendès France and Sartre can be interpreted so that for the former there is a qualitative difference between the voting situations of elections and *referenda*, while for Sartre the act of voting (by a secret ballot) itself, common to both situations, should be related to politics. Is voting a political act at all? In an interview before another Gaullist *referendum* Sartre explicitly denies it:

L'homme politique, par nature, est amené à des actions ambiguës.... Mais un électeur n'est pas un homme politique. Voter, ce n'est pas faire de la politique, c'est approuver ou refuser une certaine politique dans ce qu'elle a précisément de non ambigu. (Sartre 1961, 146-147)

The provocation lies in the claim: there are *des apolitiques* who vote. Sartre refers to a possibility denied by contemporary political science, "apolitical" anarchists and pro-political republicans. All of them tended to consider voting as the political act of the individual *par excellence*. A republican like Mendès France could hardly blame people who vote of being "apolitical." He remains a formalist or institutionalist for whom the reasons and the experiences of the voters do not count, nor the absence of real alternatives to choose. By voting the citizen legitimates the republic as a system which allows her/him to vote,

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to be a citizen. In this sense voting remains a paradigm for other forms of participation in politics (cf. esp. Mendès France 1962, 155).

To deny the political character of voting is for Sartre not to affirm that of non-voting, either. Rather, "l'abstension, c'est un signe nul" (Sartre 1961, 149) or, "S'abstenir, c'est confirmer la majorité nouvelle, quelle qu'elle soit" (Sartre 1973, 87. To act politically is for Sartre something independent of "electoral behaviour". Unlike anarchists and others who see the root of evil in the rise of politicians who do not simply reflect the given opinion of their mandators, for Sartre everyone should be a "politician," i.e. a person able and ready to live in the ambiguous world of politics. When **les apolitiques** vote, they vote for being liberated from politics, for being sheltered against the experience of ambiguity.

As human beings are condemned to freedom (Sartre 1943, 581), they are condemned to politics. To be apolitical is, although not policy, already a political act - this is an implication of Sartre's conception of politics as presented in an interview from 1964:

Mais la politique, qu'est-ce que c'est? Pour moi, cela n'est pas une attitude que l'individu peut prendre ou abandonner selon les circonstances, mais une dimension de la personne. Dans nos sociétés, qu'on 'fasse' ou non de la politique, on naît politisé. (Sartre 1964, 132)

This is a response to the claims of youth on **dépolitisation**, which for Sartre refer to a lack of lucidity (op.cit) and not to the existential situation, "parce que la jeunesse est une lutte" (op.cit., 135). In other words, politics as activity is something already built into the experience of young people:

.. le jeune homme ... peut se mettre à briser des vitrines et à se battre à coups de chaîne de bicyclette. Ce sera un acte politique, bien qu'il ne le sache pas. Cela voudra dire: "Je veux casser cette société qui me refuse ma place, je veux être un homme." (Op.cit.)

For Sartre to speak of depoliticization is a form of politics of the adults against young people. Sartre wants to change the "already political" acts of young people into a more conscious policy towards the adults:

Il ne s'agit pas, pour vous, 'd'entrer dans l'arène politique' - vous y êtes déjà, quoi que vous fassiez - mais de dire et de faire ce que réellement vous voulez. (Op.cit.)

Perhaps Sartre is appealing to young people in a situation where he is "losing their support," even by a voluntarist terminology alien to himself. The point of the text for the present purposes is, however, in a distanciation from the assumption of politics as something to be left to mature people. Within the horizon of the republican tradition, the conflict between youth and adults appears as political only with respect to the age of voting. In the **dépolitisation** controversy the editor of the left-Christian *Esprit*, Jean-Marie Domenach, ques-

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tions the "right" of youth to politics: "Est-ce bon que des enfants de 15 ans fassent de la politique dans nos lycées" (*Le problème...* 1963, 54). It is easy to imagine the response of Sartre: "Oui, bien sûr."

3. THE PRIMACY OF POLITICS?

An apology of politics does not require a subscription to the **Politique d'abord**-formula. Sartre's critique of it (cf. Sartre 1949, 108-109; 1963, 219) is directed against the slogan's causalist idea of 'weighting' politics with other 'factors' in life and history. In the absence of given criteria such 'weighting' is meaningless: politics is no 'factor' among others. Sartre speaks, however, for a primacy of politics in another sense, especially when defending the priority of oppression over exploitation. This is, however, free from understanding politics as a sector or a sphere (cf. Sartre 1960a, 801n) and compatible with his perspective of **totalisation** while affirming - using the relations between the oppressors and the oppressed as a paradigm case - the priority of the praxis over the process in the intelligibility of history.

C'est cette lutte comme double **praxis** réciproque qui assure le développement rigoureux du **processus** de l'exploitation. (Op.cit., 813)

More important for the appraisal of the existential significance of politics are Sartre's historical remarks in essays and examples in larger works. These comments do not always directly express Sartre's own position but they give sufficient material which oppose his views to the republican apology of politics.

In *Les communistes et la paix* Sartre engages in polemics against the contemporary "bourgeois" attempts to keep trade union activities "out of politics." He summarizes the basis of these attempts as follows:

Ainsi le domaine de l'économie devient celui de la nécessité, tandis que le domaine de la politique demeure celui de la liberté. Tout va bien tant que les deux domaines restent séparés... (Sartre 1952-1954, 117).

The passage contains three assumptions: politics and economics are spheres; the difference between them is identified as that between freedom and necessity; the separation is preferred to a mixing of spheres or to a reduction of one to the other. Sartre does not ask about the validity of these assumptions but affirms their ideological character:

vous faites entrer dans votre définition de ce qui est politique et de ce qui ne l'est, des jugements de valeur, des présuppositions, une idéologie. (Op.cit., 121)

The ideological character lies in the asymmetry of chances of politicking for **le patron** and **l'ouvrier**: "la décision bourgeoise de limiter le droit de grève aux revendications professionnels est *déjà politique*" (op.cit., 120). Similarly the

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worker, who resigns by accepting these restrictions "a pris déjà une attitude politique" (op.cit., 123). What is presented as a philosophical question on freedom and necessity, has immediate political consequences for the relations between the capitalists and the workers. For Sartre these relations as such are already political, for politics is no sphere and the political does not require a policy of the government, the opposition or the trade union. The workers do not even have to act in order to be political:

Ainsi par leur seule présence silencieuse, par la calme menace que leur ordre rigoureux et consenti fait peser sur l'ordre établi, par leur regard, ces hommes apparaissent tout à coup comme une société dans la société, provoquent des troubles au paradis et font éclater le humanisme, voilà un *acte politique*, n'est-ce pas, et le plus important, peut-être, depuis 89. (Op.cit., 127)

The rhetoric of the French post-war bourgeoisie seems to have conserved elements of republican ideology just in interpreting politics voluntaristically and economics deterministically (cf. Nicolet 1982, 290). When a Guy-Grand, already in the beginning of the century, extends politics to production, he makes political the decisions about organization and internal decision-making in enterprises (Guy-Grand 1911, esp. 142) as does Mendès France with his planning rhetoric (esp. Mendès France 1962, 140, 239). They reinterpret the borders between the spheres but they do not give up thinking of politics and economics as spheres. So does Sartre, partly by replacing the voluntarist view on freedom by a situational one, partly by considering all inter-individual relations as political, as relations of conflict (cf. Palonen 1989b).

Another example of Sartre is apparently opposed to the preceding one. In the second volume of *Critique* he critically discusses the "primacy of politics" as it was conceived in the Soviet Union of the twenties. His formal intention is to make intelligible how such an obvious "renversement...du marxisme" (Sartre 1985, 138) was realized in the Soviet context. The priority of politics over economics is presented in classical terms:

la subordination de l'économique au politique s'identifie pratiquement à la subordination de l'être au devoir-être. (Op.cit., 139)

Politics refers here to the normative and finalistic aspect of the situation, while economics corresponds to the inert aspect of its "facticity." Or, in terms of *Critique*, politics affirms the priority of the totalizing moment over those of particularization and contradiction (cf. op.cit., 13). Sartre's point is directed against the questionable consequences of this optimistic and pathetic interpretation of the situation in the Soviet context. The priority thesis is a too easy means for an apparent resolution of internal contradictions, like that between the long term and the short term projects (socialism vs. the maintenance of the Soviet Union as a state), which is present not only at the level of the government's

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and party's policy but also in the "lived experience" of the politicized militants (cf. op.cit., 141).

Planning is a central aspect in the Soviet rhetoric. "Elle continue la révolution par d'autres moyens," as Sartre paraphrases Clausewitz (op.cit., 138). It not only tends to overestimate the role of a consistent policy in the face of resistant facticity, it is also partially unintended itself:

l'absence de techniciens oblige les politiciens à prendre les décisions techniques - et, par conséquent, de les prendre *en politiques*". (Op.cit.)

Conditions for routinizing the decisions are not available. Politics becomes overloaded by minute decisions about planning details, which are themselves considered as political: "elles font l'objet d'une véritable décision tenant compte synthétiquement" (op.cit.). The very extension of the "political" tends to fail to discern degrees in the intensity of the political in the decision situations. Or in more Sartrean terms: the relative circularity of the particular decisions tends to lose sight of the "crucial," totalizing decisions.

The futurist and normative character of Soviet politics is responsible for understanding the centralization of power (of chances of politicking) as a necessary correlate of the primacy of politics. Not only is all resistance declared counter-revolutionary and as such illegitimate, but also the centralization tends to isolate the leaders: "les dirigeants ne participent pas à l'universelle mobilité de ces classes en fusion" (op.cit., 157). The concentration and centralization of power shapes the very character of politics possible in the Soviet context:

il faut dire à la fois que le souverain *est* bureaucratisée par l'action et qu'il *se* bureaucratise *pour* l'action. (Op.cit., 158)

A further consequence of this voluntarist-futurist version of the primacy of politics is a tendency to interpret facticities and counter-finalities due to the sovereign's policy in a conspiratorial manner. The resistance met is treated as if it were a policy of some opponents. This is illustrated by a famous example of Sartre in following two formulations, which refer to a different context but which suit the Soviet situation in the twenties too:

Le métro de Budapest était réel dans la tête de Rakosi; si le sous-sol ne permettait pas le construire, c'est que le sous-sol était contre-révolutionnaire. (Sartre 1957, 31)

Ainsi Rakosi fit emprisonner les ingénieurs qui, après quelques mois de travaux, vinrent lui expliquer que le sous-sol de Budapest ne se prêtait pas à la construction d'un métro à travers eux, c'est ce sous-sol qu'il emprisonnait. (Sartre 1985, 186)

For Sartre the policy of Rakosi is, however, not simply ridiculous. He could himself, in a sense, admit that the action of Budapest substratum was "political." For him, in Critique, the relations between persons are possible only through

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the mediation of "worked matter," which is already a product of the work and struggles of others. That counter-finality which manifests itself as a failure of the metro project arises from a situation where Budapest subsoil is just "worked matter" of this kind, and it was not re-workable with the available techniques. Rakosi's voluntarist interpretation imputes the failure to the engineers as present and personalized actors, while for Sartre the counter-finality of the Budapest underground would be politics of the Other (*l'Autre*). The Other is an absent and impersonal adversary, which does not have any policy, but which well can inverse the policies of present actors. (Cf. Palonen 1989b).

Parce que gouverner, c'est choisir, le Plan est, avant tout, un acte or une suite des actes politiques (Mendès France 1962, 140).

Does Sartre's critique of the Soviet version of planning rhetoric also concern the "democratic" planning à la Mendès France? Also Mendès France remains committed to a futurist and voluntarist view of politics with a certain optimistic pathos (cf. op.cit., 7-10), which makes it - despite all differences of degree and context - subject both to overloading political decisions with details and to reducing decisions to technical routine. Sartre's analysis of the tendencies to centralization and bureaucratization tend also to emphasize the presence of similar tendencies in the French republican tradition, hardly overcome by the Mendésist renaissance.

4. DEPOLITISATION AFTER 1848

An eloquent critique of **apolitisme** and **dépolitisation** is to be found in *L'idiote de la famille*, mainly in the third volume from 1972, a year in which nobody spoke of them any longer. Sartre uses the terms heuristically in an historical study - surely not in a manner that conforms with Brunner's (1968) **quellengebundene Begriffsgeschichte** or with Skinner's (1969) anachronism thesis - in which he is involved in polemics against his contemporary structuralist etc. opponents. One aspect of the third volume can also be seen in a confrontation with a republican interpretation of 19th century French history: although Nicolet's book - which never mentions Sartre - had not yet appeared, there are some striking parallels which provoke comparisons and confrontations.

For a comparison with the republican tradition three aspects discussed by Sartre deserve closer attention: the **zoon politikon**- view of human beings; the futurist view of politics proper to the republicans of 1848 as well as "cette dépolitisation massive des intellectuels qui caractérise la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle" (Sartre 1971, 104), which is denounced as counter-revolutionary by Sartre.

Constitutive of Nicolet's republican interpretation of the French **Sonderweg** in the 19th century are references to an event as well as to a non-event. The latter is the intellectual turn to that "modernity" initiated by the Scottish En-

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lightenment, which was "jamais vraiment admis" in France (Nicolet 1982, 479). From this viewpoint the depoliticization after 1848 could have been interpreted as a "normal" phenomenon in a wider European perspective: Sartre does not consider such a possibility. But he would doubtless have accepted the other side of Nicolet's interpretation:

La part de la France, au contraire, c'est avoir connu une Révolution, à vrai dire *la seule*, et dans un sens, de continuer à vivre de façon quasi permanente. La République - même et surtout si elle doit être un 'gouvernement' - est aussi et toujours une révolution. (Op.cit., 497)

For the interpretation of French history in *L'idiot de la famille* a crucial aspect of the Revolution is the commitment to the ideal of *zoon politikon* (cf. Sartre, 1972, 213, 230, 242). Sartre's point is to emphasize that the institution of suffrage, which for the contemporaries was decisive as the "droit politique d'intervenir dans les affaires publiques" (op.cit., 213), was not universalized in order to correspond with the ideal: those excluded from suffrage were "sous-hommes." The political significance of Louis Bonaparte's *coup d'Etat* was to send "les nantis grossir les rangs des sous-hommes" (op.cit., 242).

The republicans and socialists of 1848 had, according to Sartre, however, a broader notion of the political dimension of the person. They had invented the constitutive role of the future for political action:

ils avaient découvert les premiers que la réalité humaine se définit par l'avenir lointain jusque dans son passé reculé et que nous sommes des êtres du lointain, qui venons à nous de l'horizon, à travers le monde. C'était nous définir par la *praxis* et nous reconnaître avant tout la dimension *politique*. C'est-à-dire le rapport *pratique* à l'avenir humain, la détermination de nos actes de citoyens par l'homme qui nous produisons mais ne verrons pas (Op.cit., 260).

This portrait of the *quarante-huitards* renders them a sort of *existentialistes avant la lettre*. The link between the future, praxis and politics distinguishes them from both the stationary time of the classical republicans (cf. Pocock 1972, 1975) and from the liberals' faith in quasi-natural progress. In Nicolet's portrait the republicans of the early Third Republic believed in progress like liberals, but the Revolution itself both originated and ended time in politics. This dualism is expressed in two quotations:

comme tous les républicains depuis Condorcet, Dupont-White pense que le but de toute politique est le "progrès", à la fois technique, scientifique, social et moral. (Nicolet 1982, 453)
Elle a République, KP est dans l'histoire, puisqu'elle est née un jour, qui reste ... un "point zéro" du nouveau temps. Mais elle est aussi hors d'histoire: 'La forme républicaine du gouvernement ne peut faire objet d'une révision constitutionnelle. (Op.cit., 498)

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So different from liberal progressivism as the "future orientation" of the *quarante-huitards* described by Sartre, his portrait is not without parody. This can be directed also against the Soviet futurist-normativist apology of politics as well as against Sartre himself, the Sartre of *Existentialisme est un humanisme* in the name of *situation*, *rareté* and *contre-finalité* constitutive for the Sartre of *Critique* and *L'idiot*. The orientation towards a projected future is a necessary but not a sufficient criterion for the time dimension in politics.

The portrait of the *quarante-huitards* is also a point of reference for Sartre's analysis of the subsequent *dépolitisation*. It is studied in three directions: the proletariat, the Bonapartists and the intellectuals. In the first respect Sartre - like others, e.g. Donzelot 1984 - emphasizes the replacement of *politique* by *social* (esp. Sartre 1972, 240-241) until an affirmation that "toute politique est bourgeoise" (cf. Sartre 1960a, 835). For Sartre this is a self-deception of the workers, connected to the advent of mechanist philosophy.

On voit que la *politique* est tout entière disqualifiée; la raison: fût-elle machiavélique, elle s'adresse aux hommes et demande leur approbation. Fût-il ambitieux, dominateur et perfide, s'imposât-il par la ruse ou la violence, le politicien dépend des masses ou d'un groupe social privilégié; il lui faut persuader.... De toute manière, le pouvoir, tant qu'il reste politique, émane d'un groupement qui le mandate et l'épaulé mais en même temps le contrôle: les relations demeurent humaines, même déviées et faussées. ... bref, l'homme politique est *situé*. C'est sa faiblesse: l'ingénieur social ne le sera pas. (Sartre 1972, 261-262)

This is a subversive apology of the politician, directed also against the moralist and primitivist egalitarian tendencies in the republican tradition. In a more Weberian manner than elsewhere Sartre here appreciates the "oblique" skills of the politician. This portrait of the politician can be seen as another indication of the paradigmatic role of politics in Sartre's view on inter-individual relations and actions concerning them.

The "social engineer" is here an ideal type, which corresponds to the marginal situation, in which the relations between human beings are identified with the relations between things. In *Critique* Sartre described this limit-situation as one in which the reactions of the adversary are treated as foreseeable as those of the material worked by the individual actor (Sartre 1960a, 890). In fact, Sartre does not see the post-1848 Bonapartism approaching this limit of politics, rather: "la vie politique ... se réfugie chez les militaires" (Sartre 1972, 242).

As a historian Sartre tends here to take recourse to simplifications while using distinctions crucial to his own philosophy. He does not consider the possibility of combining the republican, pro-political rhetoric with a positivist or scientific philosophy. Nicolet emphasizes this connection but also quotes examples of internal tensions between these aspects in the thought of the intellectual

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founders of the Third Republic (cf. Nicolet 1982, esp. 206, 290). Positivism and scientism were in late 19th century France part of *l'esprit objectif* (cf. Sartre 1972, 41-66) and therefore combinable with diverse attitudes towards politics. Maybe the positivist heritage still forms an aspect of the republican rhetoric of simplicity while the Sartrean rhetoric of ambiguity is also an expression of his opposition to the merely analytic reason inapplicable to politics.

The main object of accusation of *dépolitisation* in *L'idiot de la famille* is, however, the *littérati* of post-1848 generation. The paradigm is Leconte de Lisle, who

abandonne à jamais la politique à l'instant que nantis et capables
décident d'abandonner leurs droits de citoyens - et pour les mêmes
raisons. (Op.cit., 413)

A republican critique of *dépolitisation* could hardly have paid a similar attention to the writers. For Sartre they, not so much the MP's or professional politicians, had been central political actors in France since the Enlightenment. Politics by writing was practiced by the Enlightenment *littérati* and scientists (op.cit., 68), by romantic counter-revolutionaries (op.cit., 110) as well as by Victor Hugo, who was "un parti politique à lui seul, le parti de l'opposition républicaine à l'Empire" (op.cit., 162).

It is against this background that the turn in Flaubert's generation, especially after 1848, is decisive for Sartre. They opposed to "agitation" "la littérature, comme entreprise de *dépolitisation*" (op.cit., 149). They did neither acknowledge the political to be a "dimension of the person" nor did they "misuse" the special opportunities for "celebrities" to a "politics by writing" not entirely suppressed by a dictatorship (cf. also Weiss 1975-1981). They were, to use a term coined later, no intellectuals, for "l'intellectuel est quelqu'un qui se mêle de ce qui ne le regarde pas" (Sartre 1966, 377).

5. THE DEPOLITISATION CONTROVERSY AS A RHETORICAL SITUATION

The thematization of the phenomenon of politics into a concept subject to interpretations from diverse perspectives is a surprisingly recent phenomenon. Even in Germany and France it is only around the turn of the century that the *étatist* or governmentalist perspective to subjects and objects of politics is questioned and the politics-vocabulary is expanded and differentiated. The possibilities to speak of politicization and of depoliticization or to differentiate between *Politik* and *das Politische* or between *la politique* et *le politique* are knot points in this process of the thematization of politics as a concept. Profilic individual conceptions of politics appear in Germany in the Weimar era, while in France the decisive years are the late fifties and early sixties. (Cf. Palonen 1985, 1988c,d, 1989a,c)

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A main current in the 20th century re-thinking of politics is the invention and actualization of a perspective which could be called existential. A situational approach to politics, an emphasis on the individual actor and her/his dramatic choice is not attributable to Sartre alone. Max Weber's view on the dramatic situation of a genuine politician, Carl Schmitt's views on the exceptional situation, Helmuth Plessner's individualization of the Schmittian **Freund-Feind**-distinction, Karl Jaspers' thoughts about limit situations etc. are the most obvious examples from the Weimar period (cf. Palonen 1985). A similar conceptual horizon is worked out in post-war France especially in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Humanisme et terreur* (1947) to which Sartre gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness, and it seems also to be present in some contributions of Edgar Morin (1958, 1965) and others (cf. Palonen 1989c). Sartre's conception is a highly singularized version of this existential perspective on politics.

As strange as is the existential horizon of thinking about politics to the republican tradition, they have in common the commitment to the primacy of *vita activa* and to a *zoon politikon*-view of human beings. In the oeuvre of Hannah Arendt (esp. 1958, 1963) "republican and existential languages" are closely intertwined, and even Sartre has, as quoted above, no difficulties to speak of **citoyen** etc.

Still, there are some qualitative breaks which allow us to speak of "republican and existential languages of politics" in the French context in general and in the case of Sartre vs. the Mendésist neo-republicans of the 1950s and 1960s. The moral or religious legitimation of politics (cf. Nicolet 1982, 358) was replaced by an appeal to "lived experience" or, in terms of Malraux' famous novel, to **la condition humaine**. Nicolet understands politics as "une organisation consensuelle de la collectivité" (op.cit., 396). This is diametrically opposed to the Sartrean view of politics as a "dimension of person" as well as to his Weberian commitment to see in the struggle (*lutte*) the core of politics.

Rhetorically the neo-republican answer to the **dépolitisation** controversy is an appeal to the renaissance, a reinterpretation of the **polis** tradition in a manner suitable to a modern context. Compared with this neo-classical rhetoric, Sartre's is openly disrespectful. Especially his appeal to young people for politicization and his oblique apology of politicians express a provocative distance from the republican rhetoric of **citoyen**. (Sartre hardly speaks, however, in this period, about the politicization of women, although his existential pro-political rhetoric in a sense anticipates some interpretations of the feminist "the personal is political" formula).

Sartre's disregard for organizational and institutional arrangements and disinterest in constructive policy proposals well corresponds with this rhetorical distance from republicanism. In so far as he is obliged to take a standpoint in these questions, he mostly supports the current left-wing positions by retaining a distance in details. Or, to put it the other way round, Sartre's changing positions in the "daily politics", so often ridiculed later, are an expression of his

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denial of the possibility to "derive a line" or to "form a consistent policy" on the basis of the existential horizon of politics alone. While the republican perspective on politics was more or less consistently linked with a policy, at least in questions of regime and constitution, the existential perspective remains at the level of the interpretation, appraisal and "misuse" of the situation: the appeal to **engagement** leaves the "how" question to be decided more or less *ad hoc* in the actual situation.

To summarize the opposition between neo-republican and Sartrean apologies of politics in the context of the **dépolitisation** controversy, I will make use of some rhetorical categories. In order to both deny and answer the **dépolitisation** claims both apologies distance from the current party-government-state paradigm of politics and will also see politics elsewhere. The republican apology's recourse to "back to origins" -appeals in order to extend politics to a wider field is, as a "tropological" move, a typical use of "borderline-transfers" (**Grenzverschiebungs-Tropen**, cf. Lausberg 1963, 64-67): it retains the classical idea of **chose publique** as a core of the political and does not question the political character of acts like voting. Neither of them is retained by Sartre, and his provocative moves suggest a call for the break in the conceptual horizon of politics as an example of "jump tropes" (**Sprung-Tropen**, *op.cit.*, 64, 78-79).

As a rhetorical situation in the opposition between pro- and anti-political positions, the **dépolitisation** controversy is a novelty. It is a sign of the tendency to see politics "objectivistically" independent of "conceptualizing" that the controversy concerns rather **dépolitisation** than **politisation** (cf. Palonen 1989a). The controversy does not manifest a simply 'asymmetric conceptual opposition' (cf. Koselleck 1979) between politics and anti-politics, for **dépolitisation** is hardly praised (cf. Vedel (*dir*) 1962; *Dépolitisation et consensus...* 1962; *Le problème...* 1963).

In retrospect the high time of the **dépolitisation** controversy is at the same time that of a high conjuncture of thematization and of re-thinking politics in France (cf. Palonen 1989c). The Mendésist neo-republicanism and the existential perspective to politics are expressions of a rhetorical situation in which a pro-political commitment presupposed a reinterpretation of the phenomenon of politics. This "move" allowed both of them to deny a "deeper reality" of **dépolitisation**, while an anti-political commitment was suggested to retain the common sense usage (cf. Ellul 1965). As important as both the neo-republican and the Sartrean apologies of politics were as commitments in the actual controversy, as strikingly different both in rhetoric and in the direction of thematization are the respective conceptions of politics.

While for the monarchist and republican apologies of politics in France the appeal to **chose publique** was something like a "common space," the existential perspective, manifested most clearly by Sartre, breaks with this consensus by making choices about ways of life the core of politics. The **dépolitisation** controversy is perhaps the last rhetorical situation in which the question "for or

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against politics" still had a certain value independent of the interpretations of the concept of politics. But it also indicates a new era in which politics as phenomenon and as concept is more openly liberated from objectivistic and essentialistic implications of the naive usage. It becomes a concept in the strong sense of being ambiguous and subjected to diverse interpretations (cf. Koselleck 1979, 118-119). The politics of politics becomes less autonomous but is supposed to be more sophisticated.

If the emphasis is in the context of the *dépolitisation* controversy, neo-republican and existential perspectives to politics can well be called "languages of politics" in the Pocockian sense. If it is shifted to the conceptual history of politics in general, the asymmetric character of these perspectives, not only in relation to the traditional usage but also to the degree of abstraction in speaking about politics, becomes obvious. This qualitative change in the history of the concept of politics (cf. also Palonen 1988c, 1989c) is comparable to the replacement of "realistic" art by the abstract (of which, the existential perspective is, of course, only one version). For conceptual changes of this kind the Pocockian terminology seems inaccurate, while the tropological way of speaking seems to be a more promising alternative.

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