**Political Subjectivity**

*The Long Way from the Subject to the Citizen*

**Summary**

When have human beings started to think politically? What enables them to understand themselves as individuals and to recognize others as such? How can they imagine themselves and others in a public order – and more fundamentally: What do those concepts of “public” and “order” really mean? Where does the ability of individual political judgment come from? Which kind of cultural preconditions are required for this ability to emerge and to grow?

These questions will be examined first in a historical perspective and then in a philosophical analysis in order to dig to the very grounds of the individual competency to create political judgments. The subtitle *The Long Way from the Subject to the Citizen* indicates that something must have changed since we were subordinates to a Sovereign and even his legal property. At the beginning of the 21st century we are already used to consider ourselves as individuals with political opinions. But we have forgotten where this individuality came from, how difficult it was to acquire a political form of judgment and to develop even the simplest political opinion.

In this book we will inquire into the regionally and temporally differentiated emergence and evolution of this specific kind of human self-understanding and self-conception. We will look for articulations and functions of individual, personal consciousness from which we can infer to a genuine form of political subjectivity. For this purpose we have a useful historical starting point. Europe and the United States experienced in the 17th and 18th century along with the *Bourgeois Revolutions* a breakthrough of new ideas of public order and of human self-description. The philosophical question that will explore and illuminate this historical context is: *How was this possible?*

In the first part of the book we will investigate on three new phenomena that marked the beginning of western political modernity. *Individuality, aesthetics and publicity* and their interrelations show in various fields (philosophy, economy, law, pedagogic, warfare) a new self-understanding of human beings as citizens that was accompanied by a strong need of individual self-expression.

There are strong indications that in analogy to this need a new cognitive ability emerged, a specific way of thinking about oneself and society. With this result it is permitted to interpret this context of events as the historical emergence of political subjectivity – even though we don’t know yet the fundamental pattern and the principal of generation of this kind of subjectivity.

By then we switch to the philosophical analysis of the historical findings. The fundamental forms of human thinking, perception, action and knowledge are judgments. Thus we have to look for a specific *form of judgment* for the political subject. We will follow a direction given by Hannah Arendt who suspected that the reflective judgment as discovered and described by Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgment* (*CoJ*) might be the very “organ of political reason”.

But how can we extract a concept of political reasoning from an opus that only deals with aesthetics and teleology? Some authors tried to identify the reflective judgment with *common sense*, more precisely the ability to understand and to recreate common sense. Kant indeed explained also the common sense on the basis of reflective judgment. But this cognitive competency of reflective judging was far much bigger and richer in consequences. As the
mentioned authors focused on the more simple concept of common sense, they did not need to dig into the more complex topics of the CoJ, namely beauty, the sublime, the concept of ends and the whole context of Kantian critical philosophy. At the same time their tentative philosophies of common sense did not provide more than common places.

Here we will develop a new approach that starts with the entire CoJ and that takes into account the whole system of Kantian philosophy in order to identify a sort of judgment that has a quality which can legitimately be called political.

For this purpose we have to break up systematically the methodical shell of the CoJ. We have developed a counter-method that consists in a controlled re-mixing of certain kinds of judgments that Kant had analyzed and kept pure. Along with this counter-method and a special concept of nature Kant’s “transcendental principle of judgment” takes over an important function within the creation of political judgments. The guideline for the remixing process of judgments on beauty, sublime and ends is the definition of the unity of political judgment as reflection on public order.

This formula describes the unity of reflective-individual judgements within the medium of an imagined public space on imagined public orders. The formula by itself is empty and must be filled with aesthetical and teleological concepts. Within this process the aesthetic concepts of beauty and sublime take over the function of labelling the actual status and condition of the individual. They valuate the situation and feeling of the judging individual. Those semantic allocations must be connected to the syntactical concepts of individuality and order so that it is defined who is reflecting on what. In this context we don’t look at attributed individuality and empirically given public orders but at the conditions of subjective creation of individuality and order. Here is the place to revisit Carl Schmitt’s writings on the concept of order and to appreciate his approach as a first step towards the analysis of political subjectivity.

The permutation of possible combinations of semantic and syntactical concepts along the guideline of the unity of political judgments results in a complete set of fundamental concepts for the political judgment, namely the subjective concepts of justice, time, body and might. These concepts differ widely from their homophones in common speech.

The result of the inquiry into the fundamentals of political subjectivity is one unity of action (individualizing reflexion) that is at the same time the medium of the judgment (imagined publicity) and two fundamental syntactical concepts (individuality and order) that can be combined with four fundamental semantic concepts (justice, time, body and might).

A large number of examples illustrate how the concepts of beauty and sublime systematically fill the political judgement with familiar contents if they are properly combined with ideas of ends. On this basis we can go further and define more accurately and convincingly than ever before the difference between the moral and the political subject within the unity of the individual. We will find out that the individual is a polycentric formation of qualitatively different subjects from which each is in charge of a specific form of judgement. With this approach it becomes even possible to identify the religious momentum within political judgments and to define the conditions for the compatibility of moral and religious ideas with the political quality of the judgment.

In the chapter Hypostasis of Identity we will try to locate the concept of political subjectivity as a Second Tradition of Philosophy of Consciousness that systematically adopts the philosophical heritage of Enlightenment and especially the Kantian concept of subjectivity. In a genealogy of theorems of subjectivity the concept of political subjectivity will take its legitimate place between social philosophy and the theories of society. Against the predominance of communication theories in social sciences that avoid any reference to some kind of subject of reason we will show that the Kantian philosophy of subjectivity is
far from being exhausted and that in can still tell us a lot about the anthropology of politics.

It is even possible to convincingly refute the post-metaphysic commonplace of the “monologue of the subject”. The philosophy of Enlightenment had a much less monolithic image of the subject of reason than postmodernist authors wanted to make us believe. It’s sufficient to read the ancient texts in order to show how thin the plethora of postmodernist truths was.

After this philosophical polemic the concept of political subjectivity will be tested with an interesting sociological and psychological phenomenon first described by Max Weber, namely charisma. The results of empirical research on charisma are re-evaluated in a perspective of political subjectivity. The result is a fundamentally different understanding of charisma because for the first time we can ask what makes the political subject receptive for charisma? And we will see how the charismatic field is not an emanation of the charismatic object or person but created by the reflecting subjects.

The book is wrapped up by a chapter on the Emergence of Political Subjectivity. In the first part of the book we took the historical constellation in early modern Europe as a starting point of our investigation because we felt that a new cognitive quality made surface in large parts of the population. But what was the principle of generation of this emerging power of judgment? Is there only one way of emergence of political subjectivity? The answer is no and it is provided by a general theorem on the emergence of political subjectivity that can also explain why political subjectivity could appear in Greek antiquity and disappear again for two millennia. But there are many other possible scenarios for the emergence of political subjectivity.

This exploration has discovered a weak and vulnerable faculty of human beings to understand and express themselves politically. We could show that it is not a robust anthropological equipment but something that can disappear quite easily as history has proven more than once. It is easy to destroy and difficult to cultivate. Among the many possibilities that are part of human nature political subjectivity is one of the most challenging and demanding.

Reginald Grünenberg
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**Political Subjectivity: Organs of Reasoning and the Creation of the Political Judgment**

- **Concept of Ends / Purpose**
  - *Teleology*
  - provides Syntax of political judgment
  - internal ends create
  - relative ends create
- **Individuality**
  - mine & others
  - creation of subjective Publicity as syntactical field
- **Order**
  - subjective & objective
- **Imagination**
  - involve and keep busy
  - Reflective Judgment
  - Unity of Action: *to reflect*
- **Sensations**
  - affect
- **Feeling of Pleasure & Dislike**
  - *Aesthetics*
  - provide Semantics of political judgment
  - beauty creates
- **Reflective Judgment**
  - involves and keeps busy
  - Pure (theoretical) Reason
    - Reasoning applied to space & time
  - Practical Reason
    - Reasoning applied to volition
  - Imagination
  - Sensations
  - Sensations
  - Beauty
- **Publicity**
  - as syntactical field
  - filled with
- **Synthesis**
  - renews, animates, gives examples and sensualizes
- **Political Subjectivity**
  - includes
  - *Might*, *Body*, *Time*, *Justice*
- **Communication & Creation of Political Publicity**

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Dr. Reginald Grünenberg – Hufelandstraße 24 - 10407 Berlin - Tel: +49-30-4255499
email@reginald-gruenenberg.de                               www.politische-subjektivitaet.de