Apoliticism

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ABSTRACT: The following describes the concept of apoliticism, distinguishing it from indifference, which is also considered a negative attitude toward politics. Whereas apoliticism is the rejection of the official political institutions, possibly with the plan of an alternative system, the indifferent rejects politics altogether and is politically disinterested. If reflective negativism rejects politics as mechanism, the indifferent rejects it as a pursuit. I also distinguish between the extra-political, as the condition of being outside of any environment in which free deliberation and public engagement is possible, and the supra-political condition, as blurring the line between public political activities and rites prescribed by the state on the one hand and the private sphere of the individual on the other hand. If different, both are forms of political poverty. These concepts may serve as means for a more nuanced understanding of the structure of apolitical attitudes.

KEYWORDS: antipolitics, apoliticism, extra-political, suprapolitical, political poverty

This essay is an attempt to explain what “apoliticism” means. As an umbrella term, “apoliticism” unites various terms that describe negative stances toward politics, whether “apolitics,” “antipolitics,” “pre-politics,” or “non-politics.” These will be classified into a consciously rejecting orientation and into an indifferent category of apolitical arguments and attitudes. I label as “apoliticism” every argument and attitude that either considers an official system of institutionalized politics as improper in representing the interests of the members of the political community it is supposed to manage, or that turns away from politics altogether and displays an indifferent attitude toward public issues and toward personal engagement. The first type I denote as antipolitics, which is a reflective, critical form of apoliticism and the second as apolitics, which is passive,
uncritical, indifferent, and un-reflected upon. Given the switching meanings of the apolitical and the antipolitical in the bibliography of the topic, I will often use the term “apolitical” as a simplified notion to cover the phenomenon of negative politics in general.

The present analysis by and large applies the distinction made by both George Konrad and Barry Hindess (insert reference year) between the antipolitical and apolitical. Accordingly, apolitical means indifference toward politics in general and it is opposed to the notion of the antipolitical when meant to denote the rejection of particular institutionalized systems of politics rather than any possible form of politics altogether. Contrary to this, the apolitical means a lack of interest toward politics as such.

In the present analysis both notions are understood as covering the already invoked negative stance toward politics, but in opposed ways: whereas antipolitics rejects politics as a particular mechanism, apolitics rejects the pursuit of politics. Reflecting apoliticism is understood as a critique of politics, the rejecting as the opposite of politics. The opposite of politics is meant to indicate passive, indifferent negativity; the reflecting one, conscious negativity. By political, I mean the phenomena of politics in general, which include apolitical attitudes. As already mentioned, “apoliticism” is an umbrella-term. It doesn’t denote any particular movement or any specific form of apolitics but, instead, unites the family resemblance among forms of negativism toward politics.

Besides reflecting and indifferent apoliticism, I also identify two political conditions—the extra-political and the supra-political. I call “extra-political” the condition in which the political agency of the individual is suspended or even ceases to exist. This condition implies the impossibility for the individual to be politically informed and capable of free deliberation or able to plan individual political behavior. This condition is not identical to the pre-political state of nature as known from the tradition of contract theory, which describes that condition as the birthplace of the political as such (Weiler 1996, 46; Thomas 2000, 55–56).\(^1\) Contrary to the state of nature, the extra-political condition is the exclusion, the falling out from the political condition, rather than its emerging. It is neither identical with the apolitical nor with the antipolitical, because although these are negative attitudes toward politics, they are situated within the environment of any possible form of political behavior as opposed to the extra-political, which is outside of it. The extra-political condition even rules out the chance to decide about one’s own escape from the political environment.

The supra-political is the condition of the over-politicization of institutions and even of private life. In this situation, it is the “too many” of what
Apoliticism counts as politically significant that annihilates genuine political behavior, as opposed to the extra-political, where there “isn’t enough” to become informed, share, and engage. In such an environment so many things count as political that the voluntary character of free political behavior cannot gain space.

Both the extra-political and the supra-political are conditions of political poverty. In both cases the individual is not only politically passive, but also stays outside the area of interactions within which information and action may be possible for individual political agency at all. Contrary to this, apolitical and antipolitical forms of existence still include individual access to information, political identity, and opinion formation.

The concept of political poverty is not identical to poverty economically understood, but it may be related as it is also a form of scarcity, though primarily of a political rather than economic nature. The condition of political poverty may be caused by economic poverty and can lead to economic poverty, but it is essentially a political kind of deprivation, the loss of political agency as a public asset.

The Concept of the Apolitical

The conceptual mapping of apoliticism cannot be carried out without reflecting upon the concept of the political. The complementarity of these concepts consists in the assumption that apoliticism is only meaningful empirically and conceptually if the concept of the political it opposes is also meaningful. For a working definition of the concept of the political, I rely upon three political theorists, George Konrad, Barry Hindess, and Andreas Schedler, and the broader conceptual background offered by Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and Hannah Arendt.

Hannah Arendt’s conception of politics as the pursuit and exercise of freedom may be fruitful as the philosophical anchoring of the concept of politics as explored in the present context. There are two reasons for this: (1) she links politics to deliberation and (2) although she grasps freedom as an essentially political goal, she also acknowledges it as escape from politics. Her conceptual framework can be discerned from the following quotes:

“Politics,” in the Greek sense of the word, is therefore centered around freedom, whereby freedom is understood negatively as not being ruled or ruling, and positively as a space which can be created only by men and in which each man moves among his peers. (Arendt 2005, 117-118)
... it has become almost axiomatic even in political theory to understand by political freedom not a political phenomenon, but on the contrary, the more or less free range of nonpolitical activities which a given body politic will permit and guarantee to those who constitute it. (Ibid, 30)

The word “apolitical” suggests a secondary status in its relation to the term “political”; the terms of the pair are asymmetrical. For instance, if we claim that apolitics is a political phenomenon, we cannot equally claim that politics is an apolitical one. Thus, the relationship between the two terms is hierarchical. Despite this hierarchy, the terms gain a complementary role in the meaning both of them obtain. Similar to the way Carl Schmitt’s terms “friend” and “enemy” are building a complementary meaning in the theory of the political, in the present context the meaning of the political and of the apolitical are interdependent (Schmitt 1932, 53). But this interdependence does not in itself teach anything about what makes apoliticism specific.

In classical and discursive political theories (Edelmann 1971, 3, 12), the attitudes consistent with apoliticism appear as features of the broader political sphere. More precisely, both the indifferent and reflective rejection of politics are political phenomena because they are not outside the political realm they impact.\(^3\) The frequency of their impact on the political can be detected in the significance of the undecided portion of the electorate in the outcome of an election, and in the interest in alternative political movements. Similarly, critically apolitical agendas may become more important than any agenda offered by the party system (Ordeshook, Schwartz, 180–199; Török, 19–75). Such an environment of devaluation of hardcore political actors can be both the outcome of an exhaustion of earlier political messages and the cause of emergent ones.

In his work *Antipolitics*, George Konrad distinguishes between antipolitics, as the civic rejection of the politics embedded in the core institutions of the state regime or establishment, and apolitics, as the indifference toward politics as such (Konrad 1984, 227–233). Konrad describes antipolitics as an avowed politically unbiased civic attitude that seeks distance from the establishment and insulation or protection of one’s own private life from politics.\(^4\) The apolitical attitude, by contrast, is one of disinterestedness that may make the citizen more vulnerable to politics.

Barry Hindess elaborates a similar distinction to Konrad’s, adding that no universal typology of the apolitical is possible, because all its understandings are only meaningful in relation to some specific understanding of the political. He therefore offers a widely acceptable understanding of politics as the more or less autonomous range of action of a community, which he would also apply
Apoliticism

to apolitics (Hindess 1996, 21, 23). The present analysis tends to follow the line offered by Hindess by emphasizing the necessary correspondence between any specific understanding of politics, on the one hand, and of apolitics, as related to it, on the other hand.

Andreas Schedler offers a more detailed typology than both Konrad’s and Hindess’s. He distinguishes among four theses that describe the antipolitical: (1) instead of collective issues, the thesis identifies a self-orienting order; (2) instead of plurality, uniformity; (3) instead of accidentalism, necessity; (4) instead of political power, individual liberty. According to Schedler, each eliminates a fundamental aspect of the political: (1) the recognition of the interdependence among the constituting individuals of the community; (2) the recognition of their plurality; (3) their capacity for joint action; (4) the possibility of their acceptance of a common rule. Schedler links the private sphere to the apolitical and the public to the political one and claims that the primary code of politics always emerges from the opposition between the private and the public (Schedler 1996, 3–4). He describes the apolitical as non-cooperative and the political as cooperative enterprise.

The Apolitical as Phenomenon and Meaning

If the functioning and the goals of politics are related to freedom and deliberation, then apolitical attitudes can be considered either as forms of free withdrawal from deliberative acts or as free engagements in alternative forms of deliberation. In the first case we deal with refraining from any platform of civic influence and from sharing one’s own needs and values. In the second, we are dealing with engaging in alternative forms of deliberation.

Political processes are distinguishable from economic and social ones to the extent that they carry a specific dynamic in the web of social interactions (Ingram 2002, 1). In this understanding, interactions become political by acquiring meanings that count as political in a particular context. Although activities like beekeeping, driving, courtship, and camping belong to the world of politics, such everyday activities can be clearly described without invoking politics. However, this does not hold for apolitics. Unlike many everyday activities and interactions, apolitics is not meaningful without politics. To elaborate any typology of apolitics, one must turn to the meaning of politics.

By taking the asymmetry of the political and the apolitical into account, the goal and mechanisms above do not only include the official forms of politics, but also the forms of its negation—that is to say, both indifferent and reflective apoliticism. As such, freedom does not only appear as the goal of politics but also as the goal of apolitics. Even if the institutional forms of official politics do
Philosophy and Global Affairs

not serve apolitics, apolitics gains its own space of freedom through negating officialized forms of politics. Although in case of apolitics one is not dealing with a particular plan of free action—this would be especially improbable in the case of indifferent apolitics—freedom may be envisaged as the ideal target for apolitics, too. But whereas in politics freedom rests on participation, both passive and active apolitical attitudes rest on un- or disengagement.

Considering the above definitions of politics, it can be inferred that indifferent apoliticism would be the lack of interest toward the distribution of power and toward society-wide debate about it. Critical apoliticism, by contrast, would be an alternative way of interpreting and debating issues related to the distribution of power. Robert Huckfeldt, Paul E. Johnson, and John Sprague (2004) offer a closer examination of the structuring of levels of interest and engagement.

In their volume *Political Disagreement*, the three authors attempt to detect systematic relationships between disagreement and political or civic engagement. They thereby offer useful criteria for both the empirical and conceptual understanding of apoliticism. One of their concluding passages deserves a lengthy quotation:

"Taken together, it would seem to imply that citizens who encounter politically diverse messages are more likely to hold intense but balanced (or ambivalent) views regarding politics and political candidates, and they are less likely to hold intense and polarized (or partisan) views. For these purposes we can think in terms of three ideal types—the disengaged citizens who are unable to provide justification for their attitudes regarding the candidates; the intense and polarized citizens (the partisans) who are only able to provide reasons for liking one candidate and disliking the other; and the intense and balanced citizens (the ambivalent citizens) who are able to provide both likes and dislikes regarding the candidates. Small and politically sparse networks of communication are likely to yield the low intensity citizen; large homogenous networks are likely to yield the intensely partisan citizen; and large diverse networks are likely to yield the intensely ambivalent citizen. (Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004, 212–214)"

"Applied to the terminology of the present research, the first group (those who cannot account for their attitude toward political processes and personalities) corresponds to the unreflective apolitical. In the second, the range of political preferences (or sympathies) the respondents can justify is so narrow"
and they are predominantly biased and subjective so they cannot correspond
with the reflective apolitical. This group is a border case between the reflective
and indifferent apolitical. The third group identified in the quote doesn’t cor-
respond to either of the two apolitical types.

As already indicated, both the reflective and indifferent forms of apoliti-
cism are only meaningful in a given web of relationships of meanings of what
counts as political and apolitical. The following quote from the same volume
addresses this rhetoric/semantic dimension of our analysis.

The moral is that politics, at both micro and macro levels, that
revolves around interdependent citizens, and unless this inter-
dependence is taken into account, we run the risk of ignoring a fun-
damental aspect of politics. A primary challenge of political analysis
is to specify the nature of this interdependence. Who depends on
whom, or what? What are the circumstances that create this inter-
dependence? What are the consequences of interdependence, both
for individuals and for politically relevant aggregates and groups?
(Huckfeldt, Johnson, Sprague 2004, 216–217)

Interdependency may indicate the context-ladenness of apoliticism. The
difference between the political and apolitical and between reflective and
un-reflective apoliticism emerges in a web of interdependencies that config-
ure their roles as either political or apolitical. The authors highlight the tran-
sient character and even the possible inter-changeability of these roles.

To adapt the quote to the context of the present analysis we must recall
the observation that both reflective and the indifferent apoliticism can trans-
form into a proactive political attitude. As dimensions of political reality, apo-
liticism may acquire a political role, for instance, as pure non-participation
in elections, referenda, or demonstrations of support or protest. Similarly, the
political sphere may generate apoliticism by failing to represent aspects of the
political community, for instance, by disintegrating into factional spheres of
interests.

Factionalism is understood in this sense as the infusion of some, particular
interests into institutions intended to represent the entire political commu-
nity. Hindess stresses that the harm factionalism inflicts upon society consists
primarily in the denied access of the larger community to the benefits some
factions can obtain for themselves. He argues that the destruction caused by
factionalism consists in the ambivalence it provokes between the political and
the non-political. This occurs in the always switching sense of considering ei-
ther institutionalized politics or society as the primary representative of the in-
terests of the entire political community, temporarily considered as the “true” interests. In this ambivalence a constant alternating takes place between the corruption emerging from the official political sphere and the corruption emerging from the various factions of the society. This alternation undermines any authentic institutional representation—or the political character—of the political community itself (Hindess 1996, 28, 29, 36).

The fundamental thesis that both rejecting and indifferent forms of apoliticism form part of the political spectrum can then be divided into the following three theses:

First, as just stated, public institutions may be captured by particular interests and goals which do not serve and may further fragment the larger political community. In this process, public institutions become apolitical by losing their role of representing the whole community (Michels 1968, 156–160). Such institutions may also become too bureaucratic or too corrupt, too centralized or autocratic. These circumstances exemplify alienation of public institutions from the political community where the main feature of the alienation is the abuse the suspending or transforming of their public institutional role, including society-wide public deliberation on the distribution of the goods of the community (material assets, public office, and liberties), into a socially useless private (factional) one.

The above considerations imply that political rule can have (and historically often has had) a vested interest in limited society-wide deliberation or in sustaining degrees of apoliticism of the population. Seyla Benhabib observes that from the first half of the twentieth century onward, deliberative democracy has suffered an increasing deficit, leading to the weakening of the consultative function of parliamentarism and to the intensification of the anti-parliamentarian imposing function (Benhabib 1996, 316–317). She refers to Carl Schmitt’s authoritarian and fascist theory of sovereignty as a scholarly example of interpreting the public sphere as unnecessary (ibid, 322–323).

Second, as evident in the first, official forms of politics can function apolitically and contribute to both the reflective and unreflective apoliticism of society. Historical and contemporary examples include the radicalization of earlier politically disinterested masses, the capturing of previously apolitical masses by the far right, and the political apathy known to spread among many electoral groups worldwide (Lipset 1988, 116–121, 131–138; Reckwitz 2019, 106, 128; Blumler and Coleman 2010, 185–188). By turning away from official agendas, electorates sometimes tend to be reflectively apolitical as they restructure the political landscape, sometimes by creating new political institutions (Arendt 2005, 29–30; Leonard 2019, 203).
Recalling various courses of events in the twentieth century, some scholars have emphasized the justified role of people in influencing and changing government action, sometimes through sedition within reasonable limits. For example, Giorgio Agamben distinguishes between the absolutist and the democratic revolutionary traditions of exceptional legislation in situations of crisis (Agamben 2005, 5). Emphasizing the ideologically neutral character of the state of exception, he then stresses that the exceptional functioning of the state displays ambivalence between legality and genuine political action. The ambivalence consists in the suspension of legality itself as a political act (Ibid, 1–4). Agamben identifies a parallel between civic disobedience and the state of exception, describing both as the edge of legal order (Ibid, 10). Both exemplify the paradox of the legal order of public distress.

The main justification of Agamben’s approach—and of John Rawls on the ambivalence between distress and the new law—has been that the ultimate actors of a political community are not the institutions of the political establishment, but the people (Rawls 1999, 327–331, 335–340; Smith and Zhang 2019, 115, 121, 124–125, 135–137). What makes such analogies and parallels intriguing is that like the political action emerging from apoliticism and, reversely, the apoliticism emerging from political action, both the state of exception and public distress are in the intersection of the old and the newly emerging politics.

Third, what makes various deeds and occurrences politically relevant is their meaning. The present analysis joins those approaches of discursive political theory that consider the meanings constituted in the interactions among the members of a community as more indicative regarding the political reality of the community than the formal functioning of its public institutions (Edelman 1971, 3; Foucault, 2002, 198). For instance, symbols of protest can be just as crucial in the political self-determination of the community as the official, national symbols of the state. Therefore, there is a recurring battle between the reflective apolitical and the officially political side for seizing the power of the salient symbolic representations (flags, slogans, public spaces etc.) of the political community (Mosse 1977, 11, 79, 102).  

**Empirical and Conceptual Preludes**

Apoliticism can be systemic if it emerges from and is sustained by the major institutions of the social and political system. Systemic apoliticism is not unknown to scholars. Numerous authors pointed out various elements in the institutions of Euromodern societies which work against the genuine political articulation of demands.
Still, it is possible to distinguish between two types of systemic apoliticism. The first inheres in the institutional structure rather than any particular political content. The second is the outcome of certain political and/or ideological commitments of a particular regime which displays systemic apoliticism. These types of apoliticism exemplify either over- or under-politicization against which genuine politics can be described. The following illuminate the nature of over- and under-politicization.

The implicit political character of apoliticism was powerfully addressed by the Frankfurt School (Adorno 1991). They located this phenomenon in their analysis of the entertainment industry emerging from mass media. Their central thesis, that there was nothing like apolitical entertaining, included two claims: (1) the entertainment industry can itself transmit political messages; and (2) the entertainment industry “socializes” its audience for apoliticism, carrying out a particular mode of political education: the demand for apoliticism.

Their second thesis focused on the social implications. By educating for apoliticism, the entertaining industry is part of people’s relationship to politics in a broader and less visible way than in the form of any direct political messaging. By winning the consent of the audience through entertainment, Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno traces the structure of a mode of influence in which the market and political power cooperate to train people for the delusion of their deliberate approval.

In later decades, several authors interpreted late Euromodern society in similar terms. Joining the idea of the economization of political behavior, Colin Hay argues:

I have suggested that privatization, the contracting–out of public services, the marketization of public goods, the displacement of policy–making autonomy from the formal political realm to independent authorities, the rationalization and insulation from critique of neoliberalism as an economic paradigm, and the denial of policy choice . . . are all forms of depoliticization. . . . Each serves effectively to diminish and denude the realm of formal public political deliberation; each might be seen as a legitimate cause of political disaffection and disengagement (at least from formal politics). Moreover, the increasing adoption of a range of political marketing techniques has also resulted in a narrowing of the field of electoral competition (at least in policy terms), the depoliticization of whole areas of public policy, a tendency to remove questions of policy content, especially those involving significant institutional reform from electoral
scrutiny, and a compensating politicization of the personality traits of candidates for high office. (Hay 2007, 159)

This elimination of the deliberative and non-profit-oriented character of politics is affirmed by Norbert Lechner when he argues that the uncontrolled prevailing of the market economy destroys the traditional ethos of politics as public service. Extending to even more areas of life, it has turned politics into a spate of commercial deals. Although this process need not lead to the demonization of the market, he warns that the right-wing criticism of state interference into social and economic processes and the left-wing criticism of state autocracy unite these two political orientations in one single anti-statist stance. The outcome is a double-edged criticism which disregards the importance of state symbols in the creation and sustaining of a political community. With the lack of such collective symbols, the society is exempt of any shared understanding of coexistence or common order.

Meynhard Creydt similarly identifies the source of apoliticism in political institutions themselves, however, in his Marxist approach, politics as a middle-class structure which is only suitable to offer a framework of handling problems, which is the very cause of those problems (Creydt 2019, 7, 9). Accordingly, the process is distorted since political problems are represented as the manifestation of the already existing economic and power relations. As such, the political articulation of human problems are forced into an artificially reductive guise.

Contrary to left-wing approaches, Erwin A. Jaffe adopts a non-Marxist and specifically U.S. perspective. In his characterization of apoliticism, the U.S. tradition of suspicion toward the state offers a fertile ground for apoliticism. According to him, this feature of U.S. political culture tends to reduce all problems to competing interpretations of the Constitution instead of handling them as politically intriguing. This account of U.S. political culture also exemplifies its apolitical nature (Jaffe 1996, 63–64).

The rejection of political systems of institutions—especially of the state—as linking apoliticism and social movements is part of Alan Renwick’s careful analysis of the Central European dissidence cultures in the 1970s and 1980s (Renwick 2004, 288–291). Identifying a regime-specific apoliticism, he argues that Czech, Hungarian, and Polish, dissident communities were internally and externally diverse and that their post-1989 influence also developed along different trajectories. Accordingly, the oppositional politics of that period cannot be considered as antipolitical, even if antipolitics was not nonexistent in that period. It was present in two primary types of oppositional movements.
One was represented by Vaclav Havel and George Konrad and involved pleading for as much independence from the state as possible while attempting to influence the state. (Some more radical versions of this model refused to attempt to influence the state.) The other, represented by Havel and Václav Benda, advocated for Security Education and Training Awareness and KOR Security. These consisted in platforms of debate and sought to build a culture parallel to the one offered by the state. Renwick highlights that while the first focused on the individual and on the institutionally un-organized communities, the second sought a more structured alternative institutional system.

In his reconstruction of the history of political ideas of these state-socialist countries and of their development after the end of the state-socialist regimes in 1989, Miklós Tamás Gáspár elaborates that the post-fascist turn in the 2000s emerged from the erosion of an earlier understanding of the equality of rights. He argues that in this process of eroding civic equality, citizenship has become apolitical and led to an uncritical political environment (Tamás 2014, 24, 2015, 28–42).

Finally, when interpreting apoliticism in Central Europe after 1989, Charles Fairbanks also identifies a connection between the rise of apoliticism and the development of these societies (Fairbanks 1996, 91–114). He interprets this apoliticism as a grotesque outcome of the over-polarization of everyday life during the one-party rule of the pre-1989 period. The void left behind by communist dictatorships has been filled up by nationalism inspired by a Jacobin understanding of the “people,” already gone in Western societies. In Western versions, apoliticism is found in “single issue” movements (Fairbanks 1996, 112).

**Conclusion**

This essay elaborates the concept of apoliticism and the terms related to it. I have addressed the meanings of the apolitical and antipolitical and apoliticism as an umbrella term to denote various negative attitudes toward politics. Whereas the apolitical is a reflective attitude designed to reject a dominant institutional system of politics and possibly to advance an alternative to it, antipolitics refers to an indifferent stance toward politics in general: lack of interest, no preference for alternative political agendas, and lack of participation. Apolitics rejects a particular mechanism of politics; antipolitics rejects the pursuit of politics as such.

These definitions contain an understanding of politics as a fundamentally deliberative undertaking. Accordingly, every institutional or individual episode of politics that runs counter to free deliberation is considered essentially
Apoliticism

apolitical. In this understanding, even a particular institutional establishment of politics can function in an apolitical way, if it impedes voluntary engagement and free discussion.

This description of apoliticism may also contribute to understanding politics as in its versions as apolitics and as antipolitics, apoliticism is part of political reality: apoliticism is a political phenomenon.

The main thesis that both the rejecting and indifferent forms of apoliticism are part of the political spectrum has been divided into the following claims: (1) Institutions of the official system of politics may become apolitical if disintegrated into factional interests, which disregard their impact upon the political community. (2) Both electoral apathy and the orientation of previously politically disinterested masses toward extremist narratives are instances of the political potential of apolitical attitudes. (3) Critically apolitical agendas may become more important than any of the agendas offered by the institutionalized political sphere, highlighting the possible monopoly of the stage by political and critically apolitical messages.

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NOTES

1. Gershon Weiler (1996) claims that by detaching the competence of ruling from the philosophers and considering it as the exclusive right of the sovereign, Hobbes opened the path for antipolitism, followed later by Carl Schmitt, who interpreted the contract theory paradigm itself as antipolitical. David Lloyd Thomas (2000) claims that in his contract theory Locke was the first Euromodern political thinker to offer a systematic foundation of anti-government protest and even of the removal of state leadership through the justification that the ultimate sovereign was the people. This interpretation is consistent with the present understanding of the reflective kind of antipolitics, which only rejects a particular politics, but not politics altogether.
2. Although the results of elections and surveys about party preferences demonstrate the global presence of electoral indifference, passivity, lack of interest, and citizen disengagement are often addressed by scholarship ranging from political science to sociology and media research (Blumler and Coleman 2010, 1–14; Kunczik 2001, 86–87; Knobloch-Westerwick and Johnson 2012, 192–193; Recwitz, 275, Stroud 2017/2018, 1–21). Apoliticism rarely appears as a topic of political philosophy (Tamás 2014, 24, 2015, 28–42; Agamben, 1–4, 10). Brian McNair defines political communication as a society-wide deliberation on the redistribution of goods: “pure discussion about the allocation of public resources (revenues), official authority (who is given the power to make legal, legislative and judicial decision), and official sanctions (what the state rewards or punishes)” (McNair 2011, 3). By addressing the aspect of redistribution, McNair partly follows Max Weber’s definition of political action as follows: “Social action, especially organized action, will be spoken of as ‘politically oriented’ if it aims at exerting influence on the government of a political organization; especially at the appropriation, expropriation, redistribution or allocation of the powers of government” (Weber 1978, 54).

3. James M. Jasper distinguishes among three key factors behind any act of social resistance: (1) the alteration of the options offered by the political environment; (2) the level of organization of a particular movement; (3) the positive perspectives of the given community. This classification corresponds to the present interpretation of reflective apoliticism as a potential in the emerging of movements (Jasper 1997, 34).

4. Žižek (2005, 12) also makes this argument.

5. For Hindess, factionalism has been an especially acute problem in Euromodern times, when politics became even more specialized and separated from other major domains of life like economy. This specialization also gave birth to a new sense of dissatisfaction toward politics, for its falling short of fulfilling its fundamental duties for the community (Hindess 1996, 27). Theoretical and ideological commitments can also serve as factional goals and interests that may capture politics by reducing it to un-questioned extra-political criteria. Volker Gerhardt (1996) argues, in this sense, that theoretical models of politics, whether “the veil of ignorance,” the original contract, or the friend–enemy dichotomy, all offer reduced conceptions of politics. In a similar fashion, Schedler challenges systems of thought that frame politics in the economic, religious, or legal spheres as antipolitical (Schedler 1996, 7–8). When analyzing specific uses of the language of globalization, Louis Pauly states that Karl Polányi’s and Joseph Schumpeter’s labels for the market in the 1950s as “self-regulating” (Polányi) and as “creative destruction” (Schumpeter) were antipolitical euphemisms that obstructed the gap between economy and society. Pauly adds that these metaphors are being re-applied by the nationalist and populist movements of the 2000s (Pauly 1996, 159–160).

7. Miriam Leonard argues that three traditions merge in Arendt: ancient Greek republicanism, the revolutionary spirit of the eighteenth century, and the civil disobedience of the twentieth century.

8. George Mosse (1997) analyzes the over-politicized culture of public events and its roots in the Weimar Republic. He highlights the consciousness-forming impact of this kind of state symbolism of that age.

9. In such an environment, economic hard data acquires an exaggerated significance over the soft data of genuine political action necessary for social cohesion. The outcome is the marginalization of politics and its disintegration into private undertakings (Lechner 1996, 175–176, 181).

REFERENCES


