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INDIVIDUALISM AND POLITICAL THEORY

by

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## INTRODUCTION.(1)

In this paper I will try to examine the crossing points between individualism and political theory. Within this wide and complex area, three main issues will be dealt with:

- 1) The first concerns individualism, as a method of inquiry in the social sciences, and its applications in political philosophy. Broadly speaking, methodological individualism assumes individuals as the basic units of social life and therefore, tries to explain all social phenomena in terms of the individual agent. The applications of the method in political theory, provide a picture of the political realm with reference to individuals' aims and interests, and provide models of the just society as the result of the individual choice.
- 2) The second issue concerns those forms of political arrangements which are compatible with, and which therefore entail individualism. In this respect, individualism does not imply a method of theory construction, but rather an ideal, a set of values orientating a conceptual framework of the social world. Political models may encompass individualism in three different ways: a) justification of political obligation; b) the conception of individuals as free actors in the political realm; c) as a consequence of (b), collective participation in political decision making.
- 3) Then I intend to deal with the problematic definition of public interest, when it is viewed from the individualist approaches. That is to say, what individualism demands of politics. I will show that this is a specific issue arisen in connection with individualism, which it does not exist in the same way, in holistic models of politics.



This third problem implies both the assumption of an individualistic Weltanschauung and the use of some sort of methodological individualism to reach a solution.

Clearly, dealing with political models, the two aspects of individualism, as an ideal and as a method are very often strictly related, since values such as autonomy, human dignity, privacy are normally embedded in political theories built on some versions of methodological individualism and viceversa. Still there are many exceptions: one well known example is Thomas Hobbes' conception which begins with the methodological assumption of free and equal individuals and ends up with a strong, absolute state, with no individual guarantees.

But, leaving aside the exceptions, the links between methodological individualism and individualistic values exhibits many difficulties as the analysis of public interest will try to point out.

Before taking up the topic, I want to clarify that the strategy of inquiry used here is the analytical method of conceptual models. Though references will often be made to history, history of ideas, and classical thought, I will use these references as materials to build ideal-types, through which political and social life will be represented. I do not therefore attempt to reconstruct the developments and the changes of concepts, let alone examining political formations as historical data.

What I would like to do is to stress some theoretical problems concerning logical consistency in political theory involving individualism and viceversa. And, since descriptions of the social and political sphere affect our behaviour and so influence the social construction of the world, they may well turn out to be also politically relevant.



1. METHODOLOGICAL INDIVIDUALISM AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: THE CASES OF INVISIBLE HAND VERSUS SOCIAL CONTRACT.

In this first part, I shall begin with a brief sketch of philosophical and epistemological features involved in methodological individualism. Then I shall focus on the two rival conceptual schemes in which the method is applied in political philosophy, namely the so-called "invisible hand" mechanism and the model of social contract. In order to do this, a brief presentation shall be given of what, to my knowledge, is the most extreme example of the invisible hand approach within contemporary philosophy, that suggested by Friedrich von Hayek; the analysis of Hayek's position will allow me to outline, by contrast, the opposite approach.

A purely epistemological definition of individualism can be found in the debate which developed in England in the Fifties and the Sixties, against holism(2). By holism we mean the viewpoint which assumes social facts to be more than a mere sum of individual components.

Briefly, methodological individualism includes: a) ontological assumption about individuals as the only empirical agents in social life and, thus, the denial of the existence of social wholes; b) epistemological principles about the form of explanation in social sciences.

It should be noticed, however, that the consideration of individuals does not concern itself with individuality, by which is meant the unique character of each human being. The individual here is indeed considered as an abstract entity, with given features representing the commonality of human nature. In this sense, we may better talk of human beings, rather



than individuals, insofar as they are playing their role only as representative individuals. This is indeed one of the criticisms against methodological individualism. Nevertheless, this remark does not affect the theory whose aim is not a moral affirmation of the single human being, but a better understanding of social phenomena by means of this heuristic device of the abstract individual. In this sense individuals are seen as much as in the same way as atoms in chemistry, as the smallest and simplest component of social world, regardless of the personality involved(3).

Among various versions of this methodological approach, a distinction should be made between descriptive, definitional individualism, and explanatory individualism.

The latter implies the reduction of all explanations in social sciences to theories which make use only of Individual predicates, i.e., every social explanation is framed in terms of individual actions while the possibility of non-reducible emergencies as the outcome of interactions is rejected.

Without getting into the details of this discussion, it should be pointed out that, in order to make a reduction, two theories are needed, one reducible to another, larger and more fundamental one; and both must be closed and complete, that is specified in all their variables and in the relations among all the variables. This is quite far from the present situation in social sciences, apart from the whole question concerning the legitimacy of reduction itself. Moreover a set of combination rules is required in order to explain the compositional effect: but the validity of combination rules cannot be accepted a priori, being a matter of empirical demonstration(4).

Definitional individualism (the weak version), on the contrary, states that there are collective concepts and properties which cannot be totally



reduced to individual agents. According to this all collective concepts have no existence of their own, outside social actions and interactions, and their reduction, even if possible, would be too long and complicated and useless for analytical purposes. Therefore some form of 'emergence', i.e. properties of phenomena which would be unexpected on the basis of their component elements, are compatible with individualism. The theme of 'unintended consequences' should be placed here, as filling the space between individual actions and the social outcome(5).

Approaching methodological individualism in terms of theory construction, another distinction we can draw among theories built according to an intentional action approach and those built according to the general model of behaviorism(6). Quite apart from the epistemological problem concerning reduction and emergence, the issue has to do with different models of human beings and contrasting views of human behaviour(7).

For behaviourism, human action is in fact explained without any reference to the actor's intentions and motivations, simply as a response to a given stimulus while the intentional action paradigm conceives of individuals as acting purposefully, choosing under constraints, but nevertheless among several alternatives. This implies a model of human being which is able to conceive of ends, to project possible courses of action, to weigh them up and to choose the best, according to the actor's preferences, beliefs, abilities, expectations of others' behaviour. The intentional model does not necessarily mean that individuals are actually able to maximise their freely chosen goals, but that individual actions, no matter how much personalities are influenced by the environment and how

results may or may not correspond to expectations, are intentionally oriented towards purposes.

It must be added that the two paradigms, clearly contrasting in theoretical terms, are not easily distinguishable in their application, that is when one comes to social explanations.

Without going into details the rational choice model, for example, which is the main development of the intentional action paradigm, does not allow us to appreciate the difference between an intentional action and a fully determined one, at least, given the standard definition of rationality.

In other words, in economics or in political science, in order to make use of the rational choice model, the actor's goals are normally postulated, for example, optimal allocation of resources, profit maximization or the quest for seeking offices, etc. Now when actors' goals are given, individuals find themselves trapped between constraints, circumstances and goals, so that if they are rational, only one course of action is open to them. This being the case, nothing enables the observer to detect whether the action was intentionally orientated towards purposes or simply adaptive to the external situation. Thus the rational choice model becomes a sort of behaviourism, where actors' intentions are indeed disappeared(8). Paradoxically, the only kind of actions which allow the inference of intentionality is the irrational one or the mistake. (However, this highly theoretical problem does not affect -or not too much- the work both of economists and of political scientists, who, after all, are not committed to a philosophically sound definition of human nature, but, rather, are trying to make sensible predictions about human behaviour in



specific fields, regardless of whether behaviour presupposes intentions or whether it actually correspond to a stimulus-response scheme).

So too in the realm of political philosophy the above question does not particularly undermine the theory, because the relevant use of methodological individualism is limited to the intentional action model. This is obvious, because if one thinks of human beings as completely plastic, no possibility is left for a normative theory of politics.

In this field, the two rival models which I intend to refer to, are social contract and invisible hand theories. The main argument concerns the possibility and the desirability of collective choice, leaving aside the question of how a collective decision can be brought about by rational individuals.

I shall start from a picture of the invisible hand model by means of a presentation of Hayek's political philosophy, and then I shall return to the debate.

The kind of methodological individualism which underlies the economics and social philosophy of Friedrich von Hayek is not concerned with reductionism, which is the strong version of individualism. Rather his methodological approach can be reconstructed on the basis of a negative assumption: in Hayek's view, the starting point of social science analysis should be the individual only because of his/her empirical evidence and also because of the impossibility of visualizing any social whole independently of its constituent elements, that is human beings. This, however, does not

mean that social outcome should be considered as intentional products of a human design which individual actor can easily master(9).

This can be explained by going back to the model of human beings which lies behind Hayek's programme. Again Hayek uses a sort of 'negative' approach to the issue, according to which we can scarcely define the positive potentialities of rationality, but, we can however recognize its limited extension, from everyday experience. While the totality of human knowledge distributed throughout society amounts to a large, powerful aggregate, the part of it that each individual attains is small, so that human beings can control only the immediate consequences and effects of their own actions in the limited sphere they know(10).

This notion of the individuals' ontological ignorance constitutes the basic idea, not only of Hayek's philosophy and methodology, but also of his political position. Mainly from the model of limited rationality, Hayek derives a criticism of social planning and of any form of collective control of social facts. He supports the theory of society as the unintended and unplanned product of spontaneous social coordination.

(I would like just to remark that the idea of limited rationality-e.g. in the more famous version of Herbert Simon's bound rationality-(11) does not necessarily bring about the denial of social planning. On the contrary, in the case of Simon, the acknowledgment of human rationality's limits becomes the ground for a theory of organization).

The concepts of limited rationality and its opposite, that of omniscience are embedded in two different traditions in Western philosophy(12). The first is continental rationalism which, starting with Descartes assumes human capability of rational control both in individual and in public affairs; the second is Anglo-Saxon empiricism, gives a picture



of human nature in less flattering terms: since human beings are ontologically limited they cannot control reality, but can only adapt to it. Thus society is conceived of as the result of a spontaneous evolution and growth, with an unplanned emergence of patterns and social rules. This anticonstructivist view, which makes claim for a slow and unintentional evolution of society in an unknown direction was traditionally embodied in organicism, with its ideas about natural and uncontrolled phases of development and about hierarchically organized parts; the organism can be cured in the case of illness, but cannot be consciously designed. This powerful idea, deeply rooted in Western political philosophy is generally connected with a holistic point of view; is politically oriented against innovation; and is in favour of tradition. Not by chance, indeed, this organicistic theory of society flourished in the early XIX century (classically exemplified by Hegelian philosophy) in relation to the "abstract", "artificial" attempt of the French Revolution to build a new social order.

The traditional thought to which Hayek refers and to which he claims to belong peculiarly combines an individualistic approach with an organicistic evolutionary view of society. In fact, inside this composite stream of thought unified by Hayek under the label of "true individualism" different components are present. In Hayek's work, the English philosophy of Hume, Mandeville and Smith is filtered, through Burke's traditionalism into the German historical school of jurisprudence (Humboldt, Hugo, Savigny). These different streams have already found a synthesis in Carl Menger's methodology of social science, the founding programme of the Austrian school of Economics(13). In this way, Hayek does actually revisit Menger's interpretation, only generalizing the model of the invisible hand.



The invisible hand mechanism, in fact, is applied not only to a horizontal situation as in the case of the market, as in Smith's original version, but also it implies that individuals pursue stable advantages only if their interests can combine with others' plans. Given human ignorance, single actors cannot plausibly pursue social coordination as an end, nor set an agreement in order to produce it. Between individual intentional actions and the outcome there is neither a conscious design nor an irrational development: indeed there is a trial and error process through which the most successful patterns are selected and fixed in institutions. Once they are set up, institutions "become" data available to the actors of the following generations, both as constraints and as sources of informations: a network of stable expectations is thus established within which only rational action may be performed. This model exhibit a family resemblance to natural evolution: like the latter, the process shows a sort of a-posteriori rationality that is, something like unintentional teleology, since no human mind has designed the outcome(14).

As an explanation of socio-political life, the invisible hand mechanism is considered fundamental, because the explanans makes use of completely different terms than does the explanandum. According to Robert Nozick "the less an explanation uses notions constituting what is to be explained, the more (coeteris paribus) we understand"(15).

Thus, no altruistic or sociable attitude is assumed, such as described in Aristotle's definition of the political animal, nor is the actors' consciousness of higher common good as in Rousseau's volonte generale. Through the invisible hand, social order comes into existence only as a by-product of self-interested action.



This however is true only if one considers the exchange of goods between two producers as the basic unit of social life. Menger was the first to point out that market transactions appear as a fair situation because each actor pursuing his/her interest, satisfies also the other's and so, unintentionally, a common good is brought about(16). But two requirements must be met if one wants to extend the model to all aspects of social life: 1)the situation of the actors must be, more or less, equal. In the case of great differences -clear advantages and handicaps- direct imposition would plausibly be the rule of selfish actors. 2)Individual interests must be open to transactions (no lexicographic value is allowed).

I think that this very image of society emerging from the exchange of goods, gives roots to the deep motivation of Hayek's denial of a constructivistic approach.

We have seen Hayek's criticism of social construction and public choice because human beings are only limitedly capable of foresight. But it should be observed that human limitations may explain the difficulties and limits caused by models of socio-political engineering (namely, side-products and perverse effects), but they cannot provide adequate support for the invisible hand model. In order to clarify this point, I shall refer to social contract theories. The need for a social contract has always been founded in the impossibility of a spontaneous growth of stable cooperation. The very image of the state of nature, however defined, points out to a pre-social situation where conflicts, insecurity and arbitrariness are (or may easily become) dominant.

Thus, it is considered necessary to overcome this original stage for peaceful life to be set up through an enforced agreement (which individuals are thought able to create). Thus, I maintain that the fiction of social

contract derives much more from the need to solve conflicts than from a bias for rational construction of reality. But Hayek's assumption of limited rationality does not answer the problem of war and insecurity symbolized by the state of nature. In fact, besides human ignorance, Hayek makes another implicit assumption; that is, that the basic interactions of a social life take the form of a cooperation game. Now, if the basic interaction is cooperative, why should any social contract be required? Social contract, even before being considered difficult, expensive and dangerous, appears to be useless. This is the first point I want to make about the two models: on the one hand, they imply different concepts of human nature, a more "optimistic" one in the case of social contract, and a quite "pessimistic" one in the case of invisible hand, where individual rationality is not considered capable to go further than individual plans, and even then, to a limited extent, that is, only within a given context of known rules and expectations. On the other hand, they also refer to a rival pictures of basic human interaction, and here we can say, a "pessimistic" one in the social contract model (conflict, insecurity) and an "optimistic" one in the opposite model (possible transactions of interests).

Another issue should be brought up at this point for the comparison of the two models. Like the social contract, the invisible hand has both an explanatory value and a normative significance as a justification scheme for social arrangements. But here I think that the two models exhibit an inverse strength at the descriptive and at the prescriptive level respectively.



At the explanatory level, both models carry the status of conjectural explanations, not of empirically tested ones: in this sense, they are not acceptable as forms of scientific explanations, but only as als-ob general hypothesis about the social world which may well have a hermeneutic value or may even be transformed into specified explanatory schemes for historical and social facts, empirically falsifiable.

As a general model for the explanation of social life, I think that the invisible hand appears, at least, less implausible than social contract. On the one hand, as we have seen, it is more fundamental as a kind of explanation, on the other, all our empirical evidence supports the view that patterns, rules, institutions can only with difficulty be conceived as the result of rational choice.

Besides that, as everybody knows, social contract presents a certain logical circularity; how can social rules be decided from pre-social condition? Normally, in the natural law tradition, some social content (some form of intersubjectivity), is already introduced in the state of nature (natural laws or laws of pure reason), in order to make collective agreement possible: very often, for example, the rule to keep promises is already assumed as working, even if not perfectly.

But coming to the normative strength of the two models, the situation is exactly the opposite. The justification scheme of social arrangements produced through a social pact is directly embodied in the very idea of collective agreement of rational individuals under specified circumstances. What better basis for political and moral obligations? And, in principle, which better path exists in order to overcome the gap between subjective values and interests, on the one hand, and the need of common rules, on the other, once we have lost the faith in objectively normative value-judgments



and principles? I do not want now to go into the difficulties which political philosophers must face in order to figure out how such an agreement may ever be reached, if different individuals, with different tastes, values and conflicting goals are assumed to be the starting point. Indeed the rich tradition of the natural law theories and the contemporary literature on the axiomatic theory of rational choice give us several examples of the attempts to solve that problem, and everybody can judge whether they are satisfactory or not. Here I am concerned only with the very general normative idea implied in the social contract in the broadest possible sense, that is the idea of the public sphere of enforced obligation and commitment, as the result of a process starting from individuals collectively choosing their civil society, so that external legal constraints are also internally accepted. Therefore "eteronomy" is also reconciled with "autonomy". I believe this idea is the most powerful source of political obligation, since God's death in Western philosophy.

It is more difficult to assess the normative value of the invisible hand. In fact, the model gives a picture of the hypothetical development of social aggregates, which produces a spontaneous social order: here, some forms of social life are guaranteed, however, not necessarily the best or the most just or desirable from the viewpoint of individuals.

Hayek believes that the spontaneous outcome is justified through the analogy with natural selection. But leaving aside the legitimacy of the analogy itself, it should be pointed out that the apparent (a-posteriori) rationality of biological evolution is still quite far from the human standard of rationality. A heuristically fruitful distinction has been traced by Jon Elster, between local maximising rationality, characterizing natural selection, and global maximising one, which singles out specific



human capacities. The former is myopic, looking always for the first solution, while the latter makes wide use of strategic behaviour, such as the strategy used by Ulysses against the Sirenes, that of binding himself against the weakness of the will or that of "one step back for three forward later on"(17). Thus, we cannot regard natural selection as a satisfying way of solving problems concerning human aggregates. Moreover the agreement about human limitation in collective choice leaves us dissatisfied, once we have recognized a social problem. Quite the contrary, human beings have always tried to do something, maybe in the wrong direction or in an unefficient way, but they have not just waited for the invisible hand adjustments. Even in the case of natural catastrophes, we normally expect and require an organization for prevention and intervention afterwards.

Not by chance, I think, later followers of the invisible hand have assumed a compromising position towards social contract. Both Buchanan and Nozick (18) have kept the invisible hand as an explanatory device for initial forms of rudimentary social life. In Buchanan's words, there is a more or less random initial distribution of goods. In Nozick's picture, there is an autonomous emergence of protective agencies, and then the selection of the most effective in a monopolistic position. This hypothetical social developments are spontaneously produced, but definitely, they are not conceived of as the best of all possible worlds. For a more stable framework to be worked out and a higher level of wants to be fulfilled some sort of social contract is required. Even if both Buchanan and Nozick are not concerned with distributive justice, still they introduce partial social contracts as a means to enforce the obligation to respect

property rights and individual freedom, which otherwise, in a purely invisible hand society, are always threatened by arbitrary outcomes.

We can see that the result does not change in both cases: much as Hayek, Buchanan and Nozick support a liberal society where primary value is given to the individual's freedom and the private sphere's protection. But the procedure is quite different. I shall not engage here in a normative analysis of the value of freedom vs. distributive justice; my only concern is to point out the theoretical procedure implied in the two models.

An attempt to reconcile the invisible hand and the social contract may also have a positive effect on the latter.

Assuming that the social contract is signed within an already socialized framework, although spontaneously developed, the circularity of the contract itself is easily overcome. Language, mutual understanding, patterns and rules are supposed already existing, so that we can imagine a situation where a collective agreement can be reached.

The possibility of overcoming the theoretical difficulties involved in the social contract theory seems to me worth careful exploration. My point is, in fact, that the invisible hand is not a normative scheme, unless we allow for a clear case of naturalistic fallacy, based, after all, on the old concept of human nature. On the other side, the normative force of social contract appears strong. But we cannot avoid considering the fact that the theoretical difficulties may affect and undermine the whole model.



## 2. FORMS OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY AND INDIVIDUALISM.

As mentioned before, individualism is included in models of political arrangements both as to the form of justification and in relation to the definition of the actors of politics, hence demanding of individuals' political participation. Of course, referring back to individuals may give rise to a wide range of different political justifications and obligations, according to whether individuals are considered as moral persons, natural beings, perfectly or partially informed, self-interested or benevolent and so on and so forth.

However individuals are considered, a major distinction can be traced between justifications founded on rational consent of free individuals and those referring to individuals' happiness and welfare as an end of the State which does not encompass individuals' positive involvement in it.

In relation to this, a further possibility of inclusion of individualism within politics consists in that of a liberal order meant to protect and preserve individualism at the level of social life: this may be called a case of 'passive political individualism'; but it is also historically the first way through which an individualist Weltanschauung has been expressed.

Considering the traditional form of political domination, as classically defined in Max Weber's typology(19), it does not provide room for individuals as such, in the political sphere. Reference to traditional values, rituals, principles whose validity is rooted in their remote origins, constitutes the proper legitimacy of power.



Within this framework, political activity is by and large regulated by fixed roles, statutes, customs which are supposed to be protective of community cohesiveness and which are deeply linked to religion and its organization.

The forms of traditional representation (Middle Ages' Parliament and assembly) were not channels for the individuals' participation in political process: indeed they were institutions with the symbolic significance of power' rituals and meant for the preservation of community's integrity(20).

Of course this picture is only an ideal-type one which includes many historical varieties (with many exceptions) in one coherent model. Actually, as Weber himself stressed, within traditional power framework, there is a constant struggle between the aristocracy and the power holder, the king, who is concerned with the reinforcement of his own power and his individuality against the limits fixed by tradition, often preserved by clergy and aristocrats(21). But even in this case, individuals as such are neither the condition, the end, nor the actors of traditional system of politics.

Coming now, briefly, to another Weberian type of political power, the charismatic authority is that emanating from the inherent exceptional qualities of a leader, with uncommon gift of persuasion over people(22). In this case the only individual, the only free agent is the leader with his innovating and creative force. Opposite him, the others are only followers.

By contrast, the third kind of political authority, within Weberian typology, the legal rational, corresponds to various forms of modern and contemporary state, where individualism is entailed.

The best example of reconciliation between individualism and political arrangements is indeed the liberal-democratic state; here legitimacy is



grounded on the collective consent to established rules and procedures; room for public discussion and confrontation is part of the game; more or less enlarged participation is guaranteed.

The result may not be particularly original: that liberalism is individualistic in its core is a sort of truism. But what I want to stress is that only political arrangements which allow some form of rational control and participation leave room for political individualism. This is also to say that, following this perspective, the mechanism of power and organization demands "trasparence" from the point of view of the public. In order to have justification of political arrangements supported by rational individuals, a knowledge of political process and possible alternatives is required, and for the participation to be guaranteed, the mechanism should be open and accessible. Mystery, esoterism, magic rituals, in other words, the 'sacred' is ruled out of rational legal power where individuals have access to the rules and to the decision-making procedures(23).

While with the breaking down of the Ancien Régime, the visibility of political power has disappeared in the anonymity of popular sovereignty(24), the mechanism of rules, procedures, policy discussing and decision making has emerged in the sight of the public from the darkness of traditional rules and the absolute will of Kings.

In relation to the suggested dynamics between visibility/invisibility, light/darkness, on the one hand, and individuals' involvement in politics, on the other, I would like to point out two special (mixed) cases of political models: those of invisible hand and of enlightened despotism.

In the version provided by Hayek, the former has already been analyzed in the first paragraphs. Now, I believe that the invisible hand mechanism can be said to be politically individualist only as to the form of justification, because the overall order is meant as the defence of individual economic freedom, but in a very weak sense of the expression.

In the classical representation of the invisible hand (from Bernard de Mandeville to Hayek), individuals are not involved (or not necessarily) in the political process; they are only left free by it to pursue their own plans. The political system itself is something outside rational control ('invisible'), allowing for little room for participation and collective decision. Yet the process is beneficial to individuals' interest and constitutes the best way to preserve their private freedom, but, as I have said, it does so unintentionally, as a secondary effect. Indeed, in such a model, all choices, goals, values and means are defined by the individual engaged in market transactions, and very little room is left to politics, as a specific dimension of social life.

Thus, in the case of invisible hand, individuals are enlightened, but only in a very limited way, only about themselves and, on the other side, in the dark about the compositional process producing the political order, so that they cannot do anything to regulate politics, except to trust in its beneficial development.

The picture looks quite the opposite in the case of enlightened despotism. First of all, a methodological remark: "enlightened despotism" is an expression used by the German historiography of the late XIX century in order to indicate the reform policy enacted by absolute sovereigns



influenced by enlightenment philosophy during XVIII century. Because of the origin of the expression, many scholars have put in question whether enlightened despotism has ever existed, either as a political formation or as a specific doctrine(25). Here I do not intend to answer this question, but I can only to suggest that the idea of the absolute king inspired by the light of reason and by philosophers was definitely part of the common sense of the lumières and, for a while, an actual hope of the Encyclopédie circle, shared by Voltaire, d'Alambert, and Diderot. Furthermore, the governments of several absolute European states (Russia, Austria, Prussia) were consciously inspired by this general idea, which sometimes was structured in a proper political programme of enlightened reforms(26). Eventually, a theoretical sketch of such a state was coherently developed in the work of the economic school called the Physiocratie. All in all, I think that enough elements are available to outline the model of enlightened despotism(27).

Here a clear separation obtains between the greater part of the population (living in the "dark") and the happy few, enlightened by knowledge and reason. In this situation, les savantes have the moral duty of advising the holder of the absolute power, who, in his/her turn cannot but follow reason, both as logical and moral imperatives, and cannot but rule in the truest interest of ignorant individuals. The justification of this political model is thus the individuals' happiness and welfare, and the achievement of it, is indeed the goal of politics (and not, as in the previous case, just a by-product): but individuals are not active subjects of the programme. Their rational and free consent is not required; on the contrary, from the very logic of the knowledge's unequal distribution, they cannot but be the objects of a design encompassing them. But through the active educational policies (which are always a major aim of enlightenment),



they will get to understand and appreciate that this arrangement is exactly for their best. Under the rule of such a government, individuals are clearly not free; so far this is not only as political actors, but also as regards social life, which is organized and regulated by the centralized state, with the exception of economic business, especially free trade, which is, for instance, strongly advocated by Physiocratic school. Here in spite of the resemblance of the Platonic model of philosopher kings, utilitarian considerations are actually the leading motives: the goal of general happiness, being materially defined, has an unambiguous distributive connotation. So it is not a "common good" in the holistic sense, but the sum of individual utilities. But what we can correctly call a definitionally individualistic goal, is attained here through a tremendous enlargement of the political sphere, from which real individuals are totally excluded.

Despite the immediately striking differences between the liberal invisible hand model and this authoritarian programme, some similarities may be pointed out. Both models assume human ignorance: in the case of invisible hand, ignorance, or limited knowledge is an ontological character of human nature, so that virtually nobody can escape. On this basis freedom is granted; nobody knows the best, everybody should be left free to try. Hayek states very clearly that if human beings were omniscient, there would not be a case for freedom(28).

On the other hand, enlightened despotism views ignorance, widely spread through out society as a historical product of superstition, religious, beliefs and so on. Accordingly, the intellectuals through a systematic practice of reasoning, are able to move towards the truth, according to the natural order. If an alliance between intellectuals and



power holders can be assured, then this will be the most effective method to struggle against superstition and to spread enlightenment, because in a traditional society absolute power is believed to be necessary to implement these policies quickly and efficiently.

What I want to stress is that the liberalism implied in the invisible hand, depends only on a different description of the character of human ignorance, and not on a different normative position(29). So, if a supporter of enlightened despotism could give conclusive evidence about the distribution of ignorance and knowledge, according to Enlightenment's point of view, the invisible hand supporter should be consistently convinced of the preferability of the other arrangement. In my opinion, this hypothesis shows that when individualism is limited to the social economic life, built on a very strong negative concept of liberty, it is always open to the temptation of benevolent omniscient dictator.

Indeed, no value is attached to individual rational consent to politics, to the capability of collective control of the process and to an active participation. Accordingly, when the possibility of an enlightened leadership is given, no normative barrier of principle prevents the invisible-hand-libertarian from adopting such an authoritarian arrangement, as far as economic freedom is kept. This very fact can explain why such "negative" liberalism is often tempted by very conservative position on civil rights; the reason being that freedom is not an ultimate value, but a procedural principle in order to cope with limited capability of information and foresight.

### 3. INDIVIDUALISM AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

In the second paragraph, I have briefly shown which models of political order entail individualism, and in which sense of individualism. Now I would like to view the other side of the issue, that is, how individualism may shape political arrangements.

In the first paragraph the analysis was focussed on the application of methodological individualism to political theory: the presentation started with methodological questions and then went into the specific problem of the usages within the field of political philosophy. Here, again, I would like to look at the other side of the problem. That is, first I will select the specific points that an individualistic Weltanschauung raises in the area of politics and, then, I will try to see whether there is a solution consistent with an individualistic method.

A very general and provisional definition of an individualistic Weltanschauung in relation to politics may be expressed as follows. Political organizations should be sketched in such a way that they serve individuals (however defined) because there is nothing above or behind them: individuals are indeed the only actors in the social world(30). Of course the picture will vary depending on whether the individual is defined as an autonomous being, or as oriented towards self-development or as valuable because of the intrinsic dignity of human life, or as a subject of rights, or just as a preference Trager and so on.



I would like to show that a common feature of all these "individualisms" affecting the political dimension is the emergence of the "public good" or "general interest" as a problem.

In a "holistic" society, that is a society where individuals' existence is conceived as dependent on the whole, the political subject is the community as such and the collective goals which are postulated as the ends of political activity are supposed to be inclusive, by definition, of individual interests.

This is because individual interests cannot be imagined as given, independently from the common good and so conflicting with it unless in the case of behaviour deviating from the standard of the good citizen. Therefore, individual interests, considerations of private utility, selfish behaviour are not simply ignored and denied in their existence, rather they are excluded from the definition of common good and of justice. They are kinds of moral behaviour worthless of citizenship.

A classical example of this position can be found in Cicero's De Officiis(31). In his analysis, he defined the morally good as that kind of behavior which necessarily includes considerations of others and of the community as a whole, so that the result of pursuing the morally good will lead consistently to the prosperity of the community (rei publicae salus or bene communis).

(Clearly, one of Cicero's major concern is the safety of the Roman homeland against external enemies which would mean not only the loss of group-identity, in terms of dignity and pride, but also of personal freedom as a consequence of the end of Rome's liberty as political entity. This real threat may well explain how it is impossible in such a situation to conceive of individuals independently from the community).



At the same time, according to Cicero, no conflict can actually arise between the morally good and the consideration of personal interest (utilitas). The morally good is indeed the only good and what is on the opposite scale has scarcely the slightest weight, so that such a conflict can never arise (Book, III- III, 11). All the wrongful gains stemming from the quest for personal profit (and so from a misinterpretation of individual interest) are against the law of nature, of nations, of god, and of men (Book III, V, 21-24). The metaphor Cicero used in order to single out the wrongfulness of such behavior, sharply presents the contradiction between self-seeking and the very nature of human society:

"Suppose by way of comparison, that each one of our bodily members should conceive this that it could be strong and well if it should draw off to itself the health and the strenght of its neighbouring members, the whole body would necessarily be enfeebled and die"(Book III, V, 22).

Revisiting Menenius Agrippa's popular apologus, Cicero grounds it in the law of nature which, binding all the individuals in the same mankind, imposes mutual obligations on each members for the community and the human mankind to be saved.

I shall now give another example of a holistic point of view on general interest, even though this example may be very different theoretically and distant historically, namely Hegel's ethical state.

In Cicero's time, as we have seen, political individualism was quite impossible to conceive; indeed, Cicero's respublica represents a common viewpoint about political community and its relation to private citizens.



Hegelian philosophy stemmed from an age of triumphant individualism and his efforts were actually oriented towards a full criticism of what he considered the one-sidedness of individualism itself. Without here attempting the summary of Hegelian philosophy, I would like to refer to some passages in his Philosophy of Rights, which relate to the topic of the common good. Hegel states the existence of a superior point bridging the gap between individuals and an atomistic society. The state indeed represents a universal position, expressing the rational necessity of dialectical development. Because of its intrinsic rationality, it cannot be the outcome of a social contract, given the inherent contingency implied in the very idea of the contract. It cannot be an optional possibility either, meant to secure individuals' protection, as exemplified by the nightwatchman state of the liberals. Rather, the state constitutes the condition for ethical life, because the universal is embedded in it and ethics cannot stem from particularities (32).

Thus the state will is not general, does not proceed from the individuals' arbitrary will, but rather is universal, i.e., embodying the objective rationality of the Spirit, whether recognized or not by individuals. So "this final end has a supreme right against the individual whose supreme duty is to be a member of the state"(33).

Hegel's idealism can be considered as an attempt to overcome the difficulty of an individualistic definition of public interest, by means of the assumption of an entirely different point of view, that of the 'universal' encompassing all the historical and empirical singularities through a dialectical unifying development.



The individualistic and the holistic viewpoints differ in relation to politics not because the former assumes society as composed of individuals; indeed this is true also for the latter. Rather the difference lies in the fact that holism attributes a specific perspective to the whole, defined as the objective rationality or whatever, from where a view unfettered by individual limits is granted. For this reason human beings should subordinate their plans and interests. On the other side, social goals, values and principles are alleged to be embodied only in individuals. So the condition and the scope for political enterprise are based on (various) individual motives and purposes.

This implies that the public interest is neither given nor evident, nor is it the starting assumption, but its definition must derive from individual interests or preferences.

Taking as an example the tradition of natural law theories, individuals are assumed to have existence before civil society as independent beings. Whether this assumption was supposed to be realistic or not, what matters most is the method. In order to define the core and the scope of civil society (and until Rousseau, the term 'civil society' was used as a synonymous of political association)(34), a preceding definition of individual in isolation was required through which the social order could be obtained. Given the methodological character, the definition of the individual cannot but be abstract(35). In this abstract notion, human beings more than individuals emerge, in the sense that features of human nature more than the unique qualities of the single are pointed out. (Nevertheless the individuality of such an abstract being is given in a) the supposition of his/her independency from any social context; b) the autonomous definition of personal preferences. (In this respect modern



individualism implied in natural law has been seen as the secularization of God in human beings, now conceived as self-sufficient, purposive, rational actors). But what matters more now is that each individual is a unit of the social life and that the latter will correspond to the organization of the single units in a complex order, according to various procedures.

Since the various definitions of the public sphere must take individuals into account, it will follow consistently that the differences in anthropological conceptions will play a significant role together with the rules of composition, so to speak, i.e., the procedures of aggregation.

From the extensive literature and the several schools of thought on this subject, I would like to recall three different possible solutions which embody relevant traditions in political thought.

I will not insist too much on the first, which has already been examined, i.e., the invisible hand model. In this case harmony between individual and public interest is already postulated: private vices become public virtues. Here, self-interested, imperfectly informed, only partially rational, mainly economic men require the limitation of political dimension for the sake of spontaneous development of social forces, which, fortunately, produces beneficial effects.

In passing, I will recall that contemporary game theory has pointed out some cases, such as the widely known "prisoner dilemma", where individual self-interested rationality produces a sub-optimal collective result. Moreover, Mancur Olson, in the Logic of Collective Action(36), has shown many examples of collective disruption following from a purely individual rationality: situations like the prisoner dilemma and cases of "free rider" behavior are very common indeed in social life and suggest, at least,



serious difficulties in the conception of the natural harmony between public and private interests.

The second solution I would like to recall is that of utilitarianism. With the invisible hand mechanism, this second viewpoint shares a naturalistic model of human nature, but, on the other hand, it does not include any stress on human limitation. Seeking pleasure and avoiding pain are at the core of human motives for action and indeed they are also the only criterion for ethical behaviour, there being nothing beyond pain and pleasure in humane nature. On the basis of such a hedonistic anthropology, the ethical problem arises when there are interferences and conflicts among private utilities. Thus, a socio-political arrangement is morally good when it represents the sum of individual utilities. The resultant public interest is nothing more and/or different than the aggregate of private preferences(37). Of course, this simple definition is not itself a solution, because the very problem is how to define the compositional rule for a function of social "utility". Here I do not wish to examine the variety of utilitarian literature about this point, but I want to recall that Bentham's suggestion on the composition of individuals' utilities was merely axiomatic (the happiness of the greatest number). He presupposed that each individual, making the felicific calculus on a societal scale, would have assumed the viewpoint of the whole, considering the whole itself as an individual. The obvious implication is that the so obtained public interest does not reflect all individual interests, some of which are simply excluded for the whole's greatest happiness(38).



Thus a strictly individualistic starting point ends up with a social utility where the only individual is society as such, defined as a sum-ranking, where individuals have disappeared in the total lump. Even if, utilitarianism, since Bentham has grown impressively both in moral philosophy and in economics, it still has offered no satisfactory answer to the problem of harmonizing personal preferences in a social function which fully reflect individuals' utility.

The last solution to the problem of public interest I am going to consider now, refers back to the Kantian ethics(39). Kant views human being as belonging both to the realm of sensitivity and to that of reason. But while as a member of the former, he/she is only a passive eteronomous natural being, as a member of the latter he/she is active and autonomous. As far he/she is autonomous rational being, he/she is also creative and free. Given the priority of the world of reason over the other, human beings should recognize themselves as subject to the purely law of reason which is also their autonomous will. So, realizing their freedom, at the same time individuals realize morality, which follows from autonomy and liberty. The link between morality, autonomy and liberty is explained as follows: if human being, instead, pursued private utility, then they would not be autonomous actors, since they would become dependent on the eteronomous commands of nature and sensitivity. Thus, utilitarian behavior cannot be free, self-imposed, but always externally determined. .

Now, Kant considers politics as the sphere where moral persons enter into reciprocal relationships to set up a civitas by public law where liberty can be protected and combined with others' freedom.



Thus, clearly, the definition of the public space is affected by individuals, but not insofar as they merely bear private interest and utility. Rather, because of human autonomy and freedom, each individual should be considered as an end in him-herself and never as a means, or an object for the others' desire, nor for the general happiness. This implies that as far as the definition of the public good is concerned, individuals count as moral persons, freely acting according to the universal law (following the criterion of universalizability, in Hare's language), not just as utility's Träger.

In the Metaphysics of Morals, Kant maintains openly that the core of the political state cannot mean private citizen's welfare or happiness: these goals are indeed easily obtained even in the state of nature (according to Rousseau) or, even, under a despotic rule(40).

Rather, the political state, envisaged by his theory is a legal constitution which is meant to preserve freedom and which citizens have a moral duty to obey through their own pure reason.

Therefore, in the Kantian approach, the gap between individual tastes and preferences and the public good is filled by morality. Achieving the status of moral person, individuals should regard their interests merely as subordinated to their sensitive nature and to be dismissed vis-à-vis the moral imperatives of reason. According to reason's maxims, individuals should give their actions a universal form. In this way, moral persons get to a level which is shared by all rational beings, leaving aside the empirical differences of natural individuals. In the Kantian perspective, again, the individual disappears in the common rationality of human nature.



Concluding this section on public interest, the three examples I have given share the view that the public should be deduced and/or produced from/by individuals. From this very general point which can be called individualistic versus holistic, various theory are built according to the surrounding conditions, namely the kind of human nature (naturalistic or autonomously connotated) and its capabilities of knowledge, and the "compositional rules".

The first solution is indeed a way to ignore the problem, postulating a questionable harmony between individuals and the public sphere. At the same time, individuals in themselves, however they be, apparently are not constrained by the overall order. In my opinion the lack (or minimization) of public constraints on individuals is only apparent: it derives from the fact that the theory of the invisible hand does not provide any suggestion for the overall order to be designed, but stresses, on the contrary, its spontaneous character.

But the spontaneity in itself does not guarantee that the emerging order will not constrain the individual's plans and will. Thus, the method implied in the invisible hand is strictly individualistic and no general or social viewpoint is already assumed to figure out the (desirable) common good, but the question is not answered in itself. An individualistic procedure does not necessarily bring about a public interest which would be satisfactory from the individual components' viewpoint.

The other two examples, in a very different way, produce a definition of the public interest that in both cases implies the assumption of some super-individual viewpoint.

In the case of utilitarianism, we have the individual, who, when social implications arise in his/her acting, applies the felicific calculus on a



societal basis. That is, he/she first puts him-herself in the place of the whole, and, second, considers the "whole's perspective" as that of an individual, so that as a result the single would maximize whole's preferences as if the whole were him-herself.

Kant, on the other side, making the distinction between sensitivity and reason in human nature, stresses the rational sphere as a superior point overcoming utility's consideration and as a universal character, bridging particularities. In themselves, human beings find the conditions of possibility of the public sphere, defined in its turn as the condition for freedom of all. The only requirement is that individuals cannot be considered in their immediate empirical appearance, but should be assumed as moral persons able to set up such a free constitution.

The picture of the problem has necessarily been very sketchy, but, picking up examples from different influential traditions, at least, shows alternative basic procedures used to define the subject, starting from the same very general point. The result of this preliminary analysis is that none of the models examined is conclusive. Should we conclude that we must give up an individualist approach to the definition of the public interest(41)? Is this a case of clear-cut alternative between a dismissal of the problem tout-court (invisible hand) or some form of holistic assumption of what the public interest is?

Given the present purpose of this paper (i.e., the pointing out theoretical problems) and its character of work in progress, I will not try to answer these questions.



Rather, as a provisional conclusion, I would like to stress the fact that the general definition of 'individualism' is not enough to characterize a political theory. Many other surrounding conditions must be specified in order to catch the methodological procedures, the basic Weltanschauung implied and the political arrangement proposed as the outcome. A theory need not necessarily be said "individualist" in all of the three aspects, even if there is more than a casual connection among the three.

Yet the connotation of individualism, that is the assumption of individualistic perspective at some level, rules out immediately the possibility that the theory under consideration may support for example totalitarianism or fascist regimes. Thus, "individualism" gives a negative connotation to a political theory, more than a positive picture of the political model 'necessarily' implied in it.

For these reasons, here I have tried to reconstruct possible paths linking individualism to some strategies of political inquiry; the analysis has shown that the sharp opposition between individualism and holism is much less clear-cut than at the level of a purely methodological debate.







## NOTES

1. The work here presented has been developed and produced while my staying at the Badia Fiesolana, as a Jean Monnet fellow. The first section of this paper has been presented at the seminar of political philosophy coordinated by Prof. A. Moulakis. The second and the third parts have been discussed at the workshop on "Individualism" organized by Prof. A. Padgen, within the activity of the department of Political Science. Moreover, the attendance at the seminar on "Rational choice" (Prof. Budge) has helped to clarify, in many respects, my thoughts.
2. The various positions involved in the debate have been helpfully presented and summarized in John O'Neill, ed., Modes of Individualism and Collectivism, London 1973. About the opposition individualism/holism in methodology of social science, see also R. Borger and Cioffi ed., Explanation in the Behavioural Science, Cambridge 1970, particularly J.O. Wilson's paper "Situational Individualism and the Emergent Group Properties"; then R. Nozick, "On Austrian Methodology", Synthese 1977; S. James, "Methodological Holism: The Case of Marxism", PhD thesis, Cambridge University 1980, forthcoming; S. Zamagni, "Sui fondamenti della metodologia austriaca" Note Economiche, 1982; and, eventually, the recent debate started by J. Elster "Marxism, Functionalism and Game Theory: The case for Methodological Individualism", Theory and Society, 1982, including the papers by G.A. Cohen, Offe-Berger, and T. Giddens.
3. A satisfactory account of the theoretical need of such an abstraction is given in J.D. Moon, "Interpretation, Theory, Human Emancipation", p.167, in Strategies of Political Inquiry, E. Ostrom ed., Beverly Hills-London-New-Delhi 1983.
4. About the procedure of "reduction" and its legitimacy, see E. Nagel, The Structure of science, London 1961, chap. XI "The reduction of theories", pp. 366-398. See also Webster jr. "Psychological Reductionism, Methodological Individualism and Large Scale Problems", in American Sociological Review, 1973.
5. I would like to recall that according to some authors, such as R. Nozick, the very presence of a filter mechanism between individual actions and output implies the rejection of methodological individualism. See R. Nozick, Anarchy, State and Utopia, Oxford 1974 p. 22. His position, however, follows from the restriction of methodological individualism to the very strong version of psychological reductionism, which in the literature it is not recognized to exhaust the methodological individualism itself. See Webster, quoted, p. 259.
6. See, for example, R. Boudon, Les effets pervers de l'action sociale, Paris 1977.
7. M. Hollis, Models of Man, Cambridge 1977. Here the alternative is sharply posed between a plastic being and an active one.



8. See, in this respect, J.Buchanan "Is Economics a Pure Science of Choice?", in Road to Freedom, essays in honour of F.Hayek, London 1969.
9. About Hayek's methodological position, the main references are to his Individualism and Economic Order, London 1948 and The Counter-revolution of Science, Glencoe, Ill., 1952. (especially "The Facts of Social Sciences").
10. See Hayek "Economics and Knowledge" in Individualism and Economic Order, quoted, and "The Use of Knowledge in Society", ibidem.
11. H.Simon, Administrative Behaviour, New York 1960.
12. F.Hayek, Individualism: True and False, Dublin 1944.
13. See my paper "Individualism in Carl Menger's Methodology of Social Science", mimeo, Cambridge 1982.
14. About the 'a-posteriori' rationality of natural evolution see J.Elster, Ulysses and the Syrenes, Cambridge 1979, pp.3-18.
15. R.Nozick, Anarchy State and Utopia, quoted, p.19.
16. C.Menger, Principles of Economics, Glencoe, Ill., 1950, pp.169-180; p.230; pp.260 foll.; Id., Problems of Economics and Society, Urbana, Ill., 1963, book.III "The Origin of Money", pp.152 foll. A critique of the quasi-natural evolution from barter to money as the typical example of the invisible hand mechanism can be found in H.Sheiner "Can a Social Contract Be Signed by an Invisible Hand?" in Birnbaum et al. eds., Democracy, Consensus and Social Contract, London 1978.
17. J.Elster, Ulysses and the Syrenes, quoted, ibidem.
18. J.Buchanan, The limits of Liberty, Chicago 1975; R.Nozick, Anarchy, State and Utopia, quoted.
19. M.Weber, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, Tübingen 1976(3), pp.124.
20. A.H.Birch, Representation, London, 1971, pp.22-25.
21. See also R.Bendix, King or People, Power and The Mandate to Rule, Berkley 1978.
22. See. M.Weber, quoted, pp.130, foll.
23. About the divorce between political process and the "sacred", after the French Revolution, examined through spatial metaphors, see J.Laplace, Left and Right: A topography of Political Perception, Toronto-Buffalo-New-York, 1981.
24. Although he makes use of a different theoretical approach, also M.Foucault in his Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison, Paris 1975, states that the typical feature of contemporary form of power is the disappearance of the center of political authority which was at the



- core of Ancien Regime typically exemplified by Louis XVI, and correspondently by the public spectacle of punishments, see chap.II.
25. L.Krieger, An Essay on the Theory of Enlightened Despotism, London - Chicago 1975.
  26. See also my Istituzioni educative e politica della cultura; La Riforma dell'Universita' di Pavia (1754-1781), Pavia 1978.
  27. M.Bazzoli, La cultura politica dell'assolutismo illuminato, forthcoming (Franco Angeli).
  28. F.Hayek, The Costitution of Liberty, London and Chicago 1960, p.29.
  29. A wider discussion on Hayek's concept of liberty as a procedural value can be found in my "Uno schema di giustificazione della societa' liberale", Problemi della Transizione, 14, 1984, p.141. Other criticisms of the ambiguity of freedom as a value in Hayek's view can be found in M.H.Wilhem, "Political Thought of F.A.Hayek" in Political Studies, XX, p.168 foll.; W.G.Watkins "Philosophy" in Agenda for a Free Society (Seldon ed.), London 1961, p.47; H.B.Acton, "Objectives", ibidem, p.75.
  30. L.Dumont, in his recent Essay sur l'individualism, Paris 1983, has studied the development from holistic societies to individualistic ones.
  31. I am referring to the English edition of the text, translated by W.Miller, Harvard-London 1913.
  32. G.W.F.Hegel, Philosophy of Right, English tranl.by T.M.Knox, Oxford 1952, see III part "Ethical life: The State", pp\_155-160.
  33. Ivi, p.156.
  34. M.Bovero, "Il modello hegel-marxiano" in N.Bobbio-M.Bovero, Stato e societa' nella filosofia politica moderna, Milano 1979 pp.140-146.
  35. In this respect I do not share the marxist criticism of the abstract individual as an ideological approach to the study of the society (robinsonades). See Marx, Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy (1857), in A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Chicago 1913, pp.226-228. See also S.Lukes, Individualism, Oxford 1973, pp.75-78. Indeed, since the 'abstract individual' is a methodological fiction, Marx's criticism, i.e., that it hypostatizes a historical model of man in general feature of humane nature, is clearly a case of ontological fallacy. It may well turn out that the abstract individual is not an adequate tool to describe, say, holistic societies, but, even then, this inadequacy does not question its legitimacy as a metodological approach to social reality.
  36. Cambridge Mass.1965.
  37. Among the large amount of utilitarian literature, a good summary of the various positions and the theoretical difficulties about utilitarian



design of the social happiness is the recent Beyond Utilitarianism edited by A.Sen and B.Williams, Cambridge 1982. A good presentation of the public choice literature is P.Martelli, La logica della scelta collettiva, Milano 1983.

38. J.Bentham, An Introduction to the Principles of morals and legislation, in A Fragment on Government and An Introduction to the Principles of Moral Legislation, W.Harrison, ed., Oxford 1948, p.125.

39. I.Kant, Metaphysic of Morals, in Kant's Political Writings, H.Reiss ed., Cambridge 1971, pp.131-175.

40. Ibidem, p.142.

41. This is indeed the position maintained by F.Oppenheim, in the definition of 'Public Interest' where he argues that for the very logic of the two concepts 'public' and 'interest' (which, according to him, always connotes something related to material welfare), the definition of the expression cannot be "definitionally individualistic", but necessarily it should refer to the whole as such. See F.Oppenheim, Political Concepts, A Reconstruction, Oxford 1981, "Self-Interest and Public Interest", pp.131 foll.



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