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Venice and Turkey: republicanism and history

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Abstract
Building upon J. G. A. Pocock's suggestion, this article presents the opposition between the myth of Venice and Turkey in modern republicans authors. Restricting the object to thinkers who fall into the "Florentine-Atlantic republic tradition", who are more inclined to accept the imperatives of history rather than of natural right the text argues that these authors, in a more or less voluntary fashion, ultimately disseminate and deepen the striking distinction between East and West. We conclude that, even in the light of historic knowledge, these thinkers do not accept fair comparisons between Western and Eastern models, and references to Venice and Turkey contribute incisively to this understanding.

Keywords
Venice, Turkey, Republicanism

Set you down this: And say besides, that in Alepo once, where a malignant
and a turban'd Turk beat a venetian and traduced the State,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog, and smote him, thus...
Shakespeare, Othelo

Introduction

Venice, known as the most serene Republic, has since the beginning of modernity profoundly marked the thought of political thinkers who sought to understand how constitutional stability could be achieved. Republican thinkers, in particular, classified the city state as an aristocratic republic because of its political system and, first and foremost, because of its electoral system (Skinner, 1996: 160-165). Conversely, Turkey also left its imprint in political thought however as an example of a true tyranny, a centralized government serving above all the petty appetites of rulers, reducing the population to serfdom or slavery. The goal of this article is not to discuss these states on their own but to analyze their impact on republican and liberal political thought and the development of these traditions and the employment of these states as examples to be followed or rejected.[1]

In general terms, modern republican thought is identified with the Machiavellian perspective and with the reception of the ancients, handed down by Italian civic humanism (Baron, 1992). Yet, liberalism is frequently accepted as a modern tradition, owing very little to the ancient of medieval humanists. The echoes of this dichotomy, which has already been widely explored, can still be heard. It could be said that republican thinkers tend to understand history as a source of authority, whose vocabulary of virtues finds more space than the grammar of individual rights and freedoms (Pocock, 2003: 349-350). Within this opposition between the ancients and the moderns Leo Strauss identified that in the modern reception of the ancients virtue was substituted by liberty, leading to the decadence of political philosophy. Thus, in order to fit a tipology, the liberals tend to reject the authority of history and lean upon natural rights. It is true that only after 1953, when he published *Natural Right and History*, an original work, the dichotomy acquired a deep, almost engaged existence. And perhaps this might explain the recent effort to bring these strands together, from a historical (Rahe, 2006; Sullivan, 2004; Viroli, 2002), or theoretical (Pettit, 1999) perspective. The second article will consider this at greater length, focusing on the liberal tradition. In sum, the texts approach how each tradition saw Venice and Turkey.

The choice of the authors follows Pocock (2003) in his definition not of the "Machiavellian moment" but rather of the "republican Florentine-Atlantic tradition". Despite its debt to Machiavelli, this latter tradition has distinct traits that do not necessarily match with the

terms expressed by the Florentine thinker. Let us here only mention some of the initial definitions posited by Pocock[2]. In his book, this author does not expressly draw any special attention to the comparison we are suggesting here, since this is not his main objective. Notwithstanding its sporadic appearances, the model adopted by each state and how these traditions developed drawing on these examples still requires furthers instigation.

Before an isolated comparison, itself worthy of investigation, here our intention is to present two opposing "models". Hailed as the zenith Western civilized culture, Venice is usually doused with praise and mythologizing, while Turkey is cast as its opposite. The politicized offshoot of this claim dos not escape from the reasons related to self-definition and the use of facts that are not necessarily true. As a binary classification, with opposite valences, both states have been mythologized to a certain extent. The positive impact of the example of Venice is only more effective alongside the negative projection of Turkey, with varying decrees depending on the author. The constant is the self-affirmation of Western Republicanism, in its Florentine-Atlantic version, not only as distinct, but as opposed to the Oriental model.

Such self-imposed imperative, almost as if only due to the impact of a cultural shock, untempered by relativism. With rare exceptions, which we intend to point out here, Turkey is almost always judged according to Venetian standards. Thus, the western benchmark established and defined by the Italian Renaissance is indicative of the impossibility of understanding a political universe cast as unbelievably authoritarian, centralized and despotic.

Before the advent of universal paradigm related to the philosophies of natural law, a stranger to the Florentine-Atlantic model[3], it is the sociological dimension, by means of the Turkish aberration, that seems to predominate. This would be less compromising if Turkey were judged the worse of all cases according to supposedly universal or natural values. It is therefore more complicated to abstain from assuming a Western perspective when dealing with mores and customs. Even in the face of subject amenable to sociological analysis, the opportunity to affirm the superiority of Western customs compared to the savagery of East is not relinquished.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the second chapter of *The Classical Republicans*, by Zera Fink, published in 1945, despite its stated purpose of examining English Republican authors, approaches the myth of the Republic of Venice and how it developed in Italy and England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The serene Republic was the object of numerous controversies throughout history. In the sixteenth century, its institutional deficiencies were compensated by political stability warranted by the constitutional orders and its tradition. In England, during the following century, the myth became stronger among the Republicans and were founded on categories unhinged from local and lateral observations made by Italians.

As models that serve as lessons, albeit hard to follow, the Enlightenment and the American Revolution contain appreciable potential whose realization is nonetheless unattainable. What Fink argues as true to the initial moments of the construction of the Venetian myth can be expanded, allowing room for peculiarities, for following periods, even more so regarding Republicanism. The backdrop to this entire history is the political stability the aristocracy never relinquished. The myth of Venice figures in the Western tradition as a positive reference, as an inherent achievement and laudable example, even when not followed. Any critical attempt would be swiftly eschewed away by a new interpretation. At most, it was conceded that the city had not realized its full potential. A

reference for uncountable utopias, Venice was more romantic when observed politically. Always depicted as the pinnacle of Western civilization, as the foundation of its political virtues, it never suffered criticism without being extolled simultaneously. This procedure became a form of legitimating the inventions of the cradle of modern culture.

On the opposite side, references to Turkey by modern Italian thinkers lack interpretative unity.While the myth of Venice has already been sufficiently mapped out by contemporary scholars, the same does not hold true for Turkey. However, this void can be explained. The treatment of Turks, even in comparison to Western states has marginal dimension. Turkey functions as an exemplar and argumentative tool more than as a rigid model, as in the case of Venice. This occurs in the first place because the idea of a barbarian nation prevails over that of a state supported by law. From this perspective, the reflection becomes more sociological and less institutional, as the examinations of uses and customs, as well as of religion, particularly show. Even if both nations were not always compared on fair terms, it still becomes evident that they were treated as opposites, whether due to differing customs of institutions. Regarding the former, the clash is even more evidence considering the endeavor to praise Venice and the West in general, as for institutions, comparisons are allowed with European countries, as in the of France and of the intepretation that approximates it to an absolute monarchy. In any case, it must be made clear the construction of these two models stretches deep through time.

The Construction of Myths

Often in the work of Machiavelli Venice is compared to ancient republics, in particular, Greece. This is because after the fall of the Roman Empire those who settle on the Adriatic coast wished to and had the opportunity to live in the absence of princes. They thus established a form of self-government whose laws served to guarantee security and its own survival (Machiavelli, 2010: 61). This interpretation demonstrates continuity between the ancient world, a subject often discussed by Machiavelli, and the modern (Pocock, 2003: 187). Even if the justification for survival is not always fruitful, little is explained, and, rather that a simple window into the past, Venice remains untouched since its beginnings.

A more incandescent comparison is made with Sparta (Machiavelli, 2010: 61 and 138; cf. Pocock, 2003: 197). Both were republican cities with a strong aristocratic bent, with a well-established noble class, and a long history. Furthermore, their institutions were built for maintenance, in contrast with those of Rome, which were built for expansion. The way Machiavelli likens Venice and Rome is not casual, acknowledging that his *vivere politico* (Machiavelli, 2010: 75) and *vivere libero* (Ibidem: 164 and 504) are attributes of the ancients. There is thus the presumption of the line of continuity between the ancients and the modern is the notion of civilization. There is a furtive acknowledgment that the installment of the political situation – a Greek invention – in Venice, as far back as during Antiquity, stands in contrast to other regions the world, since "the Venetian republic, among the modern ones, is the most excellent" (Ibidem: 136).[4] Notwithstanding the Florentine's preference for Rome, the contrast of the other states presents the guarantee that the virtue of the ancient can be relived (Cambiano, 2000: 62), which is proved by the near impossibility of the restoration of the Roman universe (Machiavelli, 2010: 543).

In some moments, especially in his approach to historical examples, Machiavelli presents the relationship between the Turks and the French, as times strategically united, at others enemies. However, the interesting aspect of this tie is that the French monarchy obliterates to a large extent the possibility of profound connections with each other (Ibidem: 567). But it is the monarchy indeed that provides this comparative opportunity

with Turkey. The fourth chapter of *The Prince* is devoted to this point. Approaching the subject of how to maintain government in a principality with a memory, that is, when the memory of the virtuous and conquering prince still inhabits the imagination of the public, Machiavelli develops two models. France is governed by a king and his barons, determined by blood; customs are conserved and respected, memories is fundamentally kept among the barons, who have their own subjects and prestige. Thus, this country is easier to conquer yet harder to maintain. On the opposite side, Turkey is governed by ministers, chosen by the monarch (Idem, 1995: 30); customs are constantly changing according to the king's will and all subjects share the memory of the government. Furthermore, the fact that all are slaves shows that a centralized regime is profoundly authoritarian and thus easier to maintain than to conquer.

Regardless of the historical veracity of these observations, the fact is the Florentine had a negative impression of Turkey. Even if France was considered far from an ideal model to be followed it still exhibited qualities. Two factors explain this attitude towards France. In the first place, France is a part Greco-Roman history and shares with the rest of Western Europe the same fundamental customs and political institutions. Second, its proximity to Italian states, especially Venice, place it in a favorable position in comparisons. Even a thinker such as Machiavelli, whose realism could never be ignored, is astonished by the degree of arbitrariness and power concentrated in the hands of the Turkish sovereign. Even the European country that most resembled Turkey paled in comparison in this regard.

After arguing, following the last chapters of the first discourse of Machiavelli, that equality is a necessary requirement for freedom, in the *Discorso di Logrogno*, Guicciardini (Guicciardini, 2000:11)[5] affirms the simultaneous need of both institutions. Developing a model of institutional equilibrium is necessary in order to guarantee mutation in some orders of the magistrate, while others require continuity. In the latter "it can be seen from natural things that in there being one [ruler] there is perfection". This instrument is limited by the fact the ruler cannot be a private person and, with rule being either temporary or for life, the *gonfaloniero* must have the qualities of the Venetian *doge.* It is interesting that what he emphasizes is not the aristocratic aspect of the Venetian constitution as is usually the case among the thinkers we investigated, but rather the institutional aspect of that republic more amenable to monarchy (Pocock, 2003: 118). Unlike Machiavelli, Guicciardini presents the responsibility for the political stability of the city by the balancing of the changes in the councils, with the necessary limitation of power preventing the *gonfaloniero* from becoming a tyrant (Ibidem: 227), an elements also present in the work of Harrington, still decades away in the future.

The aristocratic lens through which Guicciardini views republicanism, typically Florentine, seems to not coincide with the large assemblies the *gonfaloniero* holds in counter position (Cambiano, 2000: 94). Despite this observation, the aristocracy in his mixed republic is built upon the individual and non-transferrable gifts of each man:

> And the most important thing to maintain true and complete liberty is this: that there be a means to regulate the ignorance of the multitudes and check the ambition of a gonfaloniero, but this interventions must be carried out by man in possession of a brain and reputation (Guicciardini, 2000: 12-13)[6].

It was not the common aristocratic view of Venice that initially won Giuccardini's trust. It simply confirmed it. His continued defense of aristocracy owes little to the city. On the other hand, a common factor still resists: stability. Given the permanent threat to political unity between the *gonfaloniero* and the people, already described by Machiavelli, the role

of providing checks behooves the aristocracy. The fact is that Venice starts being seen as a mixed republic due to the balance struck between the *doge* and the popular assembly, a characteristic noticed since the times of the civil humanism of Leonardo Bruni (Cambiano, 2000: 51). However, he later complements his initial argument and exhibits the traditional Venetian bias:

> We see that in the republic of antiquity, Rome, Carthage, Athens and Lacedaemon, many people attended a council that they called precisely "Senate". In Venice those whom they call pregati, which is much the same thing, are two hundred. This is necessary, as we said, both for the safeguarding of liberty and because in a free constitution it is difficult for the few to be responsible for the whole before the many (Guicciardini, 2000: 25-26) [7].

As Machiavelli, the comparison with the cities of antiquity is the basis of the argument that Venice is a remnant of those times. However, he does not add the stabilizing element of Venetian aristocracy, but rather freedom (Pocock, 2003: 125-126), contrary to the permissiveness of the popular liberty (Skinner, 1996: 175). This inflection can seem small, if it were not for the previous acknowledgment that the *doge* is the lynchpin of stability. Be it as it may, the argument assumes the mixed regime for the safeguarding of equality and liberty are shared values.

In a book dedicated exclusively to Venice, *Della repubblica e Magistrati di Venenzia*, Donato Giannotti presents an imagined dialogue concerning the city, its institutions and customs. In line with the sixteenth century tradition, Rome and Lacedaemon are used in comparisons and it is also implicitly stated that Venice was all that was left from the virtues of antiquity (Giannotti, 1840: 258). After tracing out the well-known distinction in Italian history between the exuberance of the Roman republic and what followed after its fall with the barbarian invasions (cf. Pocock, 2003: 277), Giannotti situates this second phase near the modern East (Gianotti, 1840: 263). The clarity of his exposition marks not only the binary division of the world, even before the fall of Rome, but also the contiguity between the barbarian world and the East, in modernity, also existent in Europe. Before such widespread corruption, only Venice resisted: "my Republic is not corrupt, it is first (if am not mistaken) the most perfect of all times" (Ibidem: 264)[8]. Thus follows the argument of a city tempered by the law, protected from turmoil and sedition (Ibidem: 264): "So I am filled with joy that nature itself produced, especially in Italy, the queen of all other provinces, the city of Venice, in which I see the virtues we have read about and heard praise from in Rome and Greece" (Ibidem: 264-265)[9]. Notwithstanding the praise of Venice, there are certain references incapable of leading the serene republic to ruin. (Cambiano, 2000: 121). Even if this position reflects a myth, all that is barbarian and oriental is, as it were, strange to Venice (Pocock, 2003: 333). For the first time in this tradition Venice is placed atop Rome and the Grecian city-state. From this perspective, from Machiavelli to the end of the century thinkers, the myth of Venice is further strengthened, along with that of Turkey, which will leave its imprint in England one century later.

Harrington's use of the example of Venice goes far beyond the scope of this investigation. We will however emphasize the core of our argument. Both distinctive periods of European history, if we are to follow, are the prudence of the ancient and that of the moderns (Harrington, 1977: 161). The first is defined as a government guided by the rule of law (*de jure*), whose mixed nature ensures the common interest and property is distributed equally among citizens. The second is based on the empire of men (*de facto*), the government is not mixed and is based on private interest. In this case, the gothic balance represents the fall of Rome and the rise of the barbarians. An interesting

turnaround point lies herein that will have a significant impact in years to follow. What used to be done by Italians, the comparison with Venice with other regions, shifts to temporal comparisons (Cambiano, 2000: 231). The fall of the Roman republic hitherto represented the most radical change experienced by Western civilization.

When Machiavelli subtly suggests that Venice could represent the survival of the virtue of the ancients, Harrington takes his cue without questioning and furthers the analysis (Pocock, 2003: 384). Now ascribed with a mythical dimension, leading many interpreters to classify Venice as part of the utopian tradition, the city becomes to a certain extent, a model to be followed (Manuel and Manuel, 1980: 361-366). Rejecting the Machiavellian vocabulary of *virtù*, replaced by Aristotelian prudence, Harrington adopts its most important political institution. The rotation between the legislative houses and the magistrates of the republic of Oceana is an admitted appropriation of Venice. Compared to other cities of antiquity, just as Machiavelli and Guicciardini had done, Sparta and Rome are references, once again tending towards the first (Harrington, 1977: 182). The originality consists of the comparison in equal terms of Venice with the republic of Israel (Ibidem: 174-175). Nevertheless, the concern with Venetian aristocratic proclivities remains intact, since it figured to him as a safeguard against ruin (Pocock, 2003: 392-393). Faced with this scenario, Harrington defends it from what has become an accusation:

> The like in some sort may be said of Venice, the government whereof is usually mistaken; for Venice, though it does not take in the people, never excluded them. This commonwealth, the orders whereof are the most democratic or popular of all, in regard of the exquisite rotation of the Senate, at the first institution took in the whole people. (Harrington, 1977: 168)

Soon thereafter he states, more so as an explanatory rejoinder than as a disagreement with Machiavelli, that Venice, notwithstanding its vocation for preservation (Ibidem: 181), does possess foreign domains. These represent, before imperialism, a way of government that confers citizenship to the occupied regions, bringing it closer to that completest of all models: Rome.

The perfectibility of Venetian elections translates two important aspects. Being elections an admittedly aristocratic criterion of selection, necessary for the composition of the mixed Republic, Venice would be the most democratic of all republics only because it incorporates all of its citizens. Harrington thus strays from the Greek typologies inasmuch as he admits there is a conceptual shift that distances the moderns from the ancients. Otherwise, his defense of aristocracy is not bound to the Venetian ideal. It is, nevertheless, framed by nature and not by example. The natural aristocracy is a concept that admits only human diversity as an exclusive attribute of nature. This acknowledgment leads to the comprehension that some are more apt to debate and propose laws just as other might be more apt to vote and deliberate. This idea will be in the future followed by Montesquieu, in his claim that the people knows how to chose rulers but are unable to govern. The aristocratism of Harrington hinges upon elections, human nature, and, indirectly, the institutions of Venice. Setting it apart as an exception is tantamount to saying its institutions revolutionized the past, yet to preserve its prudence. Hence, Venice is part of the same history, the better part of the history of the West.

Just as Venice represents, in modernity, the prudence of the ancients, Turkey is the link to barbarian savagery of the Roman occupation. With due emphasis on the goths, Harrington resembles the Turks to those who were responsible for destroying ancient prudence. Partly following Machiavelli, Turkey is called an absolutist regime, whose subjects were all slaves. The gothic balance reflects – and this is an important originality in Harrington's thought – the forms of distributing property (Pocock, 2003: 387). Concentrated in the hands

of one man, the regime cannot be anything other than an absolute monarchy. When this concentration is exacerbated even people are deemed property – hence nothing more radical and profoundly desolate as the example from Turkey.

> If one man be sole landlord of a territory, or overbalance the people, for example, three parts in four, he is grand seignior; for so the Turk is called from his property, and his empire is absolute monarchy (Harrington, 1977: 163)

In fact, by closely examining the text, it is possible to notice that gothic balance is expressed in its superstructure as a mixed monarchy, or an aristocracy, which amounts to its equivalent. The history of the West is not aware of any absolute monarchies within its realm, only mixed monarchies, as the concentration of property never reached the extent of creating a population of slaves instead of serfs. Reflecting upon the ancient regime, Harrington classifies it as gothic. However, the explanatory characteristics of the two forms of monarchy – absolute and mixed – are the same, varying only in degree. In varying degrees, Spain and Poland distinguished themselves from Turkey for Turkey carried out land concentration to the highest degree possible (Ibidem: 164). Not changing in essence, the Turk regime does not stand apart from Spain or Poland. Why is it, then, that Turkey is not said to be in gothic balance? To be precise, this is because it was not considered part of Western history. The fear of likening the worst of all known regimes to the legitimate modern representatives of civilization led Harrington to create a distinctive artifice that, in his own words, varies only in terms of degrees. "Wherefore, it being unlawful in Turkey that any should possess land but the grand signor, the balance is fixed by the law, and that empire firm" (Ibidem: 164). Harrington is not willing to admit that any of the characteristics of his culture are shared with the East. Therefore, in arguing against Hobbes with Giannotti, on the perfection of monarchy, all he reveals is that only Turkey is fully a monarchy, a form of government inherently imperfect since it remained pure (Ibidem: 179),

> and that this was pure, and the other mixed, happened not through the wisdom of the legislators, but the different genius of the nations, the people of the eastern parts, except the Israelites (which is to be attributed to their agrarian), having been such as scarce ever knew any other condition than that of slavery; and these of the western having ever had such a relish of liberty, as through waht despair could never be brought to stand still while the yoke was putting on their necks, but by being fed with some hopes of reserving unto themselves some part of their freedom. (Ibidem: 188-189).

Save for Israel, unquestionably part of the Western tradition, the rest the East is entirely enslaved.

The Decadence of Myths

Even with the economic decadence of Venice by the end of the seventeenth century and the consequent loss of important territories to the Ottoman Empire in the beginning of the following century, the myth resisted for a few decades. The historical rivalry between Turks and Venetians reached its climax during the last armed conflict (1714-1718). Thus, the splendor and grandeur of the city started being question and, most importantly, the Venetian-Turk opposition became consolidated. The questioning of the myth occurred in tandem with the construction of its opposite pole. Even facing a vaunting loss of power, the aristocratic structure survived for many generations, which is why the myth survived for so long: "By the end of the period the way was clear for the great summations of the controversy written by Montesquieu and Hume" (Pocock, 2003: 427).

Although the geography of Montesquieu's country was not indispensable for the republican Florentine-Atlantic scenario his admiration of the English constitution and its enormous reception throughout the new world placed him in a prominent position. Also to be included are the important references to republicanism, Machiavelii, Guicciardini, Giannotti and lastly his reception of Harrington (Ibidem: 463). But another outstanding fact is his original critique of natural right, which is why he was many times considered as one of the founders of sociology. The countless references to Venice as well as Turkey inevitably led him to insert it in his work.

Montesquieu returned to the comparative paradigm of Venice and ancient Rome precisely in the description of the nature of aristocracy, in the molds of the Florentine-Atlantic tradition. Based on his comparative methods, he question *The Spirit of the Laws*, the difference of institutions of each country with regard to aristocratic functions: "It is because Rome supported the remains of her aristocracy against the people; whereas Venice employs her state inquisitors to maintain her aristocracy against the nobles" (Montesquieu, 1949a: 245)[10]. The interpretational legacy of the mixed Roman regime conferred the dictatorship solely limited and temporary powers, which did not happen among the Venetian magistrates (Cambiano, 200: 263). Hence, the serene republic was the ultimate and perfectly completed example of an aristocracy. When commenting on this pure regime, Montesquieu does not hesitate in adding other necessary characteristics for its proper functioning. Unlike other authors, he holds that a republic is the regime in which the people, or part of it, rules, being, in the first case, a democracy, and, in the second one, an aristocracy, whose principles are equality and moderation, respectively. What confers unity, however, to republics is the quality that combines equality and moderation: virtue. Republics and monarchies are set apart from despotism due to the fact that both are ruled according to laws. The requirements here are listed as part of the republican tradition, although more or less akin to the authors of this tradition.

The defense of Venice from any despotism, despite the fact its regime is not perfectly mixed, is thus in the moderation of customs and the rule of law (Montesquieu, 1949a: 284-286). In this sense, the law plays the role previously attributed to the balancing of powers, that is, the obliteration of the savagery of the most ignorant of peoples, the Turks (Ibidem: 309), savagery, it must be added, which is a despotic trait (Ibidem: 292). But, moreover, a well-constituted aristocracy must, as Venice, limit the luxuries of the noble classes in order to stay loyal to the spirit of moderation (Ibidem: 334-335). In general terms, aristocratic customs and laws must unite in order to prevent the regime from deteriorating into despotism. Based on these parameters, described in first ten books of *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu finds himself confronted with a comparison with the East:

> I do believe that the pure hereditary aristocracy of the Italian republics is not precisely like the despotism of Asia. The multitude of magistrates sometimes softens the magistracy; not all the nobles always concur in the same design; there various tribunals are formed that temper one another. Thus, in Venice the Great Council has legislation; the pregadi, execution; quarantia, the power of judging (Ibidem: 398) [11].

As in the rest of his work, the president of la Brède resorts to his voyage diaries and the texts of adventurers in order to interpret faraway countries. As he strays farther from Europe, and more specifically, from the British isle, towards the east, he also is keen to point out the same tendency towards rampant savagery: "Each prince of

the royal family has the same capacity of being chosen, but so it happens that the one who ascends to the throne will order his brothers strangled, as in Turkey, or blind, as in Persia, or deems them mad, as in Mongolia" (Ibidem:. 296)[12]. With rare exceptions, China is the ultimate example of despotism, a realm that begins at the border of the European boundary with Turkey. The ethnocentrism of Montesquieu does not only reach the ancient enemies from Greece and Roman, but also, being that new geographical expanses have been discovered, casts the Paraguayans in deplorable light (Ibidem: 268-269) and does not acknowledge the existence of souls in black Africans (Ibidem: 494).

What survived from this profound ethnocentrism, however, is still the paradigm of Turkey as the negative opposite of Venice. For "in Turkey, the prince is content to ordinarily take for himself three percent of the inheritances of the people of the people" (Ibidem: 295)[13]. The description that follows is almost an exact reproduction of Harrington's argument on the balance between property and political power, whose despotism (tyranny) occurs in regions where the despot (or tyrant) has property of a type that he dominates all, not only due to the fact of the lack of distinction between public and private, but moreover because political command is based on the control of productive and resources and capacity of levying taxes upon subjects. Thus, one can apprehend one of the basic differences between monarchy and despotism, and also France and Turkey, which respectively correspond to these forms of government. Lastly, in one of his Persian letters, despite the relativism of Usbek's ironies, he seems to confirm his position as a European:

> Otherwise, I do not notice that the police, justice and equality are more well observed in Turkey, Persia, among the Mongols, than in the republics of Holland, Venice, and even England, not that less crimes are committed, or that, profoundly intimidated by punishment, men pay better obeisance to the law. (Idem, 1949b: 253) [14]

Between the lines, Montesquieu indicates the opposition between the two parts of the world, and that ancient republican Rome was the logical opposite of the barbarians. As the time of the republics was bygone, what remained was the memory of the eternal city and Venice; on the barbarian side, nothing could be more representative than Turkey.

The essay titled *That Politics May be Reduced to a Science* was first published in 1741 and *The Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth* in 1752. It is quite probable that the first edition of *The Spirit of the Laws*, dated 1748, reached Hume and some how influenced his political essays. At first, he attacks Rome for not limiting popular sovereignty to its representatives. Otherwise, when the noble classes are in the sovereign legislative power it occurs with the consent of all, as in the case of Venice, or by heredity, the case of Poland. Hume concludes then for the tripartite division inspired in Harrington (Pocock, 2003: 493): the prince as head of the executive, a noble class without the vassals and the people electing their representatives. As in Montesquieu, these paradigms are exclusively Western (Hume, 2006: 20). In fact, the Western standard can no longer be limited to temporal aspects that are so important for Italians and Harrington.

> Where any accident, as a difference in language or religion, keeps two nations, inhabiting the same country, from mixing with each other, they will preserve, during several centuries, a distinct and even opposite set of manners. The integrity, gravity, and bravery of the Turks, form an exact contrast to the deceit, levity, and cowardice of the modern Greeks. (Ibidem:. 210)

The mythical decadence of inspires some degree of tolerance regarding the Turks (Ibidem: 216), given that they do not live in barbaric conditions (Ibidem: 442). The most fruitful comparison, however, is still between modern Venice and the ancient republics. Already

distant from its mythical pinnacle from a century before, Hume draws from the serene republic a legal lesson. True to the Machiavellian style, solid and conclusive, and knowing that all men are conniving, the Scotsman notices in the Venetian institutions the capacity to mold private interests as a function of positive public results (Pocock, 2003: 472). "Can we ascribe the stability and wisdom of the Venetian government, through so many ages, to any thing but the form of government" (Hume, 2006: 22).

In the essay first published in 1752 a significant shift can be notices. Synthesizing the utopias of Plato and More, Hume states merely that Harrington's model is acceptable, despite some important faults (Ibidem: 500-501). The justification for the critiques is that theories cannot by applied in practice, although the internal logic is perfectly coherent. After brief references to Venice, the model becomes Holland (Wootton, 1994: 351), a feasible model (Hume, 2006: 512). It is probable that Montesquieu's reticent remark on Venice's capacity to maintain moderation made Hume doubtful. Shifting his remarks from an idealized regime to one considered practicable, Hume leaves aside the Venetian myth to ponder the imperative of practical necessities a fact that will arrive with momentum in the New World.

The dispersion of republican ideas that stemmed from civic humanism, particularly after the contributions made by English natural law, in which Locke and Sidney stand out (Parrington, 1987:. 189-190) render the identification of authorship more complicated (Pocock, 2003: 467 e 545). Furthermore, the historical distance from the myth of Venice and Turkey consolidated during the first stages of modernity already had a high degree of dissemination among the more important references of republicanism. It also entails the fact that the central role of the terms researched by those who proposed a republic in the New World encompassed examples not compatible with the Venetian institutions, and neither did the fear of the Turk savages haunt the minds of those men. With the perspective of a republic in a country of huge expanses, a completely novel fact at the time, only the imperialist regimes or those organized in leagues or confederations could fuel new desires.

Of the ideas of Montesquieu that arrived to America, the perspective of the separation of the world between the West and rest stands out. But the West was never as profound as in America. Defending a republic in a large territory, Madison argues that the only form of government compatible with the revolution is the republican. Precisely due to the understanding that no previous thinker could have foreseen this feat, the distinctive principles of this new republic must be created anew. The title of the republic referred to "Venice, where absolute power over the great body of the people, is exercised in the most absolute manner, but a small body of hereditary nobles" (Madison, 1999e: 211). The legacy of the Venetian myth had not arrived in America in the same mold as in the old continent. In the contrary, some of their political customs were rejected (Wood, 1998: 399).

The problem of Venice is heredity, a pillar of monarchies. The ambition of an entirely new proposal does not permit any bond to the institutions of this nature. Neither survival nor political institutions were capable of winning the trust of one of the authors of the *Federalist Papers*, but rather its mythical stability, adapted to new conditions. Despite the rejection of Venetian aristocracy, Madison saw in it one of the keys of the legislative chambers of a republic. One of the buttresses of the checks and balances system, a trait of any well-ordered republic, regardless of its dimensions, is the separation into a senate and an assembly (Madison, 1999e: 211). What in modernity had begun with Machiavelli,

now assumes another function (Madison, 1999e: 403). The counterbalancing of the high and low chambers serves not only to check the unfettered appetites of the people, but also has a federative function that was unknown to Venice. In order for each one of the units of the federation be protected from tyranny or from tyrannizing others, the construction of laws would have to be undergirded by a principle of equality (Wood, 1998: 525). Although he does not make an outright acknowledgement as to this inspiration, Madison implicitly admits that a greater degree of responsibilities, and, hence, of powers, in the hands of the Senate, would be necessary to correct the disparities among members – a lesson from Venice.

Although not occupying a prominent role, the Turks are perceived in the same fashion as by the tradition of English natural rights from the previous century, yet from an oblique angle: "One of the objections of New England was that the Constitution by prohibiting religious tests opened a door for Jews Turks & infidels" (Madison, 1999a: 420). Addressed to Thomas Jefferson, this letter begins with a broad and uncompromising defense of liberty of conscience and hence of religion (Wood, 1998: 504). The object in question was whether the recently formulated constitutional terms would be sufficient to safeguard this right (Ibidem: 410). The positive and confident answer given by Madison considers the mistake made by New England. An innovation of the Florentine-Atlantic tradition, religiosity outside of Europe is not a problem, however, that fact that "the despot of Constantinople dares not lay a new tax, because every slave thinks he ought not" (Madison, 1999b: 503) is a problem. This shift in the treatment of Turkey occurred simply because there are limits to the actions of the despot, not imposed by laws or a checks and balances system, but rather by the objective incapacity of acting at will. Once again, the Turks, with the exception of despots, are all slaves. His ethnocentrism assumes a sarcastic tone: "A magistrate issueing his warrants to a press gang, would be in his proper functions in Turkey or Indostan, under appelations proverbial of the most compleat despotism" (Idem, 1999c: 516).

Hamilton does not deny that the inspiration for the establishment of the first national bank was the example of the Venetian lenders and borkers (Hamilton, 1986a: 83). His constant concern with the Union, in addition to his assesment that interpersonal lending were not sufficient, leading the currency to become devalued, sustains the argument, controversial at the time, that a national bank was necessary (Wood, 1998: 497). In this sense, it is not a political system or the myth of the serene republic that mattered, but the development of finances. Harrington's argument is reproduced here, namely that the balancing between wealth and political power must impinge upon its two embodiments: money and land. Small states, such as Venice, that do not have much land, concentrate their authority on financial resources. Hamilton's conclusion is thus that Venice did not realize its vocation and thus lost its territories:

> Venice in latter times figured more than once in wars of ambition; till becoming an object of terror to the other Italian States, Pope Julius the Second found means to accomplish that formidable league, (I) which gave a deadly blow to the power and pride of this haughty Republic (Hamilton, 1984b: 179).

However, a previous question must be asked, for Harrington's argument is only partially reproduced. Hamilton's defense that the republic must incorporate strong financial organisms as a safeguard for unity and sovereignty certainly echoes Harrington's interpretation of balance supported by wealth. It would then follow that in a large republic political power is bound to land, the Americans would bot require financial organisms.

Yet Hamilton's opinion, considering Venice, is that the sovereignty of a country is directly related to financial wealth. He this ignores Harrington's admonition and, defending a central bank, conditions sovereignty to the state, that is, the Union (Parrington, 1987: 293). In his view, the mistake made by Venice was not to be repeated in America.

Conclusion

The opposition between Venice and what was hitherto known of the East is as old as the first writings concerning the Italian city-state. However, as the myth of Venice reached greater dimensions alongside the notion of a Golden Age, Venice's place in the Western world became more prominent. Its aristocratism was not the only reason behind the praise. Before, political stability, often interpreted as a result of such aristocratism, was a pivotal reference. In a universe in which national states were still consolidating, stability was an inevitable subject. One can therefore notice that this claim was relegated to the background as the authors of the enlightenment encountered significantly well-established concepts. Venice thus receives a new interpretation and its institutions are confronted with uses and customs. In this sense, the Florentine-Atlantic tradition did not forego praise for the serene republic, however modified the aspect that made it a worthy example.

In a broader sense and, clearly, closer to less institutional and more sociological interpretations, Turkey was never, willingly, constructed as a model to be rejected. It became precisely so because of the heightened tension between the East and West. Turkey was not chosen because it was the most repulsive, but because it was the one nearby. This proximity entailed the need to push it away. The very objection to classifying Turkey according to the criteria that applied to Western states rendered it an object more accessible to studies sociological in nature. Otherwise, it was simply labeled a tyrannical or despotic state. It is possible to notice that in general terms, political system of Turkey is judged, at best, as the worst among those known to westerners, yet the explanation remains founded on its customs and mores.

What figures largely in the Florentine-Atlantic tradition cannot be defined unless as a construct, more or less intentional, of the deepening of the divide between the East and the West. Any distinct degree of relativism, when any exists, is usually applied to East. Clearly a legacy handed down from the Grecian and Roman worlds. In the contrast between civilization and barbarianism, this tradition bequeathed the world the interpretation that republicanism can only flourish in the West.

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Notes

1. This is the first part of this article. The second one will be in our forthcoming issue.

2. Evidently it is impossible to carry out a deailed and compared investigation of all authors of this voluminous work. Thus we have selected the most prominent and relevant authors for the Venice-Turkey comparison. If, on one hand, distinguished thinkers such as Pocock will not be further explored, on the other hand, others to whom he did not bring much attention but who touched upon the comparison will deserve greater attention. The Machiavellian Moment opened up a broad field of research which, with peculiarities and distinctions, confirm the Florentine-Atlantic tradition. Thus, his work and the many that followed are important guides for our research (Cambiano, 2000; Rahe, 2006; Skinner, 1996; Sullivan, 2004).

3. The juxtaposition between republicanism and Machiavellianism in the work of Pocock demotes authors hailing from the tradition of natural rights, as they are distant from the machiavellian tradition (Sullivan, 2004: 8).

4. "la Republica viniziana, la quale intra le moderne republiche è eccellente".

5. "si vede nelle cose naturale che el numero di uno ha perfezione".

6. "E certo delle più importante cose a mantenere la liberta vera ed intera è questa, che sia uno mezzo che regoli la ignoranzia della multitudine e ponga freno alla ambizione di uno gonfaloniere, e però è necessario che vi intervenga tutti li uomini che hanno cervello e reputazione".

7. "Cosi si vede nelle antiche republiche, in Roma, in Cartagine, in Atene e Lacedemonie, in questo consiglio che loro proprio chiamavano senato, essere intervenuti molti; a Vinegia sono dugento o meglio quelli che e' chiamono pregati, che è questo medesimo; ed è, come è detto, necessário e per consevazione della liberta, e perché in uno vivere libero, male potrebbono e' pochi giustificare el tutto co' molti".

8. "la mia repubblica non è corrotta, anzi (se io non m'inganno) è più perffetta ch'ella mai in alcun tempo fosse". Ver Skinner, 1996, p. 183.

9. "Talchè io mi rallego assai d'esser stato prodotto dalla natura principalmente in Itália regina di tutte l'altre provincie, dopo questo nella città di Venezia, nella quale io veggo assai di quelle virtù le quali di queli antichi Romani e Greci si leggono e lodano".

10. "C'est que Rome défendoit les restes de son aristocratie contre le peuple; au lieu que Venise se sert de sés inquisiteurs d'État pour maintenir son aristocratie contre les nobles".

11. "Je crois bien que la pure aristocratie héréditaire des republiques d'Italie ne répond pas précisément au despotisme de l'Asie. La multitude des magistrats au adoucit quelquefois la magistrature; tous les nobles ne concourent pas toujours aux mêmes desseins; on y forme divers tribunaux qui se tempèrent. Ainsi, à Venise, le grand conseil a la législation; le prégadi, l'exécution; les quaranties, les pouvoir de juger".

12. “Chaque prince de la famille royale ayant une égale capacite pour être élu, il arrive que celui qui monte sur le trone, fait d’abord étrangler sés frères, comme em Turquie; ou les fait aveugler, comme em Perse; ou les rend fous, comme chez le Mongol”.

13. “en Turquie, le prince se contente ordinairement de prendre trois pour cent sur les successions de gens du peuple”.

14. “D’ailleurs je ne vois pas que la police, la justice et l’équité soient mieux observées en Turquie, en Perse, chez le Mongol, que dan les republiques de Hollande, de Venise, et dans l’Anglaterre même; je ne vois pas qu’on y commette moins de crimes, et que les hommes, intimides par la grander des châtinents, y soient plus soumis aux lois”.

15. It is worthwhile pointing out that the fact that the noble class does not possess vassals is directly related to Harrington’s argument concerning the correlation between property and political power.

16. (Hume, 2006: 15). The same argument is made by Machiavelli in his examination of the ancients (*Discorsi*, II, 2).

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