EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

BİNNAZ TOPRAK
Boğaziçi Univesity

The question of political order has been a lasting problem in political theory. It has a long history in Western political thought that goes back to the ancient Greek philosophers and maintains its prominence among current political thinkers and social scientists. The question has to do with how and through which mechanisms political obedience is secured by states and why political power is accepted by individuals as legitimate. Much of utopian thought, starting with Plato, can be seen from this perspective as attempts to construct an ideal system that would dispense with conflict and provide social peace and political order. Many dystopias, on the other hand, deal with the same problem, such as George Orwell's *1984* or Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, which depict visions of social order based on obedience secured through either close supervision and control of private lives, or through a discourse of security based on imagined threats from unknown enemies. Modern political theory, whether in favor of consensual politics or critical of institutional mechanisms that disguise power behind a veil of free consent, is also very much within this tradition of how to deal with the question of political order. This has gained even more urgency and importance in contemporary theories on multi-culturalism in the face of resistance by most nation-states to recognize the group rights of ethnic or religious minorities and to alleviate barriers that lead to the marginalization of immigrants, people with different sexual preferences, the handicapped, as well as the exclusion of women from centers of power.

This special issue of the *Journal* is devoted to political theory. Five of the 8 articles deal with the above problem of understanding the roots and causes of political order, stability, and political obedience. Two of the articles are on critical ontology and theory of politics, invariably touching on questions of order and political obedience, even if implicitly. The last is a "free article" that is not directly related to political theory but nevertheless has theoretical implications of how order and stability can be achieved in the international arena.

The first article, by Cem Deveci, is a critical textual analysis of Francis Bacon's seventeenth century work, *New Atlantis,* a utopia of a society governed by scientists that is, in terms of its idea of rule by those who possess scientific knowledge, much like the twentieth century text by B. F. Skinner in his *Walden Two,* which is a utopia of a society constructed and ruled by psychologists. Deveci persuasively argues that behind the "peace, order, and happiness" seemingly enjoyed by the inhabitants of New Atlantis, there is an underlying tension between the ordinary people of this portrayed heaven and the scientists who rule over them. Reminiscent of Plato's philosopher-kings, the scientists of New Atlantis occupy positions of power because of their higher status in a strictly hierarchical society. However, unlike Plato's *Republic,* where obedience is secured through the

* Professor Binnaz Toprak is the Chair of the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Boğaziçi University, 34342, Bebek, Istanbul; Turkey. E-mail: toprak@boun.edu.tr

internalization of Plato's definition of justice by those in the lower ranks, in Bacon's *New Atlantis* it is secured through recourse to "paternalism, social customs, myths, rituals, ceremonies and xenophobia," a combination that comes alarmingly close to twentieth century fascist and Nazi practices of mass mobilization for purposes of regime support, a point that does not escape Deveci's attention when he summarizes the text as a "defense of modern progressive science in the imaginary context of reactionary society." Hence, the question of order and stability in *New Atlantis* is deconstructed by Deveci by a careful examination of the simultaneous and contradictory presence of tradition and modern science in Bacon's utopia. In the final analysis, Deveci argues, the rule of the scientists in New Atlantis is accepted by the people as long as they "benefit from products and inventions of scientific activity." It is on this point that Deveci's interpretation of Bacon's text could be read as a prophetic harbinger of modern consumer society.

Fahriye Üstüner takes up the question of political order through an examination of the concept of public sphere in Arendt and Habermas. She points out that although their philosophical positions differ, both "conceive the public sphere on the basis of intersubjective communication that is expected to create a collective will in society" and that their common concern is to delineate the principles of "legitimate and democratic politics." Üstüner points out that Arendt, borrowing Kant's concept of the "faculty of judgment," argues for consensual politics through what we may call empathy, i.e., taking other people's opinions into account, and it is this type of collective thinking that contours political life as an arena of persuasion and argument and ultimately leads to political order. Habermas, on the other hand, takes what he calls "communicative action and discourse ethics" as, in Üstüner's words, "the regulative principles of the public sphere" and argues that it is this type of collective deliberation that leads to social integration and legitimate democratic politics. Üstüner takes a critical stand against both thinkers by asking whether "politics is necessarily a moment of agreement and conformity." Relying on Jacques Rancieré's philosophy that sees politics and democracy as "possible through disagreement rather than agreement" and defines politics as a tool for hearing the "blabber" of the voiceless and the dispossessed, Üstüner is critical of Arendt and Habermas and finds both thinkers excluding "those who make noises but cannot speak in the public sphere."

Murat Özbank compares the thought of Kant, Rawls, and Habermas from the same perspective of political stability. Taking culturally diversified societies as his starting point, Özbank asks the question of how the normative justification of the political system and stability of democracies are accounted for in contemporary democratic theory. His major problematique is to understand how different conceptions of justice among societal actors in a multi-cultural setting can be resolved without resulting in polarized conflict that would disturb social peace. He argues that the Kantian solution to the problem is to discover the universal attributes of "practical reason" that serve as the basis for truth claims, and once discovered, guide human action in accepting the justification for political authority and stability. Özbank argues that the Kantian solution is inadequate in contemporary societies, the defining characteristic of which is a "plurality of reasons" rather than a universal human reason applicable to all. Özbank then analyzes the Rawlsian theory of justice first by reference to his original treatise, *A Theory of Justice,* and to his later work, *Political Liberalism,* in which Rawls modifies his earlier position. He points out that in the earlier work, Rawls seems to be a "straightforward Kantian philosopher" who subscribes to a universal definition of practical reason whereas in the latter, Rawls' concept of "overlapping consensus" takes into account the plurality of comprehensive doctrines in society and argues that a common understanding of "justice

as fairness" can nevertheless be accepted by everyone as valid, i.e., that they can agree on the impossibility of any one claim to justice assuming universal legitimacy. Özbank ultimately finds the Habermasian solution of deliberative politics to be more promising and practical than the other two in solving the problem of legitimacy and stability of democratic regimes.

Murat Boravalı adopts Rawls's later position on political order and stability to the analysis of religion and politics in Turkey. Basing his argument on the conflict between those who "adhere to a staunchly progressive, Enlightenment-inspired" vision of society and those who claim a greater role for religion in social and political arrangements, Boravalı's problem is to deconstruct and understand the truth claims of those who defend a strict separation of religion and politics versus those who argue that in a predominantly Muslim society, democratic politics should take into account religious considerations in determining public policy. This deconstruction, carefully using rules of reasoning and logic, probes into the rationale behind the exclusionary argument. Borovalı concludes that impartiality of the state towards religious claims would indeed require that religion not be included in the decision making process in order to ensure that the "vocabulary" of politics stresses "values such as freedom, equality, concord, peaceful coexistence and public welfare." However, Boravalı warns, will not this position "lead to an impoverished understanding and practice of politics" if so much is excluded from the political realm in the name of impartiality? To answer this question, Boravalı resorts to Rawls's argument in his *Political Liberalism,* that since there are competing claims to justice in society, none of which can have priority of authority over the others, it is best to consider "only constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice as making up the domain of the political." That is to say, when the fundamentals of a democratic regime based on the rule of law are in question, disagreement over comprehensive doctrines should be ruled out. In Boravalı's words, "wider public dialogue concerning many affairs of society may be conducted with reference to comprehensive doctrines, but discussion over constitutional essentials should be carried out on the basis of commonly shared reasons." Hence, "by requiring from each holder of a comprehensive view what it asks of all the others, this understanding of politics tries to demonstrate that it is not putting any view at a systematic disadvantage" while it simultaneously opens up space for a rich public debate on different comprehensive doctrines on a variety of other issues.

Bican Şahin tackles the problem of political order and legitimacy by examining what he calls "communitarian-republican" thought. He first makes a distinction between civic republicans and communitarians by pointing out that not all republicans are communitarian and vice versa. Civic republicanism, he argues, rests on publicity and self-government. Whereas publicity gives priority to politics as the public's business rather than a personal matter and hence implies shared common concerns, the cornerstones of which rest on the rule of law and civic virtue, self-government involves civil liberties as understood in Isaiah Berlin's conceptualization of positive liberty. Communitarianism, on the other hand, is critical of the liberal position on individual autonomy and freedom of choice and argues for society's claims over those of the individual. Finding the liberal insistence on individualism insufficient, communitarians argue that a society based on individual concerns leads to the atomization of the individual and a materialistic world view. Communitarian-republicanism combines both views by arguing that individuals have rights, but these rights are derived from "the values of the community in which they are situated" and hence require a moral obligation to be virtuous citizens. However, argues Şahin, this view rests on the assumption that civic education is adequate in inculcating the values of a virtuous polity whereas it leaves open the question

of free-ridership. Drawing on Mancur Olson's concept of selective incentives in his *The Logic of Collective Action,* Şahin argues that "the notion of 'self-interest properly understood' comes close to a selective incentive" in that individual self-interest would require a commitment to the well-being of society at large. Thus, Şahin claims that contemporary communitarian-republicans would do well by taking self-interest into account in their search for a virtuous polity of citizens who are driven by their self-interest but in pursuing self-interest end up by contributing to the stability and well-being of their society.

Boğaç Erozan analyzes Foucault's concept of critical ontology by comparing him with Heidegger and Arendt. Although, Erozan points out, Foucault does not directly discuss his concept of critical ontology, he describes his own work as an "historical ontology of ourselves" or, alternatively, as "critical ontology." Erozan argues that Foucault divided his own work as those that concentrated on "ourselves as subjects of knowledge," i.e., on the "genealogy" of truth when, for example, he studied the history of the clinic. In others, he deconstructed how "we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others," when, for example, he studied the history of discipline and punishment, i.e., on the genealogy of power. Finally, some of his works focused on how "we constitute ourselves as moral agents," such as, for example, in his study of the history of sexuality, i.e., on the genealogy of ethics. In Foucault's understanding, Erozan points out, genealogy "serves as a source of critique." However, this is not a critique that claims a grand theory status. Rejecting it, Foucault uses the concept of critical ontology to refer to "an ethos," "a critique of what we are" and "the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us" as well as "an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them." As such, claims Erozan, the critical ontology of Foucault is neither a Heideggerian "meditative thinking" of philosophers who are "indifferent to human affairs" nor an Arendtian "problem of truth in the public realm," but an active search for a philosophical life that inquires into the possibilities of transcending the limits of what we are.

Kürşad Ertuğrul examines post-Marxist theory by way of Heideggerian existentialism. He argues that the articulation of Heidegger's existentialism with political theory has elevated "politics" and "the political" to "the level of ontological circumstance." This has been translated by post-Marxist theory in such thinkers as Laclau and Mouffe into conceptualizing class hegemony in terms of contingency, i.e., a world of competing hegemonies, so to speak, none of which has any guarantee of success in securing its hegemonic status. Ertuğrul claims that by using Heidegger's distinction between "the being" of an object which is constructed by discourse and therefore open to change versus its "existence," which is not related to thought processes, post-Marxist theory adopted the concept of "being of an object" at the expense of its "existence," as a consequence of which politics was conceptualized as "an irreducible ontological category" and the "ontological significance of the social" was denied. This has resulted in social actors no longer considered as subjects of study unless they are engaged in political struggle. Ertuğrul concludes that by excluding sociological analysis in discussions on political order and identity, post-Marxist theories fail to deal with change that is constructed beyond existing structures and hence remain encapsulated within a discourse that restricts itself to the status quo.

The final "free article" by Aysegül Kibaroğlu looks at the water dispute between Turkey, Syria and Iraq in the Euphrates-Tigris basin from the point of view of international relations theories on conflict and its management. She points out that seen from the theoretical outlook of the Realist position,

conflict over water is inescapable given the scarcity of the resource. The Institutionalists, on the other hand, would view the water dispute, not in terms of "water wars," as the Realists would put it, but in terms of political confrontation and negotiation that are likely to result in collaboration. Kibaroğlu opts for the "Benefit-Sharing Approach," an off-shoot of Institutionalism, arguing that "diverse benefits derived from political, economic and scientific cooperation can be bundled with transboundary water use and management benefits." Giving detailed data and arguments that outline the conflict, she concludes that "cooperation in the region needs to be based on wider development concepts" and that "cooperative processes need to be geared" to wider socioeconomic development and poverty reduction in the region.

Taken together, these articles constitute an attempt to contribute to debates on theories of consensus, conflict, and power. As the editor of the volume, I believe that this special issue will draw attention from academics who are interested in questions of political theory.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Kadem Şenkal, the Administrative Editor of the Journal, whose meticulous attention throughout the process of the compilation of the volume has turned my job into a much easier endeavor than otherwise. I would also like to thank Kathryn Kranzler, the Copy Editor of the *Journal*, for her contribution to the editing of the articles in this volume.