

NONKILLING REFLECTION:
PHILOSOPHY OF PERSON-CENTERED ACCOUNTABILITY IN POLITICAL
THOUGHT
by Clay Edwards

Introduction

Philosophy makes political science a discipline because in philosophy and political science, we pursue the knowledge of the problem of accountability of any polity, jointly and severally, in the management of human affairs. If we think of the soul interchangeably with the idea of person, where persons are recognized as what they do, rather than their status¹ in some place we conjure up for the sake of convenience, we can recognize the person in soul as predecessor of the body and master of the body. This premise allows us foundation for an argument that we indeed are accountable and need to be held accountable for learning to behave for all our sakes, according to legitimate demands of political competence.

Further, these premises allow us to take a just and therapeutic approach to politics in art and science, in the interest of preparing a safe healthy environment in which we can carry out our public affairs competently for the sake of humanity.

Moreover, we may begin to appreciate politics as a pedagogical matter -in education, for learning in our schools, at home and in the Agora or Forum of business and public affairs. This is certainly the concern we should have in creating, managing and ending disputes between and among actors in any given context in politics. This is no less true in the case of the

¹ The concern here is with the pedagogic in teaching and learning doctrine of nonkilling global political science, as conceived by Political Scientist Glenn D. Paige, an expert in Political Leadership as a social science and therapeutic, related to the healing of disease. These matters are treated extensively by Plato in his dialogues, especially Gorgias, Statesman, Timaeus, Phaedrus, Sophist, Laws, Republic and Theaetetus. Plato is often understood as a philosopher but perhaps we do best to think of Plato as a teacher, not taking sides in a dispute, but in allowing us to understand and handle disputes and manage our political affairs using the principles and tools we associate with classical philosophy and politics. If we can take the China Taiwan dispute as a teaching and learning experience, even in dialogue form, we may best act for all our sakes in avoiding oppression and lethal war.

China/Taiwan dispute in which the principal actors behave as though they can only calculate the level of acceptable cost in getting advantage in the dispute over whether Taiwan is governed officially by the Communist Party of China controlled government in Beijing. Indeed, these concerns are universal across any and all political disputes the world over.

Plato in his dialogue Laws 9 conceived of politics in art as the management of men's souls. The soul, as Plato conceived it in Phaedrus is the master of the body, and in Timaeus it comes first in creation followed by the body. As a pedagogical matter, we may regard this dispute in the context of person-centered education.

Developmental Considerations in Political Art and Science: Education for a Nonkilling World Community - the China / Taiwan conflict in Person

I propose that we consider person-centered politics emphasizing nonkilling global political science as the baseline for understanding of successful practice of politics in art and science. I borrow from the pedagogy of person-centered theory in the pedagogy of education explained by Verne Faust (1978) in my graduate program in the School of Education at Alliant International University in San Diego, California.

Faust's unpublished manual provided to all graduate students in this program explained the theory of person-centered education by arguing that a person's behavior, *all* of his behavior, is shaped by his need to be, not what we may want any person to produce² as behavior. "While the need to maintain physical existence is a powerful force, even more influential is the propensity to preserve one's identity and sense of self. In the final

² When anyone brings into being something which did not previously exist, we say that he who brings it into being produces it and that which is brought into being is produced. (Sophist 219a,b) Agriculture and all kinds of care of any living beings, and that which has to do with things which are put together or molded (utensils we call them), and the art of imitation—all these might properly be called by one name, the productive art, directing their energy to production.

analysis the individual will, if necessary, behave in ways that will maintain, or not drastically alter, the self-concept *even at the expense of giving up physical existence.* “

Faust further explains that ordinarily, in speaking of ‘personal safety’ it is physical safety which is being talked about. However, in the person-centered curriculum, ‘safety of the person’ refers to the individual perceiving and feeling that his ‘self,’ his personal characteristics, has full opportunity to remain intact, and need not be changed in order to be esteemed.”

The need to be means the need to maintain, as is, how the individual perceives himself. To change one’s self is to alter, give up, a part of personal existence. Therefore ‘to change’ is generally perceived as a loss of a part of self. For others to attempt to change the self of an individual is to immediately set resistance into action, in service to person-preservation. This is no less true of every polity the mind of humanity can devise to separate or wall off to others across the world community, domestic or international.

Therefore, if people have the opportunity to remain as is and still be esteemed by others, they are in a position to change what they do in enhancing directions. This is the stake of politics itself – enhancing directions, because there is little or nothing to lose in changing what we do. That is, what Plato had Socrates explain in the dialogue Gorgias, **the purpose of rhetoric in public affairs is to make others better.**

This means that, should the risk of change be overcome, the person, the person’s personal safety has been enhanced, stronger, more potent, perhaps safer than it has ever been before. This is no less true in the relationship between China and Taiwan in their respective administrations. Not only should both sides refrain from devaluing each other in their rhetoric, they should make it clear they *will not* give signs of valuing, esteeming the other for having changed in the direction desired by either side.

It would seem that all of us would be in a safer environment if the two sides are able to re-examine their dispute in light of a person-centered politics, a nonkilling politics, and without the need to express affection for one another. Instead, we value the human condition and its improvement to facilitate improvement with law tracking with gymnastic for the body, as justice and medicine track together for the sake of the human soul. This is what I believe Plato's Socrates meant in Gorgias when he called for us in rhetoric to make each other better, not worse. It is on that standard by which each of us is and will be held to account, as a matter of philosophy, religion, politics, political science and nonkilling global political science.

In person-centered politics we try to understand that the failure of affection experienced as between the two sides should not make anyone, no matter what side of any dispute they are on feel guilty or responsible for failure, because success in politics does not require us to have affection for everyone. Success in political art is in esteeming and valuing others as members of humanity.

Such esteem and valuing of persons on their own terms allows each of us to get access to the affective and cognitive domains within us. It allows us to bring into the open and accept our own feelings and ideas. These feelings and ideas will not be walled off or separated from each other which means there is less opportunity for deception and deceit to torment our lives. There is less distortion, less repression. In such an environment affect mixes generously with cognition and we are liberated for learning, for pursuing knowledge and indeed, making humanity better in genuine politics in rhetoric.

It is important to make the learning about the nature of the dispute and the nature of the parties involved to make it relevant to the selves or souls of the parties to this dispute to maintain and enhance who they already are *in existence* to generate the affect that allows the parties to move forward to something better in their political lives. I cannot imagine either side - China or Taiwan

- having any happiness having guns and missiles pointed at each other and as we are more aware of the mutual threat and danger, the more likely we will learn, retain, generalize and use what we know to generate a safer, healthier political environment across the Taiwan Strait.

Angry feelings may evaporate in the mix as temperance and courage to face the other person and behave in a statesmanlike way rises as genuine nutritious human interaction, in the true meaning of political art and science. It would be unnecessary to defensively resist learning. One need not angrily strike out against the other and the wider community. We need not distort the realities of subject matter, instruction, nor the actual curriculum of politics and the political science. The content of politics in art and political science in statesmanship are perceived accurately and realistically. We can focus attention and sustain concentration, all in the interests of maintaining and enhancing all polities in interest.

When we feel safe- when we perceive ourselves to be esteemed for who we are, independent of how little or much we change (learn), we will form strong identification with each other, build our capacities and capabilities for philosophy in art and political art and science and thereby actually function in our highest and best interest.

We are whole, not flattered into the abyss of empty, not separated, not divided, not clothed deceptively and not cooking devoid of nutrition for our bodies, in a world in which there is truly enough for us all. We have access to our bodies and our persons, consciously and unconsciously.

To conclude, we are able to deal with ourselves developmentally rather than in clinical, remedial or compensatory ways and therefore society functions optimally, everywhere. It is in this paradigm of the person that politics takes place in art, scientifically mixed in proper proportions as courage and temperance in Statesmanship, in political science and offers us the soundest intellectual foundation for a Nonkilling Global

Political Science. We have a basis for holding ourselves accountable to protect and enhance the quality of human life within and across the international community.

About the Author: Clay Edwards holds a Masters degree in Education from United States International University (USIU) in San Diego (renamed Alliant International University). Professor Verne Faust was the Dean of Education at USIU who developed the Person-Centered Education model. Clay Edwards' undergraduate degree is from University of Hawaii (Political Science and Communications) with special courses on Political Leadership under Prof. Glenn D. Paige and in Asian Studies, he took courses at Soochow University in Taiwan and Chiang Mai University in Thailand under the auspices of Saint Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota and at Srinakarinwirot University in Songkla,. Thailand.