

Democracy and cyborg citizenship

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One of the challenges that AI poses to the concept of democracy is represented by the issue of citizenship. In the short discussion that I will carry on, which is a sketch for the discussion, I will try to offer food for thought, often provocative, on the role of citizenship in democracies in which artificial or semi-artificial individuals are legitimate holders of citizenship.

Historically, as is known, citizenship was defined starting from ancient Greece; citizenship was, in fact, acquired through naturalization or birth (as Aristotle testifies to us in *Politics*).

Males, white and "free" (i.e. not slaves) belonged to the Polis: the vast majority of Athenian citizens were men of at least twenty years of age, born in Athens to an Athenian citizen father and a mother daughter of an Athenian citizen. In other words, the *Ius Sanguinis* (as opposed to the *Ius Soli*) was in force, which however excluded women and slaves. In Imperial Rome, on the other hand, the *Ius Soli* was in force, in fact, at least from the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, issued by the emperor Caracalla in 212, citizenship was granted to all populations living within the borders of the Empire. In the Middle Ages, at least in Europe, it became a very complex matter; the right of citizenship was originally granted to those who had owned a house within the walls for a given number of years and paid taxes. Subsequently, it gradually extended to the various categories of immigrants, with different measures. In this period the now obsolete equation between citizen and bourgeois was gaining ground:

"Borghese" (Burger, *bourgeois*) indicates, in fact, starting from the XII century the citizen in Germany, France, England, while in Italy the terms are used "citizen" and citizenship" (*civis*, *civitas*). The qualification of citizen indicates whoever possesses the privileges of citizenship and is a member of the *civitas*, that is, of an ancient settlement where a bishop resides. The bourgeois, on the other hand, is the inhabitant of the *burgus*, a agglomeration born outside the ancient city and distinct from the countryside. Often between the inhabitants of the village and the city there were conflicts for the conquest of the same rights; in fact, however, with time "bourgeoisie" and "citizenship" ended up taking the same m

Over time, the concept of citizenship has taken on a broader meaning, also embracing those who are, for various reasons, rooted in the territory and who contribute to the material and spiritual progress of society. Women, individuals adopted and recognized as their own children by Italian citizens, and, in some states, children of immigrants, immigrants who want to become citizens of the host country, can therefore obtain full citizenship, or a "limited" citizenship such as in the USA, where those who have not had US citizenship since birth or have not resided in that country for 14 years, have the "limit" of not being able to run for the US presidency (think of a personality like Henry Kissinger, who for better or for worse, if he had held US citizenship since

birth would probably have become president of the United States).

We can, therefore, imagine that in the future citizenship will be extended to additional individuals who possess certain characteristics, through a cumulative criterion, and, perhaps, removed from individuals who are now full-fledged citizens. In the Middle Ages, in fact, citizenship was a sort of barter between farmer and vassal; those who remained outside were considered outcasts: outlaws, brigands, heretics, thieves, beggars or vagabonds (witches or prostitutes, in the case of women – although it is not clear whether women had any rights of citizenship).

In the last two centuries, as observed by the feminist philosopher, leader of cyberfeminism, D. Haraway, biology and evolutionism have made modern organisms a subject of knowledge, and at the same time, have reduced the boundary between animal and human; in other cases we can say that we have even anthropomorphized animal behavior, we dress them as if they were human or had human needs: perhaps we would not be surprised if in a Disney-like future humans walked arm in arm with Goofy/Goofy. Would the next step be the recognition of citizenship for these hybrids, these "cyborgs"? On the other hand, the story of the horse Incitatus appointed senator to demonstrate that even a horse could have done better than the other Roman senators is by now proverbial, although it has been exaggerated over the centuries (The animal never became a senator and the idea of Caligula seems to have rather been the one to make him consul), and shows us how, in history, creatures, albeit not hybridized, have been made bearers of citizenship.

But what exactly is a cyborg? There are no precise definitions, even if, as D. Haraway points out, the term is a compound between the words *cyberg* and *organism*: it means, then, cybernetic organism and indicates the mixture of flesh (natural) and technology (artificial) that it features the body modified by hardware grafts, prostheses, and other implants. Given this literal definition, room for debate opens up: for D. Haraway human beings, as owners of prostheses (such as pens, forks, knives, glasses, etc.) are cyborgs; according to others (including myself), the mere presence of an artifact in an individual is not enough to define him as a cyborg. In other words, the use of a pen or a smartphone is not enough to define an individual as a cyborg, such a definition would be too broad to be significant and would still leave us within an analogical rationality; it takes something more to make an individual a cyborg: that something more is an intimate connection between the neurological apparatus and a digital system, as for example happens in the episode of the Borg in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, where Picard is assimilated by the Borg who apply a series of artificial instruments connected directly to his neural system, giving him the name of Locutus. The Borg grant Picard/Locutus citizenship rights at least as a Borg spokesman - hence a political role - for mediation with the United Federation of Planets. Would we give citizenship to such an individual or would we consider him a semi-human person like a beggar or a medieval vagabond?

It is difficult to give a certain and definitive answer to this question, unless you think that, in the end, even a cyborg fighting for his life would end up, who knows when, with access to citizenship rights.

An attempt to answer this type of question was made in the controversial essay *Cyborg Citizen*, by the American social activist and cyberculture expert Chris Hables Gray who, starting from a Lockean and Kantian (i.e. cosmopolitan) perspective, proposes as a test of citizenship the Turing test. According to Hables Gray, in a hybridized and cosmopolitan world (i.e. where nation-states are contingent and global citizenship makes greater sense due to global political and ecological choices) the Turing test, as an operational procedure (i.e. not an abstract value but, like citizenship, it is a working idea) is the best way to test whether an entity in question, insofar as it is capable of holding an intelligent conversation with an intelligent human being for a sufficiently long time, can be the recipient of rights of citizenship. In case the machine, be it a robot or a cyborg or an android, can maintain a conversation with an intelligent human being, then it can be, at the limit, considered as intelligent as many humans. Hables Gray, therefore, places emphasis on the idea of citizenship/participatory democracy, that is, on the idea that the type of citizenship that allows individuals (in a very similar way to ancient Greek democracy) a greater involvement in political life and an increase in their role in decision-making processes. Some authors have noted how Hables Gray's proposal can paradoxically cut out human beings and keep artificial or semi-artificial individuals inside. Gray, on the other hand, countered that his proposal would not permit denials of citizenship on racist grounds or recurring prejudices; the point is not to exclude, Gray continues, those who already possess the citizenship requisites, as in the past the criteria of wealth, literacy and sex did) nor to include institutions or fetuses or domestic animals: rights and protections can be theirs guaranteed beyond the Turing test. According to Hables Gray, the beauty of using the Turing test lies precisely in focusing on the heart of political activity: communication, which is elevated to the definitive value of politics itself; it doesn't matter if the citizenry becomes embodied by an organic, machinic or hybrid body or even an avatar or a hologram (as in McBride Allen's novel *The Modular Man*).

In 2019 Bill Gates, speaking at the Security Conference in Munich, had supported the idea of a double taxation for robots: that is, both the companies that build the robots and, then, both the companies that build them should pay an extra levy install to replace the manpower of men and women. Could Hables Gray's hypothesis, which we have provocatively presented here, be an alternative to Bill Gates' proposal? Entities capable of intervening in political discourse with other human beings could therefore be bearers of citizenship and, as active citizens who participate and they have the say they can be taxed directly and therefore have rights and duties that entities unable to participate in the political discourse would not have. Work and active politics

they would regain the central place that in the age of social networks seems, for many factors, to be denied them.

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