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Phenomenology of Irrationality in Political Thinking and Diversity of Logics in Political Action¹

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Abstract. The article presents a typology of modalities of thinking based on data from experimental psychology and comparative anthropology, followed by an application of this typology to the problem of diverse interpretations of political phenomena and the resulting forms of political action. A comparative characterization of five modalities of thinking – *rational*, *magical*, *aesthetic*, *ethical*, and *instrumental* – is provided, identifying the structuring rules that govern the perception of reality, the formation of judgment, and

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the acquisition of new knowledge. Each set of such rules is analyzed as an independent logic, with political thinking and associated political action being interpreted as a consecutive realization of these logics, contingent upon the chosen modality. Typical strategies of political behavior linked to each modality are identified, along with the psychological triggers that stimulate the activation of rational, magical, ethical, aesthetic, or instrumental thinking and behavior.

Keywords: political thinking; political action; political theory; typology of thinking; irrationality in politics

The most prevalent definitions of thinking suffer from a sort of monism: thinking has traditionally been defined primarily as a rational and logical variety of psychological activity (Rubinshteyn 1958). This synonymization of thinking and logic – implying singularity of logic reduced to its formal variety – is convenient, providing a reliable reference point for describing and analyzing psychological phenomena, at both individual and collective levels.

However, this concept, developed since ancient times, is increasingly eroding; and psychological phenomena often dismissed as “irrational” are now the subject of closer scrutiny. Psychologists recognize the existence of different cognitive styles (Kholodnaya 2004; Zhang et al. 2012) and various types of intelligence that do not reduce to explicit formal-logical operations (e.g., emotional intelligence). Researchers examining the socio-psychological aspects of magical practices and beliefs describe magical thinking as a special type of cognitive activity that does not adhere to classical laws of causality (Subbotsky 2010; Lévi-Strauss 1996). Studies in the field of logic, as both a philosophical and mathematical discipline, have led to the emergence of an increasingly diverse array of logics, which not only differ from the principles and rules of classical formal logic, but also often prove to be impossible or counterintuitive for individuals accustomed to formal logic. Furthermore, investigations by historians and cultural researchers into the peculiarities of thought within different cultural and civilizational paradigms reveal an irreducible diversity of cognitive approaches (Smirnov 2010). This diversity necessitates a reevaluation of the irrational in political thinking and behavior: where it is often assumed that there is no logical coherence, a perfectly coherent system may indeed be present.

The issue of thinking modalities acquires particular significance for political science. Traditional approaches to analyzing political thinking and political consciousness often exhibit a certain “rootedness”. Individual, and especially collective perceptions of political reality and responses to it are linked to the conditions of socialization, cultural or social embedding of beliefs and mental patterns. This is evident in classical theories of political culture, class ideologies, political mentalities, and types of civilizations. Meanwhile, in the contemporary world, the volatility of mental constructs – provoked by information and migratory exchanges, growing aggressiveness and complexity of the information environment, and the destruction of classical models of political action – has become increasingly important.

Consequently, it is essential to identify and elaborate on those structural elements of political thinking that enable consideration and analysis of this volatility. In this article, we adopt a working definition of thinking as a voluntary psychological mechanism for processing and transforming information, which enables the acquisition of new knowledge. Within this framework, logic is understood as a set of non-contradictory rules that govern the operation of this mechanism. Accordingly, different sets of rules represent distinct logics, each embodying unique interpretations of coherence and non-contradiction in both political thinking and political action.

The reconstruction of models for the formation and functioning of various political logics becomes increasingly feasible when adopting an interdisciplinary approach. Disciplines such as psychology, pedagogy, anthropology, and others have long studied phenomena like magical thinking, artistic-imaginative thinking, and everyday thinking in a consistent manner. In the subsequent sections of this article, we will demonstrate that: 1) different types (modalities) of thinking are grounded in distinct logics while remaining comparable; 2) the objects of cognitive activity associated with these different modalities can include political phenomena, leading to fundamentally different interpretations of political life within each modality; and 3) varying modalities of thinking facilitate different types of political action, including collective action.

Before delving into a more detailed analysis of each modality, it is essential to clarify certain points regarding terminology and the role of language in relation to the conceptual frameworks employed across various disciplines. The terminology we use, particularly concerning the names of different modalities, is inherently conditional. Within philosophical, psychological, sociological, and political literature, numerous typologies of thinking exist, with some employing the same terms in different contexts, while others utilize their own conceptual frameworks. A comprehensive synthesis of these constructs is not feasible. Consequently, the author faces the challenge of either developing an alternative, personal terminological system or accepting that the terms used may carry different meanings within other conceptual paradigms. We have chosen the latter approach; however, the selection of terms is not entirely arbitrary. Regardless of the degree of alignment with other interpretations, each term allows for the identification of distinct patterns, which will be further clarified in the detailed descriptions of each modality.

The positioning of descriptive language in relation to the examined logics presents an even more intricate challenge. Each modality possesses its own linguistic framework, employing distinct language not only for describing its intrinsic workings but also for self-description. However, reproducing this semantic diversity would render comparison impractical, if not impossible. In accordance with the conventions of a scientific article, we adopt the language of the rational modality, while retaining specific terminology for other modalities when necessary and feasible. The complexity arises from the fact that the same terms can carry different meanings across modalities. For instance, in the context of *magical thinking*, a ritual is viewed as a sacred act and a means of communication with spirits (or gods), often resulting in the creation of a miracle.

In contrast, for *rational thinking*, a ritual is understood as a socio-historically conditioned institution endowed with a predetermined functionality. It is crucial for the reader to recognize these distinctions, as they significantly influence the interpretation of each modality.

The typologies we consider are not ideal types; rather, we conceptualize a modality as a communicative phenomenon in which the manifestations of specific traits are directly influenced by the density of the corresponding communicative space. Furthermore, we posit that each modality is universal, suggesting that this form of organized thinking is characteristic of every individual or the vast majority of people. Therefore, the discussion should not focus on whether individuals or societies belong to a particular “type”, but rather on the conditions under which a specific modality is actualized, even for the same individual or within the same group.

Modalities of Thinking: General Characteristics

In our view, when it comes to understanding and interpreting political phenomena, it is both justified and heuristically promising to identify five distinct modalities of thinking: *rational*, *magical*, *aesthetic*, *ethical*, and *instrumental*. Each of these modalities should be analyzed in relation to one another; indeed, it appears that pairwise comparisons may be methodologically flawed in this context due to the inherent tendency to ascribe to one component of the pair all known properties that are not observed in the other. In contrast, a simultaneous comparison of all five modalities allows for the positioning of each modality's properties on a cognitive map, considering the interplay among the five dimensions. All five modalities share the following characteristics:

1. *Nonconvertibility*: The methods and rules for transforming information within one modality cannot be adequately replicated in another.
2. *Self-sufficiency*: Each modality provides sufficient grounds for constructing a coherent worldview or for a complete and coherent interpretation of any political phenomenon.
3. *Universality*: The average person is capable of thinking and communicating within the framework of any of these modalities.
4. *Structuredness*: Each modality facilitates the identification of objects, operations, and stages of thinking, thereby enabling the construction of relatively complex and elaborate inferences.
5. *Sequentiality*: Engaging in thinking within a single modality is simpler and less energetically demanding, in relation to a single cognizable phenomenon, than switching between modalities. In this context, monomodal cognitive operations are more resilient to refutation and falsification.
6. *Logic*: Each modality is characterized by a relatively explicit set of rules that guide thinking and serve as the foundation for communication within that modality.
7. *Comparability*: It is possible to establish criteria for comparison that reflect the structure and outcomes of thinking within each modality.

Postulating these general characteristics enables a comparison of various modes of thinking and allows us to consider them as phenomena existing on a similar level. However, the true value of such a comparison lies in the differences among these modalities. We believe that these differences can be elucidated through several criteria of comparison, which can be presented in list form:

- *Subject of Judgments and Reflections*: Different modes of thinking identify the focus of cognitive processes, determining what can be contemplated.
- *Typical Characteristics of the Subject of Thought*: The identification of an appropriate mode of thinking for a given subject occurs through the recognition or attribution of specific qualities to it.
- *Mechanism of Connection Between Subjects of Thought*: This refers to the mechanisms attributed to perceived reality, which simultaneously dictate the rules of understanding.
- *Method of Confirming a Judgment*: The accepted approach for justifying the adequacy and persuasiveness of judgments, applicable both to individual cognitive operations and to final conclusions.
- *Criteria for Evaluating Judgments*: The standards used to determine what is considered true or false within a specific mode of thinking.
- *Sphere of the Suppressed or Unimaginable*: Phenomena or characteristics that cannot be integrated into cognitive activity within a given mode of thinking are regarded as non-existent or insignificant.
- *Mechanism of Suppression and Rejection*: The typical framework for a given mode of thinking, including the associated actions taken in response to the unimaginable.
- *Mechanisms for Incorporating New Information*: Processes that give new information meaningful form within a specific mode of thinking.

Since each of these parameters possesses a normative character within its respective modality, we can discuss various logics in relation to the interpretation of a given political phenomenon, including rational, magical, aesthetic, ethical, and instrumental logic. (The analysis of the interplay between these different logics extends beyond the scope of this article. – *Author's Note*) We propose that the characteristics outlined form an axiomatic framework for each mode of thinking, serving both as a structuring mechanism for that mode and as a boundary beyond which it becomes ineffective.

1. Rational modality of thinking

Rational thinking has been the subject of extensive study and was historically regarded as synonymous with thinking itself. Researchers in this field – primarily philosophers and psychologists – often refer to it as *rational thinking*, rational logical thinking, or simply thinking in general. A considerable body of work focuses on abstract, scientific, and mathematical thinking, which are traditionally viewed as the most advanced forms of rational thought. This form of thinking is also examined by specialists in logic, who treat it as an independent

philosophical and mathematical discipline, as well as by literature dedicated to problem-solving methodologies and the decision-making process. While we do not aim to undertake a comprehensive review of all interpretations of *rational thinking*, we will limit our discussion to identifying the characteristics of rational thought that align with the proposed research protocol.

Firstly, the objects of *rational thinking* encompass both *facts* – external phenomena that have proven existence and possess certain properties – and *concepts*, which are developed and logically self-consistent cognitive constructs. Both facts and concepts exhibit stable properties that determine the existence and acceptability of the object of rational thought, thereby facilitating the identification of the object itself. These properties include objectivity (in the sense of being external to the subject), self-identity, and structurability. The connections between the objects of thought are established through relationships that adhere to the rules of formal logic, such as identity and difference, causal connections presented as logical consequences, and the relationship between parts and wholes. Overall, *rational thinking* is object-oriented; it is directed toward external objects relative to the subject and their interactions, with those characteristics of the subject that become part of the reasoning being objectified.

The existence of an object and its properties, as well as the truth of judgments concerning specific objects, can be rationally justified through proof – whether empirical or logical in nature. The validity of such proof and the judgments derived from it are assessed using the criterion of “true or false”. Consequently, truth emerges as a fundamental parameter of *rational thinking*, serving as the filter through which information is selected, structured, and transformed. The foundation for determining the truth or falsity of both the processes and outcomes of thinking lies in reasoning, which can be expressed in verbal or other forms (such as numerical), comprising a set of interconnected judgments.

In the broadest sense, *rational thinking* is structured according to the principles of syllogism, although it is important to note that syllogism serves more as an idealized model of rational judgment than as a comprehensive description of it. The evolution of classical formal logic and the emergence of new logical systems do not undermine the fundamental framework of rational thinking; rather, they introduce new concepts and rules for interaction that are grounded in the same foundational principles. For instance, in fuzzy logic, the introduction of the idea that a judgment can possess a truth value that is not strictly zero or one, but rather a probability greater than zero and less than one, does not alter the essential rules of rational judgment. These rules remain applicable within the context of probability and the methodologies for its calculation.

The presence of cognitive filters inherent in each mode of thinking suggests that certain types of information are excluded during perception or interpretation. In other words, there exists a realm of suppressed or ignored information – elements that cannot be integrated into thinking that adheres to the rules of a specific cognitive framework. In the context of scientific rational thinking, Karl Popper (Popper 2010) has articulated criteria for such suppression. More

generally, the rules of exclusion are governed by formal logic: something cannot be the subject of rational thought if it does not conform to the law of identity, for instance. Furthermore, at more complex levels of reasoning, judgments that cannot be proven or those that cannot be subjected to falsification due to a lack of factual or conceptual clarity are disregarded. In essence, *rational thinking excludes the unprovable*. However, since unprovable assertions often arise in public discourse, significant emphasis is placed on procedures that ensure their exclusion from the realm of thinkable ideas. For rational thinking, this procedure involves declaring the unprovable as non-existent. It is noteworthy that even dictionary definitions of “fact” underscore its reality in contrast to fantasies or non-existence – elements that do not qualify as facts (Nikiforov 2010). Exceptions to this exclusion are the axioms of rational thought, which are a priori in nature and not subject to proof; they are simply accepted as foundational conditions for the existence of the world.

At the same time, new information can often be assimilated into existing knowledge frameworks. Within rational thinking, previously unknown information is readily integrated not only through individual proof but also by reducing it to what has already been established. This can occur through reference to existing categorizations and the proof-based inclusion of new phenomena into established classes of events, for which the necessary procedures for determining truth have already been conducted.

Finally, *rational thinking*, like any cognitive mode, operates at varying levels, ranging from concrete reasoning grounded in tangible objectivity to highly developed abstraction. The differences in these levels are influenced by individual capabilities, educational experiences, the presence of a well-established intellectual tradition, and the surrounding institutional environment. In the context of political thinking, particularly when comparing it to other cognitive modes, the most intriguing operations involve abstraction. This process entails identifying common properties among thinking subjects, which enables the application of these properties to similar phenomena. Consequently, knowledge of a specific object can be utilized to make judgments about other objects. The psychological mechanisms and logical procedures that facilitate abstraction are well-documented in the literature, with categorization being recognized as the primary mechanism of this process.

In contemporary discourse, the rational approach to interpreting political phenomena is often regarded as the standard, not only within the realm of political science but also in everyday judgments about politics (Yudkowsky 2015), and therefore hardly requires additional illustrations.

2. *Magical modality of thinking*

Magical thinking is examined through various terminologies. Researchers often refer to it in relation to a class of interconnected phenomena, using terms such as *magical consciousness* or thinking, *mythological consciousness* or *worldview*. Many observations and concepts draw on terminology associated with the study of religion and pre-religious socio-psychological phenomena. Some aspects of this mode of thinking are analyzed as manifestations

of primitive thinking, while other works explore similar phenomena as symbolic thinking or a symbolic worldview. Despite the common association of these forms of thinking with traditional societies of the past or as ethnographic relics, a substantial empirical foundation confirms the prevalence of magical perceptions in the modern world. Studies have demonstrated that magical thinking continues to exist and influence contemporary thought and behavior (Subbotsky 2010; Rozin et al. 1992; Rozin, Nemeroff 1994).

Magical thinking is characterized by its engagement with a specific type of ideal objects, namely *symbols*, *miracles*, and *artifacts*. In this context, a *symbol* is understood as a representation of reality that is not identical to itself; it inherently embodies something beyond its own existence and possesses a supernatural quality. From the perspective of rational thinking, defining the supernatural poses significant challenges – particularly when attempting to articulate its essence without resorting to negation (e.g., un-natural, non-natural, beyond natural) or merely stringing together synonyms. However, within the framework of *magical thinking*, the concept of *otherworldliness* is distinctly clear. It is important to note that, from the standpoint of magical thinking, defining what is evident to rational thought – such as *reality* and *fact* – can be just as elusive as rationally defining the supernatural. If one does not establish the supernatural based on criteria derived from a rationalist understanding of the “natural”, the key to comprehending it lies in the notion of a multiverse: the simultaneous existence of multiple worlds (or layers of reality, levels of existence, etc.), each of which may be perceived as supernatural or otherworldly in relation to another.

In this framework, a *symbol* is not arbitrary; its implicit component, which originates from another realm, restricts the unrestricted manipulation of its form. However, the external aspect of the symbol can be created – through inscription, utterance, or other means – to recreate the wholeness it embodies. When the creation of a symbol is not immediately apparent or unique, we encounter an *artifact*. *Miracles*, on the other hand, represent a manifested and intentional interplay or clash of these worlds, often described as divine or spiritual interventions. While forces such as *fate* or other manifestations of magical power may be impersonal, they are perceived as providential, possessing intentions, attractions, and aspirations – essentially volitional properties that elucidate their actions. In many instances, these forces are personified within a specific pantheon, giving them a recognizable identity and agency.

Magical thinking is inherently subject-object oriented, lacking the subjectivity that typically underpins it. This magical subjectivity implies that, from the perspective of the subject, the acting agent is primarily a psychological component, particularly the will (Shtulman 2008). Symbols, artifacts, and miracles exhibit a distinct set of essential properties, both general and specific. Among these, perhaps the most significant is integrity and indeterminacy. As a result, each of these objects of thought necessitates an element of *enigma* – an un-finalizable and fundamentally elusive quality that embodies interworldliness. Despite the potentially infinite variety of wonders that can be conceived, three basic variants can be identified: the appearance of something, its disappearance, and transformation (or transmutation).

The interaction of objects within the realm of magical thinking can be reduced to straightforward formula: the creation of a miracle as an expression of will or intention, coupled with the manipulation of symbols – be they ideal, verbal, graphic, tactile, or otherwise. However, these manipulations are neither arbitrary, nor is the selection of symbols or artifacts. The most fundamental, and seemingly the most prevalent, rules for combining symbols are those of similarity and affinity (Frazer 1986: 19-53; Levi-Strauss 1994). These principles can manifest across various dimensions and aspects, ranging from external similarity to synchronicity (similarity in time), and from connections based on a shared substrate – such as blood or linguistic sounds – to the relatedness of souls or ideas, however one may interpret these connections. In essence, much of magic can be understood as *sympathetic magic*, where the underlying principles of connection and resonance govern the efficacy of rituals and symbols. The rules for executing specific actions or constructing representations and judgments through magical means are elaborated upon within the frameworks of particular magical practices, as well as in cult rituals and mystical or esoteric literature.

The existence of the postulated connection, as well as the miraculous nature or properties of a symbol or artifact, is validated through the demonstration of *coincidence*. This coincidence serves a role analogous to that of *proof* within rational modalities, providing justification and verification for the correctness of judgments. Unlike formal proof, which relies on logical structures, coincidence affirms the adequacy of judgments and actions through their vividness. Consequently, the vividness of the magical result – essentially, *the miracle* – becomes a crucial parameter for distinguishing between true judgments and actions based on them and false ones. This vividness acts as a filter, excluding information that does not align with the principles of magical thinking.

Vividness can be deferred; in this sense, *testimony* serves a function in magical thinking analogous to the role of experimental reference in scientific rationality. Instead of relying on protocolizability and reproducibility as in scientific experiments, magical thinking draws upon authoritative figures or the competence of those who testify. Prophets and oracles, for instance, provide their insights into the future based on their perceived authority rather than empirical evidence.

Filtering in *magical thinking* involves the exclusion of elements that cannot be assimilated according to the modality's inherent rules. In this context, certain phenomena are explicitly isolated from the supernatural and deemed unthinkable; they cannot exist or occur without a connection to other realms. The process of exclusion manifests as a form of taboo: the unthinkable is prohibited from being contemplated, as engaging with it is seen as a form of profanation that may provoke punitive reactions from magical forces. Interestingly, a line of reasoning that is deemed erroneous by mythologized consciousness can be classified as *sacrilege* or *sin*. Conversely, new information can be integrated into magical thinking by animating new phenomena or the forces associated with them. This integration often involves relating these phenomena to known or newly identified subjects of magical will. The formation of new cults,

such as the well-documented “cargo cults” or chieftain-like cults, exemplifies this mechanism, illustrating how magical thinking adapts to incorporate new beliefs and practices.

The variety of magical practices and the mythological and religious systems they encompass is extensive. Often, the term *supernatural* serves as an oversimplification, primarily employed to rationalize magical phenomena. Developed mythologies frequently depict a complex interplay of multiple interacting worlds, ranging from dualistic frameworks to the tripartite structure of Christianity (comprising *hell*, *earthly life*, and *heaven*) and the nine worlds of Scandinavian mythology – all of which are considered equally real and, in that sense, *natural*. In contrast, primitive magical practices may operate with a more straightforward dichotomy between “here” and “there”, distinguishing between the ordinary and the extraordinary. As with rational thinking, the effectiveness of magical thinking is influenced by the level of abstraction and the sociocultural context, which will be explored further. Within magical thinking, various levels of abstraction exist, from concrete magical operations to interactions with higher powers and elemental forces. Individual proficiency in abstract magical thinking is contingent upon one’s abilities and learning. A notable aspect of this modality is the tendency to attribute certain magical manifestations to a universal force or to personalize them as deities or entities from other mythological realms. In simpler forms of magical thinking and associated practices, specific objects may be believed to possess unique wondrous properties. However, more abstract forms of magical thought suggest that any wonder can be derived from a personalized nature or force, aligned with its attributes. This can encompass specific types of energy (such as the traditional four elements), particular manifestations (like thunderstorms, droughts, diseases, or luck), or designated areas of activity (including territories, age and sex groups, and professional occupations), as well as connections to other worlds.

In contemporary politics, the cults surrounding leaders – whether political leaders or “effective managers” – often exhibit a predominantly magical structure. In these contexts, the leader’s persona becomes imbued with magical associations tied to concepts such as *historical mission*, *charisma*, and *the uniqueness* of their political role. This phenomenon reflects a form of magical thinking where the leader is perceived as possessing extraordinary qualities that transcend ordinary political dynamics. Another notable example of magical thinking in politics is the conspiratorial interpretation of political life. In this framework, the complexity of interacting worlds is frequently reduced to a binary opposition between “the secret” and “the open”. This reductionist view simplifies the intricate web of political relationships and events, framing them as the result of hidden forces or agendas, thereby reinforcing a sense of mystique and intrigue around political processes.

The study of *magical thinking* and its manifestations is a vast and intricate field that cannot be fully covered in this brief overview. However, the examples provided illustrate key characteristics of this modality of thinking and the types of phenomena and objects it engages with.

3. Aesthetic modality of thinking

The study of *aesthetic thinking* primarily falls within the domains of aesthetics, cultural studies, art history, and pedagogical sciences, as well as various branches of artistic criticism. Related cognitive processes are also examined through the lenses of game thinking, imaginative or artistic thinking, and aesthetic taste. Many essential aspects of this modality are further elucidated in research on clip thinking, mosaic thinking, and the nature and mechanisms of humor and fashion. Within this modality, the objects of mental activity encompass (artistic) images and prototypes – visual, acoustic, tactile, and beyond. This includes the formation of comprehensive images that cannot be reduced to a single sensory experience. In this context, an image is primarily understood as a psychological reality that is perceived as such. Simultaneously, the capacity to produce specific images or sets of images is attributed to physical reality, rendering this subject matter quite universal. Here, we can discuss the perception of various objects in terms of their ability to evoke certain images or the actual formation of those images. This often leads to discussions about an object's “expressive form”, which refers to how its characteristics contribute to the creation of aesthetic experiences.

Thus, physical or social objects can indeed serve as subjects of *aesthetic thinking*, but specifically in their capacity as sources of images or prototypes. In this regard, aesthetic thinking is inherently object-subjective: the existence of an object gains significance only through its perception and evaluation by the subject.

This form of thinking possesses several distinct attributes. Firstly, it is simultaneous in nature; the existence of an artistic image requires the simultaneous perception of all its components, at least within the confines of operational memory. Secondly, each image has the capacity to evoke emotional and aesthetic impressions, and in this sense, it can be described as beautiful, humorous, atmospheric, dull, tragic, and so forth. Finally, every image exhibits a sense of wholeness, forming a kind of *Gestalt*. Although it can be analytically dissected, its existence and the impressions it elicits rely on the totality of its components and their arrangement (Sibley 2006).

The interaction of various images and the design of linked mental constructs are primarily governed by the principles of harmony, which include proportionality and compatibility. This refers to the relationships between the parts of an image and the relationships among different images. Researchers have identified several characteristics of artistic thinking, such as associativity, metaphoricalness, and paradoxicality (Kanashchenkova 2011). Interestingly, deviations from classical principles of harmony – whether through alienness or overt violations – can also form compelling images. The validity of aesthetic judgments is assessed through a comparison or transduction, which “involves evaluating images of objects and phenomena against an artistic standard rooted in aesthetic categories” (Kanashchenkova 2011: 145). This artistic standard is shaped by the socio-cultural context of the perceiving subject and influenced by the phenomenon of *fashion*, granting this modality remarkable flexibility in its evaluative criteria. Ultimately, the criterion for judgment is

the correspondence to an implied model, but the variability of these models leads to subjective opinions categorized as “like” or “dislike”. Thus, aesthetic evaluation is inherently emotional and aesthetic in nature.

This parameter is crucial for determining the validity or invalidity of aesthetic judgments, whether concerning a work of art, a political action, or a natural landscape. An object perceived as unpleasant or dissonant cannot be considered aesthetically valid. The requirement for originality may also serve as a model in this context; however, the final judgment is always the result of a comparative process. The substantiation of a judgment is often achieved by highlighting the most striking impressions associated with the object and its individual properties, which contribute to the overall impression. Frequently, these properties are influenced by the subject’s actions, where the technique employed to create an aesthetic result becomes both the object of evaluation and a basis for formulating the judgment. In this regard, “how it is done” often holds greater significance than “what is depicted” (Ushaneva 2009: 58).

As with all modalities, *aesthetic thinking* presupposes the existence of an unimaginable domain that eludes the format of its perceptual framework. This domain encompasses what is perceived as dull, uninteresting, or aesthetically and emotionally neutral. Consequently, the primary mechanism of filtering is *ignorance*: that which does not evoke aesthetic feelings is deemed unworthy of attention, largely imperceptible, and effectively “nothing”. Aesthetic thinking remains indifferent to such experiences. It is important to note that unimaginability represents more of a value assumption than a technical impossibility. While aesthetic thinking is indeed capable of perceiving and analyzing what is considered dull, engaging in such analysis is viewed as a meaningless endeavor – like to the logical analysis, fantasies are recognized as such rather than as historically conditioned social facts.

The variety of forms and levels of aesthetic perception and judgment arises primarily from the multitude of possible models. This results in a spectrum that ranges from a basic dichotomy of what is perceived as “fitting” or “unfitting”, “liked” or “disliked”, to more intricate and context-dependent evaluations and constructs. The fundamental mechanism of generalization – allowing for the extension of a unique judgment to related objects – lies in the comparison of images or prototypes within a specific style, format, genre, or manner. Importantly, this comparison is not grounded in rational categories that define style or genre; rather, it is rooted in subjective aesthetic perception. The hierarchy and differentiation of these generalized typical models serve as indicators of the degree of abstraction in *aesthetic thinking*.

The aestheticization of political life has been recognized as a persistent trend, particularly through the media’s formatting of politics (Debord 1999). This phenomenon is characterized by the adaptation of political discourse and mediated practices to align with the demands of aesthetic perception. *Aesthetic thinking* manifests not only in the way politics is presented but also in various scientific and popular interpretations of political phenomena. This includes the symmetrical nature of many political schemas, the aesthetic dimensions of concepts such as *quality of life* and consumption patterns, and the embellishment

of fundamental forms of political participation with elements of carnival and festivity.

4. *Ethical modality of thinking*

The characteristics of ethical thinking are primarily studied by ethics as a branch of philosophy. Additionally, the formation of moral consciousness has traditionally been a focus of pedagogical research and development. At the same time, and often independently of these traditions, an ethically oriented worldview is rigorously examined by anthropologists and ethnologists, and it also garners attention from cultural disciplines, particularly comparative studies. Certain aspects of this modality are consistently explored within the frameworks of philosophical axiology and jurisprudence.

The subject of *ethical thinking* encompasses human behavior along with the associated intentions and contexts. Consequently, this modality possesses a “subject-subject” character and is oriented towards interactions between individuals (or other subjects) as the primary content of thinkable reality. Behavior can be deconstructed into discrete acts, particularly focusing on the specific type of act known as *choice*. As in other instances, the physical (behavior) and mental (intentions, settings) aspects of thinking are closely interconnected and do not exist independently: behavior is perceived and conceptualized as intentional or, at the very least, conscious activity, while intentions and contexts imply corresponding behavior – both in prescriptive and explicative senses. A fundamental attribute of this modality is its value-colored nature: for *ethical thinking*, there exists no action or intention devoid of *value*. Each act or intention is personified to the extent that its existence presupposes the authorship of a consciously managing subject.

The object of *ethical thinking* is evaluated – or conceptualized in terms of value – in relation to a normative model. This norm serves as a crucial element for both the self-identification of the subject and the identification of reference groups, typically asserting claims of universality and absoluteness. However, in most instances, norms are variable and differentiated, accommodating not only universal requirements but also specific prescriptions, limitations, or exclusions pertinent to particular situations or demographic groups (such as age, social status, or profession). The primary means of connecting distinct objects of ethical thought lie in their productivity concerning ethical norms, which subsequently determines their conformity or non-conformity to the established norm, as well as the degree of such conformity or non-conformity. The resulting judgment is not merely evaluative but also prescriptive, delineating certain actions or attitudes. The justification of this judgment is facilitated by a comparative or contrasting procedure that assesses the act (or intention, or context) against the norm. An essential procedural function – analogous to ensuring clarity within the framework of *magical modality* or providing proof in *rational thinking* – entails identifying the relevant moral norm and interpreting it accordingly. The ultimate criterion for determining the adequacy and legitimacy of the judgment is the evaluation of the act, intention, or context within a binary opposition of “good/bad” (or “right/wrong”, “valuable/worthless”, etc.).

In the realm of *ethical thinking*, phenomena devoid of value coloring are deemed unthinkable. However, this does not imply that ethical thinking is exclusively concerned with social interactions; rather, relationships with natural phenomena can also be ethically structured. This spans a spectrum from certain manifestations of animism and totemism to various forms of ecological consciousness. Consequently, physical processes can be ethically oriented through human participation, which may occur even through mere presence or awareness of these processes. When *ethical thinking* encounters situations or objects that do not conform to this mental framework, the primary mechanism of exclusion is *depersonalization*. In such instances, entities that are perceived as non-ethical and non-ethicizable are regarded as non-subjective, characterized as mechanical, instinctual, or animalistic. This depersonalization serves to delineate the boundaries of ethical consideration, reinforcing the notion that *ethical thinking* is fundamentally rooted in the *recognition of subjectivity and value-laden interactions*.

The inclusion of certain phenomena within the domain of ethical thinking necessitates their personification – implying that “someone must bear responsibility” – and moralization, which involves framing the phenomenon in a manner that aligns it with the existing system of ethical norms. This system can range from class consciousness and national interests to Christian ethics.

Ethical thinking inherently accommodates varying levels of complexity, from primitive forms, such as “I took a camel from my neighbor – good; my neighbor took my camel – bad”, to highly differentiated and expansive ethical systems. The specific mechanism of generalization characteristic of this modality involves transferring the evaluation of a particular intention or act to encompass the entirety of an individual's behavior, and, more broadly, to their integral personality. This process operates within the sequence of “moral act – moral behavior – moral personality”, allowing for further extrapolation of such judgments to socially or professionally defined characteristics, nations, and other collective entities.

In contemporary political life, the activation of *ethical modality* typically occurs within the framework of the “we – others” dichotomy, particularly in contexts of political conflict. This represents a straightforward and widespread method of ethically perceiving reality. More intricate and abstract manifestations of ethical modality are associated with the discourse of justice, which reflects an idealized alignment of political practice with the moral norms upheld by a specific group.

5. Instrumental modality of thinking

This modality is primarily examined as practical thinking, particularly within the field of psychology (Kornilov 2000; Vasishchev 2002; Albrecht 2007). However, related phenomena are also characterized by terms such as *concrete*, *utilitarian*, *object-oriented*, and *pragmatic*. Numerous essential aspects of this modality are explored in sociological, psychological, and philosophical literature as manifestations of *everyday thinking*. In contemporary social and political theory, various processes associated with instrumental thinking are analyzed

in the context of social and political practices, particularly concerning the issue of “bounded rationality”.

The primary focus of reflection within this modality encompasses individual entities, operations, and reflective schemes. In this context, *an entity* may refer to a person or a relationship, particularly as it is instrumentally mediated in the pursuit of a utilitarian goal. Unlike a mere fact, the central object of thinking is viewed through the lens of intelligibility and comprehensibility, which are essential for the execution and reproduction of an operation. Concreteness is equally significant; *instrumental thinking* not only considers the abstract model of an operation but also its immediate implementation in the present moment. The resulting scheme is contextually determined and can only be extrapolated to a broader range of phenomena under conditions of contextual similarity. “Applicability” serves as a key criterion for evaluating the validity of a judgment or conclusion within this modality. The focus lies on what is *applicable*, what functions *effectively*, what is *useful*, and what is *efficient* – these criteria collectively define validity in this framework.

Different objects of instrumental thinking are interconnected through processes such as *imitation*, *accumulation*, *stereotyping*, and *algorithmization*. Imitation, whether in the physical realm or through mental experimentation, entails the endeavor to apply a specific operation or scheme to a given situation or object, accompanied by the corresponding documentation of successful operations. Accumulation refers to the development of a repertoire of schemes and operations that may be applicable in particular contexts. Stereotyping involves the formulation of typical schemes that can be employed in similar situations (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1996: 50-94). Algorithmization, on the other hand, consists of establishing a stable sequence of operations or schemes designed to address a specific problem.

The primary mode of validating a conclusion or judgment lies in its practical implementation: what is executed is valid. Consequently, *instrumental thinking* possesses a precedent-based character, wherein the *validity of a precedent* is confirmed through its repetition, establishing it as the ultimate criterion. The standard for evaluating the adequacy of such confirmation is the overall coherence of the result. This coherence may be assessed on the nature of the task at hand, or in functional terms, as a self-sufficient completion or utility, reflecting its intrinsic usefulness.

Instrumental modality delineates its own realm of the unthinkable: the concept of *the useless* – those elements that cannot be instrumentalized and are thus deemed inapplicable. Such realities are systematically excluded or isolated, creating a distance from both physical and psychological engagement. Everything that the subject can manipulate must be considered *instrumental*, while everything which eludes manipulation must be either removed from consideration or, if removal is unfeasible, the subject must distance themselves from it. Nevertheless, any novel phenomenon can be assimilated into the framework of instrumental modality once a method for its application within the current activity is identified. In this context, what is deemed applicable is subsequently applied; ultimately, the final conclusion emerges from a process of comparison.

As with other domains, *instrumental modality* presupposes the existence of varying levels of cognitive engagement, ranging from basic operations and skills associated with manual labor and the fundamental differentiation between the useful and the useless, to more complex constructs such as engineering, managerial, or medical expertise, as well as skills related to political intrigue.

The primary mechanism of generalization in this context is the typification of phenomena based on their applicability to specific operations or their designated roles within particular frameworks (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1996: 50-94). From this perspective, Borges' "Chinese classification of animals" serves as a straightforward yet illustrative example of such typification: animals are categorized into groups that anticipate different behavioral responses from the interacting subject and various practical applications. The foundation of this typification is not a universal classification; rather, it is oriented towards usability, taking into account characteristics that are not incidental but rather determined by potential future uses (cf. Lakoff 2004: 129-135).

In contemporary society, the instrumental approach to politics is legitimized through the frameworks of *Realpolitik* and political realism, while in the media sphere, it is reinforced by the ideologeme of *political pragmatism*.

Interaction of Modalities of Thinking and Political Life

Different modalities extend beyond the realm of cognition; they also underpin various forms of political behavior. In this context, it is promising to examine the mechanisms of transition and interrelation that project the mental frameworks established within a given modality onto actions in the physical world. Conversely, it is equally important to consider how external influences can stimulate, support, and shape the existence and functioning of a specific modality of thinking.

In examining the characteristics of political thinking, we can employ a research protocol that facilitates the comparison of different modalities. We propose that the most significant parameters for comparison include:

- *Organizing the Transition to Action*: The cognitive mechanisms that facilitate the shift from thought to action within a specific modality.
- *Strategies for Political Action*: The potential non-contradictory variants of activity that can be pursued within a given modality.
- *Key Actors*: The roles of leaders, authorities, and professionals that are characteristic of a particular modality.
- *Institutions*: The traditional institutions that integrate and support this modality of political behavior.
- *Unqualified Actors*: The roles of individuals who lack the necessary skills or capabilities to engage successfully within a given modality.
- *Triggers*: The stimuli that prompt transitions between modalities or activate a specific modality of thinking and behavior.

The transition from thought to action represents a complex psychological and philosophical issue with a rich historical background. In this context, we focus on a specific aspect: the prerequisites for political action that are inherent to each modality.

The initial step of this transition is particularly significant – not only because it marks the beginning of action, but also because its nature and structure largely influence the subsequent organization of activities. Throughout the course of actions undertaken within a given modality, the acting subject not only adheres to the direction established by this “first step”, but also constantly relates individual actions back to it. Consequently, this initial step plays a crucial role in shaping the character of reflexive behavior.

For *rational thinking*, the initial action is characterized by *planning*, which serves as a mental framework that outlines the sequence of actions to be undertaken. The absence of a plan renders activity either impossible or irrational. The complexity and structure of the plan, including its planned stages and the duration of actions, are contingent upon the specific circumstances and the level of rationality involved. This rationality is primarily influenced by the scale and variability of abstraction, as well as the factual substantiation of the situation at hand. A rich and diverse body of literature addresses the challenges associated with planning and goal-oriented programming, examining various facets of this activity from multiple disciplinary perspectives. This extensive analysis underscores the notion that *rational political action* is fundamentally rooted in the development of a comprehensive program.

For *magical thinking*, the initial action is characterized by *establishment of contact with otherworldly forces*, which serves as a prerequisite for any subsequent magical action. This contact may occur through various means, whether it is spontaneous, initiated from the “other side”, or conducted according to a prescribed ritual. Such interactions fundamentally shape the possible and necessary directions for further activity. Consequently, any magical interpretation of leadership inherently involves the sacralization of the leader's ascension to power, framing it as a *miraculous event* that signifies a connection between the realm of magical forces – such as the collective will of the people, providence, fate, or the decisions of higher powers – and a specific individual.

For *aesthetic modality*, everything is inherently dependent on *inspiration*, which manifests in various forms, including creative impulses, intense admiration, and the desire to emulate prevailing trends. While the unpredictability and emotional determinism associated with inspiration might suggest that aesthetic reactions are infrequent occurrences, they can, in fact, become widespread when applied to a sufficiently large population. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the aesthetics of revolutionary or reformist fervor, which often accompanies or precedes political changes that align with the desired format – namely those that are presented as simultaneous and sensorially experienced.

For *ethical thinking*, transition into action happens through the recognition and acceptance of *moral duty*. In the absence of a sense of duty, actions that are ethically motivated tend to be sporadic and incidental, often disconnected from

the underlying thought process. Duty is contextualized within specific situations; thus, the initiation of ethical action is predicated on addressing the question of *who is obligated to perform what actions in a given context*, guided by an established system of moral norms. Conversely, the failure to recognize an individual's entitlement to engage in a particular type of activity may also reflect a manifestation of the same ethical modality.

Finally, *instrumental thinking* manifests in action through *experimentation*. In contemporary discourse, the term *experiment* is frequently associated with scientific inquiry, which is primarily characterized by *rationality*. However, in this context, we refer to experimentation in its more general sense: a trial action designed to assess the ability of a particular behavior in achieving a specific outcome, irrespective of its rationality, predictability, or other attributes. It is evident that experimental actions, in this framework, can be both random and informed by prior experiences. Within the realm of political activity, such experiments are often framed as situation-determined endeavors – responses to the confluence of circumstances aimed at implementing changes.

Each modality of thinking delineates a specific set of strategies for responding to political realities. To identify these strategies, it is reasonable to draw upon the classic triad proposed by A. Hirschman – *exit, voice, and loyalty* (Hirschman 1970) – with slight modifications. This framework can be adapted to encompass strategies of passive acceptance and distancing (*departure*), strategies of construction (*creation*), and strategies of participation (*support or criticism*).

Thus, *rational thinking* assumes the potential for structuring political realities through *explanations*. This structuring can lead to rationally motivated and organized participation or to the rationalization of these realities, as understood in psychological terms. In instances where a sufficient factual basis is lacking, individuals may construct rational explanations *ad hoc* to alleviate cognitive dissonance. Such explanations often exhibit a tendency toward reductionism, which can manifest as *cynicism* or the substitution of objective truth with subjective mental constructs. In this context, creative activity – akin to Hirschman's concept of *voice*, but lacking the protest component – occurs through the formulation and execution of rational plans and projects. Consequently, a defining characteristic of rational political activity is *the commitment to a well-developed plan*, encompassing all the attributes of a systematic action plan.

Magical thinking encompasses two primary dimensions: one that involves *active participation* in a magical framework – such as an ideology, movement, leader, or state – and the exploration of appropriate means for such participation, which may include *rituals* and *incantations*. The other dimension is characterized by a more passive form of *divination* aimed at uncovering the intentions of higher powers. In contemporary society, this role of *political divination* is frequently assumed by expert consultations or, in the context of mass political behavior, by the media. In any case, *magical thinking* posits the existence of otherworldly forces that underpin every phenomenon, thereby integrating these forces into the very fabric of reality. This perspective is exemplified by

conspiracy theories, which illustrate the belief in hidden influences, as well as the sacralization of political figures and processes. *Creative magical activity* manifests through efforts to influence the actions of these higher powers via incantations and various forms of active divination, ranging from traditional religious rituals to the sacralization of elections and mass mobilizations. Moreover, the construction of a *magical reality* is crucial, involving myth-making and the continuous generation of miraculous events. This process shapes representations of the world's structure and the narratives associated with it, whether through the portrayal of an eternal (*geopolitical*) level, the demonstration of the magical power of political decisions, or the ritualization and attribution of extraordinary qualities to military achievements (cf. Akhmetova 2005).

Aesthetic thinking assumes both political participation in the form of *fanaticism* – manifested through active support, popularization, and adoration of leaders – and aesthetic responses that include *sympathy*, *comfort-seeking*, *novelty*, or *humor*. In this context, satire and humor serve distinct yet interrelated functions. *Political satire* often aestheticizes and incorporates into the realm of pleasurable perception the attributes of the subjects it critiques, which may be deemed uneducated, profane, ugly, immoral, or tasteless. Conversely, *humor* tends to normalize and aestheticize existing political realities, thereby reproducing established patterns and role characteristics. The perception of reality as unattractive within this aesthetic modality can provoke standard forms of *escapism*. Political creativity, when viewed through the lens of *aesthetic modality*, is aptly captured by the concept of *society-as-performance* (Debord 1999). In this framework, actions are structured as artistic acts or performances, characterized by technical elaboration and anticipated aesthetic effects. This can range from the aestheticization of foreign policy through *grandiose imagery of power* to the formulation of social policies that evoke pity for favored groups or reject those deemed undesirable. Additionally, political marketing strategies targeting youth often employ appeals such as “come, it will be fun” or “come, it will be cool”, emphasizing the aesthetic dimensions of political engagement. It is important to note that the aesthetic construction of politics has historically manifested in various forms across different epochs.

Strategies for responding to political phenomena through the lens of *ethical thinking* can be analyzed similarly to the previous modalities. The primary form of political participation in this context involves *adherence to moral prescriptions*, which frames specific activities within existing political structures as *moral duties* or *expressions of rights*. This can encompass participation in mass events, such as elections, as well as the substantive content of political choices. Variations of civil or patriotic duty exemplify this ethical engagement, which can also be articulated through class consciousness, religious obligations, or professional responsibilities. Such organized activities inherently rely on effective social control mechanisms to ensure compliance with these moral prescriptions. In terms of exit strategies, this *ethical modality* may embrace the principle of “small deeds”. When faced with the perceived inhumanity or incomprehensibility of large-scale political actions, individuals may choose to focus on practical ethics within their immediate environments. Ultimately, *creative political*

activity within this ethical framework is realized through *the pursuit of political justice*, which is defined according to a moral code that guides individuals' actions and decisions.

In this work, we examine political life primarily as *inter-subjective communication*. Consequently, one significant aspect of the transition from the mental plane to the physical (i.e. from thought to action) is the *identification of actors* who facilitate this transition. The preceding thesis posits that all five modalities are universal, suggesting that specific differences should manifest in the nature of activities rather than in the identities of those who perform them. However, it is essential to recognize that the organization of activity within each modality necessitates the presence of social roles defined by the specific actions characteristic of that modality. In other words, the specificity of actions denotes that alongside numerous anonymous social and political agents, there are particular actors who assume necessary roles and possess the attributes for those roles. Within each modality, these actors establish prevailing standards and play a crucial role in ensuring compliance with these standards. They perform leadership functions concerning essential types of activity associated with the modality and are responsible for producing and sustaining the relevant information environment.

Key actors of the *rational modality* in the modern world are predominantly scientists. The rationality of any activity is approved by its endorsement or proposal by scientific authorities, thereby establishing a framework of *scientific legitimacy*. The attributes associated with “science” or “scientificity” are characterized by stable features, including specific sources of specialized rational competence and mandatory external manifestations that serve as evidence of scientific expertise. For instance, a scientist's qualifications are typically validated through a combination of stable specialization, extensive and rigorous research, recognized scientific titles or degrees, and a portfolio of publications or other demonstrable outcomes of their work, along with their institutional affiliations. While the necessity of these characteristics underscores the importance of formal qualifications, it is crucial to note that role expectations are not merely formalistic. Actors must continuously reaffirm their role and status through activities that are specific to the rational modality and exemplary within its framework. In this regard, the role of the scientist is not inherently tied to the individual characteristics of the person occupying that role at any given time, whether those characteristics are personal or academic.

In different historical periods, the role of key actors in rationality has varied. For example, during medieval Europe, a significant portion of the functions associated with rational authority was fulfilled by *the clergy*, particularly those engaged in theology within the scholastic tradition. Modern scientists, however, are not irrevocably tied to this set of role functions. In specific situations, they can take on roles akin to those of *a priest-mage* or *a pop star*, operating within different modalities and under different norms. This reflects an institutional tendency rather than an absolute rule, indicating that the boundaries of these roles can shift based on the social and cultural context.

Priests-mages serve as key figures within the *magical modality*, characterized by essential attributes such as special “contact” properties – whether innate or acquired – alongside *mastery of ritual practices*. These rituals encompass specific procedures designed to facilitate successful interactions with other-worldly forces, ranging from *divination* to inspired-from-above *governance over the fates* of individuals and states. Key external manifestations that legitimize and affirm the status of the actor in this system include *sacred marks* – such as distinctive appearance, notable biographical events, behavior, and successful achievements – as well as the inevitable cult surrounding the mage, which may lead to their partial or complete deification. Furthermore, the mage often possesses specific magical instruments – such as a magic wand, ancient amulets, charisma, secret police, wise counselors, extensive connections, and “a cunning plan” (rus. *хитрый план*) serving as exclusive artifacts that ensure stable contact with the other world and underscore the uniqueness of the priest-mage.

This role has remained consistent throughout human history, despite the social and symbolic distance between a representative of God on earth and a street soothsayer. At the same time, this modality can be readily adopted and adapted by political leaders, state officials, political activists, indicating that role functions are not strictly tied to any specific socio-professional group. Instead, the role is shaped more by the relational dynamics within which the actor operates than by the actor themselves.

The *ethical modality* necessitates the identification of specific role functions associated with defining and interpreting behavioral norms, as well as the formation of moral authorities. A key characteristic of actors within this system is their integration of adherence to prescribed norms *in their own lives*. For instance, while a scientist may exhibit irrational behavior in their personal life and a mage may be invulnerable to magic, a *preacher of asceticism* cannot indulge in hedonism without jeopardizing their role. Consequently, the moral leader emerges not only as a source of norms but also as *an exemplar* – if not a model – of their application, with this application being constant, daily, and ongoing. This aligns with the personalization and subject-subject dynamics inherent in this modality. A fundamental attribute of such actors is their capacity to resolve ethical conflicts, thereby fulfilling the roles of both arbitrator and counselor or confessor. This ability is often rooted in biographical ambivalence, where the actor possesses experiences of both virtuous and immoral living, typically accompanied by a transformative rebirth – a motif frequently observed in hagiographic literature. Additionally, this role necessitates the regular application of prohibitions or sanctions to uphold the integrity of the norm, thereby embodying the functions of *a judge*.

In the *instrumental modality*, the key actor is a *master-experimenter*, who establishes their competence based on specialized abilities and professional experience. The role of the master cannot be effectively fulfilled by someone who has acquired their skills through alternative means. Given the nature of practical knowledge associated with this modality, such an actor resembles a craftsman more than a teacher; they do not merely explain the knowledge they possess but demonstrate the ability to perform specific tasks. Consequently, standards are

set through example rather than through explicit rules, which contrasts with other modalities where normative components play a significant role. Political variations of this role, such as an *effective manager*, *successful negotiator*, or *experienced public relations specialist*, illustrate that the role is constructed not by elucidating the mechanisms of activity or adhering to certain principles, but rather by a history of success. This emphasis on demonstrated achievement underscores the practical, experiential foundation of the instrumental modality, highlighting the importance of tangible results over theoretical explanations.

Despite significant differences, key actors across various modalities share common characteristics that are inherently linked to their roles and the specific individuals who perform them. Foremost among these is *uniqueness*, which encompasses distinct features associated with both exceptional abilities and a unique biography. The social construction of corresponding biographies can occur in a typical chronological order, thereby ensuring a pool of candidates for the relevant roles, or it can be constructed *post hoc*, creating necessary stages and markers. Conversely, the functions of these roles are largely shaped by the social expectations related to each modality. The performance of a role by a given actor is evaluated and perceived based on how well it aligns with these expectations. Regardless of the degree of explicitness, the key actor must invariably demonstrate and articulate the standards that are critical for the modality in question, including the logic of its functioning in specific situations. Finally, the role of the key actor is often associated with a corresponding institutional position. However, it appears that not every society establishes such positions for all modalities; in some instances, institutionalization may be spontaneous, informal, or may not occur at all.

Consequently, the rational modality is integrated into *science* (and previously into *philosophy*), magic into *religion*, and, applicable to religions of differentiated societies, into *the church*. The aesthetic modality is linked to the institutionalization of *artistic creation* and *criticism* (literary, theatrical, musical, etc.), and in the modern world, increasingly into professional design, media, and image-making. The ethical modality is associated with *morality* and *law*, while the instrumental modality connects to professional associations and organizations (historically, primarily *craft guilds* and corporations, and today, *corporations* in the modern sense). At the same time, each of these institutions is compelled to construct its position in relation to other modalities. This is achieved by forming specialized *institutional channels* – such as counteracting religion and superstitions within classical science, or certain sections of theology like apologetics and homiletics in developed religious systems – and by attempting to subordinate other modalities based on their own rules. These attempts, however, are often met with resistance and are generally unsuccessful.

The cognitive functionality of these “profile” institutions is fundamentally centered on two primary tasks: 1) organizing and advancing the inherent logic of the modality, and 2) facilitating its expansion into other domains, thereby fostering the development of a self-sufficient and ultimately unified worldview. In terms of organization and advancement, any modality that exists outside of institutionalization tends to remain in a rudimentary state or may regress

(for instance, magical thinking in a secular technocratic society, or rational thought in the absence of scientific and educational frameworks). Conversely, institutions play a crucial role in enabling the emergence and transmission of sufficiently complex forms of existence for this modality.

Regarding the expansion of these modalities through a comprehensive explanation of the world, it is indeed conceivable to address this task across the five modalities. At advanced levels of development, each modality possesses the potential to provide a holistic explanation of reality; historically, such all-encompassing worldviews have been constructed multiple times.

The social existence of these modalities extends beyond the functioning of the mentioned institutions and their derivatives. *Rationality, magic, aesthetics, ethics*, and *instrumentality* appear as inherent properties of society, with their organizational forms constantly evolving and never fully covered by dominant institutions at any given time. Political thinking is particularly noteworthy in this context, as the interactions and conflicts among various groups, institutions, and interests necessitate the engagement of all modalities of thinking. When we assess the political sphere not merely as an arena for competing interests (*politics*) but also as a manifestation of state functions (*policy*), it becomes evident that the political significance of different modalities of thinking is influenced by the degree of state intervention in diverse aspects of public life. Thus, the expression of all five modalities and their effects on political behavior is inevitable, and the specific forms, scales, and conditions of their manifestation being largely shaped by political practice.

Activity carried out in accordance with some rules cannot be oriented exclusively to ideal models; in order for the rules to be able to set the coordinate system in which behavior occurs, there must be anti-models. In relation to institutional norms, such a role is played by a list of violations, combined with the specified sanctions; in relation to functional roles, the construction of the coordinate system occurs through the formation of stable roles of violators or *maladroits* - those who are unable to adequately act within this modality or violate the established rules within it. Alongside regular reproduction and demonstration of anti-models, these actors perform a standard set of social roles characteristic of outcasts, i.e., they complement the completeness of the social reality within the framework of this modality. At the same time, such roles remain within this way of perceiving the world, i.e., they do not coincide with the sphere of the unimaginable - the impossible within this modality: it is still part of a comprehensive thinking and behavioral pattern, even if it is condemned and despised.

Activities conducted in accordance with established rules cannot be solely oriented toward ideal models; for these rules to effectively delineate the coordinate system within which behavior occurs, the presence of *anti-models* is also essential. In the context of institutional norms, this function is served by a catalog of violations that is accompanied by specified sanctions. Regarding functional roles, the coordinate system is constructed through the establishment of stable roles for violators or *maladroit* - individuals who are unable

to act appropriately within a given modality or who transgress its established rules. Beyond the regular reproduction and demonstration of *anti-models*, these actors perform a standard set of social roles characteristic of outcasts, thereby enhancing the completeness of social reality within this modality. Notably, such roles remain confined within this specific worldview; they do not intersect with the realm of the unimaginable – the impossible within this modality. Rather, they continue to be part of a comprehensive pattern of thought and behavior, even when they are subject to condemnation and disdain.

Thus, the rational modality implies the existence of a role for something *ignorant*, while the magical modality encompasses the role of something *cursed* or *unsuccessful*, specifically, an individual who has been condemned to failure by higher powers. In the aesthetic modality, this translates to the role of a *boring failure*, characterized by an insensitivity to aesthetically significant phenomena, e.g. a *lack of taste* or *humor*. Within the ethical modality, the corresponding role is that of an *immoral individual* or *criminal*. Finally, in the instrumental modality, the role is defined by a *clumsy* or *maladroit* person, who struggles to navigate practical tasks effectively.

It is entirely natural that each of these roles is defined through negation in relation to the ideal mode of activity for their respective modalities. The primary function of individuals embodying these roles is to exemplify erroneous models of behavior; additionally, their existence aids in self-identification within the framework of the modality by differentiating themselves from both key actors and outcasts. The behavioral integration of *the unimaginable*, as previously discussed, can be achieved by transferring characteristics of familiar and fully imaginable outcasts to representatives exhibiting extreme behaviors within the modality. For instance, a superstitious individual may be rationally characterized as illiterate, while a rational person may appear ungodly to those with a magical worldview. Similarly, an individual who is insensitive to emotional and aesthetic evaluations can be described as *tasteless*, an ethically neutral person may be labeled as *immoral*, and someone not engaged in pragmatically useful activities can be deemed *unadapted*. In different terminology, this can be grasped as socially constructed mechanisms for resolving cognitive dissonance when confronted with activities that are formed outside the modality in question.

In the context of political theory and practice, the mechanisms for inducing or switching between modalities are particularly intriguing. Within the framework of the hypothesis that all modalities are universally present, it is natural to explore how and under what conditions a specific modality is activated, how a particular modality is selected during a mental act or communication, and how a set of rules is chosen to interpret reality, derive meaning, and structure subsequent activities. Broadly speaking, one can refer to *triggers* – specific situations or one-time effects that provoke the actualization of a certain modality.

Psychological triggers associated with certain modalities have been extensively studied. For instance, experimental research consistently demonstrates that psychological stress, particularly in the form of fear or threats to significant values, reliably elicits *magical thinking* (Subbotsky 2010; Keinan 1994).

These findings align with longstanding philosophical traditions that link the origins of religion and magic to humanity's fear of the unknown forces of nature (Lucretius 1936; Tokarev 1959). While the broader issue of religion's emergence as a complex phenomenon is indeed multifaceted, it is noteworthy that its magical elements can be activated by stress, especially fear. Our focus here is not on the historical roots of *magical thinking* but rather on the mechanisms by which it operates in contemporary society. The studies referenced convincingly illustrate that fear is intricately connected to *uncertainty*, particularly when it pertains to fundamental values such as life, health, or property. This uncertainty, which induces stress, manifests as a *fear of loss*. Consequently, the psychological trigger assumes a distinct structure: fear experienced in the present, under conditions of uncertainty, is projected into the future as hopes or fears. It is this interplay that activates *magical thinking*.

The actualization of *rational thinking* presents a paradoxical challenge for study, primarily because prevailing traditions regard it as natural and self-evident. Extensive research during centuries on thinking, logic, and causality claims to encompass all aspects of human cognitive activity. Consequently, the existing literature frequently confuses *rational thinking* with *thinking in general*, making it difficult to delineate the specific parameters that define rationality independently of broader cognitive processes.

Modern experimental psychology provides a basis for discussing the existence of psychological triggers related to rationality in the proposed context. First, the philosophical tradition, dating back to Socrates, consistently aligns with findings from experimental psychology. Second, researchers have convincingly demonstrated that interruptions and the discontinuity of information, often referred to as *disfluency*, serve as stimuli for activating *analytical thinking* (Alter et al. 2007; Gervais, Norenzayan 2012). Thus, a stable cognitive framework can emerge in which *curiosity* – defined as a persistent desire for knowledge (Loewenstein 1994) – acts as the initial motivator. This curiosity, when projected into the future, fosters an analytical, and ultimately formal-logical, approach when encountering unfamiliar information in contrast to familiar cognitive frameworks. However, the challenge of inducing situational curiosity, or specific epistemic curiosity, remains: while curiosity is a fundamental aspect of human nature, what mechanisms sufficiently stimulate it to activate rational thinking? Traditional definitions of thinking, which emphasize its rational-logical dimension, characterize it as mental activity aimed at problem-solving (Vygotsky 1999). This raises a pertinent question: how do we differentiate a problem from other types of information, especially considering that curiosity is not inherently linked to the immediate fulfillment of physical or physiological needs? The key element appears to be *the formulation of a question* (Berlyne 1954); it is this articulation of a question or problem that acts as a trigger, prompting the activation of the cognitive framework described.

Aesthetic perception and, consequently, *aesthetic thinking* are significantly influenced by the pursuit of *pleasure*; the immediate gratification derived from aesthetic enjoyment is often regarded as a defining characteristic of this psychological activity (Berlyne 1972). Contemporary sociology and psychology

frequently explore the interplay between pleasure and aesthetic perception through the lens of consumer attitudes and behaviors, with similar studies prevalent in marketing. In this context, the immediate external stimulus is typically *seduction*, which involves presenting an engaging stimulus. A key aspect of pleasure associated with aesthetic experiences is *arousal* (Cupchik 1994). Thus, the mechanism of this trigger can be articulated as follows: the expectation of pleasure leads to a seductive stimulus, which in turn induces *arousal* and activates aesthetic evaluation and judgment processes. Notably, one of the most pertinent forms of aesthetic response for political analysis is humor; the “humorization” of a phenomenon translates it into a realm of pleasurable feelings linked to laughter, thereby enhancing the aesthetic perception of that phenomenon. It is not surprising, then, that the philosophical tradition has long recognized the close relationship between *aesthetic perception* and *pleasure*, dating back to Aristotle, while religious thought has quickly identified the specific role of seductive effects as non-ethical (Tertullian). Essentially, the ritualization of *mockery* directed at bureaucracy or political leaders serves to uphold the system, transforming it into a source of positive, aesthetically enriched emotions that ultimately support political passivity.

Ethical modality is evidently activated through the experience of *frustration*. Experimental psychology convincingly demonstrates that emotions elicited by induced frustration, such as *anger* or *guilt*, are directly linked to the attribution of intentional actions to the source of that frustration (Weiner et al. 1982). This relationship also extends to feelings of *offense*, which can sometimes be characterized as projecting guilt onto others (Ageeva, Grishchenko 2009; Smirnov 1999). Consequently, frustration not only provokes the attribution of intentionality to the frustrating agent but also connects it to a system of expectations – essentially, rules that have been violated. A well-established research tradition in psychology interprets the emotions stemming from frustration as aggression, which can be directed *outward* (toward others) or *inward* (toward oneself) (Dollard et al. 1939; Berkowitz 1989). Thus, ethical thinking emerges from *aggression* in a manner analogous to how rational thinking arises from *curiosity*, magical thinking from *fear*, and aesthetic thinking from *pursuit of pleasure*. The triggering mechanism can therefore be outlined as follows: frustration leads to aggressive feelings, which in turn prompts the identification of the guilty party and the association of their actions with a system of rules through the lens of normative expectations, ultimately resulting in *ethical perception* of the situation, accompanied by corresponding behavior.

The *instrumental modality* of thinking is intrinsically linked to the pursuit of *benefit* or *utility*, specifically the immediate fulfillment of a *conscious need*. Each of the stimuli previously discussed can be characterized by the desire to meet a particular need; the essence of usefulness lies in its focus on outcomes – the individual clearly envisions the objects, states, or properties whose presence or acquisition will satisfy that need. This creates a closed system defined as “from *need* to *satisfying result*”. In contrast, the earlier modalities – such as *fear*, *curiosity*, *the desire for pleasure*, or *frustration* – do not typically associate the fulfillment of their respective needs with a specific outcome, instead representing an

open system characterized as “from *need* to *various options* for its satisfaction”. In other words, instrumental modality is directed toward acquiring a specific set of consumer properties that are already known to the individual, along with a clear understanding of how these properties are expected to manifest. Therefore, while *rational thinking* seeks to resolve a problem by identifying an answer that aligns with the criterion of truth – an answer that is unknown by definition, as the existence of the problem implies uncertainty – *instrumental thinking*, when faced with a problem, is oriented toward a clearly defined solution that signifies its resolution.

The trigger that appears to activate the instrumental modality of thinking is *recognition of the urgency or relevance* of a problem, which arises from the interplay between necessity and the feasibility of its resolution within the context of current activities (cf. Kornilov 2000: 176-179). The aspect of current activity is crucial, as urgency is only evident within a situationally defined context. Consequently, the resulting schema can be articulated as follows: *awareness of the problem's urgency leads to the formation of a concrete image of the desired outcome*, which subsequently initiates *instrumental thinking*.

The common characteristics of triggers indicate that they do not necessarily reflect the deeper motives behind an individual's activities; rather, they function primarily as technical switches. For instance, a person may engage in *rational, ethical, or instrumental thinking* when driven by fear. However, within the communicative domain, the induction of fear is likely to elicit *magical thinking* and corresponding behaviors. Additionally, there exists an inverse relationship: the sequential progression of thought within a given modality can provoke specific emotional states and behavioral responses. To illustrate, *rational-logical thinking* tends to generate questions and problems, *magical thinking* evokes hopes and fears, *aesthetic thinking* inspires temptations and pleasures, *ethical thinking* can lead to aggression and the need for its regulation, while *instrumental thinking* focuses on pragmatic goals and the means to achieve them.

Political thinking is inherently diverse and can be conducted according to various frameworks, as any given situation can yield multiple interpretations and behavioral responses. This variability can be partially attributed to the concept of *silent knowledge*, when apparent inconsistencies and ambiguities in cognitive processes stem from implicit assumptions, particularly those related to values (Collins 2010). Another prevalent explanation for such contradictions is the notion of *information asymmetry*, which posits that differences in conclusions and deductions arise from unequal access to information. Information is often perceived as an independent and universal entity, as the human.

The study of political consciousness and political action frequently simplifies the complexities of differing logics to the issue of interests. Various subjects prioritize distinct interests and values, which in turn fosters the emergence of diverse cognitive and behavioral strategies. A multitude of studies focused on political consciousness and political culture aim to deliver a thorough analysis of these phenomena, linking them to the characteristics of the socio-cultural environment in which they are situated. These studies consider the interests of different groups, the influence of traditional institutions, and other critical

factors that shape the context in which various elements and aspects of political consciousness exist.

However, not all research models emerging from this tradition withstand the test of *mobility*. Typically, a specific form of political consciousness – encompassing mentality, values, and political culture – is perceived as inherent to a particular socio-political configuration. The individual embodying a specific political mentality is often either a member of a stable group characterized by shared features of political consciousness or an easily identifiable social type. In a broader historical context, discussions usually revolve around historical types or stages in the evolution of political consciousness. In this framework, types of political mentality are associated with distinct, historically determined worldviews and are linked to specific historical epochs. For instance, traditional societies are often characterized by predominantly *mythological* or *religious* political thinking, while the *rationality* and the political mentality of the Enlightenment is attributed to the modern era. Similarly, the emergence of *the society of the spectacle* and *political simulacra* is linked to postmodernism. However, what occurs when political thinking and action diverge from the socio-cultural or historical foundations that are expected to shape them?

Different methods of organizing thinking have been long and thoroughly studied by psychologists. However, this is primarily either an analysis of individual differences (the most extensive and substantial literature operates with terms such as cognitive styles, thinking styles, and so on), or an analysis of individual or group thinking processes in exceptional situations (stress, altered states of consciousness, mass hysteria, panic, and so on). In contrast to this research tradition, the typology of thinking modalities proposed in this article is oriented towards phenomena that are inherent to all individuals, i.e., are universal, and, at the same time, can manifest in situations of the most diverse nature.

The organization of thinking has been extensively examined by psychologists over the years. However, this body of research primarily focuses on either individual differences, i.e. utilizing concepts such as *cognitive styles* and *thinking styles*, or the analysis of individual or group thinking processes in exceptional circumstances, including stress, altered states of consciousness, mass hysteria, and panic. In contrast to this established research tradition, the typology of thinking modalities presented in this article emphasizes phenomena that are universal to all individuals, while also acknowledging that these modalities can manifest in a wide range of diverse situations.

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