



The Punishment of Sisyphus in Argentina

Edgardo Zablotzky, Vice Chancellor and Full Professor, Universidad del CEMA

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In Greek mythology Sisyphus was punished by being forced to roll an immense boulder up a steep hill, only to watch it roll back down; repeating this action for ever. This ended up consigning Sisyphus to an eternity of useless efforts and to unending frustration.

Go back to start once and again. Is it not perhaps a picture of our country facing a change of government? What worse punishment? It is really worthy of a Greek tragedy. How not to associate it with the punishment of Sisyphus?

However, there are reasons to be optimistic. If anything remains clear of the current electoral process it is that a majority of society wants to change some things, but maintain others. Probably, the strategy of the candidates in search of voters who would tip the balance in their favor in the balloting will support this hypothesis, backed up, for example, by a survey conducted last September by Poliarquia, in which “55% of the people answered that they wanted to keep some things and change others”.

Without going any further, it is clear that a great asset during the campaign of Cambiemos in recent months was to recognize the achievements of the government, realizing that the voters demand change, but they also want to preserve what has been achieved.

Let’s see, for example, some statements made by Mauricio Macri shortly after Rodríguez Larreta’s triumph in the elections for Major of Buenos Aires. At that time, Macri said that under his administration YPF and Aerolíneas Argentinas will remain as state enterprises, that he will maintain the Asignación Universal por Hijo, and that pension funds will continue being managed by ANSES.

With regard to Aerolíneas Argentinas he made it clear that while it will continue to be a state enterprise, it would stop losing money: “With the 5.000 million pesos that it lost, all Argentines would have sewers”. By the same token, with regard to the ANSES, he said that “pension funds will remain in the hands of the ANSES, but the agency will not be a political instrument for any party”.

Change some things, but maintain others. Mauricio Macri’s statements clearly illustrate this position. Moreover, it is possible to explicitly find this idea in the following text of his website: “In a country as rich as Argentina poverty is unacceptable. We are all entitled to live better. But we must also recognize that, in these years, in some things there has been a large progress, and we cannot go back. Because of that, the Asignación Universal por Hijo is a right, it is not a gift. It is not a gift that someone gave us and another can take from us. We will work to ensure that Congress approves a law so that this has continuity in future governments”.

Change some things, but maintain others. This fact, far from being a negative characteristic, is a reason to hope. After all, starting again from scratch, once and again, stating that all that had been done by the previous government was wrong, as consistently proclaimed by the current administration, generated a significant cost to our society.

When do we associate in our daily lives the results of our actions with our own responsibility and not with that of others? When do we accept that our children have failed because they didn’t study and not because of another, the unfair teacher that the destiny has brought to them? When do we admit that our favorite team has been



defeated by its poor performance and not through the fault of the other, the inept or corrupt referee, whichever be more satisfying to our imagery? When? We have become a society of others and this fact is not for free.

Who are the others in political terms? The previous governments, without any doubt. The first sentence that we usually hear from a president in his inaugural speech is about the awful reality that he faces. All have done wrong, his main task will be to fix it, rebuild the nation and bring to justice those alleged responsible. Go back and start again, to finally succeed this time. Haven't we heard statements like this once and again? Can we have such bad luck that no government ever did anything good? It is just impossible.

In the first world a government builds from where the previous one ended. Of course, differentiating itself from its predecessor by making policy changes, sometimes very substantial, but not saying that everything done by the previous administration was wrong, and that the goal of this government will be to roll back to square one and start again from scratch. It isn't necessary to think of our recent political history in order to avoid arousing strong passions, it is enough to contemplate our neighbors, Chile and Uruguay, who in this aspect do not differ today from first world countries.

It is obvious that the present government hasn't done everything wrong. Even at a logical level it is quite difficult to imagine that any government could do so. The new president will have to carry out his own plan of government and not focus his speech on the difficult inheritance that he has received. He should not go back to start again.

Therefore, the current electoral process, in which the majority of society wants a change but also wants to maintain those things considered correct, far from being negative is auspicious. It is a sharp break with our recent history. It is to aspire not to have ever again a president who claims that everything done by her predecessors was wrong, and that the history of our country will begin to be rewritten from the day of her inauguration.