

ARTICLES

THE VALUES IN PRESSURE OF TIME

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The purpose of my article is to reflect the possibility of interpreting the significance of values in socio-cultural world of human beings, by means of an elementary ontological analysis of human action. I stress the word "elementary", because I am especially concerned with the following two questions: primary elements of action structure and their temporary context. My essay aims – to introduce the problem of value and time relationship, starting from a suitable point and general enough for particular value analysis.

I think, it is viable to start considering the values by stressing their general limitation as socio-cultural phenomena. At the same time, this will enable me to ask a question about value origin and its existence in time.

The values, thus, originate from two sources: the act of creation and that of behaviour. Both of these acts have been determined by the temporary limitation of human existence, but each of them in a different way. The act of creation (e.g. products, aesthetic objects, narratives, whether artistic or scientific) takes place with the pressure of time (which is felt by the person – by this notion's author Ondrej Mészáros), as something urgent, as a tension, which must be overcome. He has, however, a larger time limit, the possibility of procedure methods, corrections, until he reaches the final modification. In comparison with the act of behaviour, the act of creation absorbs the urgency of time limitation to such a degree, that it neglects any chance of repeating itself. The stress of time, is thus, the "cause" of primary social action, with its disability to return linearity and individuality. The primary originality of social behaviour is an assumption of its cultural value.

The elementary structure of social action can be described by means of a certain crossing of notions, characterizing consciousness and those, determining that human existence belongs to paradoxes of time. Of all notions, defining consciousness, that of consciousness intention, by Brentano, is of fundamental significance. I believe, it enables us to express the moment of where both perceptive and willing acts caused by time-stress action meet. What flows out of this transformation (or change) of perceptive act into that of will? There are three se-

quences in the structure of social acts, which present a part of the act. In the act itself, they do not, however, create harmony or connection, just the opposite is true. They “break” the structure of social action into disconnected fragments.

Intention presents the first sequence. This exists out of time and space in the substance of consciousness. The second sequence is represented by the act in which conscious intention is changed in the given moment of time “here and now”, into a real form of social action – a certain act. The act of performance at the same time presents both the moments, the one of inception of consequences and that one of value origin, being connected with consequences. But in spite of the fact, that their genetic structure is inseparable, they have a tragically divergent function in human existence. This reposes in the fact that in the ontological fundament of human existence, there is the fatal absence of impossibility to connect these three elements (i.e. intention, act and consequences) into one congruous whole.

Human existence has been created for inevitable activity, while the consequences of action cannot be kept by the actor himself. These will be transferred to future and into unknown complex of random contexts or consequences. The act itself, its intention and performance, is to be decided by man, he can choose possibilities, or prefer certain ways. The consequences, on the other hand, are not to be decided by man. This divergence in the elementary structure of action is “underlined” by time stress, too. An act is determined by time stress from both – ontological and biological points of view. As far as I can ascertain, biological time causes less stress, than the one caused by acting for existing inevitability. It means that the biological form of life can exist, but that someone who surrenders or is absolutely incapable of elementary acts of an inter-personal nature, loses his socio-cultural identity.

Another aspect of this problem lies in the fact, that action is influenced by time stress, but consciousness, on the other side, is not, because it is composed of awareness of metaphysical continuity and can evaluate persistence ability as the consequence of acts.

We can see, thus, the two different human potentials again, which blast the elementary structure of human action: the one chasing him to act in time stress and the other one, which prevents him from accepting the consequences of his own acts within his decision. From the second point of view, however, this “seceding” of consequences from acts and intentions of actions creates the possibility of human act evaluations within the categories of morals and culture. If consequences represented an inevitable attribute of an act, they would disappear together with time stress, within which the act has been realized. This has a negative, but also a positive significance. In the former, it deters the possibility of correcting act consequences and the actor cannot identify himself with them. In the latter, it creates a possibility of “adding” value to those acts, the consequences of which have gained cultural significance in overtime continuance.

Let us pay attention to the description of this problem by Aurelius Augustinus. He was very much worried about why there were additions to what God had created, from what "he saw, it had been very good",¹ in the Old Testament. The act of creation is represented by the word of the Creator, and thus, the act of evaluation is confirmed by the statement that God saw that everything he had created was very good. There are two substantial components of action – act and consequences, followed an additional evaluating reflection.

In an elementary structure of action, time is involved in two ways: as time stress, because action is of a sudden extatic character and an added overtime in which some other parts may originate with their own code of value. (The example of Socrates' martyrism may be shown here, as well as other direct and indirect consequences, which have been safeguarded by those who respect the Greek tradition of ethos.)

Action absolutely changes the mutual relation between intention and consequences. Primary intention loses its own basis, as it changes from a consciousness activity of "knowledge" into an act of will of purposeful intention. But action does not reach what is called "ideal of intentional consciousness",² by É. Lévinas, which is, in fact, possession or merging. Just the opposite. Intention as knowledge can acquire the adequacy of idea thought, intention as will of action causes disharmony and contingency. In spite of this, which is a paradox again, a pure act cannot represent a subject of evaluation. An act represents a singular event in absolute privacy and does not provide the possibility for others to enter his primary originality. The presence is his time, and in the sense of É. Lévinas – presence is in its origin holding in hands (*main-tenant*).³ As act takes place in presence only, it enables in the moment of time stress "hold in hands" his own existence. But at the same time we lose consequences of our action to unknown overtime continuation. This can be reported later (case of heroism), or neglected (from indifference to cowardice). But it must be our conscience which leads us to non-indifference, by É. Lévinas.

A very interesting transformation of "time stress" takes place in aesthetic time, by J. Bańka. Artistic differentiation of acts of social action "adds" not only aesthetic and ethic values, but by means of these creates two different time horizons – horizon of nonrealistic "now" and that of real overtime, "czas tematyczny", as termed by J. Bańka.

Time dimension, paradoxically changes those real functions which were mentioned above. The moment of time "now" does not provide the possibility of "main-tenant", just the opposite, it is transferred into a non-real now, serving

¹ AUGUSTINUS, A.: *Vyznání* (The Confession). Prague, Kalich 1992, pp. 512–513.

² LÉVINAS, É.: *Transcendence a inteligibilita* (The Transcendence and the Intelligibility). In: *Člověk v moderních vědách*. Prague, FÚ ČSAV 1992, p. 135.

³ Ibid.

thus topical time. "Czas tematyczny", by J. Bańka, is infinite. It lasts as a subject, though being deprived of the attribute of presence, i.e. forever.⁴ This transformation of time functions leads to the fact, as stressed by Józef Bańka, that time and value in an artistic masterpiece are not concerned with the problem of ontology. It is also because the metaphysics of arts is different from that of value, and also because a metaphysical evaluating attitude, by the author, may express an extremely positive realization of man in his individual relation towards the Absolute.⁵

I could, probably, finish my essay at this point and underline, that investigating value, from the point of view of philosophy, assumes time examination within several levels:

1. From the point of view of the relationship of the "stress of time" moment towards overtime continuation; in this, there are other two substantial elementary sequences: private time of action and social time of consequences;

2. From the point of view of origin of "time stress" in ontological basis of human action; not all aspects can be explained only by arguments of infinity of biological time;

3. From the point of view of constructing "upside down time" in arts, in the sense of metaphysics;⁶

4. From the point of view of linear time, which reflects cultural values into overtime continuation;

5. From the point of view of chances to interpret values as consequences of social action, and that would enable to gain arguments for underlining Lévinas' idea of ethos of non-indifference.

⁴ BAŃKA, J.: *Metafizyka piękna* (The Metaphysics of the Beauty). Warsaw, Ethos 1991, p. 47.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ SZOŁTYSEK, A. E.: *Metafizyczność języka* (The Metaphysics of the Language). Katowice, Uniwersytet Śląski 1992, pp. 78-79.