

## SOCIAL ORDER AND HUMAN NATURE

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The author considers the problem of social order to be the other side of the problem of human individual and human nature because the purpose of any social order is to make human coexistence possible (although, as is being argued, no type of social order has resolved the latter issue in a satisfactory way). This means that the question “How is social order possible?” should rather be explicitly articulated as follows: “How is social order possible particularly with respect to such beings as humans are?”

Such a question is sometimes neglected or considered already resolved within social philosophy. But according to the author’s standpoint, philosophical anthropology constitutes *prolegomena* to any social philosophy. He points out that the roots of any social order exist in human nature which is not merely sociobiological but also sociocultural concept (i.e. cultural identity of any particular community is crucial for the shape of its social order). The author further takes social philosophy as a normative discourse. He argues that no social order can exclusively be spontaneous or unintentional. On the contrary, there is a special group of individuals who are responsible for its creation. The creation of social order is perhaps the most important and complex of all human creations. It is hardly possible without some compatibility of human needs, ends, values and intentions, without relevant knowledge of human nature and some fundamental ethical prerequisites, such as good will.

According to one of the conceptions of social philosophy (which might well be called “sociological” or “culturological”) the problem of social order is the basic socio-philosophical problem.<sup>1</sup> According to other approaches (“psychological” or “anthropological”) the central topic of social philosophy could be the issue of the relationship between human individual and the social whole. What is the connection between these two approaches or between the problem of social order and the problem of human individual (his/her nature or character)? Is not the problem of social order just the other side of the same coin, *viz.* the problem of human indi-

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<sup>1</sup> “Social philosophy in the first place puts the question why society is more an order rather than chaos, how is it possible that it is some kind of order at all” (Novosád 1994a, 59).

vidual? Are humans the kind of beings who need some sort of "social order" for their coexistence and why?

We could preliminarily note that in the background to both approaches there is a latent conflict of conservative and liberalist tradition of socio-philosophical thought: it is the issue of order that is central to the first approach (which is finally willing to think about it also as an abstraction from the problem of individual) while the second centres on the problem of the individual (and is willing to think about it also as an abstraction from the issue of order). Of course, merely in the clearly outlined form, this controversy leads somewhere else: towards a divergence of authoritarian and paternalistic conservatism showing affinity with statism and nationalism (but there is even a risk of sliding into totalitarianism) and classical liberalism with its tendencies to social Darwinism and a risk of a tendency towards anarchism (see Heywood 1994). At the methodological level there is a deeper conflict between holism and individualism. There are also options trying to strike a balance between the two sides, such as libertarian conservatism or other variants of social democratism, almost undistinguishable from modern liberalism.

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Within the context of social philosophy two fundamental questions are posed in connection with the problem of social order: 1. how is social order possible or "how is it possible that the society is organized" and 2. what types of social order do exist or "how is society organized" (Novosád 1994b, 620).<sup>2</sup> Looking for the replies to these questions, social philosophy is orientated towards the identification of certain "foundation stones", or principles enabling the establishment of social order. If, however, social philosophy is not only a descriptive but also a normative discipline, as e.g. G. Graham (1988) has claimed, it should also answer the question what is the purpose of social order, i.e. whether we need social order and from which point of view it should be established. *The problem of human coexistence* is one of the most significant philosophical issues. The purpose of social order consists then in the fact that it should promote this coexistence.

The issue of the possibility of social order has often been solved in the way Jon Elster (1989) has done: what is the "cement" that keeps society together?<sup>3</sup> The replies are at hand, e.g. liberalistic: it is an invisible hand of the market; or conserva-

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<sup>2</sup> One of the replies might claim that social order is possible thanks to communication, which leads to the so-called communicative conception of social order. J. Habermas (1985, 151) says that the question "how is social order possible?" is just another side of the question "how is social action possible?"

<sup>3</sup> Elster (1989) was inspired by Hume's idea of causality as the "cement of the universe". He speaks about two concepts of social order or disorder: about stable, regular, and predictable patterns of behaviour and about cooperative behaviour.

tive: it is the state power and authority, etc. However, it might be even possible that there is nothing in society that keeps people together, that society can exist without any “social cement” simply because people are beings of such a (social or communicative) nature, or just because they share a common space in a particular time. In our opinion, it is just this problem that is at issue: *how is any order possible among beings of such a species as humans?* The question of the possibility of social order contains an inner presumption that we either know what humans are like or we are not concerned with social order specifically pertaining to human beings and we assume certain abstract-universal properties of any social order (from this perspective e.g. sociobiology would be relevant to our problem). But we have already claimed that philosophical anthropology as a conception of man represents probably prolegomena to every social philosophy (Višňovský 1993, 29).<sup>4</sup>

The aim of the speculation about social order in the abstraction from the nature of human beings who create or should create it, is to identify the “mechanisms” mediating various forms of interaction (communication and “dismunication”,<sup>5</sup> co-operation and conflict) between these individuals. In our opinion, we could achieve more if we would succeed in pointing out the connection of these “mechanisms” with the nature of the individuals themselves. Social order can hardly be different from the nature of individuals who create (produce and reproduce) it, only if we were to assume that formation of social order is something that is not a product of these individuals, their nature and nature of their interactions, but that *vice versa* it is something that moulds and masters these individuals. Thus social order would be something that is shared by all but at the same time something that none of them wanted. Would this not mean that the final shape of social order is of purely counteractive if not demonic character?

The question of human nature, i.e. of whether humans are social beings who not only need to live within a society but also need to live in a transparently and well-organized society, is just one of the questions. Another question associated with the nature of social order is, what is the nature (mentality, cultural identity) of individuals or of a community whose order is at issue. There is naturally a difference between the order created by the barbarians and that created by the civilized people; the difference will be between the order created by educated and cultural individuals and that created by the uneducated and non-cultural. The special issue then is, how is a certain type of social order possible within the conditions of a certain community – e.g. a liberal order in Slovakia?

So it is probably not as much the question whether any order or not. The problem is what kind of order. It is not only the fact that the social order should comply with the nature of man, i.e. that it should facilitate the saturation of human needs

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<sup>4</sup> A similar approach has been proposed by D. Levy (1993) in his political anthropology.

<sup>5</sup> The term “dismunication” has been proposed by J. Piaček (1995).

and the life as a whole that is at issue, but also the fact that in addition to social order there is another, more extensive order of the world, universe, nature with which the social order cannot be at variance either (from this point of view it is also the so-called environmental philosophy that is relevant to our problem).

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What is the core of the problem of social order? Is it the fact that there is no order or that it is bad?<sup>6</sup> The common vision of social order connects it with the organized society, i.e. with the social organism, a whole, a system where everything has its place and is well functioning. The problem of social order is probably analogous to that of health at the individual level: the problem of the order becomes urgent in the period of disorder, mess and chaos, just as the problem of health becomes acute during illness. In the period of the rule of order just as in the period of good health we do not realize either of the problems (of course, unless we have adapted to the “state of illness” or the rule of poor order). Throughout history the periods of chaos alternated with the periods of the established order very often. Social philosophy in ancient Greece was also developed in such a period – the fall of the Athenian polis. If, however, Plato and then also Aristotle sought not only the causes of the disintegration but also certain universal foundation stones of a good social order, today, in our conditions, after the fall of one type of social order different tendency seems to prevail: the crisis of social order as such and escape from any order rather than attempts at its re-construction. More often appear apprehensions and anxieties about any order, even about new order, and escape tendencies, uncertainty, fear of social sanctions or nostalgia for the old order that seem to have been rooted deeper than could have been thought.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> According to D. Levy (1993, 57), the political order must not only be, it must be correct; and correct in this context means that it should be in as exact accord with the order of being as a whole as possible.

<sup>7</sup> It is particularly the period of social breakdown – the collapse of the old and non-existence of the new order that appears to be the non-existence of order. It is not always clear whether in the transformation period there is any order (and what kind of), or is it the status of disorder. If it holds that social orders are in general created by five “channels” – and we can agree – namely, through empathy in the field of everyday psychology; through value consensus in the domain of morals; by power relations in politics; exchange relationships in economy; and contract relationships in the domain of law (see Novosád 1994b), then the crisis of social order can be identified as principal defects in these areas, or its collapse as the absence of empathy, value consensus, power, exchange, and contract relationships as a whole. As far as our country is concerned, it seems that after a short period of revolutionary euphoria in which the idea of classical liberal order has not taken root, a relatively long phase of the formation of a new social order was initiated where tension between a special form of paternalistic conservatism and a more progressive liberal or social democratism prevails; only then can the third phase of the stabilization of this type of order which has been enforced in the second phase be launched.

The need of social order is probably most frequently associated with the need of *stability* (stabilization) of the conditions of human existence. This is the *raison d'être* of every conservatism: we cannot live in constantly changing conditions, a certain measure of stability (organization) is a prerequisite (although not a sufficient one) for our life. Life is not possible without order and order is not possible without authority, without ruling power (as E. Burke said). This would mean that human nature is more conservative and does not like changes; it takes change as a necessary evil and nobody can be happy about the change (of orders), except fanatic revolutionaries. According to D. Levy (1993, 35), social existence is possible as long as doubt is not cast on everything on a daily basis. In human affairs there is a dialectics of freedom and order. We have to freely create and maintain the order which limits the freedom. Only in such order can freedom be something more than abstraction.

According to another of the conceptions of social order (stemming from T. Hobbes), its primary function is *security*, that is the removal of the mutual jeopardy of individuals which is allegedly possible only under the strong authority of the state. Order is here understood as the opposite to the so-called state of nature where people live in general fear from each other since there are no guarantees that a one would not attack another, etc. There is ample evidence both in history and at present that the problem of individual security has not been solved so far: liberal orders wrestle with criminality and for that reason citizens are even allowed to wear guns; authoritarian and totalitarian orders are sources of fear and the greatest threat to the safety of individuals is the government itself which can do anything to them. Paradoxically enough, the social order itself can thus breed what it is allegedly authorized to prevent. Should not the resolution be sought in a different place, in changing human nature and not in the establishment of social order which has nothing to do with this change? Were not Kierkegaard and his followers right when they spoke of fear and anxiety as of the fundamental existential features of human beings independent of any social order? If there are humans who think that they were born into this world in order rather *to fight* with others for their living, territory, honour, fame or anything else than to cooperate and create something with and for them, the idea of social order seems to be very problematic. A human with such a power-control intention (whether given in one's genes or cultivated through education) will always find cunning ways for their implementation, seeking the ways how to subdue another man rather than how to cooperate. The social order can here really fulfil the function of a "gendarme" at the most and then only the problem "who will watch the watchmen" has to be solved. Is it not then more hopeful to orientate towards the faith of man in the good – at least potentially – of his nature and not to rely on the fact the problem of evil will be resolved by good social order? If man fails (within himself), it is not a good reason to be sceptical even with respect to any kind of social order which can finally be nothing else than the organization of human coexistence from micro- up to macro-social levels?

According to another conception, the purpose of social order is *to coordinate human action and behaviour*. However, this primarily pertains to the fact which might be called “external negative coordination” by laws, rules, norms (directives, bans, commands, etc.). It delineates the social space within which an individual can move and relatively act freely. It is based on the assumption that without such a “limited freedom” or “freedom under the rule of law” human coexistence would turn into something unbearable and would finally lead to the self-destruction of man. It is thus again assumed that man has to be bridled to avoid being overpowered by his “selfish gene” and power-control intentions (although such a human nature can also be appreciated as a fact which is “beyond the good and evil”). This social order is simply a *necessity*. Human existence and coexistence are impossible without social order although they are not quite possible with them either. Humankind has not yet resolved the problem of social order which would guarantee well-being and good future. Successful solution will hardly be reached if people only demand re-creation of the external coordinates of behaviour and if no way is found to change the inner coordination by intentions. The cynical statement that “good intentions have so far led only to hell” at least forgets that i) good intention is not enough (e.g. respect for life and compassion for suffering is needed); ii) good intention alone does not have any legitimacy “to justify all means”; and iii) against good intention there are some other intentions (often also temptations) which can prevail. If, however, all this should serve as an argument to give up any good intentions and goodwill in the creation of social order, then we should better resign. The conclusion will then be that it is the problem beyond our power (that in the case of such beings as humans only various surrogates of social order are possible), or let us leave it all to the so-called spontaneity and speak only as Hayek did about the “spontaneous order”.

Does then the need of social order follow from human nature or not? If so, what type of order would best correspond to human nature? To find the answers, exploration of how the social order is formed might be helpful. People create a kind of order probably non-intentionally, spontaneously, following through with their actions. The first aim is to survive (preservation of life). This is the aim all human individuals have in common. To fulfil it, certain basic needs have to be satisfied. If somebody finds out that it can be done better with others rather than individually, s/he strives to create a community. If somebody finds out that it can be done better to the detriment of others rather than together with them, s/he creates a conflict. If there is a community or a conflict (of individuals or communities), some rules have to be created. Where the rules are established, a kind of order is created. If these spontaneously created rules are found to be insufficient for preserving the community, or for coping with the conflict, additional rules will be imposed consciously and intentionally. As the communities and conflicts become more complex, new and new rules are needed. Realms, kingdoms, states are being established, statute books are written, social institutions are set up. The new order constructed by hu-

man intellect is added to the spontaneous “natural” order. Hayek’s demand to give up this social constructivism is probably an illusion; the point is rather the question what are our constructions, what basics and which intention we follow. What starting points for the construction of the models of social orders can be better for their creators and legislators than the knowledge of human nature and good will to come to the harmony with it? Social order is the first place possible due to certain *compatibility* (not coordination) of human needs, interests, values, and goals. As soon as this compatibility is not evident, the need for coordination occurs which can be either inner (ethical motivation) or outer (legal regulation). But it is our *self-interpretation* that is crucial – we act and behave towards another humans according to what we hold them to be.

The need of social order as a framework for dignified human coexistence (for solving the problem of coexistence) is at first rather unconscious. People need order but they do not realize it. They simply follow their goals, strive to survive and only later aspire for a certain quality of life. The issue of order seems not have an immediate relation to their lives. Only stage by stage, with the development of the division of labour, a special group of people is delimited whose aim is to create social orders and oversee their reproduction. These people (ideologists, politicians, lawyers, government employees, etc.) are responsible for the completion of this work more than others and thus also for the shape of the social order in a particular community. Therefore the competence of these individuals for such work as the creation of social order is decisive.

The idea of social order is both rationalistic and constructivistic. Although we can also think about the fact that we need social order to feel well in the human world, that means a kind of emotional need of order, it seems that we need and create order because we are rational beings.

The concept of order is burdened with certain “positiveness” (similarly as e.g. the notion of communication<sup>8</sup>): we have natural tendency to think that it is “good” if there is an order, it is better if there is at least some order than if there is none.<sup>9</sup> As rational beings, we need “to have an order” (in our world, life, home, even in ourselves, inside us) and we need order to the same extent as we are rationalists. Our need to have order is associated with the fact that we want to have matters clear, we want them to be transparent, readable, predictable, etc. Maybe that the need of order is just the emotional need of this rationalist – if he has got an order, he is calm and in a positive mood, he knows how to and wants to live. As soon as the order starts to be obscure or even vanish, it causes anxiety, despair, etc.

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<sup>8</sup> We assume, for instance, that communication with people is better than seclusion and isolation.

<sup>9</sup> The notion of order is of special importance also in everyday life: we ask our relatives and friends: “Is everything all right?”, i.e. “in some good order” and we are happy if it really is.

Extreme rationalists need order at any cost. Depending on their “action radius” and the field of action, they decide to introduce order everywhere. They organize all matters through their critical mind and establish duties and discipline. They issue norms, rules, commands, prohibitions, directions, and instructions.<sup>10</sup> Order is a net spread all over as far as their influence, power, and authority reach. In their opinion order is not only a universal need and necessity but they also think they know what kind of order and how to establish. The order does not exist as such, it has to be introduced. If it exists, the critical reason shows that it is a bad order which has to be changed and a new one has to be introduced. History is thus just “a struggle of orders”, successful or unsuccessful attempts at removing the orders and introducing the new ones. Order simply “must be there”. Order is the end not the means for a modern rationalist; his life-long project is to contribute to the production and reproduction of some order in this world. The order is his final value. To create and install the order is one of his greatest pleasures.

A human, who does not care about the order, or breaks it by his every act, is suspicious, being regarded as irrationalist or even something worse. Chaos, non-systematism are characteristic ways of his life. Looking for something else than order, a person is assumed deprived of a “common sense”. The best description of the disciplining function of rationalized order was given by M. Foucault.

Certain traditionalism and conservatism follows from such a rationalism – if we have introduced some order which costs us much efforts and sacrifices, let us prevent its destruction and experimentation with it. The search for a new order is a hazard which should not be permitted. This is how people speak who are satisfied with the given order and who benefit from it. However, throughout all history, we can hardly speak about optimal or humane social orders.

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Social order should be considered not only in connection with traditional philosophical categories such as freedom, justice, or equality but also in connection with such categories as “good” and “life”. People start to be interested in the problem of social order when they find out that there is some relationship between *good life* and social order. Human nature comprises certain constants and constituents which serve as norms for *good social order* and which cannot be by its creators either changed or ignored. Creation of social order is evidently no “idyllic” process. Social order can be compared to a house, which should be built in cooperation and in consensus, where the spirit of goodwill governs (goodwill is seemingly a *conditio sine qua non* of good social order). Similarly as in the construction of a house, foundations are most important here too.

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<sup>10</sup> “Modern society is not kept together by moral means but by external pressure” (Rolo 1993, 94).



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