
HUMAN AFFAIRS

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ARTICLES

CAN THE WORLD ORDER BE CREATED WITHOUT THE ORDER IN MAN? (ON THE ISSUE OF POWER AND HUMAN DIGNITY)

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The author's contemplations on the relationship between power and human dignity are based on the intrapsychic sphere of experiencing power efforts and the ambivalence of human needs. Power is understood as a prerequisite, capability and part of human action associated with the way of self-confirmation in time-space which limits the life of an individual. It is precisely the way of self-confirmation in both vertical and horizontal incorporation into human relations as a precondition for creating respect for the self that assigns a value dimension to power manifestations. The world order and humanization of power are evidently impossible without the "order" which a man can create inside himself within the process of spiritual self-creation of a personality on the principle of conscience. Thus human dignity also becomes a power, strength of spirit, which provides an individual with the capability to decide competently about the self and others.

What is power? Has it power over us or have we power over it?

The description of phenomenal manifestations of the application of power brings a plethora of factual data about the conditions and consequences of the implementation of power at a social level as well as in the personal-human micro-structure. More complicated and more mysterious issues are probably those penetrating into the core of power efforts, into the intrapsychic sphere of the human SELF. Why does a man long for power? Which human needs create the basis for such desires? Why do efforts at humanly valuable aims often change into violence against man? Is it possible to understand the essence of power and reach control and self-control over it, or do we have to be contented with the registration of its various phenomena and declare with pessimism that there always were and always will be the powerful? What is the relationship between power and human dignity like? Is it possible to humble human dignity just through a power from the outside or can a man unconsciously trample on his own dignity or can he never reach the consciousness of his human value and dignity? There are just a few of a number of

questions pressing us to think about the relation of man to the self, to his self-confirmation in time-space which limit his life.

P o w e r can be understood as a kind of ability, capability to do something (be able to, overpower, help, enforce but also not to be able) to have control over or rule over something or someone (to master, manipulate) or exert one's influence. Power is thus a prerequisite for and part of human action but, at the same time, it is always associated with the way of self-confirmation of man and it is just this way of self-confirmation that provides it with a certain value aspect.

D i g n i t y is a concept expressing ideas about the value of each human as a free, sovereign and autonomous being. The consciousness of dignity is a trait of a personality – a complex integrated personality who is a unity going beyond the sum of one's biological, psychosocial, and spiritual dimensions. Respect for the self is a precondition for the creation of consciousness of human dignity based on self-awareness within a certain social context, on self-understanding and appraisal of one's aspirations and possibilities but mainly on the ability to realize one's long-term ideas and objectives associated with the sense of existence. The need for self-respect and dignity is strengthened by the awareness of temporariness, mortality establishing thus attitudes towards life and its qualities.

Abilities, skills, influences, that means power, cannot be eliminated from human relations. Every human individual is exposed in his ontogenetic development to the pressure of socialization through which he acquires initial social experiences, learns to be a subject, that means also the subject of power. Since, however, in terms of existence, man is a free being in possibility, able to resist the reality, to go beyond it spiritually and return to it, in order to make it better (8, 78–80), humans are also able to humanise power and to refine necessary power effects.

Elementary preconditions for the mode of the exercise of power are created in joint relationships of the socio-cultural and individual-personal. With respect to the complexity and the scope of these problems, knowing these connections should become an object of the coordinated interdisciplinary approach. In accord with the possibilities of philosophical-ethical reflection, we focus only on the most general of them:

- preconditions for the socialization of a human individual in which his basic value attitudes are created,
- the process of permanent self-concept and creation of the consciousness of one's own value modelled by socio-cultural agents of external experience.

I. Preconditions for the socialization of a human individual in which his basic value attitudes are created:

1. The democratic or totalitarian-autocratic character of the socio-political system which establishes or (does not establish) legal guarantees to prevent the abuse of power.

2. The measure of democracy and prevailing emotional atmosphere in various social institutions and social microgroups. The character of the activities and mu-

tual relationships within the family, at school, in the workplace as well as within the system of health or social care are considered as most important. It mainly concerns the way of the functioning of the vertical social-role bonds of superiority and inferiority (parent-child, teacher-student, medical specialist-patient, official-citizen, etc.).

3. The intellectual-spiritual atmosphere of society – cultural traditions, systems of world-view orientations and the prevailing hierarchy of values. It is probably the measure of liberalism and tolerance that is significant or, rather the contrary, of the totalitarian exclusiveness in the attitudes of the intelligentsia, particularly humanitarian. “Social mirror” providing a feedback in which an individual sees himself, with which he is confronted, can also be included here. It concerns not only public opinions but also deviant manifestations (mainly positive), overcoming the barriers of ossification and conservatism.

II. The process of permanent self-image and the creation of a consciousness of one's own value modelled by socio-cultural agents of external experience.

Reflecting socially significant criteria, a man realizes and values himself in the process of life activities and in the interaction with others, mostly on the basis of his position in the hierarchy of groups. In contrast to the majority of eastern cultures where the virtues of subjecting to the duties following from relatively stable social roles dominate, the traditions of European thought created a prerequisite for intellectual and spiritual development of individuality. Within the cultural context of Western civilization, the Self, as a source of the application of the creative human potential, is an important value (6, 106). Paradoxically, it is just this cultural background that enabled the acceptance of evaluating criteria reducing (and degrading) the individual to some of his social roles (mainly professional) or functions. The domineering paradigm of modern rationality reflecting the world inclusive of man as a quantifiable calculable reality and placing him thus into the sphere of human dominion has become a determining factor of thought. The formula of both conscious and unconscious attitudes of human behaviour towards reality is thus determined (7, 142). Life activities are strengthened by the awareness of the time limit. The need of the positive relation to the self is chiefly satisfied by the success in time. Such criteria of self-respect prefer what supports external activity (e.g. intellectualism, self-assertion under any circumstances, etc.) to the detriment of spiritual self-creation.

A human individual moves within the two types of social relations – vertical (social roles and functions following from them) and horizontal (human – human). A human is permanently in a dilemma of the two tendencies following from his socialized needs:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| to dominate | – to be dominated |
| activity | – passivity |
| freedom | – certainty |
| independence | – dependence |
| disquiet (dissatisfaction) | – peace (satisfaction) |

| | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| incompleteness of self-transformations | – finiteness of one's being |
| self-respect | – respect for others |
| self-love | – love for another person |
| anxiety about loneliness | – hope for overcoming |

Violation of the ambivalence of double social dependence can finally lead to isolation and loneliness. Psychological literature provides a plethora of examples ranging from deep autism to the most brutal form of aggressiveness. This “ambo” (from Latin: both, together), two tendencies in a man which are an internal source of his behaviour is implemented in the two social positions mentioned.

1. In vertical – by learning, by imitating, accepting ready, external value criteria, activities and formulae of behaviour. Such a way is necessary in a certain period of ontogenesis but, at the same time, it suppresses other possibilities (5, 37). It is also attractive for many individuals in adulthood, since it enables them to be equal to others on the basis of “standardized equality” (2, 21). The need for freedom and activities can be secured by pseudofree mass behaviour which deprives humans of the dilemma of ethical decision-making and often also of personal accountability. The unification of such “narcissists” knowing and seeing just themselves and the same creates communities of “their own”. Since the problem of values (truth, good, beauty) is for them resolved and stable, other values and their bearers are not only “strange” but they are often judged as less valuable. This categorization provides “mass narcissists” with the illusion of infallibility and omnipotence. Strict vertical hierarchization of values and unification of people according to them are prerequisites for power manipulation with others as with material. Manipulation is a calculable, rational activity with an object (9, 23) which can be anything, starting with nature, ending with man as a number, piece, diagnosis, an element of a statistical set, etc. Power manipulation with other people perceived as objects can be regarded to be an aspect of the global crisis of humanity. The awareness of belongingness and power can be in the most extreme cases intensified by external demonstrational signs and symbols, mainly by a uniform of “their own” in contraposition to the enforced less distinguished costume or the complete nakedness of “strangers”. But also the self-respect and awareness of one's own value can be changeable and unstable on such a basis. The only objective – success – often also achieved by self-assertion above others, against others, or to their detriment, can easily be lost. A partial man who is aware of people and judges them (individuals or groups) only within vertical relations lives most of his everyday life on the basis of instrumental values.

In his effort to reach the highest spot up the vertical he often accepts consciously or unconsciously the status of an instrument, becomes an Aristotelian “organon empsychon”. His life activities consisting in wanting, in being constantly eager for something (G. Marcel) are focused predominantly on “to have”. It does not concern just material goods but the life orientation – education, knowledge also

very specialized for oneself and for one's success, which enable one "to have" (achieve, play, maintain) a certain social role or to be promoted. That also means to have power following from a particular social position. In this life orientation "ambo" usually manifests itself through the "syndrome of a cyclist" hunching one's back behind those who are higher and treading on those who are behind him. Failure in one activity is often compensated by power in another relation; the exchange of his people for another social group which enables better fulfillment of power ambitions is not uncommon either. Even a single insecurity in behaviour leads to restlessness about "social mirror", apprehension that the enforced or accepted form of behaviour is wrongly realized and will be "repudiated" by his people (5, 44). The externality of self-appraisal and self-confirmation, refusal of the dilemma and ethical conflict can also lead to the tendencies of looking for the causes of failure (and generally of the evil) outside oneself. The principle of self-pity without inner critical analysis of the Self is probably closely associated with the principle of a "scape-goat". The fatal identity with the group soul is according to C.G. Jung dangerous since the group, with respect to its unawareness, is not able to make free decisions and therefore the world of spirit is manifested within it as a causally bound process which will reach a peaceful stage as late as through a catastrophe (4, 63). Unfortunately, history corroborates the fact that the strength of collectivism is in the situation of uncertainty associated with the desire for a hero, a "dragon killer" (4, 63) with all social consequences – starting with demagoguery and ending with violence.

2. The second social position in which ambivalent tendencies towards satisfying the needs are implemented, is the horizontal level of the man-to-man relationship. The view holding a universal respect for life in esteem enables understanding of oneself and others next to him as individualized equal human beings. As A. Schweitzer put it: "I am the life which wants to live in the middle of the life that wants to live" (1, 284). This way of learning to live is based on making the "order" within oneself, not by accepting any kind of the relativity of values but on the basis of knowing them, experiencing, acceptance or at least tolerance. This enables avoidance of the force and alibism of collectivism by transferring the value struggles of the good and evil into the individual's interior. The reward for often painful searches and uncertainty in solving ethical conflicts is the option of free and responsible action as a prerequisite for spiritual self-creation of the personality based on the conscience. The conscience, as a subjective ability of the morally responsible action, grows from inner experiences, is created on the basis of understanding of and respect for oneself and others as moral subjects. The violation of the norms built on the respect for life, in relationships toward others and to oneself leads from pity and shame to a feeling of guilt. It is a deeper level of self-examination, shame for oneself and one's human dignity. At the same time there is a possibility of revealing oneself, one's "ambo" and the truth about oneself in new dimensions of human relationship toward the world. We could speak about the development of Socratic tradition: "Recognize yourself" (and thus also others) as an existential being

who is not only aware of temporariness and often lives according to the vulgarized principle "Carpe diem" but who is also able to reflect and use one's human incompleteness. The concept of dignity is thus created not only on the basis of any self-confirmation and self-respect but consisting in becoming aware of one's own value, the value of a human being unfinished in the possibilities to go beyond ordinariness by spiritual going beyond the self. In other words, a human misses the meaning of life to such an extent to what he is unfaithful to his own law and does not become a personality (4, 68). A man of the horizontal level seeks meaning even in everyday life, asks about the meaning, tries "to be" rather than "to have". By looking at the self, he usually values others.

Even in various social roles one can be a human in the first place both for the self and for others. Human dignity thus becomes power, the strength of the spirit, which makes us capable of making competent decisions about the self and others in view of human possibilities.

If the law is valid that only strong and healthy individuals survive in nature, then in the conditions of the human species the possibility to survive is offered through the force of the psyche which, on the basis of cognition, understanding, and tolerance enables us to pacify the conflicts of individuals, groups or whole cultures. Will humans make use of their unique chance? Even today it is most topical to disseminate the Cartesian Cogito about I feel, sense, cognize and consider the good and the evil in a bitter struggle for one's conscience, I learn to tolerate and love people, therefore I am.

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