

Spirituality and Commitment [1992]

Chotěboř, 4. 5. 1992

01

Modern men do no more understand any deeper meaning of spirituality. They reduce it to psychic phenomena, they observe it from the psychological point of view. Even those who speak about spirituality don't know well what they are speaking about. Or, at least, they differ profoundly in understanding spirituality without feeling any need for a conceptual precision. It is because of that, if I shall start with an intellectual model of a very abstractly conceived human situation. The main fault of the modern world view or of the so called modernity consists in depriving modern men of an important part of their world and of themselves. Let us consider a general model of a human situation, i.e. of the way a human being is situated in his environmental part of the world.

02

There are two basic preconditions of giving rise to any human situation: a man as a focus or centre of such a situation, on the one side, and a plenty of things and events which surround or even encompass that situated man, on the other. It may seem trivial, but it is not, as you will see. Both constituents of such a situation are changing, even if they have a certain relative stability, too. And there are two diverse and really disparate sources of any change. One of them is represented by various activities exercised by the man as the centre of the situation, or by some other active beings belonging to his situation but having their own situations, too (to which he, again, is belonging to). So we can understand that various individual situations form a common „place“ or area inhabited by different sorts of individual centres or foci differently situated there and which are differently sharing this common intersubjective situation based on their individual and private, but coinciding situations.

03

The other precondition of any change at all is the still coming future time: in every moment, the present is passing away, but a new second is coming after every immediately past second, a new minute after any immediately past one, a new tomorrow is coming after every today and yesterday, and so on. Of course, we are influenced by the prejudice of the so called causality: we imagine that any future is but a consequence of the past. But such a presupposition doesn't make any real sense, I am afraid. Any event is starting to be on the „basis“ of its being not yet. It is the matter of our false or at least onesided way of observing events, if we understand the past as preceding the future. Every event starts on its actual beginning and only then it passes through all its further actual phases, till it comes to its end. Than it stops. So the end of such an event is not its oldest phase, but its last and youngest one. The actual stream of time has its source in the future, not in the past, and it is flowing on to the past. And it is because of that, if I spoke about the two disparate sources of any change of the situation.

Very soon, we shall come back to this point.

04

Any man situated in a changing world (or its part) is challenged not only by the given things and passing events, but also by the coming future which is not at all void nor blank. In everything we do, we are responding to such non-objective, not materialized, not real challenges which nevertheless are more important than anything real or material. Given things do not challenge us actually, we only have to acknowledge them in their existence and to count with them in planning and projecting our next activities. Any our activity, including our thinking, is a response to some of those immaterial challenges. The first form of our responding to them is our hearing an understanding them. At the same time, it is the only way of materializing them. It means that they matter before we do materialize them. You mustn't uncritically take every sign nor token through which the language is appealing you. The English language is convincing you e.g. that something which is no thing, is really nothing. It would be, of course, a deep misunderstanding if you would accept this suggestion or rather this insinuation.

05

I have to remind you of the fundamental importance of various activities for the constitution and especially reconstitution of any active being, i.e. of a being as the centre of its own activities. Nobody is able to play tennis excellently only because of being an excellent player, but on the contrary he succeeded to become a good player because he spent much time by training. So in the course of being active you don't remain the same, but you change: it depends of the way you are active if you will be better or worse. In responding to the plenty of various challenges, you are becoming better or worse not only technically, but as moral and spiritual beings, too. In moral way, you reconstitute yourself as moral beings by fulfilling your commitments. But there is a fundamental question: how do you reconstitute yourself in the spiritual way, i.e. as spiritual beings? It is simply impossible without criticism, and it means: without using your understanding and reason.

06

We need to establish a conceptual difference between „moral“ on one side and „spiritual“ on the other. In his moral responsibility, the man is reacting to the demands and obligations of his own society where he is living. As a spiritually responsible being he is „reacting“ to the non-objective, not yet materialized obligations coming out of the future and appealing or even challenging him personally. (The distinction is an abstraction only, not very useful for applications, I am afraid.) Nearly every moral obligation is appealing to a higher obligation which we can call a spiritual one. So we can see a rather deep confusion of both types of obligations, in which we are mostly muddled up without precisely knowing the difference between them. But sometimes we can meet a special case where an exceptionally spiritually sensitive person is surprised and often even shocked by recognizing a deep discrepancy or a direct contradiction

between a social or moral obligation or a commitment already accepted by himself in the past, and a newly discovered, purely inner responsibility to a higher, but originally less clear spiritual obligation which was not yet understood, conceived nor formulated. It is really no obligation but only a challenge appealing to us for being attentive and prepared enough to hear and to understand it in so far to be able to formulate it in such a way to convince at least some of our fellow-men of its first rate importance.

07

Morality is based on two foundations, namely on habits and on higher spiritual appeals and obligations. The main problem consists in possible misunderstandings or even deception about what a right spiritual appeal actually is. We are only men and so we can be wrong and deluded, we can commit an error. Habits are not always all right, there are or may be also very wrong and bad. But if you are protesting against wrong or bad habits, you may also be wrong, without any doubt. However you will understand the difference between given moral laws, founded on habits and common sense, and not yet understood, conceived and formulated „moral“ or „spiritual“ appeals and challenges, in one point you possibly can agree: we all are responsible not only before our fellow men, before our society, but for them. Spirituality means responsibility towards what should be done in our situation, i.e. towards what we should do, or more concretely: what I should do. And what should be done is no direct consequence of what is, even if it is a given society or a given tradition.

08 Here we are standing on a crossroad, where we have to decide. Modernity was disclosed by Nietzsche as the European nihilism, and not without any reason. The old metaphysical way of thinking, which started in old Greece and was adopted by the Christian tradition, conceived the highest values as beings, as „entia“. Theologians mostly spoke about God as about „summum ens“ or „infinitem ens“ or „ens aeternum et immutabile“, it means the Highest Being or Endless Being or Everlasting Unchangeable Being etc. The modern European nihilism found that nothing like that exists. The vast majority of Christians were shocked, most of the theologians were and are convinced that any theology is impossible without the old metaphysics. It is an example of a predominant habit of a false way of thinking, as we know it from different false ways of living. But there is no true spirituality based on given old habits. If we want to behave and think in accordance to our spiritual vocation, we have to stop with founding all our hope on what was and what is, but we should open our minds and our lives to all what is coming to us, into our actual presence. Any true spirituality is oriented to the future, i.e. to the coming new events.

09

So we read in Isaiah (65,17): „For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create.“ Such an orientation to new heavens and a new earth is the only true foundation of a right spirituality. It is much more than a

mere waiting for what should come. We have to be active, we have to do our best for preparing ourselves as well as preparing the circumstances and preconditions. The true spirituality means our responding to the right challenges and our fulfilling the not yet formulated obligations appealing to us. Any true spirituality is engaged in events and goals within the framework of this world and of its history, because we cannot actively help the future to come but on this earth and within our lives. Nevertheless, there are – spiritually seen – no right events and goals which are not narrowly connected with such a coming future which represents something new and better.

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So we can conclude that all human spiritually oriented activities have to do with aims and goals which are not to be reduced to calculated images and projects of future „things“, but which are deeply connected with an openness towards originally not yet objectified, not yet formulated obligations. Any interpersonal relation, any obligation towards concrete men, any bond or commitment is to be measured and appreciated in view of those coming appeals and challenges. Nothing which exists already is good enough for the basic orientation of our lives and of our minds. It is this orientation into the coming future which we do call „faith“. But it would be another chapter and another talk. Thank you.

Praha, 4. 5. 1992