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Thema:

Das entscheidende, vom gesunden Menschenverstand gegen die Freiheit benutzte Argument besteht darin, uns an unsere Ohnmacht zu erinnern. Weit entfernt, daß wir unsere Situation willkürlich ändern können, scheint es sogar, daß wir nicht einmal uns selbst ändern können. Ich bin weder „frei“, dem Schicksal meiner Klasse, meines Volkes, meiner Familie zu entgehen, noch auch mir Einfluß oder ein Vermögen zu schaffen, noch meine unbedeutendsten Neigungen oder meine Gewohnheiten zu besiegen.

*(Jean-Paul Sartre, Das Sein und Das Nichts)*

"I am not 'free'[i;]"- that is the central thesis of this excerpt taken from "Being or Nothingness." And Jean-Paul Sartre, the author, against expectation does not base it on mere abstract theories. His central argument instead is taken from the experience of "common sense". (1.1) Therefore he describes the experience of "impotence", which he mainly grounds on the fact that we are "far from being able to modify our situation at our whim". (1.2) According to this point Sartre is obviously right. The examples given in the quotation make it clear. You cannot decide neither when you are born, nor where and-most important- you even cannot determine if you want to be born anyway. Concerning these facts you hardly could deny Sartre's that "the Other is the hell". However this sentence, as far as we can make it out from the thoughts developed before, is only valid in the sense that the Other robs you your freedom and for this reason disables you to decide from the autonomy of your will.

However Sartre claims wider validity for his thesis than just the meaning of dependency on the conditions of birth would have. For when he says that we are "unable to change ourselves" and justifies it with the same argument as above- the social dependency- the consequence must be that the individual has no qualities but the ones given to him by his social group. Every person at the moment of his birth would then be a "tabula rasa" not only in the narrow sense that he/she does not have experienced anything, but in the radical meaning it is a "nothingness."

Let us take this thought for true for a moment to see if it is persuasive or not. If we follow Sartre's type of argument, we will soon see that the common sense does not only suggest the idea of dependency, but the idea of freedom as well. Let us stick to an example of every-day-life to let this thought become clearer. If anyone hits another person the hidden one will not believe that the other one would not have been able to decide different. This is mainly because the hidden person for himself sees the possibility of acting a different way. He would basically

justify this belief as follows: The person who has hidden me theoretically must have seen the possibility not to hit me (because I see that myself) he has decided to me, but it was him who did it - he knew what he was doing. He might have been in anger, but he would have had to control himself."

We see from this hypothetical situation. Common sense postulates the freedom of the will as well, as he might give us the impression of dependency. Therefore in case of our topic "Is the human being principally free or not?" common sense does not give a clear, but even contradictory answer. For this reason we have to find other arguments the question we are dealing with.

The example given, as well as the quotation itself, should be a hint for us to find a solution for our problem, which at the same time, if it is persuasive, must enable us to solve the "antinomy of common sense" we have discovered before.

In the example the fictive person thought: "He [the hitting person] knows what he has done." If we once take this for granted, we are providing that the person has a self-consciousness and is able to reflect. So we cannot pass over the Cartesian Cogito. As it seems the key to the question of freedom is laid down in the opportunity of reflection. Reflection itself includes freedom: it is nothing else but the freedom of realization. It is this kind of freedom Sartre himself makes use of: He reflects on the entity of human being. This reflection includes the thought, I reflect; and this thought makes it necessary to see oneself as a free individual in so far as the reflection is based upon my will, because it enables me to recognize that it would even possibly not to reflect in this moment. You easily recognize that we developed the thought from an idea of absolute impotence-with the help of cogito to Kant's idea of the transcendental Ego. Kant's theory might even enable us to get a more precisely idea of the problem of freedom as it has shown up in the experience of common sense. The "antinomy" we saw there is nothing but one of the antinomies of practical reason, which is based on the fact that according to the laws of theoretical reason and the sector of the outward world which it refers to, everything is following unbreakable material laws; however there is also the experience of an autonomic will, which shows up, as we saw, as soon as you develop self-consciousness. (Herein, moreover, you can see another argument against Sartre's statement, because if you guess yourself just being a product of the outer world you could never develop an inner sense, could never discover an Ego, which you have to assume for any kind of reflection.) Kant, as you know, solves the practical antinomy with his theory of freedom, whereas he sets up two different worlds: the "sensual" and the "intelligible" one. It is clear as well that Kant was not able to solve the problem of freedom fully for it is necessary to make clear how the "transcendental entity of apperception" can cause anything in the sensual world, when itself is only a part of the intelligible world.

Nonetheless it will be justified from the arguments given above to work with the idea of the

autonomy of the will as a basis of our further argumentation. To accept this idea, by the way, does not mean to state that we are practically free- the consequence is only that we theoretically could be free in acting. Nothing else is meant by Kant when he claims freedom to be a "postulate of reason." As we have seen right at the beginning of this essay it is sure that we depend to a high extent on our (natural as well as social) living circumstances. However our will (no matter if good or bad) is standing up against this binding pressure of nature. He calls us to free ourselves and to become mature beings. Our worthiness is based on the consciousness of this postulate of reason and the possibility to follow it.

However here the notorious question comes up again: Are we able to follow our will, is in fact, our freedom a practical one?

Two anthropological qualities seem most important to me as regards this question. One is that we, as social beings, who can from a naturalistic point of view be characterized as "shortcoming beings" ("Maengelwesen" -Gehlen), the other is that we are mortal. Both illustrate our impotence and make up the decisive difference to the idea of God which especially since Aristotle can be defined as the "ens summe perfectum." It was Aristotle, too, who invented the idea of human as the "zoon politicon." He knew the dependency of humans well, he knew that they could not live without each other; however Aristotle's definition of man did not end at the point of pure dependency from nature, whose necessary development the state would. In common with the athenic tradition he thought of the state as a construct built by man and therefore politics as being based on the unity of the citizens' will. Does this idea of democracy based on the autonomy of the will have any justification if we at the same time have in mind that the state develops out of an anthropological necessity? If the development of a state- or let us say for the beginning more generally: a social construct- is a necessity the question must now be: Is there an absolute contradiction of necessity and freedom: Do they exclude each other a priori or might there be even an idea of a state, where one is including the other?

Before we discuss this question let us first have an overview about the generally possible access to the question of freedom. If you ask for freedom you can ask for it in two different ways:

1) What is one free from?

2) What is he/she free for?

It is easy to see that a definition of freedom, which takes only care of the first question will not be satisfying. In this case the superiest form of freedom, one can think of would be to be free from everything. However if you are free from everything you are as well a Nothingness as if you are free from nothing, because you then will not be able to define yourself. To be able to define something it is necessary to recommand its borders: If you have essential qualities they

fix you and you are not completely free, but on the other hand if you do not have one, you are a Nothingness. Only the second question can tell us the way out of this paradox. If you are clear about what your essential qualities are, you are able to define what you are able to be free for seen from the "constitution" in the widest sense of the word and therefore you are then able to say what you should be free for. It is only possible to get this knowledge if you build up the ideal of yourself, because without this image you cannot say what is the aim of your will, because you are not clear about the "good will". According to this aspect Heidegger is right, when he says that you have to think about ontology before you think about ethics. If you have no idea about the essential conditions of human being you cannot find an ethic that fits to these conditions. That does not mean that only practical aspects are important to consider if you think about the possibility of a good life. Instead you have to bring the ideal to reality by considering its conditions.

Considering these conditions leads us according to Aristotle to the theory of politics and state. According to freedom we get a special hint in Hegel's theory. His idea is this of a dialectic development of state. The state develops from the state of necessity to the state of freedom(!) where the idea of "Sittlichkeit" has come true. This is reached, when every single will has become a unity with the "absolute reason" as Hegel imagines it.

However I would not follow Hegel in his idea in so far, as he states the development as a necessary process. According to the fundament we have worked out with the help of Kant's theory I am persuaded that the only possibility to reach this aim is laid down in the autonomy of the will. Therefore we will have to accept the idea that the state in reality may fail, because we have to accept the possibility of wrong decision.

We have to allow failing for the sake of freedom as long as we do not forget the ideal we are wanting to become reality. This concept obviously is an exceptional one and therefore it is not to be read as a practical advice.

It is instead written as a recommend of the necessity of utopia as an idea to go for and it is written as an apology of freedom; for the sake of humanity you are not allowed to deny freedom. Otherwise you are denying the possibility of man to be good-even if it is only within the borders of here and now.