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THE QUESTION CONCERNING HUMAN ACTION

Abstract

The paper presents phenomenological and hermeneutical approach of human action in 20th century. There were two important cultural phenomena in the twentieth century. On the one hand, the growing expansion of technopoly, which based its operation on instrumental rationality and therefore affected destructively the spiritual realm of man, was growing, on the other hand, there were attempts to apply to the economy humanistic and personalistic vision of management, based on axiological rationality. Studies and projects belonging to humanistic stream are based on the assumption that at turning points of history human labour became deprived of its human nature. Hermeneutical and phenomenological analysis allows to indicate the sources of this dehumanization. Phenomenological analysis has discovered that in a technopoly human being has been deprived of her/his transcendental dimension and reduced to one of the factors of production. Hermeneutical analysis has discovered *eidōs* of human action: Norwid's *church of work*, Brzozowski's *creation of will*, Teilhard de Chardin's *holy march of mankind*, and Tymieniecka's *the human creative act*. The essence of the phenomenological approach of human action is to build a "community of work" that allows personal development through work as well as cooperation.

Keywords: phenomenology, human action, spirituality, community of work, church of work

PYTANIE O CZYN LUDZKI

Abstrakt

W artykule dokonano fenomenologicznej i hermeneutycznej analizy czynu ludzkiego. W XX wieku miały miejsce dwa ważne zjawiska kulturowe. Z jednej strony narastała ekspansja technopolu, która opierała swoją działalność na racjonalności instrumentalnej, a tym samym niszczyła duchową sferę człowieka, z drugiej podejmowano próby zastosowania w przedsiębiorstwach humanistycznej i personalistycznej wizji zarządzania, opartej na racjonalności aksjologicznej. Badania i projekty należące do nurtu humanistycznego opierają się na założeniu, że w pewnym momencie historii praca została pozbawiona ludzkiej natury. Analiza hermeneutyczna i fenomenologiczna pozwala wskazać źródła tej dehumanizacji. Analiza fenomenologiczna odkryła, że w technopolu człowiek został po-

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zbawiony swojego transcendentalnego wymiaru i zredukowany do jednego z czynników produkcji. Analiza hermeneutyczna odkryła *eidos* działania człowieka: „kościół pracy” Norwida, „kreację woli” Brzozowskiego, „święty marsz ludzkości” Teilharda de Chardin i Tymienieckiej – „ludzki akt twórczy”. Istotą fenomenologicznego podejścia do ludzkiego działania jest budowanie „wspólnoty pracy”, umożliwiającej osobisty rozwój poprzez pracę i współpracę.

Słowa kluczowe: fenomenologia, czyn ludzki, duchowość, wspólnota pracy, kościół pracy

BACKGROUND – TECHNICAL AND SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF TECHNOPOLY

Over the twentieth century, two important cultural phenomena could be observed. On one hand, we dealt with the domination of instrumental rationalization (Husserl 1965) that supported the economic development and which had a destructive effect on the human spiritual domain, while on the other hand, a vision of community based on axiological rationality emerged from technical civilization: humanization of work (Ondrack and Timperley 1982), servant leadership (Greenleaf 1991), Economy of Communion (*The Economy of Communion* 2002). Those latter ones possess a deeper dimension: a transcendental, eschatological one.

The great development of civilisation (resulting from the use of machines, automation and information technology) over two last centuries has changed the conditions of human life on the earth. Various resources created at this time made it possible to construct new social structures. However, the new global civilisation is based on the “community of machines” and “community of economic interests”, and not on common values. Therefore, many people regard the so-called scientific and technical progress as a new form of constraint and humiliation (Sen 2002; Sedláček 2013).

But perhaps machines, computers and related new systems of work organization, as products of a man, are not wrong in themselves, but they are only often wrongly used by people. It should be noted that a system of work rationalization, initiated by Frederick Taylor, did not limit itself to the internal organization of the enterprise. The rules developed by him were transferred to other domains of human life. Everything remains under the influence of scientism: family life, education, entertainment, science, art. This technical rationalism was marked by great business achievements, although it led to depersonalization of human life (Postman 1993).

It seems to be also possible to provide a positive answer to the question whether technology is able to improve a man: his spirit, freedom and happiness. A man belonging to *praxis* and to *techne*, *homo faber*, feels capable of humanity. A person-creator, through the entire burden of his self strives to humanity. Intuitions about a particular and proper role of human activity in the world can be found already in Polish poet and philosopher Cyprian Kamil Norwid (1821-1883). Norwid perceived two attitudes in historical tradition: that of Prometheus,

symbolizing independent activity of a human being and of Moses, protecting *sacrum*. The Bible reminded him that work is a punishment for the original sin, from which he concluded that this punishment required redemption through love. He considered the original sin a “Fortunate gift”; because banishment from Eden made it possible to participate in the difficult work of history, brought a man to a road leading him back to paradise and enriching him, although it was not this given, existing paradise, but the paradise that was co-created through his own effort. Work became in this perspective not only a penance, but also a means to raise the fallen man. Norwid saw the road to reintegration and rehabilitation of a human being in continuation of the previous work of history, in the process consisting in ennobling physical work, removing the degrading stigma of automatism and constraint from it, making the subject of work the subject of love. The main means to redeem work through love was to be art, combining physical effort with free expression and joy of creation. Work was to be transformed into art, and art was to descend from the height to merge with “practicality” and to brighten everyday life with its light (Węclawska-Lipowicz 2017). He understood art as “a banner on the human labour tower”, and saw its task in bridging the gaps between the intellectuals and working classes. For him, the idea of “art-work” was a conception of spiritually linking working classes with educated classes and creating a “church of work” (Norwid 1997, 80). Unfortunately, the creation of community in technical organization encounters various obstacles. Introduction of spirituality into technology is a difficult process, although necessary if the “church of work” is to be created (Chauhan and Das 2016, 114). This process requires a deepened reflection, also a religious one (Capra, Steindl-Rast and Matus 1991).

The 20th century also saw the rise of solutions enhancing the status of the human work. Restoration of the “work community” was observed, i.e. spontaneous, emotional devotion to common enterprise, which conceal human benefits, aspirations and values (Mitroff and Denton 1999, 85). An employee becomes a co-participant of the enterprise. The enterprise fulfils the aim of the entire community, common welfare, which consists in the development of all its members. The 20th century experienced the phenomenon of self-awareness, achieved by a working person and by working community. This phenomenon means a drive towards freedom and personal development.

1. STANISŁAW BRZOWSKI’S PROTO-PHENOMENOLOGY OF HUMAN ACTION

Searching for the sense of his own existence, as well as the sense of history of human activity in the world, one cannot omit the thought of polish philosopher Stanisław Brzowski (1878-1911). Brzowski was an influential critic of Polish social and philosophical thought and a piercing observer of Polish and European everyday life (Walicki 1989). In his “philosophy of work”, he explores a concept of work which touches certain themes which are important for phenomenological

praxeology and offers some interesting parallels with the contemporary searching of the good entrepreneurship (Bombała 2014).

While treating work as relationship between a human being and the nature, Brzozowski emphasized that this was a relationship of fight, in which a man did not remain passive, but revealed great activity, necessary for his existence. Initially, he emphasized directly productive work, and a technological factor –power and efficient operation of artificial environment, created by people and determining their position in the fight against nature. He wrote: *Nature, as an idea, is an experience thought of as our work; the world – as a possible subject of our technical activity.* The world is not directly given to us; the world known to us, the world within the human experience is our own creation. Its order and rights are products of human activity, human work and manufacturing technology.

Later on, he focused on subjective factors of work; on the quality of human will and on cohesion and strength of live social bond determining this quality. He thought that examination of work from the perspective of experience acquired in the process of its performance, or its “internal” analysis, made it possible to prove that the ultimate basis of work and its products arising in human awareness as “objectively” given world, was subjective physical effort, maintained by the strength of human will. This effort, its appropriate level and progress, depends on other forms of labour, creating proper organization and culture of societies: *work, its quality, amount, it is a subtle creation of will, maintained by entire customs, which in turn is a very subtle and complicated creation.*

Brzozowski reaches the conclusion that an essential condition of the discipline of will is a strong, traditional moral bond. This results in recognizing religion as a valuable school of will and a precious element of intense social bond:

“Religion is a method of extracting force from those depths of creativity that do not come out to us in any forms of activity available to our consciousness and our purposeful will. If life ceases to be enough to us, as a created form,, we have to resort to that life which is our meaningful, own creation, supporting us and our world. (...) A social, rationalized person, appeals at this point to the person of unexhausted creative possibilities. (...) A sacramental religious system seems to be a system of action by means of which we maintain on the surface of our consciousness, our will, those forces that are not covered by it, that are deeper than it, and therefore not existing for it, since they go beyond it. (...) Thus religion becomes not a concept, but a significant, deep historical reality, since it blends so strongly with deep and source will (...) We understand that the fight with supernaturalism is only an impoverishment of our creative nature down to the limits of our created and controlled life” (Brzozowski 1990, 447-449).

The essence of work is therefore the inner life of a human being, spirituality, “willingness to work”, although strongly rooted in customs, in culture. This emphasis on roots indicates that community is of crucial importance for work

continuity. However, another view on work is commonly accepted, according to which work is an effort changing something in a purposeful way in the external world. Brzozowski considered this common view naive and superficial. He stated the failure to understand the nature of work is *the sickest point of modern thought*. Work is still analysed “from the outside”, and not “from the inside” as certain continuous and autonomous creation. This is where the common faith in technical development is derived from, faith that in the course of time the work will become lighter, more attractive and reduced to minimum. Brzozowski warns us that this is not a good way to liberate work:

“First of all, it should be remembered that even if technical improvements made work extremely easier (...), mankind would not cease to be its own work, painfully maintained against the elements, since beside these elements that technology is fighting with, we deal with an element that is more imminent and more dangerous, with ourselves, with life (...). The more independent a human being is from the pressure of destitution, the more important is the role and the need for internal heroism, fortitude, securing the existence of biological basis for all other achievements. Therefore, the issue of liberating work consists in, firstly, understanding which psychic forces are used to produce this sum of will that creates today’s manufacturing and secures transfer to our offspring of those features that help this will to be still produced; and secondly, realizing how those mental powers can and may be transformed, so as the same or a larger sum of will and energy would be produced without the participation of any upper hierarchy over the working class exploiting it” (Brzozowski 1990, 332).

Accomplishment of real reforms, in Brzozowski’s opinion, will be possible when the society frees itself from intellectual individualism. He regarded hegemony of intelligence in social awareness as pathology, leading to deprivation of the society of its “own” specified legal and moral awareness. In his opinion, intellectuals were responsible for alienation of work and reification of the image of the world. Reification of the image of the world, i.e. the view on the social reality as a set of “ready-made facts”, governed by “objective course of affairs” beyond our control, was the creation of alienated awareness, not participating in the process of work, creation of intellectualism, i.e. of analytic and spectator attitude, describing the world from the outside.

The law, thus created, makes use of the fiction of an abstract, isolated entity. However, in Brzozowski’s view, the law emerges from work experiences, and work is a social and historical process, its subject is human groups, linked through a certain system of bonds and relationships, and not ahistorical and abstractive entities. Brzozowski wanted to *make work, i.e. the only human force able to create its own freedom, the source and the aim of law, and make history an act of human will and work, and not of human ignorance, weakness and chance*. The conscious and

natural participation of a human being in the process of civilisation development will take place:

“when the need to work and its requirements, become the subject and the content of his will, when work can freely govern itself, when a man can perform the entire vastness of work, being the condition and the basis for his growth, his life, status attained in the course of history, without any other constraints beside his own will, beside his own respect for himself (...). Therefore, revolution managed from the top is not sufficient here; internal fusion must be created, affinity between the human being and work. Work must be felt not only as a source of law, but as law itself, therefore something, of which one can be proud, which can be loved” (Brzozowski 1990, 161).

Thus, it is necessary to take a new approach towards work, and first of all, to penetrate its nature and to understand its role in the history of mankind, which is understood by Stanisław Brzozowski as the community of work.

The evolution of Brzozowski’s thought can be defined as subjectivization and irrationalization of the “philosophy of work”. The notion of work itself became hugely expanded; it began to indicate any effort enhancing human power. A particular role was to be played by the human mind: *Reason is work in abstraction, this is the skeleton of work, while nature is its flesh*. Three meanings of the notion of “work” can be distinguished in Brzozowski’s philosophical output:

- a narrower meaning, indicating direct material manufacturing, production;
- a broader meaning, referring to the “organic” system of human co-operation; this is a system of various, mutually conditioning and supplementing forms of social activity (the nation is here a real community of work);
- the third meaning, indicating the process of work depicted from the perspective of the act of will carried out in its very subject, co-forming an appropriate course of human effort, leading to achieving appropriate results (creative activity).

The subject of the description of work is therefore a process that is complex, diverse and expanding in space and time, considered in its entirety, the subject of which is a human being and human societies. The process of work carried out in time is identical to the historical process. Brzozowski claimed that work was a real, although unrealized, subject of philosophical consideration in the course of history. A proper subject of philosophical analysis of work should be an area of subjectively fulfilled acts of the working entity and of experiences emerging as their correlates. Brzozowski contrasted the common view on work with a metaphysical thesis of “co-measurability” of the world and work, the world being something “unready” and therefore subject to the creative effort of a human being. This thesis finds its full development in *Prolegomena of the philosophy of work*, where Brzozowski formulates his final definition of work:

“Work is the exchange of a certain stretch of our life for certain stable or relatively stable conditions of our further life. By using up our life, in a certain specified way, we determine, in a way consistent with our will, conditions of our further life. By determining and using up ourselves in a certain manner, we go beyond ourselves, we create something we can rely on. This is the most general property of the world for us that it is co-measurable with work: it receives it into itself, records it in itself and secures its results” (Brzozowski 1990, 224).

The analysis of Stanisław Brzozowski’s legacy reveals his pioneering work in treating work as an important factor of self-cognition and self-creation, and at the same time, as the most important manifestation of human existence on the earth (which was later developed by theology of mundane realities). His claim that new systems of work organization can lead to the creation of the community of work when they fulfil certain conditions is also important. Full development of this philosophy in the sphere of *praxis* can be found today in the above mentioned concept of *servant leadership*, in its basic principles: *Listening, Empathy, Healing, Awareness, Persuasion, Conceptualization, Foresight, Stewardship, Commitment to the Growth of People and Building Community* (Greenleaf 1991).

2. ACTS OF A HUMAN BEING AS CULTUROGENESIS

Theological revalorization of work – is one of the “ideas – forces” of the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). He attached a great importance to work, which is proved by the fact that he calls a creative act of God “God’s work”, and all-embracing process of changes – *the work of evolution* or *absolute work of the universe*. According to Teilhard’s vision of the world, all work contributes to the growth and progress. And progress is a *holy march of mankind*, therefore human effort is also *holy*. The call for continuation of the creation work is defined by Teilhard in the following way: To act simply as God’s tool, to continue the work of creation, to process the matter even visible and loved as God’s work, which should be brought to the end. Matter – is the transmitter of God’s action, possible to deify through exoneration and joining Corpus Christi through moral improvement and submission to the human being (Teilhard de Chardin 1984, 146).

A fundamental breakthrough made by Teilhard in theology was overcoming dualism, dichotomous division into “work for God” and “work for the world”. Religious enhancing of the value of work is related to the thesis that the work of creation has not been finished yet, but it is still continuing. A human being, acting in the world according to the direction of the course of changes, unites with God in creative action and becomes His collaborator. Sacredness of human acts in this light becomes obvious. But is every human act sacral? Certainly not. Only the dynamism of a person aiming at Truth, Good or Beauty can be considered a sacral act.

The dynamism of a human being can be most fully expressed in a personalistic culture. The nature of creative work of human being has been beautifully expressed by Teilhard with the following words:

“To create, or to organize material energy or truth, or beauty, brings with it an inner torment which raises the one who dares to face its hazards above the quiet and mundane life where egoism and attachment to the existing state of affairs prevail. To be a good workman on the Earth, one must not only surrender one’s calm and peace, but must learn to continually abandon the form taken by his deliberate labour or art or thought to go in search of new forms. To stop to enjoy them, or to possess them, would be a fault against action. Over and over again one must go beyond oneself, tear oneself away from oneself (...). The more nobly a man wants and acts, the more he desires searching for great and sublime aims. He will not any longer be satisfied with his family, country and a remunerative aspect of his deeds. He will have to create wider organizations, to pave new ways, to fight for great causes, to discover unknown truths, to shape a new ideal and to defend it” (Teilhard de Chardin 1984, 318).

In this perspective, culture appears as personalization and sacralization of the human existence and the world. Culture is a dynamic relation of a man towards himself and the world, consisting in continuation of the creation work. The entire reality referring to a person is a challenge, a task, an idea. Culture constitutes a completion of this task. A person – individual and social one – is a subsistent form creating culture. Culture is a projection of a person and community. As Czesław Bartnik writes,

“It emanates a person, an image and its «self-continuation». It is a horizon of a person, allurements into the world of ideas, perfections and a movement towards the inside of future. It is essential and existential dynamic of a human being. A man is written out into the score of time, space and subject of history. He takes place, occurs and strives all the time, until he comes into being in an optimal and absolutely final way” (Bartnik 1995, 404).

Culture is a basis and a method of self-realization of a human being. It arises from a real coming into existence of a man and his entry into the history. It is the possibility of proceeding the recovery of a human being in reality. After coming into existence and entering the course of history, a man is subject to a cultural process. Thus culture, understood as its constant “coming into being” (culturogenesis) is a consequence, a result of anthropogenesis and cosmogenesis. Therefore culture is a personalization of a human being, it is a transformation of human nature into a person and a community of people. It is a particular type of self-fulfilment, manifestation and expression of a person. The act of a person (participation in culture) is a *flash of new life, new good, as if an announcement of a new heaven and a new earth.*

3. PHENOMENOLOGY OF *CREATIVE EXPERIENCE* AND *CREATIVE ACT OF MAN*

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (1923-2014) was a Polish and American philosopher, one of the famous phenomenologists of our time. Tymieniecka's *phenomenology of life* seems to be the culmination of reflections over the act of a person. Her concepts of *creative experience* and *creative act of man* have been considered not only as "essential factors of awareness", but also as "acts of creative making of things and beings", subjected by a human being. They are an element of a cosmological vision of the world: an attempt to reach the "heart of the matter", to understand "the leading thread" of primary creativity of the Cosmos (*Cosmic Creation*), as a result of which it assumes the form of "self-individualizing coming into being". This is expressed through a concept of "creative activity towards universal coming into being of everything" (*creative constitution*).

Other important ontological categories in her concept include: *initial spontaneity* and *inner workings*, which expose spontaneity and inner creation of the world as a whole in the dimension of its *Universe*, which includes also a human being (Szmyd 2002, 241). What becomes crucial is the place and the activity of a man in a world as a being that is fully conscious and possesses a stabilized moral awareness, which resulted in his distinguished way of existence – the being of a person. This new poetic mood vested in a human being makes it a source of regulative creative actions that are fully morally conscious. Creativity thus understood becomes a "factory" of community dimensions of human existence among other people and with other living creatures.

What is crucial here is the issue of the role and the function of creative processes in the structure of human condition – *the creative function in the human condition* (Tymieniecka 1997, 19). Its causative source in human apparatus of world perception is an analogical structure called *Imaginatio Creatrix*. Tymieniecka focused in her analyses on creativity understood as the unification and harmonization occurring within a creative experience of a man, in the context of the entire being, which she defined through the category of orchestration. In thus developed creation actions of a constitutive character prevail, attaching to a person a specific human meaning: new living phenomena are at the same time conceptualized and evaluated (*the process of valuation*). It becomes important in the process of shaping human existence to build moral senses and his poetic actions. This concerns indicating those dimensions of human creativity which are the source and emanation of its spirituality and which maintain and constantly restructure his human nature together with the changing world.

Studies of the author of the *phenomenology of life* are concluded by a philosophical theory of life as an entirety, where the main place is occupied by a man and his *human condition*; establishing the place of a human being in unity with everything that is living, emphasizing the creative factor in human existence, and indicating the primarily meaning of this existence, its *primogenital significance*

(Tymieniecka 1997, 21). This primary meaning is revealed in art, science and philosophy. This has also a religious dimension, which combines with its possibility to transcend towards infinity. Life is understood as a never-ending entirety, full of variety of its manifestations, from the most elementary to the best organized, including highly developed “creativity of Human Spirit”, the expression of which are various forms of social structuralization and the development of culture.

Tymieniecka also introduces the idea of *onto-poiesis* on a global scale, which expresses all relationships and creative effects in space, of life “working”, occurring between the cosmos, life itself and culture. *Cosmos, bios and culture reveal their onto-poietic junctures within a common interplay of life*: life is a “crucial player” in a cosmic dimension, the effect of which is the incessant process of creation (Tymieniecka 2000, 41). Therefore, all-embracing creation becomes the content of the logos of the world and a man. Such a view allows for going beyond reductionism theories emerging in natural sciences, and for fully understanding the exceptional character of every element of the reality in the context of the world complexity. Processes of the self-individualization of life that overflow the world, as well as the diversity of living creatures, are given in this concept a chance of a comprehensive presentation and reasonable understanding.

Tymieniecka’s *Phenomenology of life* lays out a further direction for investigations, not only for philosophical ones. Assumptions concerning the creative nature of a man and the world may provide a basis for new developments of classical problems of ontology, epistemology, axiology and anthropology, as well as of social science and management science. In this way, philosophy itself becomes a manifestation of the creative experience, going beyond its previous limits. Philosophy, thus understood, should become a stream, which constantly undergoes transformation processes and discovers new areas of phenomenological analyses, hence becoming creativity itself by its nature and providing the basis for other forms of activity. It builds human work into the *creative logos* of the world, as a fundamental sense of existence.

CONCLUSION

In a technopoly human being has been deprived of her/his transcendental dimension and reduced to one of the factors of production. This situation is perceived by most people as a physical problem to be resolved through technological innovation. However, phenomenologists notice also a metaphysical dimension of this crisis (Husserl 1965; Heidegger 2002). Fascination with mathematical formula, i.e. instrumental rationality, is core of the crisis that plagues the contemporary world. Absolutizing the role of mathematics in building business strategies has become one of the main determinants of economic and ecological crises. Phenomenologists are calling for a reflection and re-conceptualization of used business strategies and relationship between human beings and nature.

Phenomenology is able not only to challenge the basic conceptualization of utility in today's modern, industrialized civilization, but also to indicate the way how the existing problematic situation can be remedied. Phenomenology proposes a new approach to company management (Gill 2014; Heil 2011). In contrast to technocratic heartless attitude, phenomenology promotes the idea of human dignity as the inviolable value and suggests new understanding of business through describing company as "community of work" (Chauhan and Das 2016, 114).

Technology is used by a man to control nature. It should be also an instrument of human liberation. Technology is indeed a part of culture in which matter and spirit are united. A human being, gifted with the order embodied in the matter, unites in his actions all processes, also those that are governed by determinisms of geography, biology and economy. Related to matter, able to determine new forms of its surrounding through the gift of thinking, *homo faber et artifex*, co-creator of the world, pushes history forward. A human being is a collaborator in the work of creation and a demiurge of evolution of this work in discovering, exploitation and spiritualization of the nature. Work provides a link between a human being and the world, as well as between matter and spirit. Technology is a tool of this creative enterprise. Work – a human act – is performed by combining the effect of technology with the consciousness of the freedom of creation.

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