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Postnational constellation and political identity

Discussion of the contribution of political psychology to the configuration of democratic politics in the era of globalization leads to two fundamental questions.

1. How have politics changed under the conditions of globalization, and what are now the requirements for a democratic consciousness?

2. What insights can critical political psychology contribute to answering these questions?

My treatment of these questions does not focus upon aspects concerning economy, ecology or mass media, but rather upon the problem of the future of democracy and democratic consciousness under the conditions of globalization in general. The work of J. Habermas has contributed substantially to solving this problem. In his publication from 1998 "Postnational constellation and the Future of Democracy" he explores the consequences and the necessities of postnational constellation, especially with regard to the development of a democratic consciousness and to the individual identity of citizens. Habermas argues that at first the economic process of globalization produces the formation of a global society. As a result of the cross-border development of economic and social processes as well as ecological problems the national state will eventually tend to disappear. Therefore there has to be a transnational organization of these processes and expanded regulatory competence on a global level (Habermas 1998, p. 90). The perspective of international relations would thus change to that of "world domestic politics" (88; translation of all quotations, except those of Freud and Lifton, by the author of this paper). This can not be done by government, it requires a deep change of consciousness in society, a greater appreciation of world citizenship.

What characteristics would a citizen of the world have to possess? First of all, he should be equipped with a sense of civic solidarity founded in an attitude of constitutional patriotism to his own democratic nation state. He should resist falling into political apathy or into an attitude of pure protest. He should withstand the drift of empty symbolic politics and should not allow himself to be discouraged by complex global circumstances (including social, cultural, economic, technical issues) of globalization. These are the prerequisites for a cosmopolitan or world interior political citizenship which enables the formation of transnational collective identity. There is, however, a remarkable difference between this collective identity and that of an individual living in a single nation. The identity of a "citizen of the world" is characterized by total inclusion. In other words there is no counterpart to this identity – the global citizen finds himself quite alone. Thus this identity can not develop and grow by comparing and discerning other traditions and value orientations. It is somewhat like a meta-identity consisting only of legal and moral convictions. "The world civic solidarity" can only "be based on a moral universalism, which is expressed in the human rights" (163). The change of civic consciousness can not be initiated by government; it can also not be expected that people will move spontaneously in this direction. The "deciding question", Habermas argues, is "if in civil societies and public spheres a world civic consciousness will develop, if so to speak a consciousness of forced cosmopolitan solidarization, will be cultivated" (168).

In his paper Habermas gives no answer to this question. However, we can refer to a former text in which he deals with the problem of individual identity in detail. He maintains that a world-wide collective identity which is not territorially bound "can only be considered as a reflexive figure, that is to say grounded on the consciousness of general and equal chances to participate in such processes of communication, in which the forming of identity takes place as a continuous process of learning" (1974,

p. 66). This process leads to the development of flexible individual identities, enabling members of society to acknowledge each other (see Habermas, ibid, p. 52).

Whereas Habermas discusses the communicative constitution of world civic identity, Giddens studies this phenomena under the present conditions of globalization. Risks, uncertainties, disembedding are the circumstances of the individualized self in late modernity. The self has become a reflexive project. This project is connected with the economic, political, ecological and military aspects of recent world developments, and the self recognizes its dependence and responsibility. Reflecting upon this, the self is concerned with its own psychological and physiological needs. In this combination of perspectives offered by the outer and inner world it creates a specific appropriate lifestyle. Giddens calls this concept of reflexive, critical individual life "life politics". The self formed by life politics relates its biography, its own being in fact, to the risky dynamics of globalization. To control political power in the transnational area it is interested in constructing a world-wide democratic order and bringing forth new "forms of egalitarian global cooperation" (Giddens 1992, p. 50).

Regarding the contributions of critical political psychology, although authors agree to the relevance of political consciousness and participation for the inforcement of democratic world domestic politics, inner motives and psychological capacities largely remain in the dark. Correcting this deficit is extremely important, because as a consequence of globalization there are reactions and movements which are contradictory to the ideals of an individual living in late-modern democratic society. New ethnic and nationalist tendencies begin to appear, perhaps symbolizing discontent with economic, technical-industrial determined global civilization. Even developed democratic countries suffer from the complexity of global processes. It is a difficult task for them to maintain a climate of security and hope and to prevent their citizens from losing faith and confidence in politics.

The following political psychological reflections explore the deeper, psycho-dynamic conditions of life politics and cosmopolitan patriotism. First of all, I will treat aspects of drives and libidinal structure, secondly, aspects of personality structure and mass psychology and lastly, aspects of socialization.

(1) Habermas describes pacifism as an "encouraging example" for a change of consciousness in response to a global community. More than 60 years earlier in his famous correspondence "Why War" with Einstein, Freud expressed himself similarly. At the end of his last letter he welcomed pacifism as a hopeful sign for the existing and growing capacity for the progress of civilization. Furthermore, he argued that a new mentality had developed. Cultural evolution had nearly stopped military aggression as a part of the psycho-physiological state of an avant-garde of pacifists. In his own words: "Now war is in the crassest opposition to the psychical attitude imposed on us by the process of civilization, and for that reason we are bound to rebel against it; we simply cannot any longer put up with it. This is not merely an intellectual and emotional repudiation; we pacifists have a *constitutional* intolerance of war, an idiosyncracy magnified, as it were, to the highest degree. It seems indeed, as though the lowering of aesthetic standards in war plays a scarcely smaller part in our rebellion than do its cruelties. (Freud 1933, p. 215)". Freud's thought recurs in Marcuse's much more radical conclusion that the refusal to submit to the principles of the ruling capitalist society and the need to establish a new social reality results from a "libidinal morality". The term "libidinal morality" does not mean a primitive level of drives. This morality consists of "a deep physiological and intellectual capacity to participate" (1979, p. 25). It incorporates a high cultural level of successful sublimation of drives. Libidinal morality, as I see it, is the pendant to that seldom reached postconventional stage of moral consciousness refered to by Habermas and Kohlberg. Morality, that is my point here, is not only an intellectual matter, a matter of controlling the drives. There is some kind of inspiration in it that causes it to be active and vital. And this, in my opinion, is the intention of both

Freud's category of "constitutional intolerance against the war" and Marcuse's concept of "libidinal morality" as a source of refusal.

I also think that this throws light upon Habermas' concept of "constitutional patriotism" as a necessary preliminary stage to a cosmopolitan consciousness. "Patriotism" is always grounded in an emotion – it is a matter of affection, even love. In the extended sense of a libidinal postconventional morality the question here must be, how a constitution, a liberal, consensus-based democratic political community can be psychologically cathected. To express it the other way round: An essential democracy can not function without strong psychological cathexis by his citizens.

(2) With respect to personality structure, fear is an important affect of the subject of life politics. This is not to be understood as neurotic. On the contrary, some psychoanalytical-socialpsychologists emphasize that a strong, morally competent ego must be able to receive the signals that fear of the risks of late modernity sends. This constructive way of managing fear is open, critical, and non-compulsive. It requires a high measure of "tolerance of fear" (Horn 1981, p. 196). It is not fear of authorities but rather a fear which is confident, being concerned about the conditions of a life in security, freedom and contentment. In the context of globalization this fear takes shape as a "world fear" (Richter 1992, p. 305). This kind of fear is currently growing and is especially experienced by women and children. It is an appropriate answer to the transformation of single risks and threats in different areas into a "One-World-Problem" (G. Anders).Thus, as Richter (ibid., p. 23 and 292 ff.) observes, it is transformed to a loving, healing and caring fear. This fear belongs to a "citizen of the civilized world" (Freud 1915, p. 277), who is equipped with a pronounced "consciousness of the species" (Lifton and Markusen 1990, p. 272).

An important prerequisite for generating this kind of global problem consciousness is the capability of coping with the loss of tradition and the fatherlessness which the

late modern society has created. The subject living at the present time is confronted with a comprehensive challenge existing in the areas of work biography, educational structures, sexual relations, the cultural industry, and economy and technology in general. He must attempt to participate actively in the processes of democratic decisions and to counteract military and ecological threats. He is forced to generate a protean type of action orientation. He must adjust himself in this multiplicity of relations in a flexible, mobile manner (cf. Lifton). He must become a "multiple" subject[1], permanently occupied with reorganising, losing, renewing and recombining the elements of his identity project.[2] This subject has to be able to jeopardize his own projections; he must be equipped with a kind of "dissociative competence" as Lifton and Markusen (ibid., p.228) describe it. Dissociation remains accessible for criticism, "if it coexists with actively functional portions of the self in which symbolization and general emotional experience are intact. Where the situation producing the dissociation is temporary and rectifiable, the dissociation itself can readily give way to integrated functioning of the self, having served a limited, protective purpose. But when those external conditions (as in both Nazi and nuclear situations) are themselves lasting, so are the dissociative inner divisions of the self that harmfully interfere with the always fragile human aspiration for wholeness" (ibid.).

In summary, this subject demonstrates in his tolerance of fear and consciousness of the species a new form of ego strength. He self-confidently makes use of the opportunity of fatherlessness to democratize society in a substantial way. He represents what can be called the true subject of life politics which would be able to achieve a new post-modern order by uniting in a constructive way with the like-minded in progressive masses. In such "political alarmed masses", as Mitscherlich mentions, the individual subject can measure up to the challenge of regression caused by the circumstances. In his group he is accompanied by members who are highly reflected themselves. Furthermore, in this new fatherless democratic order

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[1] *vielheitsfähiges Subjekt, W. Welsch*

real equality between man and woman would exist – it would necessarily be a "sexual democracy" (Giddens 1992, p. 197). In correspondence to the standards of this progressive democracy the subject certainly is master of consensus-orientated communication and argumentation. But language and verbal communication cannot alone constitute inter-subjective understanding. The subject must at the same time command enough forms of extra-linguistic sensual expression and have the opportunity to implement them, giving voice to his inner scenic patterns of interaction. Thus, in practicing life politics subjects no longer merely suffer from "civilization and its discontents" (Freud 1930), but have the opportunity to relieve themselves of their burden. Life politics struggles against despair and depression through a tendency towards solidary action which is to be found in the mentality of the "species self". It is fundamentally interested in reconciliation of internal and external nature, and thus tries to find its fortune by counteracting the destructive forces of late-modernity.

(3) A subject as described above, equipped with libidinal morality and ego strength and active in life politics can only be considered as the result of a specific process of socialization in early childhood and youth. On the basis of such encouraging and stimulating experiences in well bound object relations, in the future the child will be able to contemplate its social and object world and to shape it in a constructive and diverse way. The expectation of "basic trust" (Erikson) will become the fountain of psychic energy for the tasks of adult life. With respect to the subject structure, acquiring a minimum of distorted sensual patterns of experience is as essential as the reconciled relation between this pre-linguistic stratum and the normative linguistic system of a given society.

To inaugurate child development in this way a parental style of socialization that corresponds to Giddens' ideal type of "pure relationship" (Giddens, ibid., p. 69) is necessary. Both father and mother are equally involved in the process of socialization and, beyond their different parental roles, are independent interested and active

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[2] Cf. The concept of „patchwork identity" (Keupp 1989, p. 59ff.)

subjects. Thus, from the very beginning the growing child learns to recognize the permeability of male and female sex roles. This reciprocity of life patterns and the practice of acknowledgement create a social space in which the child can identify with and learn from both parents and can outline his own rich, post-traditional sexual identity.

In the process of the formation of the identity of the ego, adolescence is a decisive and crucial phase. In modern societies its relevance for the socialization process, and most especially for the political socialization process, has increased enormously. The phase of adolescence has become "hot" (Erdheim 1982, p. 296 ff.), long and conflicting, and the adolescent usually falls into a deep identity crisis. To solve the identity crisis the adolescent has to exhaust the potential of these conflicts as much as possible by seeking optimal verbal and extra-verbal expressions for his needs, wishes, thoughts, feelings, and demands, for his inner states and outer situations. Acquiring this ability is a fundamental prerequisite for becoming a mature adult subject of life politics. Life politics works solely upon the basis of autonomous, universalistic and individuated personal patterns of action and interpretation. This can, as Döbert/Nunner-Winkler (p. 39) argue, be demonstrated by Kohlbergs model of moral development. Having mastered the identity crisis of adolescence, the individual will be able to form a more individualized, relatively role-independent identity (41) and thus free himself from the bonds of particular cultural and parental models and enable him to aim reflexively "at the principles of a universalistic communicative moral". This ideal course of adolescent conflict leads directly to a substantial, vigorous politicisation of biography in precisely the sense of life politics. Now, as I pointed out above, in a concept of socialization in general and of adolescence in particular moral development has to be connected with the affective-communicative components of the individual's family system. This assumption is confirmed by the results of the well-known research of Kenniston in the sixties published as "Young Radicals" and cited by Döbert and Nunner-Winkler. These

"young radicals" "have grown up in person-orientated family systems permitting open and rational settlement of conflicts without (symbiotic) forms of coalitions. Through their thus acquired high ego resources their system of personality could develop optimally until the beginning of adolescence. Since these children have always been treated as individuals, the phase of adolescence can be comprehended by both parents and children as a period of personality transition and not simply as a change of status. As a result, an intensive crisis in the personality system is released in which former internalized norms and value orientations can be reflexively introduced and transformed." (ibid., p. 62)

One can not maintain that such conditions of political socialization are wide-spread today. That would be euphemistic. However, results in juvenile research reveal that instead of the appearance of a non-political youth, there is a clear tendency to politicization. Adolescents are registering, sensuously and intensively, the changes in late modern society. Their political interest is highly emotional, and political problems are not observed alone from the perspective of personal, egoistic interest. Hurrelmann (1996, p. 11) considers them as the "politically most sensible (…) part of the population". The needs of the current youth are not satisfied with a system of democracy in which passive citizens withdraw from forming their community, confining their political activity to exchanging political elites in periodical elections.

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