

FAMILY IN POSTMODERN SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

The postmodern era, which we live in, is characterised by the demand for freedom. One person's freedom ends where another person's freedom begins. The idea of tolerating another person's freedom is not new; it has its roots in the works of Thomas Hobbes whose political philosophy stands at the very beginning of the early modern period.

The moral rules are strictly purposeful; they ensure balance – arrestment, which is in the best interest of all members of the world community. The fight against each other, selfishness and immorality are eventually to the detriment of the one who disturbs the balance.

The 20th century, face to face with tragic events, brought forth a new concept of the world opening up the options of substantive quest for the essence of mankind – its domesticity, concentration and responsibility. Born into the time and space continuum of one's life, human beings are subject to the life movement. The resource of potential for good and meaningful living, not only for the present but also – and above all – for future generations, is found in a family. Family is the environment where one can find the option and resource of a free relationship to each other, dignity, trust and self-confidence.

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Our time and space continuum and the hot postmodern presence in the early 21st century has been pre-signed and fulfilled with the statement of Friedrich Nietzsche. We are bridging over; our performance is just good enough for today, however we always have slightly higher demands for ourselves tomorrow. This is how we have become a tool of volition and reification of ourselves – the reification is obvious at every moment of our lives.

Our thought is imaginary, drawing on Cartesian philosophy with a strict “clare et distincte” requirement for clear and distinctive thinking.

Entities (Seiendes) in our imagination are thrown in front of us in the form of objects having their particular shape with the option of being present at hand and with the potential of being owned by our mind.

We are forged in the current methodology and are hardly able to think of the things we cannot imagine. We unwillingly succumb to a certain pattern and conceive our world on the basis of this pattern. We seem to be stuck in a kaleidoscopic postmodern world with a growing difficulty to perceive the substance, thereby losing the access and opportunity to be in the natural world and to live naturally there.

The world itself has become a space for phenomena. On the other hand, the world cannot be reduced to a mere entity, yet we all are “being-in-the-world” through the entities; we “are” in the world. Through the entities, we also perceive our everyday nature and the need for the concern (care).

A human being, predestined in the concreteness of their ex-sistence (meaning the emergence in the uniqueness) is born into the world thereby adapting to a certain social group, given a space of home and an opportunity for domesticity.

Home is therefore related to the term POLIS – the Ancient Greek term for “city” or “city-state”, which does not only denote a social concept within the meaning of “citizenship”. It also refers to the Ancient Greek verb PELEIN – to stay.

To understand the wider meaning of “home” and domesticity of a human being, it is necessary to go back to the Ancient roots from which our culture grows. Heraclitus of Ephesus saw home as a fiery centre of the world; yet for Aristotle the meaning of the word “polis” is based on the principle of a large family meaning the individual existence in a society which is a part of the world as a whole based on a principle of functioning and law of the whole without any margin, with no option of defining, grasping, weighing, measuring or any other instantiation.

Family, the particular family of a particular person, is a phenomenon in a way – a phenomenon sticking out of the background to reveal itself. If we want to understand a phenomenon from the phenomenological point of view, we need to question the latency and it is the very transition from latency to non-latency which will reveal the truth, called by the Ancient Greeks “aletheia”.

Truth revealed as non-latency, not subject to time changes of the modern, the postmodern or the global age which we, probably, head for.

Family in its foundation, from the archetypal age, has always provided home in the proper sense of the word “fiery centre”, as postulated by Heidegger and Hölderlin. It is a place of absolute acceptance and kindness, occasion and offer of good, even if accompanied by mistakes and drawbacks. Genuine kindness and acceptance within the meaning of “communio” make it possible for a human being to domesticate in its living, to form a basis for

the relation to “You” as emphasized by Martin Buber, and to form a basis for the future asymmetric responsibility as introduced by Levinas. An affable face and greater responsibility for the others than for oneself must be essentially lived through, experienced in concrete living, cannot be transmitted, ensured or arranged for. It must be experienced in one’s own life, in the essential experience of an urgent moment of the living itself.

Family, if functioning as a home, always offers this higher principle, and it must be realised that the saturation is transcendent – it reaches beyond the horizon, works across generations. A human being is intertwined with their ancestors and descendants right in the time and space of life, thereby creating a kind of generational chain with an option of not only genetic but also psycho-social-spiritual transmissions.

Family for a human being (in its uniqueness and originality) represents an organism which is able to carry on through generations in creating further and further spaces and options for the future time and space for the descendants’ lives, it is also a place for transmitting the model of managing various situational attacks in everyday life.

We are born into the time and space of our life – into the ex-sistence, we perceive the actuality of our life, the presence of time, at every moment we are required to implement our life movement in the context of our original life and we are confronted with anxiety.

Anxiety is our essential experience as early as in our birth. The ever-present demand of unsecured living is a source of life-long existential anxiety and the individuality of a human being is its projection screen with a potential of trans-generational transmissions. Anxiety and fear allow people to become a human being in the proper sense of the word. They open up the path to the authenticity and to the opportunity for domesticity (Hogenová 2005).

The demand to ex-sist in the world is connected with the openness and ability to relate oneself to the people around, to society and the whole of the world and therefore to minimise anxiety. Anxiety accompanies human beings throughout their space and time, and has a specific nature at certain stages of our life (Čálek 2004). It is childhood and the original family which is of great importance to future adaptability, to the upcoming challenges and demands related to anxiety in adulthood. Ex-sistence within the meaning of “living” is something thrown outside the safety of being, thrown into a relative solitude of individual existence, with responsibility to cope with anxiety and death.

The human “burdening freedom” is a movement of the inner heart as well as exteriority between “here and there”, allowing for the risk of loss, as the rival is life itself, so mighty and mysterious. Thus, the visualisation of the ancestors’ (parents’) openness to play is very important and irreplaceable for

the descendants (children). Through their authentic living, parents naturally guide their children to discipline, introduce them to authenticity, honesty, responsibility and thereby help their descendants in finding the options of free cognition.

The life movement of every human being in the family system runs in coordination with other family members, particularly in the periods of existential shocks (demands provoked by separation upheavals), the solidarity of the shocked – the shaky – comes to the fore.

The existential shock is related to the life referents (Patočka 1996). If we perceive life as the Heideggerian movement along the path of life from birth to death, the Time “between” has certain developmental stages and particular phases are intertwined through the concrete claims for events. It is a concreteness of the claim in the time and space of human life – typical thought and co-being with parents in childhood, emancipation in puberty and adolescence, work and concern in adulthood and the currently revealed horizon – telos – in old age.

Jan Patočka (1996), through the concept of three life referents, explains the irreplaceability of the path along which a soul becomes what it can become – unified, coherent, in the shape of a sharp-edged crystal.

In the first life movement – referent (anchorage – home), childhood, people satisfy themselves by explanations presented in the form of a story, they perceive their life space within boundaries, they do not endeavour, they only accept, succumb to the “vis major” of their parents. This is the very period when the love of parents is very important along with a secure, defining, embracing and tolerating family environment, protecting against the disproportionate demands of the world around, and mediating the very important feeling of acceptance of originality and overall setting of the child. Now, the human being is offered a necessary time, called “kairos” used for fulfilling the potential of growth and maturation. It is the time and space of the existence where the demands of the trans-generational line and the ambient world take place, maturity and growth in the sense of option of the life movement in the individuality and authenticity. The period of anchorage, which Patočka calls “home”, is perceived in the psycho-social-spiritual development of a human being as very important fundamentals of the future emotional anchorage and concentration, and forms a basis for option and openness to the authentic living.

Through their love, parents define a safe space for the development of a child, they draw on their own experience of childhood and parenthood for them is also a period of certain separation demands – demand for the role of the parent.

The process of maturation in children wakes up the consciousness of themselves, young people are addressed in various ways, the target is the thinking itself and independence from the intellectual point of view, not in terms of life itself. This release to an independent existence occurs later. It demands the ability to share the world with other people and responsibility.

In the second life movement – referent (work – struggle), people are presented with a double perspective – the first is that of an ordinary life, living in everyday concern and provision of livelihood through work. The other is a top view – the reflection of a certain situated-ness, assessment of one's deeds and responsibilities for the deeds and failures (responsibility for what I have failed to do, say, etc.).

Personal responsibility is very demanding; the sacrifice is in the authenticity of life.

In the context of a family and family pattern, the opportunity given to children is in the perception of the gift of everyday life, the transmission of boldness and integrity and sufficient courage to include death in every minute of one's existence. Our continuous dialogue with ancestors and descendants gives us the opportunity to sacrifice ourselves. This is the inevitable fate of all parents and their descendants.

In what other way may a young person at the beginning of adulthood fulfil the demand of "life movement" as postulated by Patočka: work, struggle, defence of their existence? Parents feeling good about the anchored adulthood of their child have an easier path to the horizon of their life and would have more integrity in not being afraid of death.

In the third life movement – referent (the absolute) – people, according to Patočka (1996), explicitly relate to the whole, here existence finally reaches its sense, where people are not afraid of their own finiteness – death, because they disclose the referent which makes sense in all the aspects, all the being as well as non-being, existence and non-existence, sense and non-sense. This disclosure is aletheic, disclosing and incommunicable, it is the original experience which everyone must go through, it cannot be passed on and, in fact, communicated either. The third life movement is only possible if a human being is on the limits of his/her life experience. To understand the meaning, metaphors may only be of use, not the verifiable (measurable, manifestable) approach to a certain thing. It is transcendence over the horizon, time is experienced authentically, and things in lives are not determining. Emptiness forms the background of meaningfulness, the emptiness lies beyond the horizon – telos. "Chórismos" according to Plato; "negative Platonism" according to Patočka; and "an opening of being" according to Heidegger.

The entire historical experience settles down in the human inner heart. Human life, as a movement along a path, is nothing but answering from the offered possibilities/options and values where people constantly choose the proper ones. The values become real through the process of assessment. According to Heidegger (Heidegger 1996), a human being needs something outside themselves because they are in constant risk of getting lost. The essence of life in the phenomenological context is given; it is the beginning – “arché”. This beginning is not conceived nor chosen by people, it is instead given beforehand. According to Heidegger, it is a disposition to mobility, with a significant trans-generational transmission.

The phenomenological perspective of a human being is – in a way – an archetypal time and space continuum, where the presence is intertwined with the past, where everything is interconnected.

It is a space inhabited by the living as well as the dead without any difference, reigned by the “time of sacred continuance”. Yet, it is also a dimension where one cannot deny feeling the absolute personal responsibility for the destiny of the whole.

Patočka’s (1996) history-conscious mankind lives through its relation to what transcends the entity.

Family and its member “inhabit” this space. This space is reigned by a generic time which encompasses the living members as well as the deceased and those who are to be born.

Human perception is not point-based, we live in temporality – the living and have lived temporality which functions essentially and also resonates essentially (Hogenová 2008). Temporality has a vital role specifically in the context of a family. Home is created by the family if and only if people living at home have a common past, presence and planned future. This means, they all live in a common “Dasein”. They plan their life by assigning and allocating the similar or identical importance to a given presence. Of course, there are always some differences, they are inherent in the specific Dasein, yet there is something that unifies all the family and home members.

„I” participates in time thus developing its own movement: Dasein, which is not only the development of its own time, it is a Dasein of all entities appearing in the world community. Now, Dasein becomes an access to the deepest source of life in each person. The world community is the home of all different people, otherness as a whole without any margin – enabling the identical, the unified. It enables “Aghaton” – good, which is implemented in the vocation for entering the world community, it engages and summons us to Dasein along the path of our life from birth, through the contracting future, to the life horizon, death – “Telos”. A human being is born and there-

by implements the individuation potential of becoming an individual, at the same time he/she becomes a member of a certain community which he/she was born into. The community for the newly born is formed by his/her closest relatives, i.e. mother, father, then it widens to a broader space – polis (society) which is a part of the whole of the world thereby establishing the context of space as a part of the human existence in time-and-space.

The generic time of a human being is not only his/her presence but also his/her ancestors who implemented their life movement in the framework of their individualisation and who passed beyond the horizon, as well as the descendants who are not yet born, i.e. those who will be born in their own time and space continuum.

Time and space where human existence takes place nowadays – in the postmodern era, is a time that passes by the past, it is a linear time where the option of creating relationships fades out and the sense of existence is endangered. Such a world is no longer inhabited by beings and things that were once intertwined through their mutual relations, and the meaning is nowadays only defined by a mere casuistry.

There is also another time-and-space continuum. It is an emptied time, a no-name, dark dimension of depersonalised actuality, where the meanings are determined by a mere finality and the sense of existence is not revealed through a relation nor remains hidden, but it is lost in the no-name time. This dimension is experienced in the accumulation of wealth and the contest for prestige. A human being loses access to the beings in their uniqueness, is encircled by things which are needed for one's life to manifest that he/she "is", "exists". Nevertheless, through owning, the things become mere present-at-hand objects, and the beings become depersonalised, alienated to themselves and to others. A non-authentic person, immature in his/her egoism, remains at the level of reification, in owning the things and eventually becomes a thing him/herself. He/she has a permanent need to see his/her objects – to grasp them with eyes and hands in order to manifest the ownership and also to assure him/herself of his/her existence. His/her living is becoming forward-oriented, the presence is not experienced personally, everything is oriented towards the future and the human being loses themselves as a result. The consumer-oriented society and the consumer-oriented people project themselves through the things, completely lacking authenticity and are becoming rescendent (objectified).

As Hogenová (2008) suggested, the sense is not hidden, it is completely lost. We have forgotten that we forgot. We have forgotten twice...

Everyday life naturally encompasses the concern and provision of things, as a necessity required for survival. The risk inherent in the concern (care) is

the fall into self-oblivion, non-authenticity, reification – objectification, where even the very concern loses its meaning. It is typical of young people to raise questions, to mount resistance and rebellion with the aim of confirming the values.

The question arises as to whether the achievements really correspond to the expectations; but the questioning, reconciliation and desperation bring us back to the whole, back home. It is a return which is the third life movement, the very return to God.

The path does not lead through finding certainty, peace and balance. It is rather a jump to absurdity. The absurdity consists in the lack of any tangible, reported certainty.

Thus, human existence is linked with anxiety – God is silent.

Home is linked with a demand for authenticity and boldness. When the demand is satisfied, it opens up the opportunity for domesticity with other people in the whole of the world.

The Ancient Greek concept of *IZONOMIA* (balance) between reason, boldness and indulgence is the basis for authentic human existence. Heraclitus' image of a child moving gamepieces in a game is unsurpassed and actually unsurpassable. The same idea is exemplified in a family gathered around a game, with children, parent and grandparents all involved in the game. The generation gaps and differences between sub-systems vanish for a moment and an opportunity arises for the family as a whole to enter the area of "cross" when all the participants find themselves in a time which can be identified as "GENERATIONAL TIME". At this – almost sacred – moment, every member of the family is firmly bound to all the others, in the framework of the cross, he/she is as close to and as far from the others to the same extent – the sufficient closeness and distance to the specific individual life movement. Now, opportunity and space are offered to satisfy the demand of separation processes. Children are given a chance to "spread their wings" to explore the sphere of independence and to satisfy the demand of the 2nd life referent (as postulated by Patočka (1996)), parents are allowed to stay in "generous benevolence" and grandparents are offered a path to the confidence that their days have been fulfilled, and are encouraged to follow the path beyond the horizon of their lives.

The demand of a life crisis in the sense of necessary individuation passage, through a dark, inanimate timelessness offers the opportunity for turning, waiting in the darkest point of burdensome situated-ness. Here, in the demand of this moment, the idea may be re-born again. The idea is present at the beginning of every deed, in every meeting with oneself, with another person, in the least important situations. Only if the human mind succeeded

in rediscovering the whole of the Cosmos something could change within us, in society, in the universe.

When we realise that an individual is a member of a family and the family – with it emotional pole – represents an organism which reacts very sensitively to changes in society or situations outside the home area – the emotional pole, as a protected and safe area for all those who inhabit the area, we would find ourselves in phenomenological meditation on time and space continuum.

Home is a whole, in order to be, it must emerge constantly, it must be born on and on in its originality with no imitations. This is the home which, in the basis of human existence, opens up the chance for arresting (balancing) existence, and subsequently the polis and the universe as well.

CONCLUSION

Meditations on the importance of family and home must present the question for the whole of society, not only in individual parts – but in practical life purposes. An ecological way of living, nowadays frequently discussed, also applies in terms of family and relationships. Through the accumulation of things, their application, use and replacement, we can provide momentary well-being to our descendants. Yet, through the common experience of time in the family circle, generic time, we bless not only the currently living but even more those who are to come.

Our individual existence develops an unlimited wealth of life thanks to the relationships which we establish with ourselves, with others, with Nature, the environment, things, and on the whole, part of which we are (Pelcová 2001).

A human being is privileged in the world order through logos, which are a gift of the perception of world order, the search for truth and the essence of things, which are all only accessible through spiritual insight – reason. This allows understanding, which is something completely different from knowledge.

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Summary

Meditations on the importance of family and home must present the question for the whole of society, not only in individual parts – but in practical life purposes. An ecological way of living, nowadays frequently discussed, also applies in terms of family and relationships. Through the accumulation of things, their application, use and replacement, we can provide momentary well-being to our descendants. Yet, through the common experience of time in the family circle, generic time, we bless not only the currently living but even more those who are to come. A human being is privileged in the world order through logos, which are a gift of the perception of world order, the search for truth and the essence of things, which are all only accessible through spiritual insight – reason. This allows understanding, which is something completely different from knowledge.

Keys words: family, family house, generation, security