

NOTE ON PARTICIPATION, HIERARCHY AND JUSTICE

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Consider a human group which uses such simple technology that all members are well-acquainted with all production tasks (though not necessarily equally skillful in performing them). Such a group could be organized on a non-hierarchical basis (though it need not be).

If technological advances make elaborate division of labour necessary, two types of producers will emerge: the specialists and the generalists. The latter coordinate the work of the former. This simple coordination may be called *weak* hierarchy.

If, further, the specialists possess substantially different degrees of skill and knowledge, then the more knowledgeable ones will direct the work of the others. This intensifies the hierarchical pattern and we may talk of *medium* hierarchy.

Finally, if the generalists fuse their coordinating position with the position of economic or political power (as owners or representatives of owners, either private or state), they will be transformed into technocrats or politocrats. The organization reaches the third degree of hierarchy, which may be called *strong* hierarchy.

Strong hierarchy obviously characterizes the present state of social organization. If we are interested in relaxing hierarchical constraints, we must reverse the above sequence and proceed stage by stage. The most important is the first step, the elimination of economic and political power from production decisions. This step requires social revolution and implies a separation of technical and policy decisions, of professional and political authority. Obviously, neat separation is not possible in practice and the overlapping of the two spheres represents *the* problem of the socialist organization. Analytically, the procedure is simple and straightforward. Within the technical sphere, weak and medium hierarchy remain. Within the political sphere, every hierarchy is destroyed, every member of the community counts as one.

The elimination of *medium* hierarchy requires a technological revolution. This implies (a) a sufficient increase of labour productivity so as to establish equal access to knowledge and culture for every member of the community, and (b) a sufficiently sophisticated technology so as to eliminate or drastically reduce menial, repetitive and

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routine jobs. Incidentally, in this context the currently fashionable calls for "zero rate of growth" appear not only meaningless but directly reactionary.

Weak hierarchy remains even in the future society. However, being weak it will not be experienced as hierarchy. Another type of hierarchy will also remain. We may call it *popularity* hierarchy. Yet it belongs to a different genus from the one analyzed so far: it is based on what characterizes person as a person, not on the person's position in the productive or political process.

The social revolution mentioned above implies the formation of a just society. Justice, in this context, has three components or dimensions: liberty, equality and solidarity. The important characteristic of the three components is that they are indispensable and complementary, they cannot be traded against each other. To see that, proceed as follows.

Freedom and equality are clearly complementary. If *everybody* is to be *free*, everybody must be *equally* free. My liberty must be consistent with the liberty of others. The reverse is also true. Equality implies freedom. If some are less privileged, they are also unfree to that extent. In some abstract sense, the same inter-relationship does not apply to solidarity. One could envisage a society of free and equal individuals with solidarity or brotherhood among them being absent. But that would not be a human society. Without human solidarity, inequality and unfreedom would immediately reappear. Thus, solidarity makes (substantive) freedom and equality possible. Freedom and equality make solidarity necessary.

It may be desirable to interpret the concept in terms of the actual historical situation. We live in a stratified society in which social classes exist and the great majority of its members are in some important sense (economically) exploited and (politically) oppressed. This majority accepts the values of liberty, equality and solidarity. Assuming that each human being is to count as one (which is one aspect of equality), our values must be considered as relevant social values. Equality may be interpreted as social equality, equal life chances; freedom is to mean freedom of self-determination. It follows that equality implies freedom which is, in fact, one of its own dimensions. Similarly, freedom implies equality, because only by overcoming the class stratification can freedom of the oppressed majority be increased. Here we encounter a difficulty generated by our realistic assumption that the society is socially stratified. Increased freedom for the majority — due to greater equality — may reduce freedom of the privileged minority, which controls the allocation of scarce values such as authority, status, rights, wealth, income, etc. Thus, we have to balance greater freedom for some against reduced freedom for others. The principle of equality, as already mentioned, solves this problem. We can also look for a general solution which will take us into the realm of philosophical anthropology. Namely, an exercise of economic and political power over fellow citizens against their interests (otherwise it would not be an exercise of power but simply administration), subjects the privileged minority to an alienating experience which is humanly degrading for the power-wielders themselves. In order to avoid

this process of dehumanization — a life in which the potentialities of human beings are either not developed or are distorted — the privileged minority ought to opt for greater equality. And this conclusion is, of course, implied in the principle of solidarity. It appears that freedom, equality and solidarity are necessary conditions for social justice. If one component is absent, the other two collapse and justice is destroyed.¹⁾ They are also sufficient conditions. If they are present, the society will generally be considered just. This conclusion requires a qualification. Justice is a relative concept; relative to some standard. A society will be called just if it lives up to historically-given possibilities. Thus, there may be a lesser or greater degree of freedom, equality and solidarity and a final stage of perfection can never be reached. But whatever improvements are made, the three components — being complementary — move together. There can be no trade-off, no substitution among them. A more equal and less free society is an impossibility.²⁾ If, in spite of that, choices of this sort are suggested, the explanation for this is to be found in the realm of ideology and class interests.

A non-hierarchical (i. e., strong hierarchy absent) society is one based on freedom and equality. This makes it a just society. And justice is the justification for its formation.

BILJESKA O PARTICIPACIJI, HIJERARHIJI I PRAVEDNOSTI

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S a ž e t a k

Podjela rada stvarara specijaliste i generaliste (koordinatore) te tako uspostavlja slabu hijerarhiju. Značajne razlike u kvalifikacijama dovode do srednje hijerarhije. Ukoliko generalisti uspiju spojiti svoj položaj koordinatora s položajem ekonomske ili političke moći, stvara se jaka hierarhija. Društvena revolucija može ukloniti jaku, a tehnološka revolucija i srednju hijerarhiju, čime slaba hijerarhija gubi stratifikaciono značenje. Društvena revolucija implicira stvaranje pravednog društva. U ovom kontekstu prednost imaju tri komplementarne komponente koje se međusobno impliciraju. To su sloboda, jednakost i ljudska solidarnost.

¹⁾ Justice conceived as equal liberty is more-or-less generally accepted. But solidarity, as the third component, is occasionally absent. This absence creates insuperable problems and so solidarity is subsequently added under some other name and in some special relationship. Characteristic in this respect is the analysis of R. W. Baldwin, who defines justice as equal liberty and then concludes that justice alone is not enough and the second great rule of morality is altruism or beneficence (*Social Justice*, Pergamon, Oxford, 1966, p. 112).

²⁾ Greater economic equality and lesser political freedom is a possibility. But here we trade economic goods (say, income) for political goods (say, power), not equality for freedom. It is, however, impossible to trade overall equality for overall freedom. Consider another example. If children are separated from parents, this may increase social equality. But the parents may resist and prevent the change unless their freedom is curtailed. Apparently, freedom is traded against equality. In fact, the future generation is contrasted with the present one.