

HELPLESSNESS AND HELP

1. Helplessness

1.1 We are not really helpless if we could very well use some help, if help is needed, but if there is not any we struggle on and find a way out ourselves. We are helpless if we can't help ourselves. If we are hopelessly stuck. There is no way forward, no way back. Life can't go on if no help shows up.

It is the situation of the Hebrews, standing before
the sea with the army of the Egyptians in their back.
If we are, or feel helpless, we have always
the sea, death, before us, the enemy, closing off
the way back, behind and around us.

1.2 We can become, be helpless in endless many manners and mostly many of the reasons which can make us helpless come together. Which everyone might be your own responsibility, others, or circumstances from outside, brought you in a hopeless situation. You are disappearing in conflicts, at home, in your work, which you neither can solve or evade. You disappeared in the of physical and/or psychological illness. You are overwhelmed by sadness and sorry, which destroy you. You make faults, became guilty, without finding a way out of it. Your health is waning and you can't cope. You become old, need care and help and nobody is looking after you.

1.3 There are still other forms of helplessness coming much more from the past. Nearly all helplessness has to do without past, but in some cases it looks like as if it is only the past, harassing us and so making us helpless. There are old experiences which you can't forget, becoming more and more powerful over our life. Treatments of which we were the victims, long ago, which put us down more and more. Destroying guilt feelings about sins, not having to do with anything especially. The feelings to be bad and rejected by everybody and especially by God.

1.4 Very often really to be helpless means that we are totally alone and nobody is with us. All are against us. Those who could be a help, to become dangerous, a threat. In our helplessness we don't trust anybody any longer. It is the central theme, especially of the early novels, of Dostoevski.

1.5 So, being helpless, means that the world is overpowering and not trustworthy. Everybody is better off than I am. Everybody seeks his own interests and anyway is not interested in me. Even professional helpers are exactly the same as everybody is. From everywhere death, or dead ends, are looking at me. You can't trust anybody of anything, not even your own body, your own mind.

1.6 Helplessness and the weakness are in fact the same. The weak, for whom there is no help and who needs so desperately a helper. The ever-recurring theme of the Old and the New Testament.

2. The seeking for a helper

2.1 Being helpless we are seeking desperately for a helper. Somebody who is more powerful. A real ally, who can solve all our problems, free us out of the hopeless situation. In a sense somebody out of the blue, having nothing to do with all those around us, who eventually means well but only make our life more difficult. Or even they very clearly don't mean well at all, even when they say that they mean well. A Saviour who pulls us out of the pit. A God, in fact.

2.2 And we don't trust these gods, who eventually even offer themselves. We long for the god and we know that he/she doesn't exist. We know that these gods have their conditions, and it were exactly the conditions of this life which made life for us impossible. We seek a powerful person, a really good powerful person, and it was and is exactly power, which destroys us.

It is the age-old experience of Israel.
They were, amidst of the world powers of those times,
a very weak people. And so they always were
Seeking, looking for mighty helpers. The result
Again and again, was that they were
More destroyed. See Ps. 146.3, a reflecting of
An age old and very deep experience.

2.3 People who help, or try to do so, often feel themselves like gods. And so they make real help in fact impossible. They wish to be honoured as helpers, make their conditions. They too clearly show that, although they think that they are and so as if they are gods, they simply belong to "the others", the heartless people, the enemy around.

2.4 Seeking a god who helps out, an almighty father, mother might help, now and then, a little bit. In the end the situation worsens. The gods always fail.

3. Help

3.1 Help is (WNT), the Dutch OED, VI 526 ff) to bring a person into a new situation in which he is not able to come himself, out of another which is not desirable. Helping is fundamentally not to help out of, but to bring into. Into the world of "all the others", who are and feel well. Helplessness means, not to belong to that world.

3.2 Help is given when someone out of the world of "the others" who belongs to the world out of which the helpless feels excluded, comes to him, so delivering him/her. from the being alone. The helper is not a god. He is just human and accepts him being human by know that he/she is not better, in which manner ever, than the helpless. She/he is not proud and happy, not being the helpless but the helper. She/he accepts the helpless in his/her life, totally as he/she is. So he/she is together with the helpless and so he/she is already bringing the helpless to another world, the world with the others.

3.3 This means in the same time that the helper does not have any fancy about him, herself. He knows: The position of the helpless is in fact too my own position. I am

held, about the pit in which the other fell, but I am not any better and it is not my merit, that I am held, that I did not yet fall into the pit.

3.4 In the situation, in which the helper meets the helpless, first of all the helper is helped. Seeing into the fact of the helpless, she/he recognizes his/her own human condition, her/his own helplessness. Her/his own dependency on being held. True humanity is only found, we can only be saved to true humanity, by meeting the helpless, looking into his, her eyes and so finding at least, in these yet, our own human place, our being.

3.5 If there are still structures, given everybody her/his place, helping still can be very matter of fact. There too, the helper never comes a god, neither in the eyes of the helped, nor her/his own eyes. The helper simply is doing his duty and, please no nonsense even.

It is the atmosphere of Luk. 17.10: “So with you:
When you have done all you have been told to do
Say: “We are merely servants: we have done no
More than our duty”. (Hesus. Bible)

3.6 More and more we are losing this structure. In that case we can only help by first finding the way to the other, the helpless, finding a place beside him/her, and so finding a place in real humanity. The helpless is always, in some manner, the scapegoat. Real humanity only becomes visible for whom wishes to see her/himself in him, in her. That becomes true for all forms of help, professional, in voluntary work, in the family. We can't pull any longer out of the pit from outside. We have to go to the helpless, recognizing her/him and ourselves in the same time. In the same time the way together to a new life, a new world, is already beginning.

3.7 There is a very curious paradox here. The helper can only help to go a way together with the helpless, if she/he recognizes her/his own weakness. As long as the helper trusts her/his own strengths, time and again it will become clear that all this strength is worthless, weakness. Knowing and accepting their own weakness, it becomes clear that that is strength.

This is again one of the central insights of Paul.
“My grace is enough for you: my power is at its
best in weakness”. (2 Cor. 12.9 Jerus Bible). To
say it in a more anthropological manner. Being
outside of desire and rivalry, where we only come
when we are really weak, we at last are strong.
The same “paradox” the other way round:”...anyone
Who wants to be first among you must be your slave
(..)” (Matth. 21.26b, 26, Jerus Bible).

3.8 So it becomes more and more clear, there is only helping, both for the helped and the helper, if it is service, in the words of the New Testament, slavery, which means being owned by Jesus, who makes free, to serve, to help.

And again such a paradox: Eph.5.21ff. Paul does not attack the patriarchal structure of the family, although he knows that in Christ there is neither man or woman. He turns the structure upside down, by making the husband the servant of the wife, with his total existence. So exactly the same in the helping professions: Structures, as far as still exist should not be destroyed. That is part of the powergame. They come in the paradox, in which she/he, in power gets the power, not over the helped but together with the helped, by recognizing in the weakness of the helpless the own weakness, the own human condition.

3.9 So helping is only possible in humility. And in this relationship of humility all the knowledge, all the experience of the helper, as a human being and as a professional, is important and eventually life-saving. And only so all the experience and knowledge get their real chance to be integrated in the relationship, because they are wholly used with and so for the helpless, who in fact is not any longer helpless because of the new relationship.

4. The helper

4.1 It seems clear that the helper only can be a helper if he/she gives himself, herself, in this relationship. All the possibilities to manipulate, the person who is asking for or is needing help, or the situation as such as gone. Being called to be a helper means being called to real humility. Only in humility help is possible.

4.2 In this humility the helper and the helped go, for a short or a long time, a way together, a way which is open for both, a way during which both will change, on which will benefit in one manner or another. So for, helped and helper, the relationship has an open outcome, both changing during the relationship and changed when the relationship ends or changes its character. So the helper not only needs real humility, he too needs trust, on or in whatever this trust is founded.

4.3 To engage in this relationship the helper needs real love. Love, not in the sense of fascination, although, very often fascination is in relationships between helped and helpers. Fascination, however good the feelings are, always obstructs the possibilities for help, because it makes unfree. Real love makes free, because it accepts the other, the person needing help, exactly she/he is. The person is received, with all her/his good and bad sides, all her/his beautiful possibilities and eventually nasty difficulties, in the being, the existence of the helper.

4.4 Humility, trust, love in the end they are only possible in self-denial. Self-denial again is only possible when we know, with our very being, that we ourselves are too of the last importance. That we only reach our human destiny, when we are prepared to fulfil, simply, the task life gives to us, without asking, as long as we are helping, anything for ourselves.

4.5 Of course as modern, secularized people we don't like this at all. So we forget the word help and use others. Or we misuse it, calling our manipulation of people in our profession for our own benefit to help and to help. And, nevertheless, without help, in the real meaning, human life can't go on.

When we look after the lemma to help in the OED2 Vii, 125ff., the first meaning is: To furnish (a person with that what is serviceable to his efforts or his needs, to aid, assist. Many meanings which follow are more or less the same. Only under 9 is mentioned: To succor in some distress or misfortune hence to deliver, save, set free, relieve (from, of); spec. to relieve or cure a disease or of some evil condition This meaning, so the OED, is obsolete or archaic. Under 10a: To relieve or Cure (a malady) to remedy, amend. And again: Obsolete or archaic. The lemma help, meaning 5: Relief, cure, remedy.

Obsolete. And of course, we can't stand the words to Help and help, because they have become so much means of manipulation. And again, nevertheless, without real help, human life stops.