

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR AND IN A RELATIONSHIP

1. In fact there are no relationships without the responsibility, for everybody partaking in this relationship, for the relationship itself. As such it is a very general theme. This paper is about the responsibility, which those who have entered into, or get into relationships because of a function or a task, a duty they have, a function, which is acknowledged and, anyway in the beginning of the relationship, accepted by the other, partaking in this relationship.

Of course there are a very wide variety of functions, which fit in this description. Social workers, doctors, ministers, priests, civil servant, community workers a.s.o. Further it is about relationships with single persons, couples, families, groups and then again groups of every description.

2. No responsibility is possible without freedom, as the reverse, no freedom is possible without responsibility. They belong together.

3. There is only freedom in the relationship, and so it is only possible to carry the responsibility in and for a relation, when the relation is not only a direct one between the person, carrying the responsibility in a special manner and the other (s). If there is only this direct relationship, it is not possible to have space together. The participants of the relationship don't have the possibility to stay at a (in fact spiritual) distance. They are drawn to each other and come into an ever more the total being encompassing, rivalry. They become each other's slaves, locked together and/or flying from each other. The space which they eventually had in the beginning diminishes more and more and in the end disappears. Both feel threatened and are afraid. The original reason for meeting, and the goal, are forgotten or become part of the power game.

4. Freedom is and stays in a relationship, if there is space, in which all move. If there is not only the "direct line" between those, partaking in the relationship. If, in fact, there is a triangle with, as its corners, the two participants (the responsible person and the other, who can be a person or a small or big group) and third reality.

5. This third "participant" in the relationship is a knowing of the responsible person, an existential knowing, about this reality, in relation with which he/she stays all the time she/he is together with the other. This reality gives inner security, space and freedom. It is a reality, which does not rival with the person knowing about it and so it gives freedom. Staying in the relation with this reality, the person responsible for the relationship does not rival with the other and she/he stays free of the rivaling with her/him, of the other. The common task stays in the centre of the relationship and is not lost. Both, the responsible and the other, participate in an objective reality, which neutralizes all rivaling and is so already participating in the work, together done.

It is an expression of this central reality of all being really together that Paul finds it so important that we always are together "in Christ". He is the third angle of the relationship, so giving freedom and qualifying the relationship.

Probably the so-called eccentricity of human beings, which was worked out in the anthropology of the philosopher Helmuth Plessner too has to do with this fundamental aspect of our being human.

Fundamentally people who ask for or seek help, in which form ever, are just looking for help because they are lost in their relationships of this third angle. Eventually, they know of it “in their head”, or, much deeper, not conscious, but it is when they are looking for help, existentially lost for them.

6. Being dependent on the “third point”, “third angle”, to have freedom in relationships, means that this freedom always comes from outside. You don’t have” it and you don’t need to despair when you don’t have it. Nobody ever has. It is always given and it is always, “having” it, living out of a gift.

7. This means that in the end this “third angle” always is a personal relationship. Knowledge can be of great help, but only knowledge does not protect against rivaling. On the contrary it can be used very well in it. For experiences of success the same is true. They give self-esteem, but it is very quickly shattered. Experiences of freedom, which always are experiences with others, they help. They are relations of freedom. Freedom with colleagues, with whoever. With teachers who were free and gave freedom to do the work. Duty, if it is not a legalistic duty, but one taught from parents, teachers, who accepted duty in freedom. Friends. Other professionals, who know about freedom and brought us in the triangle. Our knowledge of Jesus, of Christ, of god, which too was learnt, in one way or another, eventually without even our remarking it in the moment. The third angle is always given to us in relationships with living persons, who are free and show us the way to freedom.

8. Being in this triangle we are, in the responsibility for the relationship, with the other. We listen, use all our experience and (existential) knowledge, being there with our whole heart and in the same time without our emotions, which make us centered around ourselves, our worries and our fears, instead of being with the other. And so we can do and say everything we deem necessary or useful without threatening, never being afraid about what happens next or about making faults.

9. It is clear from this, that the “third angle”, who gives us freedom, only gives us freedom as long as we know and respect that this third angle is totally free in its relationship with us. For us it only is a real, freemaking “third angle” when it is transcendent. Just there. Impossible to manipulate. Spending freedom, just because we wait for it and trust.

10. For groups, all this is equally true as it is true in relationships with only one person or a very small group. At most the relationship with the third angle becomes still more important. They are so many, and thus so powerful, and I am so alone. Unless this relationship keeps us in its security and makes us free.