

## **SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF STRATEGIC ENERGY CHALLENGES**

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I am not a technician or a specialized expert on the physical or economical aspects of the problem of energy, but after listening about various prospects of the availability and possible use on future scarcity of energy, including the continuing increase of the human population on the earth, I would like to formulate our problem in the following way: we are living either in a wrong world or in a wrong manner.

Something very important is happening for sure. It must be stopped or thoroughly changed if the future of the human existence and a human way of living on our planet should be granted. A few days ago, I listened to an interview with a well known czech philosopher Mahovec who was very pessimistic about the possibility of living a life of quality in our modern world. His opinion has been utterly allarming because he has been convinced that the catastrophe is imminent and almost certain.

I must confess that I am a methodical pessimist. We are all very bound to repress bad news or difficult problems, especially the collective ones, and we are always nurturing hope that things are not so bad as they seem to be. We act in this way particularly if our problems are huge and if we have no idea how to cope with them and if they are not near to us. So we are doing nothing about it or not everything we could and we rather allow ourselves to be caught by the events. Let us then start from the fact that the problems are indeed extremely serious.

I think that we can start with the previously mentioned formula – we are living either in a wrong world or in a wrong way. It is the task of science and technology to find possible ways and means of making this wrong world less wrong. It is certain that we have some more sources of energy that can be exploited and that we can find a better and more rational use of the present provisions. In spite of that, it seems always more and more improbable that in the future we shall be able to supply the growing world population with the

sufficient amount of energy in the adequate way. I do not know the present probabilities of the atomic fusion and in what year will the first reactor start working on this principle. I mention the atomic fusion because it is at least in theory the most promising solution of the problem. But four decades ago this seemed true also for the present atomic reactors. Even if the new source of energy happens to be clean, we still have the perduring problem of the thermic waste.

Until now, none of the mentioned solutions is granted to us. It is therefore necessary that we consider more carefully the other side of the problem: are we living in a wrong way?

Unquestionably! If we say this, two other questions appear: is it possible to change the present way of life and save human life on the earth in the future, and, secondly, if this is possible, how can we do it? There may be also a third »question«: why not let the things going their own way?... something will surely happen! It certainly is the easiest way of thinking, but also the most unacceptable.

There was a time – the long millennia of paleolithic – when man was so dependent on nature and his environment that he had nothing to choose, but to accept the given conditions of life. It was the time of spontaneous harmony with nature and a long time of stability. Today, after the invention of Galilei's magic formula – the mathematic and experimental methode in the natural sciences – and after the series of very important technological achievements, we can control natural events much more and put the enormous quantities of energy into our service. This submission of nature – of our world – made us greatly independent from immediate conditions of our environment. This independence gives us the power and duty to choose.

If we indeed have the power to choose – of course, not always a supreme one – than, we should not choose the wrong thing.

It is quite easy to give some general formulas about desirable goals or express some not very defined wishes about what ought to be done or not to be done. It is generally clear that the cutting of the Brazilian rain-forest, the dying of the woods in the central Europe, the explosion of the population in some world regions must be stopped, but these general insights are not functional for themselves. Desired goals must be made probable as well.

The unlimited consumption of energy is surely in some way connected with our highly sophisticated material culture – especially in the so called developed countries – which is in this form possible exactly by supplying cheap energy in great quantities. It is clear that the restriction in the use of energy, exactly in these countries, could be the most effective element in economizing energy in general.

Why don't we do it? Certainly, like any restriction, these possible constraints are uncomfortable and undesirable, something that restrains the liberty and prosperity of the citizen. I remember that during the first oil-crisis in Yugoslavia we had the system of economizing the fuel on the basis of using our cars every second day. We have had the feeling of liberation when there was enough fuel again, though for many people the use of car was not the essential need always when they did use it.

Now, I would like to point out certain fundamental features of human behavior that we always have to cope with. Unconsciously, we usually ignore

them, maybe because they seem to be something too natural to us. By this I mean the structure of our spontaneous reactions in every day situations. For example, we often automatically react aggressively upon a frustration, with the feelings of greed in the presence of plenty of goods, with the uncontrollable fear and panic in a dangerous situation. We can also find the same behavior mostly in the higher animals. This and similar behavior was necessary and sufficient to secure the survival of human race in primitive conditions of its existence i. e. man as hunter and gatherer. The children are often bound to kill everything that moves only because it is moving (boys) and pick up possibly all the flowers in the meadow only because there are plenty of them (girls), often without knowing what to do with all of this. Picking up with the hand is tiring and because of that it is probable that the rest of flowers will be spared, but if we pick up flowers with a machine, they will probably be doomed. We can not kill too many hares with a sling, but if there are many of us who want to kill them and we use a gun, it becomes another affair. After the paleolithic, we have invented a lot more instruments to cope successfully with nature, we have greatly changed and improved our environment to our profit, we have created what we call culture, but the fundamental patterns of our behavior have not changed. We are still hunters and gatherers, except that we have greatly changed the methods of hunting and gathering, that is, »improved« their efficiency.

The harmony of man and nature during the paleolithic was due to the limited possibilities of man in his relations to nature. These possibilities are so wide today that they can destroy nature and they do it. The conclusion is that the fundamental pattern of our natural behavior is not adapted to our environment any more. We have to control our behavior by means of reasoning. The possibility of the existence of human societies, the communion of the individuals in an ordered life must be regulated by means of law and especially by the rules of behaviour that we call ethics. These rules defend the weak in the community and make human behavior predictable and previsible which is necessary for a stable and harmonious life. Objects and natural creatures are generally not protected by moral rules and laws, except maybe as some religious taboos or as the possession of someone.

It is now very urgent and important for us to take the nature, together with its sources of energy at our disposal, consciously as an object of our moral and law. Something has been already done, but much more still has to be done.

I have said that I am a methodical pessimist. If we take into consideration the human behaviour in the world of today, we come upon the psychological fact that our feelings break out before the logical control. It is well known that upon the difficult, more frustrating situation we react with stronger feelings. Therefore, we find ourselves in a poor condition so that we behave in a most unreasonable way in those situations which demand all our logic and control (f. i. panic in fire etc.).

This is the reason, I suppose, why often the best intentions in the history of mankind and best doctrines and philosophies have failed in their aspirations to make a better world or a better man. It seems to me a somewhat inexplicable constatation that we care so little for this fact of disproportion between our biological roots of behavior and the necessary conduct in the contemporary,

thoroughly changed world. We live too short in our civilized and highly technical environment that the pattern of our behaviour could pass through the corresponding evolutionary adaptation. We are forced to correct rationally our spontaneous behavior more and more. While the world changes very fast, the children are born with natural behaviour adapted to paleolithic and must learn everything from the beginning. Faced with this desolate fact, we have to undertake everything possible to overcome this gap in our behavioural pattern.

However, what is even worse is the mobility inside the society which has dissolved the bonds of families and neighbours in such a way that the influence of tradition has been very weakened and fewer patterns of selfcontrol are transmitted through the primary socialization. If we compare, for instance, the characters of literature in the past with those of today, it seems to me that the man of today is maybe more spontaneous and free in his behaviour, but he lacks selfcontrol. Our society is indulgent – including our destiny.

Another reason for pessimism is the structure of our society in the leading developed countries. The past year has proved that the western type of society is the relatively best functioning society. It is a free enterprise society and a trading society, consequently a very mobile society. It is sometimes called also the consuming society. It has its special values like the money and the accumulation of material goods. It is highly productive, stimulative and inventive. If we consider the history of the past two and a half millenia, we find out that merchant societies have always been materially and culturally the most developed groups with a very strong sense for freedom like in Athens, in the Italian medieval merchant states: Genoa, Pisa, Amalfi, Venice and in our Dubrovnik, and finally, in the modern western world.

But the merchant society – it seems to me obvious enough – is not a parsimonious society. Its individualistic structure, the dominant value of profit, and the law of demand and offer, the selling and buying all that can be sold and bought, is certainly not in favor of saving energy sources for the future. In this fact of our social structure I see the greatest difficulty in mastering our problem.

Finally, the energy is for most people a somewhat abstract concept, especially because we are not in our daily life immediately in touch with the sources of common forms of energy: I do not know exactly where the light of the bulb in my chamber is coming from and how many of the stuff will be available. If I have eaten a pound of steak, I have a very clear concept of these quantity, but the quantity of one kilowatt of energy is a nebulous thing for the most citizens. And we all know that people in general do not excessively worry about nebulous things.

I beg your pardon for this psychological, sociological and moral meditation. It is of little use – as I previously mentioned – to stress desirable aims without knowing how to reach them. It is better to look at the real difficulties and then we shall perhaps be able to do something. It is surely easier to make a fusion machine than to change human behavior.

I agree that these words maybe produce uncomfortable feelings but it is better not to have illusions on that matter. My little hope is the growing concern for the preservation of environment. I remember the time when the word »ecological« has had maybe another meaning then it has now or it was not in

use at all. Now, we have a growing number of people who are very concerned about the issue of environment protection and preservation. To achieve their goals, they are disposed to accept the necessary restrictions in the growth of production, in the use of available resources. The concept of man as a social being with his problems of social justice is thus receiving another dimension – of a being in his indispensable natural environment. The declarations of the human rights, especially that one about the right of existence, must include the right to a healthy environment. But now the healthy environment can not exist without conscious care about it.

We are standing in front of the fact that we are limited beings and that our material world is not inexhaustible. We may be now confused and worried by this insight but the fact for itself is nothing strange or new. Man has always been living in limited conditions of existence, being conscious of these conditions, except maybe, during the last two centuries when the technological progress in the western world and the opening of abundant sources of energy gave us a moment of illusion that the progress in this direction might be limitless. The consequence was an emphasis on material values of the human life and a devastating impact on nature and its resources.

I am a member of a christian church. We have a long tradition of a view on human existence and its goals different from the mentioned one, putting the emphasis on the world of spiritual values. That means an interest for the inner life of the human being, for the depth and richness of its personality, for the stable values. It means an ideal of a simple and humble life including the control of disorder in one's own nature, the selfcontrol in the use of material wealth. It means the sense for common needs, the care and the responsibility for the others and the sharing with them. Finally, it means the inner freedom from the outer limits of our temporal existence.

There is no doubt that such a conduct of life is very appropriate to our goals of saving energy sources for posterity and preserving nature which is endangered. It is not necessary to mention that similar ideals and styles of life exist in other religious communities, too.

Are we to demand now from every man and woman that they should live a monastic life?

Certainly not! But the fact that the great number of men and women have chosen and still choose this style of life can not be a nonsense.

Now, I would like to emphasize some points about this matter.

It would be wrong if we try to preach the ascetic, or more spiritual life because we have difficulties with catering for our material life. It would be equally wrong for the sake of spiritual life not to help to the poor in their material needs. The strategy of the preservation of energy must be performed without detriment to justice.

I would like to remind you that spiritual values (including religious ones) are not the consequence of the alienation of man as a being limited by the mighty nature upon which he must dominate. On the contrary, these spiritual values constitute the very essence of man. As the citizen of the material world he is necessarily material himself, i. e. limited in this dimension of his. But spiritual values enable him to transcend these material limits and free himself within himself for a more independent and autonomous life, richer and brig-

hter just because it is capable to endure the very truth of being. The consequence is a better and a more true communication with everything that surrounds him. We do not have the right in trying to define man only as an especially successful gadget for consuming energy.

Let us make some proposals from this point of view.

1. We may describe to the people the general situation about the energy much more intensively in order to stronger motivate their concern. In this sense we may provide them a continous information about connections and relations between individual elements of the problem. This could happen by means of schools and mass-media, similar to the functioning of the ecological movement.

2. If we have to change our behaviour, we have to do it truly earnestly. This means that it is necessary to point at the present inadequacy of our natural patterns of behaviour. Nobody has the right to pretend living in paleolithic.

3. We may trigger a large educational process of enlightenment among he men who are conscious of solidarity with other humans. The idea of the universal brotherhood includes not only the community of our contemporaries but also solidarity with future generations.

4. We may emphasize responsibility for the future of the human community. It is not permissible to ruin the existence of future generations because of the selfishness, lack of the care or a temporary profit of someone. This chapter includes the problem of war which is the worst consumer of energy.

5. We may patiently try to make people more sensible for spiritual values, especially those from their own tradition. It is a pity that our mass-media promote the style of life which is not very amiable to the strategy of the preservation of energy for the future. It is impossible to stop the irrational expenditure by mere preaching about the endangered future. The change can be achieved by creating adequate motives.

Conclusion: We can try to change and seriously correct our behaviour starting from the new image of man. Maybe an older picture can help us in this process. When we begin to lack the abundancy of the material resources, we must not forget that it is the time to reach the spiritual ones again.

Spiritual resources give us the power to achieve a true human life, even in a limited environment. It may be that many of them have been forgotten in the meantime, but they are still here.