POWER AND STYLE
-THE ARCHEOLOGY OF POWER-

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Power makes itself visible inside a structure of human interactions, conduct and various attitudes. This the expressions of power are different form case to case, from person to person. Such differentiation also appears as a consequence of personal features of those who we usually call "leaders". Every form of power is also an expression of a leder's personal features but such a feet shouldn't be mistaken for the "personalization" of power, which leads to dictatorship.

The Archeology of Power deals with the rigurous study of the different "layers" of power, according to the type of personality exercising it(each person having his or her own style), as sedimented in history, especially during the last century, and in close connection with the political regime that enforced the respective type of personality.

Generally speaking, the exercise of power is being performed in a large area of relationships, behaviors and attitudes, and hence the different ways in which this exercise is being produced concretely.

This is how we see certain *systems of power* and *systems in which power is exercised*, aggregate and crystallize.

They differ though, mostly because of the different type of qualities of the person involved in the relationship of power and especially due to the persons placed at the hard pole of power, namely <u>the leaders</u>.

This is why, in time, different styles in exercising power have taken shape. Such a crystallization / sedimentation are being produced by the *personalization of power*.

Nevertheless, we need not mistake this phenomenon with the one of *instituting the personal power*, the latter leading sooner or later to a totalitarian system or to a tyranny.

Any form of power bears the imprint of the person exercising it.

Only an extreme burocratisation or mediocratisation of the act of exercising power could blur or diminish the imprint or the mark of the person or persons involved.

Paradoxically enough, if nowadays, democracy of the liberal type is a dominant in most parts of the world and in Europe we can even consider it **exclusive,** the personalization of power has become nevertheless a fact / a piece of hard reality, felt especially in the world of business corporations.

Not only in the field of corporate governance can we see it, but also in the field of politics, even if here ***the democratic censorship of the civil society*** is very active in countering it.

However paradoxical it may seem, the personalization of power does not mean dictatorship or tyranny.

A dictatorship or tyranny would imply an imposition of personal power as the constituting principle of the system. This is always exercised through mimesis: a tyrant takes for model another tyrant before him. Someone whose time had been, in one way or another, idealized, either by the people or by a certain political force.

What could be called the "personalization of power" does not imply the personality of the respective tyrant, which would be a particularization of the power phenomenon subjected to the features of a certain person, but it implies a personal character of a more general type, namely that **power is being exercised in a personal name** and that all its prerogatives bear the imprint of the person.

Therefore, we can see that there is a great difference between **the personal power** and **the personalization of power**. At the limit, we could say that these two are opposites.

Because the personalization of power individualizes responsibility, meanwhile the institution of the personal power liquefies it to the point of its exclusion as a reference. The very person invested with power and who is exercising it, is practically extracted from the common area of the rest of the persons and is considered above them.

None of the subjects can possibly, in a realistic and efficient way, succeed to tackle the issue of the responsibility of a tyrant, at least not during his / her life, and even less when the respective tyrant rules over a more or less isolated country. On the other hand, one cannot openly fight against a tyrant through democratic confrontation. Tyranny is in fact total violence and the answer to it cannot but spring from the same register, namely the field of violence. Usually tyrants can be removed only through physical death, owing to the fact that gradually, in their lifetime, they themselves eliminate all those around them, and there is no other possibility of separating them from power in a less violent way.

We may incur from this that the relationship of a person with Power can be viewed from at least two standpoints : the first perspective concerns the attraction exercised by power over a person and this person's strife to get hold of it, possess and maintain power into the same hand. Such an aspiration very easily slips towards an exclusive attitude and a wish to possess power in the absolute sense of the word, ruling out any sharing or other form of partnership which, sooner or later, could easily turn into competition.

The second perspective on the exercise of power takes more interest in the personal way to exercise power and in a determined style of the relationship with power, or, more specifically, in a certain style used to achieve the act of power. At this level, the focus shifts from the wish to possess power in the exclusivist sense to the original exercise of power and to the mark of the

personality laid over the exercise of power. Doubtlessly, this can entail both positive and negative consequences. Power *per se* is, virtually, limitless. It is especially through this feature that it produces fascination and an attraction close to sickness that drives so many persons to it. A well- known Indian proverb says: "If you want to really know a man, give him Power and watch him use it!" It is so because the virtual potential of the being can be activated only under the spell of power.

It has been claimed that power can pervert and it really perverts the person in a great majority of circumstances.

But, is this consequence really inevitable? The empirical observation according to which people start to change, to a greater or a lesser extent, from the very moment when they acquire power, cannot sustain in itself the idea that power perverts through sheer power, and in any circumstances. It is also debatable to what extent the person in question really changes; moreover, it is worth taking into account that power develops in a person potential qualities which couldn't have been detected otherwise.

The truth seems thus to be that power, being, through the possibilities and opportunities it contains, an exceptional human relationship, determines exceptional and uncalled for reactions in any individual, stimulating certain aspects of his or her human nature, revealing certain sides unknown to us till then.

This is how the individual comes to learn about himself that he is endowed with capacities or potential he had not been aware of, and hence he may easily become the victim of extremely perverse effects.

If his immediate surrounding exploits his "soft spot" and of course, if the answer he gives to these stimuli is a weak one, owing to the low intellectual dowry of his personality, an alienated leader will immediately turn into a tyrant, dominated by paranoiac predispositions.

Taking advantage of the situation of power he is in, he may turn either into a tyrant or into a blackmailer, or merely become a mediocre individual, with the sole purpose to maintain the level of power obtained, even if the real effects of the power he got become null in time.

From this point of view, we can establish three representative types of personality for the alienated leader:

The tyrannical personality – dominated by the obsession of power

The opportunist – exploiting any situation, explicitly or implicitly profitable to him, and

The mediocre man, who voids of its content any power relationship, in order to be able to make it pragmatically instrumental and to eternalize it symbolically.

We shall come back on these types later on in our work.

For now we shall try to point out very actual aspects of the inter-relation between individuals, persons, personalities and power.

Though we are used to consider our present day world as being the climax of human civilization and we keep wondering at the fact that "In the 21st century primitive things worth blaming still keep on happening" we should nevertheless recall that this world of ours is very diverse and entangles other worlds found in different historic stages of development and that in any world, at least from those known so far, all acts that human nature contains as potentialities are possible to happen.

It all depends on the nature of the social stimuli. That which we call primitivism or barbarism is but the "normal" reaction of individuals or communities to the life and survival conditions comparable or identical to those considered as "primitive" or "barbaric".

How else could we classify the amplitude and the refined cruelty of terrorist acts launched at the dawn of a new Millennium in the history of Christian western world? We could abandon ourselves to endless whining or moralizing but we think it would be by far more profitable to assume that terrorist acts at the beginning of this century unveil the necessity of a more profound archeological study over the phenomenon of power. Before all, it seems necessary to change the perspective on the adversities, an aspect the relationship of power is exaggerating and considering absolute through ideologies.

The first observation suggested to us by such a perspective is the fact that, from ancient times there has been a strong fascination, a mystical attraction to power. It is not an ideology or a faith, or even less, a cause; however high and worthy, that determines the commitment of individuals towards total terrorist acts, but on the contrary, it is the beatitude obtained through the ultimate liberty of bringing death to who ever is different. Especially to those who differ from yourself in such a way that your own faith is contested as deep as its very roots…

To cut the throat of one of those European infidels, guilty or not (and should he be innocent, even better, because the state of liberty in deciding over somebody's life or death, only then seems truly without boundaries), here is the supreme service to one's own Faith and the supreme proof of an invincibility obtained through exercises and through different exceptional hardships endured.

The heroic periods in the history of humanity, happening at different times and not at all the same for different areas and human communities of our planet, considered that a crime, if approved by the respective community or even glorified by it, should be cloaked in a mythical curtain and then passed on to the new generations as a true and worth-following act of heroism. This has left very deep marks in the consciousness of the people.

In time, these could have become recurrent acts sprung from the deepest areas of historic consciousness. At the same time, the delayed presence of such reactions in certain human communities, especially those who are far from the

level of prosperity of Western World societies, (a level of life setting totally different values and which pays a special attention to individual life), makes this mystical heroism encounter and fuse, at an unprecedented level, with extremely sophisticated technological device and possibilities of mass destruction obtained by combining agents or substances placed nowadays practically at anybody's disposal.

It is on this background that the entire heritage we spoke of is fueling up the obsession for absolute power in an increasingly high number of individuals. Ever more, by the day.

But being unable to reach such a level of supreme power for the simple fact that any human being is mortal, the tyrants made those individuals overwhelmed by their strife for power abandon this path.

The absolute power began thus to be searched beyond tyranny, beyond institutions – conservative and not at all perennial – to the borderline, a place where the individual becomes free in respect of his own life.

Only absolute freedom can grant absolute power. That is why terrorist suicidal acts constitute on the one hand an attraction for alienated individuals searching for power *per se,* and on the other, the most efficient path these individuals can use in order to reach the astonishing heights they had dreamt of in their exercise of power. And here we speak about a type of power with some of the most widely spread and more persistent consequences. The suicidal attempts transform thus the interior freedom of the individual into the best solution for this person to turn himself into divinity. All of a sudden he or she is sent among the saints and heroes of a most religious community. And for this, all he or she needs to do is cause the death of as many people as possible; a simple thing if you consider the present day means that any individual, even from a totally inadequate culture with a backward technological development, but enrolled into the simplest yet efficient organization has at his or her disposal.

It is strange that this type of power is placed at the same level, but at the opposite pole, with what was called "the power of the powerless", namely the power of those who do not hold any political or economical instrument of power and who have nothing left to loose. They still can reach and obtain unparalleled power by uniting themselves and by acting simultaneously and in full solidarity.

Power is always being exercised on somebody. And if the individual, the group or the people over whom this power is being exercised, merely cease obeying, then we may say that power is being exercised in vain.

Either this ceasing to obey is cloaked, or it breaks off at the very moment when it is exposed. In fact we may say that communism had crumbled down even before its dismantling had been asserted. Communism had managed to survive its own death through simulation, by repetition of the rituals implied by the act of power through which communism had been instituted. The crumbling down of communism represents the best example to illustrate the power of the

powerless. Moreover, it brings into light the climax of this type of power, reached through the simultaneous explosion of freedom in all social media and the spontaneous transformation of a whole political system into ashes. Such a climax seems to produce a general state of beatitude, which lasts sometimes more and other times less, pending on the violence of the social outburst.

Romania's case is, from this point of view, an exemplary one: six months after the dismantling of the Ceauşescu regime and even after the first democratic elections, so long awaited for, the state of beatitude generated by the exceptional power gathered all of a sudden by the population – and inside it by each and every active individual with initiative – had not vanished away.

Laws and regulations adopted, nevertheless, in a democratic way, have been blown away by the thrust of the explosion of liberty that practically contaminated huge masses of people.

This state is comparable to what the suicidal terrorist lives. Far from us the intent to associate these two states, which in fact are so different, especially in their effects.

But it seems fair enough to assert the fact that their origin is nevertheless the same: they both spring from the abyss of human nature so poorly explored until now in the modern world.

This clue is probably of unprecedented value in studying the real nature of the power phenomenon. To act against any rules or regulations is practically the same thing as to act in a total lack of rules or regulations when they simply do not exist.

Society is thus reduced to its primary stage, in fact to its primitivism. Nothing matters any longer, but raw power and its forms of assertion may reach the most outrageous acts. Bertrand de Jouvenele wrote, referring himself to these very outrageous forms of raw force during the Second World War: "nothing would have been possible, neither this widely spread participation, nor these barbaric destructions without the transformation of people through violent passions at unanimous level, allowing for their natural activities to be integrally perverted" (De Jouvenele, 1972, 11).

And the raw force under its most violent forms, coupled with a total lack of responsibility through an organization of a tribal / family type, where the individual identity blends fully through a mystic apology with false or falsified ethnic or religious connotations, imply a *personalization of power*, taken to the extreme, through which the person is being identified with the respective act of power.

At a moral level, power is unconceivable outside responsibility.

The personalization of power – or at least its positive side – means first and above all <u>an assumed responsibility,</u> even if only for the simple fact that power grants certain advantages to the one exercising it versus those in whose respect it's being exercised.

By compensation, these personal advantages necessarily imply personal risks. That is why we can qualify as worthless the declarations or the excuses of the ex members of the Executive Committee of the former Communist Party, who tried to justify their actions by saying that it was not them, but Ceauşescu, who had ordered in 1989 the army to shoot the people. The power they held into their hands was nevertheless sufficient to influence the decision of a criminal nature or at least to be able to weaken it by merely saying "no", even if their opposition wouldn't have borne fruit.

They claim on their own behalf that any type of opposition would have automatically meant for them the risk of being shot on sight, but we argue that even if this risk had been a real one, it is none the less true that it was a risk already assumed through the responsibilities incurred by their high level ranks and positions and that it was precisely owing to those positions that they had enjoyed advantages and a good life.

In the mythology of humanity, it is believed that any power has its own term, its own life or cycle of existence. In the Romanian one, this cycle of life is contained by the proverb "He who has taken power, has also put on the shirt of death" or better said he has embarked upon a fate of death.

So far no one has ventured considering this ancient belief as mistaken. On the contrary, so many books have been written on its account that libraries barely contained them. The folk tradition is yet not sufficient to create and maintain a climate of responsibility in the sphere of power. Especially that a constant trend of modern times is drawing a line between these two elements. It is therefore necessary for cultural elite to exist, a cultural elite who, in perfect solidarity should pledge that this message will be relayed from one generation to another. It must also be an elite playing the role of censorship in the exercise of power.

In the conditions of modernization, traditions are being turned upside down; cultural bridges between generations are being torn apart or even broken, crumbling down in the abyss of mercantilism and blind consumerism. In developing societies mostly, social groups isolated from their roots and disoriented, with no moral point of view become dominant in the representative social media and, step by step the belief that anything is possible creeps in.

Also the thought prevails that human action can be free from norms and rules, that for so many years have been the true binding solution for societies and the measure of their stability.

In the process of personalization of power immense risks await. Especially when this process takes place in situations of transition. This is due to the fact, as we have stated before, that there is an extremely complex "archeology" of the phenomenon of power, unfortunately insufficiently explored.

This is how we are left helpless and we cannot protect ourselves from the

expansion of ancestral aggression of mankind, especially when this aggression may reach unbelievable accents and effects owing to technological means of our time.

In Europe's recent history there has been an extremely tough warning, represented by the fascist Hitlerian regimes, which can be considered, without reservation, to belong to the category of suicidal terrorist political regimes, which find themselves greatly at the origin of present day expansion and exacerbation of terrorism.

Let us not forget, that the exaggerated fear of political instability, generated precisely by such antecedents, may as well trigger a yearn, in its turn exaggerated, for stability.

This is how different stages can be reached, leading to the suffocation of natural processes in the evolution of societies.

A mediocrisation beyond limits of the social organization can be but the opposite of the natural state, the same way as aggressive political voluntarism, be it of left wing or of right wing is so.

While the latter produces violent effects in a relatively short time, mediocrisation bears the same fruit through accumulation in time of the suffocation effects.

The need / wish for predictability may drain – sterilize – the system; this is how mediocrity sets in. Mediocrity in itself tries to install stagnation forever. The increasing need for creativity produces continuous stimuli that get into the system. And this system, once rendered mediocre, has a smaller capacity of integrating them in the social evolution. There has existed – and still exists – a temptation to answer this threat through social engineering, a well known reaction of simplifying the social relationship to the limit of its manipulation.

The rationalistic / primitive belief that man can build intentionally a new world develops a limitless optimism regarding the possible intervention of social techniques and technologies in shaping up social relations and human individuals.

Besides, in time, the origin of the phenomenon is not a new one, even if we feel the temptation to place it at the point of birth of modern societies.

We can situate it at the dawn of imposition of rationalism as a dominant attitude toward reality.

But, the substitution of a complex thought with specific engineering techniques applied to social politics or of strong willed social interventions in solving social conflicts, creates greater social distortions than the problems themselves which could have been solved through such methods. To this a contribution is brought both by the necessary simplifications supposed by any modeling operation, and by the manipulation implied by the methods of an engineering type. This manipulation brings into the social life new elements of distortion. On short term, the results are attractive, rather at imaginary level,

especially for tyrants. It is well known that Stalin enjoyed keeping repeating: "the role of the State of the working class is to create / shape engineers of the soul…" (C F Lefort, 1981).

Social life is always by far more complex than the capacity of understanding and of rational control of the people or institutions can grasp. That is why, in order to put into practice such a project of social engineering, social life is represented in a simplified and quite often simplistic manner, implying extrapolations, therefore manipulations, either direct or indirect, of actors involved in the targeted sector of social reality.

It is to be noted that manipulation has also negative effects. These effects produce themselves both when manipulation is taken note of, and under circumstances when the individuals are not aware of it. In the first case an exaggerated suspicion is born in regard to the altered elements of behavioral influence and thus a real anomic, even pathologic reaction may take place.

Secondly, the underground influence achieved through manipulation can alienate in such a degree behaviors, that the positive results become unnoticeable and the constant risk of outburst of the collective unconsciousness is present all the time, triggering, sooner or later, the crumbling down of the new construction.

Voluntary social intervention can be only an indirect one, at least for now, at the level of the possible knowledge phenomenon of our times. This is how the negative effects can in fact entail consequences beyond calculation.

The results of historic action are never those wished for by the involved actors, but very often they take a surprising form of manifestation for all participants in the "social traffic". The individuals, even if they are not equal among themselves through power or wealth, nevertheless fail to influence the historic action the way they wish to: … "As always, history takes note *en passant* of human intentions, even the intentions of the decision makers at national level. The real social transformations have not been intentional, or planned." (Hobsbawm, 1994, 212).

On the other hand, the study of "The Archeology of Power" reveals that behind "The Self-proclaimed Hero", the purest vendetta of a gangster-like character seems to lie. The "social engineer" dissimulates most often the consciousness of a superior master of the others, a master who only leans over them in order to bring them to the rank of a humanity that he himself postulates in a very poor reference system.

But also moral idealism may become harmful through the perverse effects that it triggers, even through the mimesis that it may induce among the young generation. Both attitudes in fact are of discontent towards the others, combined with the wish to change them according to one's belief. They dissimulate or hide the comeback of raw force about which Bernard Russell used to speak in his relationships of power.

The new mask for basic, elementary raw power is provided for by the sophistication and the refinement of the media employed, along with the capacity for dissimulation of the discourse able to motivate the *violent act of power*.

"The main characteristic of raw power is of a psychological nature" (Russell, 154). Its use as a current means of establishing relations is characteristic to human natures found in conflict.

The conflict, real or induced, represents the "normal" state instituted through this type of power, which is fueled by it.

The instinct of the raw force seems to no longer be able to be contained because the XXI Century was preceded by a "Century of the extremes", when all limits of exercising power through violence have been exceeded and because the borders separating different fields of exercising power have disappeared.

The World War in the XX-th Century "was led for unlimited purposes and differs from the previous wars, which were engaged on account of limited, punctual, objectives, and were motivated by limited purposes. In the Age of Empire, the political and the economical have merged. It is true that international political rivalries used to be fueled by economic growth and free competition, but their common characteristic laid precisely in the fact that they had no limits".

"The national frontiers" of a corporation such as Standard Oil, Deutsche Bank or Debers Diamond Corporation used to be practically, the limits of the Universe, or, more precisely, the limits of their own expansion capacity." (Hobsbawm, 1987, 318).

"If the XX-th Century led us to a restless intensification of violence, most unfortunately, the beginning of the new Millennium announces, in a very spectacular way, the disappearance of any limit implied." (Măgureanu, 2003, 67). Nevertheless, it seems that in no society can raw force be totally eliminated from the manifestation of power. "Power must exist. Be it in the hands of the Government, or be it in the hands of anarchist adventurers. Raw power itself is necessary, as long as there keep being rebels against the governments or common law criminals. But if, nevertheless we wish for the life of the great majority of mankind to be more than a continuous gloomy suffering, only here and there with scattered moments of the most profound horror, then we must act in such a way in order to have the existing raw power percentage as high as possible.

If we wish the exercise of power to be more than a mere cause of unjustified and uncalled for suffering, then, power must be limited through security measures that are in close connection with applicable Law and local customs, measures of security that should be established *only after very careful deliberation* and entrusted to individuals who, in their turn, *can be placed under close democratic oversight,* in the interest of all those they lead" (Russell, idem, 170).

In order to achieve this, the existence of an influential social group is needed, one to ensure that the purposes of power coincide with the vital interests of the community.

Present day transition in former communist countries demonstrates that, in the absence of such a bond, the personalization of power becomes a harmful phenomenon, producing endless suffering and despair to an increasing number of people, both on account of the moral inconsistency of the persons we speak of and on account of the pulverization of local habits, customs and laws – all denied as a whole, but far too sluggish in being replaced and far too difficult because of a process governed by sectary interests and incompetence.

The more we shift our focus towards the East of our continent, the more we find that the field of manifestation for raw power is wider, owing to the fact that personal interests and savage yearning for illicit riches and welfare prevail. This generates corruption and lack of respect for community values and for the people. We deal here, in different proportion and from country to country, with the distribution of power according to a *vote-catching* relationship.

Springing from the ashes of the former regimes, this *vote-catching* relation remains the prevailing one for social solidarity and is meant to ensure, in time, a real social stability, without producing on short term extremely painful inequities.

Important social groups become the victims of the transition process, paying not only the price required in such times from everybody, but also an extra tribute for the welfare of the "nouveaux riches".

And for quite some time, it has been known for a fact that, as Russell puts it: "in a stable community, we should not find any social group of relatively great dimensions and importance, who feels and considers itself utterly wronged and disfavored." (Russell, idem, 168).

Aside from the instability risks entailed by such a situation, other type of risks are triggered, namely the moral and spiritual emptying of certain human communities, pushing them to the limit and categorically influencing the younger generations who are led into total confusion, lose their own sense of belonging to a certain community and start migrating at random, without compass.

Obviously, the archeological study of power offers an opportunity to assess once again the criminal character of different acts of power performed in totalitarian regimes or dictatorships. At the same time, it provides the chance to eliminate harmful elements from the process of political decision making.

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