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CIVIL SOCIETY: FREEDOM IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

As we come to the close of the 20th century, the turn of the millennium calls for and augurs profound changes. The period last millennium has been characterized by an intensive development of human reason. In the West this began in 1000 AD with the reintroduction of the work of Aristotle and was radicalized from 1500 by the age of rationalism and enlightenment. This now has borne its fruits, which in last century have been both sweet in the important of living standards and the emancipation of peoples, and bitter in devastating ideological conflicts both hot and cold.

Now, however, the peoples of the world seem to be moving beyond rationalism to a great project of social reconstruction. This focuses no longer on ideologies and structures, but on people in their natural communities and solidarities in an effort to become increasingly creative and to take responsibility for their life. This is, in a way, the utopian vision of Marx as people achieve the conditions of freedom and begin with others to shape their common life after classical ideals of justice and peace, harmony and co-operation. As a result the focus of attention reaches beyond the political and the economic to include the people, now no longer as amorphous masses or tools of industry, but as informed and responsible human solidarities acting responsibly each in its own field. This is the reality called civil society or civil culture emerging as a newly vibrant reality which promises to characterize a post modern, more globally sensitive, 3rd millennium.

In order to understand this development and how it can be appropriately promoted we will first look back to Aristotle in order to understand the place of freedom as basic to community, second consider how this might be redeveloped in ways which surpass the reductionism structures of modern rationalism if considered also in the more integrative categories of culture and aesthetics, and then face the challenge of how this can provide the normative power needed to weld people together responsibly, in a unity that is truly civil both in its members and in their mode of exercising their freedom.

FREEDOM AS THE ROOT OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Aristotle begins his politics not historically by thematically delineating the elements in which political life consist¹. Both however bring us to the same point, namely, that to be political means to govern and be governed as a member of a community. Most properly the political bespeaks governance or directive action toward the goal. Significantly this is expressed by the term *arché* which originally means beginning, origin or first source. Secondly, this is extended to governance in the sense of sovereignty, that is, of directing others toward a good or a goal while not oneself being necessitated by others. This point of the beginning or origin of social action, which takes responsibility for the overall enterprise is characteristically human; it is the exercise of freedom by individuals and groups in originating responsible action. Though most actions of humans at the different inorganic and organic levels can be performed by other physical realities, it is precisely as these actions are free that they become properly human acts. This issue of corporate directive freedom – its nature and range – is then the decisive issue as regards civil society. How this can be exercised effectively today is the key to the development of civil society for our times.

There is a second dimension to the issue of governance in Aristotle. It is indicated in what many have seen as a correction of his evaluation of types of governance. His first classification of modes of government had been drawn up in terms of the quantity of those who shared in ruling. When ruling is seen as a search of material possessions or property, this tends to be an oligarchy; rule is by the few because generally only a few are rich. Democracy, in contrast, is rule by the many who are poor². Aristotle needed to improve on this basically quantitative division founded empirically on the changing distribution of property, for conceptually there could be a society in which the majority is rich. Hence, he came instead to a normative criterion, namely, whether governance is exercised in terms of a search not for goods arbitrarily chosen by a few out of self-interest, but for the common good in which all can participate³. In this light governance has its meaning in terms of the broader reality, namely, the community (*koinonía*) which comes together for the happiness or the good life of the whole. Community supposes the free persons of which it is composed; formally it expresses their conscious and free union with a view to a common end, namely, the shared good they seek.

¹ *Politics*, I, 1, 1252a22.

² *Politics*, III, 7

³ *Politics*, III, 8.

The *polis* is then a species of community. It is a group which as free and self responsible joins in governance or in guiding efforts toward the achievement of the good life. In this way, Aristotle identifies the central nature of the socio-political order as being a *koinonía politiké* or „civil society”

Civil society then has three elements. First there is governance: *arché*, the beginning of action or the taking of initiative toward an end; this is the exercise of human freedom. But as this pertains to persons in their various groups and subgroups there are two other elements, namely, communication or solidarity with other members of the groups and the participation or subsidiarity of these groups or communities within the whole. The key to understanding civil society lies then in the solidarity and subsidiarity of the community as its members participate in the governance of life toward the common good.

Solidarity and Community

Through time societies have manifested in increasing diversity of parts; this constitutes their proper richness and strength and brings quantitative advantage. It is important that the parts differ in kind so that each brings a distinctive concern and capability to the common task. Further, differing between themselves, one member is able to give and the other receive in multiple and interrelated active and receptive modes. This means that the members of a society not only live alongside each other, but share the effort to realize the good life through mutual interaction.

Aristotle develops this theme richly in „On Friendship”, in Book IX, 6 of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, stressing that the members of a civil society need to be of one mind and heart for the common weal⁴. Such solidarity of the members of society is an essential characteristic. Plato used the terms *méthexis* and *mímesis* or participation for this, but Aristotle feared that if individuals were seen as but another instance of a specific type persons would lose their reality. Hence, he used the term ‘solidarity’ which recognizes the distinctive reality of the parts.

In the human body, where there is but one substantial form, the many parts exist for the whole and the actions of the parts are actions of the whole (it is not my legs and feet which walk; I walk by my legs and feet). Society also has many parts whose differentiation and mutuality pertains to the good of the whole. But in contrast to the body, the members of a community have their own proper form, final-

⁴ *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, 6, 1167b13.

ity and operation. Hence, their unity is one of the order, of their capabilities and actions to the perfection of the body politic or civil society and the realization of its common good.

Aristotle does not hesitate to state strongly the dependence of the individual on the community in order to live a truly human life, concluding that the state is a creation of nature prior to the individual⁵ Nevertheless, in as much as the parts are realities in their own right outside of any orientation to the common good of the whole, society is ultimately for its members, not the contrary.

Subsidiarity and Community

But there is more than solidarity to the constitution of civil society⁶ Community in general is constituted through the co-operation of many for the common goal or good, but the good or goal of a community can be extremely rich and textured. It can concern nourishment, health maintenance, environmental soundness; it includes education both informal and formal, basic and advanced, initial and retraining; it extends to nutrition, culture, recreation, etc. – all the endless manners in which human beings fulfil their needs and capacities and seek „the good life” As each of these can and must be sought and shared through the co-operation of many, each is the basis of a group or subgroup in a vastly varied community.

When, however, one adds the elements of freedom as governance (*arché*) determining what will be done and how the goal will be sought, subsidiarity emerges into view. Were we talking about things rather than people it would be possible to envisage a technology of mass production in a factory automatically moving and directing all toward the final product. Where, however, we are concerned with a community and hence with the composite exercise of the freedom of the persons who constitute its membership, then it is crucial that this responsible freedom not be substituted for by a command from outside or from above. Rather governance in the community initiating and directing action toward the common end must be exercised in a cumulative manner beginning from the primary group or family in relation to its common good, and moving up to the broader concerns or goals of more inclusive groups considered both quantitatively (neighbourhood, city, nation, etc.), and qualitatively (education, health, religion) according to the hierarchy of goods which are their concerns.

⁵ *Politics*, I, 2, 1253a20–37

⁶ John Mavone, *The Division of Parts of Society According to Plato and Aristotle*, „Philosophical Studies” 6:1956, p. 113–122.

The synergetic ordering of these groups, considered both quantitatively, and qualitatively and the realization of their varied needs and potentials is the stuff of the governance of civil society. The condition for success in this is that the freedom and hence responsible participation of all be actively present and promoted at each level. Thus, proper responsibility on the family level must not be taken away by the city, nor that of the city by the state. Rather the higher units either in the sense of larger numbers or more important order of goods must exercise their governance precisely in order to promote the full and selfresponsible action of the lower units and in the process enable them to achieve goals which acting alone they could not realize. Throughout, the concern is to maximize the participation in governance or the exercise of freedom of the members of the community, thereby enabling them to live more fully as persons and groups so that the entire society flourishes. This is termed subsidiarity. Thus civil society is a realm of persons in solidarity who through a structure of subsidiarity participate in self-governance.

This manifests also the main axes of the unfolding of the social process in Greece, namely,

– from the Platonic stress upon unity in relation to which the many are but repetitions, to the Aristotelian development of diversity as necessary for the unfolding and actualization of unity;

– from emphasis upon governance by authority located at the highest and most remote levels, to participation in the exercise of governance by persons and groups at every level and in relation to matters with which they are engaged and responsible;

– from attention to one's own interests, to attention to the common good of the whole.

This thought of Aristotle bore great potentiality which would unfold as the sense of being and of person were enriched philosophically in the context of a Christian culture. This is marked by elements of human dignity based upon creation in the image of God and human community in the image of the Trinitarian sharing of life as knowledge and love.

Today much is said of a post-modern global culture there is an emerging consensus that philosophy may have overreached itself in the Enlightenment in requiring that all be subjected solely to the technical requirements of clarity for human reason. It perhaps should have been noted sooner that this requirement led almost immediately to the two contrary results of Anglo-Saxon empiricism and Continental intellectualism, constituting a Kantian antinomy manifesting rationalism to be reductionism, and to that degree dehumanizing. What G. B. Vico saw at the beginning, namely, that this would generate an intellectual brute, we have come to experience bitterly in the hot and cold ideological wars of the last century.

A NEW SPACE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Aesthetic Awareness

All of this, together with the existential and post-modern critiques of rationalism suggest that the task of developing a more adequate notion of civil society must be taken up, but on a new, more open and inclusive basis. To do so will require a richer notion of reason and of freedom capable of integrating the personal dimensions of moral sensitivity in a broader sense of human life and meaning such as is suggested by the new call for civil society. But if this is to be more than a replay of the past the effort to redevelop the notion of civil society must be moved to a new level of freedom: neither that of mere choice between alternate objects nor that Kantian effort to will as one ought, but the freedom „to be able, by a power inherent in human nature, to change one’s own character creatively by deciding for oneself what one shall do or shall become”⁷. It is to this, rather than the proceeding two levels of freedom, that Adler adjoins political liberty and collective freedom.

In initiating the decade in which he wrote his three critiques Kant did not have the third critique in view. He wrote the first critique in order to provide methodologically for the universality and necessity of the categories found in scientific knowledge. He developed the second critique to provide for the reality of human freedom. But when both of these had been written he could see that in order to protect and promote freedom in the material world there was need for a third set of categories, namely, those of aesthetic judgement. These integrate the realms of matter and spirit in a harmony which can be appreciated in terms not of a science of nature as in the first critique nor of personal freedom as worked out from the second critique, but of human creativity working with all elements to create life and meaning as an expanding and enriching reality.

Kant is facing squarely a root dilemma of modern times, namely: how can the newly uncovered freedom of the second critique survive when confronted with the necessity and universality of the realm of science as understood in the *Critique of Pure Reason*?

– Will the scientific interpretation of nature restrict freedom to the inner realm of each person’s heart, where it is reduced at best to good intentions or to feelings towards others?

⁷ Mortimer J. Adler, *The Idea of Freedom: A Dialectical Examination of the Conceptions of Freedom*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday 1958, p. 187

– When we attempt to act in this world or to reach out to others, must all our categories be universal and hence insensitive to that which marks others as unique and personal?

– Must they be necessary, and, hence, leave no room for creative freedom, which would be entrapped and then entombed in the human mind? If so, then public life can be only impersonal, necessitated, repetitive and stagnant.

– Or must the human spirit be reduced to the sterile content of empirical facts or to the necessitated modes of scientific laws? If so, then philosophers cannot escape forcing upon wisdom a suicidal choice between either being traffic directors in the jungle of unfettered competition or being tragically complicit in setting a predetermined order for the human spirit. Freedom then would, indeed, have been killed; it would pulse no more as the heart of mankind.

Before these alternatives, Kant's answer is a resounding No! Taking as his basis the reality of freedom – so passionately and often tragically affirmed in our lifetime by Ghandi and Martin Luther King – Kant proceeded to develop his third *Critique of the Faculty of Judgement* as a context within which freedom and scientific necessity could coexist, indeed, in which necessity would be the support and instrument of freedom.

To provide for this, Kant found it necessary to distinguish two issues, reflected in the two parts of his third *Critique*. In the *Critique of Teleological Judgement*⁸, he acknowledges that nature and all reality must be teleological. This was a basic component of the classical view which enabled all to be integrated within the context of a society of free men working according to a developed order of reason. For Kant, if there is to be room for human freedom in a cosmos in which man can make use of necessary laws, if science is to contribute to the exercise of human freedom, then nature too must be directed toward a transcendent goal and manifested throughout a teleology within which free human purpose can be integrated. In these terms, nature, even in its necessary and universal laws, is no longer alien to freedom, but expresses divine freedom and is conciliable with human freedom. The same might be said of the economic order and its „hidden hand” The structure of his first *Critique* will not allow Kant to affirm this teleological character as an absolute and self-sufficient metaphysical reality, but he recognizes that we must proceed „as if” all reality is teleological precisely because of the undeniable reality of human freedom in an ordered universe.

If, however, teleology, in principle, provides the needed space, there remains a second issue of how freedom is exercised, namely,

⁸ Immanuel K a n t, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J.H. Bernard, New York: Hafner 1968, p. 205–339.

what mediates it to the necessary and universal laws of science? This is the task of his *Critique of the Aesthetic Judgement*⁹, and it is here that the imagination re-emerges to play its key integrating role in human life. From the point of view of the human person, the task is to explain how one can live in freedom with nature for which the first critique had discovered only laws of universality and necessity and especially with structures of society in a way that is neither necessitated nor necessitating?

There is something similar here to the *Critique of Pure Reason* where, under the rule of unity, the imagination orders and reorders the multiple phenomena until they are ready to be informed by a unifying principle which was one of the abstract and universal categories of the intellect¹⁰. In *The Critique of the Aesthetic Judgement*, the imagination has a similar task of constructing the object, but not in a manner necessitated by universal categories or concepts. In contrast, here the imagination, in working toward an integrating unity, is not confined by the necessitating structures of categories and concepts, but ranges freely over the full sweep of reality in all its dimensions to see whether and wherein relatedness and purposiveness or teleology can emerge and the world and our personal and social life can achieve its meaning and value. Hence, in standing before a work of nature or of art, the imagination might focus upon light or form, sound or word, economic or interpersonal relations – or, indeed, upon any combination of these in a natural environment or a society, whether countered concretely or expressed in symbols.

Throughout all of this, the ordering and reordering by the imagination can bring about numberless unities. Unrestricted by any *a priori* categories, it can nevertheless integrate necessary dialectical patterns within its own free and, therefore, creative production and scientific universals within its unique concrete harmonies. This is properly creative work. More than merely evaluating all according to a set pattern in one's culture, it chooses the values and orders reality accordingly. This is the very constitution of the culture itself.

It is the productive rather than merely reproductive work of the human person as living in his or her physical world. Here, I use the possessive form advisedly. Without this capacity one would exist in the physical universe as another object, not only subject to its laws but restricted and possessed by them. He/She would be not a free citizen of the material world, but a mere function or servant. In his third *Critique* Kant unfolds how man can truly be master of his/her life in

⁹ Ibid., p. 37–200.

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N.K. Smith, London: Macmillan 1929, A112, 121, 192–193; Donald W. Crawford, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory*, Madison: University of Wisconsin 1974, p. 83–84, 87–90.

this world, not in an arbitrary and destructive manner, but precisely as creative artists bring being to new realization in harmonious ways which make possible new growth in freedom.

In order for the realm of human freedom to be extended to the whole of reality, this harmony must be able to be appreciated, not purely intellectually in relation to a concept (for then we would be reduced to the universal and necessary as in the first critique), but aesthetically, by the pleasure or displeasure, the attraction or repulsion of the free response it generates. Our contemplation or reflection upon this which shows whether a proper and authentic ordering has or has not been achieved. This is not a concept¹¹, but the pleasure or displeasure, the elation at the beautiful and sublime or the disgust at the ugly and revolting, which flows from our contemplation or reflection.

The Aesthetic Space for Civil Society

One could miss the integrating character of this pleasure or displeasure and its related judgement of taste¹² by looking at it ideologically, as simply a repetition of past tastes in order to promote stability. Or one might see it reductively as a merely interior and purely private matter at a level of consciousness available only to an elite class and related only to an esoteric band of reality. That would ignore the structure which Kant laid out at length in his first „Introduction” to his third *Critique*¹³ which he conceived not as merely juxtaposed to the first two *Critiques* of pure and practical reason, but as integrating both in a richer whole.

Developing the level of aesthetic sensitivity enables one to take into account ever greater dimensions of reality and creativity and to imagine responses which are more rich in purpose, more adapted to present circumstances and more creative in promise for the future. This is manifest in a good leader such as a Churchill or Roosevelt – and, supereminently, in a Confucius or Christ. Their power to mobilize people lies especially in their rare ability to assess the overall

¹¹ See Kant's development and solution to the problem of the autonomy of taste, *Critique of Judgement*, nn. 57–58, p. 182–192, where he treats the need for a concept; Crawford, p. 63–66.

¹² See the chapter by Wilhelm S. W u r z e r, „On the Art of moral Imagination” in G. M c L e a n, ed., *Moral Imagination and Character Development*, Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (in preparation) for an elaboration of the essential notions of the beautiful, the sublime and taste in Kant's aesthetic theory.

¹³ Immanuel K a n t, *First Introduction to the Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. Haden, New York: Bobbs-Merrill 1965.

situation, to express it in a manner which rings true to the great variety of persons in their many groupings in a pattern of the subsidiarity characteristic of a civil society, and thereby to evoke appropriate and varied responses from each according to the circumstances. The danger is that the example of such genius will be reduced to formulae, become an ideology and exclude innovation. In reality, as personable, free and creative, and understood as the work of the aesthetic judgement, their example is inclusive in content and application as well as in the new responses it continually evokes from others.

When aesthetic experiences are passed on as part of a tradition, they gradually constitute a culture. Some thinkers, such as William James and Jürgen Habermas¹⁴, fearing that attending to these free creations of a cultural tradition might distract from the concrete needs of the people, have urged a turn rather to the social sciences for social analysis and critique as a means to identify pragmatic responses. But these point back to the necessary laws of the first *Critique*; in many countries now engaging in reforms, such „scientific“ laws of history have come to be seen as having stifled creativity and paralyzed the populace.

Kant's third *Critique* points in another direction. Though it integrates scientifically universal and necessary social relations, it does not focus upon them, nor does it focus directly upon the beauty or ugliness of concrete relations, or even directly upon beauty or ugliness as things in themselves. Its focus is rather upon our contemplation of the integrating images of these which we imaginatively create, that is, our culture as manifesting the many facets of beauty and ugliness, actual and potential. Here Marx makes an important contribution in insisting that this not be left as an ideal image, but that it be taken in its concrete realization of a pattern of social relations. As we appreciate more and more the ambit of free activity in the market and other levels of life, this comes to include those many modes of solidarity and their subsidiary relations which constitute civil society. In turn, we evaluate these in terms of the free and integrating response of pleasure or displeasure, the enjoyment or revulsion they generate

¹⁴ William James, *Pragmatism*, New York: Washington Square, 1963, Ch. 1, pp. 3–40. For notes on the critical hermeneutics of J. Habermas see G. McLean, *Cultural Heritage, Social Critique and Future Construction in: Culture, Human Rights and Peace in Central America*, R. Molina, T. Reddy and G. McLean (eds.), Washington: Council for Research in Values 1988, Ch. I. Critical distance is an essential element and requires analysis by the social sciences of the historical social structures as a basis for liberation from determination and dependence upon unjust interests. The concrete psycho- and socio-pathology deriving from such dependencies and the corresponding steps toward liberation are the subject of the chapters by J. Loiacono and H. Ferrand de Piazza in *The Social Context and Values: Perspectives of the Americas*, G. McLean and O. Peggara (eds.), Washington: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy 1988, Chs. III and IV

most deeply within our whole person and society according to the character of our culture.

Confucius probably would feel very comfortable with this if articulated according to the sense of peace generated by an appreciation or feeling of harmony. In this way, he could see the sensibility of which the Scotts spoke as freedom at the height of its sensibility, not merely as an instrument of a moral life, but as serving through the imagination as a lens or means for presenting the richness of reality in varied and intensified ways. Freedom as social sensibility, understood not only morally but aesthetically, is both spectroscop and kaleidoscope of being. As spectroscop it unfolds the full range of the possibilities of social freedom, so that all can be examined, evaluated and admired. As kaleidoscope, it continually works out the endless combinations and patterns of reality so that the beauty of each can be examined, reflected upon and chosen when desired. Freely, purposively and creatively, imagination weaves through reality focusing now upon certain dimensions, now reversing its flow, now making new connections and interrelations. In the process reality manifests not only scientific forms and their potential interrelations, but its power to evoke our free and socially varied responses of love and admiration or of hate and disgust.

In this manner freedom exercised in terms of harmony to construct patterns of solidarity and subsidiarity becomes at once the creative source, the manifestation, the evaluation and the arbiter of all that imaginatively we can propose. It is the goal, namely to realize social life as rational and free, united and peaceful in this world; it is creative source, for with the imagination it unfolds the endless possibilities for social expression; it is manifestation, because it presents these to our consciousness in ways appropriate to our capabilities for knowledge of limited realities and relates these to the circumstances of our life; it is criterion, because its response manifests a possible mode of action to be variously desirable or not in terms of a total social response of pleasure or displeasure, enjoyment or revulsion; and it is arbiter, because it provides the basis upon which our freedom chooses to affirm or reject, realize or avoid this way of self-realization. In this way, freedom emerges as the dynamic center of the creation of civil society.

SPOŁECZNOŚĆ OBYWATELSKA. WOLNOŚĆ W TRZECIM TYSIĄCLECIU

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Drugie tysiąclecie w kulturze zachodniej charakteryzuje się wielkim rozwojem ludzkiego umysłu, czego wyrazem jest odkrycie Arystotelesa, a od XVI w. gwałtowny rozwój racjonalizmu i oświecenia, którego owocem w ostatnim stuleciu jest nie tylko wzrost dobrobytu, ale także niszczenie środowiska. Obecnie wydaje się, że ludzkość wykracza poza racjonalizm, kierując się ku wielkiej przebudowie społecznej zmierzającej do umacniania naturalnych wspólnot, w których podstawowymi wartościami są sprawiedliwość, pokój, odpowiedzialność. W celu pełniejszego zrozumienia tych przemian trzeba wyjść od Arystotelesa, aby ukazać wolność jako fundament społeczności, a następnie wskazać na sposoby przewyciężenia redukcjonistycznych struktur nowożytnego racjonalizmu. Dzięki temu łatwiej będzie określić normy sprzyjające zespoleniu ludzi w społeczność obywatelską działającą w sposób wolny i odpowiedzialny.

U podstaw społeczności obywatelskiej leży wolność. Odkrywamy to już u Arystotelesa w jego *Polityce*, gdzie podejmuje on kwestię sposobu suwerennego rządzenia (gr. *arché*). Ze względu na liczbę osób rządzących wyróżnia on rządy oligarchiczne, czyli rządy niewielu coraz bardziej bogacących się, oraz rządy demokratyczne, czyli rządy ubogich. Jednak jest możliwe, aby większość była bogata, gdy dobra są odpowiednio rozdzielane. Właściwy podział dóbr jest możliwy, gdy celem rządów jest dobro wspólne całej społeczności (gr. *koinonia*), a nie własny interes rządzących. Społeczność taka (gr. *polis*) przez wolne i odpowiedzialne działania dążąca do dobrobytu staje się „społecznością obywatelską” (gr. *koinonia politiké*). Społeczność obywatelską konstytuują więc trzy elementy: rządy jako realizacja wolności, solidarność jako wyraz wzajemnej wymiany i pomocniczość jako uczestnictwo członków w życiu całej wspólnoty.

Ideę solidarności Arystoteles rozwija w *Etyce nikomachejskiej* podkreślając, że społeczność obywatelska domaga się jedności myśli i działania dla wspólnego dobra, podobnie jak to ma miejsce w ludzkim ciele. Jednak w społeczności o bogatej strukturze obok solidarności konieczne jest współdziałanie wielu jej członków i współtworzących ją grup. Organizacja tego współdziałania jest przedmiotem rządów w społeczności obywatelskiej. Jej kierunki zostały już określone przez proces rozwoju społeczeństwa w Grecji: od Platonskiego podkreślania jedności do Arystotelesowskiego dowartościowania różnorodności; od najwyższej i odległej władzy do władzy lokalnych grup; od zabiegania o własny interes do troski o dobro wspólne. Ta myśl Arystotelesa zawiera w sobie ogromne możliwości, szczególnie gdy zostaje ubogacona przez chrześcijańską ideę godności człowieka jako obrazu Boga i ideę wspólnoty ludzkiej jako obrazu Trójcy Świętej. Obecnie coraz częściej zauważa się, że oświeceniowe podporządkowanie wszystkiego rozumowej jasności doprowadziło do dehumanizacji, a w rezultacie do wojen ideologicznych ostatniego stulecia.

Poszukiwanie nowej przestrzeni dla społeczności obywatelskiej skierowuje naszą uwagę na estetykę. Egzystencjalna i ponowoczesna krytyka racjonalizmu postuluje bardziej adekwatne pojęcie społeczności obywatelskiej. Konieczne jest więc poszerzenie pojęcia rozumu i wolności o osobowy wymiar moralnej wrażliwości. Nie wystarczy już pojmować wolności jako możliwości wyboru między alternatywami ani jako Kantowskiego wysiłku, zmierzającego do realizacji obowiązku. Według J. Adlera trzeba ją pojmować jako wolność polegającą na wewnętrznej mocy twórczej przemiany własnego charakteru zgodnie z tym, co ktoś chce czynić lub kim chce zostać. Idea twórczości w kontekście ludzkiej wolności pojawia się u Kanta w jego *Krytyce*

władzy sądzienia. W niej znajduje on miejsce na estetykę, dzięki której wolność i naukowa konieczność mogą współistnieć. Do przekonania, że możliwa jest wolność, Kant dochodzi w dwu etapach: najpierw zauważa, że cała rzeczywistość musi być teleologiczna, a następnie że wyobraźnia pełni rolę integrującą życie człowieka. Wyobraźnia pozwala konstruować przedmioty niezależnie od ogólnych zasad i pojęć. Jest to zasadniczo twórcza działalność budująca konkretną harmonię, która jest wartościowana nie w odniesieniu do pojęcia, lecz do upodobania. Bez możliwości takiej działalności człowiek byłby przedmiotem w świecie fizycznym całkowicie podporządkowanym jego prawom.

Integrujący charakter upodobania może jednak być zdominowany przez jakąś ideologię i wówczas nowe upodobania stają się powtarzaniem przeszłości zmierzającym do stabilizacji. Stąd konieczne jest rozwijanie estetycznej wrażliwości w taki sposób, aby w swej twórczej wyobraźni człowiek był w stanie uwzględniać coraz szersze wymiary rzeczywistości. Gdy doświadczenie estetyczne staje się częścią tradycji, wówczas stanowi ono kulturę. W James i J. Habermas zwracają uwagę, że swobodna twórczość kultury może doprowadzić do jej odejścia od konkretnych potrzeb ludzi. Jednak pójsie za ich sugestiami oznaczałoby podporządkowanie twórczej wyobraźni „naukowym” prawom historii. Tymczasem Kantowska trzecia *Krytyka* nie koncentruje się na powszechnych i koniecznych relacjach społecznych, ani nawet na pięknie rzeczy samej w sobie, ale raczej na kontemplacji integrujących obrazów, czyli wytworów naszej kultury jako wyrażających najróżniejsze aspekty piękna i brzydoty zarówno aktualne, jak i możliwe.

Wolność realizowana harmonijnie w oparciu o wzory solidarności i pomocniczości staje się równocześnie twórczym źródłem, prezentacją, wartościowaniem i sędzią wszystkiego, co możemy wyobraźniowo zaproponować. W ten sposób wolność jawi się jako dynamiczne centrum twórczości w w społeczności obywatelskiej.