



**Peter Strohmayer**

## **The freedom and the way to Christianity**

I drank from a glass of water. At first I wasn't sure if I wanted to reach for the glass. I sat in front of it. I looked at it for a long time. I thought to myself, I'll just wait until I seriously want it, until I really reach for it, but now I don't want it yet. I wait a long time.

Do I decide or does something inside me decide? When will a decision be made? And when it has fallen, will that have been the freedom of the will? Do I bear responsibility for all my previous decisions because I always made them of my own free will? Were they therefore good or evil?

The answer in the world of cognition is: there can be no free will and therefore no morality in the world of appearance understood by us intellectually. Every will, as far as it is the object of the cognition, cannot be thought differently than caused and therefore unfree. We recognize only the shadows of the things. We also recognize only the shadow of the own will.

But maybe our will is "in itself" - independent of our cognition - free after all. For this, time, space and causality would have to be sensual forms of perception of our thinking. The world, as it appears to our imagination, would have to be based on a world of the time- and causality-less will.

I paused in front of my glass. The pause was thrown down to us at the same time as the fire from the seat of the gods. It is a great ability to be able to pause, not always to be immediately carried away to the action. Without pausing, no act of will would be possible.

Now follows the lingering. So I linger in front of my glass and wait without moving.

After some time, it suddenly happened on its own. I see myself reaching for the glass. The final decision of will, that is an action or a linguistic decision, happened without my intervention. Only afterwards it came to my consciousness. The act of will came out of nothing. It was suddenly there, and with it the action or the valid decision. Not I, but something decides when and how the act of will stands before me.

In simple, self-evident acts of will in everyday life, such as spontaneously - not as consciously as I have now done - reaching for a glass of water, the pausing, the dwelling (deliberation) and the decision flow into each other so quickly that there seems to be no difference between conceptually grasped intention and actual execution. One can give oneself seemingly immediate commands. This gives one a feeling of freedom.

But this feeling of freedom is deceptive. One can want what one already really wants. You can also first wish for what you want. But one cannot bring to wanting what one just wishes but does not yet really want. The courage for the noble deed is not at our service if we wish for it. No matter how the motives may pile up: they belong to the world of knowledge and, no matter how long one waits, they alone will never suffice to trigger or "release" the actual act of will.

With the emergence of an act of will out of nothing it is not said that the will as an intellectually conceived appearance has no cause. Our cognitive faculty, inescapably bound to the form of the causal thinking, "demands" also with the setting of an act of the will the operation of causality in space and time. So I - or this other in me - can by no means want what I want freely, without being dependent on a cause. There run - so we see this inevitably - chemical reactions in our brain and surprise our perception then with a result.

But we can reach beyond this limited horizon of our cognitive faculty. Because the self-consciousness experiences the own will on the one hand - like other things of the outside world - as appearance, as shadow. On the other hand, however, the self-consciousness finds the own will also directly - so to speak from the other side - as "thing in itself". To no other thing of the world exists such an immediate access. The own inside has for the human being a presence independent of his cognitive faculty, which is beyond any doubt.

Self-consciousness perceives its own will in a causality-, space- and time-free realm. What seemed to be unreachable, we find in ourselves. The will, as it reveals itself in us as part of the "world in itself", could be in the same way, as I found it in me, the essence not only of me, but of all other appearances. This is Schopenhauer's and Fichte's German idealism. From the access to our inside penetrates the light of the intelligent world, in which our sensual forms of perception of thinking, i.e. causality, space and time, have no meaning. The fundamental form of view is the effect propagation, which brings time, space and causality into the world and forms the basis of the nature research, as this can be shown by the example of the special relativity theory. But this is not the last truth.

Our own self-consciousness bears witness in perfect certainty to the will "in itself", to a being which is always already what it wills. The will here can be called neither free nor unfree. These terms have lost their meaning in this realm. The will as a thing in itself has neither space nor time. It is neither changeable nor unchangeable, because outside of time. It is neither unity nor multiplicity, because outside of space. It is a paradoxical fluid with transcendental aura.

The self-consciousness is able to see the will, which is outside the concepts of time and change, as a "thing in itself" in its own inside. In the outside it is subject to changes as appearance, thus seen through the cognitive faculty, and makes - calculated on all beings - the course of human history. In the inside it sees in its own transcendental will the original reason of all will, the secret of the comprehensive divine counsel standing outside of a time, which was, is and will be the basis of our world of appearances in past, present and future.

This access to the most mysterious area of our existence remains closed to the realist. He assumes the sole authoritativeness of his cognitive faculty. He always reckons only with appearance and cognition, with causally explainable things in space and time, not with the divine. Since there is no world behind the things for him, he does not meet them also in himself. He always saw only shadows and became blind for the light. He believes that he bears no responsibility for his actions, because his will is based on chemical processes, unconscious imprints and injuries without his intervention. He lets his will be maintained and directed by doctors and psychologists. He relies on them, not on the God in him. Thus he must remain a slave.

Our freedom, however, is rooted in the time-, space- and causality-less origin of our will. We are called anew at every moment of our life to find the right way by grace and to renew creation.

And one step further. There is the longing to experience in God not only the freedom of one's own will, but to shape the world with his decisions of will, with his life. It would be rash to assume that the emanations of the transcendental will follow an unchanging trail through a unique temporal history. It is true that the world as a conception is the unchanging being embedded in the causal flow from beginning to end, which never was and never will be different. That it could be another from the beginning to the end retroactively and with effect in advance is not comprehensible to the cognitive faculty.

The transcendental will stands outside of space, time and causality. It is always already that, as which it is attained by us. As one takes the relation of the second to the third

as a parable for the understanding of a fourth dimension, so one could also understand every act of will as an event which does not refer to a certain point of time in history, but to the world as a whole. The single human cognitive faculty - in its constant punctiform perception of a present (past and future are our imaginations) - oscillates like a needle in the grooves of a revolving plate of wax. This plate corresponds to the will. It plays our life in time, space and causality. The peculiarity of this record is that, together with the past and future embedded in it, it remakes itself as a whole with every act of the will when life is played back, and it really remakes itself, not only in the imagination. Every "good" and "bad" act contributes to the "aura" of the record and thus to the content of life. The farthest past and the farthest future event are formed as a wholeness by the will of the living, which are always already what they want.

We who are alive are deputies entrusted with discipleship and responsibility. We are up to this task as far as the grace given to us reaches. Every moment we live, the past, present and future world is at stake anew. Through the unfolding of our will, we shape it. In the shaping we experience who we are. In the self-seen inside, our freely shaping will is found by our self-consciousness according to the grace granted to us, attained as given. In this timeless sphere we are eternally already what we desire to be. There is the kingdom in which we follow Christ and find the nearness of God.

People who have the grace that this will happens in them after their prayer, take responsibility like Christ and, like him, encourage others in their attitude. The common participation in the Kingdom of God works beyond time and enables history to take a different trajectory at every moment, looking back and looking ahead.

The grace granted to us in every moment benefits all the former, the present and the later, just as the grace granted to others before times, now and in the future benefits one's own being. That we often fail to achieve this attitude in the absence of grace is another matter. So we stand by or against each other, as best we can, throughout all times, even by our smallest action.

The sacrifices of others, no matter when they were made in history or will be made in the future, work for us, and our sacrifices work for others, as the greatest sacrifice ever made in absolute freedom, free from all purposes, intentions and calculations, free from self-interest and free from "meaning" that can be comprehended intellectually, out of pure and therefore secretive love, raises us up, that of Christ, whom we follow unceasingly.

If we thus become one with all people and their wills, then every activity and every suffering has a meaning. It is true that every activity appears to the cognition caused and therefore egoistic. A truly good, not egoistic decision seems only their omission. From this narrowness of egoism or renunciation the free action leads. Thus I can confidently serve my star, even if it shines only to people - of whatever origin - with German soul and German Christ.

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