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THINKING THE FAMILY. SOME LINES IN 20TH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY

Summary: Modern times are in many ways not a beginning, but an end. So also as to community and family. Modern times are not original, but secondary, derivative. Therefore, in order to understand them, we have to see their derivativeness first. This is developed with the help of a number of texts by Alasdair MacIntyre and Hans Sedlmayr. Then: In order to regain within the strange surrounding '20th century' the old strength of community- and family-thinking we have to concentrate on a robust understanding of institutions. Here Arnold Gehlen, especially with his radically underestimated book *Urmensch und Spätkultur*, is proposed as enormously helpful for an understanding of the binding force of institutions. Finally, there are starting-points for thinking the family, perhaps even more than this, in several lines of philosophy of the 20th century; some forms are distinguished in an effort at a typology, using books and thoughts of authors like among others C.S. Lewis, Robert Spaemann, and Martin Heidegger.

Keywords: Family, philosophy, 20th century, autonomism, institution, Aristotle, MacIntyre, Sedlmayr, Gehlen.

Introductory Things

Thinking the family. In the 20th century. This is difficult. Values are nice and fashionable things, esp. if they don't exist (coolness, tolerance etc.), civil societies as well, forms of low-level commitment, not touching the core of the isolationistically conceived individual. But virtues, communities – and esp. these taboos: marriage and family. In the jargon and small world of the mainstream journalist, these seem to come directly out of the stone age.

And, unfortunately, 20th-century philosophy forms a strong exemplification of Hegel's famous saying:

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„Philosophy is its own time comprehended in thoughts. [Die Philosophie ist ihre Zeit in Gedanken erfasst.]“ (Hegel G.W.F., 1821, p. 18)¹

Strong thinking transcends its time. It can even completely transcend times. It is then its time in thoughts, thoughts which are as such not temporal beings. Not so here. The zeitgeist is so strong in the context of marriage and family, that the ephemeral, also even the ideological aspects² are there in the foreground of 20th-century words about them. Marriage and family, the words have almost acquired a sentimental colouring.

There are, nevertheless, serious efforts in thinking of marriage and family in the 20th century. One would really want to say: We have to search for them.

So, I hunt for traces a bit. All this within an overall narrative, a story. This is the story: Modern times are in many ways not a beginning, but an end. So also as to community and family. Modern times are not original, but secondary, derivative. Therefore, in order to understand them, we have to see their derivativeness first (I). Then: In order to regain within the strange surrounding '20th century' the old strength of community- and family-thinking we have to concentrate on a robust understanding of institutions (II). Finally, there are starting-points for thinking the family, perhaps even more than this, in some lines of philosophy of the 20th century; I try to distinguish some forms (III).

1. Modern Times? Autonomism, Emancipation, Social Atomism

Modern times secular man sees himself as emancipated from God and from his neighbour. Modern times man experiences himself in the end as autonomous, creating ex nihilo. It is easy to see here how anthropology has appropriated theological concepts. Modern times secular man wants to be like God, he wants to be God, *desertione, non participatione*.³ Human autonomism is therefore inhuman. It is accompanied by certain problems.

1.1. Alasdair MacIntyre: Highly Problematic Modern Times

MacIntyre wrote a number of famous books, esp. *After Virtue* (1981). Modern times and their accompanying modern moral theories are highly problematic.

¹ All translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

² These are perhaps most grotesquely legible in what some have thought up about 'authority and the family'. So Horkheimer, but also Fromm, Marcuse and other proponents of so-called re-education, i.e. destruction.

³ I am pointing to St. Augustine: *De civitate Dei* XXII 30.

„I have tried to argue that there are sufficient grounds for reasserting central Aristotelian positions.“ (MacIntyre, 2002, p. XVIII)

Let us assume that among central Aristotelian positions are these:

We start in ethics by looking at human nature. Many things and aspects are included in this. To develop them adequately, so that actuality corresponds to essence,⁴ is man`s calling and purpose. It is actually impossible to evade this line of thinking, as esp. the movement of existentialism has by now proved, malgré lui. As and because man is the animal rationale,⁵ therefore he should actualize thinking. Ethics develops what is as what it should be. The should lies in the is.⁶

So, as for excellence of character, „we start with a capacity for it, but this has to be developed by practice.“ (Ross, 1995, p. 200) How do we e.g. acquire the virtue of justice? Aristotle: „We become just by doing just actions [τὰ μὲν δίκαια πράττοντες δίκαιοι γινόμεθα].“⁷

This is very true. But there seems to be circular thinking here: Just actions spring from habit. And this habit has been formed by just actions. If this is not to be circular, it presupposes already actually existing justice from which just acts flow. In other words: Justice is aquired by education only. This is the virtue-theory-aspect of the definition of man as a social animal.⁸ No excellences of character, no virtues outside ways of life.

„Moral concepts are embodied in and are partially constitutive of forms of social life. One key way in which we may identify one form of social life as distinct from another is by identifying differences in moral concepts.“ (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 2)

The dualism between factual and evaluative assertions is wrong. There is no such dualism.

„The Ethics shows us what form and style of life are necessary to happiness, the Politics what particular form of constitution, what set of institutions, are necessary to make this form of life possible and to safeguard it.“ (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 55)

This is Aristotle. But there are, it seems, `new values` as well, in modern times, and there is `modern moral philosophy`:

„Kant, for example, stands at the point at which the loss of moral unity means that morality can be specified only in terms of the form of its rules, and not of any end which the rules may serve.“ (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 258)

⁴ I am pointing to the grounding of ethics in metaphysics here.

⁵ So-called first definition of man. See Aristotle: Politics I 2 1253a10.

⁶ There is no so-called `naturalistic fallacy` or is-ought paralogism prior to the modern times invention of being as something that is without inbuilt telos.

⁷ Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics II 1 1103b1.

⁸ So-called second definition of man. See Aristotle: Politics I 2 1253a2 & III 6 1278b20 and Nicomachean Ethics IX 9 1169b18-20.

Basically: Modern ethics are alienation- and dualism-results. They are interesting enough at that. Nevertheless: If this development is not transcended, not re-integrated into a holistic both evaluative and descriptive account of human practice, then we need to reject it as such. Its results need to be disappointments, disillusionments.

In a healthy community people will be concerned for the flourishing of their fellow-citizens which comes from virtue. But we have lost the meaning of the word 'virtue'. Well:

„The life of the virtues is [today] necessarily afforded a very restricted cultural and social space. In most of the public and most of the private world the classical and medieval virtues are replaced by the meagre substitutes which modern morality affords.“ (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 243)

That's John Stuart Mill's matter. And our own, for political, liberalistic reasons.⁹

1.2. Hans Sedlmayr: Destructive Modern Times

In 1948, Sedlmayr published the book that has assured for him a place in the intellectual history of the 20th century: *Verlust der Mitte. Die bildende Kunst des neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit*. Unfortunately, history since then has overwhelmingly testified to his diagnostic power.

Sedlmayr is an art historian. He sees works of art as 'interpreted time', because these do not give us things, but things as experienced in their depths. If this is so, as it necessarily is at least if and as long as art is seen as mimesis,¹⁰ it is also easy to understand that works of art are also both symptoms and symbols of their times.

With this as thought-ocular, Sedlmayr develops his theory of the 19th and 20th centuries: Around 1760, something really new and not pleasant starts. It has many names and forms of appearance that are not easy to hold together. One could use structuring vocabulary like: loss of the middle, isolating parts and sectors, also arts, autonomizing, leveling, locking up history, distancing or even negating of transcendence.

All this works into the direction of infantilizing, in the case of dadaism already there in the term. Closing oneself off from greater reality leads to man circling around himself, ever more narrowly, more and more deprived of reality. Closing oneself off from transcendence leads to a nihilistic zero-point – there is nothing that man could find in direct introspection.¹¹

⁹ I would like to point to Cowling M., 1963.

¹⁰ I point to the, as one can say, third definition of man in Aristotle: Poetics 4 1148b.

¹¹ Perhaps Plato is the first human being who wrote this down: Alcibiades 132e-133c.

So man cannot stand himself any more. He also cannot stand nature any more. He wants to overcome nature.¹² He wants to overcome himself. This is man's autonomy:

„It seems to be imposed on the 19th and the 20th centuries to demonstrate and refute the falsity of the assumption of autonomous man, in a huge historical experiment and under terrible suffering. For the result of the experiment which is already visible now can only mean that autonomous man does not and cannot exist. [Dem 19. und 20. Jahrhundert scheint es auferlegt zu sein, die Falschheit der Annahme vom autonomen Menschen in einem ungeheuren historischen Experiment unter entsetzlichen Leiden zu demonstrieren und zu widerlegen. Denn der Ausgang des Experiments, der heute schon sichtbar ist, kann nur so verstanden werden, dass es den autonomen Menschen nicht gibt und nicht geben kann.]“ (Sedlmayr, 1998, p. 170)

And:

„Human mind, free-floating as abstract idea, can only assert itself for a short time. If it does not bind itself to God, then it binds itself to realities below the level of mind. [Der als bloße Idee freischwebende autonome Menscheng Geist lässt sich nur kurze Zeit behaupten. Bindet er sich nicht an Gott, so bindet er sich an untergeistige Realitäten.]“ (Sedlmayr, 1978b, p. 88)

If there are non-hypothetically good habits and man is a community being, then there are non-hypothetically good institutions. Because institutions are habits that are objectively there, so transcending and integrating – more or less of course, and on very different levels – individual human beings. The one definitely non-hypothetically good institution is the family. But I am jumping ahead. Institutions.

2. Institutions: Definitively Binding Objectivity

The next step in my narrative is this: We have seen a certain background for problems we have today. The balanced unity of is and ought, normative and descriptive, community and individual seems to be visible in a blurred way only in the 20th century.

2.1. Arnold Gehlen: Detailed, Self-Ordered Objective Structures

One could say that Gehlen stands, almost alone in the 20th century, for extreme institutionalism. He is indispensable. He wrote a number of very

¹² „[He has even] produced surrogates for all bodily and mental needs. [Er hat sich sogar] für alle leiblichen und geistigen Bedürfnisse Surrogate geschaffen.“ (Sedlmayr, 1978a, p. 177)

famous and very important books. I look esp. into *Urmensch und Spätkultur* (1956) here, giving a philosophy of institutions.

Stabilizing human life means institutionalizing. Habitualized human activity, as soon as it is there in a sufficiently culturalized way, challenges us. Institutions bring their norms with them. And they also bring meaning, end, telos. They not only make life possible, but make it rich. Otherwise our ideas and plans stay potential, arbitrary, ephemeral, not lived.

How do we arrive at self-understanding? Direct introspection is impossible. Thus indirectly: We understand ourselves in and via our objects, in distanced, qualified identification, briefly: via representation. In representing something, I do not change it, but identify myself with it. Thus I meet myself in the object. Thus I can understand myself.

Man is the imitating, the representing living being. Imitating rites objectify the otherwise invisible. Gehlen, being wonderfully precise:

„Ritualistic-representing behaviour does no longer, as all other human activity, intend any change in its object, exactly because its content is its object`s being. [Das rituell-darstellende Verhalten geht nicht mehr, wie sonst jedes menschliche Handeln, auf eine Veränderung des Gegenstandes, gerade weil sein Inhalt das Sein desselben ist.]“ (Gehlen, 2004, p. 16)

And it is here that the institutions lie, can be understood, are born.

What is difficult in thinking institutions? This: Instrumental and historical consciousness cannot bring forth final purposes. But without final purposes, without things that are grasped as ends in themselves, it cannot be understood that we act and think from the and within institutions. Without them, institutions` binding force is unintelligible. I do not know many people who understand this: `institutions` binding force`.

With Gehlen, this is possible: without imitating rites no formation of institutions. Representing rites mean objectifying otherwise invisible final ends. (See Gehlen, 2004, p. 16, but also passim) Via imitation and repetition we commit ourselves to them.

Man only arrives at a constant relationship to himself and others indirectly. He needs to find himself again on a detour, via alienation, and it is there that the institutions lie.

„All stability even down and into the heart of the impulses, each and every permanence and continuity of everything that is higher in man depends in the end on them [the institutions]. [Alle Stabilität bis in das Herz der Antriebe hinein, jede Dauer und Kontinuität des Höheren im Menschen hängt zuletzt von ihnen [den Institutionen] ab.]“ (Gehlen, 2004, p. 6)

Institutions are liberating, and this exactly and only due to their obligation-quality. Otherwise, we could never rely on them. Otherwise, we were not free. Freedom lies in necessity.

2.2. Arnold Gehlen: Individualism, Cosmopolitanism, Infantilism

Why are these things important here? For this reason: Cosmopolitanism stands exactly for unmediated universality.

The institutions save man from his own problems. They protect and help and enrich. They do so via giving meaning that is more than subjective.

What destroys institutions is subjectivism, being as such anti-institutionalistic. Gehlen shows this beautifully in his theory of modern art which gives us self-reflective subjectivity meeting itself. Thence nothing objective or binding. Thence the non-committal, universal, cosmopolitanism, primitivism, infantilism, hate against what binds absolutely.

Cultural self-understanding is there in the institutions, not the opinions.

„It is because there are no tasks and ways to form the own self any more that culture in an industrial age is the successive simplification of man. It does not presuppose fighting with oneself any more. [Weil es also keine Aufgabe und keinen Weg mehr gibt, das eigene Selbst zu formen, ist die Industriekultur die einer sukzessiven Vereinfachung des Menschen. Sie setzt den Kampf mit sich nicht mehr voraus.]“ (Delitz, 2011, p. 89)

Leisure society makes in a serious sense man uninteresting to himself.

Cancellation of alienation in no way means finding oneself, becoming an authentic self, pleasant return, but destruction. Gehlen`s texts show that emancipation is anti-human. Without discipline and mission man decays; this as motive must be there as objective and obligatory. Otherwise we are again with the empty, void `man` living in contingencies only.

3. The Family

As I said at the beginning: Thinking the family in the 20th century is difficult. We saw why: The late modern story is a story of emancipation, autonomism, destruction. We needed to clear the way: There is the absolute necessity to re-appropriate institution- and community-thinking. And now we look at some types and lines of thinking the family in a meaningful way in the 20th century. There is first

3.1. Natural and Intellectually Strong Christian Thinking

As to the history of philosophy in the occident at least, since 1500 years at least, it does not exist outside of Christianity in a serious sense. It is therefore not astonishing that even if the most famous thinkers of the 20th century are not first-class Christian thinkers, there are still those who are not willing to cheapen.

3.1.1. C. S. Lewis: Christian Marriage

Lewis, most famous of course for his *Chronicles of Narnia*, published an also great and famous and interesting book in 1952: *Mere Christianity*.

„The Christian idea of marriage is based on Christ’s words that a man and wife are to be regarded as a single organism – for that is what the words ‘one flesh’ would be in modern English. And the Christians believe that when He said this He was not expressing a sentiment but stating a fact – just as one is stating a fact when one says that a lock and its key are one mechanism, or that a violin and a bow are one musical instrument. The inventor of the human machine was telling us that its two halves, the male and the female, were made to be combined together in pairs, not simply on the sexual level, but totally combined. The monstrosity of sexual intercourse outside marriage is that those who indulge in it are trying to isolate one kind of union (the sexual) from all the other kinds of union which were intended to go along with it and make up the total union.“ (Lewis, 2001, pp. 104-105)

He is very good at detecting and writing down things almost from a standing position, so without a run-up, with hardly any preparation, truly meaningful things.

Lewis¹³ shows us an important thing: Without marriage we (or many of us) are fragments. And fragments now not in the sense that a man and a woman, as isolated, are fragments. But they are fragmented in their very community (concubination, whatever), if this union is not as such actualized in a holistic, stable, permanent way – so as institution, as marriage, as family.

3.1.2. Dietrich von Hildebrand: Objectivity Speaks, Being Word-Like

The world is really full of challenges and demands. Reality itself, objectivity speaks, invites. It is good, meaningful in itself. There is the love of friendship and spousal love:

„It can be mutual, in which case it is rooted in the special word which God has spoken between two people.“ (Hildebrand, 2009, p. 357)

Then there is the relationship between parents and children:

„Here the words ‘tua res agitur’ hold in an eminent way; it is my concern to love the child; my own child is an ‘amandus’, one to be loved.“ (Hildebrand, 2009, p. 369)

Exactly. It is there. But that it is there addressing me objectively, and not just in an arbitrary, possibly to be neutralized way, this depends on God having spoken. What is absent in von Hildebrand’s thinking is metaphysics. Therefore his thinking is completely rooted in revelation.

¹³ G.K. Chesterton would be another, though more flippant, reference-point here. I would like to point to this beautiful chapter ‘The Ethics of Elfland’, in: Chesterton, 1908.

3.2. Self-Evident Natural Order

Another interesting thing is contact with reality. Another remaining line in 20th-century thinking, corresponding to this, is the line of those who refuse to ignore reality. Take young so-called intellectuals in an economically well-to-do and highly secular civil society today – it is empirically visible that they often touch reality for the first time when their first child is here. Something really objective, something really challenging, real. Not to be hypothesized, not to be seen as possible, virtual only.

3.2.1. Robert Spaemann: *ordo amoris*

„Education is something self-evident. It only exists in so far and as long as it is self-evident. Education, this is the ways in which adults help young persons to grow into those ways of living that adults think good and right. [Erziehung ist etwas Selbstverständliches. Es gibt sie nur, soweit und solange sie selbstverständlich ist. Erziehung, das sind die Hilfen, die Erwachsene jungen Menschen geben für das Hineinwachsen in jene Lebensformen, die die Erwachsenen für gut und richtig halten.]“ (Spaemann, 2002, p. 490)

I do not want to minimize differences at all, be as sensitive as to differences as possible, but one could directly add and point to Manfred Ritter (see Ritter, 2003) and Odo Marquard (see Marquard, 1986 and 2000) here as well. The explicitly Christian background that we have in Spaemann is missing in them, in the case of Marquard also the explicitly Aristotelian background. But both participate in the strong aspect of nature / life and human life affirming itself in a self-evident way. We should not undervalue or underestimate this.

I look into Spaemann's early book *Glück und Wohlfühlen*, chapter 'Ordo amoris':

„If the realm of rational generalities is not to remain empty, it presupposes the concrete vitality of particular individuals [...] Persons are only as individuals. In this way the order of near and far is an ethically relevant order. [Das Medium vernünftiger Allgemeinheit setzt ja, wenn es nicht leer bleiben soll, die konkrete Lebendigkeit partikularer Individuen voraus [...] Personen sind nur als Individuen. Und so ist die Ordnung von Nähe und Ferne eine sittlich relevante Ordnung.]“ (Spaemann, 1998, p. 146, translation: Spaemann, 2000, p. 110)

Cosmopolitanism destroys everything – it is in favour of mathematical equality and possibility. It is, therefore, directed against order and reality. It is only the structured *ordo amoris* that can make people want and act.

What Spaemann insists on is this: Without concreteness practical philosophy is no longer practical. Action only arises from the recognition that it is me to do this. So this action is an expression of what I am and what I want. And action does not come out of the blue. It always depends on acquired dispositions,

training, history, work – and on those you are acting with, for or against. All human activity has a concrete community resonance.

If we are in no situations, we are not there. Or everywhere. We had creatio ex nihilo above. Omnipresence is added here. An omnipresent human being is required by any ethics deprived of ordo amoris-aspects. An omnipresent human being is not a human being.

3.3. Philosophy

It is difficult to find strong theories of the family in the 20th century on the top-level of philosophy; we have seen why. I point to

3.3.1. Martin Heidegger: First-class Thinking, Mitsein

In Heidegger, there is real substantiality, robust, strong.

„Heidegger tries to leave modern anthropocentrism [...] behind, via new thinking of Being. Man as Dasein becomes the 'Da des Seins', this where Being is there, he becomes a form of 'Lichtung des Seins', opening of Being, and man cannot control Being through his activity. [Heidegger versucht, den modernen Anthropozentrismus [...] durch ein neues Seinsdenken hinter sich zu lassen. Der Mensch als Dasein wird so zum 'Da des Seins', zu einer Gestalt der 'Lichtung des Seins', und der Mensch vermag über das Sein nicht handelnd zu verfügen.]“ (Schnädelbach, 1983, p. 279–280)

Taking this as thought-ocular, it is possible to understand 'Mitsein' in our context. I directly look into *Sein und Zeit* (1927), §§ 25–27, Mit-Sein:

„In clarifying Being-in-the-world we have shown that a bare subject without a world never 'is' proximally, nor is it ever given. And so in the end an isolated 'I' without Others is just as far from being proximally given. [Die Klärung des In-der-Welt-seins zeigte, dass nicht zunächst 'ist' und auch nie gegeben ist ein bloßes Subjekt ohne Welt. Und so ist am Ende ebensowenig zunächst ein isoliertes Ich gegeben ohne die Anderen.]“ (Heidegger, 1984, p. 116, translation Heidegger, 1962, p. 152)

And:

„This 'with' is something of the character of Dasein; the 'too' means a sameness of Being as circumspectively concerned Being-in-the-world. 'With' and 'too' are to be understood existentially, not categorically. By reason of this with-like Being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of Dasein is a with-world. Being-in is Being-with Others. [Das 'Mit' ist ein Daseinsmäßiges, das 'Auch' meint die Gleichheit des Seins als umsichtig-besorgendes In-der-Welt-sein. 'Mit' und 'Auch' sind existenzial und nicht kategorial zu verstehen. Auf dem Grunde dieses mithaften In-der-Welt-seins ist die Welt je schon immer die, die ich mit den Anderen teile. Die

Welt des Daseins ist Mitwelt. Das In-Sein ist Mitsein mit Anderen.]“ (Heidegger, 1984, p. 118, translation: Heidegger, 1962, pp. 154–155)

The world as ‘Mitsein’ is, on a deep level, there in the institutions. It is, on a deep level, the institutions.¹⁴ Heidegger starts to develop Fürsorge; he does not reach the family; but it is a starting point. A starting-point we need. Otherwise we are stuck, as – not surprisingly – many of the sensitive, aware poets and writers describe.

3.3.2. Robert B. Pippin on Henry James: Lost, Apories

The many and wonderful novels by Henry James are necessary food for many. Pippin has set himself the task to develop some of their philosophical implications, in his very interesting book *Henry James and Modern Moral Life*. I put in one passage:

„If there isn’t much of such a commonality, or if what there is is arbitrary, vestigial, narrow-minded, and inadequate to all it must deal with, if the traditional authority of conventional classifications has begun to break down [...], then everything, at least to characters of insight and awareness, is left unresolved and indefinite. Hence the constant question that is made so explicit in the ghost, secret, and mystery tales: Am I imagining this (this ascribed meaning or intention or possibility or presence) or is it there?“ (Pippin, 2000, p. 6)

These are epistemological problems at the same time as practical ones. The instability of our unstable, shifting societies is reflected in mental fragility.

„James’s views parallel many others’ for whom modernization is a kind of trauma and disorienting loss, not mainly a liberation and discovery.“ (Pippin, 2000, p. 5)

„The worries about contingency and indeterminacy“ are some of those „which James treats as historical phenomena, ever more a part of the modern social world.“ (Pippin, 2000, p. 10) They are overcome by unqualifiedly good habits, by virtues. Virtues are learned responses by which we naturally act well. They are learnt within institutions. They are learnt within the family.

3.3.3. Transcending Autonomism

No human being can assume that he invented the family. Compared to it, to put it this way, conventionalism itself is something that was invented. The relationships between man and woman and parents and children and siblings are so fundamental for life and the good life of human beings on this earth that we cannot as it were reach back, get back into a time when these were not yet institutionalized.

¹⁴ Hannah Arendt goes further here, with her understanding, within the context of freedom, of fundamental realities like natality or tradition, see esp. *Vita activa*.

In touching these things we touch the very possibility of human existence in a fundamental sense. So in a sense that is more fundamental than the one that is concerned when 'only' the extinction of human life on this earth due to military confrontation and the like is discussed. Because in such thought experiments it is 'only' the question of existence, not of human essence that is at stake. Whereas the institutional stabilization of the relationships man-woman and parents-children, so the institutional stabilization of the family is something without which the essence of man becomes illegible. Without it, there would be no humans in relation to which one could ask whether they exist or not. It would no longer be possible to state in relation to entities of what kind one is asking questions concerning existence or nonexistence.

In marriage and family we are in serious contact with reality. Where else?

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Myślenie o rodzinie. Niektóre wątki filozofii XX wieku

Streszczenie: Współczesność pod wieloma względami nie jest początkiem, ale końcem. Podobnie jak w przypadku społeczności i rodziny. Dzisiejsze czasy nie są pierwotne, lecz wtórne. Dlatego, aby je zrozumieć, musimy najpierw zobaczyć ich pochodność. To zagadnienie zostało opracowane na podstawie wielu tekstów autorstwa Alasdair MacIntyre i Hansa Sedlmayra.

Aby w dziwnym „dwudziestym wieku” odzyskać dawną siłę myślenia wspólnotowego i rodzinnego, należy skoncentrować się na solidnym rozumieniu instytucji. Arnold Gehlen, ze względu na swoją cenną pracę *Urmensch und Spätkultur*, w której m.in. w miejsce „bytu” wprowadza pojęcie instytucji, jest proponowany jako niezwykle pomocny w zrozumieniu wiążącej mocy instytucji. Ponadto wskazuje się punkty wyjścia do myślenia o rodzinie, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem książek i przemyśleń takich autorów, jak m.in. C.S. Lewisa, Roberta Spaemanna i Martina Heideggera.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzina, filozofia, XX wiek, autonomizm, instytucja, Arystoteles, MacIntyre, Sedlmayr, Gehlen.