



## KAPITEL 6 / CHAPTER 6<sup>6</sup>

### CATEGORY OF 'POWER': HISTORICO-PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECT AS A PROLEGOMENON TO IDEA OF BALANCE

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*Noli turbare circulos meos!*

#### Introduction

The concept of power is the most *seducing* and according to our chaos/order theory is a flaw in the mind when not examined. And it is that *seduction* of that concept what is the trait of the flawed mind. 'Power' *per se*, as a category or concept, is neither good nor bad in terms of ethics. The power is like technology, is qualified morally by motifs and aims of the user because it is just a tool or means.

Why 'power' is an attractive concept? Because it clearly is the root and source of action upon something and, in our terminology, is the principle of ordering. To give a definition to 'power' is to say that power is a capacity to order any external, objective data to an infinite extent. Here the term 'infinite' is what, in its turn, makes 'power' attractive. By addition of this term – infinitely – we differentiate 'power' from ordering. An ordering is not supposed to be an 'infinite' capacity. Term 'ordering' is less specific and wider in its content but it is not that *seducing* like 'power' because despite its local character (a locality described in terms of Whitehead's presentational immediacy).

Why 'power' is a sign of a *flaw* in function of mind? Let us consider this concept from particular to abstract, inductively. At first glance, power can bring wealth (in general term), security – it gives a sense to thrive and survive, to be safe and sound, to live good, to live well, to live better. These are characteristics that evolutionary were *conditio sine qua non* for the evolvement of species. The power can be considered not only as being physically fit, but as a capital in economics that provides with opportunities. Here capital is a passive form of power that can guarantee actual achievements. In some situations this power can be important as a passive wealth (real estate property) or active wealth (a financial investment and goods turnover). To have mighty position in this financial sector may mean to use another form of power – an influence, an eloquence or just to be physically strong at right time and at right place. So, one form of power turns to another, quite qualitatively different form of power. And we can easily observe that these forms of 'power' can be different qualitatively. So, we gradually arrive at conclusion that *forms* of 'power' are not power *per se*. That is, having capital or being a strong athlete is not what defines 'power' as it is. We are

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dealing here only with forms of power which are derivative from the concept of power. Now, what power conceptually is? What the *root* of the power?

## 6.1. Power and Greek term ‘Paschein’

In our consideration, we have to admit that Aristotle in his *The Categories* (from *Organon*) was very fortunate in his postulation of the category (one of ten) as “suffering” or “undergo.” In English speaking area this category traditionally translated as *being affected* (or “affection” or “passion”) and both in Slavic and English translation can be misinterpreted as having emotional tone. Academic professionals in philosophy know that this specific category is directly related to its counterpart – category of *doing*. It is well known that categories, as logical entities, are binary structures (*chaos and order, quality and quantity* etc.). So, if the philosopher speaks about metaphysics, not lyrics, we have to interpret this binary category in relation to its counterpart (*doing-being affected*). The benefit to stick to metaphysics and not only to lyrics here is that metaphysical interpretation can also include any lyrical cases (as accidents. – Why Aristotle’s another category – *substance* – is not followed by opposite one – *accident?*). Categories, as it is well known, are binary terms with extremely wide meaning. So, the category of *power* in our consideration is not what we see in actual world when one thing affects the other in particular way. Form of particular power is not interesting for our purposes since it does not give the answer about its source and thus, it is not a real power since it is just one of the links in the chain of the power-related events. Philosophy (as it was stated by Jose Ortega-y-Gasset) must reveal the sources of its knowledge. The same refers to power and power might easily be turned to fragility in the centuries of psychoanalysis and at times of complex global relationships and technologies.

*Paschein* (πάσχειν) – the reception of change from some other object – the meaning Aristotle used when he introduced his category of *being affected*. That ‘paschein’ is also translated as “to suffer” and we appreciate this Greek word because originally it does not have strictly mechanical meaning but more organic (personal feelings and general laws). Now, we noted that normally each category has its counterpart and it is binary. Sometimes, there are exceptions and category is unique, has no counterpart or, on in other cases, categories exist as kind of triplets. These last ones can be found in E. Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (Transcendental Analytic, Method of the Discovery of all Pure Concepts of the Understanding, Section 3) (Kant, 196, 70-72).



## 6.2. Kantian and Locke's categories as some context

Kant admits that he borrows term “*categories*” and here his intention is “originally the same as his” (*ibid.*, 72) and Kant develops four sets of categories. These are remarkable place in the history of philosophy so we think it would be worth to represent these sets as they are:

### I Of Quantity

Unity.

Plurality.

Totality.

### II Of Quality

Reality.

Negation.

Limitation.

### III Of Relation

Of Inherence and Subsistence (*substantia et accidentis*).

Of Causality and Dependence (cause and effect).

Of Community (reciprocity between the active and the passive).

### IV Of Modality

Possibility. Impossibility.

Existence. Non-Existence.

Necessity. Contingency.

Aristotle's ten categories: *substance, quantity, quality (qualification), relative, where, when, being-in-a-position, having, doing, being affected*.

We can see that these sixteen categories (3+3+3+3+4) are somewhat similar to Aristotelian and just put in different structure that shows certain priority to some of them in terms of generality. For instance, while Greek philosophers cannot imagine more important category among others like *Being* (in Aristotle it is *substance*, to some extent), Kant seemingly suggests to split *Being* into ‘unity’ (quantity), ‘reality’ (quality), ‘*substantia et accidentis*’ (relation), and ‘existence – non-existence’ (modality). No wonder – Kant deconstructs ontological approach for the benefit of epistemological and phenomenological: things are not what they are – they are what



we perceive. So, careful reader may notice that four main categories (*quantity, quality, relation, and modality*) are categories of perception. The categories any thinker introduces are kind of core (like Central Processing Unit, CPU in your device), a membrane of which fluctuates back and forth in the way like our thought moves from one category to its counterpart (e.g., *quality-quantity* etc.) and by doing so, develops cosmological picture (we are not likely to associate mind/brain with computer, though. Consider this example as an illustration of binary structure of categories and antithetical character of mind only). But where is the category of Power in this scheme?

It is clear that what in Aristotle is category of *relative* in Kant it is *III Of Relation*, and where in Aristotle is *doing*, in Kant it is *of Causality and Dependence (cause and effect)*. Here is where we may find our category of *power*. But John Locke expanded this category and suggested to consider it in cases of human being (or of any alive creature) where self-causation takes place (we may have the power to rise our hand and some external forces may rise the same object – our hand – and these are different kinds of power (or volition). There is a power to act upon something and there might be a power to restrict ourselves, the power to direct our stream of thoughts toward some object and the power to direct the stream of thought toward other object, the power of forbearance takes place among all other forms of power: we can stop please ourselves at any moment (and the author of this monograph has to admit that it is wondering if the nature – the world outside our Self – granted us an *absolute power to forbearance* isn't it? Is it in our power to reject to feel any pleasure?):

“a Man has a power to think, or not to think; to move, or not to move, according to the preference or direction of his own mind, so far is a Man *Free*. (E2–5 II.xxi.8: 237)

So that the *Idea* of *Liberty*, is the *Idea* of a Power in any Agent to do or forbear any particular Action, according to the determination or thought of the mind, whereby either of them is preferr'd to the other. (E2–5 II.xxi.8: 237)

*Liberty is not an Idea belonging to Volition*, or preferring; but to the Person having the Power of doing, or forbearing to do, according as the Mind shall chuse or direct. (E2–5 II.xxi.10: 238)

*Liberty*...is the power a Man has to do or forbear doing any particular Action, according as its doing or forbearance has the actual preference in the Mind, which is the same thing as to say, according as he himself *wills* it. (E1–5 II.xxi.15: 241)” (Rickless, 2020).

Locke associates the category of *power* with *liberty* but the idea of the category of power does not contradict to Aristotle and Kant mentioned. The difference is that Aristotle and Kant suggest more clear but narrowed, limited, definite idea of power (*doing*). And the task of philosophy, as Whitehead reminds (*The Aim of Philosophy*):

“There is an insistent presupposition continually sterilizing philosophic thought. It is the



belief, the very natural belief, that mankind has consciously entertained all the fundamental ideas which are applicable to its experience. Further it is held that human language, in single words or in phrases, explicitly expresses these ideas. I will term this presupposition, *The Fallacy of the Perfect Dictionary*” (Whitehead, 1938, 235)

So, we have to develop the definition of the category since we assume that the *Fallacy of the Perfect Dictionary* might take place. This means we are obliged to commit what Whitehead implicitly suggests – to find more adequate definition – and what John Locke already did – to make some step further in description of the category so that it not only fit principle of non-contradiction but also embraced other instances of its use.

### **6.3. Power as an Idea: its Physical and Mental Poles**

On the one hand, *power* as an idea, cannot be relative to any other ideas and supposedly, the *power* – so far as it is power – must be considered without contradiction only if it is explained as a kind of source, not an outcome of any other reasons/causes (otherwise, the *power* should be misplaced with its counterpart, an effect). On the other hand, so far as we consider power as the source (as the will, or as source of action etc.) we must explain the root, the origin. And so far as we already mentioned the depth of power in terms of Locke, not only as a cause, we may find that there might be multiple origins of power. The definition and certainty required by theory here developing stumbles upon multiplicity of the truths in actual world.

Power arises and falls. What makes power to increase? For the sake of simplicity, consider power in the context of athlete’s strength. What makes muscles to grow? Is that because of training? – Yes, but it is not training alone: there once was a decision to start some training. In Locke’s view, it was power to make a decision to do some physical exercises. That was power of mind first, not the power of muscles. But not everyone is capable to make a long-term decision to undergo physical training beyond current limits. Why some people decide to do that? One can argue, that it was parent’s advice to grow in career of athlete. Some other people might be right saying that among all other options in young life it was the best and some may admit it might be considered by the subject as simpler activity than learning new things at school and academia etc. Well, how then choice of the easiest or more comfortable option helps to grow physical power? It seems contradictory to choose easiest way to get strength or power. Psychologists may say that it was easiest in terms of already developed neurons that genetically may not be prone to work on abstract, highly intellectual



matters. But this is also half-truth. And this sounds contradictory to the theory: what is easier brings what is not affordable for many. So, muscles grown at gym are not the right example of the power as a category (for instance, will the motivation to have good career and preference of more comfortable set of activity, help to use grown muscles in an extreme situation – to risk the life? In some cases it will (and it is always better to be physically fit than not to be when it comes to extreme situations) but in some cases it will not since so-called *overall adaptational syndrome* (term used in sports which means our organisms are capable of performing and enduring specific, limited amount of exercises or actions: we cannot endure pain at gym and become less susceptible to the feeling of discomfort or pain in other activities or, of an athlete gets best results in sprint running that does not mean they have equal chances in marathon competitions. *We are bound to limits both in our physical constitution and, very likely, in our motivation, which is part of our mental constitution*) might be exhausted: human body cannot go beyond its limits when stakes are not too much extreme. A known fact: when male gym visitors attend tattoo salons, they reportedly feel more pain than young women who are not trained to tolerate extreme conditions. So, the corollary here is that these primitive explanations partially prove that the power is not something we see among external objects but it can lie somewhere in motivation, in certain inner reasons or causes. Taking into account cases with physical training and power/strength, we may likely to agree that person with certain psychological/emotional trauma in the past is capable to endure extreme physical load more than a person who is motivated by some achievements only. So, power comes from something ‘negative’ (here ‘negative’ is used in metaphysical sense – *ex contrario*, not in a bad manner or so).

If we consider the power of forbearance, we may find out that not only power to act but also not to act upon comes from something “apophatic” (definition by denying: “I will do this because I don’t want something to happen”... “I don’t want to be the kindest person in the world but I *don’t* want to feel any burden,” “I need to earn more money not because I want to be rich but because I don’t want my family starving” etc. Originally this term comes from theology and refers to definitions of God through negating concepts that might be applied to Him because to assert something in His nature is to apply limited ideas of human mind).

From this might follow that the source (if any) of power must be found somewhere in the depths of the Self. What motivates to get certain form of power (financial, physical, intellectual etc.) is both within and comes from external world, though. And what can certainly motivate one person may not work for another. This can be explained by different set of values: we may feel about our losses differently – for one the death of their wife is a tragedy, for another it might be relief. So, it is relational and



to explain our idea in formulae will not work.

For the sake of clarity, let us consider power in application to physical force/strength and intellectual/aesthetical. On average, we all normally know what to do when it comes to physical achievement of power: go to gym, overcome distance running, endure pain and gradually increase these trainings. It is about planning. Biology and medical studies will explain how the strength achieved. It explains to some extent. What if I suggest that physical strength/power grows differently for different people in similar circumstances (if they eat same food and sleep same amount of hours etc.). It is not only defined by genetics. What if I suggest that the strength on the so called physical pole of human being is proportional to the awareness in so-called mental pole (to put it simply – in mind) of the weakness and limits? That is, we may force ourselves thinking that we are weak and that does not mean we are automatically become stronger without any physical exercises. Why? – Because to really being aware of our limits is to feel them physically – cause and effect needed here for true and authentic knowledge of limits, not just belief. When I make myself to think that according to certain theory I have to consider myself as a weak (in order to, according to same theory, get stronger), I rather believe in that theory first and I subconsciously *know* that I am not truly considering myself as weak and also, in the depths of my Self, I am rather aware of my true goals (to get stronger by using some mental tricks suggested by certain theory), not of what I am planning to think of or believe. Same things happen in mind when it come to religious practice which requires foster specific mindset (to cultivate love of neighbor, of God etc.): if we are “working on our mind” to develop certain system of thoughts or feelings, we use theory that sets requirements as a tool only to achieve our personal goals. For instance, a monk or priest wants to grow spiritually or proceed in their career. His mind, before accepting a teaching or prescriptions, already knows what it really wants (even if it is called “salvation” or in any different word) and therefore, makes a decision to follow that teaching or theory or prescription. But when the theory requires them to think of something specific first (e.g., to love God, neighbor etc.) and the follower tries to put it into the focus of their mind, they will notice – if they honest enough with themselves – that what in their focus is a specific goal, the wish that was a real reason to follow that specific theory (religion, teaching etc.). This goal can be selfish or altruistic but without that goal there is no reason to follow any teaching. Even penance or voluntary physical suffering, planned to be imposed upon, already fraught with hidden feeling of pleasure: if it is known that certain monk had comparatively larger amount of penance, then another one, who wants to exceed that amount, is doing nothing but sport that brings news about its achievement and chance to have higher rank (and what is less important in



the system of penance than rank?) and all these turns to satisfaction, to an intricate sophisticated pleasure hidden behind a system of stereotypical set of things that, apparently give obvious pleasure or not. Here we can define the principle of the consciousness ordering its chaotic thoughts and feelings: ***consciousness is always beating itself*** (it falls flat in substitution of its primary goals with theoretical new ones) yet, that is completely enough for its function and this is supposed to be another image of balance in mind (conscious and subconscious).

This can be illustrated in more clear way if we continue considering our physical and mental poles in relation to the category of power. We already explained that order on physical pole requires just certain plan of activities. E.g., if we want to grow like an athlete, we can follow coach's advices and within certain time span we may achieve some goals (here: order of what was not ordered, in our terminology). It is remarkable for our purpose to note that many of advices would require not only to do something but rather to limit ourselves from the activities normally used to do (spending time with friends, watching movies at late hour that may prevent us from good sleep, avoid certain food etc.). And this means that physical power during the ordering of our activities is achieved at the cost of voluntary deprivation of ourselves from that was considered to be a favorable, or expected, or, in other words, preferable state of things (amount of pleasure that we used to). This is what Henry Bergson in his *Creative Evolution* called 'order' (a child and an adult may have different views on the room with toys scattered around: for child they are expected to be scattered and this is their 'order,' and for an adult it might be considered to be kind of 'chaos'). So, this physical achievements of certain order (result, pleasure, satisfaction) are characterized by some plan that involves an exchange between previous set of activities and new ones, or in other words, between one order and another for the subject.

## **Conclusions.**

The category of power is derivative concept. Historically, it is similar to Aristotelian concept of action but as an entire category it is conditioned by two closely-related categories - *action* and *being affected*. This is what makes us think that the power should be considered as an outcome or these two categories and it must be considered in balance with them. Power, in its broadest sense, is just another side of passivity, of being affected and cannot be fully developed without its counterpart – "fragility". The idea of balance in relation to power becomes more evident when we consider power through the prism of so-called physical and mental poles. And these last we aim to explain in our further research and next publication *Power as Art: an Explanation in terms of Chaos and Order*.