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ETHICS OF POLITICS IN CONTEXT OF THE PRESENT

Summary. Ethics of politics focuses on the relationship between politics and morality, deals with principles and norms of political order and action. The politics cannot be exempted neither from morality, moral standards, nor principles. Politicians, political parties, and political institutions that manipulate the truth, bribery, corruption, a strong ruthless governmental politics, as well as mass media manipulation, need to seek recourse in shifting to moral values, and to generally binding moral norms. Our effort will be to explore the ethics of politics at the level of ethics of political institutions, as well as at the level of the ethics of political virtues, i.e. ethics of politics at the level of an individual, moral quality of those acting, with a focus on a politician's work ethics, which demands to create the widest possible space for the basic moral virtues.

Key words: ethics of politics, ethics of virtues, ethics of institutions, the work ethics of a politician, virtues

WSPÓŁCZESNE KONTEKSTY ETYKI POLITYKI

Streszczenie. Etyka polityki skupia swą uwagę na relacjach pomiędzy polityką i moralnością, a także zajmuje się zasadami ładu politycznego i działań politycznych. Polityka nie może być wolna od moralności, norm moralnych i zasad. Politycy, partie polityczne, instytucje polityczne, które manipulują prawdą, posługują się przekupstwem i korupcją, realizują bezwzględną politykę rządową, a także manipulują środkami masowego przekazu, powinni zwrócić się ku wartościom moralnym i powszechnie obowiązującym normom moralnym. Podejmiemy próbę poszukiwania etyki polityki na obszarze etyki instytucji politycznych, jak również na obszarze etyki cnót politycznych, tj. etyki na poziomie jednostki, moralnej jakości osób działających, skupiając uwagę na etyce pracy polityka, co wymaga stworzenia możliwie najszerszej przestrzeni podstawowych cnót moralnych.

Słowa kluczowe: etyka polityka, etyka cnót, etyka instytucji, etyka pracy polityka, cnoty.

Ethics of politics focuses on the relationship between politics and morality, deals with the principles and norms of political order and activity. Its main task is solving problems of human society, where a failure of politics can take place. The politics itself cannot be exempt from morality, moral standards and principles, even though, or maybe because of that, it does not have an appropriate place in politics very often. It can be shown also on the situation in the Slovak Republic, where credibility of the state and public institutions, i.e. of the political system, is weakened. People are starting to get tired of the stereotype, which offers even a system of several political parties, which follow their own good and the good of their sponsors on the first place. Democracy cannot be idealized; we have to see also its weaknesses brought by modern global society. Politicians, political parties, political institutions, who manipulate the truth, as well as bribery, corruption, ruthless politics of countries, mass media manipulation require to search for a recourse towards transformation to moral virtues and values to generally binding moral norms. That is why our efforts will be exploring ethics of politics through social ethics on the level of ethics and political institutions over individual ethics at the level of political institutions ethics, virtues, i.e. ethics policy at the level of the individual, the moral quality of the acting with a focus on work ethics of a politician, where it is necessary to create the widest possible space for the basic moral virtues. Social ethics is an independent applied ethics; in the broadest understanding, as social ethics we understand any ethics, a focus of which lies in the reasoning and interpretation of ethical and moral problems. "A subject of the social ethics is therefore a current moral and ethical problems of the present, their critical and objective evaluation, explanation and reasoning in terms of broader social contexts and laws"¹ As one of the current moral and ethical issues currently, there can be such problem areas classified as ethics and human survival, ethics and war, ethics and information society (internet), ethics of advertising and billboards, ethics in contemporary sport, ethics and multiculturalism, minorities ethics, feminist ethics, and last, but not least, the ethics of politics.²

We agree with the opinion, that ethics of politics has to focus both on ethics of political virtues (justice, wisdom, conscience, law, responsibility, obligation) and also on ethics of political institutions (questions of economic and social importance, politics of family, environment politics, moral aspects of progress, international politics ethics etc), while ethics of virtues and ethics of institutions are necessarily correlated. Virtues and institutions support each other: virtue as an inner stabilization of human behaviour, institution as an outer stabilization.³ A politician should not only be wise, but just, great-hearted, and peace-loving. There are no special morals; a politician cannot have different morals than other people. An effort to detach a state's morality from individual morality is a great danger for democracy.⁴

¹ Fobel P.: Sociálna etika ako aplikovaná etika, [In:] Všeobecná a aplikované etiky. Časť II. Aplikované etiky, Univerzita Mateja Bela Banská Bystrica, Aprint Žiar n/Hronom 2002, p. 21

² Ibidem, p. 23.

³ Sutor B.: Politická etika. Dobrá Kniha, Trnava 1999.

⁴ Küng, 2000, p. 104.

Saying, that politics corrupts nature of people working in politics, should be amended also by saying that corrupted personalities corrupt politics. In ethics of politics, on one hand we must, through social ethics, ask about quality of laws, rules, and institutions; on the other hand, through the individual ethics, about the basic moral quality of the acting ones. Virtues and institutions support each other; virtues represent the inner stabilization of human behaviour. Institutions and laws the outer stabilization. Ethics of politics must be both ethics of institutions and ethics of virtues. While ethics of politics does not provide final solutions, but describe tasks as calls for our political institutions – social ethics, as well as our stances – individual ethics⁵

It is our effort, within the ethics of politics, to focus on ethics of virtues, i.e. ethics of politics on level of an individual (individual ethics), and to try to draw basic moral virtues, which shape the pillars for professional ethics in politics, for ethics of work of the politician's professional ethics. The role of politicians is to take responsibility for the public good, resulting from the fact that they have special tools of power, which they can abuse for their own benefit, while hurting many people. That is why there is an important task before them - to take care, so the politics moves within its own goals and within valid visions of a concrete society about the good and the evil.⁶ Since the goal of politics is an effort to ensure the public good on the first place, we have to ask ourselves, what virtues are needed for those, who want to enter politics and to operate there.

Ethics of virtues focuses within Aristotle's thoughts about positive character features of a moral actor, his stances, and opinions; as a theory, it is based on human characteristics with a task to cultivate and to show through a moral decision and activity, to lead subjects toward morally right acts, "a praise belongs to a virtue – thanks to it, we are able act morally".⁷ It values the actor himself/herself, not their acting, while coming out of ethics' tradition. It is necessary to consider it as a failure, when an inexhaustible amount of virtues is being offered from different positions, which leads to absence of consensus regarding the virtues, that could be considered as cardinal, which we would be able to agree on. When forming his own ethical approach, similar questions were faced by a follower of Aristotelian ethics A. MacIntyre. Is it possible to come to a formulation of any such thing as a unified concept of virtue, which could become the constitutive core of our ethics adequate time? Based on generalization of the results of historical analysis of individual concepts of virtues A. MacIntyre came to defining a central concept of virtue, so that it is comprehensible through an effort to explain it on the background of clarification of certain features of social and moral life (distinguishes three stages in the development of the concept of virtue – practice or practical action, narrative order of an individual human life, and moral tradition). We agree with the opinion of A. MacIntyre, that morality, within ethics of virtues, should be put into a social context and

⁵ Sutor B.: Op.cit.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Aristoteles: Etika Nikomachova, Kalligram, Bratislava 2011, p. 48.

traditions. This consideration represents recognition of the role of virtues in a human life on both an individual, as well as a social level, that is why it has its own use in the ethics policy via the ethics of virtues, as well as via the ethics of institutions. In a partial definition of a virtue, MacIntyre notes that "virtue is acquired human quality, possession and application of which allows us to reach those forms of good that internally belong to practice, and the absence of which makes this achievement impossible."⁸ Within work ethics, as professional ethics, we will focus on allocating the essential virtues, which should characterize politics; we will build also upon some ethical codes of a politician (the Code of Ethics of a politician in the Czech Republic, the Code of Ethics for Politicians, USA, the model Code of Ethics of a civil servant in Russian Federation). A classic way to develop the importance of ethics of virtue for politics lies in the teaching of four main virtues, wisdom, justice, courage and temperance.⁹ These virtues can be assigned by others in a positive meaning: honesty, dignity, humanism, selflessness, duty, responsibility, fairness, courtesy, kindness, attention, patience, tolerance, respect for customs and traditions; in a negative meaning: refusing rudeness, humiliation of a human dignity, tactlessness, deliberate (intentional) discrimination, greed, refusing of favouritism and oneself, as well as that of their family, close friends. In this context, we can talk about so-called secondary virtues, such as B. Sutor ranks diligence, neatness, accuracy, performance of duties, as well as distinguishes between "public" and "private" virtues. For Christian Europe in a globalized world, he asks up to what extent the three fundamental Christian virtues - faith, hope, love – can complement or exceed major natural virtues, whether they make sense for politics over, on political actions and decision-making.¹⁰

We cannot idealize democracy, it is necessary also to focus of its weaker sides, which take place in the modern society. These include following one's own good at the expense of the common good, fighting of interest groups for power, distribution of the social product at the expense of requirements for promotion of the common good, and bringing more emotions into political fights, thus ignoring solving real problems of society.¹¹

We must not overlook the fact that there are also individuals and various groups that are financially and ideologically guided by institutions, which fight for the interests of multinational companies that have a significant international status and a great financial, economic and political power, abusing the democratic state of law; their aim is to circumvent the control mechanisms of the state and to promote the idea of weakening of the executive power of the state in favour of the activities of competing institutions.¹²

⁸ MacIntyre A.: *Ztráta ctností. K morální krizi současnosti*. Oikoymenh, Praha 2004. p. 224.

⁹ Sutor B.: *Op.cit.*

¹⁰ *Ibidem.*

¹¹ *Ibidem*; Ivanička K.: *Globalizácia a národný štát v novej paradigme XXI. storočia* [In:] *Politické vedy*. Roč. 5, č. 1-2, 2002) .

¹² Ivanička, K.: *Op.cit.*, p.137, 142.

The aim of the multinational organizations is "through the way of privatization to seize control of natural resources, secondary sector, banking and control of elected institutions in the nation states. They influence to raise the price of capital and thus to disadvantage of domestic entrepreneurs. Under the title of high costs of new technologies, they introduce high prices for patents and worsen the balance of nation states. By acting simultaneously in many countries, they use tricks in the system of taxation and excessive drain on profits of nation states, which then show a lack of investment for development. Released high amounts for corruption of national governments and ministries, thus condemning their own voters".¹³ According to Koloman Ivanička, "The current globalization is not global at all, nor democratic, but rather prefers a minority in getting the benefits and excludes majority".¹⁴ The real life shows that the current globalization creates and deepens inequality (a Czech professor J. Keller uses the term "asymmetry") between those who receive and those who create.¹⁵ Politicians, political parties: "If they lie to our nation in the face, if they take the blame of manipulating the truth, corruption or ruthless politics of power, both the domestic and the foreign one, they have lost their credibility and deserve the loss of their offices and their voters. On the contrary, public opinion should support those politicians who dare to tell people the truth always "¹⁶

It must also cover the mass media, which have their freedom to inform guaranteed, but these are not any rights without duties; the mass media do not stand above morality, they do not have rights without responsibilities. They are obliged to honour human dignity, human and civil rights, basic human values. They cannot, or "they have no right to violate person's private sector or misrepresent and manipulate public opinion".¹⁷ The reign of media, also called mediocracy, for example via the internet, poses a danger of destruction of any state today. It is necessary to prevent that several self-styled institutions manipulate media exclusively for their private objectives, exclude the use of whole nations and operate without checking the general public. Nevertheless, the online media, which expand access to information on one hand, they can participate in creating common values, on the other hand, they are abused by commercialization for fraud, pornography, crime, spreading of extremism and supporting terrorism, anti-humanism, spreading anti-national, anti-state information, which weaken national states and are directed to destruction of the state as a whole.¹⁸

We should be looking for a way out in setting highest values, generally binding moral standards, by which all the political forces would feel bound, which have a place in the social life on the national level, as well as on the level of the international community. The attempt Hans Küng to create a world ethos, which could include at least the minimum moral values on

¹³ Ibidem, p. 143-144.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 144.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 144; Singer, p. 41, p.144; Keller, 16.3.2010, Rolný, Lacina, p. 25, 45).

¹⁶ Küng, 2000, p. 143.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ivanička K.: Op.cit.

which the international community can agree, was such a bold bid. "The values, a state is being built on, on which it orients its politics, can only come out from the society, from the beliefs that are deeply rooted in it, from people's attitudes, from the orientation of the will and interests of key social groups".¹⁹ That is also why, at the present time of so-called "advanced" democracies, at the time of deepening globalization, it is necessary to cultivate respect of young people towards their homeland, towards their statehood, the history, the traditions, towards creating moral role-models, and to build values and morals of our changing society on these pillars. It can be helped by appropriate ethical bases, which are offered by those calling on the nation's conscience, who are themselves the conscience of the nation. They are concerned about the issues of tending of the current World, Europe, and Slovakia, the same way as we are.

We are closing this account by words of a Slovak writer Ladislav Ťažký, who aptly reflected the fundamental principles of the political ethos of Slovak politician, Slovak citizen, and institutions. "I beg piteously, so the Slovak nation, not only can, but also wants to proudly carry their name as all the Europeans do, to aggrandize its fatherland and language, so it guards its inviolability and integrity under the Slovak flag, so it learns its history, lives cultural, moral, human-dignified life in fraternity and mutual respect with other nations, particularly with its neighbours. So that it is not ruled by any other nation anymore and so it never even lays a finger other nation. So that it is proud of its genius, love and skills, and not of a brute force and arrogance, so that it is not poor-minded, and so it lives in sufficiency of body and richness of spirit without looting, taking other's assets, occupation or stealing of their land, and enjoying the country's wealth more than others, or at the expense of others." "Go, Slovak, through the world and treat his wounds, shed a tear over grievances of the poor, tinker bursting Earth and the moral jar of humanity."²⁰

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¹⁹ Sutor B.: Op.cit., p. 184; McIntyre, Op.cit.

²⁰ Ťažký L.: Spisovateľ, tvorba a čnosť. Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa, Nitra, 2006, p. 56, 57.

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Omówienie

Etyka polityki skupia swą uwagę na relacjach pomiędzy polityką i moralnością, a także zajmuje się zasadami ładu politycznego i działań politycznych. Polityka nie może być wolna od moralności, norm moralnych i zasad. Politycy, partie polityczne, instytucje polityczne, które manipulują prawdą, posługują się przekupstwem i korupcją, realizują bezwzględną politykę rządową, a także manipulują środkami masowego przekazu, powinni zwrócić się ku wartościom moralnym i powszechnie obowiązującym normom moralnym. Podejmiemy próbę poszukiwania etyki polityki na obszarze etyki instytucji politycznych, jak również na obszarze etyki cnót politycznych, tj. etyki na poziomie jednostki, moralnej jakości osób działających, skupiając uwagę na etyce pracy polityka, co wymaga stworzenia możliwie najszerszej przestrzeni podstawowych cnót moralnych.