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**Attitudinal Gratitude.
An Essay in Political Science¹**

Attitudinal gratitude as part of political life takes place within and among political parties. Metaphorically speaking, attitudinal gratitude is the 'oil' in the gear of a complex, friction-ridden political system. As for Max Weber to govern needs obedience, so democracy needs attitudinal gratitude. The 'business of democracy'² requires attitudinal gratitude as a component.

In the discourse of political science the significance of attitudinal gratitude depends on the specific theory. First of all there is the extreme concept of politics by Carl Schmitt who saw the distinction between friend and enemy as the 'concept of the political'.³

Secondly there is the matter-of-fact description of the motivation of politicians by Max Weber: 'striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power'.⁴

Finally there is the thought that the function of politics is to smooth the clash of interests.⁵

The more one prefers consensus in one's concept of politics the more importance attitudinal gratitude becomes.

What is attitudinal gratitude? It is an 'inner overall mood', an 'effect influencing a relationship beyond the time when it arises ... after the process of giving and receiving is finished'.⁶

The phenomenon of attitudinal gratitude exists in individuals and in groups. Its foundation is the relationship which a person has to another person or group. But attitudinal gratitude is not the same as behavioral gratitude which is the internal answer to a specific case in someone's favor. We see attitudinal gratitude as an anthropological constant. It is part of the 'habitus' as behavioral gratitude is part of 'actus', and the latter depends on the socialization and the situation. At first we have behavioral gratitude which is focussed on specific favors. It is followed by attitudinal gratitude as a general attitude to the other person(s). One could almost relate attitudinal gratitude more or less to emotions and behavioral gratitude to rational behaviour.

Attitudinal gratitude is a much weaker political factor than behavioral gratitude. Nevertheless, it has its significance; it is necessary in a democratic system, it is vital in a human society. Therefore, it has a 'productive capacity'.⁷

Political actions can't be understood by rational standards alone. For instance, emotions are important, too. There are two opposite styles for political activity: One is the thoughtful evaluation of situations, the other is the intuitive-affective reaction. We are convinced that for the understanding of human behaviour both rational and non-rational

motives should be taken into consideration - and many actions striking the outside observer as 'irrational' might not be perceived in such a negative light by the actors themselves.

We want to further clarify our distinction between attitudinal gratitude and behavioral gratitude with an example where the latter has a function in the life of politicians. Behavioral gratitude is the essence in old-boy networks. These networks are based on the expectation of favors out of a sense of mutual obligation and the principal of quid pro quo.

Attitudinal gratitude can include a wider array of different persons than the sentiments of comradeship, cooperativeness and solidarity. Even the political opponent can occasionally be an object of attitudinal gratitude. On the other side, attitudinal gratitude is marked by a lesser degree of emotional bond than the sentiments mentioned above. But we assume that even attitudinal gratitude unites persons, because it has 'easily an atmosphere of an indissoluble tie'.⁸

And we differentiate between attitudinal gratitude and sympathy, which is a spontaneous reaction, related to the appearance of the other person.

There are five prerequisites for attitudinal gratitude to play a decisive role in the political arena:

Essentials of the social existence are a longing for being close to fellow human beings and a yearning for personal freedom, are the desire to be part of a group, and the fear of being controlled there. Human beings are subject to these tensions as they behaviour oscillates between these extremes. However, political activity has a bias: It is a common experience that people with power are lonely persons. Therefore, it is the successful zoon politikon (political animal), and as that an especially social being, that step by step has to say goodbye to the community of friends and acquaintances. And because of the community-orientation of gratitude, it can compensate the person affected - if only by autosuggestion.

Another prerequisite is the psychological and emotional balance of an individual, an equilibrium of positive and negative feelings. One cannot harbour only destructive feelings, especially for a longer period of time.

Part of a balanced character is that feelings are in general not too extreme, not too positive regarding one person and not too negative towards another person.

Isn't there the general consensus that a policy for the welfare of people can only be shaped by politicians who, in a positive sense, stay human? This continued humanness is central to our ideal of a mature personality, an ideal also shared by politicians.

In politics we have the necessity of a constantly and close dealing with each other which is a result of the political machinery where power requires and causes the concentration of forces and people. In past ages it was a court society, today it is a parliament with its milieu of politicians, lobbyists, senior civil servants and journalists. In this day-to-day

routine of politics the regular contacts rub the edges of different beliefs and character traits plain smooth. Nevertheless the essence for politics is conflict among politicians, within one party⁹ or between parties. A democratic political culture has a canon of values with a moral code of politeness which includes attitudinal gratitude.¹⁰

Attitudinal gratitude cannot barely be recognized from the outside. To substitute that weakness, we use as an approach the question what causes behavioral gratitude. Such reasons are a relatively pleasant working atmosphere, that one can have a drink with one another, that parliamentary manners, habits, and customs are followed, that secrets are kept, that agreements are respected, even among political opponents.

In parliamentarism as a process based on compromise, attitudinal gratitude is the acceptance of mutual dependence. Maybe receptions and honours have a function as an institutionalized expression of attitudinal gratitude?

Belonging to the emotional sphere, attitudinal gratitude - like love - cannot be created by a politician as an act of will.

The sentiment of attitudinal gratitude can be reinforced by a rational reflection, because short-term actionism is counterproductive in the long-term run of democratic power politics with its alternating majority.

We think that among politicians attitudinal gratitude is more often used for improving one's public image than for fostering inter-personal relations.

Finally we would like to mention the opposite term 'ingratitude'. Ingratitude reflects a fundamentally egocentric and uncompromising position which has the potential of degenerating into extremist or even totalitarian politics.

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1 We have been inspired to write this essay by Simmel (1993: 308-316). [See: Stemmler, Gunter (1998) 'Dankbarkeit und Demokratie' in: Die Neue Ordnung, 52: 358-361.] We would like to thank Gerhard Wiesinger PhD for his helpful comments.

2 We derived this term from the term 'business of power' by Weber (1965: 4).

3 Schmitt (1996: for example 26).

4 Weber (1996: 9).

5 For example Clausewitz (1980: 332).

6 Simmel (1993: 313).

7 Mann (1974: 122).

8 Simmel (1993: 314-5).

9 Compare Lynn/Jay (1989: 103): '... cross-party friendships are extremely common. In fact, it is much easier to be friends with a member of the opposite party than a member of one's own party - for one is not in direct personal competition for office with members of the Opposition in the way that one is with one's colleagues.'

10 This system of values implies a recognition of higher values, and this means for quite a few people a transcendent dimension.

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