**Panel: Individuality and Social Power**

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I would define social power as the potency of socially integrated individuals to accomplish specific predetermined values. In my view, the relationship between an individual and social power can be approached in two opposite ways. In the first approach, one considers the role of the individual in constructing social power, and focuses on the connection between the individual expression and social progress. In the second approach, one treats the influence of the growth of social power on the individual, and, thus, looks at how the society empowers or disempowers the individual.

The question that I consider central is: How the individual and group potentials transform into an effective social power, *i.e.*, into the motor of social change?

In the previous course organized by the World Academy of Art and Science that dealt with individuality, it has been shown how an individual can contribute to social change with new ideas. Here, the question is more precise: How much and in which ways can the social structure influence an individual so that he or she may bring in positive changes important for the whole society?

The social structure, embodied in social institutions, can indeed help an individual become the agency of social change, and thus attain the capacity to creatively contribute to social progress. The most obvious example of such institution is education. Through education, it is possible not only to empower the individual to realize his or her capacities but also to create opportunities for him or her to impose certain values that may be beneficial for the others.

This line of thought follows the dialectics between the structure and agency, which social science has been dealing with for quite some time. Anthony Giddens, the founder of the theory of structuration, in which the structure and agency are seen as complementary, claims that the individual autonomy is under the influence of the structure, but the structure is sustained and adapted to the agency (The Constitution of Society, 1984). The social structure does not have an inherent stability apart from the human action because it is constructed by humans. He states that the structure of social organization has the dynamics determined by the human agency, which makes impossible for its patterns to have unchangeable characteristics. The social structure is at the same time limiting and enabling. Through its reflexivity, the human agency modifies the social structure acting outside the limits of the structure that have been imposed.

Besides, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (Social Construction of Reality, 1966) believe that the relationship between the structure and agency is such that society forms individuals who create society in a continuous dialectic process.

In the end, my question still is: Where the motivation of an individual human agency comes from and to which extent its reflexive role can influence the evolution of the social structure?