

The exposition begins with a vulgar notion of guilt and the author tries to disclose what such a notion typically involves. This then becomes the starting point for an attempt at clarification of various meanings of „to be guilty“. The concept of guilt is analyzed and treated in connection with human notions of the sacred and of the conditions of power that the man confronts. Several ways of interpreting or reducing guilt emerge in the course of the discussion; yet while they are noticed, the principal strain of the study is a pursuit for more interpretations that transcend the ones already established. Each interpretation thus discerned refers to a certain self-interpretation of man. Putting to one side psychological explanations, the common ground of all the interpretations seems to be a reference to an existing order that is related to the human actions. Moreover, various interpretations assume some sort of freedom of man, that is to say, either the freedom to resist the established structures of power, or else to usurp the power for oneself and to enforce one's own ideas as to how things are to go, or else the freedom to meet certain values and demands inflicted upon the human actions. All the instances of guilt also seem to share an association with the notion of disrespect towards something that requires to be respected. On the other hand, I conclude – perhaps somewhat surprisingly – that guilt need not imply any connection with clearly demarcated laws or values.