

MORAL DISPUTES

SOCIAL DICTIONARIES

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Wit Pasierbek and Bogdan Szlachta



MORAL DISPUTES

Edited by Piotr Duchliński



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**S O C I A L
D I C T I O N A R I E S**

**M O R A L
D I S P U T E S**

EDITED BY

Piotr Duchliński

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Reviewers

dr hab. Agnieszka Lekka-Kowalik, prof. KUL

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Translated into English by

Ewa Pałka

Proofreading

Michael Timberlake

Editing and proofreading

Magdalena Pawłowicz

Cover design

Studio Photo Design – Lesław Sławiński

Layout and typesetting

Jacek Zaryczny

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wydawnictwo@ignatianum.edu.pl

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Foreword

In 2019, the team members of the Ignatian Social Forum decided to continue the work that was initiated by the publication of the *Social Dictionary* in 2004. Scientists from both Polish and foreign academic centres contributed to this publication, which contains over one hundred extended essays that discuss the findings of recent humanities and social science research.

This new project is more extensive than the original *Social Dictionary*: over twenty volumes present the state of humanistic and social knowledge in the third decade of the 21st century. This knowledge concerns man, who is developing within diverse civilizations, cultures and societies, who adheres to many religions, and who exhibits diverse patterns of behaviour. Like the first four volumes (already published in Polish and in English; electronic versions are also available), each new volume is devoted to a research area that is considered particularly important to the humanities and social sciences: each investigates man and his social environment, political and public affairs, and international relations. The analyses of these areas are undertaken from diverse research perspectives; thus, they lead to a more thorough presentation of the problems typically addressed by only one discipline and substantially broaden the scope of the reflections offered by the Authors of the articles. These Authors look for an 'interpretative key' that will allow them to present the most significant issues related to each of the

volumes' main research areas, which are sometimes controversial or debatable among scientists. These research areas give the titles to the volumes of the new *Social Dictionary*. This 'interpretative key' would not be important if the articles published in each volume resembled succinct encyclopaedic entries; however, it becomes significant because the entries take the form of 20-page articles that follow a uniform pattern. The considerations presented by the Authors focus on the essence of the concepts they analyse, including their history, subject matter, and practical aspects. Written by Polish scientists representing not only different academic centres and scientific disciplines but also different 'research sensibilities', the twenty volumes are based on theoretical reflection accompanied by practical considerations. We also treat Catholic social teaching as an element of the 'interpretative key' because it is impossible to ignore twenty centuries of the legacy and richness of Christianity.

We hope that this volume will satisfy Readers as it offers not only an opportunity to learn about scientific approaches to the vital problems faced by contemporary man, states, and societies, but also an insight into sometimes difficult aspects of modernity as viewed from a Catholic perspective. We also hope that Readers will appreciate the effort of Polish scientists who, while undertaking original reflection on these issues, go beyond the mere presentation of other people's thoughts as they are aware of the importance of the intellectual achievements of Polish science.

Series editors
Wit Pasierbek and Bogdan Szlachta

Introduction

Morality, or man's experiencing of morality, poses important questions: What is meant by the term 'morality'? How should man act and why? What makes an act good and what makes it a moral obligation? It should be emphasised here that every morality is a complex and multi-layered creation and that moral disputes are an integral part of human life. In this context, the question of the origin of moral disputes is frequently considered. Undoubtedly, it is difficult to give a precise and satisfactory answer here as any answer simply leads to further questions that merely scratch the tip of the iceberg: Why is there so much suffering, so many disputes, conflicts, and wars in the world? Does the problem lie with people or perhaps with morality? Some – primarily objectivists – put the blame on man, in whom they find all sorts of distortions of morality. Contextualists ask whether man really is the only one to blame. According to the contemporary French philosopher Paul Ricouer, distortions of morality are caused by human nature and the indeterminacy of moral principles. Morality is a product of man, and it inherits all his imperfections. In morality, as if in a mirror, the current imperfect form of man's consciousness is always reflected. There is some truth in what Ricouer said about the condition of homo sapiens, which is determined by various factors. Ethics is incapable of formulating such precise, unambiguous principles and rules of practical action that would define all moral situations in which human decision-making processes are entangled. Would it not be perfect if such a universal algorithm for resolving moral disputes could be constructed? So far, however, it has not, and in all likelihood it never will be. Besides, human nature, of which the innate

temperament is an integral element, favours the fact that we react to certain moral situations in this and not another way, i.e., always in an individual manner, sometimes different from the one required by an ethical conception. Although ethicists claim that – because we are always bound by an identical set of moral duties – all of us should react in the same way to certain moral situations, our innate temperament means that we do not always follow objective duties and that we often yield to inclinations based on extra-moral factors.

When we study the history of ethics from antiquity to the present, we see that it is a history of disputes between ethicists of different origins who attempted to rationalise the phenomenon of morality using the conceptual means that were culturally available to them. While some have passionately claimed to have definitive solutions, others have equally vehemently contested them and argued that there are no definitive solutions – that these ‘definitive’ solutions are merely the pretensions of ethicists who are more concerned with gaining power over people than with understanding how people actually experience morality. Ethics has not produced any universal method for resolving moral disputes. Although many interesting ways of conducting ethical argumentation have been invented, there is also considerable arbitrariness linked to the fact that some people are convinced by certain arguments, while others are not. As Aristotle observed, in ethics we have to say goodbye to the dream of exactness, especially of the kind that applies to the natural sciences. Ethical judgements concern human actions, which are not entirely predictable. We are incapable of accurately predicting how someone will behave in a given situation and which practical rule they will consider to be the binding guideline for their action. Moral disputes are often of a ‘stalemate’ nature. Thus, it is worth asking whether ethics is about convincing and converting others to our views or rather about trying to understand theirs.

The resolutions of moral disputes are entangled in various layers, which are shaped by ideological, political, religious, and world-view beliefs. Very often, the ideological layer makes it impossible to take a critical look at a moral issue and turns the dispute into a mutual accusation about who is morally more right. Although the literature on moral disputes is extensive, this does not mean that there is no need for reflection that shows, in a methodologically structured way, the successive

facets of ethical disputes, especially in modern times. The volume offers an overview of contemporary moral disputes based on a selection of the most representative ones, i.e., those that trigger the most interesting debates. In preparing the volume, we were not guided by any top-down key, e.g., Christian or secular, but we have given space to various authors who represent diverse ethical traditions. The voice of Catholic Social Teaching, as a key partner in contemporary debates on moral disputes, has also been represented here. The selected types of moral disputes have been analysed from different points of view which consider their different aspects, primarily historical, methodological, and systematic. Although each article follows the same structure, the “Discussion of the term” section in each article is strongly marked by the author’s individual perspective, which is also evident in the “Historical analysis” and “Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations” sections. The articles do not seek to simply summarise and quote positions that are already well known. The considerations attempt to offer a new ordering of well-known problems in an attempt to bring out content that could still attract the attention of the contemporary Reader, who is not always interested in ethicists’ abstract deliberations. It is worth emphasising that this volume has been compiled not only with Polish but also foreign readers in mind, which makes each individual author’s treatment of a given problem particularly advisable and justified. Thanks to this, the volume dedicated to moral disputes fulfils the function of promoting and popularising Polish ethics and philosophy. Showing how Polish ethicists relate to the most important moral disputes of modern times is a form of appreciating Polish philosophy, which can boast many significant research achievements, some of which are presented in this volume. The maximalistically oriented Reader will not find in it all moral disputes of modernity. However, it was not the editors’ intention to overwhelm the reader with an excessive amount of information. Rather, the aim was to provide an overview of the most pertinent contemporary moral disputes which are related to the key question: who is man and what is his nature and ultimate destiny?

The proposed overview of moral disputes allows Readers to acquire a preliminary orientation in this area, the primary aim of which is to inspire them to seek and deepen their knowledge concerning moral disputes. Whether this volume will be such an inspiration is a matter for

Readers themselves to decide – after all, they face a variety of problems every day. In our considerations we do not confine ourselves to within the framework of a single ethical system but reach out to those ethicists and philosophers who have brought to light certain important aspects of morality. It seems that with the immeasurably rapid evolution of civilisation, the need for unambiguous moral guidelines is now greater than ever. The collisions between theory and practice are externalized in the ethical dilemmas of today. Issues that are particularly pertinent today – linked to globalisation and industrialisation – include ecological problems (e.g., the relationship between man and the environment) and those that result from advancements in medicine (e.g., cloning). Much controversy is aroused by the relationship between morality and politics. I would like to emphasise here that I am aware that the articles in this volume will not provide definitive answers to the questions they may pose, simply because no such answers exist. The authors' attempts to describe the given problems are balanced and open to constructive criticism and discussion. We must bear in mind that when we talk about behaviours in which moral disputes are revealed, their evaluation is an open question – open not only to the various ethical arguments but also to non-ethical arguments. Moreover, the reflections presented in this volume allow the philosophy of the subject, the philosophy of consciousness, and metaphysics to meet and enrich one another.

Volume editor
Piotr Duchliński

Piotr Duchliński

Ignatianum University in Cracow

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9480-2730>

<https://doi.org/10.35765/slowniki.380en>

Moral disputes – a broad perspective

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: This section describes different types of morality and moral disputes, and the differences between them that surface in the context of ethical and metaethical disputes. Morality – being a complex and multilayered area – is studied within the field of ethics. Ethicists conceptualise and systematise morality in order to find justifications for particular moral beliefs.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: This section demonstrates that moral disputes have been an intrinsic element of human life in every historical epoch. In the past, they were formulated and resolved by cultural, social, and economic factors, but now developments in science and technology have taken over this role.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: This section presents two approaches to moral disputes: minimalist ethics and maximalist ethics. The former seeks consensus, informed consent, or compromise, while the latter seeks ultimate justifications for morality and the settlement of moral disputes, thus their resolutions must be grounded in the truth about man.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Ethics is dependent on anthropology, and the resolution of a moral dispute always presupposes a reference to some anthropological premise. Moral disputes are rational and debatable.

Keywords: ethics, morality, dispute, minimalism, maximalism

Definition of the term

Morality is a multilayered human creation conditioned by particular cultural, historical, and social factors (Hołówka, 2001). According to Stanisław Jedynak, “Morality is a social phenomenon shaped historically in a particular society, the task of which is to regulate the totality of relations between individuals as well as between individuals and social groups” (Jedynak, 1994, p. 142). The term ‘morality’ can be used in either a descriptive or a normative sense. The substantive characterisation of morality covers: moral norms – general and specific (e.g., Don’t kill, Don’t lie, or Always help those in need); moral evaluations of specific behaviours and attitudes (e.g., using contraception is wrong, or taking part in LGBT demonstrations is reprehensible); moral emotions (e.g., guilt, shame, or – in some conceptions – pangs of conscience); rules of conduct, e.g., in such a situation, X should behave in a certain way; moral imperatives (concerning duties, e.g., I should be faithful to my wife/husband); and moral ideas (e.g., Love your neighbour; All people are your brothers/sisters). Morality can be divided into general morality, i.e., a set of beliefs concerning norms, judgments, and values binding in a given society, and individual morality, also called personal morality, with which every person is endowed. The latter includes moral beliefs held by a person which have become internalised during his psychosocial development, moral experiences, limit situations, etc. It is also possible to distinguish professional morality, i.e., a set of principles applicable to a particular profession (e.g., the morality of doctors or lawyers); what is important here is that it is expressed in a set of codified principles which are not always consistent with general morality. It is possible for a behaviour which is unacceptable in general morality to be permitted or even recommended in a professional context; conversely, a behaviour obligatory in general morality can be forbidden at work (Galewicz, 2010, p. 16).

The term ‘moral dispute’ is a technical term used by ethicists. Even though moral disputes are held in everyday life, people rarely use this expression. Ethicists derive their knowledge of moral disputes from their own experiences, from observing others, from literature, or from studies conducted within ethics and within different moral sciences. Moral

disputes can be defined as situations in which we are confronted with mutually exclusive moral beliefs about norms, rules of conduct, values, and evaluations of a particular behaviour, e.g., X argues that abortion is permissible, while Y argues that abortion is impermissible. Moral disputes can be individual (e.g., I am arguing with my conscience about the evaluation of a particular behaviour) or group disputes, when two or more people hold contradictory moral beliefs about a normative evaluation of a given situation. Moral disputes are an essential element of social and political life. They are subject to institutionalisation and the ideologisation of worldviews, which makes it impossible to discuss them. They are particularly noticeable during encounters of people with different moral beliefs which stem from, e.g., their belonging to different cultures or their different upbringings. In everyday life, people do not critically analyse moral disputes; they settle them by referring to the prevailing opinion on what is allowed or forbidden, to recognised authorities, to a religion from which they take certain norms and judgements of conduct, or to the traditions of a given local culture, etc. Disputes are settled without embarking on any critical analyses and without referring to sophisticated ethical concepts. These settlements are devoid of in-depth analyses. The statistical majority of people are unlikely to know anything about ethical concepts and the ways in which moral beliefs are justified. The lack of ethics education in schools is reflected in a poor level of ethics knowledge and the possibilities of its use in everyday life.

Colloquially understood moral disputes should be distinguished from moral disputes conducted by ethicists. Ethics is understood here as philosophical reflection on morality (Styczeń, 1995; Szostek, 1994). The subject of ethics is morality. Ethics makes it possible to systematise morality and to study its substantive, functional, and genetic aspects in depth. Every ethicist comes from a particular culture with diverse moral beliefs, which serve as a starting point in this normative reflection. Consequently, particular moral beliefs are specified, systematised, and justified, which frequently leads to the rejection of certain beliefs commonly included within the scope of morality, e.g., the distinction between moral norms and social norms. The task of ethics is to theoretically develop a concept of morality and to systematically answer questions regarding what morality is and how to justify moral beliefs (Ziobrowski, 2016).

There is no single ethical conception, therefore there are many different conceptions of morality and ways of justifying it. Each ethical conception proposes different deontological qualifications of human behaviours, i.e., different criteria for right or wrong (Ślipko, 2004). Moral disputes in ethics are theoretical and mostly relate to different ways of justifying moral beliefs and the specific anthropological and metaphysical assumptions underpinning them. For the ethicist, the key question is 'why?' in relation to arguments that justify moral beliefs. Ethical disputes are formulated in substantive language, which distinguishes them from metaethical disputes – expressed in meta-language – whose participants discuss questions such as: what is an ethical theory?, what is a justification in ethics? etc. (Brandt, 1959). These disputes are held on a meta-level and involve sophisticated conceptual means, including formalisation.

Because of the multiplicity of different ethical traditions and the consequent differences in the epistemological, metaphysical, and anthropological assumptions adopted in them, the formulation of a dispute itself and its resolution in most cases proves incommensurable. Thus, for example, in one ethical tradition euthanasia is permitted and in another it is not, and the justifications for these norms are incommensurable because they are built on two different images of the world.

Moral disputes can be resolved in different ways. Facts, feelings, consequences of behaviour, moral authority, conscience, etc. may be referred to throughout this process. Although people refer to some of these facets in their daily lives, they do not always do so in a conscious and methodologically structured way; referring to facts, feelings, and consequences is more intuitive and is based on knowledge drawn from moral authorities. In ethics, dispute resolution depends on to the conception of ethics adopted and the methods of analysis. Therefore, some ethicists refer to facts, others to emotions, and still others to the consequences of behaviour or conscience. In moral disputes held within professional ethics, disputes are resolved using codes of ethics. In some moral disputes, referring to moral authorities can be conclusive. In everyday life, the decisive role in resolving a given dispute is performed by the individual assessment of conscience, which usually does not entail in-depth reflection. Some ethicists argue that moral disputes are not resolvable and that everyone should stick to his stated position (Pieper, 1994).

Historical analysis of the term

Morality and ethics have a long history. Before the emergence of ethics as systematic reflection on morality, people struggled with various moral disputes and resolved them by whatever means they had at their disposal e.g., mythology or religion. The former was the source of the most primordial moral disputes, exemplified by the famous dispute between Antigone and Creon. However, mythological stories could not serve to develop rational justifications for these disputes – this was done by ethics. The history of ethics is also the history of various moral disputes and attempts to resolve them. Moral disputes are clarified and systematised within ethics. For this reason, in this section I present – in a highly simplified manner, of course – moral disputes in the context of the history of ethics and the related history of philosophical trends, cultural changes, and scientific and technological developments.

Socrates is regarded as the father of ethics. However, it was the sophists who were the first to address ethical issues. They drew attention to the relativity of moral and aesthetic judgements and emphasised the role played by cultural and historical factors in their formulation. Socrates disagreed with the sophists about the nature of virtue. His conception became the subject of a dispute between the Cynics and the Cyrenaics, who developed two different concepts, both of which were questioned by Socrates, who advocated the absolutism of virtue understood as knowledge. The ethical ideas initiated by Socrates were continued by Plato, for whom the Idea (or Form) of the Good was the foundation of the normative order and hierarchy of values. Platonic dialogues offer a wide variety of moral disputes concerning the nature of virtue, justice, and pleasure. Aristotle departed from the Platonic understanding of the good in favour of the real good, which can be realised by human rational behaviour. He discussed the issue of happiness as the goal of human behaviour and drew attention to the role played by virtue in human moral life. In the Hellenistic era, great attention was paid to ethics as a specific way of life. Stoics, sceptics, and Epicureans reflected on this topic and developed different concepts of virtue and a wise life. In this period, disputes were held about the nature of virtue and the ideal of the wise man. Neoplatonism merged ethics and religion and posited that the aim of philosophy was not to explain the world but to enable man's return to God.

The birth of Christianity influenced this understanding of morality and ethics. The new ways of thinking drew abundantly on the tradition of Greek philosophy. Neoplatonism, with its extreme realism in the justification of morality, dominated until roughly the 13th century, i.e., until the great scholastic revolution. Interesting moral disputes on, e.g., the nature of good, grace, and freedom, can be found in the thought of St. Augustine. In the 13th century, thanks to St. Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle's ideas were revived and accordingly interpreted by Aquinas to suit the theological-philosophical synthesis he was developing. Thus, in the Middle Ages, moral disputes were shaped by two traditions: the Augustinian–Platonic and the Aristotelian. In the 14th century, nominalist tendencies intensified, and voluntarism and intuitionism became dominant trends in the justification of morality. The first major disputes concerning freedom, natural law, and the immutability of the moral order were held at that time. Gradually, objectivist justifications of morality began to be questioned and attention was drawn to the role of subjective, cultural, and historical factors. The criticism of scholastic philosophy in the 15th century coincided with the increasingly strong tendencies of the restoration of Platonic philosophy and some other philosophical schools from the Hellenistic period.

Modernity led to new moral disputes. The Renaissance witnessed the anthropocentric turn which placed the human being at the centre of philosophy. As a result, attention began to be paid to the role of a moral agent in the creation of the moral order. The unique position of man in the world was emphasised as a result of his inherent dignity. This gave rise to a dispute that continues to the present day between those that recognise the dignity in man and those that radically deny it. The resolution of this dispute is crucial for debates in various sub-disciplines of ethics, e.g., bioethics. Modernity led to the first disputes concerning the understanding of a subject when British empiricists questioned the category of substance, which was fundamental to the classical conception of the person-subject. Immanuel Kant's revision of the classical conception of the subject was even more profound as he demonstrated that concepts such as the soul or freedom were beyond the reach of empirical experience. He recognised the function of pure practical reason as a constituent part of morality and created rationalist ethics, which he called the metaphysics of morality.

In the 19th century, the first sciences of morality (e.g., the sociology of morality) appeared, which were inspired by the philosophy of the Enlightenment and the development of the positive sciences. On this basis, morality began to be studied as a multi-layered – substantive, structural, genetic, and functional – natural phenomenon. The humanistic sciences focused on the values inherent in cultural products. Between the 19th and the end of the 20th century, a dispute developed – particularly within phenomenology – concerning the understanding of values. This included controversies about the ways that values are understood, their hierarchy, and their mode of existence and realisation. Most phenomenologists were Platonists, and only R. Ingarden moved towards realism and linked the realisation of moral values to the real world and the behaviour of the personal subject.

The birth of metaethics exerted a crucial impact on moral disputes in ethics. G.E. Moore, the founder of metaethics, accused ethical conceptions of naturalism, i.e., of deriving moral principles from human nature. This accusation also applied to Thomistic ethics, for which nature and its inclinations was the basis of the moral order. Metaethics played an important role in moral disputes. Thanks to metaethics, it was possible to clarify the meanings of ambiguous terms such as *conflict*, *dilemma*, and *dispute* (Chyrowicz, 2008). Attention was paid to ways of arguing and justifying moral beliefs, and different types of moral conflicts and dilemmas were organised and systematised (Aszyk, 1998). Since the 19th century, various forms of relativism led to antagonisms concerning, among other things, claims of whether there is one morality or whether there are many, or whether there is one transcultural morality or whether each culture has its own morality which is impassable to members of other cultures. Studies conducted within cultural sciences led to the deepening polarisation of positions and to the formulation of disputes aimed to answer questions such as whether human nature is immutable or whether it has any fixed constitutive characteristics, etc.

After Darwin, attention was increasingly turned to the genesis of morality. Influenced by the theory of evolution, morality was searched for not only in humans but also in evolutionarily related human-like animals (*Hominidae*) such as gorillas and dwarf chimpanzees (bonobos). Naturalism, in both ontological and methodological variants, began to dominate in science and philosophy. A dispute began over whether human

beings and morality could be naturalised, which primarily entailed the ontological reduction of man, morality, and natural factors, as well as a semantic reduction which treated the language of the natural sciences as the privileged language for describing man and morality. Naturalists wanted to eliminate the category of the subject as they believed it to be a superfluous metaphysical relic that explains nothing. They treated morality as a natural phenomenon with a rich evolutionary past. They questioned the existence of the inherent dignity of the personal subject and claimed that it is acquired, i.e., it is ascribed to human individuals by society. The development of empirical psychology led ethicists to debate the role of the moral character of the subject. Philosophical conceptions of character were supported by empirical findings from psychology, which triggered further moral disputes focused on attempts to define moral character and to answer the question of how it influenced the acceptance of a particular ethical conception.

The rapid development of technology deepened the controversy over the moral value of technological activities and provoked a heated discussion on various aspects of the environmental crisis, usually viewed as an adverse effect of civilisational development. This resulted in the emergence of various types of environmental ethics that address man's normative attitudes towards the natural environment. Various positions dominate in contemporary debates, with biocentrism and moderate anthropocentrism being the most popular. There is also no shortage of extreme positions that advocate the elimination of humans to save biological ecosystems. Following rapidly developing information technologies, a humanist cultural movement called transhumanism has emerged and has given rise to moral disputes over human enhancement at various levels, including genetic, cognitive, emotional, and moral. In these disputes between transhumanists and bioconservatives, they attempt to answer the question of the limits of interference in the human body and mind, i.e., how deep the various 'enhancements' of human nature should go and whether and to what extent they pose a threat to the existence of the species *Homo sapiens*.

The rapid development of the cognitive sciences in the 20th century – especially neuroethics, which separated from bioethics at the turn of the 21st century – has contributed significantly to the emergence of new moral disputes. Using the findings of neuroscientific research,

neuroethicists attempt to answer the question of which structures of the human brain are involved in morality and to what extent. They also discuss how far-reaching normative conclusions can be formulated based on these findings.

The brief outline above reveals the highly diverse panorama of moral disputes that began in antiquity. An important feature of modernity is the unquestioned and obvious axiological pluralism. Attempts are constantly being made to understand the genesis of moral pluralism and to predict its potential consequences in the individual's life and in social life. The development of biotechnology, information technology, and artificial intelligence will generate further heated and emotion-laden moral disputes. At present, a moral dispute in which artificial intelligence plays a key role is beginning to take the lead in contemporary ethical discourse. Questions arise as to whether it will replace humans, whether intelligent artefacts can be subjects, whether they can be granted rights like other persons, and what kind of morality artificial intelligence systems could accept. Even if, for the time being, these debates are mostly based on thought experiments, they are nevertheless a valuable source of inspiration for discussions devoted to the future of the *Homo sapiens*.

The position of Catholic Social Teaching (hereafter: CST) offers an important voice in contemporary debates concerning moral disputes, in which it defends a particular conception of morality that is embedded in religious Revelation. Although the Catholic Church recognises the ethical and axiological pluralism present in the contemporary world, as a counterbalance it proposes a conception of objectivist morality based on the immutability of human nature and moral behaviour (i.e., virtues), which are central to the formation of a moral character. From the point of view of CST, the multiplicity of moral views does not justify their uncritical acceptance, even though this is advocated by the principle of tolerance, which postulates that everyone is entitled to his own view and his own truth; however, this multiplicity is an incentive to make an effort to search for the objective truth about man. Only grounding moral order in the objective and unchanging truth can guarantee that all the rights to which the human person is entitled will be observed. The objective truth about human dignity should be the foundation for individual and social life. From the perspective of CST, which is based on Thomistic philosophy, it is recognised that moral disputes are in fact disputes about the human

person and that they find their ultimate resolution in anthropology rather than in ethics. Contemporary moral disputes are in fact disputes about how to understand man and all areas of his activity.

Discussion of the term

Moral disputes, which are conceptualised and systematised in ethics, are differently formulated and resolved, depending on the adopted attitude towards ethics that is considered binding. Moral disputes are conducted by experts in the field, namely ethicists, who practise in their field within specific attitudes, paradigms, and research traditions. Being familiar with these various points of view makes it possible to understand why moral disputes find their particular resolutions within ethics.

This section proposes – as a certain interpretative hypothesis – placing moral disputes within the perspective of two types of ethics: minimalist ethics and maximalist ethics (Duchliński, 2012).

Minimalist ethics is a type of philosophical reflection that abandons attempts to ultimately explain morality and is exemplified by *mimima moralia* (proposed by various authors). These *mimima moralia* are close to the everyday understanding of morality, which does not address questions concerning the nature of good and evil. Minimalist ethics include those that are interested only in describing moral experiences and analysing language, and which base their explanations of morality on the methods used in particular moral sciences. Such ethics include, among other things, various varieties of utilitarianism, hedonism, and situationism. They do not question why man should have duties, nor why he should always do good and avoid evil. The minimalism of these ethics is conditioned by their assumptions and the methods used within them. They are usually borrowed from philosophy, which in the 20th century radically dissociated itself from the search for definitive solutions to theoretical and practical problems. Minimalist ethics question the existence of absolute and immutable moral norms. They can be formulated to match given circumstances or the calculus of non-moral goods. Many theorists argue that postmodernism led to the abandonment of the search for definitive justifications and makes do with partial and contextual justifications. They emphasise that man is unable to

reach a definitive explanation on the nature of good and evil. The ultimate conclusion of such considerations is that the ethics of the grand narratives have failed utterly, therefore what remains is *minima moralia* (Bauman, 1993).

There are no major theoretical syntheses within ethical minimalism. The predominant belief is that it is impossible to discover any objective moral order that would be binding for all people. The plurality of moral beliefs is significant in this view. Although ethical minimalism is not interested in definitive solutions to moral disputes, it is not entirely worthless for understanding morality. Its proponents rightly draw attention to the contextuality of justifying evaluations of human behaviours. Minimalist ethics tend to refrain from accepting philosophical assumptions, which is something maximalist ethicists do; they also claim to have ultimately solved the riddle of morality, i.e., they have discovered the nature of good and evil.

Minimalist ethicists abandon metaphysical resolutions of moral disputes. They do not subscribe to any anthropological background, as is particularly evident in, e.g., bioethical disputes, in which the concept of the person is central. Anthropological minimalism constitutes a kind of *proprium* of minimalist ethics. The resolution of moral disputes is based on consensus, universal consent, and compromise. After all, man has lost the ability to refer to definitive justifications for his moral beliefs. There is no single moral truth that is binding for everybody. The only available justifications for certain moral options are contextual and are historically and culturally determined, which means they constantly fluctuate. Proponents of minimalist ethics willingly use findings of empirical research in diagnosing and resolving moral disputes.

In this context, the conviction that it is not easy to reach consensus on moral issues is significant. Reaching a compromise requires critical discussion accompanied by a sympathetic attitude and tolerance for the beliefs of others. Even if the desired moral consensus cannot be reached, it is important to understand the opponent's position, his attitude, and the way in which he justifies the theses being put forward. Minimalist ethicists are not radical relativists nor nihilists, and even they admit that certain categories of human acts are absolutely evil or good. For example, rape, sexual abuse of children, and the murder of an innocent person are treated as categories of evil acts that can have

no justification. Only axiological nihilists could radically question the evil of such acts. However, there are some categories of acts whose deontological qualification can be discussed, such as contraception, in vitro fertilisation, or the value of the life of humans in a vegetative state, all of which are assessed differently by minimalist ethicists and maximalist ethicists.

The second type of ethics is maximalist ethics, within which ultimate and undoubtable justifications of morality are formulated (Duchliński, 2014). Some authors classify Christian ethics in this way: its maximalism is expressed in the fact that it seeks the definitive sources of morality. However, what does it mean to justify something definitively? In the past, this problem was linked to Leibniz's question "why is there something rather than nothing?" (Kamiński, 1989). Metaphysical maximalist ethics asks such questions as *why should man have duties? And why do good and evil exist?* The question about justifications, including definitive justifications, constitutes the identity of maximalist ethics (Styczeń, 1995). Ethicists want to know how things really are in the area of good and evil; they seek an objective hierarchy of values with their ultimate justification; and they seek the keystone of the moral obligation to act. In this view, all moral disputes find their final resolution, and the axiological pluralism in contemporary culture has little bearing on the objective character of moral truth. Maximalist ethicists assume that morality is objective (Styczeń, 1995) and are convinced that an honestly conducted moral dispute will lead to the immutable and absolute truth. Moral norms – which are founded on unchanging human nature – are also immutable and absolute. In maximalist ethics, terms such as compromise, consent, and consensus are avoided as factors that relativise morality to various subjective and objective determinants. Maximalist ethicists argue that pluralism is based on misconceptions about the nature of morality.

Maximalist ethics is criticised for its universalist tendencies, its theism, and its disregard for the determinants of the human condition. Its proponents argue that metaphysical theses are relevant for the justification of ethical theses. Ethics is closely dependent on metaphysics. The conception of moral good and evil depends on the adopted ontological conception. In other words, without metaphysics, ethics cannot be practised because it is the foundation of the adopted premises. In minimalist ethics, this connection is weak or non-existent – at least that

is what its proponents declare and they base their minimalism regarding ontic assumptions on this: the theses of metaphysics cannot verify the theses of ethics because these depend on empirically ascertainable factors. Maximalist ethics is accused of being violent and totalizing, i.e., it denies, e.g., the right of sexual minorities to proclaim their morality and is oppressive towards gender, especially women. It is also criticised for supporting normativism and for its links with religion, which make it a confessional ethics.

Minimalist ethicists ask whether, in fact, man can answer the question of the ultimate nature of good and evil and whether he is capable of understanding this issue. This always involves assuming some kind of an absolute, which is a concept that representatives of minimalism reject, instead prioritising practical experience, intuition, and life wisdom over academic speculation. Minimalists emphasise the non-obviousness of moral principles and norms in their clash with concrete situations and declare the need to part with the philosophy of the first principles, which translates into the postulate of parting with the ethics of ultimate justifications because sensitivity and solidarity with those who suffer are more important than abstract moral principles (Rorty, 2021). Life experience, practical wisdom, literary models, and intuition are key in resolving moral disputes.

The deontological classification of human acts adopted by ethicists is also important for understanding moral disputes. Obviously, we talk of two different moral systems if they perceive the same act differently: in one the given act is permissible or even obligatory, while in the other it is forbidden. In such cases, we can say that the first system ascribes a different deontic qualification (normative position, moral status) to this act than the other, or that it is placed in a different deontological category. The moral systems being compared may assume the same division of deontological categories but assign the same acts to different categories. However, they may also adopt a different list of deontic qualifications and thus differ in their categorial structure (Galewicz, 2010, p. 11).

Deontological classifications of acts are determined by different assumptions, primarily anthropological ones, which are related to the understanding of human nature, and metaphysical ones, which are related to understanding the world. This is why euthanasia is permitted in one ethical conception and prohibited in another: the proponents of

these classifications adopt different anthropological assumptions which are crucial in resolving moral disputes. It can be said that the resolution of a moral dispute depends on the prior resolution of an anthropological dispute, i.e., the answer to the question of who man is.

Moral disputes arise when two moral beliefs come into conflict with each other. In a particular situation, which we define here as a dispute, these beliefs are mutually exclusive. People resolve the problems they encounter on a daily basis on the spot without waiting for ethicists to come to their aid. In doing so, they refer to cultural norms, religions, and traditions acquired during their upbringing. Experience, intuition, and life wisdom tell them how to resolve a given dispute. In ethics, moral disputes are conceptualised and systematised. In resolving disputes, ethicists look for good justifications that are convincing and persuasive. They formulate rational arguments with which they can defend their position, but they also try to persuade their opponents. Ethicists – whether minimalists or maximalists – formulate various norms and rules through which they recommend or advise people against a certain type of behaviour. They also formulate evaluations of various types of human acts; in particular situations, these evaluations come into conflict. Some believe that abortion should be permissible and others that it should be prohibited. Some say that euthanasia is not permitted and others that it should be permissible at will. Some say that premarital sex is permissible and others that it should not be.

The propositions that express norms and judgements do not yet constitute the essence of the moral dispute itself. Neither do the reactions to these propositions. It is worth emphasising that although any debatable issue has a visible layer of linguistic formulations of norms and evaluations, it is embedded in a deeper theoretical structure which is provided not by ethics but by a particular philosophy of man. Ethics, whether maximalist or minimalist, is condemned to a certain anthropology, i.e., it depends on the – often tacit – acceptance of premises about human nature that provide the substantive justification for norms and evaluations of human behaviour. It is the adopted conception of man that determines whether it is acceptable to allow a foetus to live or to allow a woman to have an abortion, for example. In a conception in which man is seen as a collection of biological cells, there is no reason to consider abortion a prohibited act; in contrast, in a conception in which man is recognised

as a person from conception – i.e., is endowed with a normative status – abortion should be a prohibited act. For some ethicists, moral disputes are not conclusively resolvable. We have the right to put forward our arguments without expecting that our interlocutor will accept them, and there is nothing surprising about this. Proponents of minimalism argue that all we can do is recognise that the beliefs of others are somehow valid too, so we must not impose our position on them, even though we think ours is the best justified of all the options available at the time. Maximalists argue that moral disputes do have definitive solutions. They believe that it is possible to discover the objective truth that binds human actions. Arriving at the truth resolves a dispute. They argue that we can put forward categories of human behaviours that are ultimately destructive to man if realised. These are behaviours that cannot be justified by any good of society, good of humankind, or concern for ecosystems.

Summing up, I agree with S. Kamiński that

justifying the truthfulness of moral norms is accomplished by subordinating the more specific to the more general and by showing that the latter (which may, in fact, occur in the form of judgements) have analogous counterparts in metaphysical laws concerning nature: man (his dignity), interpersonal relations, and behaviours natural (or not) to man in specific circumstances (Kamiński, 1970, p. 88).

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

Moral disputes always concern man. This point is explicitly demonstrated in the articles in this volume. Thus, in resolving moral disputes, we should bear in mind what conception of man (i.e., what anthropology) is assumed by those assessing the validity of norms and the evaluations of human behaviours. There is no ethics without anthropology. This can be an ethics that accepts a minimum of anthropological premises, or it can be an ethics that accepts the majority of anthropological assumptions and is supported by justification within theistic metaphysics. Moral disputes held by ethicists are, in fact, disputes about man, the understanding of human nature, humanity, subjectivity, and dignity. Indeed, the understanding of man is central to the issue of human enhancement,

the protection of natural ecosystems, and research into neuroethics. All these moral disputes grow out of a fundamental understanding of man, which is provided to ethics either by philosophy or by various disciplines of the sciences. In moral disputes, it is important to be able to reconstruct the anthropological premises that are key to justifying norms and evaluations of behaviour. In the resolution of moral disputes, an attitude of rationality (i.e., a search for arguments that support norms and evaluations of behaviour) is important (Heller, 2006). Moral disputes are debatable, i.e., in order to resolve them, it is necessary to formulate arguments that are intersubjectively testable and communicable. Priority is given to the cognitive rather than the emotional dimension of moral disputes, as the latter is always secondary in importance. Both sides in a moral dispute should display an attitude of empathy and responsibility for each other as one will always discover something about oneself in the dispute. Arguments are put forward by concrete persons with their experiences, wounds, and inner dilemmas. A moral dispute does not always have to be about convincing someone. It is important to look for what unites, not just for what divides. This approach is more rewarding than open conflict, from which both sides may emerge hurt.

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Teresa Grabińska

General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military Academy of Land Forces in Wrocław

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9131-2637>

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Moral conflict

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: Moral conflict is a situation in which one becomes aware of conflicting moral values in one's intended or actual conduct. These values are ingrained in one's incompatible motives, aspirations, or interests. Moral conflict often leads to actions that are either morally good or morally evil, depending on whether one acts in accordance with one's values or against them.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: Analysis of moral conflict accompanies every man in his everyday activities; it has always been topical in philosophical and literary works and in psychological inquiry, and today it is increasingly used to formalise human choices and interpersonal relations as well as man's attitude towards artificial intelligence.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: This section presents an original analysis of a particular conflict that is frequently referred to in 20th century literature and philosophy. In this analysis the conflict is linked to a specific ethical dilemma and to changing circumstances, the danger of a situational trap, and an axiological conflict. The reflections are conducted from the position of the ethics of an act, which is based on the legacy of Aristotelianism, Thomism, and personalism.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The reflections presented in this article could be extended by analysing moral conflict in the language of Maritain's classification of norms and contrasting it with the process of the actualisation of values in Wojtyła's conception of the personal structure of self-determination.

Keywords: ethical dilemma, axiology, obligation, moral experience, responsibility

Definition of the term

Moral conflict is a situation in which one becomes aware of conflicting moral values in one's intended or actual conduct. These values are ingrained in one's incompatible motives, aspirations, or interests. Moral conflict often leads to actions that are either morally good or morally evil, depending on whether one acts in accordance with one's values or against them. Because moral values, together with other values, form the reality of all values that should be realised in an act, the resulting conflict between them is sometimes called a dispute with a moral basis (Aszyk, 1998, p. 108).

The above definition of moral conflict includes the notions of moral value and the moral good, which can be equated when the moral good is the good considered "in the perspective of formal causality, [...] insofar as it means the internal quality of the human act" (Maritain, 2001, p. 43). In the perspective of final causality, the moral good means the good which is the aim of a freely chosen and actualised human act.

The moral value of an act and the extra-moral value of an act, e.g., its utility, may be incompatible, which leads to moral conflict. From the perspective of formal causality, an act is intended to be good, but – despite its intentional direction towards the good in the perspective of final causality – it may be difficult to reconcile this intention with its predicted result.

In the literature, the terms 'ethical dilemma' and 'moral conflict' are used interchangeably (McConnell, 2022). The scope of meaning of both terms thus needs to be specified. The term *ethical* refers to ethics as a branch of philosophy, i.e., the good (moral value), the hierarchy of goods, obligations, and the order of obligations. The term *moral* refers to morality, that is, man's relationship to his environment (primarily other people), evaluated from the perspective of the actualisation of ethical values. This relationship is manifested in acts that are freely and consciously undertaken and performed, as well as in specific circumstances in which specific extra-moral values are present. The determinants of extra-moral values include laws, regulations, and procedures, the psycho-physical state of the acting person, the principles of moral conduct, the nexus of external conditions, e.g., political, social, economic, and others which facilitate or hinder the performance of an act in accordance with a moral obligation.

The definition of moral conflict adopted in this article is not exhausted by the definition of a dilemma (which is called moral here), which is a situation in which “the subject is convinced that he should both a and b, but at the same time he cannot fulfil obligation a without violating obligation b, nor obligation b without violating obligation a, and he finds arguments for obligations a and b (which can be either an action or refraining from action) in the ethical theory within which he tries to solve the dilemma” (Chyrowicz, 2008, p. 70). In this article, this understanding of dilemma is treated as an ethical dilemma because the term ‘dilemma’ refers to the choice of actualising or not actualising a value, while ‘conflict’ refers to the choice made in an act and its consequences in a situation in which one must choose from among mutually exclusive obligations.

The term ‘dilemma’ derives from the Greek (διλήμματος) and means ‘containing two propositions’ (affirmative) – in other words, a double lemma. In classical logic, these two propositions are alternatives. Colloquially, but also because of the approach to moral problems, a dilemma is defined as the task of choosing between two rationales, which is difficult but for some reason necessary. In order to resolve the dilemma, one of the two rationales must be chosen. When these rationales entail the attainment of some good (i.e., ethical value) and also the omission of some other good, a dilemma is called ethical.

An ethical dilemma is a situation in which a person – in order to act – turns to his internal matrix of hierarchical values (i.e., his moral experience), (Maritain, 2001, pp. 99–119; Wojtyła, 2021, p. 269) which points to the mutual exclusion of certain values or a change in their priority. The experience of morality concerns both a moral fact and moral consciousness in which analyses can be conducted in two ways (Maritain, 2001, p. 100): either from within or from without, i.e., based on historical, ethnological, cultural, or sociological data.

Analysis from within refers to the primary data of moral life (Maritain, 2001, p. 100), for example, of an ethical dilemma. The aim of this analysis is to push aside all cultural interpretations and obligations that stem from the binding principles of cultural and social existence. Only then does one arrive at the inner sense of moral obligation, i.e., what one should do and what one should not do (Wojtyła, 2021, pp. 258–259). In this approach, the existence of a moral sense is assumed. Following a thus-understood moral obligation allows one’s reason and will to resolve the

ethical dilemma, and one then knows what one ought to do. Moreover, one needs to know how to do it, i.e., adequately for the external circumstances. The resolution of an ethical dilemma does not exclude moral conflict. Moral conflict is related to agency in some extra-moral reality, while an ethical dilemma is resolved in a moral experience.

Moral conflicts can be interconnected and can occur in complex interdependencies. A moral conflict can be more or less serious, depending on the extent to which it can be resolved without generating further ethical dilemmas. The most serious conflict arises from the conscious violation of an ethical value, especially when that violation is caused by a situational trap (situation of coercion) as a result of which one must choose evil. This is caused by the compulsion to fulfil one of two equally important values in an act, which means that the other value is neglected. This leads to an axiological conflict (Aszyk, 1998, p. 114), which is sometimes called an ethical problem in a limit situation (Ślipko, 2010, pp. 15–27, 142–147).

It is worth emphasising that it is a mistake to analyse a dilemma from the perspective of determining the magnitude of the need. Needs cannot be precisely determined from the point of view of the person who faces an ethical dilemma, but the order of obligations regarding the actualisation of certain goods (values) can be precisely determined. Depending on how this is done, one might fall into a moral conflict, remain in it, or overcome it.

Reference should also be made to the term ‘conflict of conscience’, which, in the form of a moral conflict, reveals “dependence of acts on the true good” (Wojtyła, 2021, p. 256); it “designates the true good in the act” and “creates duty” (Wojtyła, 2021, p. 258), thereby creating a matrix within which an ethical dilemma arises.

The definitions of moral conflict and related concepts adopted in this article may, due to the similarity of the terms, inaccurately correspond to those adopted in other sources. The terminology in this area is not systematised. The definitions presented here and used hereafter facilitate a precise analysis of the example of moral conflict presented in the Discussion of the term section.

Historical analysis of the term

Ethical dilemmas and moral conflict have been of interest to philosophers, writers, and theologians since antiquity. The best-known examples of ethical dilemmas and their transformations into moral conflicts include those experienced by Socrates, as recorded in Plato's dialogues, Agamemnon in Aeschylus' tragedy, and Antigone and Creon in Sophocles' tragedy (McConnell, 2022, Ch. 1), as well as characters in Shakespeare's plays.

Modern Protestant philosophers (McConnell, 2022, Ch. 2), as well as Polish philosophers such as Władysław Witwicki and Ludwik Krzywicki (Ossowska, 2000, Ch. VIII), stood for the rigorous position of eliminating ethical dilemmas by means of appropriately selected value systems in specific ethics. Their position – clearly inspired by the principle of utilitarianism – calls for the introduction of principles that facilitate calculating the benefits of the outcome of the chosen action.

Twentieth-century existentialism (Sartre, 1945) weakened this ethical optimism, which amounted to adherence to the properly constructed norms of 'universal morality'; however, existentialists argued that "no doctrine is more optimistic" than existentialism (Sartre, 1945, p. 9). It deprived man of the hope of moral perfection in a deontological mode and left him nothing but anxiety, loneliness, and the need to unceasingly solve moral problems in his committed agency. Through this need, existentialism approached (albeit only slightly) the ethics of an act (Wojtyła, 2021), which is related to virtue ethics (Aristotelian, post-Thomas Christian, and personalist) (Aristotle, 2007; Thomas Aquinas, 2017; Maritain, 2001).

Resolving ethical dilemmas in a somewhat abstract and rigid manner, i.e., strictly according to a fixed hierarchy of values, especially when its origin is arbitrary, not only restrains man's free will but also limits responsibility for the consequences of his acts. It automatically eliminates moral conflict, but it is only by confronting the hierarchised values with the possible consequences of an act in given circumstances – which often leads to moral conflict – that we can attain both Aristotelian perfection in moderation (in the virtue of temperance) and Christian fulfilment in an act.

Moral conflict can also arise in symmetrical cases (McConnell, 2022, Ch. 3), when a specific value triggers an obligation that simultaneously fulfils and fails to fulfil that value. An example is a situation in which two

persons' lives are in danger, but only one can be saved, which might happen when we are able to save only one drowning person or have only one dose of a life-saving medication. The threat is symmetrically directed towards two persons and, despite an unresolved moral conflict, it is necessary to act to save one of them because it is necessary to fulfil the value of a human life. More than that, being aware of this conflict motivates the acting person to perform the prescribed action more diligently.

The Anglo-Saxon literature offers a well-argued discussion on ethical dilemmas (which possibly involve moral conflicts) being genuine or apparent (McConnell, 2022, Chs. 5–6). Philosophers who claim that ethical dilemmas are genuine provide their various classifications, e.g., they divide them into ontological or epistemic dilemmas. The former are always genuine because neither of the duties dictated by an ethical value can be overridden by the other. Epistemic dilemmas are caused by a lack of knowledge as to which of the obligations dictated by values has priority; this leads to moral conflict, mainly caused by the lack of knowledge about the hierarchy of obligations. This means that epistemic dilemmas are not genuine, but this does not mean that they do not occur (McConnell, 2022, Ch. 7).

Moral conflicts are sometimes divided according to whether they meet negotiable and non-negotiable moral requirements (McConnell, 2022, Ch. 7). Some are negotiable in the sense that when a requirement cannot be met it is possible to undertake some substitute action which in some way compensates for the loss (this action will amend the wrong). In the case of non-negotiable conflicts, when the moral requirement is not met, there is no available redress for the wrong.

From the perspective of those who advocate the existence of genuine moral conflicts, the distinction between the moral conflicts caused by self-imposed ethical dilemmas (when an agent consciously declares that he will fulfil mutually exclusive duties) and those imposed on him by the world is artificial (McConnell, 2022, Ch. 7). For these advocates, the problem lies elsewhere: experiencing values morally allows one to be aware of their mutual exclusion when the obligations resulting from them are confronted in the world.

Deontic logic deals with obligation dilemmas and prohibition dilemmas (McConnell, 2022, Ch. 4). Its algebra contains eight functors related

to an agent's obligation to perform an act: two of (un)feasibility, three of obligation (imperative, prohibition, and, in the literal sense, duty), and three of permission (concession, optionality, indifference). Using deontic logic, agency can be modelled in the perspective of an ethical dilemma as it relates to value-fulfilling norms and is expressed by the contradiction of obligations directly related to these norms. Deontic logic formalises normative reasoning, which helps to analyse the changes in human action that are subject to norms (including moral ones) under changing circumstances, and thus it helps to analyse the emergence and development of a moral conflict. Like any logical tool, deontic logic is too hard to penetrate deep into the nature of moral conflict but attempts are made to, e.g., demonstrate its usefulness in eliminating obligation conflicts (although not prohibition conflicts) (McConnell, 2022, Ch. 7).

The term 'value conflict' often refers to situations (Ossowska, 2000, Ch. VIII; McConnell, 2022, Chs. 7, 8) in which solving a conflict requires interpersonal or group resolution rather than resolution made by an individual (his conscience). These groups can be national, cultural, or professional communities (e.g., biomedical, legal, uniformed services, business, etc.). In this case, however, it would be necessary to reflect on the temporary (or even permanent) moral conflict experienced by members of a given community that arises as a result of the incompatibility of their personal hierarchy of ethical values with the values actualised while performing professional tasks (or those resulting from these tasks), from a sense of not only moral responsibility but also legal responsibility. For example, for two national groups at war, remaining in a moral conflict (or a conflict with a moral background) is demoralising and renders decision-making impossible.

To protect members of professional groups against moral harm when they are exposed to moral conflicts (although this is not always successful), and in an effort to make their work efficient, a relatively explicit hierarchy of goals (related to the hierarchy of moral and non-moral goods) is conventionally embedded in professional codes of ethics and in procedures that allow these goods to be realised in a conventionally established order. This, however, does not mean accepting the principle of negotiability of the order of values nor destroying the system of obligations but is dictated solely by the requirement of operational efficiency in exceptional situations. Importantly, this conventional hierarchy should

consider the cultural context so that those who follow it are exposed as little as possible to moral conflict between the realisation of the ethical values they endorse and the non-moral values that are hierarchised in this convention. Ultimately, the aim is to minimise personal moral responsibility for the conduct of representatives of certain professional groups (Ślipko, 2010).

Interpersonal conflicts arise against the background of different hierarchies of values, beliefs, judgements and evaluations. Because they are not always resolvable, various methods can be employed to overcome them (Ossowska, 2000, Ch. VIII), including brutal brainwashing, discussion and deliberation, or by uprooting or weakening an attachment (to a value, a belief, an evaluation or judgement) by showing – as is done in psychological therapies – its genesis.

Conflict, moral or otherwise, is increasingly of interest to researchers who study communication between representatives of diverse cultures. The results of these studies are intended to improve intercultural dialogue and to develop technological and media instruments for resolving conflict. The problem is whether it is at all possible to resolve a conflict when this resolution involves an ethical dilemma based on the adoption of different values or their hierarchisations. An alternative would be to enter into dialogue or deliberations that would enable the parties to understand each other's rationale and remove the emotional state of hostility. The latter seems feasible, while the former, especially when conflict has a social dimension (i.e., between religious groups or groups fixated ideologically), seems hardly or not at all feasible, but it is valuable to try to find a way to discuss these differences.

In analytical philosophy, attempts have been made to establish ethical dilemmas and moral conflicts that are genuine or apparent. Those who claim that moral conflicts do not exist (McConnell, 2022, Ch. 5) optimistically view both the idea of human enhancement (e.g., transhumanism), in which moral conflict is generated by the imperfections of human nature, and the increasingly predictable and reliable interactions between man and his environment, as a result of which moral conflicts will disappear (thanks to the minimisation of man's responsibility for his acts). This interaction will be technologically optimised, while axiology, including utilitarian axiology, will be replaced by efficiency (although its ultimate purpose is not clear).

This conflict-free world appears as another utopia; however, because of the commercialisation of the goals and the results of technological progress, the likelihood of its actualisation seems greater than that of other utopias. From this perspective, the very possibility of man resolving moral conflicts can become a measure of his freedom.

Due to the word limit, the above historical analysis is brief and selective as an in-depth presentation of pertinent issues would require a separate article for each. The discussion of the term section will be illustrated by detailed analysis of a specific case of moral conflict in accordance with the understanding of this term that is adopted in this article.

Discussion of the term

The basic principle of morality is to do good and avoid doing evil. In order to fulfil this, one must have knowledge and a sense of what this good is. In metaphysics, a distinction is made between the ontic (metaphysical) good and the moral good. The ontic good is a relational transcendental (together with truth and beauty); these transcendentals are those properties in which being is manifested, i.e., together with truth and beauty, the good represents the concept of being. The concept of the good is a primary concept and thus cannot be defined by an ordinary definition, so an adequative definition is used to define it, according to which the good is what everything seeks (Aristotle, 1999, 1094 a, p. 1). Seeking here denotes a relation of wanting or desiring which is capable of eliciting some response (act) from the subject of that seeking: thus, the good is “what every thing desires. [...] Every thing is good insofar as it exists” (Maritain, 2001, p. 41; Thomas Aquinas, 2017, q. 21, a. 1).

With reference to a concrete being, the moral good, which is also the metaphysical good (Maritain, 2001, p. 42), has its generic representation (Aristotle, 2007, 996 a, p. 42). The scope and manner of actualisation towards the fullness of potentiality that is inherent in each species depends on the being which is the object of actualisation. Man is the only being who is the subject of morality. This means that, in addition to the actualisation of biological-physical potentialities in him during his life, he is for himself the object of ontic fulfilment in achieving a good that is essentially metaphysical but “particularised in the moral order”

(Maritain, 2001, p. 43; Thomas Aquinas, 2017, q. 18; Wojtyła, 2021, 188–193).

The moral good can be presented in two perspectives of moral order: moral value and purpose. Moral value refers to formal causality in the order of specification, i.e., the kind of good, while purpose refers to final causality in the order of action (Maritain, 2001, pp. 43–44). As a value, the good is discovered in moral experience – as the “irreducible data” of this experience. As a purpose, the good is the ultimate cause of free action. The moral specification of an act (it being good or evil), however, is “something entirely different from the ontic specification” (Maritain, 2001, pp. 46–47). A well-performed act (in the sense of proficiency) is not necessarily a good act.

When man freely, guided by his free will, undertakes an act, he becomes its creator. As its creator, he is responsible for its external effect (in the structure of the environment, this is to the extent of achieving the proximate end (Thomas Aquinas, 2017, q. 123, a. 7)), and for its internal effect (in the moral structure of himself (Wojtyła, 2021, Part II, Chs. 3 and 4)). Responsibility acts as a link between the result of resolving an ethical dilemma and acting on this resolution. When the value and the goal are not fully actualised, the sense of responsibility gives rise to a moral conflict that may persist both during and after the performance of the act or as a result of its omission. Responsibility is also the driving force behind attempts to resolve moral conflict.

Admittedly, the definitions of ethical dilemma and moral conflict proposed here are based on a certain simplification, but its aim is to facilitate analysis of the case study.

The transformation of an ethical dilemma into a moral conflict can be followed through an example given by Jean-Paul Sartre (1945, p. 10 ff), so the analysis conducted in this section is based on his general formulation of a conflict. The aim of the analysis is to show the positive and negative consequences of remaining in moral conflict and the importance of not only the responsibility of the agent for the positive or negative role of the moral conflict but also the impact of difficult-to-predict changes in the situation of both the person who experiences the conflict and the environment in which he acts.

In the paraphrase of Sartre’s conflict adopted here, the dilemma is based on a young person facing the following choice between two obligations:

1. I voluntarily join the army because my homeland needs defence against foreign invasion.

or

2. Despite the need to defend the homeland against foreign invasion, I remain with my mother, who requires constant care which no one else can provide.

The choice depends on which hierarchy of goods (in the sense of values) the young person prioritises. Assuming that he does not use a dilemma as a cover for him being afraid to go to war, the choice is a difficult one: between the good that is

(G1) homeland,
and the good that is
(G2) mother.

But is it merely a choice between two systems of the hierarchisation of goods (in the sense of values), one of which

(H1) prioritises the well-being of a collectivity that shares a similar history and a specific cultural identity, the protection of its intangible and material resources, and the territory on which it exists, over the well-being of an individual member of that collectivity,

while the other

(H2) assumes the opposite order of importance?

But is the young man's dilemma merely about commitment to a specific axiology? Can his emotional relationship with his homeland and his mother be disregarded? That is, is the ethical dilemma merely the dilemma of an obligation to actualise values (Wojtyła, 2000, pp. 284–287)? Although it is difficult to support Sartre's emphasis on one's freedom in deciding on one's existence, in this case the emotional state of the young person should be considered if the resolution of the G1/G2 dilemma in the perspective of obligation turns out to be apparent and leads to this Sartrean dilemma. Emotionality would then lead to the disintegration of the person, whereas Wojtyła's "tension between the emotivity of the subject and personal efficacy in acts is creative" (Wojtyła, 2021, p. 356). Any resolution of an ethical dilemma leads the young person into moral conflict:

Choice G1: Would he have been a good soldier if he had remained in moral conflict (C1) by choosing an obligation to his homeland and neglecting his mother?

Choice G2: By remaining with his mother, who, for example, would soon die despite his care, and no longer being able to join the war, could the young man remain in moral conflict (C2) for the rest of his life based on the conviction that he had failed in his obligation to his homeland when many of his peers had sacrificed their health and lives?

Conflict C2 would be exacerbated if the mother were an ardent patriot. Then, her son's choice of H2 would become an additional burden and source of suffering for her. One could then speak of the 'indivisible character of certain values' (Aszyk, 1998, p. 114). In this case, the key values are G1 and G2, each of which triggers different obligations: to serve the homeland or to serve the mother, for whom the value of the homeland belongs to the order of H1.

In the young person's dilemma, in addition to obligation, an emotional relationship to certain goods comes into play. This must be taken into account when analysing the moment of resolving an ethical dilemma, but this still does not mean that the young person, driven more by emotion than by duty, will not fall into moral conflict. Each of his decisions that resolve the G1/G2 dilemma, irrespective of the motives behind the choice, gives rise to a moral conflict following its implementation. Only if the young man chooses option G2 and his mother dies soon enough for him to join the army will conflict C2 be resolved because it will simply expire. When he chooses option G1 and his mother survives the war, despite remaining in conflict C1 during the war, which could negatively affect his performance as a soldier, C1 will disappear when he returns home from the war.

In the analysed case, when the young person chooses G2 and faces conflict C2, he may be exposed to other moral conflicts, such as:

C2', which would occur if a close friend of his were killed in the war and he should then take care of his friend's distraught and lonely mother while he has neither the strength nor the means to do so.

The more strongly he felt conflict C2, the more conflict C2' would bother him. Again, there would be an interference of values in orders H1 and H2, which generate the order of duty. Caring for his friend's mother would become necessary because of the emergence of the indivisibility of the value of the homeland (G1) and the value of the health and life of the mother (G2) whose son sacrificed himself for the homeland. The young man could fall into a situational trap:

(T1) neglect his mother

or

(T2) neglect his friend's mother,

in a situation in which this friend, in a sense, substituted him in his obligation to defend his homeland. If he had chosen option T2, he would have aggravated C2', which would then have taken on the characteristics of an axiological conflict.

Roman Ingarden considered man's four types of relationship with the performance of an act, in which this relationship is called responsibility (Ingarden, 1987, p. 74). He explicitly emphasised the distinctiveness of the fourth type, that is, a situation in which "one acts responsibly" because in this case responsibility is directly related to moral conflict. During the entire process of undertaking and performing an act, an agent is accompanied by a sense of responsibility (Wojtyła, 2021, p. 271) for the consequences of his successive choices of values (goods) and ways of actualising them, and for his failure to realise others; this is also accompanied by responsibility for the good or evil of his act (Ślipko, 2010, pp. 148–160).

The young man who takes care of his mother and is trapped in situation T1/T2 would feel acutely conflicted by C2' because of his sense of responsibility for his mother and for his friend's mother. He would have two options:

(O1) divide his care between both mothers, but this would entail less attention to his own mother,

or

(O2) abandon any efforts to care for his friend's mother.

Here, the question can be asked: what, then, strengthens or weakens the responsibility for an act? If the psychological reluctance to take responsibility is rejected, it is frequently the case that efforts undertaken to ensure the positive results of an act (i.e., corresponding to positive intention and the proper choice of values) turn out to be unsatisfactory. Three main reasons for this state of affairs can be distinguished:

- Limited capacity to recognise how to put values into action in specific conditions; in the case under consideration, if the young man had chosen O1, he might not have been able to cope with, for example, the gradually growing hostility of his friend's mother towards him, caused by her irrational belief that he should have died and not her son.

- Unforeseen circumstances of the performance of an act: in the case under consideration, this would happen if the young man decided to take care of his friend's mother (i.e., if he chose O1) but could not provide this care properly, e.g., due to the deterioration of his mother's health.
- Certain mental or physical changes in the agent that interfere with the planned course of action: in the case under consideration, the young person, being torn by moral conflicts and exhausted by his wartime existence, could deteriorate in health so severely that, regardless of his choice of O1 or O2, he would not be able to cope with his obligations.

The performance of an act is always accompanied by uncertainty regarding its consequences, including its moral consequences. A sense of responsibility comes into play which influences the manner in which the moral conflict is resolved, the consequences of the action taken, and the response to it. Should the action be discontinued or continued but with a different plan? Will abandoning the act or modifying its execution have a more positive effect (will it bring about a greater good?) than continuing it irresponsibly, that is, without resolving the moral conflict that has arisen? How should one proceed when, contrary to good intentions, the outcome of an act does not fulfil these intentions.

If an action is irresponsible, this does not necessarily lead to an axiological conflict, but it makes it probable. This is because an axiological conflict is revealed when, due to a situation of coercion, a moral value is consciously violated during the performance of an act, i.e., it causes evil. Hanna Arendt's famous phrase "those who choose the lesser evil forget very quickly that they chose evil" (Arendt, 1964, p. 36) not only refers to a situation of coercion but also to a conscious choice between one evil or another (choosing one of them and violating the other in the case of two equally important values). Arendt demonstrates the dangerous banality of evil which is linked with reduced responsibility. However, even then, it is still important to be aware of the existence of moral conflict (which is aggravated by the choice of the lesser evil) and to be aware that this choice does not reduce responsibility for either the decision made or for the result produced by it. With regard to the individual person, moral conflict can improve a person morally if he responsibly tries to overcome it.

When is man responsible for his actions? Ingarden wrote that “the acting person must be in a particular way endowed in his ontic categorical structure and in his traits of character” (Ingarden, 1987, p. 97). Wojtyła defined responsibility as something immaterial, as something that does not fall under the senses, as manifestations of spirituality, and as “evident facts that the mind comprehends and whose understanding it can appropriately deepen and develop in itself” (Wojtyła, 2021, p. 288). Tadeusz Ślipko wrote that “[t]he process of formation of man’s moral personality takes place [...] in the spiritual depths of man, and [...] the fundamental current and the hidden core of his moral responsibility are expressed in this process” (Ślipko, 2010, p. 155).

The rational-volitional-emotional nexus is clearly visible in the young man’s dilemma in deciding between G1 and G2. The situational trap T1/T2 means that he would have chosen the lesser of two evils if he had somewhat neglected his mother in order to imperfectly care for his friend’s mother. It would be worse if he fell into either T1 or T2, because then one of the mothers would be left uncared for. The question can then be asked whether the moral conflicts C2 and C2’, which have no unequivocally positive moral solution in the young person’s current situation, contribute to his moral improvement or to his destruction?

As has been shown, the choice of G2 admittedly leads to conflict C2’, but as long as the young person is aware of the consequences of this choice, he is potentially able to overcome this conflict and improve morally. Moreover, his persisting in C2 when his friend dies on the frontline transforms the situation into conflict C2’, but when the young person chooses the lesser evil in the situational trap, he will do better than if he had repressed that conflict. The T1/T2 situational trap, insofar as the young person is aware of the flaws in his moral decisions (this is the essence of H. Arendt’s warning!), does not thwart his practical self-improvement, as long as he feels responsible for his choices and omissions. Being aware of this moral fact can, for example, unleash his ingenuity in improving the care for both mothers, or, after their deaths, prompt him to support the families of veterans, etc.

If the young man proved irresponsible and disregarded the need to resolve conflict C2 or C2’, he would have no motive to prove himself in caring for either mother; if he pushed away C2’ on the spot, this act would primarily diminish (if not totally invalidate) the importance of his

earlier choice of G2 (to care for his mother, who was lonely and in need) and would thus have a destructive effect not only on his motivation to care for her but also on himself and on his internal moral structure.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

The personalist Jacques Maritain's understanding of moral obligation differs from Immanuel Kant's a priori imperative (2017): for him, is not "an empty form of duty that imposes itself of its own accord and without any rationale" (Maritain, 2001, p. 170). For Maritain, moral action, i.e., action performed in conformity with moral obligation, is identical to rational action. However, he was well aware that the rationality of the choice of an ethical value (the good) here focuses on the natural relation to the good, which is love as a feeling "oriented attractively, toward a good" (Wojtyła, 2021, p. 363).

Maritain pointed to the relationship between values and norms, which is part of the relationship between ethical dilemmas and moral conflicts. The good as a value "is a formal quality, a form or ethical determination contained in an act of the human will" (Maritain, 2001, p. 137). This act changes into action that is subject to moral evaluation and complies or does not comply to a certain norm; this norm is external to this act and is part of "the order of external formal causality" (Maritain, 2001, p. 138). Maritain distinguished between the formative norm (which he called the pilot-norm) and the injunction (command-norm, law-norm, imperative-norm, and in a weaker form, advice-norm). The former determines, with the participation of reason, the measure of the moral goodness of an act. From it is derived the norm-injunction, which implies social and religious rules of conduct and, as it were, links formal causality with final causality. It is this that is supposed to direct an agent towards the 'unconditioned' pilot-norm (Maritain, 2021, pp. 148–149).

Maritain distinguished yet another type of norm, the compulsion-norm (Maritain, 2021, pp. 150–151), which is directly related to moral conflict and is meant to protect man's imperfect nature from committing an immoral act. This norm helps one to resolve moral conflict by making one aware of the possibility of committing evil. It also makes

man potentially morally responsible for an evil even if he is not the direct perpetrator of it in a situation in which the compulsion-norm stems from, e.g., criminal legislation (Arendt) that seemingly invalidates an ethical dilemma.

An extension of the considerations undertaken in this article would be to analyse moral conflict using the language of Maritain's classification of norms and in confrontation with the process of actualisation of values as proposed in Wojtyła's conception of the personal structure of self-determination.

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Anna Bogatyńska-Kucharska

Ignatianum University in Cracow

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7762-9518>

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Moral dilemmas

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: The term ‘dilemma’ is widely and often imprecisely used. Sometimes it refers to a situation in which there is an objective collision of duties on the grounds of ethical theory (the objective aspect), while at other times it indicates a moral agent’s difficulty in choosing from alternative options (the subjective aspect). The article presents three definitions of ethical dilemmas: 1. the standard definition; 2. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong’s definition; and 3. the contextual definition proposed by Barbara Chyrowicz. Each definition places different emphasis on the subjective and/or objective aspects of ethical dilemmas.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: Analysis of selected historical approaches to moral dilemmas reveals two tendencies: the first attempts to eliminate dilemmas in order to preserve the integrity of ethical theory or to accept the impossibility of their being resolvable; the second postulates analysing dilemmas and accepting that some of them are unresolvable; it emphasises the practical usefulness of ethical theories and the importance of developing ethical sensibility.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: Referring to the broad understanding of the term ‘dilemma’, this section presents a typology of dilemmas that takes into account five criteria: the type, scope, and source of duty, as well as the consequences of the choice made and the ontic status of the alternative choices that make up the dilemma.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: In the final section, it is postulated that the definition of a moral dilemma should take both objective and subjective aspects into account. This section also identifies the necessary conditions for the usefulness of theory in resolving ethical dilemmas in practice, namely

the abandonment of the pursuit of integrity, the total substitution of moral sensitivity with ethical rationality, and the total substitution of ethical arguments with a moral agent's sensitivity.

Keywords: moral dilemmas, typology of dilemmas, definitions of dilemmas, integrity of ethical theories

Definition of the term

In its broad understanding, the term 'dilemma' usually refers to a situation in which a difficult choice between two competing options must be made (Donagan, 1996, pp. 11–12). Dilemmas can be moral or non-moral. A moral dilemma applies only to a situation in which the choice concerns options that are morally relevant. The difficulty in making a choice is related to the impossibility of realising both options and the momentousness of the chosen act or its consequences. If a situation is ethically significant, the resolution is more momentous because it involves moral good and moral evil. Making a choice does not necessarily devalue the rejected option. Rather, it results in discomfort in having to give up the other option. Resolvable dilemmas are those that can be resolved on ethical grounds. Unresolvable dilemmas are those for which no convincing justifications can be given in favour of one option over another.

There are two aspects to dilemmas: the objective aspect (the content and the context of the dilemma) and the subjective aspect (the person who experiences the dilemma). In the subjective aspect, how a dilemma is experienced depends on a moral agent's beliefs, including his knowledge (whether or not he is aware that he is facing a dilemma). It also leads to discomfort linked to the sense of responsibility in having to make a difficult choice. There might be situations in which a moral agent is not aware that he is facing a dilemma, or situations in which it only appears to him that he is facing a dilemma. Although the term 'dilemma' sometimes refers to situations in which both aspects – subjective and objective – are taken into account, most often it covers only one of them and, as this is rarely clearly indicated, this can make the dilemma harder to resolve.

The standard definition¹ states that "a dilemma is a situation in which a moral agent can choose one of the available alternatives for action but cannot pursue both at the same time" (Chyrowicz, 2008, p. 52). Sinnott-Armstrong postulates narrowing this definition by adding three conditions to it. First, the situation should concern only moral demands, not

1 This term is used by Chyrowicz (2008, pp. 53–59) and Sinnott-Armstrong in his description of an entire class of definitions which fulfil specific conditions (1988, pp. 3–5).

conflicts between moral and non-moral demands. Second, a distinction should be made between duties (what a moral agent is morally obliged to do) and recommendations (ideals and supererogatory norms), according to which a moral agent may or may not act (failure to fulfil an ideal does not entail moral guilt). A dilemma can be created by two duties, but it is not created by conflicts between an ideal and an obligation. Third, these duties should have equally strong justifications and neither duty is superior to the other. Sinnott-Armstrong's narrowed definition could thus read as follows: a moral dilemma is a conflict between (at least) two moral duties, neither of which has a stronger justification than the other (Sinnott-Armstrong, 1988, pp. 3–26). He also observes that dilemmas can occur as a conflict between two positive duties, between two negative duties, and between a positive and a negative duty.

The contextual definition of a dilemma proposed by Barbara Chyrowicz reads as follows:

an ethical dilemma is a situation in which a moral agent is convinced that he should do both *a* and *b*, but he cannot fulfil duty *a* without violating duty *b*, nor duty *b* without violating duty *a*, while he finds justifications for duties *a* and *b* (which may entail both acting and refraining from acting) in the ethical theory within the framework of which he tries to resolve the dilemma (Chyrowicz, 2008, p. 70).

It is important here to emphasise that the subjective dimension of a dilemma depends on the consciousness of a moral agent rather than, as Sinnott-Armstrong advocates, on the objective properties of conflicting duties.

Historical analysis of the term

Analysis of selected historical approaches to moral dilemmas reveals two tendencies. The first, which was dominant until at least the 19th century, involved the elimination of moral dilemmas. The second, which is increasingly well understood today, involves accepting the existence of dilemmas and abandoning the ambition to formulate a theory that resolves every ethical dilemma. The first approach stemmed from the demand for ethical theories to

be consistent, have integrity, and provide an answer to every possible conflict of duties. If it did not provide an answer, a theory was flawed. Resolving a dilemma usually meant identifying a higher and a lower duty. An example would be the Platonic case of the justified refusal to give back a weapon to its owner who, due to madness, might use it to kill someone. The resolution is unambiguous, and justice lies in the source of a stronger duty than the injunction to keep promises.

Aristotle also searched for consistency in theory, although he was aware of the complexity of the issue of dilemmas. He was convinced that in every situation both an ethical theory and a virtuous person would be guided by the right reason to act. Giving the example of a captain faced with the choice of throwing cargo overboard in order to reduce the weight of his ship in a storm and thus increase the safety of the passengers, or to not dispose of the cargo and increase the risk of sinking (Aristotle, 1999, p. 33), he indicates that this is not a dilemma – the captain does the right thing by throwing the cargo overboard. However, when considering another example, Aristotle observes that this is not always the case:

if a tyrant were to order one to do something base, having one's parents and children in his power, and if one did the action they were to be saved, but otherwise would be put to death (Aristotle, 1999, p. 33).

Such situations are dilemma situations that can lead to base acts. Moreover, he claims that

[f]or such actions men are sometimes even praised, when they endure something base or painful in return for great and noble objects gained; in the opposite case they are blamed, since to endure the greatest indignities for no noble end or for a trifling end is the mark of an inferior person (Aristotle, 1999, p. 34).

The ultimate aim of ethics is still the creation of an integral system, and a morally perfect human being who chooses the right action in every situation will have no moral dilemmas.

The intention to fulfil the condition of integrity is also a characteristic feature of, e.g., Stoic ethics and St. Augustine's proposal. According to the Stoics, a wise man is guided in life by concrete values that he is able to define correctly and apply properly. In this way, he is able to fulfil all the

obligations arising from his nature and thus can avoid conflicts. Augustine observed that the source of moral dilemmas is imperfect human nature, which prevents man from the proper discernment of a given situation. St. Augustine gives examples of judges who ordered the torture of innocents (or even sentenced them to death) in order to obtain information concerning other cases. According to him, in such cases judges may order the torture of innocent men due to their ignorance. Despite this, wise men should sit in courts as judges. Such abuses as sentencing the innocent, subjecting them to torture, passing unjust sentences for educational, retributive, or preventive purposes and tolerating false accusations in order to punish a crime, are not considered sins

for the wise judge does these things, not with any intention of doing harm, but because his ignorance compels him, and because human society claims him as a judge. But though we therefore acquit the judge of malice, we must none the less condemn human life as miserable (Augustine, 2014 [XIX, 6]).

Dilemmas are rooted in the imperfection of human nature, ignorance, and the inability to know something fully. However, once God's law is accepted, these shortcomings will disappear, and every dilemma will be resolvable. From the point of view of God's law and God (the Perfect Moral Agent), dilemmas do not exist. Man's role is to discover God's law and, in situations of doubt, to be guided by it. As Augustine points out, even erroneous decisions are not sins if made with the right intentions (towards peace) and after proper consideration.

In his reflections on dilemmas, Thomas Aquinas refers to being perplexed (*perplexus*). A moral agent can be "completely (*simpliciter*) perplexed" or "perplexed to some degree (*secundum quid*)" (Thomas Aquinas, 1953, de Veritate q. 17, art. 4, ad 8). In other words, Thomas differentiates between dilemmas *sensu stricto* and relative dilemmas. In his opinion, all dilemmas are relative dilemmas and their origins lie in the consciousness of a moral agent rather than in the objective structure of a moral law. A moral dilemma (i.e., being perplexed) arises from wrongful intention, culpable ignorance, or inculpable ignorance. A moral dilemma is removable by replacing the wrong intention with the right one, by acquiring the new information necessary to assess an action, or by working to better shape one's conscience. Like Augustine, Thomas recognises that, from the point of view of the Perfect Moral Agent, there can

be no dilemma, therefore a moral agent's perplexity *de facto* stems from an error. In a situation that appears to have no way out, Thomas recommends – apart from the suspension of knowledge – that one should not give in to the illusion that there are only two ways out of a given situation.

The existence of moral dilemmas is also denied by Immanuel Kant:

A conflict of duties would be a relation between them in which one of them would cancel the other (wholly or in part). But since duty and obligation are concepts that express the objective practical necessity of certain actions, and two rules opposed to each other cannot be necessary at the same time, if it is a duty to act in accordance with one rule, to act in accordance with the opposite rule is not a duty, but even contrary to duty; so a collision of duties and obligations is inconceivable (Kant, 2017, p. 19).

Kant indicates that the source of seeing two duties as contradictory is that they arise from different 'grounds of duty', although it is not clear what he means by this term: these may be duties incumbent on a moral agent, or they may be events that have led to a given situation. Kant unequivocally claims that in a situation of conflicting grounds of duty, the stronger ground prevails. The non-existence of a duty dilemma is also emphasised by Kant's famous principle 'duty presupposes possibility'; if an action is required by morality, it is therefore possible to perform it.

Utilitarianism, especially in its classical form, also attempted to eliminate ethical dilemmas. Jeremy Bentham sought a method for resolving all moral disputes. He proposed that the basis for ascertaining the value of a given act should be how much pleasure or pain it brings to all parties involved. He also proposed additional criteria for judging pleasure and pain, such as intensity, duration, certainty (or uncertainty), propinquity (or remoteness), purity (how pure pleasure or pain are, i.e., if one contains the other), fecundity (the possibility of bringing pleasure or pain in the future), and extent (how many people will be affected). Utilitarian ethics still aim at eliminating dilemmas today.

E.D. Ross, the founder of the theory of *prima facie* duties (conditional duties), proposed a different model for resolving moral dilemmas. He considered that there are numerous conditional duties that produce obligations to act in particular situations. In a situation of conflict, a moral agent, following his moral intuition, should choose one solution at the expense of the other. The solution he chooses becomes a binding duty in a given situation. In another conflict, however, the moral agent may

choose a different conditional obligation. It should be emphasised that Ross's theory satisfies the demand for integrity, even though it does not openly point to one action that is right in every single situation.

Abandoning the demand for integrity requires accepting the fact that there are moral dilemmas in which the moral agent will not be able to make the right choice. Following Hegel, among others, such conflict can be called tragic as both parties can justify their actions. The end of history will reveal who was ultimately right. Sartre presented a good example of a contemporary dilemma: a young man who is torn between his duty to defend his homeland (and his desire to avenge his brother) and his duty to take care of his mother (Sartre, 1946, pp. 10–11). According to Sartre, such situations reveal a moral agent's powerlessness in the absence of a guarantee that he will make a right choice. These are the difficulties faced by ethical systems that aspire to fulfil the condition of integrity.

Almost at the same time, Bernard Williams and Leszek Kołakowski discussed the difficulties of integral ethics. Kołakowski drew attention to their maximalist ambitions. Integral ethics would have to produce a moral code for resolving all dilemmas. As Kołakowski wrote:

The ideal of a code is the ideal of a perfectly resolvable system from which, together with a description of the situation, any value judgment or its negation can be deduced. A code transforms the world of values into a crystal landscape where any value can always be located and identified beyond any doubt (Kołakowski, 1967, p. 264).

According to this Polish philosopher, belief in the ideal of fully integral ethics is illusory and oversimplifies the sphere of morality. Furthermore, its postulates are unrealistic (there is no possibility of accepting moral resolutions once and for all), and the desire to accept them will lead to a caricature of morality and the disappearance of conscience or individual moral reflection. Thus, it is necessary to accept the existence of moral dilemmas and to continue attempts to resolve them, without any guarantees that these will be definitive and indisputable solutions.

Using the standard definition, Williams also highlights the indelibility of dilemmas in ethics:

[i]t is possible for a man to hold inconsistent beliefs, in the strong sense that the statements which would adequately express his beliefs involve a logical contradiction (Williams, 1973, p. 166).

It follows from this fact that a moral agent can sometimes have contradictory desires and be convinced that he faces mutually exclusive moral duties. Williams also notes that, unlike conflicting beliefs or desires, in the case of moral conflicts there is no “general freedom to adopt a policy to try to eliminate their occurrence” (Williams, 1973, p. 179). Moral agents do not have this freedom because they experience moral conflicts regardless of how they choose to deal with them (e.g., by eliminating them or by admitting that they occur): “[m]oral conflicts are neither systematically avoidable, nor all soluble without remainder” (Williams, 1973, p. 179). It is impossible to totally reject one of the duties to act. He also disagrees with the thesis that the resolution of a dilemma invalidates the rejected option. A moral agent’s decision must remain uncertain.

Moral dilemmas continue to be hotly debated. An increasing number of examples and proposals for resolving them are put forward (with perhaps the most popular being the trolley dilemma). They are used in fields such as psychology and cognitive science to study moral attitudes. There is also an ongoing dispute between those ethics that satisfy the integrity condition and those that claim that moral dilemmas are unsolvable on theoretical grounds.

Discussion of the term

Typology of dilemmas. Barbara Chyrowicz lists five criteria useful for classifying dilemmas: the type, scope, and source of a duty, as well as the consequences of the choice made, and the ontic status of the alternatives that make up the dilemma (Chyrowicz, 2008, pp. 73–169). With regard to the type of duty, she lists moral and non-moral dilemmas, indicating their three main groups: prudential dilemmas, religious-moral dilemmas, and moral-legal dilemmas.

Prudential dilemmas concern a difficult choice to be made between one of two options that have no moral significance. They are experienced in life on an everyday basis. Some may be utterly trivial, such as choosing a brand of ski equipment; others might be more momentous, such as whether and how much money to spend on an expensive operation that gives one a better chance of recovery, or to forgo it and spend

the money on better education for one's children. These have no moral significance, although they may be morally momentous.

Moral-religious dilemmas arise when religious and moral requirements come into conflict. Examples include God's command of Abraham to kill Isaac, or the dilemma between choosing medical or religious justifications when a Jehovah's Witness needs a blood transfusion.

Moral-legal dilemmas are situations in which an unjust law comes into conflict with one's dictates of conscience. Examples include various situations of civil disobedience, e.g., those based on righteousness or consistency with one's moral system (e.g., helping a slave escape), injustice (an unjust law passed by the majority against a minority), politics (citizens recognise that the way in which they are protected by those in power essentially leads to increased danger, e.g., the deployment of American weapons in European countries).

In terms of the scope of moral obligation, the following deontic categories of acts are distinguished in ethics: requirements (orders and prohibitions), ideals (supererogatory acts), and morally indifferent acts (permissible). Only requirements entail an obligation to act. Morally permissible and supererogatory acts may or may not be performed, as failure to perform them does not lead to moral guilt. Dilemmas can appear when acts which come into conflict belong to the same category (e.g., a dilemma between two requirements, two ideals, or two morally indifferent acts) as well as when they belong to different categories (e.g., a dilemma between a requirement and a morally indifferent act, between a requirement and an ideal, or between a morally indifferent act and an ideal).

Only dilemmas between two requirements are unresolvable – dilemmas within all the other categories are resolvable. Neither ideals nor morally indifferent acts require one to act, so when they come into conflict with a moral imperative or moral prohibition, the ethically appropriate choice is obvious, although subjectively it might be difficult or uncomfortable. The seemingly obvious resolvability of a conflict between requirements and ideals may prove much more difficult in practice due to the problematic nature, in certain cases, of the exact distinction between requirements and ideals. An example is giving money to starving people in other countries. On the one hand, the distribution of wealth depends on the person who has earned it and is thus free to spend it on his needs

(or whims) or on the needs (or whims) of others. On the other hand, if the discrepancy between one's whims (e.g., an extremely exclusive meal in a very expensive restaurant) and the needs of others (e.g., water, food, or life-saving medication) is too great, it is legitimate to ask whether the sharing of wealth by the rich is purely supererogatory or whether it, in fact, meets the criteria of a moral requirement.

As permissible acts and ideas do not entail an obligation to act, any dilemma arising from conflict both within and between these deontic categories can be considered resolvable. This does not necessarily mean that every solution chosen is equally good: it means that none is morally wrong. These dilemmas may require reflection and may involve discomfort, but they do not cause moral evil, regardless of the solution chosen.

Dilemmas of ideals most frequently concern various forms of charity. Because of one's limited capacities, it is sometimes impossible to help everyone one would like to, which arouses regret. In this case, there is no moral guilt; the actions taken are commendable. Deciding which supererogatory action to choose resembles a prudential dilemma rather than a moral one. Regret resulting from the inability to help everyone may be felt by people with an extremely sensitive conscience.

Dilemmas of two permissible actions are what Chyrowicz calls 'dilemmas of a better choice'. Neither of the competing options entails an obligation to act; both are morally permissible. The difficulty in making a decision often stems from uncertainty about the consequences of a chosen action. For example, the father of a musically gifted girl is considering whether to send her to lessons with an outstanding music teacher, which will lead to her spending a lot of time practising at the expense of other activities typical for a girl her age, such as spending time with her siblings.

Chyrowicz (2008, pp. 114–135) identifies three sources of obligations: moral principles (rights), duties (resulting from the role one performs), and obligations (resulting most often from the promises one makes and also from the principle of reciprocity). Duties and obligations also differ in terms of the person who imposes sanctions (a superior or a person whose trust has been breached), as well as in terms of the consequences: accountability to an authority (duties) or breaches of trust (obligations). Taking into account these categories, the following types of dilemmas

can be identified: dilemmas between rights, dilemmas between duties, dilemmas between obligations, dilemmas between rights and duties, dilemmas between rights and obligations, as well as dilemmas between duties and obligations. Establishing a hierarchy of what should be done based on moral principles, duties, and obligations would make it possible to resolve dilemmas in which these three categories are present and in which they compete with each other. However, it does not resolve situations where acts from the same category are in conflict.

Of these categories, dilemmas of rights, i.e., those that arise from the conflict of two moral principles, are the most difficult to resolve.

Dilemmas of duties arise from different roles being performed, the requirements of which sometimes come into conflict with each other. Resolving the conflicting requirements of different roles involves comparing the requirements and choosing which are the more important. Typical examples are professional and private roles (e.g., the roles of an employee and a parent and the question of how much time to devote to each). One of the criteria useful for choosing the stronger one is an employee's substitutability in performing a given role.

An example of a dilemma of rights and duties is the situation of a soldier who takes part in an unjust war. The soldier, by virtue of his professional role, is obliged to obey orders. If these orders are despicable, a dilemma of moral principles and duties arises. On the one hand, it can be argued that moral principles take precedence here but, on the other hand, refusing to obey an order can be extremely difficult and result in sacrificing one's life, which, from a psychological perspective, is a situation of ethical heroism. Excusing oneself by obeying orders in such situations does not justify committing wicked acts. The resolution of this dilemma is only simple on the theoretical level. In this example, the difference between the objective level and the subjective level is clear. At the objective level, it is obvious that one should avoid evil and therefore avoid participating in an unjust war. However, at the subjective level, a person does not have complete freedom of action. There is no doubt that obeying orders is not sufficient justification for actions, either morally or legally.

Dilemmas of obligation often arise from the impossibility of realising the requirements of a moral principle towards several different persons at the same time. They concern situations where an obligation arises

from a relationship between two specific persons due to a reciprocity principle or a promise made. They generally arise when it is impossible to keep a promise, e.g., due to a significant, unforeseen, or unintended change in circumstances. These are usually resolvable dilemmas because a change of context can invalidate a previously made promise, which all parties can accept. In such situations, the proposed solution is some form of compensation. In a broad sense, the source of the moral obligation is the principle of keeping promises.

Dilemmas of rights and obligations occur when the principle of keeping promises comes into conflict with another moral principle. For example, should a borrowed weapon be returned to its rightful owner when we suspect he will use it to kill someone?

Examples of dilemmas between duties and obligations are situations where the requirements of one's role come into conflict with a promise one has made. Here, as in dilemmas involving two obligations, reflection on the terms of the validity of a promise often helps in resolving a dilemma. It is worth offering compensation or reparation in such situations.

A shared feature of dilemmas from the categories of moral residue and moral evil is the feeling of regret or guilt. In this category, Chyrowicz (2008, pp. 135–156) distinguishes between dilemmas of moral residue and dilemmas of moral evil. The differentiating feature of these dilemmas is the moral or non-moral nature of the harm or loss. Dilemmas of moral residue are situations in which some non-moral loss is unavoidable, which arouses feelings of grief or sadness and sometimes guilt. Their distinguishing feature is strong negative emotions. They are also sometimes called emotional or subjective dilemmas.

Moral evil dilemmas are situations in which a moral agent cannot avoid performing a morally evil act, which is associated with feelings of moral guilt and remorse. A milder form is dilemmas of lesser evil, which are situations where one chooses non-moral evil to realise a moral good. Proper dilemmas of moral evil are situations where morally evil acts are chosen to minimise morally evil consequences. An example is the separation of Siamese twins, which means killing one (when it is impossible to save both and forgoing medical intervention means the death of both). The separation of twins, and consequently causing the death of one of them, can be justified, for example, on the grounds of

consequentialist ethics. On the grounds of deontology, it will remain an evil act (a killing), although it may be justified. The category of moral evil dilemmas includes cases of 'dirty hands' and 'moral costs' (Chyrowicz, 2008, p. 151).

The category of dilemmas linked to the ontic status of alternative options includes epistemic and ontological dilemmas. The sources of epistemic dilemmas are ignorance and the inability to find the right solution. They relate to situations that are dilemmatic only at the subjective level: the moral agent, due to his lack of knowledge, fails to see that the right solution exists. Epistemic dilemmas are generally resolvable. The lack of knowledge exacerbates the feeling of discomfort and may foster a morally wrong decision. Here the reasons for a moral agent's ignorance are of moral significance: if the lack of discernment results from negligence, i.e., a moral agent does not have the knowledge he should have, he is guilty of choosing wrongly. The scope of available knowledge is also determined by duties and obligations.

The source of ontological dilemmas is the actual collision of moral demands. They are also always dilemmas of moral evil and are sometimes called real or objective dilemmas.

The typology of dilemmas presented here reveals the broad context and diversity in the applications of this term. In summary, the term 'dilemma' is used broadly when there are two competing options that cannot be realised at the same time. Ethically significant situations, i.e., those in which there is a moral duty, are called moral dilemmas. A hierarchy of duties resolves a dilemma, although it does not necessarily eliminate the associated discomfort. However, there are situations in which it is impossible to establish a hierarchy of duties, in which case we are dealing with real dilemmas. These are situations in which a moral agent accurately recognises an existing conflict of duties, none of which are superior to the others. Subjective discomfort is not a sufficient condition for claiming the existence of a real dilemma as they also occur in situations where a moral agent is unable to identify the right action due to a lack of adequate knowledge. On this basis, a further distinction emerges between real dilemmas (dilemmas in the narrow sense) and all other dilemmas. Only real dilemmas are unsolvable. In other situations, the term 'dilemma' is used in a broad sense, but these situations are generally resolvable.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

Both the subjective and objective (objectified) dimensions of moral dilemmas should be taken into account when considering them. The subjective dimension covers the individual's feelings, the perception of conflicting duties, regrets or qualms linked to the impossibility of realising one of the options, and, finally, possible pangs of conscience linked to the conviction that one has not acted properly in a given situation. The objective dimension, emphasised by Sinnott-Armstrong, refers to the individual's independent justification of moral requirements, the level of norms that come into conflict, their status (moral or non-moral) and their justification. Paying attention to only one of these dimensions paints a simplistic picture of dilemmas.

Arguably, an ethical theory that could be helpful in dealing with dilemmas should meet the following conditions. First, it should abandon the quest for completeness (integrity), understood as offering a solution to every moral dilemma. This postulate is too far-reaching and would only be possible if it were possible to construct ethics "from the point of view of the universe" (the aim of classical utilitarianism). Since human cognition is limited, the ethics people create will also have its limits, one of which is irresolvable ethical dilemmas.

Second, ethical sensitivity should not solely be replaced by ethical reasoning and classification. Individual sensitivity to moral dilemmas should be one factor used in the assessment of both a (sensitive) moral agent and a dilemma. Moral sensitivity, which at an emotional level is a reaction to a judgement of conscience (moral sense), can be one of the premises that is helpful in the evaluation (and choice-making) of a dilemma situation. It is worth remembering Kolakowski's postulate that moral codes (and ethical theories) do not replace and do not lead to the elimination of moral sensitivity and the ability to make an independent moral choice.

However, making a choice in a dilemma situation should not be limited solely to the emotions felt by a moral agent. After all, a moral agent may be either under-sensitive or over-sensitive, and his acting on an emotion may lead to morally reprehensible choices. Hence the need for

an ethical theory – imperfect but nevertheless being constantly refined – in which the main tasks would include classifying dilemmas, deciding which are moral dilemmas and which are not, and indicating which are resolvable, which only appear to be unresolvable and which, are indeed unresolvable. Such classifications and distinguishing features, e.g., between the requirements of an ideal and those of moral duties, can help to shape emotions and moral consciousness. Ethics should also continue to analyse moral dilemmas in order to enable their more precise descriptions and to improve the ways of dealing with them.

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Ewa Podrez

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5805-0869>

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Moral conflicts and compromise

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: A conflict is a contradiction of opinions, evaluations, and positions and can take different forms, such as a collision, an argument between quarrelling persons, or a dispute between competing teams.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: In this section, I present how conflict and compromise are defined in the various humanistic and social sciences, with a particular focus on ethics and axiology.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: This section discusses the nature of compromise: what it is and how it is applied to the resolution of axiological conflicts.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: In this section, I recommend an approach to compromise that is based on a non-negotiable moral minimum. In the practice of conflict resolution, parties should strive to ensure an ethical minimum that is always linked to the good (equality and fairness) of all parties in conflict.

Keywords: conflict, compromise, moral agent, ethical minimum, values

Definition of the term

The terms 'conflict' and 'dispute' are ambiguous. Depending on the context in which they are used, they can be treated as synonymous or as different. Definitions of axiological conflicts include both the basic factor that constitutes the conflict itself, as well as the specific subject matter. A conflict is a universal phenomenon that has its own focus, intensity, determinants, scope, and dynamics and takes place at a specific time between the parties involved (Filek, 2005, p. 59). A conflict is expressed in a dispute during which positions are voiced, and a dispute is the result of a conflict concerning values, principles, or norms. All these distinguishing features of conflict affect the possibilities of its resolution and the way in which it is actually resolved, which include

the removal of the sources of conflict, the withdrawal from a conflict, one party gaining an advantage over the other, the subordination of one party to the other, and the liquidation of one of the parties (Węgrzecki, 2005, p. 26).

M. Ossowska lists three understandings of conflict. In the first, there is a conflict between A and B, when A and B aspire to the same indivisible goods, such as marrying the same person or winning the same promotion at work. In this understanding, A becoming the 'owner' of some good will simultaneously deprive B of this good. Another scenario is when some evil which threatens A and B is inevitably experienced by B but A has managed to defend himself against it, e.g., when A or B are appointed to perform the same risky task. In this situation, there is a conflict between A and B although they may not know about it, or they may both know about it but not feel hostility to each other. Conflict in the second understanding covers all the features from the first understanding and, additionally, A and B are aware of the conflict and may feel antagonised. In the third understanding, although objectively there is no conflict between them, A and B quarrel openly and actively try to disturb each other (Ossowska, 1969, p. 105).

In philosophy, a distinction is made between moral conflicts that concern values or duties, and moral conflicts with a broader context because non-moral values (e.g., economic ones) also play a role in them. A value conflict occurs when the choice and assessment of values becomes the

axis of controversy between parties. A dispute concerns the relationship and position of values in relation to one another and in relation to the moral agent (Hare, 1981). Moral conflicts are inevitable and their source “lies not only in the one-sidedness of the characters but also in the one-sidedness of moral *principles* which themselves are confronted with the complexity of life” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 249). Life experience suggests that not all conflicts can be resolved and that not all parties are interested in resolving them.

Let us now turn to defining compromise, which was originally treated as a reciprocal promise to resolve a dispute by abiding by the decision of an impartial third party called a *compromissarius*. Because of the function performed by the third party, the aim of the compromise was to reach agreement, which required someone who would make sure that the terms of the agreement were respected by the conflicting parties. Compromise can be defined as an agreement reached as a result of mutual concessions (regarding, e.g., principles, assumptions, or opinions). It can be understood as a method of resolving a conflict that leads, through concessions, to a shared position accepted by the negotiating parties. Generally, definitions of compromise point to its procedural components:

1. A conflict that needs to be resolved arises.
2. The disputing parties enter into discussions with a view to reaching an agreement. Reaching agreement is their overriding objective and guides their consent to make concessions on some of their disputed claims.
3. The extent and scope of the concessions depend on mutual decision-making and concerns both parties to the same extent; concessions regard exchangeable and comparable goods.
4. The agreement covers those common goods that have been accepted by all parties and are not in dispute. The implementation of the agreement requires the cooperation of the signatories to the pact.

An important concept in my analysis is ethical minimalism based on two fundamental moral principles: equality and fairness. These principles create a moral framework for cooperation based on equal rights and the fair treatment of all parties concerned. In the case of compromise, this means that conflicting parties have the same equal status and that any

necessary concessions they make to resolve a dispute are subject to the principle of fairness.

Historical analysis of the term

The humanities and social sciences examine the practical issues, characteristics, and effective resolution of moral conflicts. Conflicts are studied within ethics (general and specific), cultural anthropology, sociology, psychology, and conflict management. Conflicts are increasingly more visible today, not only in science but also in cultural products such as films, TV series, computer games, etc. Because disputes arouse emotions, they are played out in a setting of fighting and danger; because they can always end in an unpredictable way, they have the capacity to surprise viewers or players. While considering moral conflicts, ethicists search for answers to three questions: 1. do the sources of conflict lie in the structures of values and duties or in the moral agent and his experiences?; 2. what is the proper subject matter in the moral conflict?; 3. what moral conditions should be met in conflict resolution and is compromise one of them? These questions stem partly from the fact that compromise is the most common practice in the resolution of group conflicts, social conflicts, and conflicts of interest, and partly from the fact that having the special status of being a moral value renders it difficult or even impossible to reach any compromise. Depending on their conceptions of values, ethicists give different answers to these three questions, which reveals the relationships between a moral conflict and its two coordinates, i.e., its subject and object. For example, in cultural anthropology, the issue of moral conflict is analysed in the context of lifestyle changes – both in the individual and in communities – which is linked to the change in external and internal determinants (i.e., generally perceived reality, emotional expression, changes in attitudes, and preferences). Conflict is considered a factor that enables development in tribal life and enables change and adaptation for progression.

Based on their knowledge of contemporary social conflicts, sociologists develop different models of conflicts, taking into account the original situation in which the parties took radically different positions on the same issue, e.g., local environmentalists versus pig farmers. Such

disputes can be dealt with through arbitration, compromise, or conflict. The uncontrolled escalation of moral conflicts, which can lead to social rebellion or even open war, arises because of a breakdown in communication between the parties in dispute and their desire to ruthlessly impose one position on others; it is linked to hostile and aggressive attitudes, erroneous beliefs, ignorance, prejudice, blackmail, pressure, and coercive measures. The separation of one of the parties is an ad hoc measure that makes it possible to temporarily avoid a conflict rather than resolve it.

Psychologists develop methods of conflict resolution based on negotiation (i.e., a formalised procedure in which the conflicting parties talk to each other) and mediation (i.e., a formalised procedure involving a third party). They study conflictogenic attitudes, identify the elements that determine the scope, extent, and trajectory of a conflict, and study the meanings and consequences of moral disputes. Negotiation and mediation procedures are the basis of a set of activities related to conflict management that address how to deal with and prevent conflict. In psychology and sociology, it is assumed that a moral conflict is both a natural and widespread phenomenon. On this basis, three types of conflict (including those of a moral nature) are identified: 1. micro-conflicts (e.g., conflicts between family members, friends, or neighbours), 2. macro-conflicts (e.g., class, ethnic, or religious conflicts that take place within a social community), and 3. mega-conflicts (e.g., between states or wars between blocs of states). Another noteworthy categorisation of moral conflicts is based on their subject matter: a. values, their validity, assessment, and preferences; b. interests and material objects, their evaluation, the quality they represent, and opinions about them, e.g., about their usefulness; c. interpersonal conflicts according to their extent (e.g., conflicts between groups of workers, between individuals with different characters, social or professional roles, or the personalisation of antagonisms); d. intrapersonal conflicts (i.e., inner disputes, when an individual has conflicting preferences or expectations that are impossible to fulfil); e. moral conflicts with an emotional basis (fuelled by aggression, frustration, hostility, anger, etc.) (Jaworski, 2004, pp. 148–150).

Management theorists utilise the findings of psychological research into conflict because they know that controlling conflicts of interest in

companies and organisations involves identifying situations that can lead to disputes. Ways of avoiding conflict include organising work accordingly, transparency, and credibility in all forms of employees' activity and in their relationships with their teams. When one of the many possible types of conflict arises in the workplace, the most effective legal solutions are implemented based on procedures that bind all companies or professional organisations. All conflicts involve values that are either moral or non-moral in nature. Disputes play different roles and perform different functions in both individual and collective life. Sztumski (1987, p. 67) lists the following functions of conflicts: 1. differentiating and identifying, 2. integrating and disintegrating, 3. unmasking and masking, 4. progressive and regressive, 5. positive and negative.

Conflict leads to changes in people's attitudes, emotions, and judgments, and it influences their opinions, beliefs, and preferences. In many ways, conflict can play a positive role in the lives of both the individual and the group. This is indicated by the work of, among others, A. Filley (1975), who distinguishes four advantages of conflict (although not all of them occur in all conflicts). It is good to remember the positive aspects of conflict because disputes can be both violent and destructive or benign and peaceful. Filley lists the following advantages:

1. Conflict can protect against and prevent heated disputes and encourage negotiation.
2. Conflict requires taking new positions, being resourceful, and adopting a broader view of the subject matter of a dispute.
3. Conflict can lead to greater integrity in a group which is a party to a dispute.
4. Conflict can lead to gaining knowledge of possible options for resolving a dispute and can increase motivation.

There are at least three reasons why extensive studies on conflict have been conducted in the social sciences and humanities. First, conflicts are believed to be a natural phenomenon in social and individual life which lead to both negative and positive outcomes. Second, as their frequency and the corresponding number of global, political, economic, and social threats are steadily increasing, legislation and procedures are being developed to prevent, reduce, and to manage them. Third, there is an increasing number of tools available to study, simulate, and predict conflicts. Moreover, unlike all other conflicts, moral value

disputes between individuals are based on emotions. Modern tribal wars are a case in point: in such wars,

what is incomprehensible to some is fully comprehensible to others because different groups choose different criteria of threats and thus make themselves participants in a war between incommensurable values (Markowski, 2019, p. 40).

Psychologists identify specific personality traits that either favour aggressive and confrontational attitudes or motivate some people to avoid quarrels, which often stems from opportunism. Generally, however, there is more to conflicts than just their *bad, very bad, or worst* dimension.

The above overview of scientific disciplines within which conflicts are studied in their subjective and objective dimensions should be supplemented by the causes and nature of moral conflicts, considered from the perspective of being disputes over values. Ethicists differ in their opinions on the sources of axiological conflicts and the possibility of resolving them by means of, e.g., compromise. Disputes over values tend to be more complex and less rational than is the case in other conflicts. Several factors contribute to this: 1. the emotional involvement of the parties in a value conflict, 2. the absence of one single objective or clear criterion to resolve the dispute, and 3. cultural differences between the parties in dispute (regarding the way in which values are perceived and realised), and their preferred lifestyles.

The above remarks relate to group conflicts (social, ethnic, religious, culture wars), where the decisive factor is differences in the perception of values that lead to differences in their ontological status, position in the hierarchy, strength, and importance. These differences – which can be studied phenomenologically by addressing the theoretical foundations of axiological conflicts, their sources, and their subjective and objective determinants – stem from perception, imagination, and thinking, as well as from different emotional and volitional attitudes which affect the relationships within conflicted groups and the level of their aggressiveness. Value conflicts can be inner conflicts experienced by the individual, or conflicts related to interpersonal relations. From the phenomenological perspective, disputes over values concern the following: a. the contradictions that occur between higher values or norms;

b. the contradictions that arise during the discernment, evaluation, and preferences of values; c. the contradictions that occur between the height of values and their strength. What do these axiological contradictions consist of and why are they the source of disputes? For a better understanding of the issues discussed in this article, let us assume that the term 'conflict' is used here in the sense of a phenomenon or an event, and the term 'dispute' denotes an action or activity.

Value conflicts are analysed by N. Hartmann, who describes intramoral conflicts in the following way:

there is [...] a conflict between values themselves [...] which oppose each other; in a concrete case they contentually exclude each other, and yet in one and the same case they can together manifest the actual duty of being (Hartmann, 1974, p. 1427).

He listed pairs of mutually exclusive values that can occur in specific cases: love and fairness; fullness of life and purity; love of one's neighbour, love for those who live far away, and love for future generations. Value conflicts are not limited to these examples but point to the incommensurability of moral values in dispute on two levels: in theory and in practice. This applies to, e.g., disagreements such as conflicts between positive and negative values (e.g., group solidarity and the dishonest behaviour of a group member). J. Filek observes that

in the space of economic life we are particularly often confronted with the inability to notice that a positive value is being transformed into a negative value (Filek, 2005, p. 59).

This type of conflict does not arise from the structure of values per se but from their translation into choices and behaviours. This has further consequences, as Hartmann points out: "[o]ften a value is captured by means of its opposite, i.e., a negative value" (Hartmann, 1974, p. 1429), which is directly linked to an antinomy of values. In some cases, the exclusion of values, such as the aforementioned love and fairness, is radical. It is then impossible to advocate love and fairness at the same time and to work towards the realisation of these two values. This conflict can be extended to the contradiction that arises in some cases between the height and strength of values. Higher values, even though they occupy a higher position in the hierarchy of values, have proportionally

weaker strength than lower values. Phenomenologists agree that higher values are built on the foundations of lower values, thus the destruction of lower values leads to the disappearance of higher values. Sometimes, there are situations (called situations of coercion) in which such conflicts occur and in which

every possible behaviour violates a moral value. Thus, whatever decision he makes, a moral agent becomes the perpetrator of evil (Aszyk, 1998, pp. 114–115),

e.g., when the individual defends his life or the lives of others against an act of unjustified aggression. From the perspective of their subject matter, value conflicts concern the evaluation of values and value judgements and occur when 1. values exclude each other either because they are indivisible or because they occupy a comparable position; 2. when there is a conflict between the height and the strength of values, i.e., between higher and lower values; 3. any choice of values is associated with evil, such as in a situation of coercion.

Axiological conflicts and disputes over values, their understanding, evaluation, preference, and meaning – both in the life of the individual and in the general moral order – have a subjective basis. Usually, three sources of axiological conflicts are identified: 1. a conflict of individual or collective beliefs and judgements (Ossowska, 1970, pp. 159–160); 2. a conflict of attitudes and preferred values (Scheler, 1977, pp. 33–34); 3. conflict caused by different characters (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 249).

Disputes over values concern how they are understood, evaluated, chosen, accepted, or rejected, which leads to the question of why the same values are evaluated differently and why some are deemed more suitable than others. Hartmann discusses three areas that affect differences in the evaluation and perception of values:

1. The scope and content of the axiological horizon depends on individual life conditions, which directly translate into the existence of doubts, mistakes, and axiological illusions experienced by a moral agent.
2. Moral choices and decisions depend on individually developed intuition and imagination.
3. A moral agent feels intrinsically bound to preferred values, which lose their appeal over time and are replaced by others.

Axiological illusions and delusions, which are entangled in both the emotional and cognitive spheres, contribute significantly to the aforementioned differences. As a result, cognitive errors affect individual judgments about values and their evaluations, preferences, and attitudes. In its most radical form, resentment leads to a reevaluation of values. According to sociologists, this phenomenon is widespread today, as is reflected in the extent and intensity of axiological conflicts.

It follows from the above analyses that value conflicts have two objective causes: one linked to the subject matter and the other to the moral agent. Additionally, there are also numerous specific factors that determine the profile and intensity of a dispute. The approach to a moral conflict depends on the conception of morality and the general philosophical assumptions made in it. The very existence of value conflicts is taken for granted, and the differences in opinion primarily relate to two fundamental questions: do the causes of a moral conflict lie in the subject matter or in the moral agent, and if such conflicts can be resolved, then how?

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to refer to general principles, e.g., human rights or the general culturally rooted norms of peaceful coexistence between people. Ossowska calls them directives, by which she means injunctions or prohibitions, such as universal benevolence, fraternity, tolerance, and the principle of the primacy of the human person, etc. These principles do not resolve value conflicts. They do, however, help to understand the moral framework of a particular dispute over values and point to proper moral argumentation based on the premise that there is a specific set of values on which each conflict is based. The question of whether a compromise can be an appropriate solution to disputes over values requires further considerations.

Discussion of the term

Moral conflicts based on values involve people who endorse different and conflicting views about what values are most important to them and how they would like to put them into practice. Values represent a diverse and varied set of moral qualities that determine patterns of human behaviour. These patterns have a complex, hierarchical structure and are either considered absolute and unchanging or there is the possibility that exceptions

can be made or they can be relativised (e.g., selected lifestyles). Various approaches to moral conflicts are developed and justified within particular theoretical perspectives, but in practice people are guided by different value criteria and demand their realisation in the public sphere in different ways. It can be assumed that moral conflicts do not only lead to axiological tribal wars but also spill over into the private sphere of family, neighbourhood, and work. By its very nature, morality is subject to various historical, civilizational, and cultural changes in terms of what people consider important, necessary, or desirable. In addressing this sphere of life, one can focus on what is enduring in it or what is changeable and discursive (Hampshire, 1983, pp. 140–169). Regardless of the theoretical approaches and interpretations of morality, the social moral order requires agreement on issues as controversial as abortion, euthanasia, or the teaching of religion in schools. The important question is whether compromise can resolve moral conflicts or at least bring about a situation in which conversation between the arguing parties becomes possible. Furthermore, can compromise as a negotiation strategy be applicable at all in value conflicts, which, it is worth remembering, can dispute the height, incommensurability, status, and assessment of values? The dispute can be internal or external and held between individuals or social groups.

Arguably, compromise cannot resolve moral disputes related to, e.g., the two highest values – love and fairness – and cannot lead to an agreement in this area by means of concession. However, this is not the case when higher values are juxtaposed with lower values, as exemplified by the conflict between supporters of forced COVID-19 vaccinations and acceptance of the freedom of citizens who do not want to be vaccinated. The conflict between freedom and health security demonstrates the dependence of these two values on each other and their incommensurability, which leads to an antinomy of values. However, any fight over values that is reduced to acts of aggression and coercion contradicts the moral foundations of social order and the role of ethical norms in the individual's life.

When analysing the possibility and scope of resolving moral disputes by means of compromise, it is necessary to account for its possible moral functions and the limitations that arise from the negotiation procedure itself. Negotiations should lead to agreement and settlement between parties, and the moral determinants of this agreement must be thoroughly defined, bearing in mind that compromise should be considered

as a method, principle, or goal of negotiations. It can be both an aim of negotiations and their outcome (Fumurescu, 2013, p. 36). Disputes take into account both subjective and objective aspects as well as anticipated outcomes. Ethicists take four positions on moral conflicts based on axiological foundations and claim that:

1. Moral conflicts are ultimately unresolvable (Williams, 1973);
2. Moral conflicts are partly regulated by the principle of the coordination of values (Ślipko, 1984, p. 211);
3. Value conflicts generate the phenomenon of tragicness, i.e., the impossibility of making a choice that would simultaneously realise two higher values (Scheler, 1976, pp. 69–95);
4. Value conflicts arise when one considers one's axiological position to be right, unquestionable, and absolute, therefore it cannot be subject to critical discussion.

Ricoeur discusses such attitudes when he analyses the conflict between Antigone and Creon. Moral principles, duties, and values require mediation in human life and in man's individual and collective history so that they can influence his conscious choices and actions. This experiential sphere of life affects practical knowledge and practical judgements and influences the nature of disputes over values. Within individual and collective life, conflicts arise and moral disputes erupt, which are sometimes resolved through compromise. An important factor that affects the moral evaluation of compromise is the establishment of what theorists call a certain necessary ethical minimum (ethical minimalism versus ethical maximalism). It represents a boundary in concessions and influences the content of the agreement between negotiating parties. In the conflict between Antigone and Creon, compromise is prevented in two ways:

1. Antigone and Creon opted for ethical maximalism and were guided by ethical hubris, which made any discussion impossible.
2. There was a practical contradiction between individual experience and practical prudence, based on knowledge stemming from collective experience. Practical prudence (*phronesis*) protects moral beliefs and attitudes against the "ruinous alternatives of univocity or arbitrariness" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 249).

The example of Antigone's dispute with Creon can be seen as a warning against two morally destructive attitudes: absolutism and relativism. What are at stake here are not ethical concepts but the attitudes that

individuals hold towards people who think and evaluate differently. From this point of view, it can be said that ethicists want to base the moral resolution of conflict on an ethical minimum. The aim is, of course, to reach agreement – which is the opposite of fighting and aggression – and to prepare the ground for future cooperation between the currently disputing parties. In view of the ethical minimum and its constitutive importance for negotiations, compromise must not lead to the undermining or reduction of values and norms derived from accepted ethical principles. If compromise is reached at the cost of, e.g., sacrificing human life or allowing a tyrant to keep power, it is rightly called a rotten compromise, i.e., a compromise that is not based on moral sanctions and is contrary to the moral good of the individual and/or the community and the principle of fairness (Margalit, 2010, pp. 121–146).

The problems associated with the moral justification of compromise as a chosen strategy for resolving value conflicts can be analysed on two levels: one that points to positive aspects of using compromise in disputes, and one that reveals its negative consequences:

1. Moral actors who represent disputing parties in their choice of values can be guided by cognitive errors, i.e., by axiological illusions and delusions, which can lead to the formulation of false value judgements. In their roles as individual human beings, citizens, or members of the community, people employ emotions to defend the values they endorse, which exacerbates conflict, as exemplified by modern tribal wars.
2. Disputes over values relate both to their antinomy and to the fact that lower values are stronger and provide the foundations for higher values. In practice, this means that the resolution of axiological conflicts must protect lower values as they enable the realisation of higher values, not the other way around.
3. Some moral conflicts can perpetuate hatred and hostility towards people with different views or principles and, over time, lead to acts of violence and aggression. As a result of ignorance and superstition or media manipulation – and in defence of the values they endorse – some people are prepared to kill their opponents, treating them as enemies.

Why is compromise as a solution to axiological conflicts often viewed negatively? At least several answers to this question can be given:

1. A 'rotten' compromise can contribute to the intensification of a conflict because
 - a. it merely covers the disputed goods rather than their sources;
 - b. under certain circumstances, the concessions made in an ad hoc agreement become the trigger for other disputes;
 - c. an agreement requires the fulfilment of certain conditions by the parties in the dispute, who may blame each other for failing to fulfil them, which may lead to an agreement being broken. Fulfilling set conditions usually depends not only on the goodwill of the signatories to the agreement and their responsibility for the forms of cooperation but also on unstable and volatile external circumstances.
2. Compromise can be forced by external circumstances, such as demonstrations, social rebellions, or other forms of oppression. These disputes are thus not resolved, but only suspended.
3. Making concessions in order to reach a compromise means that parties give up those values or goods that are in dispute, regardless of what moral quality they represent. In practice, this means that it is not ethical principles that affect the degree and extent of concessions but negotiating strategies.
4. A compromise can be weak or strong, good or bad, rotten or not rotten, tactical or rational; on the political scale it is accompanied by the conviction that the common good realised in a liberal democracy demands compromise based on all citizens' recognition of fundamental values. Without such moral agreement, society becomes a collection of individuals who represent one-dimensional characters.

Is it possible to reach such a compromise whilst taking into account an ethical minimum? Is compromise limited to only resolving those conflicts that can realistically lead to open war and violence, or does it apply wherever disputes are negotiable? Is compromise a solution to disputes in emergency situations when other peaceful strategies fail, or is it regarded as a universal tool for suspending conflict? With the assumption that what is treated as the good here stems from the fact that agreement between parties can result in the benefits of continued cooperation rather than continued attacks, war, or acts of aggression, what lies behind assessing a compromise as either the good or the 'lesser

evil'? Cooperation between conflicting parties is also good in a moral sense provided that it is based on the principle of fairness and equality. The lesser evil occurs when parties, by compromising with each other, give up their disputed claims and views because neither of them has sufficient resources to beat their opponent. An enforced compromise leads the parties to treat each other as rivals rather than enemies. The 'lesser evil' thus achieved can escalate into unbridled aggression at any time. Ethicists who criticise this type of compromise point to its dual moral flaws: the first is linked to the category of 'lesser evil', which is morally ambivalent, e.g., when it is decided that condemning one person to certain death rather than risking the lives of many people is the lesser evil. Such calculations and speculations are contradictive to normative ethics and cannot be morally justified as a compromise. While human rights may be restricted in extreme situations, the basic human good (e.g., life) as understood in moral terms cannot be.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

In most cases, compromise does not bring satisfaction to either party, but neither does it entail moral consequences. This contrasts with compromises made for the sake of moral social order and a sense of security, which is the case with controversial issues such as the ethical problem of abortion and disputes over its permissibility or its absolute prohibition. I call this type of compromise 'constructive' because it entails a certain cultural idea of the good of the individual and society which does not aim at agreement between the conflicting parties. The extreme positions that people take on such issues do not leave space for any compromise on the moral evaluation of abortion. What is left is the silent majority, who hold moderate positions and do not represent either side in the dispute; the 'constructive' compromise is concluded in their name. Numerous examples can be given which show that publicly accepted compromises, e.g., on reducing the suffering of farmed animals or limiting CO₂s, are generally based on speculation in which the measures taken to assure good and fairness are only superficial or only marginally taken into account.

Summarising the above analyses, there are certain proposals that address the theoretical and practical aspects of understanding compromise and its role in resolving axiological conflicts:

1. Compromise does not involve higher values, ethical principles, or religious values. Thus, its scope is limited to situations where value systems include moral and non-moral values and human attitudes and claims that require the reconciliation of the individual good with the good of the community. Concessions cover only goods that are exchangeable and comparable to the degree and extent necessary to reach an agreement.
2. There is a group of compromises, such as the abortion compromise, which do not settle disputes over the issue but allow the social consensus to be preserved.
3. The two principles that form the ethical minimum, i.e., the good of the individual/community and the principle of fairness, protect the parties in conflict from coercion and camouflage and at the same time influence the content of the agreement and the conditions for its implementation.
4. In its original understanding, compromise means not only the undertaking of formal acts to resolve a dispute but also a reciprocal promise to honour the agreements and thus also to assume moral responsibility.
5. Rotten or apparent compromises can have more destructive consequences than an original dispute in three respects: the loss through concessions, the loss of hope for the possibility of agreement and cooperation, and the shift from a position of partnership to a position of hostility. Numerous examples can be given of compromises that, in reality, turned out to be diplomatic disasters with negative consequences (e.g., Hitler and the Munich Conference in 1938).
6. The positive side of compromise that meets the ethical minimum is that it engages the disputing parties in negotiation talks that require them to distance themselves from their claims, attitudes, and principles; it also requires them to confront the opposing views and attitudes. In the moral sphere, compromise only opens up the possibility of achieving the common good provided that the actions taken meet the criteria of the ethical minimum.

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Krzysztof Stachewicz
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3867-9691>
<https://doi.org/10.35765/slowniki.302en>

Axiological conflicts

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: An axiological conflict can be narrowly defined as the collision of two values of equal status, both of which demand realisation in such a way that one of them must be sacrificed for the sake of the other. Their claims and position in the hierarchy are fully equivalent but they cannot both be realised. In its broad understanding, a value conflict refers to a situation in which values from different groups and hierarchies collide.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: Before the emergence of axiology, a value conflict was primarily analysed in philosophy as tragicness. Its essence is the confrontation of two opposing arguments that are equally valid. The narrow concept of value conflicts was probably first addressed by Max Scheler and was most extensively theorised by Nicolai Hartmann.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: Conflicts seem to belong to and manifest in the very nature of all aspects of human life. There are conflicts of conscience, religious conflicts, social conflicts, political conflicts, historical conflicts, armed conflicts, national conflicts, etc. Axiological conflicts underlie many of these, although each can also be individually treated as a separate type of conflict. Axiology seeks to capture conflicts through an integral approach and to develop a theory of value conflicts which includes ways of resolving them.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Value conflicts appear as a borderline problem in axiological analysis. The ways of resolving them proposed in philosophical theory are unsatisfactory, which leads many thinkers to cede the problem exclusively to the practical sphere: it is the decision of the subject that

resolves a value conflict, and the responsibility for its consequences is borne by the person who decides on the particular solution.

Keywords: axiology, value, value conflict, axiological disputes

Definition of the term

Axiology is a general theory of values within which values are studied in an integrated approach. Axiology emerged as a distinct philosophical field at the turn of the 20th century thanks to the neo-Kantists and Brentanists, although values had been studied less systematically since the beginnings of European philosophy. The foundations for the emergence of axiology were the dichotomy between a being and a duty that was introduced by David Hume and Immanuel Kant through the negation of one of the fundamental principles of classical metaphysics. The next step in its development was the rise of empirical descriptive psychology within the Viennese school (Franz Brentano). Values appeared as beings that delineated the domain of duties and as objects that legitimated duties in all their diversity. Within axiology, the themes analysed primarily include the ontology of values (whether and how values exist), epistemological issues (whether and how values are accessible to human cognition), and linguistic issues (ways of speaking about values and the nature of these utterances). Axiological studies focus on the essence and nature of values, norms of valuation, categories of values (hedonistic, utilitarian, vital, cultural, moral, aesthetic, sacred, etc.), the hierarchy of values, sources of values, etc. All these issues have been extensively studied, and numerous theories have been developed which are often contradictory and lead to disputes that stem from a layer of meta-axiological solutions and from methodological, theoretical, and even world-view assumptions. The dream of ending disputes and developing unambiguous solutions within the framework of axiology is part of the beautiful, though always utopian, dream of *concordia philosophorum*. Debate is an inherent part of the nature of philosophical studies and is, in a way, the vital driving force and source of their development. Nonetheless, it seems entirely natural and legitimate to strive for consensus and reasonably unequivocal solutions.

Values can be understood as those qualities in human life that appear, in their objective validity and significance, largely independent of individual preferences and actual needs. As Antoni Siemianowski writes:

When we encounter authentic values, we always discover them as properties inherent in objects and states of affairs, independently of our subjective interests

and needs. Thus, if something is capable of satisfying our needs, it is only because we find something in it that can serve us and benefit us (Siemianowski, 2015, p. 125).

Values, as non-complex beings, are not subject to defining procedures, and most thinkers emphasise their primordial nature. According to Dietrich von Hildebrand, they can be defined as ‘importance in itself’ (Hildebrand, 1973), as that which is valuable and that which ought to be, and as that which appeals for realisation (duty) and demands (coming into) existence. Most thinkers agree on the pluralism of values and list many of their types, although some also advocate monistic positions (e.g., the Polish axiologist Henryk Elzenberg). In this understanding, values constitute a critical point of reference for human existence, hence their analysis seems to be an indispensable element of philosophical reflection on man. A number of value disputes which have arisen – both in the past and in ongoing discussions today – cover the entirety of axiological issues, starting with the dispute over their existence, which is still often questioned in all ontological ways of understanding, apart from the purely subjective. Many contemporary scholars claim that values are fictions and try to answer the question “why do we need them even though they do not exist?” (Sommer, 2021). The claim that “with values it is like with ‘life’: as a philosophical topic they have become alien to us” (Schnädelbach, 1992, p. 249) seems an adequate diagnosis. Axiological disputes are based on radically different perspectives on approaching values and on the adoption of divergent principles for ordering and, above all, hierarchising values. The phenomenon of an axiological conflict is particularly contentious, as it seems not only particularly difficult both theoretically and practically but it also reveals an almost aporetic nature. This is where the boundary of theoretical studies on values seems to lie.

Thus, the borderline issue in axiology is the value conflict. The Latin words *conflicto* (to strike, to ruin, to harm, to distress), *confligo* (to clash, to collide, to fight, to be in conflict), and *conflictus* (a clash, a collision, a fight) clearly indicate a confrontation of values, which causes a shock in the subject who experiences the conflict. A value conflict is linked with radical discord, collision, difficulty, or irresolvability. With regard to the moral sphere, in which conflicts play an important role, it can be said that “a conflict occurs when we find the presence of opposite motives, duties, or interests within concrete facts in moral reality” (Aszyk, 1998,

p. 101). There are many definitions and terms that describe dilemmas and conflicts. Of these, a standard definition that deserves special attention is that a conflict entails a situation in which “the subject can choose any one of the possible alternatives of action but cannot at the same time satisfy more than one of them” (Chyrowicz, 2008, p. 53). A conflict appears as an irresolvable situation, at least in a way that is fully satisfactory to the ‘conflicting parties’ (i.e., the groups that endorse particular values) and fully takes their claims into account. The subject simultaneously feels that he should do something and that he should not. This gives rise to his experiencing a collision of equal values, a helplessness both cognitive and often practical, a sense of volitional powerlessness, indecision, and some guilt. Paul Ricoeur spoke in this context of ‘a tragic fault’ which is felt after an act has been committed. Axiological conflicts pose a serious challenge to the philosophy of values and thus motivate the search for a way to resolve them and find optimal ways out of them. It must be remembered, however, that finding an unambiguous and fully satisfactory way of resolving a conflict is, in a way, tantamount to invalidating it, which makes any theory aporetic in this respect, as was convincingly pointed out by Nicolai Hartmann in his monumental *Ethik* (1961). Nevertheless, many authors have attempted and continue to attempt to find the correct way to resolve axiological conflicts, e.g., through various attempts to invalidate them, which gives rise to numerous disputes within this philosophical discipline. These attempts play a key role in the reflections presented in this article.

Historical analysis of the term

The origins of axiology can be traced back to the works of Rudolf Lotze and, primarily, Christian von Ehrenfels (*System der Werttheorie*, volumes 1–2, 1897–1898), who developed the general concept of values by extracting it from a number of specific and contextual meanings. He linked values to desires and placed the philosophical theory of values within radical psychologism, from which it was extricated through phenomenology. Paul Lapie first used the term ‘axiology’ to refer to moral values, while Edward von Hartmann used it to refer to all values. The first period of the history of axiology culminated in Oskar Kraus’s book

Werttheorien (1937), which summarised all the theories in the philosophy of values known at the time. New impulses for the development of the philosophical study of values came from phenomenology, which prompted Edmund Husserl to attempt to build axiology on the foundations of material *a priori*. With the work of Max Scheler, this became the phenomenological theory of values. Roman Ingarden synthesised the knowledge of values in his well-known paper “Czego nie wiemy o wartościach?” [“What do we not know about values?”]. Axiology is rarely studied today, and scholars talk about its end and the exhaustion of possibilities of its theoretical analyses. This does not mean that the issue of values has ceased to be important and cognitively interesting. However, one can get the impression that today this issue – as if returning to its origins – is analysed within various branches of philosophical reflection, most notably social philosophy and political philosophy.

The term ‘value’ was originally closely associated with political economy, which is widely considered to have been created by Adam Smith. He understood value as the amount of labour needed to produce a unit of a commodity (“the value of a commodity”) and the costs of its production. The theory of surplus value was developed by Karl Marx, who pointed out the conflicting nature of value in economics. Kant was the first to apply the concept of value to philosophical analysis: he argued that objects have relative value and humans have absolute value. Later, Friedrich Nietzsche used the category of value to develop his theory of resentment and postulated the revaluation of all values. Neo-Kantianism made values an epistemological category and basically reduced all philosophy to *Wertphilosophie*, while phenomenology based ethical and aesthetic concerns on values. Martin Heidegger condemned ‘thinking in values’ as a blasphemy against Being and thus a wasteland and blind alley in philosophical thinking.

Tragicness was a phenomenon that preceded the value conflict (in its technical understanding in axiology) in the history of philosophical thought – and more broadly in all of culture. Tragicness was analysed from Aristotle to Hegel as a conflict between goods and their derivatives, such as powers, duties, and obligations. Tragicness constitutes the crux of many cultural works, most notably Greek tragedy and opera. For Aristotle, the crux of a tragic situation is the sudden transition from happiness to unhappiness as a result of some straying of the hero into the world of

goods due to his cognitive or moral defects (*hybris*). The conflict between laws set by two ethical powers forms the structure of tragicness in Hegel's thought. Max Scheler pointed to the essence of tragicness, which was understood in existential terms as the destruction of one high value by another high value. This destruction results from inevitable processes occurring outside of man and his decisions. The eminent Polish thinker Henryk Elzenberg saw the essence of tragicness in the combination of despair and beauty, when the two elements are "so intimately intertwined that despair is beauty (and beauty is despair); as two sides of the same thing, and not one as the result of the other" (Elzenberg, 1999, p. 249). Despair stems from sadness caused by the irreversible loss of some value, something essential and important, something that changes us or the world. "Perishing beauty is tragic", Elzenberg wrote. Thus, the nature of tragicness includes some axiological breach in reality and in the fact that "what ought to be is not and will not be". Tragicness arises from the fact that the world is not as it ought to be, and that the perishing of what is essential happens out of necessity. The irreversibility and inevitability of misfortune thus appears as the foundation of tragicness, which leads to an ultimate "sense of the infinite in the finite". This constitutes the metaphysical matrix on which tragicness in life is founded. Tragicness is a horizon that is insurmountable by actual life in its contingent and finite nature. Experiencing a radical defeat, with its inevitability and irreversibility, seems to be inscribed as an immanent and inalienable element in the human condition. It is not difficult to notice the element that leads to tragicness here in the form of an irremovable axiological conflict.

Axiological conflicts were discussed in the 20th century by Nicolai Hartmann, who, referring to the philosophy of Aristotle, Kant, and phenomenology, introduced an important distinction between the antinomy of goods-values and the conflict between them (Hartmann, 1962, pp. 294–335, 534–620; Hartmann, 2000, pp. 178–180, 201–208; Zwoliński, 1974, pp. 365–370; Galewicz, 1987, pp. 163–167; Węgrzecki, 2006). In the first case, it is a situation in which two positive values are in radical opposition, and their reconciliation seems extremely difficult or even impossible ('essential incommensurability') to realise simultaneously. Examples include pride and humility, justice and love, fullness of life and moral purity, love for a neighbour and love for a distant stranger, etc. (Hartmann, 2000, pp. 178–180). Antinomy has its source in values

themselves and in their 'ideal content', as Hartmann said. However, value conflicts *sensu stricto* arise from the empirical impossibility of realising two positive values simultaneously ('empirical incommensurability'). Overcoming them is possible through, for example, a synthesis of values (*Wertsynthese*), the best example of which is Aristotle's virtue. In general, for Hartmann, antinomy is theoretically insurmountable, and moral conflicts constitute the very core of man's moral life. People must subjectively resolve these conflicts by making specific decisions while being guided by individual and undisputable moral intuition of an emotional nature. In the context of Hartmann's thought, as Włodzimierz Galewicz aptly observes: "The proper path to values is not dialectical construction but emotional intuition" (Galewicz, 1987, p. 167).

Hartmann's laws of the strength and the height of values are worth mentioning here. He distinguished between the strength of a value (*Wertstärke*) and the height of a value (*Werthöhe*) and argued that higher values demand being prioritised because of their position in the hierarchy of values, while lower values demand being prioritised because of their power and strength, which result from their fundamentality. For example, cultural values are high but weak, and vital values are low but strong. Among strictly moral values, justice is lower but stronger, and love is higher but weaker. In their fundamentality, lower values 'carry morality', but only higher values give meaning to human life. Hartmann interprets Aristotle's virtues as a combination of two values (positive values are opposed, and negative values can easily be combined). The higher the value we realise, the greater our moral merit; the lower and more-fundamental values we violate, the greater our moral guilt. However, we should frequently prioritise lower values because of their fundamentality; they are, after all, the conditions for higher values. These issues should be taken into account in detailed analyses of specific value conflicts.

Discussion of the term

The issue of value conflicts is multi-layered and can be analysed on at least five levels. The ontological level reveals the objective antinomy between values, and their conflict is present in the formal or material layer. They

create contradictions by revealing themselves in a specific situational context. Values themselves seem to create conflict independently of their actual disclosure and of their actual co-situationality. Christian thought seems to exclude such a possibility as it claims that values are ordered and their order is immanent and shaped by God. The epistemic level most often points to the cognitive recognition of value conflicts. Insufficient insight into the matter of values, their qualitative endowment, and especially their hierarchical positioning arouses a sense of axiological conflict in the subject. The objectivity of the first level is clearly balanced here by the subjective moment. However, there are times when the conflictuality between the two levels remains in full accord with each other, and the perception of values adequately reflects the objective (ontological) state. The ethical level points to a specific value conflict which generates moral evil as an inevitable element of a conflict and is therefore fully related to morality. It represents the most sensitive point in the analyses of value conflicts due to the distinctive nature of moral values and moral goods in human life. It is in the context of moral dilemmas that value conflicts are most often discussed in the literature. The psychological level reveals a subjective feeling of an inability to resolve a conflict; it reveals the subject's doubts and struggles to make the optimal decision and take action. Different values compete with each other, which often creates psychological tensions in the person as he ponders over the choice of the value that should be realised. The existential level is centred around the question of how to resolve a value conflict from the perspective of the well-being of human life, i.e., *eudaimonia*, to use a classic term from ethics and philosophical anthropology. At this level there is a conflictual clash between two values from different hierarchical levels, when a person experiences a conflict caused by the antinomy of his subjective needs and desires. This often stems from the struggle between a purely hedonistic or egoistic motivation and a sense of duty that stems from an objective situation which is incompatible with these aspirations.

Hartmann repeatedly warned against the 'tyranny of values', i.e., against becoming fixated on one particular value and absolutising it, turning it into the tyrant of one's ethos (which usually ends in some form of fanaticism). When one adopts such an attitude, one forgets the simple truth that every value is, by its very nature, always one-sided and

incomplete in relation to the totality of the human ethos. Absolutising one value on a factual level leads to a never-ending conflict of values. The foundations that link man to values and allow him to become a responsible subject is freedom. Hartmann stated that

freedom is the third mark of divinity to which man must aspire if he truly wishes to exist as a responsible and moral being (Hartmann, 2000, p. 137).

Let us note that freedom, in this context, appears as a meta-value in the most fundamental nature of man's existence, and as a condition for becoming an axiological being. Józef Tischner aptly wrote that "freedom is an indispensable means for man to create himself as a moral being" (Tischner, 1975, p. 66). Because freedom is also a high value, its foundation in man's personal life gives it special ranking and importance as a value that – in a way – constitutes the person (Hartmann, 1962, pp. 345–351).

All man's spiritual faculties are involved in his relationships with the world of values. Reason and emotion are primarily involved to varying degrees in the discovery of values and in experiencing their duty moments. The fact that one perceives axiological qualities at the level of reason and emotion often generates – practically everywhere except on the ontological plane – a series of situations marked by value conflicts. This is revealed in the well-known thought experiment called the trolley dilemma (in both of its versions – with a lever and a bridge) popularised by Judith Jarvis Thomson. We will quite easily make the decision to sacrifice the life of one person to save five when this implies that we act indirectly by mechanically pulling the lever to change the direction of the trolley (in this we are guided by reason), but we will not do so when it requires direct contact with a potential 'victim' (actually pushing a person over a bridge) (in this we are guided by emotion). In the first case, we have a sense of some anonymity and, at most, of 'bringing about the unintentional death' of a person by acting in a situation of higher necessity, choosing the lesser evil and minimising guilt. The decision is guided almost exclusively by reason, which coldly calculates profit and loss and is thus an impersonal violation of the norm. In the second case, there is no question of anonymity because I have to throw a person over a bridge in front of an oncoming trolley, which carries the sense of being a 'murder' and is blocked in most people by the emotional sphere. Here, the norm is violated fully personally. Thus, in an objectively analogous

situation (i.e., saving five people at the expense of one), contact with values at the level of reason and emotion generally leads to two different decisions. This thought experiment is merely one of numerous examples of the conflicting nature of reason and emotion in the world of values. Everyday life provides a plethora of situational examples of this. Conflict also arises at the level of will, when man does not want to follow the directives of reason and/or emotions and is guided by some irrational and extra-emotional considerations, e.g., those imposed by his blindly following a certain ideology.

Value conflicts can also be analysed from the perspective of their division into an individual layer and a social layer of conflict, which is often expressed by the private-public dichotomy. The axiological foundations of this conflict are built by broadly understood rights and the good of the individual in the context of the good of the community (*bonum commune*). These two realities are frequently in conflict with each other and a choice has to be made between protecting the good of the individual and that of the common good. We will briefly return to this issue when analysing the aporia between freedom and security.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

There are various ways of resolving value conflicts: Aristotle's theory of the golden mean (making moral norms more flexible and 'useful' in life), delegating decisions to someone else (in a personal sense, to moral authority or the government; in a non-personal sense, to an ethical theory or law), drawing lots, relying on chance, sacrificing the interest of the individual for the benefit of the group, being guided by the principle of minimising negative consequences (broadly understood as utilitarian calculus), voting (exemplified by Agamemnon's handling of the sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia), the subjective hierarchisation of norms, or leaving a decision to the state or to state institutions (Toeplitz, 2005). The concept of the deliberative resolution of value conflicts is widely discussed in contemporary literature (Wesołowska, 2010). However, none of these ways is satisfactory and none leads to universally accepted solutions and fully satisfying decisions with predicted outcomes.

In the social space there is a lot of talk about the conflicting nature of the relationship between freedom and security and about the aporesis inherent in this relationship – or at least, the strong tension between these two values. Ensuring people’s security – both externally and internally – is always linked to limiting their freedoms and liberties, and the expansion of the latter directly translates into limiting the possibility of ensuring security. Is it more important to ensure security on the scale of a national community or to defend the maximum of human rights with regard to the individual’s freedom? In a world of rapidly developing technology and the implementation of new inventions in the field of artificial intelligence, this problem is becoming increasingly pressing. After all, modern technologies and surveillance techniques seem to protect us – at least that is what their inventors and promoters declare. Which is more important: security and the associated surveillance of public space, or man’s right to anonymity, often intimacy, and respect for his privacy? Is the surveillance society of which Michel Foucault wrote (Gilles Deleuze spoke of ‘societies of control’) becoming the social ideal towards which we are consistently moving, and is such a choice axiologically right? There is no room here to analyse this question in detail, but it adequately reflects the sense of axiological conflicts which emerges in the structurally understood social space (Stachewicz, 2020).

One example of a value conflict that is frequently analysed in the ethical literature is truthfulness, which is usually tested in situations in which it appears to result in some evil. Abundant examples from medical ethics can be given here, one of which is the dilemma of whether a terminally ill person should know the truth about his condition or whether this truth should be withheld from him for therapeutic reasons. Different ethical and legal systems take radically different approaches to this issue. There are also situations in which medical confidentiality comes into conflict with the welfare of a third party. Of course, conflicts between truthfulness and other values are very common outside medicine as well: for example, should a partisan captured by occupying forces be truthful and answer interrogators’ questions to the best of his knowledge, thus risking the lives of his comrades-in-arms? The principle of the ‘right to the truth’ of specific persons that is sometimes advocated in classical ethics seems to be an unsatisfactory solution to the problem for many reasons. Some thinkers attempt, in the spirit of Kant’s absolutism, to

exclude any deviation from the principle of truthfulness by prescribing that it should be followed regardless of the situation. Others build elaborate theories, such as Tadeusz Ślipko's 'theory of the fair defence of a secret', in an attempt to show that in a situation of defending another value considered higher or more fundamental than truthfulness, there is a question not of lying but of an 'ambiguous answer', 'deception', or 'defensive speech', because it is not a question of lying to someone but of defending another value which is more important in a particular situation. Hartmann rejected both 'lying out of necessity' (as an application of the principle 'the end justifies the means'), casuistry, and extreme ethical rigour, and he argued that moral conflicts cannot be resolved in theory. The decision lies with the individual who has to resolve the dilemma associated with a particular value conflict and take on the burden of violating a norm (in this case, lying). In Hartmann's opinion, the nature of conflict is such that it is not possible to emerge from one without becoming guilty. It is necessary to decide according to one's recognition, best will, and one's hierarchy of values, and to take upon oneself the consequences of one's decision resulting from the mutilation of a high or fundamental value. Thus, when truthfulness is in conflict with another value, the theoretical level is displaced by the practical level. Ethical theory here acknowledges its own impotence and gives way to man's moral subjectivity in its practical realisation.

Where do the sources of value conflicts lie? This question must undoubtedly be posed in relation to strictly situational conflicts in which individual subjects usually have to act, although sometimes it also refers to group subjects. In principle, this is the level at which value conflicts are most often analysed in axiology, and it is this level that has been the main focus of this article. However, we should also mention conflicts of a universal nature, where certain confrontations of values take place, brought about by, e.g., the convergence of axiological ethoses occurring as a result of globalisation processes. Such phenomena as the dialogue of cultures, the clash of different hierarchies of values, and pluralistic interpretations of their meaning or normativity on a global scale are also significant here. It is not without reason that the origin of European ethics is linked to the ancient Greeks' experience of the diversity of moral ethoses thanks to their contact with non-Hellenic peoples and cultures. Today, these processes are radicalised to the extreme. Hence,

it is difficult not to take into consideration their relevance for axiological conflicts and in increasingly heated disputes over values, some of which have been analysed in this article.

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Jarosław Kucharski
Ignatianum University in Cracow
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6129-4477>
<https://doi.org/10.35765/slowmiki.339en>

Value pluralism

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: Value pluralism, which lies at the heart of moral disputes, can be either weak or strong. Within the latter, it is assumed that values are incommensurable; within the former, they are commensurable and thus can be compared and hierarchized.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: This section outlines various approaches to and forms of value pluralism: starting with the sophists, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, medieval and modern thinkers, up to phenomenological axiologists, and Isaiah Berlin.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: A crucial aspect in analyses of value pluralism is the differences in the understanding of weak and strong pluralism outlined in the writings of, among others, Leszek Kołakowski, Bernard Williams, and John Kekes. The main axis of dispute here concerns the chance of finding a common denominator for all values and the consequences of this approach.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: This section discusses the tasks and limitations of ethical theory based on the premise of the existence of strong pluralism.

Keywords: axiology, pluralism, values, reductionism

Definition of the term

Pluralism is a position that recognises that there are many values. However, the very concept of 'value' is problematic here as it can be defined in a number of ways, two of which dominate in the discourse. According to the first, values are subjective, i.e., they are states of affairs, actions, or entities to which the individual (or a set of individuals) ascribes value. According to the second, values are objective, i.e., they are states of affairs, actions, or entities that are valuable irrespective of whether their worth is recognised by moral agents or not. Plato drew a distinction among values between (1) those that are valuable in themselves but not valuable for their consequences, (2) those that are valuable both in themselves and for their consequences, and (3) those that are not valuable in themselves but are valuable for their consequences. Pluralism means that there are many such valued entities, states of affairs, objects, and behaviours.

There are a number of properties attributed to values. First, as Roman Ingarden observes, when a value is recognised, the motivation to realise it is aroused (or to refrain from doing so in the case of negative values). Second, values are incompatible with one another, and their realisation may lead to conflicts. Third, the issue of the comparability of values is problematic, and two positions are usually taken here: they are either deemed commensurable, or conversely, they are deemed incommensurable.

The way in which values exist is also debated. Some thinkers argue that values do not exist objectively but are a social product, created by 'patterns of objectification' that allow individual or group preferences to be transformed into values (John Mackie). Others claim that values exist objectively and are independent of any entities (Nicolai Hartmann). Still others draw attention to the specific way in which values exist, which spreads between the ideal level and the real level. In this approach, values exist as specific entities which, when recognised, demand that a moral agent realise them or prevent their realisation (Max Scheler, Roman Ingarden).

Axiological monism is a position based on the assumption of the existence of one core value that can manifest itself in other values. These other values either make the core value possible or contain some aspect

of the core value. For example, a core value in classical utilitarianism is happiness, understood as pleasure and the absence of pain. Other values are valuable insofar as they increase or decrease this core value (e.g., pleasure and pain). Axiological pluralism assumes that there are many values that can be organised into a variety of systems.

Pluralism is further divided into descriptive pluralism, i.e., the recognition that many different value systems exist which serve as regulators of human action, and normative pluralism, i.e., the recognition that one should either follow a certain hierarchy of values or reject all hierarchies as inappropriate.

The concept of a value system also needs to be defined. The value system either assumes the existence of an objective hierarchy of values which forms the basis of all value judgements, or it admits that values are subjectively chosen by a moral agent. A subjective picture of values can (but does not have to) be based on an objective system, and an objective picture of values can be based on the objectification of subjective systems.

The historical analysis of value pluralism will focus on the dispute over the commensurability or incommensurability of values. The discussion of the term will be linked to the thesis that pluralist theories (especially those which claim that values are incommensurable) lead to relativism and nihilism. Within weak pluralism, it is assumed that values are commensurable, while strong pluralism assumes that they are incommensurable.

Historical analysis of the term

Historically, the recognition of values did not take place until the 19th century. Prior to this, debates concerned the notion of 'the good' or 'the supreme good' (which was supposed to be the main aim of human life). Attention was paid to the incompatibility between, on one hand, theoretical proposals that postulated one supreme good and, on the other hand, social practice, which revealed not only many different goods but also many different approaches to the supreme good.

Protagoras can be considered the founder of strong pluralism. With his proposition of the principle of *homo mensura* (man is the measure of all things), he was the first to observe that there are many values

(and many value systems) that are irreducible to one another and must be agreed on. This pluralism was adapted by itinerant teachers – the sophists – whose activity contributed to social changes in ancient Athens and led to the ‘Athenian Enlightenment’, which was based on humanism and moved away from the traditional values associated with the aristocracy. Socrates and Plato opposed the pluralism advocated by the sophists. They formulated a theory of goods (forms/ideas) which were ordered hierarchically and derived their value from the supreme idea, which embraced truth, beauty, and goodness. Thus, they can be considered weak pluralists.

Aristotle leaned towards strong pluralism. He was aware of the existence of different conceptions of goods endorsed by people and societies, i.e., he was aware of descriptive pluralism, although his thought also contains elements of normative pluralism. He described two main and, importantly, divergent ways of life – the theoretical and the civic – both of which can lead to happiness, understood in the Aristotelian way (as an activity proper to man as man). For Aristotle, a life devoted to contemplation was absolutely preferable to civic life. Thus, he cannot be considered a consistently strong pluralist, although he distinguished between at least two paths that lead to two different kinds of happiness.

The period of the Roman Empire witnessed a continuation of the struggle between weak and strong pluralism. The Stoics continued the search for the supreme good; their aim was to find it in order to – paraphrasing Cicero – prevent people wandering lost without knowing which harbour to steer for. However, within the Empire there was a strong sense of pluralism, despite philosophers’ attempts to establish what the supreme good is; for example, St. Augustine reported that Varro listed 288 ways of defining it. Augustine himself argued for monism, which for him meant the existence of one supreme good (God) from which all other goods derive and towards which they should aim.

In the Middle Ages, Christianity and Christian philosophy strongly advocated monism. The assumption that salvation (in the Christian understanding) was the supreme good allowed Christian thinkers to criticise and eliminate all pluralist approaches. The aim of Thomas Aquinas was to order the various goods in the world according to their relation to the supreme good (i.e., salvation understood as man’s communion with God). He distinguished between goods that are desirable for their own

sake (the good itself) and goods that are desirable for the sake of other goods. For him, God was the ultimate good, which can also be called ultimate perfection, which is why Aquinas can be called an axiological monist. However, it should be remembered that he recognised that the good of every being is its perfection, i.e., its development according to the essence of that being. Thus, some traces of pluralism can also be found in Thomas's thought.

The situation changed with the advent of thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes. The adoption of (descriptive) pluralism as a starting point led to the development of ways of reconciling the mutually divergent interests of individuals within society. John Locke observed that attempts to reduce all values to one basic value (even if it were the supreme good) was fruitless:

the greatest happiness consists in the having those things which produce the greatest pleasure; and in the absence of those which cause any disturbance, any pain. Now these, to different man, are very different things (Locke, 1836, p. 173).

Modern philosophy embraced not only pluralism but also the need to tolerate values different to those in one's own hierarchy of values.

Value pluralism was recognised so widely that the search was no longer for ethics based on the supreme value but for formal ethics that would allow people to act appropriately, regardless of their value systems. Immanuel Kant, the founder of such a model, proposed a moral imperative that assumed respect for different systems:

No one has a right to compel me to be happy in the peculiar way in which he may think of the well-being of other men; but everyone is entitled to seek his own happiness in the way that seems to him best, if it does not infringe the liberty of others in striving after a similar end for themselves when their Liberty is capable of consisting with the Right of Liberty in all others according to possible universal laws (Kant, 1891, p. 36).

Yet, Kant should be considered a weak pluralist. The main value that all other values should realise, according to him, is humanity, which is the main goal of all morally significant acts.

After Kant, there was a return to monism or weak pluralism. Philosophers as diverse as Georg W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, and Jeremy Bentham

can be mentioned in this context. Hegel and Marx (who were definitely monists) argued that history is subject to the logic of development and all values should be subordinated to the development of the spirit or the development of man throughout history. This is particularly evident in Marx's thought, in which any values different from the right ones were considered part of the 'superstructure', i.e., the system of beliefs and convictions whose aim is to justify and preserve an unjust system of wealth distribution. Bentham's utilitarianism reduced values to pleasure and the absence of pain. Bentham was undoubtedly a weak pluralist: he recognised that all values are commensurable as they can be expressed in terms of pleasure and pain using the criteria he proposed (i.e., intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, purity, and extent).

Friedrich Nietzsche, who called for the revaluation of all values, was also a weak pluralist. He observed that, first, there are many values which regulate human action and, second, that their hierarchy, adopted in the 19th century, was flawed. He therefore set philosophy a new task:

All the sciences have now to pave the way for the future task of the philosopher; this task being understood to mean that he must solve the problem of value, that he has to fix the hierarchy of values (Nietzsche, 2012, p. 33).

Nietzsche believed in the commensurability of values and treated the will to power as their common denominator. In his opinion, the correct hierarchy of values is not fixed once and for all but takes shape in the struggle between 'free spirits'. The purpose of the revaluation of all values is not to abolish them but to establish a proper, healthy hierarchy of values. The "will to power" itself refers to the creative forces of the creators of values rather than to the features of values. Undoubtedly, any hierarchy that glorifies weakness, badness, and the subordination of 'free spirits' to weak groups of humans must be overcome.

The phenomenological axiologists M. Scheler, N. Hartmann, D. von Hildebrand, and R. Ingarden were guided by similar ideas. The first three were proponents of weak pluralism, but what all four shared was the research method and the attempt to establish a proper hierarchy of values. Scheler, who developed 'material ethics of value', argued that the recognition of their hierarchical order is inscribed in the very manner of their a priori cognition. He listed a series of conditions that make it possible to compare values and to recognise their position in

the hierarchy. The first criterion is timelessness (the longer the value lasts, the higher it is), which is to be understood here as the longer lasting of the good brought about by the realisation of a given value. The second criterion is indivisibility, which means that the higher the value, the more people can benefit from it without having to divide up the good in which it resides. The third criterion is independence, where the higher value becomes the base for the lower value, and the higher up in the hierarchy a value is, the fewer other values it has as its base. The fourth criterion is depth of satisfaction, which states that the higher the value, the greater the depth of satisfaction from its realisation. The fifth and final criterion is absoluteness, where the less the sense of the value is related to the existence of its carrier, the higher the value (Węgrzecki, 1975, pp. 49–50). Based on these criteria, Scheler proposed the following hierarchy of categories (modalities) of values (from the bottom to the top): hedonistic, vital, spiritual (truth, beauty, justice), and the values inherent in holiness.

Hartmann drew attention to the inadequacies of Scheler's proposal and attempted to modify the criteria given. He argued that values have a different direction: in order to be able to experience higher values, a person must first experience lower values. The same is true of 'depth of satisfaction', which is a vague concept that means it is not always possible to accurately identify which values are higher and which are lower. Hartmann proposed identifying the position occupied by a given value by means of an "axiological sense of height", which in the course of learning about a value simultaneously informs one about its place in the hierarchy and is linked to conscience (Hartmann, 1974, pp. 14–42). Hartmann thus advocated trusting a priori intuition, and he rejected the possibility of using past solutions as models as they could be wrong. He opposed relativism by claiming that values exist objectively (as ideal beings), and that their changeability results from being imperfectly cognised by man. For him, the criterion for comparing one value with one another is the voice of conscience, which assesses how big a good/evil has been done through the realisation of a given value.

D. von Hildebrand, another phenomenological pluralist, treated value theory as part of agathology, i.e., the science of the good. What makes it possible to distinguish values from neutral states of affairs is importance, which is an additional element to the cognition of a given

state of affairs that arouses an emotional response or affects the will (Hildebrandt, 1988). This ‘importance’ is a feature shared by all values. He listed several types of importance:

- 1) the intrinsic importance, i.e., value (e.g., of a beautiful landscape or a noble deed);
- 2) the importance of what is agreeable or subjectively satisfying [...]; and
- 3) the importance that constitutes the objective good for the person (Galarowicz, 1985, p. 29).

‘Importance’ here is the common denominator that makes values commensurable. By feeling (and recognising) the same importance, it is possible to strictly and correctly classify and hierarchise experienced goods or values. The next step was Hildebrand’s proposal of classifying categories into qualitative values, which are the features of a given being, and ontological values, which are an essential part of a being, such as the value of a person (Galarowicz, 1997, p. 252). Hildebrand also proposed a hierarchy of objective goods for the person: goods that increase the pleasures of life are at the bottom, above them are elementary and useful goods, and at the top are higher goods which include those linked to “being endowed with values and a group of goods that make one happy through participation in values” (Galarowicz, 1997, p. 258). Goods that consist in being endowed with values include being a morally good person (Galarowicz, 1985, p. 36). Goods that consist in participation in values (e.g., beauty) also form a hierarchy which “corresponds to the arrangement of the values that support them” (Galarowicz, 1985, s. 36). Thus, there is a hierarchy of values based on their recognised importance which affects the hierarchy of goods for the person.

Roman Ingarden, unlike his phenomenological predecessors, was an advocate of non-reductionist pluralism. As he observed,

There are so many fields of values that differ from one another that it is impossible to reduce them all to a single category. [...] [F]or many mistakes have resulted from trying to resolve, for all possible values, various issues simultaneously (Ingarden, 1966, pp. 84–85).

All that can be done is distinguish fields of values, e.g., vital, utilitarian, cultural, and moral; it is impossible to compare them with one another by means of a single criterion (or even several criteria). What is more,

according to Ingarden, it is a very difficult task to identify an unambiguous hierarchy within particular categories: “We do not know what determines this height, whether it is the matter of value, or its mode of existence, or its ‘strength’, or, finally, the ‘oughtness of its existence’” (Ingarden, 1966, p. 115). By the matter of value, the philosopher understands the ‘qualitative endowment’ of a value, i.e., what it concerns, what it consists of, and in which goods it can manifest itself. An important thing is also the mode of existence of values, i.e., whether values are real, ideal, or whether they have their own mode of existence (axiological). The strength of values lies in the way in which they motivate a moral agent and is linked to their ‘oughtness’. In the latter, Ingarden saw the specificity of the existence of values: they present themselves as *Seinsollen*, i.e., as values that ought to come into existence – in varying strengths – to motivate the agent’s will to realise them. However, as Ingarden observed, values are incommensurable and caution is needed in cognising and actualising them.

When discussing the historical aspects of pluralism, Isaiah Berlin, who laid the foundations for contemporary strong pluralism, must not be omitted. He believed that any attempt to create weak pluralism or monism is in fact an attempt to impose a single binding model of values on people, therefore it is totalitarianism in disguise:

This paradox has been often exposed. It is one thing to say that I know what is good for X, while he himself does not; and even to ignore his wishes for its – and his – sake; and a very different one to say that he has *eo ipso* chosen it, not indeed consciously, not as he seems in everyday life, but in his role as a rational self which his empirical self may not know – the ‘real’ self which discerns the good, and cannot help choosing it once it is revealed. This monstrous impersonation, which consists in equating what X would choose if he were something he is not, or at least not yet, with what X actually seeks and chooses, is at the heart of all political theories of self-realization. [...] [t]he self that should not be interfered with is no longer the individual with his actual wishes and needs as they are normally conceived, but the ‘real’ man within, identified with the pursuit of some ideal purpose not dreamed of by his empirical self. [...] Enough manipulation with the definition of man, and freedom can be made to mean whatever the manipulator wishes. Recent history has made it only too clear that the issue is not merely academic (Berlin, 2014, pp. 197–198).

Berlin is the author of two concepts of freedom: freedom that enables self-realisation (positive) and freedom from constraint (negative). Following in the footsteps of John Stuart Mill, he argued that the most beneficial

system is a 'free market in ideas', where there is no single distinguished value (or value system). In his opinion, historical realisations of some systems led to totalitarianism; these systems were sometimes called 'true' ones. He treated values as incommensurable and claimed that any attempt to achieve commensurability must lead to a reduction of certain values, which will end in their disappearance. Moreover, he considered inappropriate any attempt to reduce the plurality of values to a single system. Reduction or any other attempt to create a system of commensurability of values leads to the loss of some value systems and the de facto imposition of values on society. As Berlin said: "The triumph of despotism is to force the slaves to declare themselves free" (Berlin, 2014, p. 234).

Discussion of the term

Weak and strong pluralism. The commensurability or incommensurability of values is the differentiating factor between weak and strong pluralism. Proponents of weak pluralism recognise that there are many values and that, at the most basic level, it is possible to reduce them all to a single value (a common denominator, so to speak). Within weak pluralism, the plurality of values means that there is more than one such common denominator (Tucker, 2016, p. 6). The system proposed by John S. Mill is an example of weak pluralism: he advocated the existence of qualitative and quantitative pleasures, which are not reducible to one another. Strong pluralists claim that values are incommensurable and any attempt to reduce some values to others would fail. Within strong pluralism, value conflicts are not only inevitable but also irresolvable. Bernard Williams summarised the main features of this pluralism in four points:

1. There is no one currency in terms of which each conflict of values can be resolved.
2. It is not true that for each conflict of values, there is some value, independent of any of the conflicting values, which can be appealed to in order to resolve that conflict.
3. It is not true that for each conflict of values, there is some value which can be appealed to (independent or not) in order to rationally resolve that conflict.

4. No conflict of values can rationally ever be resolved (Williams, 1982, p. 77).

Strong pluralism accepts points 1–3 and also accepts, as their practical consequence, point 4. Weak pluralism rejects points 1, 2, 3 and, consequently, also point 4. Within weak pluralism, value conflicts are, in principle, resolvable. To resolve a conflict, one has to look for another value that can be compared with those in conflict. Such a procedure allows one to see which value is situated higher in a given situation and should thus be preferred. In the case of strong pluralism, the absence of criteria for comparing values stands in the way of such a procedure. The acceptance of strong pluralism leads to great difficulties within ethical theory and in attempts to apply ethics to concrete decisions. Apart from Williams, strong pluralists include J. Kekes, J.J. Thompson, Ch. Taylor, M. Stocker, and W.D. Ross, while weak pluralism is represented by, e.g., J.S. Mill, P. Singer, and J.J.C. Smart.

Pluralism, relativism, nihilism. It is sometimes claimed that strong pluralism inevitably leads to relativism or even nihilism. From a sociological perspective, Janusz Mariański observes:

Pluralism itself brings relativisation of traditional normative orientations. In the pre-modern world, which was governed by a relatively coherent system of cultural values and norms, values and norms were treated as unquestionable and reflected the ways in which individuals acted. In practice, man had few options to choose from [...]. In the modern world, the space of freedom is expanding, but at the same time the individual loses his former certainty and security, which are replaced by changing beliefs, opinions, views, and preferences (Mariański, 2022, p. 166).

Mariański drew attention to the practical consequences of pluralism. The existence of one single axiological system gives certainty to individuals and groups regarding the prevailing hierarchy of values. Even if an individual in a non-pluralist society did not adhere to them, he still had to refer to them in some way (e.g., by questioning them). By questioning one value system which is deemed objective, a pluralist society sets in motion a process of relativisation. This applies not only to the traditional value system but also to any other system.

At least two types of relativism can be identified: descriptive and normative. Descriptive relativism describes values endorsed by individuals (or groups) and refrains from evaluating them. Normative relativism

assigns the same status to different axiological positions. There is no method that could be used to identify an objective hierarchy of values. Treating them as equivalent leads to a relativistic attitude within which different normative proposals are accepted as being equal. Relativism can be adopted in a methodological context (e.g., as a method for studying other cultures or subcultures) or in a normative context (as refraining from evaluating values and from imposing values we deem appropriate on others).

Władysław Tatarkiewicz warned against equating relativism with subjectivism in the context of values. For him, the relativity of values in philosophy was expressed in the fact that they can be valuable to someone or something (Tatarkiewicz, 1989, pp. 29–31). They are not valuable in themselves. Tatarkiewicz proposed viewing subjectivism as being dependence on a moral agent, thus it follows that objective qualities are those that are not dependent on anyone or anything. He argued that these two sentences are not synonymous: “good and evil are relative qualities” and “good and evil are subjective qualities”. For him,

a relative quality can be objective and a subjective quality can be absolute. If relativism is true, then subjectivism can be true and can be false; if subjectivism is true, then relativism can be true and can be false (Tatarkiewicz, 1989, p. 41).

This distinction is important because of the psychological tendency to equate relativism with subjectivism. It should be mentioned that Tatarkiewicz criticised axiological relativism and saw its sources in the erroneous use of terms. For example, some terms reveal confusion between the possession of a given property (value) and the difficulty with recognising that value. Tatarkiewicz wrote about “confusing the fact that an object possesses the quality of being good with recognising this quality. This recognition may be difficult” (Tatarkiewicz, 1989, p. 68). Relativism stems from equating what is recognised with what actually exists. Since many values are recognised as relative, it can be concluded that all values are relative. According to Tatarkiewicz, this conclusion is illegitimate.

Sometimes axiological relativism can lead to a nihilistic attitude, which is understood in this context as the conviction that there is no real system of values. This is stronger than the moderate scepticism present in axiological relativism (which means that one does not know which axiological system is the right one but believes that some of them

may be right). Extreme nihilistic scepticism means that there is no right axiological system.

An issue worth exploring is whether pluralism (in particular strong pluralism) does indeed lead to relativism (and perhaps even nihilism). This can be done by considering two aspects: sociological (i.e., whether relativism is widespread in pluralistic societies) and theoretical (i.e., whether accepting strong pluralism must logically lead to accepting moral relativism or perhaps even moral nihilism).

With regard to the first aspect, one should try to reflect on the change in morality brought about by the acceptance of strong pluralism. Such morality cannot be based on objective (in the sense of 'binding for all') values as it is subject to continuous verification and a continuous need to make choices. Individuals (and groups) who are exposed to people with different value systems have the choice between accepting either the thesis of normative relativism or cultural (and sometimes subcultural) relativism. Thus, coming into contact with different value systems does not always lead to normative relativism. Sometimes it is simply relativism in the cultural sense; in other words, it is the descriptive (non-normative) acceptance that other individuals, groups, or communities hold different sets of binding values. This does not necessarily lead to a diminished faith in the validity of the endorsed value system, let alone to accepting relativist or nihilist theses. In pluralistic societies, many people are convinced of the rightness of the value system they endorse. These beliefs are very often manifested in public, e.g., people object to attempts to change them, and competing groups fight to have their values recognised and expressed in other normative systems (e.g., law). People are thus far from the indifference or quietism that might result from the above definition of relativism. It seems that in pluralistic societies there is a continuous process of agreeing on values that regulate life between individuals and groups with different axiological systems.

In conclusion, sociologists of morality sometimes treat those attitudes that are not as strict as traditional moral systems as relativistic. However, such a stance implies that they replace the concept of 'liberalisation' of morality with its 'relativisation', whereas the two phenomena should not be equated.

The question of whether the rational acceptance of strong pluralism logically entails the acceptance of relativism in the normative sense

should be addressed at this point. On the face of it, the acceptance of point 4 leads to the recognition that, since disputes between values are rationally irresolvable, all value judgements should (rationally) be considered equal. However, proponents of strong pluralism who are not relativists raise arguments against such a simple conclusion. As Bernard Williams observed, even if it is assumed that value conflicts are rationally unresolvable, this does not mean that they are not resolvable at all. On the contrary, they are still resolvable in practice and in public life. Williams introduced the concept of 'imperfect rationalisation', which is the basis for establishing private and/or public practice without the need for a rational and final resolution of a dispute (Williams, 1982, p. 81). That the compromise is wrong or inappropriate does not follow from the fact that individuals are unable to provide a clear rational basis for the compromise between values they have agreed on. According to Williams, the rational-ethical approach (within which it is assumed that any conflict must be resolved on a theoretical level) is responsible for equating pluralism with relativism based on point 4. Williams referred to social practice rather than theoretical considerations. His argument against relativism can be presented as follows: objectivists (anti-relativists) treat the dissimilarity of values (and their incommensurability) as an error in theory and try to eliminate this error within their systems. If they claim to have eliminated it, they thereby either impoverish the sphere of values (which is what utilitarians do) or reduce man's moral sensitivity (e.g., by eliminating pangs of conscience). This path is erroneous, which does not mean that pluralism equals relativism. Williams recommended focusing on the principle of scepticism and cognitive humility (i.e., another person disagreeing with the value system I endorse should be a signal that I may be wrong) rather than assuming that all viewpoints are equal (Williams, 1982, p. 81–82).

The second argument against equating pluralism with relativism requires distinguishing between primary and secondary values. John Kekes defines them as follows:

Primary values are connected with benefits and harms that count as such for all conceptions of a good life, while secondary values have to do with benefits and harms that vary with conceptions of a good life (Kekes, 1993, p. 38).

Certain values are shared by all conceptions of what people define as a 'good life', regardless of their other elements. All conceptions can have

different hierarchies of primary values and have or not have the same secondary values. For example, the value of human life is undoubtedly a primary value, but in one conception of life it may be considered the highest value, while in another it is valued lower than the value of an enjoyable life or independence. That there may be many incommensurable primary values is the basis for pluralism. This is an argument against those forms of relativism that claim that no primary values are identifiable. As can be seen, they can be identified based on the analysis of existing conceptions of a good life.

The third argument against equating pluralism with relativism is based on efficacy. If any two conceptions of a good life aim to realise similar primary values but differ in their secondary values, it is always possible to check which one is more effective in realising primary values (which one leads to their better or more complete realisation). Thus, it is possible to rationally (albeit to a limited extent) compare values and make normative judgements without having to accept the thesis of the equality of axiological models (Kekes, 1993, p. 52).

Kekes's third argument may at first sight violate point 4. However, it should be noted that he advocates limited rationality. He does not want to conclusively decide which value system is best (after all, they may differ in the accepted hierarchy of primary values) but rather to indicate which one is more effective for a given hierarchy of positive values (insofar as these models are comparable). This leads to the acceptance of non-relativistic pluralism, based on real conceptions of a good life and the necessary negotiation between their proponents. Pluralism conceived in this way is also far from quietism as the individuals involved are not indifferent to the ways in which the values they endorse are realised.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

Accepting axiological pluralism poses a number of challenges for ethical theories. In the case of weak pluralism, the role of ethics is to formulate either a hierarchy of values or a method for comparing values relevant in a given situation. In the case of strong non-reductionist pluralism, ethics seems helpless, especially since there is no rational criterion for conflict resolution.

It is worth mentioning here that within reductionist pluralism the role of ethics may be overestimated and its potential may not be so great after all. As Kekes observed:

[t]he feelings of love we have towards our sexual partners, parents, children, siblings, and friends do not always coexist in a happy state of equilibrium (Kekes, 1993, p. 59).

Conflicts may arise between values from different categories (modalities) as well as between those that belong to the same modality and even within a single value, e.g., when it generates different obligations that cannot all be fulfilled simultaneously. Contrary to the hopes of classifiers, this does not at all mean that conflicts will be easier (or possible at all) to resolve. As it seems, in any conflict there will always be some value that will not be realised, so there will always be some unrealised good.

Therefore, in ethics, any approach that accepts the claim of incommensurability must also accept that its own role is limited. The impossibility of resolving value conflicts ultimately and rationally leads to the search for a 'reflexive equilibrium' that takes into account emotions, rationality, and traditional and cultural influences. The task of ethics is to clarify moral issues to the greatest extent possible, to highlight their entanglement in the totality of a moral agent, and to lead to the best possible recognition of values which are intertwined in a given decision and which are preferred over others at a specific moment or in a certain situation. Such an approach does not free a moral agent from taking responsibility for his choices but allows him to take a clearer view of a value conflict.

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Adam Cebula

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7408-1593>

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Reason or emotion: the sources of ethical knowledge

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: Proving that reason plays a role in identifying and implementing basic principles of morality remains a major challenge for moral philosophy. The failure on the part of moral philosophers in completing this task sometimes results in their putting forward claims that emotions should be treated as the sole foundation of moral distinctions.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: Ancient philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics) and Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages (Augustine, Abelard, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas) all pondered over the sources of ethical knowledge. At the onset of modern philosophy, two opposing views were proposed by David Hume and Immanuel Kant.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: Hume's and Kant's proposals illustrate the main shortcomings of the one-sided renderings of the relationship between reason and the motivational sphere of actual human behaviour, i.e., the content-neutral formalism and reality-denying postulativeness of strictly rationalist views, as well as the vagueness and normative deficiency of the notion of moral sentiments underlying the emotivist approach.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The optimal theory of morality should explain the inherent link between moral reasoning and the volitional aspect of the implementation of ethical norms. R.M. Hare's prescriptivism, which aspires to such a status, is burdened with the exorbitant standards of

ethical deliberation advocated within this approach. An interesting alternative to it may be found in the reconstruction of traditional natural law theory proposed by John Finnis.

Keywords: ethical deliberation, rationality of ethics, moral sentiments, prescriptivism, natural law

Definition of the term

The controversies regarding the essential character of human preoccupation with moral matters underlie one of the most significant areas of inquiry within moral philosophy. The formation of the basic principles of the right conduct is a key issue discussed by the very founding fathers of philosophy. The crucial link that exists between ethical deliberation and philosophical theorising as such substantiates the claim that it is ethics that constitutes the main subject matter of philosophy (Filek, 1997).

The essential assumption behind the philosophical project about the fundamental role of reason in the construal of any types of worldview as well as in explaining the mechanisms governing the realm of people's individual experiences is reflected in the model of the relationship between reason and morality which can be regarded as canonical for ethical theories. According to this model, reason is the primary tool for acquiring the necessary competences for making ethical distinctions. A specific, rationally grounded, ethical knowledge is the equivalent of one's more or less elaborate set of rational beliefs about reality. Its acquisition by a moral subject enables her to develop the ability to properly qualify – in ethical terms – her and others' past actions as well as actions she or others may be willing to take in the future. The ability to attribute specific moral qualities to such actions is analogous to the ability to acknowledge the presence of all the other features of particular objects and events. The subject's possible utterances, made parallelly to reporting on those acknowledgements, can become subject to the assessment of their truthfulness (righteousness). As is the case with the acquisition and processing of any other type of knowledge, a moral subject's convictions as to the moral value of certain activities/behaviours may, under certain circumstances, be erroneous.

Understood in such terms, the concept of moral knowledge differs significantly, however, from the theoretical grasps of other types of knowledge. Unlike standard, 'thematized' types of knowledge, focused entirely on the object of cognition – also when the object in question is construed as the functionality of the basic apparatus of the subject's cognitive activities – moral cognition entails the development of ability both to justify the subject's moral convictions and – additionally – to demonstrate the essential correspondence between these convictions

and a the subject's most elementary identity: by acquiring knowledge of the good (moral duty), the subject is at the same time broadening the scope of her own understanding of herself. For obvious reasons, this second component of the operation of reason in determining the content of moral requirements becomes particularly prominent when the individual reflects on her own duties. What is key to such moral cognitive acts is the absence of any automatism in the practical implementations of their normative content: if the cognised ethical principles are to retain their generic character, acting in accordance with them must always be the result of the acting person's free decision. The individual's freely made decision to implement a moral requirement is also a manifestation of her authentic, individual agency: it is the will of the subject, taking the form of her specific intention, that must be activated in the course of each and every undertaking following the acknowledgment of a moral truth by that individual.

The evidence of the profound tension between these two aspects of those moral cognitive activations of reason can be found in the abundance of people's experiences of the weakness of will (*akrasia*) or of their involuntarily 'yielding to passions'. Even if the subject identifies normative precepts that are adequate for a given situation, she often acts contrary to them. The recurrence of this discrepancy between the correctly identified ethical norms and the individual's actual behaviour poses the most serious challenge to the concept of morality as the realm of objects of moral knowledge. One radical response to this challenge is abandoning completely the idea of the rational nature of moral norms and proclaiming morality to be the exclusive domain of emotions. This model of ethics thus becomes the polar opposite of its classic understanding resulting from the philosophical deliberation on the nature of moral duties.

Historical analysis of the term

Socrates was the first thinker to emphasize the key role of reason in morality. He believed that for man to reach the pinnacle of his individual development he must learn how to practise moral virtues, which is possible only through acquiring knowledge of the elementary sense of these

virtues and the effective ways of practising them. The Socratic approach to morality has come down in history as ethical intellectualism. However, Socrates did not treat this model of ethical deliberation as explaining the totality of moral matters. In particular, it was not intended to cover cases of deliberate evil, which, in Socrates' view, amounted to the illness of the evildoer's soul (Legutko, 2013).

A more elaborate model of moral perfection as the subordination of one's life activities to reason was formulated by Plato. The metaphor of the soul that he proposed – a chariot driven by a charioteer (Reason) and drawn by two steeds (Spirituality/Passion and Physical Appetites) – takes into account the natural dynamics of an individual's moral development. The rational part of the soul, which plays the leading role, coordinates the other two components of the individual's subjectivity – capable of disrupting the ideal rationalisation of her endeavours, while at the same time indispensable for her very existence as a human being. According to Plato, the ultimate goal of one's efforts, i.e., the highest moral ideal, is the acquisition of wisdom (i.e., the ability to contemplate the world of Eternal Forms), but he also clearly saw the emotive element present in the process of perfecting oneself in virtue (i.e., love for the Form of the Good).

The rational ordering (balancing) of emotional inclinations, which is key in a moral experience, was elaborated on in Aristotle's ethical theory. He treated reasonableness as the most essential quality of a human individual, one that ultimately establishes her humanity. The perfect realisation of her potential is ensured by her acquiring the full knowledge and the resulting ability to contemplate the truth; such a state is achieved through the development of intellectual virtues. Aristotle's conception of morality assumed the existence of other real goods obtained by the individual through the practice of moral virtues, such as fortitude, generosity, or temperance. The realisation of such virtues consists in suppressing spontaneous stimuli and impulses, which are manifestations of the emotional component of human personality, and thus lack proper harmonisation. Man can develop moral virtues thanks to prudence (*phronesis*), which is an intellectual virtue of a specific character; it is directed towards practical action. The virtue of prudence guarantees the identification of the golden mean, which is the desirable middle way between the feelings and passions that underlie the

individual's endeavours. The notion of a prudently balanced middle between extremes is considered one of Aristotle's most original ideas, although in some cases it proves rather difficult, and sometimes literally impossible, to apply in practice (MacIntyre, 1998).

The Stoics developed an influential mode of self-control through which an individual was supposed to shape appropriate relationships between reason and emotions. The way to achieve moral perfection is to fully and consciously accept the necessary nature of the events that make up the fate of a human individual. A person acquires the ability to adopt such an attitude thanks to the most important component of her being, i.e., her rational soul. The rational acceptance of the inevitable course of events, which is the result of the orchestration of all things by the divine Logos, is linked with the adoption of a specific, holistic distance from all emotional experiences and entering a state of *apatheia*. Fully distancing oneself from one's emotions, as well as ensuring one's freedom from dependence on any external influences (*autarkia*), is – according to the Stoics – the perfect formula for human existence put into practice by the true sage. For most people, it is merely possible to persistently try to approach this ideal by meticulously fulfilling daily duties, regardless of the pleasure or pain this involves (Gajda-Krynicka, 2019).

Christian ethics brings to light the volitional aspect in the resolutions of moral dilemmas. The leading figure in ancient and early medieval Christian moral philosophy was St. Augustine, who advocated the primacy of free will in moral experience. In his opinion, free will, directed towards the immutable and infinite Good (and reinforced by the Divine Grace) is the main driving force behind morally right actions and thus sets in motion the elementary dynamics necessary for the implementation of moral norms. This focus on the motivational foundations for the realisation of moral norms underlies Abelard's conception of an moral act, in which the moral value of an individual undertaking is determined by the intention manifesting itself through it (while particular acts still are to comply with the invariable requirement that they be in conformity with the objectively proper norms of the Divine law). The vital contribution made by Christian thinkers to clarifying the pattern of individual acknowledgment of moral principles is their development of the concept of conscience. In the light of this concept, the mechanism – present in each human mind – for identifying actions which are morally right

or wrong involves both formulating the content of relevant precepts and prohibitions at various levels of generality, as well as identifying the crucial reason for their being put into practice. This reason is set out in the supreme principle of synderesis (pre-conscience): good is to be done and evil is to be avoided. It draws on the most fundamental level of motivation which initiates the actions of an individual and is thus a bridge between the acknowledgement of the objective truth of the outcome of ethical deliberation and the pro-active mental state necessary for a person to undertake (or abandon) the implementation of a specific endeavour. In St. Bonaventure's opinion, synderesis is a structural element of each individual will; its fundamental principle thus constitutes the direct impulse towards morally right actions while, at the same time, opposing differently directed affective states of mind.

Ultimately, at the height of the medieval philosophy, the classical Christian model of ethics took the form of ethical intellectualism, in which, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, the activity of the individual conscience is entirely reduced to the operations of reason. According to the author of *Summa Theologica*, the content of moral norms is revealed with the help of the theoretical intellect, while the key practical principle that indicates the necessity of their implementation is revealed through the involvement of the practical intellect in a moral experience (in this approach, synderesis is the elementary capacity of the latter component of individual reason). The efficiency of the practical implementation of moral requirements is determined by prudence – an intellectual virtue which constitutes a link between the intellect and the will. Confronted with the findings of the intellect, the will triggers the individual to undertake concrete action, while the will's ability to choose morally right actions stems from its proper formation through the practice of virtues. The role of the virtues of the will (in particular fortitude and temperance) is to optimally regulate emotions, as disordered emotions can become the cause of actions contrary to the discernments of conscience (Andrzejuk & Andrzejuk, 2020).

The central axis of the vast majority of pre-modern ethical theories (based on the assumption that reason plays a key role in recognising moral norms) was an attempt to explain the tension – which is key for morality – between reason and emotion. The most significant feature of the theory which marks a turning point in modern moral philosophy is

the radical turn towards emotions regarded as the only source of moral distinctions. This turn was made by David Hume in one of the most frequently referenced passages of his *Treatise on Human Nature*:

But can there be any difficulty in proving that vice and virtue are not matters of fact, whose existence we can infer by reason? Take any action allowed to be vicious: Wilful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call vice. In whichever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions and thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in the case. The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You never can find it, till you turn your reflection into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a matter of fact, but it is the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object (Hume, 2003).

With the dismissal of the possibility of deriving moral norms from the necessary relations between ideas established by reason, the ruling out of any connection between such norms and the sphere of matters of fact led Hume to the conclusion that morality is directly grounded in feelings. In his opinion, it is feelings, not reason, which determine all aims of human actions, and the rationality of these actions is reduced solely to their being properly selected and mutually coordinated as a means to attain particular ends (“reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions”).

Almost exactly at the time when Hume was developing his theory of ethics, an alternative theory was being formulated by Immanuel Kant – equally relevant to the contemporary disputes about the nature of morality as the Humean view, though to a large extent directly opposite to the proposals put forward by the author of the *Treatise on human nature*. The starting point for Kant was the denial of the possibility of any impact of experiential data (widely understood) on the content of moral requirements. The normative content of genuine moral principles is exclusively the result of rational deliberation:

[W]hether one is not of the opinion that it is of the utmost necessity to work out once a pure moral philosophy which is fully cleansed of everything that might be in any way empirical and belong to anthropology; for that there must be such is self-evident from the common idea of duty and of moral laws. Everyone must admit [...] that the ground of obligation here is to be sought not in the nature of the human being or the circumstances of the world in which he

is placed, but a priori solely in concepts of pure reason, and that every other precept grounded on principles of mere experience, and even a precept that is universal in a certain aspect, insofar as it is supported in the smallest part on empirical grounds, perhaps only as to its motive, can be called a practical rule, but never a moral law. Thus not only are moral laws together with their principles essentially distinguished among all practical cognition from everything else in which there is anything empirical, but all moral philosophy rests entirely on its pure part, and when applied to the human being it borrows not the least bit from knowledge about him (anthropology), but it gives him as a rational being laws a priori (Kant, 1998).

Kant emphasises that what is also necessary for an individual to implement the requirements of morality is what he terms 'judgement' (*Urteilkraft*) – enabling moral principles to be operationalised in the diverse circumstances of life, ensuring they have “access to the will of the human being” and giving them the corresponding “emphasis for their fulfilment”. However, these principles themselves are established in a mode founded on the “idea of a pure practical reason”, and it is thus pure practical reason, not the “many inclinations” of the moral subject, which is the deciding factor for the content of ethical norms.

Discussion of the term

The importance of Hume's and Kant's theories for contemporary ethics, as well as the mutually contradictory nature of their postulates regarding the foundations of moral convictions, make these theories the opposite poles of the philosophical inquiry into the nature of and the mode of recognising the requirements of morality. These poles are marked, on the one hand, by the meta-ethical views aiming to demonstrate the fully rational origin of moral norms and, on the other, by attempts at a reductionist interpretation of these norms (i.e., as directives based exclusively on emotions).

Compared to other theories that stipulate the supremacy of reason in formulating (discovering/establishing) moral rules, the uniqueness of Kant's model of ethics stems from its blueprint – consciously designed and consistently promoted by the greatest philosopher of the city of Königsberg – providing for the maximally autonomous rationality of one's decision to undertake a morally right action and constituting the

only criterion for a positive ethical evaluation of that action. In his search for an adequate formula for the supreme moral principle, Kant rejected the possibility of expressing it by means of the hypothetical imperative in either of its versions: in his opinion, a moral norm cannot take the form of either a problematic imperative, i.e., the recommendation of a certain type of action as a means to achieve a goal (if A wants to achieve goal C, A must take action B), nor the assertoric imperative, i.e., pointing to a method by which the acting person achieves the goal ascribed to him in a necessary manner (because it is natural and necessary that X strives to achieve goal Z, X must take action Y). For Kant, it is particularly important to reject this second template for a normative directive as completely inadequate for the articulation of the supreme moral rules. Thus, on the grounds of Kant's ethics, any material (naturalistic, metaphysical, or – in a more general sense – teleological) orientation of the fundamental moral principles is unequivocally ruled out. According to the author of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the autonomy of the rational nature of such rules must be total, which can only be guaranteed by the transparency of their content. Ultimately, the foundation of morality sought by Kant (its supreme principle) takes the form of the categorical imperative: act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.

As can be seen from the above, the primary feature of the strictly rationalist model of identifying moral principles is its eminently formalist nature. This particular feature of Kant's ethics has been the main object of criticism ever since Hegel accused Kantian moral philosophy of its 'empty formalism'. In spite of the various efforts made by the supporters of Kant's theory, no fully satisfactory solution has yet been developed for both its insufficient explanatory power with regard to a number of fundamental moral intuitions (e.g., concerning the moral value of key social institutions such as private property, democratic systems of government, or marriage), as well as its excessive potential for generating *prima facie* convincing justifications for manifestly immoral acts. Particularly when analysing this latter weakness of the Kantian model of ethics, there arises the

notoriously problematic issue of determining how exactly maxims are to be framed and determined, where an agent might find he can come up with a different outcome for the FUL (Formula of Universal Law) test by adjusting the maxim

by which he proposes to act in ways that do not really alter the moral situation – for example, by making his maxim more specific in various ways, it might then become universalizable, but where what is still fundamentally a morally wrong action is being licensed (Stern, 2015).

Regardless of the consequences of the pure formalism of Kant's conception of strictly rationalist ethics, another serious shortcoming of this view (as well as of other related theories) is its (their) far-reaching postulative nature. While the authors who sympathise with Kantian ethics find this feature thoroughly acceptable and even desirable, commending people

to think of ourselves as capable of understanding an *a priori* significant moral law and acting accordingly, or at least capable of becoming aware of those absolute duties which – as empirical beings – we may not even be able to undertake (Kaniowski, 2004, p. 117; emphasis A.C.),

there is no doubt that the clear and (perhaps) impassable chasm between the ideal model of ethical deliberation and the actual practice of people making their moral decisions effectively undermines the functionality of the ethical theory in question. Along with the other models of the rationality-based acknowledgment of moral duties, Kant's theory must seek to address the issue of the real grounding of a moral agent's interest in whichever standard of moral decision-making she chooses (even if one agrees with Kant's followers that the relatively small degree of correspondence between this standard and the way in which people actually make moral decisions – or even complete lack thereof – does not fundamentally affect the validity of an ethical theory).

This kind of challenge does not seem to apply in any way to the models of acknowledging moral norms derived from Hume's understanding of morality. The 20th-century theory of emotivism¹ seems to be the most systematic (and most radical) development of the main thesis of the *Treatise on Human Nature* regarding moral experience. According to its prominent representative, Charles L. Stevenson, the apparent descriptiveness of the language of ethics, noticeable in

¹ In discussing the theories of Ch.L. Stevenson and R.M. Hare, I use excerpts from my earlier publication (Cebula, 2013).

the syntactic layer of evaluative utterances, is in fact entirely illusory. According to Stevenson, the predicates 'good'/'bad' employed in normative statements (either directly or as a result of their paraphrases) are abbreviated forms for expressing approval/disapproval, combined with an act of persuasion: "I approve of this; do so as well!"/"I disapprove of this; do so as well!". The expression of a positive/negative emotional attitude towards a specific action is thus extended by an appeal to the recipient of the message: the essential aim of the evaluative utterance is to persuade the interlocutor to adopt an identical attitude towards the set of circumstances being evaluated. In its normative layer, a moral judgement is never a statement of fact: it does not denote anything in the context of the act of communication in the broadest sense of the term (including the speaker's mental processes); it only 'expresses' or 'arouses' particular emotional states of the individuals involved in this act. Moral categories must therefore be included in a broader set of emotive expressions, such as exclamations ('ah', 'oh', 'off', 'get lost'). In Stevenson's theory, the emotive meaning and the descriptive meaning – mutually complementary elements of the structure of linguistic communication – are analytically separated.

Even a cursory analysis of the main assumptions of emotivism reveals the problem of singling out moral sentiments from the total set of mental states constituting the content of a human individual's inner experience. As Hume wrote: "Nor is every sentiment of pleasure or pain, which arises from characters and actions, of that peculiar kind, which makes us praise or condemn". However, identifying the right type of experiences that qualify as the basis for moral distinctions – while acknowledging the essential non-referentiality of the basic formula of normative messages – is not a simple task. In light of the postulate of the privacy of emotions, it is impossible to identify clear reasons for introducing any objective criteria for distinguishing from among them the class of moral emotions. Attempts undertaken by both Hume and Stevenson to make the concept of moral emotionality more precise ended in failure. There can be some compensation for the ambiguous criteria for the demarcation of moral emotions: both thinkers point to the mechanism of the pedagogical or political formation of individual moral preferences. The only ethically relevant preferences are supposed to be those that constitute the axis of a conflict of interests taking place at

a given moment (are influenced by specific educational methods or tools of political agitation). Ultimately, however, this means totally suspending the dichotomy that is fundamental to ethics and ensures the possibility of distinguishing between moral good and moral evil.

When reduced to the role of an instrument of political persuasion, the concept of moral discourse should also presuppose the existence of a specific mechanism that enables the intersubjective transmission of ethically relevant emotions. Among the key elements of Hume's theory described in his *Treatise on Human Nature* is the concept of sympathy. It is this special human ability to gain direct insight into the content of others people's sensations (we "enter [...] into sentiments, which no way belong to us, and in which nothing but sympathy is able to interest us", Hume, 2003) that is supposed to guarantee the interpersonal transfer of moral feelings, which takes place irrespective of success – or lack thereof – of the communicative undertaking that relies on the descriptive semantics of natural language. However, this interpretation requires an additional assumption pointing out the specific "openness" of a moral subject to the experiences of others. The acceptance of this assumption must also be accompanied by an acknowledgement of the existence of a specific system for the coordination of the intersubjective transmission of emotions: only such a system can protect emotively interpreted morality from falling into a state of total anarchy (the constant, multidirectional, and unconstrained 'transfer' of random feelings between individuals).

An idea of such a system plays a key role in John Mackie's reconstruction of Hume's theory:

The morality that can guide action, then, is not a random collection of mere feelings, or of statements that report such stray feelings. Rather, it is a system built, indeed, out of feelings but involving also people's awareness of one another's feelings, attempts to take a steady and general point of view, and tendencies towards agreement in attitude (Mackie, 1980).

It seems that only this interpersonal system of moral emotions can guarantee the effective passing on of the normative content of communication that is defined in accordance with the basic guidelines of emotivism. Accepting the thesis of the existence of such a system, however, leads to significant complications. The intersubjective network of relations between individuals assumed in Mackie's idea constitutes

an object whose ramifications go far beyond the essential psychologism characteristic of emotivism. In this approach, a fully-fledged moral subject is an individual person, and not, as Mackie seems to suggest, a broadly understood community of people formed on the basis of the human capacity for co-experiencing emotions.

Most importantly, treating ethics as a set of para-discursive techniques used for manifesting or evoking individual mental states fails to explain both the universality and regularity of the use of moral predicates and the seriousness with which these predicates are used by the majority of competent language users. A. MacIntyre wrote

Stevenson, for example, understood very clearly that saying “I disapprove of this; do so as well!” does not have the same force as saying “That is bad!” He noted that a kind of prestige attaches to the latter, which does not attach to the former. What he did not note however – precisely because he viewed emotivism as a theory of meaning – is that the prestige derives from the fact that the use of “That is bad” implies an appeal to an objective and impersonal standard in a way in which “I disapprove of this; do so as well!” does not. That is, if and insofar as emotivism is true, moral language is seriously misleading and, if and insofar as emotivism is justifiably believed, presumably the use of traditional and inherited moral language ought to be abandoned (MacIntyre, 2007).

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

As an alternative to totally abandoning the moral language, it would seem appropriate to develop an interpretation of ethics which, while lending legitimacy to the rational character of the recognition of the requirements of morality, also refers to the elements of authentic moral experience necessary for the very existence of moral subjectivity in its particular (real) instances. The model of a moral subject’s acknowledgment of the content of ethical norms that underlies such an interpretation should include – in addition to the presentation of a transparent scheme of ethical reasoning – an explanation of how both ethical deliberation and implementation of its results become part of the natural functioning of a human individual. Thus, what should be highlighted as part of the theoretical approaches constructed within the framework of moral philosophy, is both the internal coherence of the relevant sets of ethical

beliefs as well as their practical applicability (their appropriateness in relation to the actual autonomous actions of human individuals).

Building a theory exploring the possibility of overcoming the rationalist-emotivist dualism of moral philosophy has been attempted by Richard M. Hare. Hare's model of the deep structure of the language of ethics, which is the foundation of a possible system of ethical knowledge, assumes that all moral judgements are statements expressing prescriptions (recommendations) that are subject to a special qualification based on the principle of *universalizability* of those judgements. This qualification consists in attributing to a would-be ethical prescription, apparently applicable in a given situation, the characteristic of invariability in relation to all other situations – real and hypothetical – which can be considered analogous on account of their inherent descriptive structure. This structure is determined in each case by a network of relations between actors (active or passive participants in the events taking place) as well as potential direct or indirect beneficiaries or victims of the moral dilemma in question. The test of the universalisability of a prescription is the 'stepping into the shoes' of all other persons interested in the direct or indirect consequences of the course of action recommended in it. It is only after the completion of a series of these virtual 'incarnations' of the moral arbiter that the final validation of the ethical character of the evaluative utterance takes place. Thus, in Hare's opinion, the ultimate sanction, as well as the only criterion of the identity of an ethical judgment, is a moral arbiter's taking into consideration all individual points of view on the issue under consideration (Hare, 1960).

Despite the hopes of both Hume's and Kant's followers, the proposed reconstruction of the procedures of ethical deliberation is not devoid of serious shortcomings. In conceptualising it, Hare mostly refers to a simplistic, bipolar, relationship between the participants of a situation of a moral dilemma:

B has got, not to imagine himself in A's situation with his own (B's) likes and dislikes, but to imagine himself in A's situation with A's likes and dislikes. But the moral judgement which he has to make about this situation has to remain B's own, as has any other prescriptive judgement that he makes, if it is to have a bearing on the argument.

As indicated by the author of *Freedom and Reason*, the imagined fusion of the two perspectives on the situation under consideration – which is the basis for the recognition of any legitimate moral judgment, – should entail the superimposition of two totally separate instances of subjectivity. This imposition is a specific operation that enables a moral arbiter to decree a particular prescriptive judgment as if from two ‘places’ simultaneously. The formulation of a moral precept by a moral arbiter who retains all the self-consciousness of being a co-participant in the events that are evaluated, i.e., imagining oneself in “A’s situation with A’s likes and dislikes”, should be his own entirely private recognition of the ethical norm. The question of the *locus subjecti* – the unequivocal, even if only temporary, stabilisation of the subjective perspective of an ethical judgement – becomes even more pressing in the context of Hare’s analyses of the numerical complexity of the situation of a moral dilemma: events with numerous direct or indirect participants are perfectly natural. The possibility of a specific accumulation of subjective perspectives of ethical deliberation is accurately questioned by one of Hare’s opponents, who wrote:

I can imagine what it is like to be you but I cannot imagine me being you, or you being me. For these multiplied instances of “me” and “you” signify different persons that cannot be merged or exchanged [...] [I]magining that one is in qualitatively identical circumstances to another person is equivalent to imagining what it is like to be that person (Vendler, 1988).

Another proposal to eliminate the fundamental conflict between rationalist and emotivist interpretations of moral experience has been formulated by John Finnis’s in his reconstruction of the traditional natural law theory. Finnis advocates the total rationality of ethical beliefs; drawing on the earlier theories of morality founded on the notion of natural law, he attempts to explain the specific substantive content of ethical knowledge. Importantly, however, while the acquisition of ethical knowledge by a moral subject results from a rational operation, it is also – at least on the basic level – of a fundamentally universal character, as it is guaranteed by the specific shape of the elementary matrix of individual moral subjectivity. According to Finnis,

there is a set of basic practical principles which indicate the basic forms of human flourishing as goods to be pursued and realised, and which are in

one way or another used by everyone who considers what to do, however unsound his conclusions (emphasis added).

One form of human flourishing is practical reasonableness, which generates

a set of basic methodological requirements [...] which distinguish sound from unsound practical thinking and which [...] provide the criteria for distinguishing between acts that (always or in particular circumstances) are reasonable-all-things-considered (and not merely relative-to-a-particular purpose) and acts that are unreasonable-all-things-considered, i.e., between ways of acting that are morally right or morally wrong.

The basic forms of human flourishing which are first identified by a moral subject (in the mode of an intellectual operation): 'life', 'knowledge', 'play', 'aesthetic experiences', 'sociability', 'practical reasonableness', 'religion', and then subjected to appropriate systematisation in accordance with the requirements of practical reasonableness (recognised analogously to the way in which the other forms of human flourishing are identified) make it possible – according to Finnis's views – to formulate a set of general moral norms (Finnis, 1980).

With his attempt to undermine the alleged incommensurability between rational ethical deliberation and the intrinsic (real) motivation of a moral subject's ethically righteous action Finnis has significantly contributed to contemporary moral philosophy. If we assume that this attempt is at least partially successful, it may lead to overcoming the classic dichotomy between reason (guaranteeing the validity of moral judgements) and emotion (constituting a necessary impulse to act). As this Australian thinker argues,

the principles [of human flourishing] [...] are not validated by feelings. On the contrary, they are themselves the criteria whereby we discriminate between feelings, and discount some of our feelings, (including feelings of certitude), however intense, as irrational and unwarranted, misleading or delusive (Finnis, 1980).

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Piotr Duchliński

Ignatianum University in Cracow

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9480-2730>

Adam Jonkisz

Ignatianum University in Cracow

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9850-2137>

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Ethical cognitivism *versus* ethical non-cognitivism

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: Non-cognitivism rejects the view that ethical statements have logical value but claims that – like other practical sentences – they play extra-cognitive roles.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: This section presents selected metaethical positions regarding the cognitive status of ethical statements.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: In analyses of the semantic clarification of cognitivism, some weak points of the view that ethical statements have logical value are indicated. Arguments are also formulated in favour of the thesis that singular evaluative propositions and, consequently, other ethical statements fail to meet the conditions of truthful predicating.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The article concludes that the inapplicability in metaethics of truth understood classically value and the fundamental rather than analogical difference between ethics and the empirical sciences is accompanied by the belief that non-cognitivism does not necessarily lead to subjectivism and ethical nihilism and by a call for rational justification and discussion of ethical evaluations and norms.

Keywords: cognitivism, non-cognitivism, the notion of truth in ethics, practical statements

Definition of the term

In cognitivism, it is assumed that ethical statements have not only a valuative but also a cognitive function. The core of this metaethical conception is the view that singular and general judgements of actions, as well as ethical norms, are statements in the logical sense, i.e., they are true/false because they refer to values and obligations that exist objectively.

In non-cognitivism, this view is rejected in favour of the recognition that moral values and obligations are the result of the non-cognitive activities of the subject, that they are not cognised but are attributed to acts, and that ethical statements do not refer to objective ethical facts but express and evoke emotions or are directives, recommendations, or injunctions that influence moral attitudes.

The problem of the truth value of ethical statements ('statements about the good'), i.e., evaluations and norms regarding moral good and moral obligation, is fundamental to the discussion on the cognitive status of other practical sentences: axiological (e.g., aesthetic evaluations and norms, legal norms), imperative, and interrogative.

Historical analysis of the term

The discussion concerning the epistemological and semiotic status of practical statements, i.e., their truth or falsity, began in the 20th century with the emergence of metaethics (Uliński, 1992; Biesaga, 1996) and led to the formulation of different positions regarding their cognitive status.

In intuitionism, statements about the good are sentences in the logical sense. Proponents of this view accept ontological assumptions about how the property of the good exists and an intuitionist epistemology of the direct cognition of values: we have epistemic access to (non-natural) moral facts, and ethical statements, which are the result of this cognition, are true or false. Intuitionists are non-naturalistic cognitivists (Biesaga, 1996). Naturalism, the position historically prior to intuitionism, covers diverse conceptions which share the view that the domain of morality is not fiction, that it actually exists in society and culture, and therefore that ethical statements concerning natural moral facts are true or false and intersubjectively verifiable. Inter-subjective agreements play an

important role in this verification. Naturalists are realists and thus oppose irrealists and nihilists who claim that no moral facts or values objectively exist, and that ethical statements are neither true nor false. Contemporary forms of naturalism are linked with evolutionism and expressivism and are also developed within cognitive sciences, which researches the neurobiological determinants of practical statements.

The non-cognitivist conception has been developed under the influence of logical positivism, in which only statements that are verifiable in sensory experiences are considered empirically sensible, which means that ethical statements do not make cognitive sense (Biesaga, 1996). Emotivists are non-cognitivists and anti-intuitionists: in their opinion, there are no objective moral facts. Ethical statements cannot be qualified as true or false as they are only an expression of moral attitudes which express approval or disapproval of people's behaviours. According to A.J. Ayer, ethical statements are orders that express emotional states of mind and are expressions of approval or disapproval. According to non-cognitivists, ethical statements express feelings, attitudes, advice, commands, etc. and can be translated from, e.g., "x is good" into a command "Choose x!", or a recommendation to "give priority to x!". Other solutions are proposed within non-cognitivism. According to P.F. Strawson, instead of a criterion for establishing the truth value of moral judgments, it is better to look for the arguments for considering them true in those who formulate those judgments, i.e., to look for the conditions of their acceptability in people's opinions. Therefore, it is possible (C.L. Stevenson and P.H. Nowell-Smith) to reduce ethical statements to advice that does not refer to any facts but is an expression of our support for certain behaviours (see Biesaga, 1996; Uliński, 1992), which may be accurate or inaccurate rather than true or false. In prescriptivism (R.M. Hare), ethical statements are not reduced to commands (as Carnap proposes) but to advice and recommendations: when I utter the claim "you should give the money back", I do not affirm any facts, I do not look for any arguments, but I primarily try to persuade someone to do something; the formulation of ethical statements primarily consists in giving advice and only secondarily in giving information or arousing emotions (Styczeń, 1974).

Phenomenologists opt for the intuitive cognition of values and for the truth value of moral norms and evaluations and their irreducibility to statements containing descriptive predicates. However, insofar as

singular claims are true/false, depending on whether they correspond to the value of a given object, they are not logical norms. Proponents of intuitionist cognitivism include M. Scheler in the emotionalist perspective, and D. von Hildebrand and R. Ingarden in the intellectualist perspective. The truth condition of ethical evaluations consists in the objective existence and cognisability of values, i.e., the possibility of grasping them through direct axiological experience (Ingarden, 1989).

Thomistic cognitivism is linked with anti-naturalism, objectivism (anti-subjectivism), and intuitionism. Thomists recognise the existence of moral facts that are irreducible to natural facts. They differentiate between theoretical and practical cognition, which aims to realise the objective good determined by natural inclinations. What is important in practical cognition is the contentual correspondence between practical and theoretical claims concerning the nature of being. The term 'practical sentences' covers imperatives, norms, and evaluations (Kalinowski, 1967, p. 183). Sentences that express evaluations and norms refer to actions that have objective value, thus "the sentence '*X is good*' is true if and only if *X* is good, and the sentence: '*X is bad*' is true if and only if *X* is bad" (Kalinowski, 1967, p. 208). Primary ethical claims are verified based on their analytical obviousness (e.g., "every action that is in accordance with man's natural inclination is morally good"), or their empirical obviousness, which is possible thanks to the disposition of the intellect – *prudencia*. Secondary statements are verified by means of a practical syllogism (Kalinowski, 1967, pp. 215, 224). Ethical norms are verified based on their compliance with natural law and eternal law, while legal norms complement the norms of natural law. Moral imperatives *sensu stricto* are not logical sentences: they are volitional and can be recognised by means of an imperative syllogism. Thomistic authors (e.g., S. Kamiński) argue that evaluations and norms can be qualified as true or false. Normative sentences refer to the relationship of obligation between the subject and his action. They are true if they express this relationship in the way in which it is determined by the nature of the acting subject and the nature of the aim of the action. This aim is the dignity of the human person in a short-term perspective, and the personal Absolute in the ultimate perspective; this Absolute is the Source of true practical statements that express the obligation to act (Styczeń, 1972). Evaluations expressed in singular statements are also true or false.

An evaluation predicates the modus of an object in terms of the desire (liking) of the subject, while a norm states the modus of the subject's action in terms of the aim of that action. The recommendation content (stimulus) differs in these two cases, but the informational and assertive content refer to the same relationship. Hence there is an equivalence: *x is valuable for y – y should do x* (Kamiński, 1970, p. 78).

Practical sentences are made true by objective states of being.
The justification of the truth value of practical statements

is accomplished by subordinating the more specific to the more general, and by showing that the latter [...] possess analogous counterparts in metaphysical laws concerning the nature of man (his dignity among all other beings), interpersonal relations, and actions naturally proper (or not) to man under certain conditions (Kamiński, 1970, p. 88).

Practical sentences (norms, evaluations) play an informative function (they are the results of cognition), a recommendation function (they recommend a certain action), and an expressive/evocative function (they influence recipients' attitudes). The cognitive function, which is primary, is expressed in informing the recipients of the message about what their duty is, what their moral obligation is, and how they should evaluate specific states of affairs.

Discussion of the term

The core of ethical cognitivism is the thesis that ethical statements have logical value. The view of the truth status of ethical statements is based on the claim that true/false sentences are singular evaluative sentences – i.e., they are evaluations of particular acts – which are also called, due to their role in ethical systems, basic sentences (Czeżowski, 1989, pp. 159–167). The reflections presented in this article are focused on the argumentation concerning this basic thesis, and the examples of ethical statements are focused on singular evaluative sentences.

The strongest argumentation for ethical cognitivism was formulated by M. Przełęcki in his epistemological, and above all, semantic considerations (2004; 2010, pp. 243–249). He argues that it is possible to apply to ethics the understanding of truth derived from Tarski's definition:

a sentence of the language J of ethical discourse is true when, in the domain (model m) to which this language refers, it is as the given sentence proclaims. For example:

- (*) The sentence 'this very act is morally good' is true when the event denoted by the individual name 'this very act' belongs to the set of events which is denoted by the predicate 'morally good', i.e., when the indicated act belongs to the set of morally good acts (Przełęcki, 2004, p. 20).

Truth understood in this way, i.e., according to the classical correspondence theory of truth, is an absolute property; thus, ethical cognitivism leads to ethical absolutism:

Evaluative sentences [...] are authentic sentences in the logical sense: they are utterances that are true or false. Thus, of two contradictory evaluations, one and only one is true. The same applies to sets of evaluations that make up an ethical system. There is one and only one true system among them. This is the thesis of ethical absolutism that any ethical cognitivism seems to inevitably entail (Przełęcki, 2004, p. 77).

In this perspective, model m of the language of ethical discourse is denoted by the schema $\langle U, \dots, a, b, \dots, G, B, \dots \rangle$, in which U is the universe of morally significant acts, a, b are concrete acts, and G, B, \dots are subsets of acts from U which correspond to the ethical predicates 'morally good' and 'morally bad'; the interpreted language of ethical discourse is the pair (L, m) .

The semantic presentation of ethical cognitivism offers a comparatively rigorous formulation of arguments which reveal the weaknesses of the conceptions.

1) Even the proponents of cognitivism themselves acknowledge the difficulties associated with denotations ethical predicates: (i) the notorious vagueness of such predicates and (ii) how their denotations are delineated.

Re (i). If ' $G(a)$ ' denotes the sentence 'this very act is morally good', then – according to (*) – ' $G(a)$ ' is true if and only if a particular act a is an element of the totality of G morally good acts. The denotation of a vague ethical predicate, however, cannot be equated with any set that is strictly understood. This is because a vague predicate does not divide the universe into its designata and non-designata since there are objects

which can equally well be considered as both denoted and not-denoted by such a predicate; the totality of such objects is the denotation of vagueness of a given predicate. If we predicate morally good acts, this means that there is a non-empty set G/B , the elements of which may just as well belong to the set G of good acts as to the set B of morally bad acts, and therefore such acts are outside the denotation of truthfully predicating of good/bad if – according to (*) – the logical value can only be assigned to evaluations regarding designata in the model $m = \langle U, \dots, G, B, \dots \rangle$. In order to deal with this difficulty, the conception of super-truth is implemented into the cognitivist view. According to it, the vague ethical predicate is represented not by a single denotation but by a family of denotations: ‘morally good’ is not the set G but a family of sets $G = \{G_1, G_2, \dots, G_n\}$, each of which corresponds to a particular division of elements of the denotation of vagueness of G/B into the designata of the predicate G and the acts that belong to its negation, i.e., to the denotation of predicate B ; the totality of these sets exhausts n possible dichotomous divisions of the set G/B . The interpreted ethical language is then equated not with the pair (L, m) but with the pair (L, M) , where $M = \{m_1, m_2, \dots, m_n\}$ is a certain family of such models. According to the super-truth theory:

- (**) a true/false sentence of the language (J, M) is a sentence which is true/false in every model belonging to the family M , and sentences that are true in some models and false in others are neither true nor false.

In this approach, the problem of vagueness of higher levels is dealt with in the same way as at the basic level. Vagueness at higher levels stems from the fact that the denotation of vagueness of a vague predicate also has vague boundaries. In the example above, this means that the boundaries of the set G/B are not sharp, thus the denotation of its vagueness is not-empty, and it in turn can also be not sharp. At these higher levels, we do not talk about a family of models but about a class of such families, and not about a family of interpretations but about a class of families (Przełęcki, 2004, pp. 42–44).

Referring to this concept, let us assume its simplification, i.e., let us assume that morally indifferent acts are not included in the universe U and, thus, that in U there are only morally significant acts, i.e., acts that are subject to evaluation in terms of moral good/bad, which means

that $nG = B$. Accounting for vagueness, it can be said that universe U is exhaustively divided into sets G' , B' and G/B , where G/B is the denotation of vagueness of the predicate 'morally good', G' is the core of the denotation G , i.e., the set of undoubted designata of this predicate ($G' \subset G$), and B' is the core of the denotation B , i.e., the set of undoubted elements of the denotation of the predicate 'morally bad' ($B' \subset B$). Then, in each successive possible model $\{m_1, m_2, \dots, m_n\}$, there are pairs of complementary sets in the universe U : G_1, B_1 ; G_2, B_2 ; ...; G_n, B_n , each of which is the result of one of the n dichotomous divisions of the denotation of vagueness of G/B into elements included in G' and included in B' . Since the sets G_1, G_2, \dots, G_n are obtained by adding some elements from G/B to G' , it can also be said that they are the sum of the set G' and some subset of the denotation of vagueness. The sums $(G' \cup \emptyset)$ and $(G' \cup G/B)$ are extreme in the sense that the former is obtained from a division of the set G/B in which all its elements are added to the set B' , and the latter from a division in which all elements are added to the set G' ; in between these extremes there are divisions in which both G' and B' are actually augmented by at least one element from G/B . It is obvious that the set G' is the largest intersection of all the denotations of G_1, G_2, \dots, G_n , therefore all the elements in set G' and only the elements of set G' satisfy in each of the models m_1, m_2, \dots, m_n the condition of belonging to each of the denotations G_1, G_2, \dots, G_n . Only for the elements of set G' is the sentence true that a given act from G' is true; and when such act is predicated to be bad, the given sentence is false. On the other hand, none of the elements of set B' and only set B' belong to any of the sets G_1, G_2, \dots, G_n , which means that all and only such sentences in which being good is attributed to these elements are false, while the statements in which being bad is attributed to acts from B' are true. These conclusions can be summarised in the following way:

(**)' If a^M in the models m_1, m_2, \dots, m_n is denoted by the name a , and the sets G_1, G_2, \dots, G_n are denoted in these models by the predicate G of the language (L, M) , then:

The sentence $G(a)$ of this language is:

- true iff a^M belongs to the product of sets G_1, G_2, \dots, G_n , i.e., when $a^M \in D'$;
- false iff a^M belongs to the product of the sets B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n , i.e., when $a^M \in Z'$.

The truth conditions of the statement $B(a)$ are similarly narrowed: $B(a)$ is true *iff* a^M belongs to the product of the sets B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n , i.e., when $a^M \in Z'$; and $B(a)$ is false *iff* a^M belongs to the product of the sets G_1, G_2, \dots, G_n , i.e., when $a^M \in D'$.

This result weakens the cognitivist argument because the denotations of G' and B' are subsets of the sets G and B , and the situation is exacerbated by accounting for vagueness at the higher levels: the denotation of vagueness of the set G/B is the sum of the sets $G'/(G/B)$ (the frontier of the sets G' and G/B) and $(G/B)/B'$ (the frontier of the sets G/B and B'). If the unrealistic assumption that these frontiers contain only elements from the set G/B is adopted, the super-truth procedure is ineffective because the denotations of truthful predicating are still restricted to the sets G' and B' . However, when the 'frontier' is understood realistically, then accounting for second-order vagueness results in some of the elements of the set G' being shifted to the set $G'/(G/B)$, and some elements from the set B' are shifted to $(G/B)/B'$. The resulting sets G'' and B'' – where $G'' = (G' - G'/(G/B))$ and $B'' = (B' - (G/B)/B')$ – are contained in their first-order counterparts: $G'' \subset G'$ and $B'' \subset B'$. At the same time, the total denotation of vagueness, which includes both orders, increases: $G/B \subset G//B$, where $G//B$ is the sum $(G'/(G/B) \cup D/Z \cup (D/Z)/Z')$. Thus, it can be said that the increasingly accurate accounting for the vagueness of ethical predicates expands the set which represents vagueness at the expense of decreasing the sets G and B , which appear at the beginning in the unrealistic approach: $G \supset G' \supset G'' \supset G''' \dots$; $B \supset B' \supset B'' \supset B''' \dots$, and, at the same time, $\emptyset \subset G/B \subset G//B \subset G///B$, etc. Accounting for vagueness at all levels will eventually lead – starting with the original sets G and B and the empty denotation of vagueness (a false assumption) – to the total set $G///.../B$, which represents the denotation of predicates 'morally good'/'morally bad'. In short, the entire denotations of ethical predicates would be the denotations of their vagueness, and since evaluations predicated about cases from the denotation of vagueness have no logical value, no ethical evaluations are true.

Re (ii). The answer to the question "How are the denotations of ethical predicates determined?" is justified in cognitivism with reference to the epistemology of values, and the justifications include the concept of the direct, intuitive cognition of values; cognition of values through more broadly

understood experience; truthful predicating of facts (also understood more broadly), etc. The concept of the direct, intuitive cognition of values was adopted by K. Ajdukiewicz, T. Czeżowski, M. Przełęcki, J. Kalinowski, H. Elzenberg, S. Kamiński, T. Styczeń, A. Szostek, among others.

Scholars who refer to Ajdukiewicz's views recognise that apart from empirical descriptive properties (qualities) given in perceptions, i.e. in sensory experience, there exist non-empirical evaluating properties (values) which are cognised directly thanks to intuition regarding values. Ethical values, such as good and bad, are cognised thanks to moral intuition. Intuition is embedded in the capacity for affective experiences, which is not only emotional but also cognitive, and which uncovers individual and concrete empirical moral truths. Therefore, ethical judgments state certain valuing facts, e.g., that a particular act is given the value of moral goodness (see Przełęcki, 2004, pp. 23–25). In another approach, the cognition of values is possible thanks to an evaluating attitude (moralistic or aesthetic), which results in an evaluating proposition about a given object expressed in the form of an evaluative proposition that evokes a feeling (see Czeżowski, 1989, pp. 97–100, 117–119). There are also cognitivist conceptions of obligation experienced in the moral domain as a fact of normative reality (Styczeń, 2012). Common to cognitivist conception is the claim that ethical values are not attributed to given acts, but vested to them objectively – like sensory qualities to physical objects – and are cognised directly in an axiological experience.

In the semantic cognitivist conception based on definition (*), the answer to the question “How are the denotations of ethical predicates determined?” is as follows:

(***) [...] in the case of ethical predicates, the property [which adequately defines their denotation – A.J.] is the ethical value understood as that ‘affective quality’ given to us directly in the emotional experience evoked by contact – under certain conditions – with the elements of the denotation of a given predicate (i.e., with the objects about which the predicate is truly predicated) (Przełęcki, 2004, p. 30).

According to (***), ‘affective qualities’, e.g., of being good and being bad, determine the denotation *G* of the predicate morally good and the denotation *B* of the predicate morally bad. At the same time, ‘affective qualities’ belong to acts objectively, i.e., independently

of the feelings felt by the evaluating subject, just as the denotation of the predicate 'red' is directly determined by the objective quality of redness recognised in sensory experience (Przełęcki, 2004, pp. 23, 28, 30, 31; Ajdukiewicz, 1985, pp. 346–347); thus, in objectivist conceptions of value, the terms 'qualities cognisable affectively' or simply 'values' are preferable to 'affective qualities'.

However, the thesis of the objective existence of values – vital for cognitivist conceptions of ethical statements – is not justified. Intuitive affective experiences can be treated as the basis for formulating evaluations (value statements), i.e., as the basis for a subject to consider, e.g., a particular act as morally good, but it does not follow from this description that values belong to acts independently of the evaluating subject. The results of such experiences cannot be an objective source of ethical cognition.

Moreover, the above answer to the question "How are the denotations of ethical predicates determined?", is logically flawed. Simplifying (**), we obtain:

- (i) the denotations of ethical predicates are determined by values given directly in the experience evoked by the elements of the denotation of the predicate in question.

The circularity of this statement is clearly evident. The clarification added in (***) that the elements of the denotation of an ethical predicate are the objects about which the predicate in question is correctly predicated would remove this circularity only if such objects were determined independently of the concept of denotation. However, according to (*), these are the elements of the set which is denoted by the given predicate. For the predicate 'morally good', we thus obtain the following descriptions:

- (i') the denotation of the predicate 'morally good act' is determined by the value attributed to the elements of the denotation of the predicate 'morally good act';
- (ii') the denotation of the predicate "morally good act" is determined by the value attributed to acts that can be truly predicated as morally good, and this is so if and only if the act is an element of the denotation of the predicate "morally good act".

A vicious circle is evident in both descriptions: direct in the first, and indirect in the second.

Since there is no satisfactory answer to the question How are the denotations of ethical predicates determined?, it is also impossible to legitimately talk about the truth value of ethical evaluations understood according to (*) (Przełęcki, 2004, p. 21).

2) The semantic presentation of the cognitivist conception of ethics makes it easier to also notice other problems with the metaethical thesis that ethical statements have classically understood logical value. Ethical statements are expressed – certainly they are all expressible – in declarative sentences. They thus fulfil the necessary syntactic condition for an utterance to be considered a sentence in the logical sense. It is worth noting that when this syntactic requirement is also recognised as a sufficient condition, then evaluations and norms expressed in declarative sentences are recognised as sentences in the logical sense, as is evident, e.g., in the views of K. Ajdukiewicz and T. Czeżowski, whose ethical cognitivism is supported by this understanding of logical sentences. However, when the totality of declarative sentences is not equated with a logical sentence, then it is legitimate to ask whether declarative ethical sentences satisfy the conditions of truthful predicating. In order to answer the question posed above, it is sufficient to examine these conditions for singular ethical evaluations because the results for singular evaluations also apply to general evaluations and the norms based on them. The sentence *this act is morally good/bad* is represented by the schema:

$$(***) x \in G,$$

in which x is the variable for which singular names of acts are substituted, and G is the denotation of the predicate *morally good*. The conditions of truthful predicating ultimately concern the relation symbolised by ' \in ', called 'property assignment' (E. Husserl, R. Ingarden) or 'characterising' (L. Gumański). Satisfying them, however, depends on the requirements for the arguments of this relation. Namely, the necessary truthful criterion of such statements is the objective existence of 'ethical reality', i.e., the universe U of acts which contains the designata of the names substituted for x , and in which the denotation G of the predicate *morally good* is set. An additional condition is that the universe U of moral acts is not exhausted by the totality of morally good acts, so that the totality of U includes non-empty sets of morally bad acts and morally indifferent ('indeterminate', as T. Ślipko calls them) acts. This is because

only then are singular evaluations uttered non-trivially: e.g., the evaluative sentence that an act a is morally good is true if it is the case that $a \in G$, whereas when $a \in U$ but $a \notin D$, this sentence is false.

The first doubt about the content of the universe U is related to a fact that has been neglected in the analyses so far, namely that ethical evaluations concern more than just acts. In addition to acts – even if they are understood to include omissions, intentions, and decisions whether to act or not – the objects of ethical judgements are also agents of acts as well as their fixed dispositions to act, such as attitudes and patterns of behaviour. A realistically reconstructed ethical reality would have to be a multiranged universe that encompasses sets of all these objects of judgements. Let us assume, however, that U includes only acts; this simplification, which is usually adopted in ethical analyses, is justified by the fact that ethical judgements are primarily concerned with acts and are only indirectly concerned with agents and attitudes. In this case, the elements of such understood universe U of ethical discourse belong to the ontological category of events.

However, legitimate doubts concern the ontic status of the totality of moral acts, i.e., either good or bad (here the category of morally neutral acts with respect to the moral good and the moral bad can be omitted too). The necessary truth condition of ‘characterising’, i.e., of truthful predicating of evaluative sentences in the form of (***) , is ontic homogeneity: the particular act a and the elements of the denotation of G must belong to the same ontological category. An object X is an element of the set if in this set there is an object identical to x , i.e., indistinguishable in terms of any property. More precisely, the ontological characteristics and the criteria for the existence of an object denoted by the individual name a and the elements of the universe U must be the same.

So understood the condition of the ontic homogeneity of the designatum of the subject and the designata of the predicate of evaluative sentences of the form (***) in this understanding excludes both the claim of ideal existence and of the real existence of the universe U . Idealism is incompatible with the characterisation of concrete acts understood as (spatio-temporal) human actions. Nor can the realist view be justified. After all, it is not possible that the universe U existed prior to the concrete activity that funds the ethical act a , i.e., the object of evaluation ‘ $a \in G$ ’; nor is it possible that the universe U is posterior to the concrete

act *a*, nor that the universe *U* is created with each moral action, because then it would have to be accepted that, e.g., truthful predicating of the truth value of ethical statements is relativised to the changing *U*, and ultimately that a given act is morally good/bad because – as such – it has enlarged the universe *U*. Thus, truthful predicating is not satisfied for evaluative sentences of the form (****).

The question of the existence of an object of singular evaluations is also legitimate, especially in the context of the above conclusion. Reducing ethically significant acts to the category of events is not in line with what is widely recognised in ethics as the object of evaluation:

[...] for the ethical evaluation of a given act, the mere noticing of what has happened is not sufficient [...] as a certain interpretation of what could have been noticed is necessary. This interpretation assumes knowledge of many facts unavailable to direct observation (Przełęcki, 2004, p. 49).

[...] alongside the quality of the act, there are also motives and intentions of the subject for which a given action was undertaken [...], the multiplicity of the effects sometimes realised by a given action, and a wide denotation of other factors, which only taken as a whole make it possible to formulate a statement about the moral qualification of a human act (Ślipko, 2004, p. 166).

The complexity of an act is described in detail in Christian ethics, which uses the Aristotelian schema of who, what, where, when, by what means, in what way, and for what purpose. This schema systematises the disclosure of the components of an act and decides whether it is morally good, bad, or indeterminate (Ślipko, 2004, pp. 178–181).

That the same action perceived by different people can give rise to different acts in an ethical sense is indirectly evidenced by (i) divergences of evaluations concerning specific actions; (ii) determinants formulated in ethics concerning the denotation of application of norms (e.g., the principle to tell the truth as long as telling the truth does not cause suffering); (iii) metaethical disputes over the importance of particular components of an act (e.g., disputes between intentionalism and consequentialism); as well as (iv) metaethical distinctions between ethical statements according to their agreed object: the type of action taken in isolation from its specific determinants, the accuracy of a concrete action, the intention of the agent, or the effort the action requires, etc. (Tatarkiewicz, 1930).

The schema $\langle I; R; C \rangle$ includes the main components of an ethical act: intention, result, and circumstances of the action. However, even when represented by such a simple schema, an ethical act is an ontically heterogeneous construct composed of intention, outcomes (both observed and anticipated), and circumstances, which include both objective conditions of action (not just those recognised by the evaluator) and factors dependent on the subject, such as the chosen way of acting. Even if it is accepted that all the components of the object of an ethical evaluation are real (temporal or spatial), they still contain elements with different ontological characteristics: past, present, and future; physical and mental; perceptual and dispositional. Doubts about predicating the truth value of ethical evaluations are greater than in the case of contingent statements about the future, i.e., about future events which are not determined at the moment of uttering the statement; they are stronger than for statements about fictional objects, and they are closer to statements about contradictory objects because the object of evaluation represented by the $\langle I; R; C \rangle$ schema has contradictory properties that are most clearly visible in the temporal characteristics of its components (e.g., prior motives, how it is done, future consequences). Since there are also legitimate doubts in the case of descriptive statements about the future having classically understood logical value, it is all the more necessary to consider singular evaluations as lacking such logical value. The unacceptable alternative is to regard all evaluative statements as false because they presuppose the existence of the object of the evaluation expressed in them. Thus, the view that ethical statements have the truth value is only possible if it is assumed that they refer to an objective and normative reality, that obligation is in an actually existing being, and that ethics can be based on experiencing obligation.

[...] the moment of obligation enters into the very structure of being in its dynamic aspect [...] that which man ought [...] is 'decided', determined, and set by the very objective, ontic conception of man completely independently of his will [...] purely ontic obligation becomes, in the case of man, ethical obligation (Styczeń 1966, pp. 75–76).

However, this conception makes ethics dependent on very strong axiological, anthropological, metaphysical, and ultimately theological assumptions (Ślipko, 2004, pp. 49, 249–250).

3) Confusing the truth value and derivability is another source of cognitivism. Statements of the form (****) are considered true because they are justifiable in a given ethical system. Indeed, the statement “Therefore: ‘ $a \in G$ ’” has logical value insofar as it expresses the conviction that ‘ $a \in G$ ’ is derivable from norms, general evaluations, the criteria of values, and statements that are recognised in a given system and describe a given act (which state, e.g., that it has the characteristics of a merciful or just act or that it is a case of theft, fraud, etc.). The statement ‘ $a \in G$ ’, which shortens the above statement, thus ceases to be evaluative and becomes descriptive. For example, the statement ‘ $a \in B$ ’ is derivable in a system in which the generalisation ‘every deprivation of life is morally bad’ is recognised and the descriptive statement “the act a is a deprivation of life” is valid. Then, the statement $a \in B$ really predicates that ‘ $a \in B$ ’ is derivable within this system, which is true because this inference corresponds to the rule: $(P \subset B \wedge a \in P) \Rightarrow a \in B$. However, within a system in which acts such as killing E are morally good ($E \subset G$) and are permitted, there are criteria for distinguishing such acts from the totality of acts of killing (e.g., under the condition: “insofar as the act ceases to support life which results only in the prolongation of suffering”), and it is possible to show that the same act a , insofar as $a \in E$, is an element of G , and this statement is also true because the statement ‘ $a \in G$ ’ is indeed derivable in this system (according to the same scheme). Outside this system, the statements ‘ $a \in G$ ’ and ‘ $a \in B$ ’ are evaluative but are not statements in the logical sense.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

The above analyses justify the conclusion that it is impossible to presuppose truth in the classically understood metaethical conceptions of ethical statements, and that the arguments for the thesis of the truth/falsity of ethical statements move in the direction of non-classical conceptions: self-evident truth theory (intuitionism), coherent (the truth value of ethical statements within a system), pragmatic (the truth value confirmed in the moral development of societies), and theory of truth (the truth value established in the context of intersubjective agreements).

Second, the analogy adopted in cognitivism between ethical cognition and cognition in the empirical sciences is not accurate. Just as the vagueness of observational terms such as 'red' does not deprive empirical claims of their truth value, so the vagueness of ethical predicates such as 'morally good' does not exclude the cognitivist conception of ethical discourse, and errors in valuation which result in divergent ethical judgements are analogous to errors in perception. However, the difference between these discourses is fundamental. Descriptive predicates can be made more precise by agreeing on natural and sharp criteria (e.g., of redness) for objects that exist in objective reality, which determines the logical value of observational statements. In the area of morality, the vagueness and divergences of propositions are irremovable; moreover, postulates formulated within cognitivism regarding an attitude that reduces the risk of error are incompatible with descriptions of the intuitive cognition of ethical values. Cognitivist schemes for formulating and verifying ethical concepts based on 'empirical' facts are also not feasible. One can speak of the empiricism of ethics in a similar way as one speaks, for example, of social experience that tests systems of norms rather than in the sense used in the empirical sciences, i.e., deciding of the logical value of observational statements.

Ethical non-cognitivism – which denies the logical value of statements regarding morality and relativises their justification to defined philosophical systems – does not, however, inevitably lead to subjectivism, much less to 'moral nihilism', understood as the view that there are no rational bases for favouring one ethical statement over another. It does not lead to subjectivism if the thesis that ethical statements do not have logical value is accompanied by the belief that they are intersubjectively justifiable and that ethical disputes can be rationally conducted and conditionally resolved, which can be done with the support of logical consequence theories of evaluative and deontic sentences (Gumański, 2006, pp. 389–446), including conditional obligations (Świrydowicz, 1995). Undoubtedly, ethical statements should be justified. If they are not, in disputes over evaluative propositions and norms in which their assumptions are not revealed, rational arguments are replaced by persuasive ones based on, e.g., arousing emotions, appealing to authorities, promoting judgements, or imposing norms.

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Andrzej Szostek

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5555-2297>

<https://doi.org/10.35765/slowniki.314en>

Religion and ethics: opposition *versus* cooperation

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: The many various facts and phenomena associated with religion make any of its definitions selective. Here religion is defined as a set of references for the invisible, the sacred, and the transcendent in man, while ethics as the theory of morality understood as a set of beliefs about moral good and moral evil and the behaviours associated with these beliefs.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: An essential and inalienable element of religion is a moral code. The members of a given religious community acknowledge God to be its author and derive the content of their beliefs from revelation. Ethics is based on natural sources of knowledge: reason and experience. From antiquity onwards, propositions were developed in ethics which were devoid of religious justifications. Importantly, the Second Vatican Council officially recognised everyone's right to religious freedom.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: The relationship between religion and ethics must be considered on two planes: the practical and the theoretical. The practical plane concerns behaviours related to a given religion and the degree to which it is accepted by a pluralistic society. Completely liberating ethical thought from a broadly understood philosophical worldview hardly seems feasible. Both religious and atheistic assumptions affect moral evaluations of any given behaviour. Confronting these assumptions may prove beneficial for both sides of the dialogue.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Moral sensitivity, which draws motivation not from

divine authority but from a natural moral intuition shared by all people, also plays an important role in religion, especially Christian religion. Forgetting about this intuition easily leads to obstinacy and fanaticism, which can result in acts of hatred committed in the name of love. It seems unfortunate that school curriculums force school children to choose between religious education or ethics.

Keywords: ethics, morality, religion, Christianity

Definition of the term

Religion. In the general opinion of religious studies experts, it is impossible to propose any one definition of religion that would encompass the entire multiplicity and complexity of religious phenomena. The typology of religions usually distinguishes between ethnic religions, which are limited to one ethnic group (tribe or nation), and universalising religions, whose salvific message is addressed to all people; “ethnological and religious studies research indicates a slow process of ethnic religions dying out and being replaced by universalising religions” (Sakowicz, 2012, col. 1401). Universalising religions include Christianity, Buddhism and Islam, although

some universalist tendencies can be found in Judaism, Zoroastrianism, neo-Hindu missionary movements, Confucianism, and Chinese universalism, which covers the complete assimilation of Confucianism, Taoism, and Chinese Buddhism (Sakowicz, 2012, col. 1401).

Cicero derived the word *religio* from *relegere*, understood as ‘worshipping gods’, while Lactantius took from *religare* the understanding of ‘binding again with God’. Thus, in both meanings, religion implies a difference between the divine and human spheres (Bronk, 2003, p. 106). U. Diers emphasised that no general concept is shared by all religions (as quoted in Bronk, 2003, p. 103), hence “there are almost as many definitions of religion as there are directions of religious studies and theories of religion” (Bronk, 2003, p. 103). Each definition of religion has a regulative-projective character; however, none can cover all its varieties, i.e., “‘rational’ and ‘irrational’ religions, monotheism and polytheism, paganism, magic, superstition, heresy, sects, syncretism, and pseudo-religions” (Bronk, 2003, p. 123). Various methods are used to explain the essence of religion, including its linguistic, historical, psychological, sociological, phenomenological, philosophical-religious, and theological-religious aspects (Rusecki, 2012, cols. 1394–1399). Although it is not possible to define religion by pointing to an essential core shared by all religious phenomena, it is possible to find certain elements common to many religions (Bronk, 2003, p. 119). According to W.P. Alston, in religion there is 1) a belief in supernatural beings (gods); 2) a distinction between the sacred and profane spheres; 3) ritual acts directed at

sacred objects; 4) a moral code sanctioned by gods; 5) characteristic religious feelings evoked by the presence of sacred objects; 6) prayer and other forms of communication with gods; 7) a religious world view or a general image of the world as a whole and of the individual's place in it; 8) an organisation of human life based on a world view; 9) a social group bound together by the factors mentioned above (as quoted in Bronk, 2003, pp. 119–120).

Religious studies usually adopt an anthropological starting point. In this view, religion is “a set of human references to the invisible, the sacred, and the transcendent” (Rusecki, 2012, col. 1394). If it is generally accepted that religion is the relationship between man and a religious object, it should be added that this relationship “is given in the religious experience but has external manifestations in three main directions: theoretical (doctrine), practical (worship and morality), and social (religious communities and the organisation of religious life)” (Zdybicka, 1977, p. 69).

Religious studies originated in Western culture, which was shaped in the context of Judeo-Christian religion. This perspective is still dominant today – so much so that attempts to relate the meaning of religion “to non-European beliefs and cults necessarily leads to difficulties and misunderstandings” (Bronk, 2003, p. 110). The considerations presented in this article are based on the understanding of religion developed in Western culture – regarded as classical in the literature on the subject – which makes it possible to define religion as

an ontic person-person relationship (the ‘I’ – ‘you’ relationship) between the human person and the personal Absolute, in which the human person participates as the ultimate source of his existence and the ultimate goal of life. This relationship is [...] ‘moral’, dynamic, composed of bi-directional activities, and perfects the human subject (Zdybicka, 1977, p. 307).

The aforementioned elements shared by many religions and the definition proposed by Z.J. Zdybicka indicate that a moral code is an essential element of religion. From the perspective of the relationship between religion and ethics, it is particularly important to recognise the personal Absolute (God) as the creator of the world and man and as the author of this moral code, which obliges man to worship him (cult) and to live in such a way – individually and socially (especially within an organised

religious community) – that will lead man to God as his ultimate goal. In religious communities, this code is subjected to systematic reflection, which can be called moral theology. Within this framework, attempts are made to derive specific moral precepts for the adherents of a given religion from revelation or from other fundamental premises. Systems of moral theology are different, just as religions are different, but what they have in common is recognition of the special authority of God (gods) in determining the principles for the moral life of man.

E t h i c s. The term ‘ethics’ comes from the Greek word *ethos*, which originally meant custom or habit. Today, ‘ethos’ is understood as “the distinguishing character, sentiment, moral nature, or guiding beliefs of a person, group, or institution” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary), and we tend to associate this meaning with morality, understood most generally as a set of beliefs about moral good and moral evil in a given community and the behaviours associated with these beliefs. Ethics is understood as reflection on morality; it can therefore be regarded as a theory of morality.

Ethics understood in this way is usually divided into descriptive ethics (sometimes called ethology, or simply the science of morality) and normative ethics. Descriptive ethics does not formulate rules of behaviour but describes morality in the sense described above; experiences are linked with convictions about good and evil and the activities that result from them. In this sense, descriptive ethics must include the sociology of morality, the psychology of morality, and reflection on the language of ethics, which entails addressing metaethical questions. The sociology of morality focuses on patterns of behaviour adopted in a group and attempts to compare the morality of different social groups, its evolution, and its links with other aspects of social life, e.g., economic, political, and world-view (including religious) issues, with particular reference to the relationship between morality and the binding law in a community (state). The psychology of morality covers issues such as the motivation behind human decisions, the experiences related to the moral evaluation of one’s actions (for example, experiencing guilt or moral satisfaction), links between these experiences and other experiences and life events, the dynamics of the development of personal morality, etc. Metaethics addresses questions concerning the status of ethics itself, the specifics of its language and the argumentation used in it, and the relationship

between ethics and other branches of philosophy and disciplines of science (Woleński, 2008, p. 20). Descriptive ethics refers to the beliefs people have about moral values and in this sense constitutes, alongside aesthetics, a branch of axiology as a general theory of values. However, just as it is necessary to distinguish between descriptive aesthetics (which examines what people consider to be beautiful) and normative aesthetics (which determines what deserves to be called beautiful), it is also necessary to distinguish between descriptive ethics and normative ethics, which formulates evaluations of human conduct and establishes norms of morally appropriate action (Woleński, 2008, p. 20). The normative perspective cannot be removed from human life because every man is required to make a series of decisions that shape his life, and every rational subject tries to find arguments that justify his judgements and accepted norms of action.

Normative ethics is usually divided into general and specific ethics. General ethics originated in antiquity in the systems of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics and was elaborated on in the Middle Ages by St. Thomas Aquinas and by his followers, including those of the present day. It includes issues such as happiness, the meaning and ultimate purpose of human life, the criteria for evaluating human acts, the essence and role of moral law, the relationship between that law and conscience, and the role of virtues in shaping the moral character of man (Ślipko, 2002). Specific ethics addresses numerous issues concerning specific moral questions. Traditionally (especially in the thought of St. Thomas and the Thomists), an arethaic key was adopted to systematise these issues, referring in particular to the four cardinal virtues (prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice). Nowadays, the term 'applied ethics' tends to be used, and there is a move away from the arethaic key in favour of focusing on issues of particular relevance to certain aspects of social life, such as medical ethics, environmental issues, business ethics, the ethics of political life, media ethics, etc. Although issues concerning the life of the individual are still addressed (e.g., abortion, euthanasia, and sexual ethics), the attention of ethicists is more clearly directed towards social perspectives. Professional ethics has also developed within this framework and gives rise to numerous codes of ethics or codes of good practices to establish the deontology of various professions, e.g., doctors and the entire medical services,

psychologists, academics, entrepreneurs, businessmen, journalists, teachers, soldiers, politicians, and even athletes. These codes are often accompanied by legal clauses stipulating criminal sanctions for those who do not respect them.

Evaluations and norms formulated within normative ethics, both general and specific, refer to the fundamental values that form the basis for their justification. These values focus primarily on man – his good and his development at the individual and social levels – so ethics is a fundamentally humanistic discipline. Obviously, different philosophical systems adopt different concepts of man, including differences between their ethical systems, but the basic thesis that the moral good is the good of man as man is generally accepted. In this sense, the norm that prescribes acting for the good of man plays the role of the basic criterion of ethical valuation and is sometimes called the moral norm (Szostek, 2008, pp. 42–44).

Unlike moral theology, which refers to revealed truths (variously formulated by different religions), ethical reflection is based on natural sources of knowledge – reason and experience – and in this sense it is philosophical. The fundamental focus of its interest is acts proper to man as a rational and free being; however, ethicists analyse these acts primarily from the perspective of their moral qualification by referring to the moral norm. Thus, although different authors define normative ethics in different ways, all these definitions, as a rule, admit that ethics is a philosophical (in a general sense) theory of morality understood as an obligation to act in a certain way (Styczeń, 1993, pp. 265–266).

Historical analysis of the term

Religion is much older than ethics. Undoubtedly, there was room in all religions for the regulation of human behaviour, often motivated by man's relationship with deities, and many Far Eastern religions (Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Brahmanism) contain norms for the moral life of the faithful. However, the concept of ethics as an explicit theory of morality was formulated in Greece in the 5th century BC, when, “[w]ith the Sophists, in short, begins what, with an effective expression, is known as *the humanist period of ancient philosophy*” (Reale, 1987,

p. 151). The Sophists, followed by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and others, did not explicitly question the existence of deities but instead formulated their ethical views independently of religious premises. The entirety of ancient Greek philosophy before the Hellenistic period was interested in happiness and the ways of achieving it (Reale, 1987), but even if these thinkers saw happiness in the contemplation of a deity (as, for example, Aristotle did), they sought their ways of achieving it in human nature rather than in divine revelation or obedience to divine commands. This tradition was continued by medieval thinkers. Although the main work of St. Thomas Aquinas is entitled *Summa Theologica* and the starting point of the moral doctrine contained therein is faith in God and Christian Revelation, and although it contains many biblical inspirations and norms related to the worship of God (norms of religious life), the whole doctrine refers above all to man as a rational and free being, and in this sense it is philosophical in nature.

For many centuries, the privileged position of religion in social life was maintained for political reasons. The unifying nature of state religion was regarded to be an essential element of state or national identity. It is worth remembering that one of the charges against Socrates that formed the basis on which his accusers demanded he be sentenced to death was that he “did not recognise the gods of the city”, and that the Peace of Augsburg, which ended the religious conflict between the Catholics and Lutherans in Germany in 1555, was concluded by applying the principle *cuius region, eius religio*. Even now, monarchs in some countries (e.g., Great Britain) are required to adhere to the official religion of the state. The privileged position of religion has all too often led to religious wars and intolerance towards followers of other religions (cf. the Crusades in the 11th–13th centuries and religious wars in Europe in the 15th–17th centuries). In religions that acknowledge God as the creator of the world and saviour of mankind (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), this tendency to give priority to the religious perspective over the natural (ethical) one is still a dangerous temptation that remains in many societies to this day.

Modern ethics gradually moved away from religious foundations, focusing instead on the good of man and society. Descartes acknowledged the existence of God but did not derive ethical conclusions from it. B. Pascal questioned reason’s ability to cognise God and, instead of the order of reason, proposed the order of the heart, which allows

one to see both the greatness and the misery of man. T. Hobbes laid the foundations of naturalistic ethics based on materialist metaphysics, and B. Spinoza alluded to religion in his pantheism but in his ethical views emphasised the importance of rational action as a manifestation of determined human nature. Philosophers associated with British empiricism, with D. Hume at the forefront, broke completely with religious premises. Utilitarianism, pioneered by J. Bentham, J.S. Mill, and H. Spencer, followed this path, developed in various different ways, and is still fashionable today. Many Enlightenment thinkers, following Voltaire, undertook a strong critique of religion as the opposite of reason (although not necessarily from atheistic positions – Voltaire was a deist) and focused instead on justice and the elimination of suffering. I. Kant admitted the hypothesis of God's existence, but he based his ethics on the idea of a good will, expressed in the duty to respect the law established by human reason (Tatarkiewicz, 1959, pp. 59–245). Overtly atheistic views were expressed in the 19th century by L. Feuerbach, K. Marx, and F. Engels, all of whom declared that religion was “the opium for the masses” and advocated its eradication for this reason. The 20th century witnessed the development of phenomenology, within which some thinkers explicitly referred to the religious perspective (M. Scheler and D. von Hildebrand) and the development of ethical personalism (K. Wojtyła). However, the atheistic perspective was gaining strength in both existentialism (J.-P. Sartre) and neo-positivist scientism (B. Russell). Today, religious issues are addressed within analytic philosophy (A.N. Whitehead and A. Plantinga), although they do not exert a significant impact on ethical views. The branch of philosophy in which representatives refer in their ethical considerations to the thought of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas (J. Maritain, M.A. Krąpiec, T. Styczeń, T. Ślipko) also continues to develop (Bourke, 1970).

Moreover, changes took place within religious communities, especially within the Catholic Church. In principle, the Church was never opposed to science; after all, at the turn of the 12th century the first universities in Bologna, Paris, and Oxford developed from cathedral schools. Although the most important science of the time was theology, philosophy was also taught at these universities. Later, however, the paths of Christian religion and philosophy began to diverge, with the Church maintaining that philosophy was subordinate to the teaching of the Church. The

Syllabus of Errors, published in 1864, which is a collection of propositions that Pope Pius IX had previously criticised or condemned, contains, among other things, the following ‘errors’: “Philosophy is to be treated without taking any account of supernatural revelation”; “Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which, guided by the light of reason, he shall consider true”; “The science of philosophical things and morals and also civil laws may and ought to keep aloof from divine and ecclesiastical authority” (Pius IX, 1864). However, the intellectual atmosphere in the Church gradually changed, and the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) played a key role in this process. One of its documents, the Declaration on Religious Freedom (issued in 1963) states:

This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs [...]. The council further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself (Paul VI, 1965a, point 2).

In a similar vein, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World says that

The Church, by reason of her role and competence, is not identified in any way with the political community nor bound to any political system. She is at once a sign and a safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person (Paul VI, 1965b, point 76).

The issue of the relationship between reason and faith was taken up by St. John Paul II in his encyclical *Fides et ratio*, which begins with the following words: “Faith and reason [*fides et ratio*] are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth”, and in which a separate chapter is devoted to the interplay between theology and philosophy, in which the Pope emphasises, among other things, that

[t]he content of Revelation can never debase the discoveries and legitimate autonomy of reason. Yet, conscious that it cannot set itself up as an absolute and exclusive value, reason on its part must never lose its capacity to question and to be questioned (John Paul II, 1998, point 79).

This dialogue with ideas developed outside of the Church has been undertaken by various popes of recent years, particularly Benedict XVI. In the area of ethical reflection, it is still necessary to distinguish between the philosophical perspective, which refers exclusively to the natural sources of knowledge, and the theological perspective, which is based on Revelation. Moreover, the Church continues to assert the right to formulate her position on moral questions:

the Church should have true freedom to preach the faith, to teach her social doctrine, to exercise her role freely among men, and also to pass moral judgment in those matters which regard public order (Paul VI, 1965b, point 76).

At the same time, however, the Church is more willing than before to address moral issues of importance in the contemporary world in cooperation with thinkers who hold different ethical views. A recent example of such dialogue was Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical on care for our common home.

Discussion of the term

The relationship between religion and ethics should be considered on two planes: the practical and the theoretical. The practical plane is the relationship between people who belong to a religious community and those who do not adhere to any religion or who adhere to another religion; in this sense, this relationship concerns morality as a set of beliefs about moral good and moral evil and the behaviours associated with these beliefs. The theoretical plane is the relationship between ethics as a theory of morality based on natural sources of cognition (reason and experience) and moral theology, which is based on supernatural sources (divine revelation). Since ethics originated in European philosophy and is today still being developed within mainly Euro-Atlantic culture shaped by Christian culture, the main scope of the relationship between ethics and religion concerns the relationship between ethics and Christian theology. Both the history of ethical thought and the development of Christian doctrine (especially the highly ordered Catholic doctrine) point to a central problem that can most simply be expressed in the following question:

Does “secular” morality and ethics stand in opposition to religiously inspired morality and religious doctrine, or can both perspectives be reconciled to the benefit of both?

In practical terms, religiously inspired festivals, customs, and symbols clash with beliefs and lifestyles that are alien or even hostile to religious traditions. In a democratic society (as is the case in Euro-Atlantic countries), any conflicts and compromises are regulated by the laws of the state, but at the heart of these laws lie the moral convictions of the citizens of this state, including the place of religion in social life. The parliaments of all these countries respect the main Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter, making them public holidays and allowing Christians to realise appropriate religious celebrations that go beyond church premises (such as processions and the Stations of the Cross). In many countries, other holidays are also elevated to the status of public holidays (Epiphany, Corpus Christi, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, etc.). This is already seen by some people as a sign of the excessive domination of the Catholic Church over other denominations, as religious festivals of other religions (e.g., Judaism or Islam) are not public holidays, although their adherents are also citizens of these countries. The legal regulations adopted in particular states apparently take into account the ‘religious demographic’ of their societies but they are also sometimes adjusted, precisely because this demographic is subject to change, as are the attitudes of the general public to religious festivals and observances.

Other elements of the presence of religion in social life are sometimes more controversial, including the recurring dispute about the presence of religious symbols in state institutions, e.g., crosses in hospitals; religious feelings, which are not easy to define, yet offending them is subject to criminal sanction; and religious practices that accompany certain public initiatives (e.g., the blessing of sports stadiums or other public places). The difficult task of the state authorities is to find a reasonable compromise between the separation of church and state – which is universally accepted and usually enshrined in the constitution – and respect for the religious sensitivity of its citizens. This compromise is not easy to achieve because of, for example, the notoriously political entanglement of these controversies. In the context of the accusations levelled against

the Catholic Church regarding the privileges it enjoys, it is worth recalling the words of the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*:

The Church herself makes use of temporal things insofar as her own mission requires it. She, for her part, does not place her trust in the privileges offered by civil authority. She will even give up the exercise of certain rights which have been legitimately acquired, if it becomes clear that their use will cast doubt on the sincerity of her witness or that new ways of life demand new methods (Paul VI, 1965b, point 76).

In the theoretical dimension, the confrontation between religious ethics and independent ethics is particularly noteworthy. The creation of the latter was intensively promoted by T. Kotarbiński, although this form of ethics has a longer history. Kotarbiński understood independent ethics to be a purely secular ethics, free from either religious assumptions or a philosophical worldview. He claimed that ethics covers a broad area of felicitology (the theory of a happy life) and praxeology (the theory of effective action) and is an ethics that is focused on a good life. His proposal of independent ethics covered ethics in its third, narrower and most appropriate sense: in his opinion, there is no need to appeal to divine authority or to penal sanctions symbolised by hell in order to recognise that valour, good-heartedness, integrity, self-control, and nobility are praiseworthy, while the opposites of these virtues (cowardice, selfishness, unreliability, lack of will, low motives) are shameful. These virtues can be reduced to a common denominator, an ideal that Kotarbiński refers to as a 'trustworthy custodian'. We draw this moral knowledge from our conscience, which is the source of our obvious convictions of an emotional nature about the good and evil (the rightness or wrongness) of human acts (Kotarbiński, 1987, pp. 140–143, 185–189).

However, it is not easy to meet the demand for a radical break with religious argumentations or the philosophical worldview inherent in independent ethics. It is not surprising that Kotarbiński, a declared materialist and atheist, was an adherent of a proposal for legalisation that would allow the termination of one's own life when one considers it is not worth continuing to live (Kotarbiński 1987, pp. 386–389), but, obviously, those who believe in an afterlife view suicide and euthanasia differently. Similarly, like all atheists, Kotarbiński treated prayer – greatly valued by religious people – as a harmful waste of time. These examples

illustrate how difficult it is to separate basic beliefs about the rightness and wrongness of human acts from a broader worldview context, including the religious context. The concept of conscience as a motive for noble action of a purely emotional nature also deserves critical reflection. The philosophical tradition that goes back to Socrates and Aristotle developed the idea of conscience as a practical proposition that can be assigned the value of truth. Nevertheless, the very distinction between ethics *sensu largo* and ethics *sensu stricto*, which is conceived as a strict theory of a good life, deserves recognition, as does the importance of elementary moral convictions which can provide a good starting point for ethical dialogue between religious and non-religious people.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

An appeal to elementary moral intuition is the most appropriate platform for dialogue between religion and ethics. Normative ethics is 'condemned', as it were, to regard this intuition as a source of knowledge about moral good and moral evil, but respecting this intuition is also a vital element of religion, especially Christian religion. After all, Jesus Christ explicitly referred to this basic moral sensibility when answering a question posed by a scholar of the law: "Who is my neighbour?". He did not refer to the Law or the Prophets or to his own authority but told the parable of the merciful Samaritan who proved to be a neighbour in a far more obvious way (Luke 10:25–37). He used a similar argument in the dispute over keeping the Sabbath: "If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?" (Luke 14:5). Finally, the speech about the final judgement (Matthew 25:31–46) first contains a catalogue of good deeds and then of behaviours opposed to them, which Kotarbiński would probably call praiseworthy and shameful respectively. Examples of such moral judgements that refer to an elementary sense of good and evil can be found in the Scriptures in far greater numbers. They prove – at least within the Judeo-Christian tradition – that this elementary, natural moral sensibility is not only present in this religion but is an essential element of any religious attitude. Forgetting this moral sensibility or disregarding it easily

leads to obstinacy, religious fanaticism, and to acts openly opposed to the commandment to love one's neighbour, as the tragic history of religious wars in Europe demonstrates.

Of course, Christians believe that this moral sensitivity derives from God, the creator of the world and the author of moral law; however, according to Catholic doctrine, this law is inscribed in human nature, which is why natural law has an important place in moral theology. This doctrine is not accepted or is profoundly modified by those who do not adhere to the Catholic faith, but dialogue between members and non-members of religious communities on ethical issues such as the meaning of human life, the nature of justice, respect for human rights, support for the weak, ecological sensitivity, etc. is possible and necessary. We live in a pluralistic society, and the different perspectives on the crises that afflict us do not have to be in opposition to one another. It seems doable and necessary to complement each of the different kinds and degrees of moral sensitivity; moreover, this sensitivity should be taught within moral pedagogy. Religion is not in opposition to ethics, nor should ethics be treated as an alternative to religion. For this reason, the idea, accepted in some countries (including Poland), that school children should be made to choose between religious education and ethics – as if implying that religion excludes ethics and ethics excludes religion – is worrying.

Dialogue is a conversation between people who endorse different views. Sometimes it leads to the removal of misunderstandings and to reaching agreement on important moral issues. More frequently, however, it exposes differences that are difficult to overcome but provoke deeper reflection on the issues under discussion. This was the spirit in which the dialogue with Christianity was repeatedly undertaken by L. Kołakowski, who highly valued its contribution to the formation of humanist culture (Kołakowski, 2019). The challenge for contemporary Christendom is to enter into this dialogue and to overcome the unjustifiable opposition between followers of religion and their alleged enemies. It is worth mentioning here that, according to the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, the Church – understood as the People of God on a pilgrimage to the House of the Father – includes not only Catholics and adherents of other religions, but also those who “without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God

and with His grace strive to live a good life” (Paul VI, 1965, point 16). The Christian religion is inscribed in contemporary culture and it would be unwise to overlook its contribution. Thus, it can also be postulated that the proponents of independent ethics should give thorough and sympathetic consideration to the motivation that religious people, including Christians, have in their lives. It should be accepted that many people link their ethical views to their religious faith; this is part of modern civilisation. However, the call for dialogue with other cultures, with followers of other religions, and with those who deny all religion but who value the elementary moral convictions shared by many people should not be ignored. These convictions should be the foundations for the search for the best solutions to the many moral problems we face today.

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Jerzy Kopania

The Aleksander Zelwerowicz Theatre Academy in Warsaw

Branch in Białystok

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5999-1713>

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Morality and the innateness of character

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: In this article, the term ‘character’ is treated as a concept from the realm of philosophy rather than psychology. It is defined as the variable that determines the individual’s attitude to the world of values.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: The philosophical meaning of the concept of ‘character’ is based on separating the notion of character, understood as a set of human traits and internal processes, from the notion of character, understood as man’s specific nature. In the 19th century, Arthur Schopenhauer proposed the concept of character as being personal property defined by the direction of individual will.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: Will is understood as being the individual force that determines the direction of personal action; will determines character. Character is innate, fixed, and individual, as is confirmed by, among others, Janusz Korczak’s observations of the behaviour of young children. Although character cannot be changed, it is possible to sensitise self-consciousness in such a way that, up to a certain point, people will refrain from behaviours that are considered bad and will force themselves to pursue behaviours that are considered good.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Schopenhauer’s position finds particular expression within transhumanist ideology, which is based on the assumption that developments in science and technology will make it possible to modify the human genotype in order to weaken or strengthen the possibility of fulfilling certain desires and wishes. If the consequences of scientific developments were so far-reaching that we were unable to evaluate

them by means of traditional morality, then it would become necessary to improve morality through genetics and genetic engineering methods.

Keywords: character, will, morality, Schopenhauer, transhumanism

Definition of the term

The term 'character' is usually associated with the realm of psychology, but it actually belongs to the philosophical domain. The difference between character in the philosophical sense and character in the psychological sense is based on moral evaluation: character as an aspect of being human is subject to moral evaluation, whereas character as a set of the individual's psychological traits is evaluated not morally but pragmatically.

In psychology, character is understood as the totality of traits that determine an individual's attitude to the external world and to himself (Szewczuk, 1979, pp. 43–44). Character is usually understood as a component of personality or is even equated with personality. Personality is defined as the totality of psychological traits which define an individual's basic behaviour, including all the individual's attitudes and dispositions that determine his behaviour (Szewczuk, 1979, p. 182). Importantly, personality – and character as its component – are not subject to evaluation in a moral sense. Personality is neither good nor bad as such, although it may make the individual's life easier or more difficult. Hence, the psychologist's task is to shape personality appropriately by strengthening its positive (beneficial) and weakening its negative (harmful) traits.

Character, in the philosophical sense, is an individual determinant of will. This means that the direction of will determines the individual's attitude to the world of values and constitutes his character. Character determines what values the individual appreciates and rejects, what he is inclined towards and what arouses his aversion, what he desires and what he avoids, what motivates him, etc.

From a philosophical perspective, i.e., with reference to human nature, four properties of human character can be identified: it is individual, it is only revealed in the individual's actions, it is fixed, and it is innate. The individuality of character does not mean that there are no two characters the same but only that there is a great variety of them. We get to know an individual's character not from what he says but solely from what he does. An individual also discovers his character through his acts; in other words, character is revealed not in what an individual thinks should be done but in what he actually does. The constancy of character means that, while particular character traits can be modified (strengthened

or weakened) within certain limits, they cannot be changed. The individual's character is innate because every man is born with a character of some kind; to use the language of modern biology, we could say that it is written in the genetic material of the individual.

Three basic determinants of human action can be identified: the pursuit of one's own well-being (egoism), the pursuit of another's well-being (compassion), and the pursuit of another's harm (malice). Egoism in the colloquial sense is evaluated rather negatively; however, as an aspect of human character, it denotes a neutrally understood necessary concern for one's own well-being. This manifests with varying intensity in different individuals and it is not possible to set a limit on the intensity above which concern for oneself can be pursued without harming another person, nor is it possible to indicate a minimum of intensity below which one cannot descend without harming oneself. Compassion is broadly understood here as that aspect of character which allows an individual to empathise with the emotional state of another person and is linked with a tendency to engage in eliminating the causes of negative states and strengthening the causes of positive states. Similarly to egoism, compassion is of different intensities in different individuals, and it is not possible to set a lower or upper limit to it. Malice refers to the inclination and readiness to do harm to another person based on the feeling of disinterested joy in another person's pain and suffering; it, too, is of different intensities in different individuals. The arrangement of these three determinants (motives) of the individual's actions and the proportion of their strength creates the character of the individual, i.e., it directs the individual's attitude to the world of values (Wolniewicz, 1988, pp. 101–119).

Historical analysis of the term

The word 'character' is of Greek origin and was used in antiquity by physicians and philosophers. Physicians used this term to designate a set of innate characteristics to an organism. This knowledge was deemed necessary for the proper treatment of certain illnesses. Philosophers treated character as a set of traits that define and explain human nature. The development of the natural sciences and their detachment from philosophy led to a situation in which character, understood as the totality

of man's traits and internal processes, began to radically differ from character equated with human nature. Since the 19th century, the psychological understanding of character has become dominant, although in psychology it is being superseded by the concepts of personality and temperament (Kobierzycki, 2001, pp. 95–148).

The development of the concept of character in the philosophical sense, i.e., as revealed in the individual's actions which are subject to moral evaluation, took place over a long period of time. According to both Plato and Aristotle – who upheld his teacher's views on the matter – character is a property of the soul which gives a person moral faculties. Understood in this way, character (*ēthos*) is developed through habit (*ethos*), i.e., the frequent repetition of certain behaviours and actions. Character is thus defined by fixed dispositions that enable man to make choices. As such, it was the subject of consideration in antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. Philosophers and authors of literary texts developed ethical-psychological descriptions of human actions and behaviours, searched for their ulterior motives, and formulated moral judgements. Theophrastus (c. 370–287 BC), Aristotle's successor in the Lyceum, applied his master's concept of ethics to the description of human psychological types and created an outline of philosophical-psychological characterology. Plutarch (c. 50–125 AD), one of the most famous philosophical moralists of Greek antiquity, wrote a collection of manuscripts known as the *Moralia*, which contain descriptions of types of human character within ethics from a psychological perspective. His writings were read in antiquity by naturalists and philosophers (especially the Stoics), later by the Church Fathers, and were again rediscovered in the Renaissance. The human character was also a theme that appeared in Greek drama in the portrayal of stage heroes, with the most prominent example being the comedian Menander (342–291 BC), who masterfully portrayed the psyche of his heroes. The heroes in Renaissance drama also had expressive characters, as is particularly visible in W. Shakespeare's brilliant plays. However, reflections on human characters, the analysis of human behaviours, and the typology of characters were increasingly driven by the desire to understand human psychological motivations, i.e., to discover aspirations, yearnings, and the desires behind them, and so they began to focus on human personality, temperament, and emotionality. In the 19th century, the notion of

character became a purely psychological concept (Kobierzycki, 2001, pp. 107–141), and although it was still sometimes imbedded in axiological contexts, it was not linked with the concept of value in psychology.

However, in the first half of the 19th century, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) developed a theory of character that determines the realisation of a person's behaviour through the individual direction of will. He most fully expanded on his theory in two treatises: *On the Freedom of the Will* and *On the Basis of Morality*, both of which were published together in 1841 under the title *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics* (Schopenhauer, 2009). Schopenhauer's aim was to identify, describe, and explain what causes man, in certain situations in life, to spontaneously act in a way that he would not have if he had first thought it through, evaluated it morally, and considered its possible consequences. He reached the conclusion that man cannot determine the direction of his will; he can only restrain himself to some extent and to some degree from realising what he desires. However, if his motivation (desire) reaches a sufficiently high level, action is necessarily taken to realise that desire. In other words, when a motive appears, a direction of will, i.e., a determinant of character, necessarily compels a certain action. Thus, it follows that different characters will be compelled towards different actions in response to the same motive.

Schopenhauer confirmed the validity of his theory by his own example: throughout his life, he was aware that he was taking actions that, from a rational point of view, he considered wrong but nevertheless took because they were in accordance with his desire (will). Herein lies the difference between character in the psychological sense and character in the philosophical sense: the former can be (to varying degrees) beneficial or harmful to the individual in the context of his life conditions and in view of the goals he pursues, while the latter is (also to varying degrees) good or bad.

Discussion of the term

Arthur Schopenhauer's conception of character. The philosophy of the author of *The World as Will and Representation*, as is the case with any philosophical system, underwent a process of

development and modification. It can also be interpreted in various ways. However, what undoubtedly inspired Schopenhauer and constituted the main focus of his deliberations was the question of the meaning of man's existence in the world. His deliberations were based on the assumption that this world (and man as its element) is intrinsically evil, and man is the only living entity capable of understanding this fact and of actively trying to limit evil directly in himself and indirectly in the world. In order to do this, he must understand that both the essence of the world and the essence of man lies in a blind, unintelligent will which is manifested in the form of everything that exists. It is the totality of objective reality.

However, Schopenhauer's theory of character is too original to be treated as just another ungrounded metaphysical theory. Indeed, the measure of its validity lies in its practical testability. Schopenhauer's understanding of human character was not merely philosophical speculation but a real description and explanation of human behaviour (Wolniewicz, 1998, p. 102). This philosopher explains the concept of character as follows:

This specially and individually determined constitution of the will, because of which the reaction to the same motives is a different one in each human being, makes up what we call his *character*, and indeed, since it is known not *a priori* but through experience, his *empirical character* (Schopenhauer, 2009, p. 68).

The will of which Schopenhauer wrote is not the cosmic force that permeates the entire universe on which he built his metaphysical system. It is the individual power inherent in the individual that determines the direction of personal action as a reaction to an emerging stimulus (motive). For Schopenhauer, character is a personal property determined by the direction of the individual human will, i.e., a property which determines the realisation of behaviour proper to the individual. One can, of course, interpret this individual will as an emanation of cosmic will, as Schopenhauer himself did (2014). However, this is neither necessary for understanding what character is, nor is it helpful in this understanding. Rather, it should be understood as a simple, empirically confirmed fact that different people will spontaneously react to the same stimulus in different ways; this same stimulus can evoke fear, a surge of courage, be a source of pleasure or disgust, etc. The intensity of the reaction varies between individuals.

Let us emphasise that this is not about a premeditated reaction; it is a spontaneous one which, in the case of a given individual, must be so and cannot be different for it is determined by his innate character. When there is a stimulus (motive), then, given that the individual has a specific character, his action must be one way and not another for there are no undetermined acts; freedom is expressed not in some unconditioned freedom of action but in the conformity of action and will. It is in this context that the proper understanding of the freedom of the human will is revealed: "Freedom of will consists not in the fact that I could have acted differently than how I acted but in the fact that I acted as I was willed" (Wolniewicz, 1998, p. 107). The will is free because it can do what it wants – but the will cannot want something other than it wants. Schopenhauer referred to Seneca's words that 'willing cannot be taught' (Schopenhauer, 1969, p. 294). It is for this reason that man discovers his character (i.e., his own proper, individual orientation of will) only through his actions

The individuality of character should not be understood as the sum difference of individuals as far as their volitional determinants are concerned because there are characters that are very similar, and perhaps even identical. Schopenhauer emphasised the enormous 'moral' diversity of characters, as is manifested in the fact that "the effect of the same motive on different human beings is quite different" (Schopenhauer, 2009, p. 68). This innateness of character is time fixed, i.e., a person never changes the direction of his will. As a result of the impact of various external factors (environmental and educational), these innate and fixed determinants can act with varying strength, but they cannot be completely eliminated, therefore each individual has a certain specific critical level of sensitivity at which a stimulus must trigger action. In other words, this is the level at which the individual can no longer restrain himself from performing an act and in which his will is realised.

Distinguishing between the three fundamental motives for human action – egoism, compassion, and malice – Schopenhauer also discusses the problem of their limits (Schopenhauer, 2009). Desire for one's own well-being has no objective limits to its intensity, which means that, at a certain level, concern for one's own well-being begins to clash with analogous concern for another human being, in which case different people are, to varying degrees, ready to realise their own well-being

while harming other people. Schopenhauer does not set any clear boundaries for concern for the well-being of others either and only states that it sometimes “goes as far as noble-mindedness and magnanimity”. He also claims that in some people malice can “go as far as the most extreme cruelty” (Schopenhauer, 2009, p. 201).

A legitimate question can be posed as to whether the motives of human acts can always be reduced to the three types indicated by Schopenhauer; in this respect, his theory should arguably be expanded and completed (Wolniewicz, 1988, pp. 115–119). However, this would not change his fundamental thesis that an innate and fixed character ultimately defines man in moral terms. Thanks to the possession of self-consciousness, man can, to a large extent, refrain from the realisation of desires and wishes that he knows to be evil, and he can also strengthen his readiness to perform good acts; the extent of these possibilities depends on a plurality of environmental and educational factors. Unfortunately, however, there are situations in which these factors are considerably weakened or even those in which evil is permitted – and then the will of the individual can realise itself increasingly freely. This is why, in the inhuman reality of German concentration camps and Soviet gulags, many a so-called decent person turned out to be capable of extremely evil and despicable acts. Such critical situations play a diagnostic role in revealing the deepest truth about man. The profound meaning of the words of the Lord’s Prayer is also evident in this context: “And lead us not into temptation”; these words are a poignant plea to God that we may never be thrown into situations in which the evil to which we are inclined manifests and actualises itself. We do not know how many people have maintained their moral attitude right to the end of their lives simply because they never faced an extreme situation – Schopenhauer was convinced that this refers to the vast majority of people. Of course, extreme situations reveal not only ignoble character traits but also noble ones. Under the same inhuman conditions, some people have proved capable of heroic deeds and been ready to sacrifice their own lives to save others.

Character should also not be evaluated solely based on acts of great importance to those who perform them and to the object of those acts. Schopenhauer observed that far more often we have an opportunity to judge a person’s character based on acts which we regard to be

minor and insignificant. In such situations, the individual controls himself less, but what is revealed in trifles will later be confirmed in matters of importance (Schopenhauer, 2014, p. 445). He emphasised the fact that an individual's misbehaviour in minor matters offers us an opportunity to judge his character. However, this can also be viewed differently: it could be viewed as an opportunity given to the individual to discover his character by reflecting on those of his actions and behaviours that he usually downplays.

Schopenhauer's conception of character attempts to explain what underlies those actions of man through which we judge him in moral terms. Thus, when using the word 'character', Schopenhauer often adds the adjective 'moral'. The innateness and constancy of the individual character determines the type of morality of the individual, i.e., the scope of the set of ethical norms that the individual adheres to (at least declaratively) and according to which he acts. Up to a certain point, the individual can weaken and limit the manifestation of bad character traits or even hide them. Although we cannot become morally better by changing our character, thanks to self-consciousness, which enables us to control our behaviour (to a certain extent), our actions can reveal us to be less bad than we could be. Deciding whether this is a lot or a little also depends on the character of the evaluating person – Schopenhauer was a pessimist and claimed it is impossible to make man more moral.

Janusz Korczak's practical view of character. Schopenhauer's theory of character was confirmed in the pedagogical practice of Janusz Korczak (1878/79–1942), an educator and physician who proved the nobility of his character with the sacrifice of his own life. His observations confirmed the view that a child comes into the world with innate character traits. Indeed, the innateness of character is most evident in young children, who reveal certain traits and inclinations, both good and bad, which could not possibly have developed as a result of the impact of their environment or educational measures. Bad behaviours are particularly striking in that they are motivated not by the desire to reciprocate for actual or perceived harm but by a pure desire to hurt someone and thereby experience inner joy. Korczak observed this in children aged between three and five in his work as an educator at summer camps and as a caretaker in orphanages. In an article with a telling title *Dzieci występne w wieku przedszkolnym* [Vicious

Children of Preschool Age], published in 1925, he gave examples of such behaviour:

No more than three or four among forty. But wherever they went, they maliciously spoiled the cheerful mood [...]. Their malice was logically unjustifiable. They did it not from a lack of interest but from a clear urge to muddle and wreak havoc. Someone builds something and with a skilful, cunning move, they will knock it down, take it away, hit its creator, or throw sand in his eyes. They will look and smile. They will look around to see if the educator is watching and then, suddenly and adroitly, pinch or hit another child. Then they will leave, looking for a new victim (Korczak, 1984b, p. 136).

That such behaviours are specific to a minority of children is quite obvious: if they prevailed, it would be impossible to establish and maintain positive interpersonal bonds. What is important is the fact that tendencies towards certain behaviours must be innate as they cannot be developed in children within a social context. For this reason, Korczak strongly recommended isolating 'misbehaving' individuals and applying special educational methods to them:

One thing is clear: these children must be separated, isolated. They poison the atmosphere, they infect. This psychological scarlet fever requires special care, different conditions, vigilant and professional examination. These children must not be mixed with healthy ones (Korczak, 1984b, p. 137).

Korczak did not believe that in the process of nurturing and education it is possible to eradicate bad character determinants. He claimed that

every educator knows and distinguishes between children who are badly brought up but quickly become healthy, and children who are burdened in one direction or another, where only improvement can be expected, not healing (Korczak, 1984c, p. 185).

This "burdening", which in Schopenhauer's terminology can be called the direction of will, can be modified to some degree and extent, but it cannot be completely eradicated. This modification is possible because proper nurturing weakens one's readiness to respond to factors that activate the will to act badly and strengthens one's readiness to respond to factors that activate the will to take good actions, but it cannot change the direction of the will itself.

Many years of observations led Korczak to the conclusion that innate inclinations do not change with age, and that, if not subjected to nurturing processes, bad inclinations can intensify as a result of negative environmental influences (Korczak, 1984b, p. 135). When taken in conjunction with Schopenhauer's concept, this should be understood as claiming that if a certain character is revealed in a child, it will continue to be revealed in the same way when this child grows up. According to Korczak: "Everything that happens in the dirty world of adults also happens in the child's world" (Korczak 1984a, pp. 263–264) because children have the 'seeds' of certain inclinations, attitudes, drives, and desires, i.e., the direction of their will is innate. The necessary condition for taking appropriate educational measures is therefore the detection of innate aspirations of the child's will and, respectively, the selection of appropriate educational means and methods.

Contemporary pedagogy does not follow the path indicated by Janusz Korczak, and even many of the terms he used are no longer acceptable in current educational discourse. In fact, it is assumed that there are no vicious young people, only young people who are improperly brought up, which of course can be remedied by creating the right environmental conditions and by using appropriate pedagogical methods. The problem is, however, that there are both wicked and noble individuals, for everyone has innate inclinations towards evil and towards good, and these inclinations affect everyone to different degrees and in different proportions. In this context, the question that can and must be asked is whether, over the centuries of development and the application of educational measures and methods, real success has been achieved, and whether successive generations can be said to be better in the moral sense.

The problem of directing character. Character cannot be changed. But since man is "a rational animal with individual character" (Schopenhauer, 1969, p. 288), he can, to a certain extent, consciously refrain from certain actions and behaviours and incline towards others, even though his character directs him to the contrary. Schopenhauer did not deny the validity of the nurturing process; on the contrary, he emphasised its necessity (Schopenhauer, 2014). However, he was convinced that the individual's moral character would not become better as a result because

just as all the professors of aesthetics with their combined efforts are unable to impart to anyone the capacity to produce works of genius, i.e., genuine works of art, so are all the professors of ethics and preachers of virtue just as little able to transform an ignoble character into one that is virtuous and noble (Schopenhauer, 1969, p. 527).

Nurturing does not make the individual morally better, but it can make him become more decent in his behaviour: he may pursue his immoral desires less frequently and to a lesser extent, and he may be more inclined to pursue noble desires.

Schopenhauer can be called a realist. From the dawn of history to the present day, the world we live in is a place of conflicts and wars, hunger and poverty, social inequalities, religious and ideological fanaticisms, and economic and social crises. On an individual level, successive generations are no better morally than past generations – there is no indication that the human propensity for aggression, murder, assassination, envy, lying, hypocrisy, and inflicting suffering on others is diminishing. It is true that in the social and political space in large parts of our globe, phenomena that for many centuries were considered natural and normal, such as slavery, class inequalities, inequality before the law, limited rights for women, or discrimination against strangers, minorities, etc., are today being addressed. However, this is the result of organisational and legal changes that have introduced rules of behaviour, the observance of which is enforced. Yet, any change in the socio-political situation could be enough for the desire to enslave, humiliate, or abuse other people to surface. This is because negative directions of the will have not been changed but only blocked by a specific social framework within which the individual cannot realise all his desires. It is worth remembering, however, that this is a dynamic situation that can change at any time (Kopania, 2022). Schopenhauer's realism is combined with pessimism. Not only does he believe that character cannot be changed, he is also convinced that the possibilities of shaping character in terms of weakening and limiting evil inclinations and strengthening good ones are relatively small, and that noble individuals, i.e., those in whom the will is directed decidedly more towards good than towards evil, constitute a negligible minority.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

It should be noted, however, that adopting Schopenhauer's position on the innateness of character or sharing his conviction that noble characters constitute a negligible minority, does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that there is little possibility of increasing the positive impact on how our character manifests. The foundations of the ideology of transhumanism is based on the realistic vision of man as an entity that is far from perfect, accompanied with a strong conviction in the possibility of his permanent enhancement thanks to the development of knowledge and technology. Transhumanists believe in the possibility of transcending the existing natural determinants and limitations of human nature and creating a qualitatively new human being. The range of transhumanist attitudes is, however, quite broad and depends on how far-reaching and how strong their hope is for the realisation of their dreams and plans. The most extreme claim is that, in some distant future, man will cease to be a biological being and will exist only as a consciousness implemented in an electronic network, while the most moderate claim assumes only the realisation of an ongoing process of human enhancement in particular aspects of his existence; there is a whole range of intermediate attitudes in between (Hołub, 2018).

Transhumanists evaluate the world from not an axiological but a pragmatic perspective, i.e., not in metaphysical categories of good and evil but in categories of the quality of the solutions to which evolution has led. They observe that man is the pinnacle product of evolution, but at the same time he is far from perfect. He is prone to disease, ageing, and death; he is equipped with weak senses, bad instincts, and harmful emotions (More, 1999). Transhumanists believe that biological evolution has exhausted its possibilities and that the time is coming when humans will take the evolution of their species into their own hands. Although transhumanist scholars differ in their predictions as to how far we can go with enhancing humans, they do not doubt that developments in science and technology, particularly in genetics and bioengineering, will enable continuous human enhancement.

Human enhancement is expected to occur in all four aspects of human nature: sensory (physical), intellectual (mental), psychological

(emotional), and moral (volitional). Indeed, for a long time we have been implementing various pharmacological and medical measures to increase our physical well-being and health, but transhumanists believe that these should be complemented by measures to improve the mental sphere, which means that emotions, instincts, and intellectual capacities should also be enhanced. They assume that cognitive operations are strictly dependent on matter and corporeality. Changing a person's genetic material is supposed to make it possible to enhance the operation of his mental sphere and, consequently, his moral behaviour. Genetic modifications should be performed at the foetal stage of life so that the improved genes can be passed on to the next generation.

Understandably, the process of modifying genetic material to improve morality will be accompanied by a clash of opposing attitudes, arguments for and against, great fears and equally great hopes. Transhumanists do not doubt, however, that the further we go down this path, the weaker fear and resistance will become. The problem is far more serious than the mere fact that traditional educational methods do not make us morally better. Enhancing our morality through bioengineering methods will be necessary because morality is becoming increasingly inadequate in the face of dynamic scientific and technological developments, with the result that – based on traditional morality – we are increasingly unable to assess which of our possible actions are morally acceptable and advisable and which are not.

In comparison to Schopenhauer's beliefs, the transhumanists' approach simplifies the issue quite considerably. They reduce morality to the net result of factors such as sensory and emotional reactions and instinctual desires and wants, i.e., to factors with material, organic origins. Hence, they are subject to genetic manipulation. Schopenhauer considered moral behaviour to be determined by the individual's character, i.e., the innate direction of the will, and his concept cannot be interpreted materialistically. Movements of the will cannot be modified through genetic material. From the perspective of Schopenhauer's philosophy, transhumanist projects do not refer to genetic modifications of character but to factors that allow the individual to undertake actions that realise the goals set by his innate character, and as such they increase or decrease the scope of these actions.

In the context of transhumanist ideology, the problem of what is subject to genetic modifications – moral character or only the determinants

of moral behaviour – is of merely theoretical interest. From a pragmatic perspective, it is important that the assumption that innate moral character is a component of the immaterial sphere of human existence – and thus cannot be subject to genetic modifications – does not exclude the possibility of enhancing human morality by genetically shaping individual moral behaviours. It is not possible to change the direction of the will, but it is possible to modify the individual psychological sphere in such a way that the capacity to engage in behaviours whose aim is to realise volitional desires and wishes is either weakened or strengthened. If the individual's character makes it impossible for him to resist the urge to perform a morally evil act, we cannot eliminate that urge, but we can, by means of genetic modifications, weaken that which makes it possible and easier to perform such an act by, e.g., reducing the level of egoism, aggression, malice, ruthlessness, etc. Similarly, we can strengthen that which serves the realisation of a morally good act by, e.g., increasing the level of altruism, compassion, responsibility, sense of duty, etc. For centuries, we have been trying to achieve this through education and nurturing, but the results have been far from satisfactory; transhumanists believe that we will achieve this through genetics and genetic engineering (Kopania, 2022).

The question arises as to how legitimate and realistic these dreams are. After all, this optimism is accompanied by a serious doubt noticed by transhumanists themselves: reinforcing good and weakening bad determinants is not sufficient in shaping moral behaviours because many of our personality traits enable us to perform not only bad acts but also good ones; thus, intrinsically bad traits are also necessary to lead a moral life (Harris, 2011, p. 104). Nonetheless, we will probably follow the path of genetically modifying the determinants of behaviours that are subject to moral evaluation because, sooner or later, hope will likely overcome the fear of taking risks.

We cannot reasonably predict whether and to what extent future scientific developments will enable us to make such genetic changes in which there is an acceptable degree of probability of the expected positive outcomes and the possible undesirable consequences. We do not know how far we will go down this road because guessing what the development of knowledge and technology will be like in, e.g., a thousand years' time, is beyond the reach of our understanding and

imagination. A thousand years ago, man was incapable of predicting the later developments in science, the extent of current knowledge, or the degree of advancement of technical capabilities. It is worth remembering that our deliberations are conducted under the assumption that, despite all the breakdowns and collapses, the development of our scientific civilisation will continue, even though this is by no means certain (Kopania & Nowacka, 2018).

However, we should be aware that we are facing challenges that were unimaginable until recently. The dynamic development of artificial intelligence, computer science, robotics, the biomedical sciences, and biotechnology have created problems that will increasingly exceed the capacity of our intellect and our morality. Transhumanists argue that the only possible solution is the progressive genetic enhancement of the human rational and volitional (moral) sphere. From a transhumanist perspective, then, we have two options: either we stay as we are, especially intellectually and morally (although the price for this will be an increasing misunderstanding of the world we will have to live in, and in the space of interpersonal action we will continue to pursue our evil desires, lusts, and drives as readily as we have done over the past centuries), or we take the risk of genetically modifying our reason and our psyche.

There is probably little chance of us reaching the level of knowledge and skills required to enable us to take this risk, and even less chance that any attempts made will succeed. The outcome may well be unsatisfactory, and subsequent attempts to enhance our genotypes will result in their deterioration. Should we thus conclude that no attempts at eugenic modifications of our genetic material should be undertaken at all? If so, we would agree with Schopenhauer, and we will have to come to terms with the fact that human beings are inherently evil and nothing will change that. Transhumanists, by contrast, prefer to speak not of human nature but of the determinants and conditions of human behaviours. The development of knowledge and technology will undoubtedly give humanity increasingly more opportunities and means to do both good and evil. We do not have to accept the strong thesis that man is intrinsically evil; it is enough to accept the realistic thesis that every man is capable (to varying degrees, of course) of doing evil to motivate us to a reasonable level of fear that we will actualise evil movements of the will to a much greater extent than good ones. Perhaps, then, we will

reach a scientific and technological level at which we will conclude that we can and should take the risk of genetically enhancing our morality.

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Ryszard Moń

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7113-4730>

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Normativity

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: The term normativity means assigning an obligation to behave in a certain way in a given situation by referring to relevant moral or social judgements and values or to a certain way of being as appropriate.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: Historical analysis reveals that the concept of normativity originated from a vision of obligation and the good (in the ancient sense) or a theory of values and a theory of norms (in the modern sense).

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: In order to precisely understand what normativity is, it is necessary to reflect on its source and essence. In religious conceptions, the source of normativity was the will of God, and its essence lay in following his commandments. For Kant, the source was practical reason, and the essence was in acting according to *the maxim that you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law*. In axiological terms, it is the pursuit of certain values in order to realise them. This section is devoted to the search for an answer to the question of the source and essence of normativity.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: This section discusses the subjective determinants of normativity, i.e., personal desires or visions of a fulfilled life and their realisations. This should be understood as appropriate action that takes into account what is objective, i.e., socially recognised and accepted.

Keywords: normativity, the good, obligation, values, norms, axiology

Historical analysis of the term

Historical analyses of normativity reveal a number of important issues on the subject that have been widely disputed and debated. They include the logical form of axiological and normative statements; different understandings of values and norms and of the relationships between the good and values, and between obligations and norms; the existence of the fact-value dichotomy; and the differences between values and judgements, and between norms and normativity and their reference to specific acts. Other areas that have been analysed concern whether these issues are prescriptive or descriptive concepts, and whether the truth must be the criterion for distinguishing them. If so, prescriptions – unlike descriptions – need not be either true or false if it is assumed that there are different ways of distinguishing prescriptions from descriptions (which does not exclude the possibility that only the former would be based on a truth condition, as was argued by H. von Wright (1986)). The fact-value dichotomy has also been explored and its origins sought.

In the historical analyses, various criteria are listed that make it possible to juxtapose 1) prescriptive and descriptive statements against 2) evaluative statements and statements that express appreciation or reprimand (good, bad, better, worse). From the perspective of moral philosophy, the fundamental question regarding norms and values is whether it is possible to incorporate a theory of the good into a general theory of values, and to incorporate a theory of moral duty or obligation into a general theory of norms. This shows that there are different, non-ethical, categories of values and norms because the concepts of norms and values are not only ethical but can also be cognitive, aesthetic, economic, and social.

There is no doubt that attempts to merge theories of obligation and the good into more integral theories, i.e., theories of values and norms, have triggered more specialised studies in moral philosophy and expanded its scope thanks to the economic, psychological, sociological, and logical reflections devoted to its specific areas, which include preference logic, game and decision theory, deontological logic, theories of motivation, social control, internalisation, and socialisation (Ogien, 2004, p. 1356).

At the beginning of scholarly reflection on normativity, moral statements were generally divided into evaluative, prescriptive, and directive.

Evaluative utterances contained specific predicates that could be called laudatory or reproving and classified under the general term of axiological predicates. Predicates were divided into two groups, i.e., those that have a descriptive component (e.g., brave, cowardly, generous, stingy, etc.) and those do not (e.g., good, bad, better, worse, etc.). The former were called contentual, and the latter intentional. Sentences such as “The mechanic is honest”, “An honest life is better than a successful life”, and “Lying is bad” were considered evaluative statements. Prescriptive (directive) statements are characterised both by their mode (imperative) and by the presence of deontic utterances: “it is necessary”, “it is an obligation”, “it is permitted”, “it is forbidden”, etc. According to some, sentences such as “Do not steal” and “You must return what has been borrowed or given as a deposit” are both prescriptive and directive statements, thus it is possible to express a prescriptive proposition without formulating it as a command (“The children are asleep” meaning “Do not disturb them”). Thinkers began distinguishing judgements (prescriptive and directive) from their formulation (Von Wright, 1986, pp. 10–11), as it was acknowledged that an imperative like “Do not kill” can be used to express a command, advice, a threat, a warning, a demand, a simple request, and an obligation. They also postulated distinguishing evaluative judgments from their formulations as it is possible to express evaluative judgements without using laudatory or reproving predicates, e.g. “The seller did not give me my change” instead of “The seller is dishonest”. However, the fact that it is possible to formulate judgements or prescriptions without using laudatory or reproving predicates, the imperative mode, or deontic expressions does not mean that logical-linguistic criteria do not provide guidance for determining whether something is possible, useful, or rational.

With reference to forms of statements, Castañeda, (1975) observed that normative statements express both normative and axiological differences so profound that they justify separating norms and values. However, what distinguishes these two forms of statements is not simply their relation to truth or falsity. Nothing prevents one from recognising that “I believe it is obligatory to give back what one has borrowed”. More detailed analysis, however, reveals that there are differences in the structure of these two types of statements. They can be used to express a command, advice, a threat, a warning, a demand, a request,

or an obligation. All normative statements refer to specific actions; they specify who precisely can and should (or should not) perform an act and under what circumstances. In axiological statements there are no such explicit references to acts, nor are there clarifications regarding those who act and in which circumstances they act. Laudatory predicates, as well as those that express disapproval, can apply to acts, acting persons, and to circumstances, without necessarily including all three references, although they can also refer to feelings and natural or artificial objects, that is, to something other than the actions themselves (Ogien, 2004, p. 1356). The mere criterion of difference in the reference seems to be insufficient since some normative statements, i.e., those that contain deontic expressions such as 'ought', do not refer just to what must be done. It is sometimes said, for example, that "There ought to be life after death" or "There ought to be no suffering". These are statements referring to the 'ought' of being, not to the obligation of doing. Castañeda contrasts the 'ought to do' with 'the ought to be' (1975, p. 46), and von Wright uses the German expressions *Tun-sollen* (ought to do) and *Sein-sollen* (ought to be). According to von Wright, a moral form of logic can be constructed for statements referring to *Sein-sollen*, but it is different for statements referring to *Tun-sollen*, i.e., a special form of logic (Von Wright, 1983, p. 106), which he calls normative. But if, following both von Wright and Castañeda (1975, p. 46), statements referring to the 'ought to be' are distinguished from those referring to the 'ought to do', there is a clear difference between the normative and the axiological. However, this is not sufficient to treat normative statements as propositions of logic because normative statements that refer to the 'ought to do' form a subset in the set of axiological statements. It seems that von Wright oscillated between a predicative interpretation ("A lie is forbidden") and a non-predicative interpretation ("To lie is forbidden"), that is, an interpretation that treats deontic expressions as operators that refer to propositions but in the manner of a negation of actions. Similarly, Castañeda considers that 'being obligatory' can be treated either as a predicate that describes an unnatural property linked to actions, or as an operator that refers to the phases of doing something (Castañeda, 1975, pp. 185–190, 335–336). Thus, in Von Wright and Castañeda's opinion, there are rationales for choosing a non-predicative interpretation, that is, for not treating 'being obliged' as a predicator that describes

the properties of acts as if they were equivalent to 'being fast' or 'being nervous'. Choosing a non-predicative interpretation can be justified, among other things, by the way it is used, since it would be difficult to utter the following statement without making a fundamental mistake: "He drives fast, nervously, and obligatorily". Rather, we should say "He drives fast and nervously, because he is obliged to do so, i.e., to drive fast". With this understanding, the expression concerning an obligation would play the role of a particular rationale. Axiological statements could thus contain a similar duality for intentional predicates such as "good" or "bad". But contentual predicates such as "brave" or "cowardly" reveal their adverbial character much better ("He fought bravely, with dedication" (Ogien, 2004, p. 1356)).

The point is that if the concept of obligation were treated as the central moral conception, it would be rather difficult to defend the idea that natural properties can be 'perceived' as obligatory because properties of physical objects are perceived. The very distinction between the forms inherent in normative and axiological statements may not be sufficient to justify the claim that there is no relationship between norms and values. R.M. Hare formulated many arguments in favour of reducing judgements to prescriptions and for the thesis that the most significant of all judgements contains a requirement (command) to act in such and not another way. However, can we say that in the set of things we judge to be good, there are many to which we must 'ascribe' or 'recommend' something, i.e., since we say that beauty, talent, and intelligence are good, are people automatically 'recommended' to be good, intelligent, and talented?

Conceptual analysis of norms usually reveals three different meanings or aspects (Kořakowski, 1987, pp. 15–47): 1. imperative or prescriptive, in which a norm specifies what must be done or what must not be done and thus expresses what is obligatory or forbidden; 2. laudatory, in which a norm says what state, act, thought, or emotion is good/correct or bad/incorrect or what is to be done, thought, or felt; 3. descriptive, in which a norm shows the ways of being, doing, thinking, or feeling that are recurrent or most widespread amongst the population.

The criterion of the field of the application of norms offers some clues about what distinguishes an injunction or command from praise. An injunction or command refers only to acts of a voluntary type which

have not yet been performed. The scope of praise is broader since it covers voluntarily performed actions, involuntary actions, mental states, dispositions, and objects, etc. It is therefore necessary to find other criterion to justify the difference between praise and description. From this point of view, sanctions can serve this purpose. In the prescriptive or evaluative sense, a norm seems to include the existence of positive (approval, gratitude) or negative (condemnation, punishment) sanctions, as well as informal ones, governed by one person or by everyone. In the descriptive sense, a norm merely registers the existence of ways of being, acting, thinking, and feeling that are recurring or possible (Ogien, 2004, p. 1357). It is thus possible to identify some criteria that justify the distinction between forms of normativity, although it is necessary to account for the relationships of their interdependence. If only the prescriptive or commanding aspect are taken into account, norms will be confused with rules, regulations, laws, or duties, and this will oppose our intuitions. After all, everybody knows how to distinguish legal rules regarding prisons from the norms of prison life, the laws of an occupying military power from the norms that regulate the relations between the occupants and the occupied, etc. Finally, no one would dream of substituting the term 'norm' for 'obligation' when talking of an obligation towards God and other people.

There are various ways of distinguishing norms from rules, regulations, rights, and obligations (Raz, 1990) whilst recognising that they are all types of norms. A norm is not only something that is imposed on us, but it is also something that is recognised as desired or judged to be correct. In the definitions of norms, the prescriptive and laudatory aspects are linked. The descriptive aspect cannot be neglected because if it were, our ability to distinguish between norms and rules, ordinances, and laws would have to be developed from scratch. It is not always the case that the relationship between the prescriptive, commanding, evaluative, and descriptive aspects of a norm is important; indeed, this is one of the oldest and most controversial issues debated (Ogien, 2004, p. 1357). Functionalist theories establish a relationship of intrinsic dependence between the recurring or possible spaces and forms that these parts should attain. This feature distinguishes functionalist theories from intentionalist theories, which are perfectionist and envisage the possibility of an ideal state of the parts of a species that

would correspond to the realisation of their 'nature' or their 'essence'; such an ideal state is not necessarily observed or always represented in the recurrent and possible state. Intentionalist theories offer the possibility of distinguishing between what is and what ought to be (Taylor, 1988, p. 34). If even the transition from 'is' to 'ought' is legitimate, then the reverse transition, namely from 'ought' to 'is', is legitimate. What is normative has the actual force, which is why it is difficult to propose a satisfactory analysis of norms that does not also take into account their public, objective, coercive, pervasive, and sanctioned aspects. The same applies to values (Ogien, 2004, p. 1358). Objectivist theories of value emphasise the permanency of values and their independence from the variability of interests or emotions, which does not mean that interests and emotions do not have privileged reference to values (Ogien, 2004, p. 1358). For example, for Scheler, the value of an object or action is not a function of the interests or emotions of the acting person; the acting person can discover this value by taking into account his interests or emotions. Moreover, defenders of the objectivist approach reject subjectivist definitions of value because they fail to take into account the distinction that we are all capable of making between what we desire and what is desired, between what we experience and what touches us, between what interests us and what is interesting. However, according to B. Russell, if it is true that what is visible should be reduced to what is seen, then what is desired cannot be reduced to what we desire but to what should be desired. Russell's argument has some weaknesses, however, because it does not seem to take into account the normative aspect of vision (what is visible is what ought to be seen under the right conditions). On the other hand, it is not certain that Russell's argument is not subjectivist because by saying that what is worthy of desire is what ought to have been desired, we can understand "that which would have been acceptable". So, even the rationalist version of Russell's argument is not fully objectivist as it seems not to recognise the existence of values that are totally independent of our judgements, no matter how accurate they are. To give a stronger (and more interesting) meaning to the objectivist theory, it is necessary to go further than Moore, who thought it inconceivable that of two states of affairs one is not better than the other, even if no one recognises it to be the case. If we think of a world that is extraordinarily beautiful and

harmonious and a world that resembles a pile of rubbish and is the ugliest and most disgusting, it is conceivable that the first is better, even if we have never been there to contemplate it. If Moore wanted to show that one state of affairs is better or worse than another, regardless of the state of the perceiver's consciousness, such a belief is more difficult to apply to values such as beauty or sanctity. Thus, this objectivist thesis, the most radical in its formulation, seems even less comprehensible than the radical subjectivist thesis (Ogien, 2004, p. 1359).

Summing up, we do not seem, as R. Ogien notes, to have moved far from the time when Socrates asked whether the gods love the pious because it is the pious, or whether the pious is pious because it is loved by the gods (*Euthyphro*, 10a-11b). If Euthyphro's question is still valid today, it is because it seems impossible to maintain a subjectivist position about values since this would then deprive us of the ability to distinguish desires and preferences. But it also seems utterly impossible to maintain a strictly objectivist position if it is ultimately based on the experience of thinking as defined by Moore, the meaning of which is far from obvious and would be easier to understand if presented in a less radical form. Hence, it is difficult to juxtapose values and norms directly by recognising that values are subjective, abstract, ideal, and free, while norms are objective, prescriptive, real, and compelling. However, many theories are more or less explicitly based on this dichotomy, as well as on dichotomies that place values in the objective field and norms in the relative and contingent field.

The dichotomies between values and norms are most often explained by their different ontological foundations. Those who defend the universality and unity of values and the plurality and relativity of norms are objectivists in the field of values and non-objectivists in the field of norms. However, 'moral' values are not always distinguished from other values as not all philosophers clearly see the limits of 'choosing' moral values and what distinguishes values from mere preferences (Ogien, 2004, p. 1359).

Another debated issue is the question of the relationship of values to the good, and the relationship of norms to obligations. Some argue that the theory of values could successfully swap places with ancient theories of the good and that normative theories could do the same with ancient theories of duty or obligation. Moreover, some claim that the idea

of the good would be easier to understand if it were treated as an idea derived from a general theory of values, and that the ideas of duty and obligation would be easier to understand if they were regarded as ideas derived from a general theory of norms. Moral values and norms would be species of the same kind, as would life values and norms and cognitive, aesthetic, political, and economic values. E. Durkheim argued that the integration of moral values into a broader set that also contains economic values would make more sense as it would avoid a metaphysical perspective on morality. Durkheim's proposal may be a good illustration of a crisis moral philosophy has faced since the turn of the 20th century, particularly in Europe and the United States, where the conceptions of values and norms gradually superseded the established conceptions of obligation and the good (Franken, 1967). The conceptions of values and norms attempted to show the properties of values irrespective of their type (economic, social, cognitive, aesthetic, ethical, etc.), based on, as far as possible, the empirical sciences (i.e., in particular, the emerging research field of psychophysics). The properties of values or value judgments became a problem that went further than moral philosophy. The tendency to revise traditional questions (What is good? Why act morally? etc.) in the light of general reflection on values by making the field of moral values a specialised sector in the search for values in general had reached the stage at which it was self-developing (Ogien, 2004, p. 1360).

Brentano and Meinong initiated a discussion devoted to the 'philosophy of values' which was continued by Moore in England, Scheler and Hartmann in Germany (although they went in rather different directions), Dewey, Perry and Lewis in the United States, and Le Senn and Lavell in France. The 'historical' thesis formulated at the end of the 19th century posited that the introduction of the concept of values into moral philosophy reveals that Plato's writings already contained all the elements of general axiology. It could be said that the concept of values was rehabilitated at the end of the 19th century after a long 'eclipse', but this would contradict Max Scheler's claim that the theories of value, particularly his own, that were developed at the beginning of the 20th century had absolutely nothing in common with the ancient theories of the good, which in his opinion were irretrievably destroyed by Kant.

The need to distinguish norms from values became an important issue. It can be legitimately argued that, despite their fundamental

differences, normative contents and axiological contents belong to the same family of non-descriptive judgements. The starting point for such distinctions can be found in two famous texts, one by David Hume and the other by Henry Poincaré. Hector-Néri Castañeda proposed combining them into two logical formulas (Castañeda, 1975, p. 332). The first is called 'Hume's guillotine' or the 'is-ought problem' and is the thesis that an imperative conclusion cannot be inferred from reasoning in which none of the premises is imperative. Nevertheless, logical versions of the fact-value dichotomy exist which are less distant from each other, three of the most popular interpretations being logical, semantic, and epistemological. In its logical version, the dichotomy between facts and values means that all reasoning which uses the term 'ought' in the conclusion is not valid if it does not exist in the premise. The semantic version is, to an extent, inspired by Moore and is far removed from Hume's version. It rejects as erroneous definitions of the word 'good' that are formulated in terms of facts or empirical expressions (Ogien, 2004, p. 1361). Hence, logical positivists propose an epistemological version of this dichotomy, which posits that two individuals can have identical beliefs about facts and yet formulate opposite judgements about values. However, is this really the case? Should not the totality of their factual beliefs be considered, not just those expressed at a given moment? After all, in specific cases, these two individuals may agree on facts but differ on values, as is exemplified by the divergence of views on the moral value of abortion. These three types of dichotomy have been and continue to be hotly debated because their consequences appear to be extremely important. Various arguments have been relentlessly formulated against Hume, and attempts have been made to find logical meaning in deriving 'ought' from 'is' (Searle, 1972, pp. 228–254). However, it seems that these attempts have been abandoned because the logical thesis was in fact harmless and not offensive: logical interpretations only say that a term cannot appear in the conclusion if it is not used in the premises of the reasoning. However, from the mere assertion that 'ought' does not logically follow from 'is', it cannot be concluded that there is no relationship between 'is' and 'ought', as explanations formulated within sociology, psychology, and biology reveal (Ogien, 2004, p. 1361). Further reflection shows that Moore only rejects the idea that there can be conceptual sameness between the good and its various definitions,

whether this is about empirical content (the satisfaction of the greatest number of people) or other content, such as something commanded by divine law. There cannot be conceptual sameness between the good and the well-being of the community, because then, for example, the statement “This act is good, but it does not contribute to the well-being of the community” would be a mere contradiction, just as the statement “He is celibate but married” is. The need to reject the reduction of the good to its empirical content is merely a thesis derived from Moore’s general theory. According to Putnam, the idea that all definitions rest on conceptual unity is totally wrong. The absence of the conceptual sameness does not exclude a fixed empirical relationship between the concept that is defined and the terms that define it. Those who criticise the epistemological argument admit, like Hume, that genuine incompatibility can refer only to facts. However, unlike Hume, these critics admit that, once established, factual issues leave no room for disagreement about value. In short, they believe that it is wrong for two individuals to have exactly the same beliefs about facts but opposite judgements about values, which leads to a widely accepted conclusion that there is no dichotomy between facts and values. However, some question this conclusion: they admit that traditional justifications of this dichotomy have weaknesses but argue this does not mean that better justifications cannot be found in the future (Ogien, 2004, p. 1362).

Discussion of the term

The issue of normativity requires a more thorough demonstration of the relationship between facts and values. It appears that the level of separation between facts and values remains ambiguous. Sometimes, the concepts of virtue and value are used synonymously (Franken, 1963, pp. 47–62). The greatest confusion about the understanding of normativity regards the purpose of an action, because then the words regarding values, goals, and norms are used interchangeably. Norms are usually distinguished from rules, laws, principles, and reasons for action, and the categorical imperative is distinguished from the hypothetical imperative, but other useful distinctions are ignored, such as those that contrast constitutive norms with regulative norms and those that contrast

primary norms (which oblige or prohibit under penalty of sanction) with secondary norms. The American philosopher John Dewey argued that judging can happen in two distinct ways: judging can mean performing an act of intellectual reflection and comparison (as if one were trying to determine the value of an object in economic terms), but it can also mean experiencing a specific emotion or desire for an act or an object. The fact that judgements in the second sense (of desires or emotions) can be implied does not mean that only this desire or that emotion is the source of value (linguistic analysis does not say anything about whether an object is desired because it is worthy of desire or whether it is worthy of desire because it is desired). Ultimately, Dewey seems to want to establish a distinction between the types of objects that can be cognised through a process of reflexive search and comparison, that is, that can be understood directly through our desires (Ogien, 2004, p. 1362). It is worth noting, however, that without rejecting the idea that there is a difference between judgement and value, there may be adequate reasons to argue that judgements are not necessarily comparable and that the predicate 'to be better than' is not a typical evaluative predicate. Thus, a judgement that is called evaluative may be a simple judgement of attributing a particular property, which may be relative (to be a 'good knife'; to be a 'good racehorse') or absolute (to be 'fair', to be 'integrated'). However, it must be remembered that those who are more interested in values than in judgements do not claim that values cannot be compared, ordered, or hierarchised. As is well known, Max Scheler proposed "an example of an a priori hierarchisation of values". He placed holiness at the top, followed by spiritual and cognitive values, justice and beauty, then the hedonistic values of prosperity or well-being (including health). At the very bottom he placed sensual values, i.e., pleasure and enjoyment. He recognised that every value has its opposite, which includes negative values (dilettantism, ignorance, injustice, ugliness, powerlessness in life, unpleasantness, and suffering) in his hierarchy. However, the values that are called moral (the good and the evil) are not integrated with them because they are specific only to the person, while all others refer to a broad set that includes animals and things. Although values reveal themselves as properties of the objects in which they are carried, according to Scheler they can be abstracted from their carriers in the same manner as colours are. "Being blue" does not mean "being

an object of the colour blue”: it means being a particular colour that continues to have a particular relationship with other colours independently of their carriers. Moreover, ‘being pleasant’ does not mean ‘being an object of pleasure’: it means being a particular value that continues to have a particular relationship with other values. These relationships can be examined a priori. The principle that pleasure is better than pain is not given to us through reasoning. The way of arriving at values is fully specific: they cannot be discovered through sensory perception but are discovered through differentiated emotional experiences. However, they should not be understood as complete acts, the most important of which – from the point of view of cognising the most sublime values – is love. This is because values appear attractive and they motivate us into action (Ogien, 2004, p. 1363). There are different interpretations of Scheler’s theory and different ways of ordering values while preserving some of his principles. These interpretations focus on the following areas, which must be addressed in any attempt to construct a single order or a single hierarchy of values:

1. *Scope*. Should orders or hierarchies that represent values also include negative values, such as ugliness or wilful ignorance?

2. *Mode of existence and access*. Can values be analysed by abstracting from them any possible relationships and references?

3. *Commensurability*. Is it necessary to refer to one criterion (person, happiness, knowledge, power) in order to construct an order or hierarchy of values?

4. *Intrinsic or relative character*. Do hierarchies of values establish values intrinsic to themselves, that is, that are good or bad in themselves, rather than in relation to the consequences of actions according to recognised values? This is problematic because there is not yet a decisive argument against the theory which holds that the notion of an intrinsic value of the content itself should be discussed, despite all its ambiguities.

5. *Motivating force versus freedom*. Is it reasonable to think that a discovery or contemplation is sufficient to trigger action? The most elaborated theories refer to metaphysical notions, such as that of a ‘pure act’ for evaluating values, or ‘participation’ for justifying the freedom of the one who acts according to these values. However, many philosophers are not prepared to refer to metaphysics to solve this

problem, and – accepting that there is no way of solving it – they ignore it (Ogien, 2004, p. 1364).

The issues worth analysing include, e.g., knowledge of whether value judgements are necessarily comparable; what particular predicates express or can express, i.e., whether they also express our emotions or desires; knowledge of whether value judgements can be treated as true or false, i.e., whether they satisfy the truth conditions. This last point is strongly related to the question of the ‘motivating’ power of value judgements. Some believe that what characterises value judgements is precisely their motivating power. They assume that is it possible to negate both the thesis that value judgements express predicates and that value judgements can be considered true or false. Many deny that value judgements can have essential properties of being motivating or negating.

It seems unreasonable to ask whether a value is true, but it is legitimate to assume that it could exist independently of our desires and our beliefs. The question of the existence of values must not be confused with the question of knowing whether an object or an action has a specific value. Nor must the question of the existence of a value be confused with the question of knowledge, that is, whether a given value is good or bad, and whether it deserves to be respected or not (Ogien, 2004, p. 1365).

This, at first glance, is how the problems of norms and normativity are approached. Von Wright, for example, distinguishes between normative content about which the cognitive question of truthfulness may be asked, and the question of the existence of a norm that may form the basis or condition for the truth of normative content (von Wright, 1986, p. 11). He claims that the distinction between the existence of a norm and the truth of normative content does not apply to legal norms. In this case, it can be concluded (even if this thesis is contested) that the truth of normative content depends on the existence of a norm which is neither true nor false but merely imposed by a legal authority. But it is different for contents that Von Wright calls anankastic (1986, p. 16), i.e., contents that have a conditional form (such as “if the beams are of such and such thickness, the roof will collapse”, or “to hold up the roof, the beams should be of such and such thickness”). Their truth or falsity depends not on the existence of a norm given by an authority but on respect for

certain logical or natural necessities (or respect for necessities linked to the goal envisaged by an acting person who wants to make the roof stay up). Thus, it is not possible to say that these logical natural necessities are either true or false, unlike norms provided by a competent authority (at the risk, of course, of numerous objections) (Ogien, 2004, p. 1365). In the light of G.H. von Wright's analyses, it can be assumed that the complexity of the special case of normative moral content becomes clear. First of all, it should be noticed that normative moral contents can be said to be true or false because otherwise they would not belong to the class of normative moral contents (which does not hold in case of normative legal contents). However, the truth-value of normative moral contents is not established by norms provided by a competent authority which should be satisfied by being obeyed, although it can be asked here whether it is possible to conditionally assume their truth-value by equating moral normative contents with anankastic contents, as von Wright suggests (1986, s. 23). Regardless of what answer is given to this question, von Wright's reflections demonstrate that the strategy of treating moral contents as a variety of one more general species (of norms, in this particular case) has serious limitations (Ogien, 2004, p. 1365).

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

The above reflections present the evolution of the understanding of normativity. In antiquity, it was understood as the Good and it determined people's way of being and their actions. It was either a perfect duty (perfect actions) understood as rightness (*katornoma*), or an ordinary duty (i.e., an appropriate or befitting action) (*kathekon*), i.e., something that can be justified by giving a convincing reason (Cicero). Later this understanding of normativity changed and the Good was replaced with values that determined the proper way of human action, while duties were replaced by norms, which were most often legal or ethical. Undoubtedly, there have also been philosophers who tried to combine these two ways of determining the right way of actioning or being in order to show what normativity is. In other words, they began to combine a teleological way

of determining appropriate actions (ways of being) with a deontological understanding of acts. They introduced subjective determinants of normativity, i.e., the personal desires of an acting person and his vision for a fulfilled life and for the realisation of a particular thing based on what is objective, socially recognised and accepted. M. Oakeshott calls this a 'moral idiom' – the meaning and requirements of which, as in language, depend on temporal and social determinants – which determines this and not that way of understanding the content of an act, as well as the way in which it is realised or the way of being. Thus, it seems that normativity is the recommendation of a particular way of being or acting which makes it possible to achieve what is desirable as well as right, that is, as an action that can be described as both valuable and obligatory. However, what action a person will take, what way of life he will choose as the realisation of his vision of happiness, and how he will meet the demands of society or the reality around him all depend on his sensitivity and the sharpness of his reason.

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Piotr Mazur

Ignatianum University in Cracow

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6399-8133>

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The dispute over human nature between naturalism and anti-naturalism

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: Human nature can be understood as the essence of the human being, defined either as a set of necessary and general characteristics that distinguish him from other species of beings, or as the source and principle of man's action.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: In the early days of philosophy, anthropological issues were not separated from other issues. The first philosophical concepts were naturalistic; anti-naturalism appeared with Plato and gained popularity in late antiquity and the Middle Ages. In the modern era and today, the naturalistic approach to understanding man, grounded in the natural sciences, dominates, although the presence and development of the anti-naturalistic tradition is also pursued.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: Anti-naturalism and naturalism are collective terms for different philosophical approaches, concepts, and positions that oppose each other to varying degrees and extents, depending on which aspect of human nature is taken into account in analyses: existence, carrier, essence, continuity, constancy, purpose, or laws.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The dispute over human nature concerns the possibility of man's transcendence over biologically conceived nature in terms of existence, cognition, and man's place in reality. This dispute is multifacetedly entangled in the broadly understood social, political, cultural, and economic contexts, which entails serious theoretical and practical consequences.

Keywords: man, human nature, naturalism, anti-naturalism

Definition of the term

Human nature (humanity) can be understood as the essence of the human being, defined either as a set of necessary and general characteristics that distinguish him from other species of beings, or as the source (the first intrinsic cause) and the principle of action appropriate only to humans. Human nature is that through which a particular man acts. Traditionally, the concept of nature (Greek: *physis*, Latin: *nasci*) is associated with birth or coming into existence.

The concept of nature is entangled in ambiguity. Most often, nature is understood as the natural environment, in which case the concept of human nature refers to the biological species of *homo sapiens*. Sometimes this term denotes the totality of existing entities (reality), including human beings. It is also used to mean biological laws and processes to which the human body as an organism is subject. Sometimes it is equated with man as an existing and acting being, regardless of whether he is treated as a material, spiritual-material, or spiritual subject. Depending on how nature is understood, the shape of the dispute over human nature between naturalism and anti-naturalism takes on different forms. In the most general terms, this dispute concerns whether man – both as a species or individually – is, in his being or acting, entirely immanent to material-biological reality or whether he somehow transcends it.

Both naturalism and anti-naturalism are umbrella terms for various philosophical perspectives, including numerous concepts and positions that have been put forward throughout the history of philosophy and that propose different understandings of man and nature (Woleński, 2016). Naturalism essentially advocates materialism, empiricism, mechanism, determinism, self-organisation, and methodological atheism (Leszczyński, 2014). Anthropological naturalism can be summarised as the view that all human substructures, states, acts, or processes that take place in the human body have their origin in biologically conceived nature and are ultimately reducible to empirically conceived determinants, structures, or functions of the human body. Anthropological naturalism undermines humans' transcendence to nature in the field of existence (ontological naturalism), the object of cognition (epistemological naturalism), the manner of cognition (methodological naturalism), and the position and place of man in reality (axiological naturalism).

According to naturalism, human nature retains only relative constancy and can change under the influence of biological and social factors.

Anti-naturalism, which opposes the naturalistic reduction of human nature, recognises the transcendence of at least some aspects of this nature over that which is material-biological in it. According to anti-naturalism, there are states, acts, processes, and even ontic structures of man which – by virtue of their genesis, essence, functioning, or purpose – transcend that which is materially biological in it. As a result of this transcendence, man both belongs to material reality and is distinguished from it; thus, he occupies a unique metaphysical, cognitive, and axiological position within it.

Anti-essentialist conceptions do not use the notion of nature, understood as a set of specific characteristics to which man is entitled. Instead they use the notion of the human condition (H. Arendt, Ch. Delsol) or human reality (J.-P. Sartre). However, this notion is still used by representatives of the metaphysical tradition, who advocate the existence of human nature in the traditional sense (essentialism), and by philosophers who attempt to give this concept a contemporary meaning (Fukuyama, 2002).

Historical analysis of the term

The dispute between naturalists and anti-naturalists over human nature has been going on almost since the beginning of philosophy, although the problem of man as the object of cognition distinct from the rest of reality was not immediately formulated in this dispute, and it was only with time that the difference between these positions became noticeable. The concepts of the Presocratics and Democritus were naturalistic, and the concepts of Parmenides and Plato (according to whom the rational human soul in its proper state exists and cognises without the mediation of the body) were anti-naturalistic. Aristotle offered the first systematisation of the issue of understanding nature. For him, man was a living entity (*zoon*) who is distinguished from the animal world by his rational nature (*logikon*); although, in accordance with his hylemorphic conception, he contrasted the soul with matter and the body, he took a naturalistic stance on the question of its independence.

The ethical systems of the Hellenistic period (Stoicism, Epicureanism) were founded on a naturalistic view of the world and man. At the end of antiquity, anti-naturalism gained importance, supported on the one side by the Judeo-Christian concept of the creation of the world and the creation of man in the image and likeness of God, and on the other side by the emanative concept of Plotinus and the Neoplatonists (Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus). The vital role of the spiritual aspects of human nature was emphasised in patristics (Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius). As a result of the theological and philosophical disputes of the time, the personal status of the human being was recognised, which eventually found expression in Boetius's definition of the person as 'the individual substance of a rational nature'.

Medieval Western thought was oriented anti-naturalistically. Scholasticism, influenced by Augustinian Platonism (Anselm of Canterbury, Bonaventure), recognised the positive role of the human body but attributed personal functions and acts exclusively to the soul. The rediscovery of Aristotle's writings did not fully take place until the 13th century and gave rise not only to Thomism but also to naturalism (e.g., David of Dinant, Siger of Brabant). While arguing for the self-existence of the soul and the transcendence of man's spiritual structures and functions over man's material-bodily structures and functions, Thomas Aquinas proclaimed at the same time man's ontic unity and the inalienability of the body for the ontic completeness of human nature in existence and action. Within all of scholasticism, man's rational nature was regarded as the basic factor that distinguishes the person from non-personal entities, but over time the personal status began to be linked to the mode of existence (Richard of Saint Victor, Thomas Aquinas). The end of the Middle Ages was marked by the decline of speculative philosophy, the rise of empirical interests, and the dominance of nominalism (W. Ockham), which, by undermining the reality of general aspects of being (substance, essence, nature), led to the universality of human nature and thus the possibility of its metaphysical cognition being questioned.

The modern era witnessed the abandonment of the theocentric world model and consolidation of anthropocentrism. Influenced by the development of the natural sciences (G. Bruno, F. Bacon, Galileo), philosophy visibly lost ground to mathematics and the natural sciences, and there arose an increasingly strong tendency to naturalise the image of reality

and man. This was reflected in the views of the representatives of the 'school of nature' (Herbert of Cherbury, H. Grotius, T. Hobbes). R. Descartes made an attempt to respond to this naturalistic turn: he distinguished and separated the self as a conscious spiritual substance from the mechanistically understood body. This dualism significantly shaped the subsequent discourse on human nature by separating naturalists, who viewed man through the prism of his body, and anti-naturalists, who focused on man's subjectivity and consciousness. Representatives of English empiricism were divided in their views on human nature and either leaned towards spiritualism (G. Berkeley), or – by questioning the existence of substance or self (D. Hume) – paved the way for naturalism and liberal individualism. Due to its rationalism, sensualism, criticalism, and minimalism, the philosophy of French thinkers (e.g., Voltaire, and the encyclopaedists: D. Diderot, J. le Rond d'Alembert, P.H. Holbach) took on a naturalistic stance which found anthropological expression in the materialism of J. de La Mettrie and the sensualism of É. de Condillac. In this philosophy, nature, now detached from God (deism), became the only point of reference for understanding the world and man.

In the 19th century, naturalistic tendencies in philosophy were reinforced by the detailed sciences, both natural and social. The impact of the sociological approach on the naturalisation of the image of man became apparent in A. Comte's positivist anthropology as well as in the materialism of F. Engels and K. Marx, who regarded man as the net result of the sum total of social relations. As a result of natural evolutionism (K. Darwin), the question of phylogenesis and ontogenesis (H. Spencer) was naturalised; today, the genesis of various manifestations of human personal life, including thinking or intentionality (E.O. Wilson, M. Tomasello, R. Dawkins) is also naturalised. Under the influence of naturalistically oriented psychological concepts such as psychoanalysis (Z. Freud), behaviourism (J. Watson, B.F. Skinner) – and, to a lesser extent, psychophysiology (W. Wundt) – physiology, drives, and the subconscious became important factors in human existence and behaviour, leading to the naturalisation of human consciousness and subjectivity (C. Lévi-Strauss). Nietzsche and his idea of the superman emphasised the role of biological, instinctual, volitional factors in human nature and demanded that the entire culture be adapted to them. The thought of this German philosopher had a considerable impact on the development

of new forms of cultural naturalism (e.g., postmodernism and cultural posthumanism), which regard the essential aspects of human nature to be a cultural and social product. Postmodernism struck at human subjectivity and the constancy of human existence and rejected the entire intellectual output of the Western tradition, accusing it of logocentrism and anthropocentrism (J.-F. Lyotard, M. Foucault, J. Derrida, G. Deleuze, R. Rorty, Z. Bauman). Different varieties of cultural posthumanism which began in the 1990s, such as feminising (E.A. Grosz, V. Kirby, R. Tong, F. Ferrando), ecologising (R. Braidotti), and gendering (J. Butler), have challenged the constancy of human nature. Neuroscientific research on the human brain resulted in the development of cognitive science and a plurality of primarily naturalistic conceptions of the human mind with an eliminationist bias (P.S. Churchland, W.V.O. Quine, D.C. Dennett), a reductionist bias (J. Smart, D.M. Armstrong, T. Metzinger), or a non-reductionist bias, such as supervenience (D. Davidson) and emergentism (K. Popper, J. Searle, R. Sperry). The information-cybernetic revolution, together with the achievements of genetics and transplantation, have brought about the development of technological posthumanism, which set itself the goal of improving human nature – more radically (N. Bostrom, I. Persson, J. Savulescu, J. Harris) or less radically (N. Agar, R.T. Anderson, Ch. Tollefsen) – but has also triggered varied forms of opposition to its claims (M. Hauskeller, F. Fukuyama, M. Sandel, J. Habermas, L. Kass). In the 20th century, within the main sub-disciplines of philosophy, naturalism was dominant in positivism (Vienna Circle), scientism (K. Pearson), Marxism (V.I. Lenin, A. Schaff, M. Fritzhand), cultural Marxism (M. Horkheimer, T. Adorno, H. Marcuse), postmodernism, and posthumanism, and it was also influential in analytic philosophy (B. Russell, A.J. Ayer), pragmatism (Ch.S. Peirce, W. James, J. Dewey), existentialism (J.-P. Sartre, M. Merleau-Ponty), hermeneutics (M. Heidegger), and structuralism (C. Lévi-Strauss, J. Lacan, M. Foucault). It should be observed, however, that some of these naturalist concepts had distinctly humanistic overtones (Z. Freud, J.-P. Sartre, C. Lévi-Strauss).

In opposition to naturalism, modern anti-naturalism was formed around the concept of Cartesian *res cogitans* alongside some of the assumptions of Descartes's system. In this approach, consciousness and thought were considered the fundamental carriers of human

subjectivity and identity, i.e., human nature (J. Locke, G. Berkeley, N. Malebranche, G.W. Leibniz, B. Pascal). I. Kant, by distinguishing noumena that belonged to the transcendental realm from empirically given phenomena and *a priori* cognition from *a posteriori* cognition, took a clear anti-naturalist position. In his transcendental philosophy, he emphasised the importance of the subject as the condition of objects in cognition and the autonomy of the subject in action, although this subject was situated in a world to which he had only phenomenal access. The negation of the possibility of cognising things in themselves led Kant to question the possibility of pursuing metaphysics and thus to undermine the anti-naturalist image of man built on it. In anti-naturalist German idealism (J.G. Fichte, F.W. Schelling, G.W.F. Hegel), thought and the subjective self were absolutised and became the key to discovering the laws of development of all reality and to understanding its meaning. At the same time, the tendency – as is characteristic of later naturalism – to recognise the deterministic ontic laws or laws of history to which man is subject became apparent in this approach. S. Kierkegaard, who defended the unique dimension of human existence, opposed the idealists' attempts to make human subjectivity abstract.

The persistence of anthropological anti-naturalism was supported by the continuous presence in philosophical discourse of the metaphysical tradition, with all its anti-naturalistic potential (J. Woroniecki, J. Maritain, K. Wojtyła, M.A. Krąpiec). In the 20th century, in philosophy and especially in anthropology, a distinctly anti-naturalistic role was played by phenomenology, which continued the tradition of the philosophy of the subject (E. Husserl, M. Scheler, E. Stein, D. von Hildebrandt, S. Strasser, R. Guardini, R. Ingarden). Because of its method of cognition, which is directed towards an eidetic understanding of the content of consciousness, it placed the human subject and first-person experience at the centre of its focus. Contrary to naturalism, it did not approve of the negation of the content of first-person experience or its reduction to third-person experience, seeing it as an expression of fundamental anthropological phenomena, such as experiencing one's embodiment or mental activity taken as a whole, as well as the various subjective acts that comprise it: experiences of a cognitive, emotional, appetitive, religious, or aesthetic nature. Theistic existentialism, which was anti-naturalistically oriented, also played an important role (G. Marcel,

K. Jaspers), as did the philosophy of dialogue (M. Buber, F. Rosenzweig, E. Lévinas, J. Tischner), which recognised the ethical, anthropological, and even metaphysical primacy of interpersonal relations in the existing reality. Anti-naturalists also included a number of representatives from hermeneutics (W. Dilthey, P. Ricoeur), the neurosciences, the cognitive sciences (J. Eccles, J. Bremer), as well as political communitarianism (Ch. Taylor). Anthropological anti-naturalism lies at the basis of most contemporary personalist conceptions of various provenance (Augustinian, Thomistic, Kantian, pragmatic, phenomenological) and various inclinations, such as the metaphysical (J. Maritain, M.A. Krąpiec, V. Posenti, B. Wald), the liberalist (E. Mounier, D. de Rougemont, G. Marcel, P. Ricoeur, K. Rahner, J. Tischner), and the ethical (K. Wojtyła, T. Styczeń, A. Rodziński, M.E. Jaworski, A. Półtawski, R. Buttiglione).

Discussion of the term

There are a wide range of intermediate positions – both naturalistic and anti-naturalistic – in the many disputes over human nature, which differ from one another by their approach to specific issues. Depending on the aspect under analysis, anti-naturalism and naturalism take more or less opposite positions. Although the discussion on the existence of human nature is of fundamental philosophical significance and separates essentialists from anti-essentialists, it does not coincide with the dispute between naturalism and anti-naturalism. Of far greater importance, however, are numerous important disputes relating to human nature's source, carrier, essence, constancy, continuity, purpose, and laws.

Dispute over the source and carrier of human nature. The problem of source and carrier depends on how nature is understood. What separates naturalistic from anti-naturalistic conceptions here is the participation of a transcendent factor in the genesis of human nature. In naturalism, the manner in which man comes into existence, both in terms of phylogenesis and ontogenesis, is similar to the genesis of other material entities and is conditioned by the same natural factors. The phylogenesis of man is the result of an evolutionary process shared by all entities based on the mechanism of genetic change and natural selection. The nature of man as an individual is

the consequence of him inheriting a combination of biological traits from his parents. In some naturalistic conceptions, an important role in man's coming into being is attributed to the subject's own activity, to the impact of society, or to the impact of culture. It is still debated to what extent genetics or society are the factors that create human nature. Anti-naturalism does not question the impact of biological factors on the emergence of both the whole species *homo sapiens* and the individual man. However, it claims that the complexity and synchronisation of life processes cannot be explained without an underlying and independent integrating principle (P. Lenartowicz). Therefore, the immaterial soul, created directly by God in the creative act or generated by parents (inborn or transmitted – traducianism) is regarded as the essential carrier of human nature. Under the influence of evolutionism, it is most often assumed that the emergence of the human species is the result of either a process programmed by the Absolute (P. Teilhard de Chardin) or the Absolute's extraordinary one-off intervention in this process. In non-metaphysical anti-naturalism, it is assumed that the carriers of nature include man's conscious existence and related subjective relations, positions in the world, abilities, activities, and experiences.

Dispute over the essence of human nature (1). The main dispute about the essence of human nature concerns whether it is material-biological, spiritual, or bodily-spiritual. Nowadays, the concept of a purely spiritual human nature is generally rejected. In naturalism, human nature is considered to be material. Based on scientific observations of the functional relationship between mental acts and neuronal processes, it is inferred that mental acts are emergents of processes taking place in the human brain. Moderate approaches treat these acts as real, distinct from neuronal processes, and governed by separate laws. In extreme approaches, such as physicalism, the validity of first-person experience is undermined, and only that which can be cognised by empirical methods is considered real. The anti-naturalist tradition, both its metaphysical and non-metaphysical concepts (phenomenological, existential, dialogical, hermeneutic), points to the aspectual transcendence of human states or acts over matter and nature, which manifests in mental cognition, love, freedom, relationships with other persons, or relations with the world of values. It is claimed that this transcendence not only reveals manifestations of the immateriality of human nature

but also provides arguments for its spiritual-bodily complexity and the personal status of man.

Dispute over the essence of human nature (2). Another dispute about the essence of human nature concerns whether it is rational (intelligible), reasonable, irrational, or even absurd, although these positions are not always opposed to each other. In anti-naturalism it is claimed that man's reasonable nature, which is manifested in his consciousness and freedom, allows him to be an autonomous subject-source of his action. It is impossible to explain the existence of this reasonable nature by referring to any system of internal or external factors that is independent of man's decisions. Thus, the reasonableness of nature is considered the fundamental distinguishing feature of man as a personal being. In the non-metaphysical tradition, the emphasis is shifted to the subjective states or acts of man that arise from his reasonable nature and are capable of transcendence. Contemporary naturalism acknowledges the rationality (intelligibility) of biologically understood human nature, while at the same time it undermines or relativises man's reasonableness, which is undermined or relativised on two grounds: first, because human intelligence is treated as an extension of animal intelligence which enables both animals and humans to use tools; second, because human consciousness, cognition, and freedom are fully dependent on neuronal processes that take place in the brain. By attacking the logocentrism and anthropocentrism of Western culture, cultural naturalism undermines the significance of the reasonableness of human nature or expresses disillusionment with its state. Both naturalism and anti-naturalism contain concepts that, to varying degrees, also undermine the rationality of human nature. Psychoanalysis points to the role played by drives and subconscious factors in human nature, while existentialism sometimes focuses on the paradoxicality, irrationality, or even absurdity of man's situation in the world and his existence.

Dispute over the essence of human nature (3). In the early days of philosophy, both the naturalistic and anti-naturalistic traditions – taking into account man's reasonableness – believed in the perfection of human nature. The personalistically oriented anti-naturalist tradition sees the perfection inherent only in personal entities in the reasonableness of human nature; the dignity of these entities is manifested in their being ends that are irreducible to the role of a means of action. At

the same time, depending on the conception, this nature is considered potentialised in its realisation through man's own personal acts and his relation to other persons or to the world of values. The perception of the perfection of human nature was for a long time significantly influenced by centuries of religious-theological disputes concerning the effects of original sin as the cause of the contamination of human nature and its vulnerability to evil. The issue of the tension between the ontic perfection of human nature and the evil that occurs as a result of its action gained renewed significance with the genocidal totalitarianisms of the 20th century. For a long time, modern naturalism proclaimed the evolutionary perfection of the human species and the possibility of removing evils that affect man individually or socially. Nowadays, the dominant belief is in the limited perfection or even imperfection of human nature. Therefore, although man is recognised as the supreme product of the forces of nature, some thinkers argue for the need to perfect human nature or transform it into something more perfect through genetic engineering, biotechnology, and cybernetics. Cultural posthumanism considers traditional narratives about man to be false and claims that it is necessary to change the image of man and attitudes towards him by acknowledging non-human ways of relating to reality that various beings have developed in the evolutionary process.

Dispute over the continuity and constancy of human nature. Contemporary anti-naturalism and naturalism differ considerably on the question of the continuity and constancy of human nature. In the anti-naturalist tradition, the dominant view is that the continuity and constancy of human nature does not depend solely on biological determinants. The metaphysical tradition emphasises that nature is of a complex, spiritual-corporeal character. Therefore, at its essential core, which is reason, it retains generic continuity and individual constancy because concrete people do exist as its subjects. The extent to which human nature is constituted by corporeality and biologism is susceptible to change; it is dependent on an organism for its action. The extent of possible changes is inscribed in nature, and its current expression is the plurality of human subjects with all their genetic and phenotypic diversity. In non-substantialist conceptions, the continuity and constancy of human nature depend on the activity of consciousness and its manifold relations, states, and acts through which it manifests the human way of

existence. In naturalism, the continuity and constancy of human nature is linked to an organism, with its genetic, physiological, and neuronal determinants. Changes in these determinants which took place in the evolutionary process led to the emergence of the nature of the species *homo sapiens*. This nature is relatively fixed but is also susceptible to further modifications as a result of biological and social factors. The individual constancy of human nature depends on consciousness, which stems from neuronal processes. Proponents of bundle theory argue for the discontinuity of human identity, which, in their view, is provided neither by an organism nor by consciousness (D. Parfit).

Dispute over the purpose of human nature and its laws. The dispute over purpose and laws complements other aspects of the dispute over human nature and clearly separates naturalistic and anti-naturalistic conceptions. The anti-naturalist tradition generally accepts that human existence transcends biologically conceived nature. At least some of these conceptions point to the existence of an objective purpose for human nature that transcends the biological and social world, in addition to the various subjective goals that man sets for himself in his life and actions. God is considered the source of human nature and its ultimate goal; this goal gives people happiness. Human nature, which derives from eternal law, manifests itself through natural inclinations inherent in man and through his entitlements to preserve and transmit life and to freely pursue his personal development. Entitlements (*ius*) demand being respected in the social sphere, where they become the foundation and norm of laws binding in both the moral sphere and positive law (*lex*). The first expression of natural law is the injunction to 'do good and avoid evil'. Modern naturalism (Grotius, Hobbes) led to immanentisation and naturalisation of the purpose of human nature; this purpose became the fight for survival and the most important law was the protection of one's existence. Collectivism pitted individualistic egoism against the good of the community, to which it totally subordinated human life and action. As a consequence of the rejection of natural law, positive law with its hierarchy and legitimacy (H. Kelsen) has gained prominence in modern naturalism. Increasingly, entitlements derived from natural law are being replaced by regulations derived from positive law (human rights), which are, to varying degrees, compatible with natural law. The undermining of the uniqueness and

continuity of human nature leads to a reduction in the scope of the validity of entitlements derived from it and thus weakens the protection of man at every stage of his existence.

The plurality of detailed discussions dedicated to human nature held between anthropological naturalism and anthropological anti-naturalism stems from the fundamental dispute over whether the essence of human nature is material-biological or corporeal-spiritual, and thus whether it allows man to transcend material determinants. Linked to this are questions of the genesis and carrier of human nature, its constancy and continuity, and its purpose and its laws. To a lesser extent, it involves disputes about the reasonableness and perfection of that nature.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

The dispute between naturalism and anti-naturalism over human nature can be analysed on both a systematic and a historical-philosophical level (philosophy as discourse). In the first case, it is part of a broader discussion about the nature of reality and its cognition. Naturalism accuses anti-naturalism of being unable to develop a conception of man that is compatible with modern science. In its extreme forms, the anti-naturalist picture of the human being that is built on the subjective self, consciousness, and free will is totally rejected as being an extension of folk psychology. This image is considered primitive and more appropriate to outdated religious traditions than to the knowledge of humans that has been amassed by the detailed sciences (Duch, 1999). Defending this image is regarded in naturalism as a sign of ignorance and an unwillingness to accept facts, research findings, and the solutions provided by the detailed sciences, especially by neuroscience (Bremer, 2016). Apart from the naturalistic critique, anti-naturalism encounters two problems of its own. The first is the need to explain the reason for recognising the subjective transcendence of man when the unity of human nature has been empirically proven; this unity is manifested in the dependence of consciousness and its associated mental acts on the determinants of the brain and its processes. The second is the necessity of if not implementing then at least addressing the results of human cognition

obtained in the detailed sciences after a naturalistic interpretation of these results has been rejected.

Anti-naturalists point out that although naturalism is based on the findings of the detailed sciences and sometimes also applies their methods, it is not a scientific but a philosophical position. Scientific cognition is not the only way of acquiring knowledge about the world. It is unjustified to replace teleologism with functionalism; it is also unjustified to replace the answer to the question of who man is with the answer to the question of where he is from. Naturalistic assumptions and methods of cognition exclude the affirmation of the transcendent qualities of human nature or the recognition of the personal status of the human being. Anti-naturalists emphasise the importance and irreducibility of anthropological facts which reveal the uniqueness of man in the world, such as transcendence over the biological and social world (M.A. Krąpiec), personal self-determination (K. Wojtyła), the capacity of relating to one's nature (Spaemann, 2006), the capacity for laughter and subjectivity with self-identification and self-reference, as well as freedom, moral life, and religiosity (Scruton, 2017), the unique intentionality of cognition and action (V. Possenti), or self-consciousness, self-knowledge, and the irreducibility of the subject to physical phenomena or objects (Frank, 2002). According to anti-naturalists, the evolutionist genesis of man and his mental life is so improbable that it is simply impossible (A. Plantinga), and brain sciences cannot replace first-person self-knowledge obtained in interpersonal relations (R. Scruton, V. Possenti). Moreover, contrary to naturalism, the thesis of the existence of the soul today is legitimate (K. Wojtyła, M.A. Krąpiec, P. Lenartowicz) and provable (S. Judycki).

According to anti-naturalists, the explanations of human nature proposed in naturalism are fragmentary and limited to only selected aspects of human nature. They are based on narrowly understood empiricism, which ignores phenomenological experience. The human mind cannot be reduced to a computational dimension and its models are simplistic in their assumption of the synchronicity of mental and neurological processes (Bremer, 2016). Hopes that neuroscience and cognitive science would unravel the mystery of the human personal life have proved too optimistic. A consequence of naturalism is the anthropological error, which consists in considering man as the product of biological and social forces. By questioning the manifestations of man's transcendence, some

versions of naturalism have subjected him entirely to political power and, as such, have been negatively validated in socio-political conditions.

In addition to them being critical of each other, both naturalism and anti-naturalism contain traces of their mutual impact. Some representatives of anti-naturalism try to implement naturalistic scientific solutions to the question of man's genesis or the understanding of mental processes. Some phenomenologists still study the embodiment of man, while some naturalists attempt to combine neuroscience research with phenomenological analyses of the first-person experience.

The history of philosophy as a discourse demonstrates the alternating dominance of naturalism and anti-naturalism, therefore neither of these two positions can be considered privileged from a historical perspective. The different eras emphasised either the more immanent (naturalistic) aspects of human nature or the more transcendent (anti-naturalistic) aspects, which stemmed not only from the evolution of philosophical discourse but also from changes in cultural determinants. In contemporary philosophical discourse, as in all of contemporary culture, the dominance of naturalism and the naturalistic image of man is obvious. Some philosophers place great hopes on transformation and some form of enhancement of human nature, while others draw attention to its consequences and the dangers entailed (Fukuyama, 2002; Habermas, 2003). 21st-century anthropological naturalism is based on the naturalistically oriented detailed sciences – natural, social, and human – and at the same time supports them. This naturalism rests on the strength of the detailed sciences and their potential to cognise men and to transform his individual and social life.

In the plurality of its philosophical conceptions, anthropological naturalism attempts to maintain a link with the detailed sciences, especially the natural sciences, while also showing their limitation in explaining the human question when isolated from philosophy. Furthermore, it purges anthropology of those philosophical concepts and assumptions that undermine the material-biological determinants of human nature. By emphasising the aspectual transcendence of human nature over material biological and social reality, anti-naturalism serves to protect the life, dignity, and integrity of man as a personal being, i.e., a subject who is autonomous in his cognition and action in the world (Ch. Delsol). In some respects, then, both positions play an important and irreducible

role in philosophical discourse, although they also generate specific problems. Naturalism, due to its reductionism, is prone to interpretations that depersonalise and even dehumanise man. Thus, it should not shed responsibility for its consequences too easily, especially in the way it approaches the most vulnerable and least-protected members of a community. Anti-naturalism should not overlook or neglect man's material and biological determinants and needs. It is clear that nowadays, due to its cultural dominance, naturalism poses more threats.

The dispute between naturalism and anti-naturalism over human nature takes place not only on a theoretical level (what it is like), but also on a practical level (what is done and how it is done). This dispute is multifacetedly entangled in the broadly understood political, cultural, and economic contexts; it is also laden with serious consequences for individual and social life. Among other things, the stance taken on human nature determines one's approach to most bioethical issues (cloning, genetic experimentation, abortion, euthanasia) as well as social issues (respect for the natural rights and freedoms of man, the relationship between man and the state). The importance of the dispute over human nature and its entanglement in social discourse means that its understanding is increasingly influenced by non-philosophical factors. Participants of the public debate openly voice their growing expectations that this debate be resolved in the desired direction and manner. As a result, the efforts of philosophers are increasingly directed towards discussing the social consequences of the positions taken in this area. Increasingly, other participants in the public debate have also become involved in the resolution of this dispute.

The contemporary relevance of the anti-naturalist approach to understanding human nature has become particularly apparent under the influence of the anthropological errors that underpinned the great totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century. The ideologies of racial collectivism (Nazism) and class collectivism (socialism) were built on anthropological naturalism. The crimes and genocides that occurred in the states gripped by these ideologies exposed both the social consequences of totalitarianism and the practical effects of an erroneous grasp of human nature. The social teaching of the Catholic Church in the 20th century pointed out that an erroneous grasp of human nature occurs not only in totalitarian collectivism but also in naturalistically oriented individualism, to which Western liberal democracies increasingly often refer nowadays. Therefore, democratic

systems are also threatened by overt or covert totalitarianism, especially if they reject moral principles and values reflected in their attitude towards the weakest members of society (John Paul II, Benedict XVI).

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Stanisław Gałkowski
Ignatianum University in Cracow
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1084-0487>
<https://doi.org/10.35765/slowniki.351en>

Dispute over the subject in ethics

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: A subject is a being to whom agency and moral responsibility can be legitimately attributed.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: The range of positions regarding subjectivity can be demonstrated by presenting how it is understood in three successive philosophical traditions. Representatives of the first claim that the proper subject of morality is a fully autonomous and agentive individual, who is thus free and self-conscious (classical philosophy). Representatives of the second list numerous limitations on human subjectivity (e.g., Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud), while representatives of the third treat the concept of subjectivity as an illusion – a purely theoretical construct without any existing designator in reality (e.g., Skinner and determinists).

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: The most frequently debated issues concerning moral subjectivity regard the conditions in which it is possible to acknowledge or question the moral responsibility of an individual who performs an act. These primarily include consciousness, freedom, and the relative constancy of the acting person's identity.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: By taking for granted the existence of morality, ethics presupposes some form of subjectivity. Consequently, we must assume the existence of a subject who meets its basic requirements, namely the freedom and consciousness in which he performs an act. This makes it possible to postulate the existence of – as it is understood in classical philosophy – a 'strong' subject.

Keywords: subject, moral subject, morality, responsibility, ethics

Definition of the term

Ethics is the study of human behaviour relating to moral good and moral evil. The moral subject is one who acts in such a way that it is possible to apply fundamental moral categories to judge him, his actions, and their consequences. Reflection on the subject and on subjectivity is thus essential as it is impossible to reflect rationally on morality without referring to subjectivity.

The term 'subject' (Latin: *subiectum*) comes from the Latin term for 'moral' *ubiletum*, which is the equivalent of the Greek term *hypokeimennon*, derived from *hypokeimai*, translated as 'underlying thing', 'at the bottom of something', and less literally, 'to be the basis of something' or 'to be the composite of something' (Węgrzycki, 1997). Józef Herbut defines the subject as "that in which something resides or is contained, to which something can be attributed, as the centre of activity, or as the one who performs cognitive, volitional, and emotional acts, etc." (Herbut, 1997, p. 425).

In the history of philosophy, the concept of the subject has appeared in many contexts and has been and still is reflected on in various philosophical disciplines. Subjects can be analysed in logical, cognitive, metaphysical, anthropological, and ethical terms. The concept of the subject is both necessary and constitutive for ethics, if only because it is impossible to make a moral evaluation of actions that are not performed by someone. It is worth adding, however, that within ethical reflection, the various schools and traditions approach the subject in very different ways. The ethical discussion on the issue of subjectivity is not only cognitively interesting, but its references and consequences go far beyond ethics itself.

The range of positions regarding subjectivity is enormous: from those who claim that the proper subject of morality is a fully autonomous and agentive individual who is thus free and self-conscious (classical philosophy), to those who list numerous limitations of human subjectivity (they are called 'masters of suspicion'), and those who treat the concept of subjectivity as an illusion, a purely theoretical construct without any actually existing designator in reality (determinism).

To have one's own subjectivity is to 'be someone' and to know that one 'is someone' (Taylor, 2002, pp. 52–54). According to this interpretation, to be a subject means that one is conscious of being 'different to

other people', being aware that one stands out from his environment. This presupposes that I am is the bearer of a set of qualities that are characteristic only of me. In the case of human identity, it is about recognising that I am the cause of my activity and the subject of my cognitive, volitional, and emotional acts. The claim that I am the source of at least some of the processes that take place within me presupposes that I exist as a person – I have my own identity and subjectivity.

The subject is the cause of his acts; he is not merely their vehicle or a passive 'performer' (actor), but he initiates them and is their active perpetrator. As Alain Renault put it:

since the emergence of modernity, humanism has consisted in valorising humanity's twofold capacity to be conscious of itself (self-reflection) and to determine its own destiny (freedom as self-determination). Historically, these two dimensions have defined the classical idea of *subjectivity* as consisting in the capacity – the quintessentially human capacity – to be the conscious, responsible author of one's thoughts and acts; in short, to be their foundation or *sub-jectum* (Renaut, 2014, p. xxvi).

Historical analysis of the term

The strong subject in classical philosophy. The above-mentioned conditions refer to a number of 'strong' assumptions of a metaphysical and anthropological nature which consequently paint a picture of the 'strong subject', i.e., a subject that

is guided by a certain rationale when making decisions. We can say that the subject's action is rational because of his recognised rationale. The strong subject is first and foremost an agentive subject who acts and whose actions have an impact on the reality around him. Finally, the strong subject is one who has access to the rationale of his action, which is a necessary condition for responsibility. He is able to identify an act, recognise it as his own and, consequently, take responsibility for it. Finally, we can say that it this subject recognises his normative identity (Duchliński, Kobyliński, Moń & Podrez, 2022, p. 47).

The requirements thus outlined are fully met by the concept of man developed within classical philosophy, in which man is understood as both substance and person. In classical philosophy, e.g., Thomism, subjectivity seeks its ultimate basis in metaphysics. Referring to

substance, which underlies all changes and human acts, makes it possible to acknowledge the existence of “the real identity of the human being in spite of its multifaceted variability” (Krapiec, 1974, p. 114). The substantiality of the human being is also the ontic basis for the reciprocal interaction of human faculties, both mental (reason and will) and physical, which make it possible to realise the accepted aims of an action and thus not only to transform consciousness but also make real changes in the external world. Two spheres come together in man: the biological-vegetative one and the psycho-spiritual one. However, bodily and spiritual faculties are subject to a certain hierarchy. Recognition of the primacy of reason and will is fundamental in classical philosophy. It is these two supreme human faculties that determine man’s actions, but they should interact with the other elements of his nature. They determine the uniqueness of the human person, which is “every man thanks to the rational soul, endowed with mental life, cognition, and spiritual will” (Swieżawski, 1983, p. 121).

Another feature of Thomistic philosophy is cognitive realism and the intelligibility of being. Man functions in the real world and can gain cognitive access to it by formulating judgements – based on his experiences – that can legitimately be considered true. In the cognitive process, man not only discovers the external world, but also – and this is of particular importance in the aspect of subjectivity – acquires self-knowledge, thanks to which he is able to become fully conscious of the true motivation behind his acts and the role it plays in them (this was later questioned by the ‘masters of suspicion’). The decision-making process is thus at least potentially completely transparent for the acting subject. It is only by gaining full self-knowledge that I can form the basis of my belief that I am the source of my acts and that they are the result of my decisions – independent of any determinisms, pressure from authorities and tradition, or social pressures. It is the cumulative knowledge of the effects and causes of one’s action that makes it possible to recognise man as the subject in the fullest sense, that is, a rational subject who, when choosing an action, is guided by rationales which – in the process of fully transparent reflection – are recognised as legitimate. Of course, a fully autonomous moral subject thus outlined is not a description but only a certain ‘ideal type’, which it is our duty to realise, but which is achievable only through a long process of development.

The need to ground and strengthen subjectivity stems from the conviction of the existence of human nature and the objectivity of natural law, which shows us the right direction of our development and exists independently of our consciousness. Man does not decide what the good is but 'reads' it in reality. Hence the requirement, when making moral decisions, to take into account the nature of the objects of these decisions, i.e., 'inclinations' and the purposes inherent in them. Nature here means not only the properties a given thing has in its present form but also and above all it is a reflection of the divine idea – the perfection of being, i.e., the fullness of being that is potentially given to it. As Stefan Swieżawski wrote:

This perfection of being, towards which this being strives consciously and instinctively, or unconsciously, being motivated by a natural drive, is not arbitrary or accidental. This perfection is constituted in every being by a specific and strictly defined task, i.e., by the goal that this being is to fulfil. In the light of this goal, the deficiencies to be overcome by a given being will all be deficiencies in the realisation of that goal. The concept of the good is most closely linked to the concept of the goal. [...] Every being [...] strives for and desires the good insofar as it fulfils its aim, i.e., acquires the perfection owed and due to it. This very perfection, which the being is to realise, is that natural good desired by the being. The goal to be realised by each being is not arbitrary or accidental; on the contrary, it is precisely defined and is constituted by the nature of the given being most fully expressed in its "ideal type" (Swieżawski, 1983, p. 180).

Every human act acquires a positive or negative moral qualification depending on whether it brings man closer to or further away from his ultimate good, i.e., from the realisation of his God-given nature. A good person is one who, in realising that humanity is tasked to him, becomes fully human. The recognition of this objective good imposes upon us, first, the duty to realise it through individual work on oneself and, second, the duty to help other people achieve it.

Masters of suspicion – weakened subjectivity. By questioning the intelligibility of being and the possibility of cognitive access to reality, contemporary philosophy calls into question the two fundamental conditions of subjectivity, namely freedom and self-consciousness, which are closely linked since it is difficult to consider as free (which means, among other things, the ability to direct one's own life) someone who does not understand what he is doing. A group of thinkers that Paul Ricoeur called the "masters of suspicion" argued, each in

a slightly different way, that what we take to be our consciousness (and especially self-consciousness) is only apparent consciousness or false consciousness which does not reach the true motives of our behaviour. In the *Preface* to “The Genealogy of Morals”, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote:

We are unknown, we knowers, ourselves to ourselves: this has its own good reason. We have never searched for ourselves – how should it then come to pass, that we should ever find ourselves? (Nietzsche, 2014, p. 1).

The reasons for this ignorance are looked for in various phenomena. Nietzsche saw it primarily in our unequal participation in the very inner principle of the world: the will to power. As he wrote: “This world is the will to power – and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power – and nothing besides!” (Nietzsche, 2011, p. 505). People with a greater will to power are able, not only in an act of self-reflection, to perceive, understand and, above all, recognise their own moral status (including, of course, their membership in the ‘master race’ and the resulting perfection); also, just as importantly, they are able to carry the burden of the resulting freedom. Subjectivity is only enjoyed fully by very few individuals – the superhumans. For the rest, who are inherently weak and passive, such an affirmative attitude evokes only fear and envy. According to Nietzsche, these feelings activate the psychological mechanism of resentment, which underlies slave morality. Resentment lies in our rejecting what we really desire and want to achieve because we are afraid to act towards achieving it or we fail along the way. As a result, we start thinking of the originally desired virtues or goods as evil and immoral. Resentment is unconscious, so the vast majority of people do not realise why they are guided by one but not another hierarchy of values and why they adhere to this and not that lifestyle, i.e., they simply do not understand the motives behind their decisions. Their subjectivity is thus significantly reduced.

Although Nietzsche admitted that achieving full subjectivity is possible, he postulated that this is only available to a handful of people who have the right amount of the will to power within them. Only they, the superhumans, can liberate themselves from slave morality and re-evaluate all values. People who do not have the right amount of the will to power are simply unable to do so and forever remain at the level of slave morality. The aim of the process of upbringing and all educational

endeavours is not to help everyone to achieve full subjectivity but to select and support the few that are capable of subjectivity. In practice, this makes little difference, because it is only with hindsight that we are able to see that they were capable of it, so the pursuit of this ideal should be a universal aspiration.

Karl Marx explained the reasons for limited subjectivity differently. He claimed that the process of the construction of human identity is primarily determined by economic and social processes:

[i]n the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence but their social existence that determines their consciousness (Marx, 1859, p. 4).

With the assumption that the most broadly understood spiritual sphere (which covers not only religions and ideologies but also theoretical thought, including philosophy) is a superstructure placed on the top of material relations of production, it inevitably leads to the alienation of man. Through his labour, man changes the world, but the products of his labour – which are alien and hostile – oppose him. This is what lies at the root of the phenomenon Marx termed ideology, by which he means false consciousness, i.e., the result of the mystification of human consciousness, whereby the products of our mind begin to affect us ‘from the outside’. A person subjected to these processes is unable to discover the real causes and forces that guide his thinking; he cannot understand the processes that really influence his thinking, including the true motives for his behaviour, but is stuck in the belief that he is only influenced by his reflexivity (Marx, 1998). The resulting limitation of one’s subjectivity can be overcome when one becomes aware of one’s situation and cognitive status and when social relations are changed in such a way as to enable human alienation to be overcome (in practice, this would presumably mean introducing communism). Of course, this inevitably leads to a paradox, since it is not clear how Marx and Engels,

who after all were not workers, managed – without changing social relations – to liberate themselves from the mindset of their class and take the side of the exploited working class.

The third philosopher of suspicion was Sigmund Freud, who emphasised that what we commonly take to be our consciousness is only the surface of a structure shaped by forces of which we are mostly unaware. Personality consists of three main elements: the *id*, the *ego* and the *superego*. They are independent of each other in the sense that each has its own different properties, functions, and dynamisms, but they are nevertheless closely interrelated and – in normal conditions – form a whole, so that it is almost impossible to separate their interactions and determine the relative influence of each on one's behaviour. All human behaviour is the result of the reciprocal dynamic interactions of these three systems. The primary system of personality is the *id*, which is the reservoir of innate psychic drives. The *id* is the reservoir of psychic energy, which is also the driving force for the other two systems. It represents the world of subjective sensations and has no knowledge of objective reality. The drive was defined by Freud as the psychic representation of inner arousal, which is somatic in nature. The basic drive is the *libido*, which is governed by the principle of pleasure (primarily of a sexual nature) that demands immediate gratification. The *ego* (self) is the part of our personality that we often confuse with its totality. It is the only part that is rational and conscious and guided by the principle of reality. It decides whether to take action, which drives to satisfy, and how. In making these choices, it attempts to reconcile the usually conflicting demands of the *id*, the *superego*, and the external environment. These attempts require a lot of effort, which makes the *ego* the most fragile structure. The element of personality that takes shape last is the *superego*. Like the *id*, it is non-rational in nature, but also, like the *ego*, it attempts to exercise control over the drives of the *id*. The *superego* is the internal representation of the traditional values and ideals of society instilled in us through the process of socialisation. In its pursuit of the principle of obligation, the *superego* appeals to ideals rather than to reality and strives for perfection without regard to reality or pleasure, or the lack thereof.

The different elements of our personality set contradictory goals for us, which creates internal tensions, gives rise to neuroses, and is

the source of much pathological behaviour. The *ego*, while oscillating between the forces of the *id* and *the superego*, tries to reconcile their demands and maintain stability by means of various psychological mechanisms, e.g., sublimation or compensation, while maintaining a semblance of rationality. Thus, man is prompted to act by mechanisms of which he is not aware and tries to reconcile forces (which are part of his personality) of which he knows little. At the same time, since these forces are unconscious, the *ego* creates the illusion of believing that the decision-making processes that take place within it are autonomous and motivated by cognitive mechanisms that make it possible to understand the totality of reality, both internal and external.

When man takes action, he is unable to understand the true causes and motivations of his acts; thus, his subjectivity and the possibility of controlling his behaviour are partial and illusory at best. The only way to achieve full subjectivity is to understand the principles that govern the psyche and to become aware of the unconscious during psychoanalysis. As Freud wrote: “the division of mental life into what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premise on which psychoanalysis is based, and this division alone makes it possible for it to understand pathological mental processes, which are as common as they are important” (Freud, 2018, p. 1). Only psychoanalytic therapy enables us to gain insight into the layers of our unconscious and thus offers the chance to take these layers – at least partially – into account when reflecting on our lives and making decisions. However, this therapy must take place under the guidance of someone who has already undergone it, having thus gained knowledge of the unconscious. This gives rise to a certain paradox (which only applies to Freud’s classical conception), since, first, it should be consistently assumed that people before Freud, being unaware of the deepest motives of their behaviour, were unable to achieve full subjectivity. And second, it is not clear how Freud himself was able to develop a psychoanalytic theory, since he was the only one who performed self-psychotherapy, and that, according to his theory, is impossible.

Determinism – the end of subjectivity. The masters of suspicion (their list can undoubtedly be extended to include many prominent contemporary thinkers) agreed on two things: first, that our consciousness (and therefore moral subjectivity) is strongly limited;

second, that it is nevertheless possible to strengthen it, at least to an extent. Determinism, a view that is gaining popularity today, radically undermines human subjectivity and instead refers to the principle of universal causality. This is a widely accepted paradigm in the natural sciences, but its application to the human sciences is met with resistance because its immediate consequence is the negation of human freedom.

Richard Brandt defines determinism as the view that any event could be predicted if, first, we knew all the laws of nature and, second, we knew enough about prior states of affairs to be able to use them in making predictions (Brandt, 1959, p. 507). Both conditions are, of course, impossible to meet, and the future remains a closed book to us. It is not possible to cognise states of affairs with the precision of 'every single particle', nor is it possible to know all the laws of nature, but they nevertheless operate realistically in the existing universe and change it in necessary ways. According to determinists, the fact that we are unable to predict these changes lies at the root of the illusions of freedom and subjectivity. Here is how Brandt explains it:

if a person takes a determinist view of human behaviour, he thinks that, theoretically, it is possible to predict in a fertilised cell – providing one knows all the properties of this fertilised cell – the relevant laws of nature and all the situations in which the human being developing in it will find itself in life, what kind of human being he will be at each stage of his life, what he will do, and what he will think at any given moment (Brandt, 1959, pp. 508–509).

Determinism is essentially a metaphysical view derived from the belief that one type of cause applies to everything, and humans cannot be an exception to it. Nowadays, universal determinism is sometimes rejected on the basis of studies that seem to indicate that at the quantum level some particles behave in an undetermined way. It is, of course, up to physics to resolve this issue. Nevertheless, this view, even if true, changes nothing in ethics and human subjectivity: if the mental states of our mind are a function of what happens in our nervous system (with the brain at the forefront), then it makes little difference from the point of view of human autonomy whether the changes in the nervous system are a necessary (determined) response to external circumstances or whether they are random. In the first case, the state of our mind is determined and therefore (theoretically) predictable; in the second,

it is subject to chance and therefore unpredictable. However, in both cases, the state of our nervous system is the sole cause of our thoughts and decisions, and knowing why such a state has arisen changes nothing. Even if our actions are not necessary but merely accidental, we are still not their authors, and it is hard to acknowledge our responsibility for their consequences. Indeterminism would have just as destructive consequences for ethics as determinism.

The most significant consequence of determinism is the inevitability of human fate – the belief that the world cannot be any different to how it is at any given moment, and that all individual decisions and beliefs are necessary and enforced by the entire history of the world to date. Nevertheless – and this should be emphasised, as these concepts are frequently confused – determinism is not fatalism. Fatalism assumes that the final outcome of our efforts – plans, actions, and decisions – is predetermined and nothing we can do will change it. However, it does not deny that we are the source of these efforts. When Oedipus and his parents tried to avoid the destiny foretold to them, they were making real and autonomous decisions, i.e., decisions whose source was themselves. Oedipus's struggle with destiny can be metaphorically compared to a chess game played between a grandmaster and an amateur player: the champion is bound to win; his opponent is making his decisions as only he can and is doing his very best but ultimately his decisions will prove totally ineffective. They are not merely an automatic reaction to external stimuli but have their origin, at least in part, in his inner experiences. He thus retains his autonomy – he is a subject.

Defenders of determinism often argue that it changes nothing in describing human moral behaviour. We still learn about the world, make plans, perform acts of valuation, make decisions, and try to carry them out. Moreover, determinism does not claim that we have no control over our actions or that our actions do not change the world around us; for example, if I hit someone, I am the cause of their pain and annoyance. If I had made a different decision, done something different, the world would be different. Since we are the cause of this change, it can be judged in moral terms: our act can make us proud or ashamed, it can gain the approval or reprimand of an outside observer, and we should also be rewarded or punished for our behaviour. This is why Richard Brandt believes that determinism changes nothing in ethical practice.

There are certain favourable and unfavourable 'moral' attitudes towards people that are prompted by their behaviour. These are not removed by reflection on the reasons for that behaviour, which may or may not be objectively justifiable even if determinism is true; if so, the terms 'reprehensible' and 'morally praiseworthy' apply to certain acts (Brandt, 1959, p. 524).

At the same time, determinism changes everything. While it does not propose a different description for a human moral act, it gives each of its stages a different understanding. In determinism, everything I have thought, decided, and done was, in principle, foreseeable, since it was the consequence of an extremely complex system of causes that forced my action, and in this sense my act (and all its subsequent stages) could not have been other than it actually was. "Could not" means that the system of realistically existing causes did not permit a different course of action; it does not mean that that a different course of action would have been logically impossible. Determinism thus destroys subjectivity and even the possibility of thinking about subjective reality. Metaphorically speaking, man has a status similar to a whirlpool of water in a stream: one can point to a physical structure that really affects the environment by, e.g., eroding the banks or pulling people under water. These effects can be assessed as good or bad. Moreover, these actions really depend on what is happening inside the stream. Everything that happens is the result of the interactions of the water flow, which creates the whirlpool. Nothing starts inside a whirlpool, and everything is the result of the play of external forces that are independent of it. Thus, this negates all the attributes of both subjectivity and being a person. One can hardly even say that one has done something; at most, something has happened within one's body. Characteristically, not all proponents of determinism reject these consequences of their views. The following anecdote, for example, testifies to this:

Along with the development of technology has gone an underlying philosophy of rigid determinism as illustrated by a brief exchange I had with Professor B.F. Skinner of Harvard at a recent conference. A paper given by Dr. Skinner led me to direct these remarks to him. "From what I understood Dr. Skinner to say, it is his understanding that though he might have thought he chose to come to this meeting, might have thought he had a purpose in giving his speech, such thoughts are really illusory. He actually made certain marks on paper and emitted certain sounds here simply because his genetic make-up and his past

environment had operantly conditioned his behaviour in such a way that it was rewarding to make these sounds, and that he as a person doesn't enter into this. In fact, if I get his thinking correctly, from his strictly scientific point of view, he, as a person, does not exist" [my emphasis – S.G.]. In his reply Dr. Skinner said that he would not go into the question of whether he had any choice in the matter (presumably because the whole issue is illusory) but stated: 'I do accept your characterisation of my own presence here'" (May, 1967, p. 171).

The problem, however, is that the statement "I accept the view that I do not exist" shows Skinner's inconsistency, because in saying this he assumes that his acceptance of determinism is his free act (i.e., he could have reacted differently to his adversary's statement), whereas determinism contradicts precisely this. Not to mention that the claim "I do not exist" is internally contradictory.

However, if determinism is true, it is true only at this very moment. This inevitably raises the question of the status of this theory and its relation to its proponents. Determinism, like any other theory, should refer to itself. It is granted the status of a scientific theory (or rather, a scientific paradigm), i.e., a certain description of reality (prepared according to precisely defined rules). However, any theory is not part of the world that is external to the mind of a researcher: it is part of his mind. A researcher is relatively independent of this external reality, and is free, i.e., he can formulate his theories and hypotheses arbitrarily. This arbitrariness implies that a researcher can make errors and put forward false theories, but this is a private matter for the researcher, who should, of course, strive for the fullest possible adequacy of his proposals to the transcendent reality. However, he is responsible for the proposals he formulates, at least in the sense that it is easy to imagine that he could formulate a totally different theory, which might be a foolish theory but which would nevertheless still be his.

At the same time, however, determinism postulates theses whose consequences radically contradict the above description. Above all, it annihilates the boundaries between the mind and the world that is the object of the minds' reflection. If I make a series of squeaks and sounds during a lecture (or, in the case of writing an article, a series of movements of my fingers over the computer keyboard), I associate certain senses, meanings, or symbols with them, but they all appear in my mind as the inevitable consequence of past events, my genetic structure,

and the stimuli to which I am currently subjected. This means that my proposal (the theory I have just formulated) could not have been any different. Thus, it has the same status as, e.g., the sound of flowing water. This conclusion immediately raises the question of why anyone should take seriously a theory that defines itself like this. Socrates claimed to know that he knew nothing, which, of course, was ironic. Determinism, however, claims in all seriousness that its postulates make no sense. As determinists say of themselves: they do not exist. It would be difficult to find a more explicit denial of human subjectivity.

Discussion of the term

The paradigmatic and probably only example we know of a subject conceived in this way is man (of course, apart from God, whom we do not cognise directly). All attempts to extend subjectivity to extraterrestrial entities (hypothetical aliens) or to recognise the at least partial subjectivity of animals are done by analogy with human subjectivity. The problem of subjectivity in ethics can thus be summed up by the following questions: to what extent is man the author of his acts, and which elements of his structure make it possible to link man and his acts based on cause and effect?

While the subject of an action can be defined as an entity who influences and transforms the reality around him, a moral subject is one to whom responsibility for an action can legitimately be attributed. It is thus necessary to indicate the conditions that an entity must fulfil in order to be considered a moral subject in the fullest sense of the word. As with the conditions Roman Ingarden listed in relation to responsibility, these include consciousness, freedom, and the relative constancy of the identity of the acting person (Ingarden, 1987). The last two conditions are hardly ever undermined as it is not possible to speak of a subject of an action (or to formulate judgements about his morality or immorality) if the source of this action is not a subject himself and the action is enforced by a more or less complex combination of external circumstances. Similarly, the requirement of the constant identity of the subject identified as the person who performs an act, i.e., the problem of his identity and its duration in time, is understandable because if we were to

conclude (for whatever reason) that the changes that have taken place in the being who was the cause of some action no longer allow him to be recognised as the 'perpetrator' of this action, then he can no longer be held responsible for it. The claim that one is now a completely different person may be considered true and taken into account, e.g., at trial, but taken in all seriousness and literally, it would lead to the paradox described by Ingarden:

The responsibility that existed at the moment of performing an act would be something meaningless, as it could not perform the basic function of being the source and basis of the reparation to be realised in the future (Ingarden, 1987, p. 111).

He also observes that identity cannot consist solely in a subjective feeling; it must go beyond the realm of pure consciousness and the pure 'I'. All theories that reduce the person to a plurality of pure experiences are insufficient in explaining the ontic foundations of morality. Thus, the subject of responsibility must be a real being who lasts in time and possesses the adequate capacities to act in the real world (Ingarden, 1987, p. 122).

The third condition of subjectivity – consciousness – is the most controversial and has most frequently been contested in contemporary philosophy (at least since Kant's Copernican Revolution). Fulfilling it requires that the person who acts is aware of the acts he performs, understands their consequences and circumstances, and – even more importantly from the perspective of the subject – is capable of cognising not only external reality but also the internal reality. Being consciousness of the motives of one's actions is thus also a necessity. Moreover, the person in charge of his life must have a real impact on the shape of these motives (including changing them), for only then does he gain the ability to make free decisions about his actions.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

The dispute over the status of the subject essentially focuses on the scope of morality and the meaningfulness of ethics as philosophical reflection on morality. The masters of suspicion and the determinists

argue that although man is guided by motives he recognises as his own, he does not realise that this motivation arises independently of his consciousness, in a way over which he has only limited (or none) influence. Consequently, it must be concluded that a person's behaviour is also largely beyond his influence or even totally beyond his control. Thus, he cannot be fully recognised as a subject of morality, and the moral evaluation of his actions becomes problematic. In the extreme version, the total negation of human subjectivity means questioning the rationale for the use of any moral categories; moreover, negating morality deprives ethics of all meaning.

However, the very act of asking questions about the subject presupposes the existence of some form of subjectivity. It is not so much necessary to ask whether the subject exists; what is important is to put the question in Kantian terms: in what way is the subject possible, in what way does he exist? Ethics imposes an additional constraint on the issue of the subject. Taking the existence of morality as a self-evident assumption, we must assume the existence of the subject that fulfils its basic requirements – he must be free and conscious of his actions – and thus opt for a 'strong' subject. Although modern philosophy, as represented by, among others, the masters of suspicion, raises a number of important objections to this conception which are of a metaphysical and epistemological nature, by analogy with Kant's conviction that the antinomies of theoretical reason are resolved by practical reason, it can be considered that ethics resolves – in this case – the problems faced by metaphysicians.

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Ryszard Wiśniewski

The Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6626-4688>

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Dignity

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: Dignity is a key concept in culture and ethics; it is also ambiguous and emotionally charged. It is sometimes treated as an idea that links recognition of the innate uniqueness of humanity and man's excellence (merit) with personal self-esteem.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: It is impossible to understand the idea of dignity without looking at its evolution, beginning with its origins in ancient culture and philosophy and continuing in the Judeo-Christian religion. Both these traditions are united by the pursuit of excellence, which is interpreted as an expression of the greatness of man and the conviction that this pursuit is possible because man is directed towards the Absolute, i.e., God. In modernity, human dignity as an end in itself was discovered among and above relations of utility. The great humiliations experienced in the contemporary era in the context of these relations of utility led the dignity of the person being declared as the basis of human rights and morality.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: In its ambiguity, the idea of dignity can be limited to the dignity of the person, personal dignity, and individual dignity, as well as to a specific configuration of non-relative values. Many of its meanings derive their sense from these values and are extra-personal. The ethics of dignity can be applied to professional ethics and to various specific ethics.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The issue of dignity requires analytical work that separates the non-relative sphere of the value of human dignity embedded in man's personal existence from relative values typical of the pragmatic

dimension of reality. More complex problems require analyses of various aspects of dignity within specific ethics.

Keywords: humanity, person, dignity of the person, personal dignity, individual dignity

Definition of the term

Dignity (in Latin *dignitas hominis*, in Polish *godność*, in French *dignité*, in German *Würde*, in Russian *dostoinstvo*) is an ambiguous concept that is descriptive of the human race and is also value-laden, distinctive, and thus emotive. Following the older etymological dictionaries, let us start with the fact that the Polish noun *godność* [dignity] is derived from the adjective *godny* [worthy], which itself derives from the Old Slavic word *god*, meaning ‘that which is in time’, which is ‘suitable’, ‘appropriate’, but also ‘that which is decent’ or ‘considerable. It can be said that *godny* [worthy] means the same as valuable, since *niegodzień* means ‘unworthy’ (Brückner, 1957). More recent dictionaries usually derive the meaning of *godny* [worthy] from *zdatny* [fit], and then define it as ‘deserving of something, worthwhile’, but also as ‘respectable, honourable’ (Sławski, 1952). The etymological primacy of the adjectival source of the term *godność* [dignity] from *godny* [worthy] points to the ontological relationality of dignity and to its embeddedness in relations of practical fitness, suitability, and adequacy. However, this meaning of the term ‘dignity’ does not include any indications that the human personal subject is treated as a being and a good in himself (regardless of his value resulting from what he is fit for).

Encyclopaedic entries emphasise the ambiguity of dignity and focus on a probable typology of meanings. In the simplest approaches, a distinction is made between 1. human dignity, 2. individual dignity, and 3. professional and social dignity (Pilch, 2003, pp. 80–84). Mieczysław A. Krąpiec listed 1. the philosophical understanding of human dignity as a being and an end in himself; 2. the theological understanding of human dignity as a unique being that transcends nature and remains in a special bond with God; 3. the sociological understanding of human dignity as human rights declared in international acts (Krąpiec, 2003, pp. 15-17). Janusz Mariański, a sociologist who specialises in the subject of dignity, identified three understandings of this term: 1. personal dignity “with its ontic layer, to which every human person is entitled [...] in connection with an absolute being”; 2. personality dignity, expressed in human actions, capacities, and perfections of the personal ‘I’; 3. individual dignity, “which refers to subjective sensations and consciousness” and “is linked to the consciousness of the person” (Mariański, 2015, p. 225).

Jacek J. Jadacki made a semiotic analysis of dignity in which he identified four understandings:

First, humanity, i.e., human dignity: one lives in a dignified way if one lives in dignified, i.e., decent, conditions[...]. Second, merit, i.e., acquired dignity: one is worthy (of something) if, for certain reasons, one is entitled to dignified, i.e., due, conditions [...]. Third, nobility, i.e., personal dignity: one acts in a dignified manner if his behaviour is dignified, i.e., praiseworthy [...]. Fourth, majesty, i.e., professional dignity: one acts in a dignified way if his behaviour is dignified, i.e., appropriate, which means that he observes specific duties (Jadacki, 2003, pp. 85–86).

Magdalena Środa provided a multifaceted analysis of the notion of dignity in her introduction to a historical-analytical monograph devoted to the idea of dignity in culture and ethics. There, she distinguished dignity as: 1. “position, privilege, suitability for something”; 2. a subjective psychological state, “to have a sense of dignity”; 3. an objectified evaluation of an attitude, “to behave with dignity”; 4. an interpersonal attitude, “to show respect for someone’s dignity”; 5. a philosophical-moral value in which human dignity is expressed in calling man *animal rationale*; and 6. a theological-ontological value that captures man as *imago dei* (Środa, 1993, p. 10).

Środa began with a different starting point based on the historical evolution of a multifaceted phenomenon from the world of values that is ambiguously and often emotionally called dignity. An in-depth analysis of the meanings of dignity allowed her to conclude that:

On the basis of dictionary analyses, it is difficult to establish a clear range of meanings for “dignity”. It is an extremely entangled concept, both in different usages and in different traditions of thought. However, this does not mean that, as linguistic analysts claim, “dignity” derives its meaning from each context of use. It is probable that some “common essence” of dignity exists which allows it to be treated as belonging to the vocabulary of philosophy, that is, as an idea rather than a term or a name (Środa, 1993, p. 10).

According to the online edition of *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, in Western society dignity is treated as “a defining ideal of the contemporary world”. The author of the entry observes that it is multidirectionally related to concepts such as

rank, station, honor, uniqueness, beauty, poise, gravitas, integrity, self-respect, self-esteem, a sacred place in the order of things, supreme worth (Debes, 2023).

Historical analysis of the term

The broadly understood idea of dignity has deep and even pre-philosophical historical roots, being embedded in the attitudes and characteristics that have shaped human relations from the very beginning. Before these attitudes and characteristics were contextualised in the concepts of Greek philosophy, they were described in mythologies and epics. There is consensus in the subject literature that, in order to understand the idea of dignity, the context of its historical evolution must be taken into account, which is true of any other great idea (Kozielecki, 1977, p. 11; Debes, 2023).

The Greek culture of Homeric times attached great importance to human honour based on martial prowess, valour, the recognition of merit, and being born into an aristocratic family, which endowed man with excellence and rightful pride. Athenian democracy developed the model of the citizen as a member of a community of equal, free, prudent, and righteous people. Finally, Greek philosophy gave Mediterranean civilisation the model of the sage-teacher, who valued care for the soul, control over the chaos of desires and passions in the light of reason, and respect for the laws of the community. The Judeo-Christian tradition brought biblical questions about the essence of humanity into the process of recognising the problem and value of human dignity and introduced the understanding of man as a natural being who was created in the image of God and related to him. None of these used a word corresponding to the term 'dignity', but this notion has its ethical origins there.

Philosophy, by its very nature, transformed social feelings and ideas about honour (merit) into concepts and theories. It was preceded by the legend of Socrates, who epitomised all the dimensions of Greek virtues that gave rise to later conceptions of dignity. His name should be associated with the rather revolutionary view that virtue can be learned, which means that excellence is not given by birth (as in the aristocratic system) but requires study, exercise, and care for the soul, which constitutes the essence of man.

Plato inspired the later philosophical debate on the nature of dignity with his idea of the tripartite division of the soul into appetitive, spirited, and rational parts. The first part testified to man's presence in the natural world and the third part to the possibility of his participation in the world of divine transcendent ideas. The second one, which was located between the other two, was responsible for composure and fortitude in establishing harmonious relations between the needs of the body and the rationales embedded in the world of transcendent ideas. According to Juliusz Domański, this is the seed of the later idea of humanity as a being whose essence is the soul (the second one) which controls the space of human freedom and is determined by the needs of the body and the rationales of the spirit (Domański, 1994, pp. 7–19).

Slightly differently but also more precisely, the idea of the middle was articulated by Aristotle in his studies on man's goods and virtues. He treated virtue as the choice of the right measure in the middle between extremely opposed pursuits (subjective goods). Thus, it was a conception of the right choice based not on rationales of reason but on experience (habit) in accurately recognising the middle ground between extreme desires. Based on Aristotle's virtue ethics, the idea of dignity is linked to the virtue of magnanimity (*magalopsychia*). In his *Nicomachean Ethics* we read: "Now a person is thought to be great-souled if he claims much and deserves much" (Aristotle, 1999, 1123b). Magnanimity, i.e., greatness of soul, is understood here as a middle attitude between vanity and excessive modesty in the assessment of due honour. Next he wrote: "Greatness of soul seems therefore to be as it were a crowning ornament of the virtues: it enhances their greatness, and it cannot exist without them. Hence it is hard to be truly great souled, for greatness of soul is impossible without moral nobility" (Aristotle, 1999, 1124a). The axiological endowment of magnanimity points to its special status and makes it the crown of virtues and a value added to excellence (*kalokagatia*). This call to honour excellence in man could be seen as a precursor of the later notion of personal dignity, which should be interpreted as consequential of the axiological balance of virtues one possesses. M. Środa observed that, although the definition of a great-souled man is formal,

magnanimity is [...] the crowning of virtues, it is a value that is a consequence of certain natural, psychological, and moral qualities, and it is also a value that is precious in itself (Środa, 1993, p. 29).

The Stoics also contributed to the historical discourse on the values that constitute human dignity. They saw the greatness of man in his wise, rational power over passions (*apatheia*), and in freedom, which Marcus Aurelius called “the inner citadel”. To express that which befits man from his essence, the Roman Stoics used the term *honestas*, which means honesty and integrity, and thus that which is in itself worthy of honour (respect) and different from that which has a *pretium*, or price. Cicero, who is credited with the influential use of the term *dignitas* in his text *De inventione* (2,166), wrote:

dignity is the honourable authority of a person, combined with attention and honour and worthy respect paid to him. Influence is a great abundance of power or majesty, or of any sort of resource (Cicero, 2006, p. 328).

The arethaic motif of Greek philosophy is here linked with the Roman ethos of respectability and dignity of office. Man’s dignity is manifested in his excellence, which is appropriate (*decor*) to the office he holds.

In the perspective of the Christian Middle Ages, the issue of human dignity was a continuation of the classical belief in man’s specificity which placed strong emphasis on his task to transform his temporal life, his freedom, and his excellence into values that pave the way to holiness and eternal happiness. The essence of humanity, as the creative image of God (*imago Dei*), was seen in the soul (*anima*), and the causal power of the soul was vigorously debated throughout the Middle Ages and later. For centuries, some thinkers, following St. Augustine, saw it in the will (*voluntas*), which is guided by love, and their successors saw the greatness of man in noble feelings. Others, following St. Thomas Aquinas, claimed the superiority of the intellect over the will and defended the guiding role of reason as the source of the right rationale in the choice of paths that lead man in his temporal life to excellence (happiness) and ultimately on the path to holiness in unity with God. The ways in which man governs his freedom demarcates the ethical space of his dignity. This is confirmed by the reflections of Thomas Aquinas, for whom man was an individual rational and free being, i.e., a person (with which he

affirms man's relationship with the Divine Person). Human dignity consists in the fact that man "is naturally free, and exists for himself" (Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 64 a. 2). It can be said that the Middle Ages clarified and elevated the theological dimension of the ancient idea of excellence. The greatness of man was seen in the fact that, as the only one among corporeal beings, he exists in substantial unity with his soul and that, as the only one in this world, he is a person and thus the image of God.

Dignitas hominis became the subject of philosophical and theological disputes at the turn of the 16th century thanks to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. In his *Oration on the Dignity of Man – De hominis dignitate* – (1486), he raised the question of the 'dignity of man', which he saw in man's ability to acquire personal values embedded in human freedom in the central place of the world between inherent nature and God.

Blaise Pascal's anthropology became a paradoxical form of opposition to the widespread admiration of human dignity and merit which man owed to his rationality. At the beginning, Pascal appreciated the greatness of man in comparison to the entirety of nature based on human reason, but this was followed by him noticing man's incapability to be the source of the highest moral truths and rationales. Pascal argued that man's dignity and merit consisted in being aware of his misery, and this included the hubris of a rational being who disregards the reasons of the heart. For him, the dignity of man was based on absolute trust in God; this view was later reiterated by Christian existentialists.

In the naturalistic and at the same time social-ethical spirit of the 17th century, the problem of human dignity was addressed by Thomas Hobbes. Describing man in terms of rational egoism, this philosopher identified man's inherent and instrumental power, his values, majesty, honour, and dignity. Hobbes used an economic notion of value:

The value or worth of a man is, as of all other things, his price, that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his power and therefore not absolute, but a thing dependent on the need and judgement of another (Hobbes, 2002, p. 68).

In everyday human relations, value based on price was called 'honouring or dishonouring', while in public relations the social value of a person was called 'dignity'. Honouring and dignity are manifested in public relations through positions, honours, and titles which testify to one's power. As Hobbes wrote:

Worthiness is a thing different from the worth or value of a man and also from his merit or desert, and consistent in a particular power or ability for that thereof he is said to be worthy; which particular ability is usually named fitness or aptitude (Hobbes, 2002, p. 74).

Worthiness is recognised here as the conjunction of man's various utility values and forms of objectified social esteem (honouring) in the form of public dignity, which are manifested in symbolised positions, honours, and titles. This is how the foundation of a social-utilitarian conception of dignity was formed; the pillars of this foundation were both an aristocratic tradition which linked excellence with social position and the ideas of great civilisational and cultural change in which ethical utilitarianism and liberalism were espoused. In this perspective, man was seen as a node in a network of benefits, reciprocity, dependence, and his value (moral value – which is debatable) was measured by calculated social utility.

The philosophy of Immanuel Kant – widely regarded as the foundation of ethical humanism – was a reaction to this turn. His conception of humanity was similar to the philosophical tradition based on theology. In Kant's philosophy, man was a being embedded in nature and determined by its laws, but his essence also included reasonableness, and it was this obedience to reason (by no means instrumental) that made him free. Man's greatness was based on his capability (as a rational and free being) to establish moral norms for himself (autonomy). However, these moral norms should, according to man's reason, pass the test of universalizability, i.e., they must have universal validity. This is what Kant's categorical imperative – which is formal in its essence – means.

This imperative is considered the eminent dignitarian turn in Kant's ethics. It was called practical because it pointed to human dignity as the foundation of morality. It should be noted here, however, that it is frequently simplified in various texts and statements as the injunction to treat man as an end and never as a means, which in fact ignores his important words which testify to the more complex relationship between being an end in itself and being a means to an end. This imperative reads as follows:

So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time both in your person and in the person of everyone else, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means (Kant, 1998, p. xxii).

Kant repeated the phrases “always at the same time as an end” and “never merely as a means” in the examples and explanations he gave for relations of utility. What he meant, then, is that however humanity is realised in the world of utility relations and laws, it is irreducible to utility reasons in the light of reason that commands the will to respect the absolute value of human dignity expressed as price. A being that has reason and is free, who lives in a community of law, belongs to the “kingdom of ends”, and here “everything has either a price or a dignity. What has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; what on the other hand is raised above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent has a dignity (Kant, 1998, p. 42).

Kant’s practical imperative has had a profound impact on contemporary humanism and personalism, which have more or less explicitly recognised it as a pattern for identifying attitudes to human dignity. This impact can be seen in Karl Marx’s theory of economic alienation and his political idea of the liberation of the working class from all relations in which man is a “debased and contemptible” being. Marx criticised socio-economic relations in which creative labour – which is essential to man’s greatness – is reduced to the market price of the labour force. Marx’s moral-political intentions were undoubtedly humanist, yet their political fruits were dubious. One contemporary expression of how the language of economics and politics is dehumanised is exemplified by the reduction of the value of human creative potential to the term ‘human resources’, which objectifies humanity.

Fridrich Nietzsche’s eminently naturalistic and elitist interpretation of dignity is expressed in his critique of this concept as being overused by weak people who demand equality and seek security in the herd life. Nietzsche opposed the rhetoric of dignity contained in the idea of democracy, in Jesus’s *Sermon on the Mount*, or in the ideas advocated by socialists; he granted dignity to the aristocracy of the spirit and to the elite of individualists who are creative, courageous, rise above mediocrity, and overcome themselves. This was a return to the values of the age of the heroes of Greek epics and myths; there is no place in Nietzsche’s theory for the reception of Kant’s “kingdom of ends”.

Almost all the major branches of contemporary philosophy have addressed the problem of dignity, notably the philosophy of life, existential philosophy, phenomenological philosophy, hermeneutics, personalism,

the philosophy of dialogue, and Thomism, with its vitality of the classical metaphysics of man. The turn of the 20th century was characterised by a sense of crisis, decadence, the loss of man, his split between the values of the natural world and the search for rationales that would give meaning to life at a time when the certainty of the image of the world and man's place in it had been undermined by positivism. Philosophical thought returned to the classical sources of the philosophy of man and also gave them a new form. According to Max Scheler, the founder of modern philosophical anthropology:

Only man – insofar as he is the person – is capable, as a living being, of rising above himself and, as it were, from a centre located beyond (*jenseits*) the space-time world, make everything, including himself the object of his cognition (Scheler, 1987, p. 93).

Man's dignity is realised in the spiritual life, through which he becomes similar to God and brings spiritual values into the cold Cosmos; an echo of the classical philosophy of man can be seen here.

In the theistic strand of existentialism (K. Jaspers, N. Berdyaev, L. Shestov, G. Marcel), man is freed from the crisis of modern civilisation, from fragmentation, fear and uncertainty by his individual, free choice of Transcendence and by the growth of his spiritual strengths as a result of the recovery of faith in the sense of his existence and the existence of the world. The philosophers who represented secular existentialism (M. Heidegger, J.-P. Sartre, A. Camus) went in a slightly different direction. They claimed that man's being existentially torn between freedom and uncertainty of choice in a world with an unfathomable ultimate rationale finds a solution in the responsible project of oneself, in transcending oneself, and in the transcendence of one's human, subjective world. For Sartre, existential humanism was

humanism, because we remind man that there is no legislator but himself; that he himself, thus abandoned, must decide for himself; also because we show that it is not by turning back upon himself, but always by seeking, beyond himself, an aim which is one of liberation or of some particular realisation, that man can realize himself as truly human (Sartre, 1946).

Sartre expects from man such responsibility as if he were choosing for all humanity, which is a clear reference to Kant's categorical imperative.

The idea of the dignity of the person (which is innate) and personal dignity (which is moral and added) is particularly manifest in personalist philosophy, which is related to theistic existentialism, phenomenology, and the philosophy of dialogue. In a climate of intellectual and moral sensitivity to the threat to human subjectivity, freedom, and creativity, in the face of world wars and social revolutions which posed the ultimate threat to the individual, the problem of the dignity of the person was raised to a higher level of discourse and moral sensitivity. The notion of the person (*persona*) has its origin in Greek theatre, where *persona* (Greek: *prosopon*) meant a mask behind which the actor's face was hidden. Later, in Christian theology, the term *persona* referred to the divine person, and over time it was used to refer to the human person (Thomas Aquinas).

Contemporary personalism is a complex ideological tradition based on respect for the unique position of man as a person and for his dignity. There is a long list of great personalist thinkers of which the most prominent representatives are E. Gilson, J. Maritain, E. Mounier, K. Wojtyła, and many Polish philosophers and theologians. The separation – fundamental for personalism – of man as an individual (subject to the laws of nature and social laws) from man as the person (who possesses a unique individual personality, identity, and personal dignity) corresponds to a growing awareness of the difference between the value of the world of things and the world of instrumental social institutions. There is a special bond between personalism and the idea of human dignity formulated by Kant, as expressed in Karol Wojtyła's 'personalistic norm':

As a principle formulated negatively, this norm states that the person is a kind of good that is incompatible with using, which may not be treated as an object of use and, in this sense, as a means to an end. Hand in hand with this goes the positive formulation of the personalistic norm: the person is a kind of good to which only love constitutes the proper and fully-mature relation. And this positive content of the personalistic norm is precisely what the commandment to love brings out (Wojtyła, 2013, p. 25).

Wojtyła's conception of personalism was continued and developed by Tadeusz Styczeń, for whom the supreme moral norm is the absolute "duty of affirmation of the person by the person". Why such an existentially fragile being as the human person experiences the absolute

duty that is the love of the person lies outside the realm of ethics. The contingent experience of the person leads to the metaphysics of Necessary Rationale (Styczeń, 1972).

The culmination of the fundamental importance of the idea of innate dignity, which forms the basis of every individual's/human person's claim to respect his rights, is its legal international affirmation in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The preamble to this document states that

recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world

Human rights are thus rooted in the inherent dignity of man, and this means that they are a semantic field for the interpretation of particular rights listed in the Declaration.

Discussion of the term

An attempt to systematise the various meanings of the concept of dignity and to limit its ambiguity can lead to either a broad or narrow typology. The simplest division distinguishes between 1. the dignity of the person, 2. personal dignity, and 3. individual dignity. This and other divisions demonstrate the multifaceted nature of reflection on the human person and his value. Three meanings of dignity meet here: ontological, ethical, and psychological. They occur in two dimensions, descriptive and axiological, which cannot be separated. That which is and what it is like appears as valuable, otherwise it would not appear at all. Value here can mean as little as being beyond nothingness or standing out from the background, and this sometimes means as much as dignity in a non-relative or relative sense.

In the first sense of dignity, the person is seen as a self-conscious being who is aware of reality and his place in it and of his value, thanks to which he is free and cognitively open to both the natural and the supernatural world. In the second sense, the person acquires personal dignity thanks to his ontological idiosyncrasy and axiological sensitivity, and he perfects himself by using his cognitive and creative potential

and sensitivity. In the third sense, the person guards his dignity personally, and through his personality he demonstrates his personal values and expects them to be respected; at the same time – while diligently protecting himself against the instrumentalisation of his dignity as the person – he is responsible for his dignity.

The essence of the above division lies in the separation of the perspectives from which they are described. While the first, ontological perspective (also called philosophical-theological) serves as a starting point and seems to pose little difficulty in comprehending its essence, the other two are indeed difficult to understand because the process of acquiring proficiency is objectified in personal values, which are added to the innate level of the ontic value. This process takes place alongside the process of subjective concern for oneself as a subject who builds his sense of dignity. To those who distinguish between personal and individual dignity, this seems to be the point. To put it another way, the dignity of the person is where personal dignity develops, and individual dignity is the guardian of both: the person and his values.

The axiological dimension of dignity requires that the different meanings of dignity be filtered through a conceptual apparatus and system of values. This is important insofar as dignity and value are treated as interchangeable terms in the language of evaluations of the personal world, but it is worth noting that the etymology of dignity, and later also the cultural and social understanding of dignity, point to dignity as 'fitness', which is a relative value. Man and his absolute value has always been the point of reference of this value. In the old Polish adjectival sense, *godny* [worthy] is a term from the order of relative, derivative, utilitarian, and instrumental values. These values include conditions, means, symbols, and reservoirs; they derive their value from what they serve. In this order, the horizon of values seems too close for those who are unable to break through to the world of objective and non-relative values, called absolute values. Leaving aside the derivativeness of the axiological sense of relative goods, let us stay with the understanding of dignity as a non-relative good in and for itself (a good is realised in value). But even at this level there is a problem: are the dignity of the person, personal dignity, and individual dignity non-relative or absolute goods? If the distinction between non-relative and absolute goods is made according to the criterion of their permissible and impermissible use, then non-relative

goods do not lose their value – they even gain from being used (life is a non-relative good, but it is also the basis for making glorious uses of it) – whereas it can be claimed that there is also the good that should not be used and to which only worship is due. At this unique axiological level, the history of philosophy and theology has discovered only one Good. Thus, it is worth asking whether any these dignities reaches this place at the top of the hierarchy of values. It seems that the dignity of the person (based on Kantian postulate of the irreducibility of humanity to being a means) is the earthly equivalent of this Good.

However, the problem lies in whether the person, as an end in and of himself, is used when he enters into various relationships or whether it is only the person's personal qualities that have a price, although they remain goods in themselves. It seems that many qualities linked to dignity which have non-relative value enter into relations of use, but it is only the dignity of the person that prohibits treating him as a mere means. Therein lies the problem of the contemporary practice of dignity: namely, that people, caught up in the social and civilisational networks of utility and practicality, fail to see non-relative values, including the absolute one.

The moral norms postulated in defence of the dignity of the person form a barrier against the state of affairs outlined above. They were reviewed by Maria Ossowska, who distinguished the dignity of the person in the sense of the person's majesty and the dignity of the person as an end in itself and focused on the dignity that can be lost and is gradable (defined here as personal and individual). She demonstrated that the normative perspective, which is more concrete than the abstract axiological perspective, is dominated by negative norms and patterns, i.e., condemnations of unworthy and insulting behaviours. She also emphasised that dignity is demonstrated in situations of danger and discussed such aspects of dignity as its defensive function, honour, depreciation (of personal dignity), and its degradation (Ossowska, 1970, pp. 51 ff.). The latter can be interpreted as an invitation to discuss moral suicide, which is an extremely negative form of the loss of personal and individual dignity, except for the dignity of the person, which will always remain an area in which man can rebuild himself.

Professional ethics is the practical dimension of the discourse on dignity. This ethics is codified in numerous codes of professional ethics.

The dignity of the person should be treated analogously with the dignity of the profession (described in its mission, particularly in the division of roles in the social division of labour or job titles); professional dignity is an application of personal dignity which is described normatively in the special requirements for working in a profession, its virtues, and role models. Personal dignity has its counterpart in professional pride, concern for the authority of the profession, and one's participation in it, all of which is prescribed in these codes. Professional dignity is founded on reliability (attitude to procedures) and honesty (reverence for the dignity of the professionals' clients).

Of particular importance is the discourse related to dignity within bioethics and its fundamental dispute – which can legitimately be called a dispute on human dignity – between the principle of the sanctity of life (the absolute value of life) and the utilitarian principle of valuing life according to its quality (which should be equated with personal dignity in the sense adopted in this article), as represented by, e.g., Peter Singer. Singer's position seems to imply that dignity is gradable. Let us counter this with opinion that “The dignity of the human person is not gradable, and neither is the person himself” (Mariański, 2019, p. 5). An important issue in bioethical disputes is the attitude to human dignity during the foetal stage but also – in the broader temporal context – the attitude to the posthumous status of the human person. In the perspective of the dignity of the person, the foetal potential, the posthumous identity, and the corpse are subject to moral and legal protection. The only area for discussion is linked to the limits and circumstances that relativise foetal viability and what happens to a corpse and the good memory of a deceased person. The examples of the concretisation of the dispute over the dignity of the person can be expressed in the following two questions: Is the dignity of the human person – which is so highly valued – legitimately self-determined? Can it become (co-)shared by those who are responsible for the dignity of the birth of the child and for the burial of the body (Antigone).

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

Semantic, historical, and contentual analyses of the ambiguity of the concept of dignity paint a necessarily simplified picture of the evolution of its three meanings, all of which have, to an extent, both a personal and a social dimension:

1. the dignity of the person (innate, natural, ontological, non-gradable, inalienable, the foundation of human rights, theological *imago Dei*);
2. personal dignity (moral, acquired, composed of merit and excellence), takes the forms of gradable and objectified recognition, honour, respect, and institutionalised majesty;
3. individual dignity (embedded in the subjective desire for honour and excellence, radiates personal majesty).

Life is above all a process of use. The modern world is a great network and arena of uses, hence it is the task of philosophy and the pedagogy of dignity to find the limit – indicated by Kant – at which civilisational instrumentalism should stop before reducing man to a system of means that uses and objectifies him. According to J. Mariański:

In justifying the dignity of the person as an inalienable value of human life, we refer both to philosophical premises that appeal not only to believers but to all people, and to theological premises related to the belief that man is a child of God. These two aspects should not be pitted against each other, even if the first argumentation (humanistic ethics) is oriented outwards to the world, and the second (theology) is oriented inwards to the members of Christian churches or to people who believe in God. These are only two perspectives of looking at the same truth about the dignity and greatness of man. In fact, people also use arguments derived from different moral beliefs and sometimes even utilitarian-pragmatic premises (Mariański, 2019, p. 26).

Attempts to apply the concept of dignity to specific social and ethical issues within environmental ethics (man in the natural world), civic, social, and political ethics, communication ethics, etc. are promising but also problematic. In all these fields, the term ‘dignity’ is strongly associated with an axionormative order based on the non-relative value of the person and on personal values, which are realised in the structures of relative (instrumental) values. This requires analytical reasoning and

methodological caution, a cooling of emotions, and an awareness of the uniqueness of the value of dignity in its various manifestations.

Contemporary subject literature addresses the idea of dignity in different ways. In the 1970s, Burrhus F. Skinner famously criticised it from the position of behavioural psychology. He argued that the concepts of freedom and dignity cannot be operationalised, thus they are not facts. From the perspective of positivist empiricism, human dignity, as well as the world of values linked with it, are signs of emotions, which are tools of persuasion without any cognitive meaning. J. Mariański, a contemporary Polish sociologist of religion and morality, approaches the possibility of operationalising the concept of dignity in scientific research in a different way. He claims that, for those Poles that took part in his survey,

values linked with dignity have a rather high position in the hierarchy of values. In the conflict situations to which they had to respond, more than half of the respondents prioritised values linked to dignity over pragmatic values (Mariański, 2016, p. 453).

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Sebastian Gałeccki

The Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2728-0447>

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The nature of conscience and its conflicts

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: Conscience is an instrument that is innate in every man and enables him to discern what he ought to do in a given moral situation. It can be said that conscience stands between the objective world of the truth, the good, and values, and the individual who, in his unique situation, faces dilemmas concerning what to do in given circumstances. Conscience is thus a tool that allows the objective truth about the good to be applied to specific moral situations people experience.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: Numerous theories dedicated to the nature of conscience have been proposed throughout history. These theories can be divided into three main categories: rationalist (Stoicism, Origen, Thomas Aquinas, and Kant), voluntarist (Socrates, Augustine of Hippo, Hegel, and Nietzsche), and emotivist (Pascal, Rousseau, and Schopenhauer). In the 20th century the balance of power between these changed: the voluntarist and emotivist approaches merged to form an autonomous approach, while the rationalist approach transformed into an axiomatic one.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: There are two groups of conflicts related to the nature of conscience. The first covers conflicts of conscience *par excellence*, i.e., those in which the individual faces a moral dilemma and has various options for action, one of which is commanded by the voice of conscience and the others are demanded by other authorities: law, culture, religion, emotions, loved ones, etc. The second covers conflicts that appear when the individual's conscience clashes with various imperatives, state laws, and the common good.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: European philosophy has developed very precise norms

and instruments for resolving conflicts of conscience and conflicts over conscience. The absolute primacy of the individual's conscience should be protected both from the temptations of other human mental faculties and from being overruled by the authority of the state, which is the primary aim of the modern principle of freedom of conscience.

Keywords: conscience, syneidesiology, conscience clause, medical ethics, freedom of conscience

Definition of the term

Conscience is one of the most difficult concepts to define, not because it is something as abstract and distant as an integral or gravitational waves, but because the opposite is true: conscience is something so close to each of us, so intimate and intrinsic, that we find it difficult to distance ourselves sufficiently to describe it objectively in an uninvolved and rationally justifiable way. St. Augustine of Hippo's famous words about time might be helpful in defining it: "What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know" (Augustine of Hippo, 1955). To which he immediately adds: "Yet I say with confidence that I know that if nothing passed away, there would be no past time". It is the same with conscience: although it is very difficult to put into words how most people experience conscience, there is no doubt – to paraphrase the author of *Confessions* – that if we were not able to overcome moral dilemmas concerning what we should do in a given situation and under given circumstances so frequently, we would not know that we possess an inner strength and personal capacity to discern what is right, good, and prescribed, and what is wrong, forbidden, and evil.

There have been attempts to describe conscience for over than two thousand years. The definition offered by John Henry Newman seems the most interesting:

so alert is the instinctive power of an educated conscience, that by some secret faculty, and without any intelligible reasoning process, it seems to detect moral truth wherever it lies hidden, and feels a conviction of its own accuracy which bystanders cannot account for (Newman, 1880, p. 66).

All the most important elements of conscience appear in this definition: its personal character, which is concealed from outsiders, the close connection with truth, and the need to both shape conscience and obey it at the same time. As most of these features can be found in almost every historical analysis of conscience, they can be regarded as its hard core or its essence, even if they differ in detail in different theories and concepts.

The following definition will be used as a starting point for further considerations in this article:

Conscience is an instrument – it does not constitute a specific content [...] but allows man to function in an appropriate way in the moral world. Just as the sense of sight will not provide any reliable data without light, conscience derives its power and effectiveness from something external to it, something that precedes and surpasses it. The condition for the correct operation of conscience is the objective truth, which is the “sovereign master” of conscience (Gałeck, 2020, pp. 603–604).

The nature of conscience is closely linked to the function it performs in the moral life of the individual. It is a strictly personal way of discerning what needs to be done in a given situation so that an act has a positive moral value and achieves its intended good. However, conscience will not be able to fulfil this task if it is not an adequate application of the objective truth about good and evil and of behavioural norms in a concrete moral situation.

Historical analysis of the term

The origins of the idea of conscience can be traced as far back as antiquity. It appeared in a vague way in the writings of Socrates (the mysterious *daimonion*), Plato (the human element in the tripartite symbol of the soul in *The Republic*), and Aristotle (the *orthos logos* in *The Nicomachean Ethics*). Later, it was of interest to other ancient philosophers and theologians (Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, Origen, and Jerome), medieval ones (Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Martin Luther), as well as modern and contemporary ones (Blaise Pascal, Joseph Butler, David Hume, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, John Henry Newman, and Friedrich Nietzsche). The nature and role of conscience has been a vital ethical problem from the very beginning of philosophical thought. Although it has been differently approached by different thinkers in different eras, they seemed to share the conviction that the function of conscience is an attempt to resolve the conflict between what is external and objectively good and what is necessary in an individual in each unique and subjectively binding situation.

Classical syneidesial approaches. In the development of the idea of conscience, there are three main ways in which this concept was understood (Gałeck, 2012, pp. 21–86). The first is the rationalist

tradition, within which conscience is treated as some form of practical knowledge, a rational assessment of reality that offers man knowledge and understanding and allows him to distinguish good from evil. In his *Disputed Questions on Truth*, Thomas Aquinas, the most renowned representative of this tradition, wrote:

For the name c o n s c i e n c e means the application of knowledge to something. Hence, to be conscious (*conscire*) means to know together (*simul scire*). But any knowledge can be applied to a thing. Hence, conscience cannot denote a special habit or power, but designates the act itself, which is the application of any habit or of any knowledge to some particular act (Thomas Aquinas, 1952).

The second way of understanding conscience is the voluntarist approach, within which it is assumed that conscience is related to volitional power and signifies a certain decision, choice, desire, want, or even an inner compulsion to do something or a resistance to do the opposite. This tradition was best expressed by Socrates in his defence speech:

I will tell you why. You have heard me speak at sundry times and in divers places of an oracle or sign which comes to me, and is the divinity which Meletus ridicules in the indictment. This sign, which is a kind of voice, first began to come to me when I was a child; it always forbids but never commands me to do anything which I am going to do (Plato, 1999, p. 14).

The third understanding of conscience is the emotivist tradition, which links it to emotion, intuition, emotional predilection and adherence to something, or, conversely, disgust and distaste. This tradition was well explained by one of its earliest representatives, Blaise Pascal:

The reason acts slowly, with so many examinations, and on so many principles, which must be always present, that at every hour it falls asleep, or wanders, through want of having all its principles present. Feeling does not act thus; it acts in a moment, and is always ready to act. [...] The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know. We feel it in a thousand things (Pascal, 1958, point 252 and 277).

Conscience is treated here as an intuition and has an arational or supra-rational nature rather than a non-rational or irrational one. This 'heart' has a direct insight into the truth of things: it allows each person to recognise

the apparent good and evil in a given situation, and it discovers what he should do and what he must not do under any circumstances.

Contemporary approaches to conscience. Nowadays, this division is somewhat blurred and conscience is treated either as autonomous conscience or as axiomatic conscience, as was aptly distinguished by Tadeusz Ślipko (2002, p. 365). The first is characterised by the complete detachment of conscience from any external, objective, or heteronomous point of reference. It is something radically sovereign and individual. As Richard Rorty explicitly stated,

we treat both “conscience” and “taste” as bundles of idiosyncratic beliefs and desires rather than as “faculties” which have determinate objects. So we will have little use for the moral-aesthetic contrast (Rorty, 1989, p. 142).

This contemporary version of the radicalised combination of the emotivist and voluntarist approaches is not only typical of secular perspectives and those built in opposition to the Christian tradition. Perhaps the most glaring example of ‘autonomous conscience’ can be found in the much publicised *Cologne Declaration*:

conscience is not some kind of fulfiller of the commands of the Magisterium, as it might appear from such speeches [of the Pope to theologians and bishops]. Rather, in interpreting the truth, the Magisterium is also reliant on the conscience of the faithful. To abolish the tension between doctrine and conscience is to dishonour conscience. [...] Bishops [...] and moral theologians [...] are convinced that the dignity of conscience consists not only in obedience but also in responsibility (DKP, 1989, p. 288).

Conscience here is linked to individual, personal, and fully autonomous moral decisions; thus, the link between conscience and the world of values and obedience to truth has been broken.

‘Axiomatic conscience’ – a term coined by Ślipko – is a different approach based on the rationalist tradition, within which conscience is considered to be a part of man’s rational faculties, which formulate practical judgements of what a concrete individual should do in a given situation. It consists in applying general moral principles (such as *synderesis*, i.e., the principle ‘do good, avoid evil’, or the Decalogue) to the individual and unique situation of a moral dilemma. Therefore, conscience

is, in the light of a general evaluation or norm, a formed judgement about the moral good/evil of man's intended act, the performing of which becomes for him a source of inner approval or guilt and proof of his being a good or bad person (Ślipko, 2002, p. 371).

The axiomatic approach sees conscience as a personal opinion about what I am obliged to do in a given situation and under specific circumstances.

Thus, it can be concluded that in the 21st century the dispute over conscience concerns both the need (or the lack of thereof) to obey the voice of conscience and to understand the nature of conscience either as a completely autonomous and individualistic decision of the individual who establishes the moral value of an act, or as a personal discernment of moral duty in a given situation in the light of an objective world of principles and goods. This metaethical context is not merely theoretical as it is directly reflected in social, political, and ethical disputes about the place and role of conscience in the lives of individuals and communities.

Discussion of the term

Conscience has posed a problem for philosophers, theologians, and ethicists from the very beginning. This issue has transcended and continues to transcend the boundaries of narrow theoretical analysis and has revealed practical conflicts in religious, family, social, and political life. Let us begin with conflicts in the individual dimension. As a subjective source, i.e., the personal discernment of right and wrong and duties and values, conscience can clash with objective, external, and heteronomous sources of morality. In such a situation, an individual feels torn between the deeply felt need to be faithful to his conscience, which can lead to either reward ('peace of conscience') or punishment ('pangs of conscience'), or the usually equally strong pressure that stems from his upbringing, worldview, loved ones' expectations, or the search for consistency between principles he proclaims in public and those he actually upholds. Thus, conscience can not only support making the right moral decisions (especially in ambiguous situations) but can also be a source of suffering if one is unable to live up to the high standards one discovers inside oneself.

It should be remembered that conscience is not the only instrument available to man: he possesses other natural faculties such as reason, will, emotion, the bodily senses (i.e., sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch), and the inner senses (memory imagination, intuition, instinct, etc.). In a situation of moral conflict, e.g., the threat of being tortured by the Germans during World War II if one does not give up the Jews one is hiding, reason tells us to do one thing, and will tells us to do another. Fear prompts us to reveal the secret, while conscience urges us to keep the promise we made to those who trust us. In such a situation, we are faced with a truly tragic conflict. However, even in such situations, it is possible to make a decision that is not only good but also the most sensible.

This is well explained by three terms that are used to describe conscience (Gałęcki, 2015, pp. 144–147). The first treats conscience as *norma normans sed normata* (Thomas Aquinas used the phrase *regula regulata*), i.e., ‘the norm of norms that is normed’. This means that conscience itself constitutes the norm for the individual’s behaviour: it is ‘the norm that norms’, i.e., it underpins the normativity of norms and principles of a lower order. It is from the act of conscience’s approval (or disapproval) that more specific norms (e.g., ‘you must not betray the trust of those whose lives depend on you’ or ‘you must not eat meat on Fridays’) derive their validity. Conscience, however, not only norms (*norma normans*) but is also normed (*norma normata*). This means that it is not self-sufficient or sovereign, nor it is an absolute and independent rule; on the contrary, its normativity is dependent on the conformity of the act of conscience with both a more primordial truth (the first principles of morality) and with objective goods; the aforementioned norms of conscience derive from recognition of the value of loyalty or from acceptance of the principles of the Catholic faith. This was brilliantly described by Tadeusz Styczeń:

In ethical analyses of conscience, it must be stressed equally that conscience is the subject’s own act, by virtue of which the subject commits himself to a certain action, [...] and that conscience is the subject’s act of cognition, that is, a judgement, by virtue of which the subject, in forming this judgement, makes himself dependent on the truth about the real value of persons or things ascertained in it (self-dependence through self-addiction to truth, which excludes equating the subject’s autonomy with his unrestricted acts). In this way, conscience, as the only source (that reaches directly into the subject’s essence) of self-information

about the conformity of one's own action with a given moral norm becomes the subjective expression of that norm, that is, the subjective and at the same time subjectively ultimate norm of morality (Styczeń, 2002, p. 281).

In conscience, what is subjective and autonomous is tied with what is objective and heteronomous.

The second term defines conscience as *norma proxima moralitatis*, i.e., 'the direct or nearest moral norm', which means that this norm is internal for the subject, not external. From others, we learn about all other norms, e.g., don't kill, respect your parents, don't unnecessarily risk your health, pay your taxes. We can easily dispense with external norms (our parents' voice, the opinion of the clergy, the prohibitions of state law, etc.), when we consider them alien, imposed, incompatible with our current situation, etc. However, this internal norm – direct and nearest – which resounds in our mind, will, and emotions, is independent of external pressures. We can hear the voice of conscience even if we plug our ears, break off contact with our loved ones, or flee to the desert to throw off the yoke of state law. This norm nearest to us instructs us and invades our blissful peace "in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2) by commanding, forbidding, punishing with pangs of conscience, and rewarding with a sense of a duty well done.

And finally, the third term treats conscience as *norma ultima moralitatis*, i.e., 'the ultimate moral norm'. It could be said that the second and third definitions are two sides of the same coin. From our perspective, conscience is not only the first moral norm but also the last norm in a series of numerous norms that we take into account when making a moral decision. This means that before making a decision and acting on it, the subject may reflect, analyse his situation, discuss it with moral authorities, or compare the existing moral rules and norms. However, when the moment of decision arrives and when action cannot be delayed any further, then only one voice remains – the voice of conscience, which is always decisive. This is why conscience is the ultimate norm of morality: when it commands or forbids something, it means that the time for decision, reflection, and analysis has come to an end, and there is nothing left to do but to put into practice the judgment on which it is founded.

In the light of these three definitions of conscience (the norm of norms that is normed, the nearest norm, and the ultimate norm) it is relatively

easy to determine how an individual should behave in a situation of internal conflict, i.e., the difference between the voice of conscience and the injunction of some other external authorities, such as religion, friends, or law. Man is always obliged to obey his conscience completely and absolutely. Even if his conscience is objectively wrong in a given situation, we have no other more reliable source of moral normativity. Whatever is done against conscience is ultimately done against the individual's deepest personal conviction of what is good, right, and prescribed in a given situation. Acting against the dictates of conscience is always done in the name of convenience, peace of mind, financial profit, or other such extra-moral gains.

Now let us turn to the second possible area of conflicts of conscience, i.e., not a person's internal dilemma regarding how he should act in a given situation (for that is what, in the strictest sense, a conflict of conscience is), but the social and political dimension of the dispute between the individual's conscience and social values or common goods. These conflicts – and attempts to resolve them – have historically been defined by three phraseological compounds: freedom of conscience, conscientious objection, and the conscience clause (Gałeck, 2012, pp. 16–18).

Freedom of conscience is the oldest way of mitigating conflict between the individual's conscience and social rules or laws. In the past, such clashes between the individual and the community were always resolved for the benefit of the community – the most glaring and uncompromising example of which is the principle developed as part of the Peace of Augsburg (1555): *cuius regio, eius religio*, which meant that inhabitants of German states were obliged to follow the religion (thus also the morality) professed by their rulers. It is only since modern times that the freedom of the individual, and therefore also the freedom of worldview, religion, and conscience, has begun to be emphasised. Freedom of conscience is limited only by borderline situations in which the basic rules of social coexistence are at stake and the freedoms and fundamental rights of others are threatened. Freedom of conscience guards the autonomy of the human person, although it is specified differently in different countries. Fundamentally, at its core, it always means freedom of thought. Freedom of speech is much more often and more strongly restricted than freedom of conscience (not everything a person thinks and how he views reality can be spoken of publicly or published),

and there is even less freedom in acting according to one's conscience (e.g., by a racist or a doctor who is a proponent of euthanasia).

What about a situation in which the law forbids freedom of conscience or does not provide for it sufficiently? Then, there are grounds for conscientious objection, i.e., the conscious and voluntary breaking of a provision (or provisions) of the law that contradicts the voice of conscience. Obviously, such an objection does not resolve the conflict between conscience and law but only takes it to a slightly higher level. Someone who invokes conscientious objection in order to not pay taxes (which are spent on weapons or abortion procedures), to avoid conscription, or to publish banned books (which promote a worldview he deems most appropriate) becomes a criminal in the eyes of law (often as a recidivist), but from his perspective he may consider himself a warrior or even a martyr for a just cause. In fact, conscientious objection usually exacerbates a conflict rather than resolves it.

The conscience clause emerged as an attempt to reconcile freedom of conscience with conscientious objection. If many people are prepared to break the law, to be declared criminals and rebels and, in the end, to suffer (often severe) punishment for fidelity to their conscience – e.g., doctors who refuse to perform abortions or young men who refuse compulsory military service or to kill in wartime – then the state has two choices. It can either consistently impose harsh punishment on each of them, being prepared for an escalation of the problem, or it can find some 'get out clause' that allows this group to rest easy with their conscience while maintaining the validity and consistency of the law. The conscience clause is a legal solution in the spirit of conciliation. It is a form of official (legal) consent for certain individuals to violate provisions of the law in specific circumstances and under certain conditions. The conscience clause is a valve through which individuals who are faithful to the dictates of their conscience can remain in harmony with it, while at the same time their decisions – being institutionally sanctioned exceptions to the law – are not destructive to the community.

There are two groups of conflicts related to conscience. The first concerns what is strictly called 'conflicts of conscience', i.e., moral situations in which the individual experiences opposing inclinations to act: on the one hand, conscience forbids something (or commands something); on the other hand, other motivational impulses – personal benefits,

convictions, pressure from parents or the community – induce the opposite behaviour. Such conflicts of conscience affect almost everyone in certain circumstances in life.

The second group of conflicts arises when individual conscience and social rules clash. Such conflicts are widespread, as individuals' inevitable pluralism of attitudes and values usually does not fit into the framework of a single dominant culture and the binding legal order. In the face of such disputes and tensions, both the individual (conscientious objection) and the community as a whole (freedom of conscience, the conscience clause) must develop a certain *modus operandi* to ensure that such situations are as rare as possible, do not escalate, and do not lead to the destruction of society.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

The role of philosophy and ethics is not only to diagnose problems but also to propose solutions to them. For the sake of order, we will start this section with reflection on real 'conflicts of conscience', i.e., situations in which an individual is torn between the voice of his conscience and other arguments for a choice of action; then, we will move on to social conflicts that arise because of the conscience of the individual.

The ethics of conscience, which links the Catholic Church (the Fourth Lateran Council, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Thomas More, and many others) with contemporary supporters of natural law (such as John Finnis and Robert P. George) and classical liberals (such as John Butler and Jeremy Bentham), has traditionally always prioritised the voice of conscience over any other authorities, criteria, and opinions. What conscience commands must absolutely be applied, and what is forbidden by conscience cannot be done under any circumstances.

The only exception is sometimes applied in the case of doubtful conscience (*conscientia dubia*). The essential state of conscience is certain conscience (*conscientia certa*): a subject with this conscience knows with unshakeable certainty what he ought to do. This certainty is not rational certainty, for that is usually impossible to achieve: it is moral certainty, thanks to which the subject knows that his act is either good

or bad. Sometimes, however, we find ourselves in a situation of doubtful conscience, that is, in a state in which

man is either incapable of forming for himself any judgment about the moral value of a particular act, or he forms such a judgment but it is accompanied by a legitimate fear of error (Ślipko, 2002, pp. 375–376).

In such a – fortunately rare and exceptional – situation, the subject has the right to refrain from acting or to act based on the best available data coming from sources other than his conscience, e.g., on the basis of rational arguments, moral authorities, personal experience, etc. (Ślipko, 2002, pp. 375–376).

The need to follow the voice of conscience does not exclude the possibility of making an error. Conscience is not infallible. The entire centuries-old Christian tradition emphasises the possibility of conscience being mistaken (erroneous conscience, *conscientia erronea*), which, however, does not exempt one from the obligation to obey it:

The conviction of the right and duty to respect one's convictions (obedience to one's conscience) is so widespread today that no one needs to be convinced of its validity. Perhaps it is only worth mentioning that it found expression in the scholastic tradition, which attributes to conscience the role of the ultimate norm of morality, that is, the ultimate binding criterion – in spite of its fallibility – by which man should be guided in life (Szostek, 1989, p. 236).

This may seem like a paradox: why should a person obey the erroneous voice of conscience rather than, for example, the correct opinion of the Church or the law of the land? But it is perfectly understandable. What is a person supposed to appeal to in order to decide whether his conscience is right or wrong? What higher criterion allows him to consider the voice of conscience to be wrong in a given situation? According to the principle that conscience is the ultimate moral norm, there is no appeal, no recourse. Conscience – as long as we are subjectively convinced that it is right – is binding.

However, it should be borne in mind that conscience is not only the ultimate and normative norm but also the normed norm. This means that it can be formed (or deformed) in the course of our moral life. If we take care of it, try to develop it, and confront it with other authorities and arguments, it will become increasingly accurate, more certain, and

better able to point to the truth and the good. The best way to form and improve conscience is to obey it: “the more closely this inward monitor is respected and followed, the clearer, the more exalted, and the more varied its dictates become” (Newman, 1880, p. 18). Conversely, if conscience is neglected and man does not follow and obey its voice, it will not only deceive him but may also become silent, and then even man’s search for it will be of no avail.

In conclusion, the entire tradition of philosophical reflection on conscience unequivocally prescribes absolute obedience to it. Certainty of conscience constitutes the most important and ultimate criterion of the moral value of a human act. In the case of a moral dilemma, it is necessary to seek the best solution in accordance not only with the dictates of conscience but also with reason, with our worldview, and with the opinion of those who are authorities for us, etc. However, at the moment of making and implementing a decision, there is nothing left but absolute obedience to the dictates of conscience. In this sense, there are (with the exception of rare cases of doubtful conscience) no insurmountable moral dilemmas. In every situation, man is in possession of an instrument that he can and should use to make the best and the right moral decision in specific circumstances.

Let us now turn to the more problematic area of reflections on conflicts related to conscience. In social life, conflicts may arise between the conscience of the individual and the convictions of the community or the law established by it. How should the state resolve, in principle, the clash between the individual’s conscience and the convictions of other citizens? By recognising freedom of conscience. This is what happened in Poland in 1997, when the new *Constitution of the Republic of Poland* was adopted. Article 53 is dedicated to this issue and declares that “[f]reedom of conscience and religion shall be ensured to everyone” (*Constitution of the Republic of Poland*, 1997, art. 53, para. 1). These two freedoms are not restricted (at least, in their most literal sense) in any way, i.e., no person in the Republic of Poland can have his freedom of conscience, which is his fundamental and constitutional right, restricted in any way. In addition, the third paragraph *expressis verbis* extends this right to the sphere of the upbringing of children (*Constitution of the Republic of Poland*, 1997, art. 53, para. 3), and the seventh paragraph extends the sphere of conscience and religion to the privilege of secrecy

(*Constitution of the Republic of Poland*, 1997, art. 53, para. 7). Thus, Poland guarantees freedom of opinion, freedom of thought, and freedom to bring up one's children in accordance with one's convictions; additionally, the sphere of conscience is protected from the state's interference.

In the next article of the *Constitution*, freedom of conscience is extended to include freedom of expression: "[t]he freedom to express opinions, to acquire and to disseminate information shall be ensured to everyone" (*Constitution of the Republic of Poland*, 1997, art. 54, para. 1). Is this right – which recognises not only freedom of thought but also the externalisation of one's thoughts verbally, in speech and writing – as unrestricted as freedom of conscience? Unfortunately, not entirely. For example, it is not permissible to form parties based on Nazism, fascism, and communism (*Constitution of the Republic of Poland*, 1997, art. 13), although here one might wonder whether prohibiting "programmes [...] based upon totalitarian methods" means the same as acknowledging, e.g., communist egalitarianism or Nazi anthropology. Preventive censorship is also prohibited (*Constitution of the Republic of Poland*, 1997, art. 54, para. 2), i.e., it is not allowed to prohibit the publication of an opinion, view, or position, but consequential censorship is not prohibited, i.e., it is allowed to prohibit the republication of a given text or statement. However, is this not a restriction on freedom of speech, i.e., on revealing the voice of one's conscience?

Finally, let us notice that although the Polish constitution protects the right to recognise a certain worldview ("freedom of speech") and – to some extent – the right to express it publicly ("freedom of expression"), it does not mention the right to act freely according to one's conscience. Moreover, the *Constitution* contains provisions that seem to prohibit – at least in certain situations – acting in accordance with the voice of one's conscience, and it prescribes certain behaviours, even if they are contrary to the voice of conscience. Article 31 explicitly talks about the possibility of restrictions on the exercise of constitutional freedoms and rights (including freedom of conscience) and – no longer explicitly – that the law may prescribe certain behaviours ("No one shall be compelled to do that which is not required by law"). Article 42 speaks of criminal liability for a person who "has committed an act prohibited by a statute in force at the moment of commission thereof"; thus, the law may not only prescribe a certain behaviour but also prohibit a certain behaviour, regardless of what the

conscience of a given citizen demands. Regardless of whether the state law is in accordance with one's conscience or whether taxes are spent on activities contrary to the judgement of my conscience, Articles 82–84 list citizens' obligations: loyalty to the Republic of Poland, observance of the state law, and compliance "with his responsibilities and public duties, including the payment of taxes, as specified by statute". Thus, in Poland, freedom of conscience only theoretically protects the rights and duties of every person to act in accordance with the convictions arising from it. It is easy to point to situations in which a citizen – despite his constitutionally guaranteed "freedom of conscience" – will be legally obliged to be unfaithful to his conscience.

This is why, in principle, since the dawn of European civilisation, there has been a demand for radical obedience to conscience, even in defiance of state, religious, or social precepts, prohibitions, and sanctions, which is called conscientious objection. This was perhaps most fully expressed by Thomas More, the author of *Utopia* and Chancellor of England under Henry VIII. When the king decided to break from the unity of the Church of England with the Pope, More opposed him, for which he was sentenced to death. During his trial, he uttered very significant words:

I did really think it to be the Duty of every good Subject, except he be such a Subject as will be a bad Christian, rather to obey God than Man; to be more cautious to offend his Conscience, than of any thing else in the whole World; especially if his Conscience be not the Occasion of same Sedition and great Injury to his Prince and Country: for I do here sincerely protest, that I never revealed it to any Man alive (Ostrowski, 2001, p. 24).

More unequivocally and radically places conscience above obedience to the state or the law. The ruler (in a monarchy) or statutory law (in the 'rule of law', *Rechtsstaat*) can demand obedience, but this obedience has limits, whereas obedience to the voice of righteous conscience is absolute and unlimited. If a state authority or any other external authority attempts to usurp the right to violate a person's conscience, he has the right to oppose it, which is recognition of the primacy of conscience over any other imperative.

This problem was recently revealed in the high-profile case of Rocco Buttiglione, the 2004 Italian candidate for European Union Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security. During the hearings before he

took up this post, some MEPs threatened to reject the entire composition of the European Commission if someone who so clearly expressed his conservative and Catholic views on morality continued to be supported as an MEP candidate. Buttiglione resigned and explained his decision with these words:

One must avoid having to choose between political victory and one's own conscience. A politician should achieve what he seeks without betraying his conscience. However, if circumstances make maintaining this balance impossible, one should then follow one's conscience without hesitation. Failure, accepted in a spirit of being witness to the truth, can be the source of man's greatest good (Buttiglione, 2005, pp. 26–27).

This act is a perfect example of conscientious objection: Buttiglione did not bow to external pressure, he did not change his convictions, he did not succumb to moral and economic blackmail (an EU Commissioner earns around €22,367 per month): he remained faithful to the voice of his conscience and agreed to bear all the consequences of his decision, just as Thomas More did earlier, albeit by paying a much higher price for his conscientious objection.

It is pertinent here to ask whether the state can afford to lose its citizens – those who have clear views and are prepared to remain faithful to the voice of conscience at all costs. This refers not only to prominent politicians such as More or Buttiglione, but also to doctors (who do not want to perform euthanasia or abortion), pharmacists (who do not want to sell early abortifacients), young men (who do not want to serve in the army with guns in their hands), university lecturers (who do not want to keep from telling the truth as they perceive it in the name of political correctness or the feelings of some students), etc. It seems that modern states have only two options to choose from: to ruthlessly enforce existing laws (forcing gynaecologists to perform abortions, pharmacists to sell early abortifacients, etc.) and punish those who resist, including putting them in prison, or to find a solution that allows at least some citizens to remain faithful to their conscience while obeying all laws that do not contradict it.

This is where the conscience clause comes in. It can be seen as a privilege granted to citizens in the most sensitive areas of social life. Interestingly, the Polish constitution also implies the possibility of granting such privileges:

Any citizen whose religious convictions or moral principles do not allow him to perform military service may be obliged to perform substitute service in accordance with principles specified by statute (*Constitution of the Republic of Poland*, 1997, art. 85, para. 3).

This refers directly to a group of conscripts (compulsory conscription to military service was suspended twelve years later), whom this paragraph allows to opt out of their constitutional obligation to perform military service in special cases related to the voice of their conscience (“religious convictions or moral principles”).

This conscience clause for conscripts, which was formulated in detail in *Ustawa o służbie zastępczej* [*Act on alternative service*] of 28 November 2003, is not the only one in force in Poland. Similar regulations apply to doctors and dentists (*Ustawa o zawodach lekarza i lekarza dentystry* [*Act on the professions of doctor and dentist*], Article 39) and nurses and midwives (*Ustawa o zawodach pielęgniarki i położnej* [*Act on the professions of nurse and midwife*], Article 12, paragraph 2). Each of these regulations refers to activities which are ‘incompatible with conscience’ and the possibility to opt out of them under certain conditions. Such a compromise – exempting certain social groups from the legal obligation to act in a way that is contrary to their conscience, while allowing them to serve their country – seems perfectly rational insofar as both parties (society and these groups) gain something from it. It is also in line with the ethical and Western civilisational principle of the primacy of the individual over the group and the primacy of conscience over law.

This does not mean that conscience clauses are easy to introduce or that they cannot be changed. For example, in 2022, a civic bill *Act on safe termination of pregnancy and other reproductive rights* [*Ustawa o bezpiecznym przerywaniu ciąży i innych prawach reprodukcyjnych*], signed by over 100,000 people, was brought before the Polish Parliament. It almost totally erased the abolition of conscience clause for the medical professions. Undoubtedly, conflicts of conscience and about conscience will continue because not only do individuals have differently formed consciences and thus evaluate situations of moral choice differently – which often leads to social or political conflicts – but from time to time each of us also experiences a conflict of conscience in which it demands something or prohibits something, while our convenience, emotions, our loved ones, or our interests want something different. The worst solution

to such a dilemma is to plug one's ears to the voice of conscience or to try to tell oneself that it is meaningless. The best response to this conflict is to form our conscience, analyse its judgements, and be faithful to it.

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Magdalena Kozak
Ignatinaum University in Cracow
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2549-8007>
<https://doi.org/10.35765/slowniki.357en>

The concept of responsibility in contemporary philosophy

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: The concept of responsibility is reflected in the word itself: it is the ability to 'respond'. This is crucial for the considerations undertaken in this article. To take responsibility means – depending on the school and tradition of European thought – to answer a question, to answer a call, or to be. Responsibility is a bond and a relationship in which the making of a commitment and the ways in which that commitment is interpreted are crucial.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: In contemporary 20th-century philosophy, the concept of responsibility was most fully addressed within existentialism, the philosophy of dialogue, the philosophy of relations, and the philosophy of encounter, which stemmed from phenomenology. New and deeper insights into the essence of responsibility were added by post-Holocaust philosophy, i.e., by Jewish philosophy motivated by the experience of the evil of the Second World War, i.e., the persecution and extermination of the Jewish people.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: Contemporary philosophy interprets responsibility primarily as a relationship with the world, with other people, and with God. It is treated as a reference – which is fundamental to man – to what he discovers in himself as the 'I' and as a conscious subject who experiences various forms of externality and internality.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Contemporary philosophy distinctly demonstrates the importance, role, and relevance of the concept of responsibility in

the formation of man as a subject, as well as in the perspective of the ethical design of his future in the spirit of care, concern, and commitment to action aimed at protecting the Good and values.

Keywords: responsibility, phenomenology, existentialism, dialogists, contemporaneity

Definition of the term

Arguably, the term 'responsibility' derives from the Latin terms *respondere*, *responsio*, and *responsum*, which in Roman law meant 'to answer' or 'to respond'. Originally, these terms were legal and judicial in context: 'responding' originally meant answering to someone or before something (e.g., before a court), answering for or to something (e.g., for a crime, to charges, to accusations), defending oneself or someone else before a court, and justifying one's actions or someone else's behaviour. In the Middle Ages, the concept of responsibility became widespread throughout most European countries and their various linguistic terminologies, and the interpretative context of the meaning of this term changed. Responsibility began to be understood as a response, primarily before God, or as a response to His call. The response given in the eschatological dimension began to be understood as the voice of one's conscience, as a declaration to adhere to a certain moral law, or as an obligation towards a higher order of values. Christianity also introduced an ethical dimension to the concept of responsibility (Filek, 1996) because, by taking responsibility for all humanity, Christ interceded for sinful man before his Father and sacrificed himself for all humanity. Moreover, Christianity taught that responsibility in ethical terms means responding to another man in need who asks for support and help.

It is worth first emphasising that responsibility has always been linked to ethics and dialogue. Modern interpretations of this term pointed to the link between responsibility and duty (moral or legal) towards, e.g., another man, a system of values, or a code of principles. It was also understood as the need to take responsibility for one's actions and to be held accountable for them. According to some definitions, responsibility is an ethical norm that implies a readiness to bear the consequences – both positive and negative – of one's actions. In addition to its ethical (moral) meaning, nowadays this term is used in legal, penal, disciplinary, political, civil, constitutional, and social spheres.

Historical analysis of the term

In this section, the primary focus is on the ethical context of the concept of responsibility and how it has been shaped in contemporary philosophy. Due to formal requirements, it has been necessary to restrict the scope of the considerations presented in this article; hence they focus on the phenomenological tradition, which has decisively shaped the continental philosophy of responsibility.

The first insightful attempts to describe human existence from the perspective of responsibility appeared in the thought of S. Kierkegaard and F. Nietzsche. By introducing the concept of 'choosing oneself', Kierkegaard presents responsibility as man's fundamental relationship with himself and with God. By alienating the individual man from the rest of society, Kierkegaard describes a subject who is alienated (in relation to other people) but obliged before God. Man is presented as a singular subject who "walks alone burdened with his dreadful responsibility" (Kierkegaard, 1981, p. 87). It is only in being alone with himself that man becomes aware of the burden of responsibility he carries. Thus, Kierkegaard abolishes the notion of collective responsibility, since authentic responsibility can only be attributed to the individual:

The fact that the individual is in a crowd either absolves him from remorse and responsibility or weakens his responsibility because only a crumb of responsibility then falls on each individual (Kierkegaard, 1965, p. 51).

The other pioneer of the 20th-century philosophy of responsibility, Friedrich Nietzsche, declares "the death of God", through which he abolishes the necessity of the presence of a higher authority before whom man would be responsible, thereby placing absolute responsibility in the hands of man himself. Although responsibility is not the key problem of human existence for Nietzsche, his ideas inspired later thinkers' reflections. Nietzsche rejects the previous traditional understanding of responsibility, seeing it as merely the effect of the 'instinct to punish' and the 'instinct of revenge' (Nietzsche, 1910, p. 282). Instead, he perversely proposes his idea of 'irresponsibility' (or rather, a new responsibility), which stems from the will to power and the sense of pride. Responsibility understood in this way involves the forging of a superman within oneself, the "liberation of the spirit", and the search for "new human

greatness". The proclamation of the 'death of God' becomes a unique opportunity for man, which Nietzsche puts in the following words:

Hitherto, God was responsible for every living being that was born – it was impossible to guess what he intended through this [...] Since, however, one no longer believes in God and in man's destiny to that world, man becomes responsible for every living being that is born in pain and that is doomed in advance to an unwillingness to live (Nietzsche, 1910, p. 67).

"The death of God" places in the hands of man a radical responsibility towards life itself.

The experience of the First World War began to popularise the concept of responsibility, which burgeons throughout the 20th century, being founded not only on the thought of its aforementioned precursors but also on the context of historical experiences, including the enormity of the evil of the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the persecution and extermination of the Other. The 20th century also placed emphasis on the relationship between freedom and responsibility, which, admittedly, had been addressed by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Without freedom, there is no responsibility, and vice versa: responsibility begets freedom. Responsibility is also what distinguishes freedom from lawlessness or wilfulness.

In such a short article, it is impossible to discuss all the concepts of responsibility that were formulated in the 20th century; hence, we will focus our considerations on those that seem most important for the historical development of the philosophy of responsibility in the 20th century.

Martin Heidegger would not normally be considered a philosopher of responsibility, much less an ethicist; however, it is he who explicitly states that human freedom and responsibility are verified not in thinking itself but in being itself. Although Edmund Husserl had previously argued that responsibility permeated and guided human thinking, Heidegger shifted the focus to the responsibility of being. If the manifestation of inauthentic existence is being in the mode of the 'Self', then it is precisely this 'Self – which is anonymous, commonplace, and conforms to the majority – that is a sign of human irresponsibility. The 'Self' is an elusive mode of existence that consists in co-being, that is, in submission to the crowd, but this is precisely why it cannot be identified and why the 'Self' bears no responsibility. Insofar as one submits to this way of life and insofar as

one yields to the 'Self', one fails to take responsibility and escapes from authentic existence. In other words, for Heidegger, being-in-the-world in an understanding and open-minded way means being oneself individually and consciously, that is, also in the sense of being responsible for one's existence.

The second context in which Heidegger talks about responsibility is the role and significance of conscience, which he understands as an inner voice that speaks to man. If speech is one of the fundamental ways of being in the world – *Dasein* – then the inner voice that speaks to me is the call to do something. Conscience calls *Dasein* to be itself, to be free, and to be authentic. From this perspective, it seems problematic to show man as responsible for himself and at the same time before himself. *Dasein* is presented as both the subject and the object of responsibility, thus man places responsibility on himself and holds himself accountable for it. In Heidegger's philosophy, responsibility can be understood as self-responsibility, which stems from man's ontological construction; however, the question of responsibility for other people, which seems to be treated marginally by him, remains open.

A new way of thinking about responsibility was offered by thinkers of Jewish origin, whose perception of responsibility stemmed from the profound experience of evil manifested in various ways in the 20th century. Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Emmanuel Lévinas, and Hans Jonas focused primarily on experiencing responsibility for other people in the face of the evil that marks human existence and thus compels man to take a stand. Rosenzweig is the least explicit about responsibility; however, his contributions in this area are worth mentioning. In his vision, man, the world, and God are radically separate and distinct. He allows them all to retain their freedom but also to interact with each other. What is also important here is that the world is a created world but is also still becoming: "the world is not yet complete" (Rosenzweig, 1998, p. 175). This incompleteness turns towards man and opens up a field of action for him – a space for him to engage in. Man, too, is not yet complete, he is constantly in a process of development and growth, while being called upon by the world to become engaged. Here Rosenzweig opens up the field for the realisation of human responsibility by showing that it is not God who is responsible for the world as its Creator but man, who – with the freedom entrusted

to him by the Creator – is tasked with ‘transforming’ this freedom into his responsibility for the world he has been given to govern for himself. The Creator loved man so much that he entrusted his entire creation to him, hence taking responsibility for the world is man’s response to God. From such a perspective, responsibility appears as a task and a direction for human endeavours that look forward into the future. Such a positive view of responsibility does not stem from a prior experience of evil, for which one must take responsibility and await punishment; it is a response to the good which entrusts man with a mission to fulfil.

Martin Buber, who represents a relational and dialogical approach in contemporary philosophy, does not devote any of his texts to the problem of responsibility. This, however, by no means testifies to his lack of interest in the subject. It suffices to quote his words: “It is about not the ‘soul’ but responsibility. This is in general the fundamental theme of my work” (Buber, 1963, p. 618). His fascination with Hasidic tales motivated his first scholarly analyses, which, in 1918, allowed him to conclude that “every man is endowed with a certain infinite sphere of responsibility, responsibility to the Infinite” (Buber, 1989, p. 52). This clearly indicates man’s inseparable relationship with God. While describing the teachings passed on by the tzadiks, Buber observes that the most valuable thing man gives to the world is his own way of life. Such a view places my way of life at the centre of my responsibility for the world. Buber pays attention to the tendency in people to escape from responsibility and to hide from it for convenience. The problem of responsibility is here linked to the presence of evil in the world, which Buber expresses in the following words: “When you happen to see a sin or hear about a sin, look for your own participation in that sin and try to improve yourself. Then this evil will be converted as well”. In one of his later texts, Buber explains the crucial relationship between the ‘I’ and the ‘You’ in the context of love, which he directly equates with responsibility: “Love is the responsibility of the singular I for the singular You” (Buber, 1992, p. 47). Even if it is accepted that love can have various forms and manifestations, at their core they are all formed from responsibility for other people. Acknowledging the symmetry and at the same time the reciprocity in the relations of love, Buber attributes the same characteristics to responsibility.

Emmanuel Lévinas, the third representative of the Jewish philosophy of dialogue, philosophy of relations, and philosophy of encounter,

elevates the notion of responsibility to its fullness in an absolute and radical sense. As was the case with Buber, Lévinas's thought on responsibility evolved and matured into near obsession in the final stage of his work (as indicated by his later terminology: persecution, being guilty, trauma, debt, being held hostage, being sacrificed, and substitution). In his early texts of the 1940s ("Time and the Other"), Lévinas focuses on the relationship between freedom and responsibility, pointing to their interdependence. In the 1950s ("Difficult Freedom"), he portrayed man as having been chosen/called to responsibility, which by no means implies privilege but more the loneliness and inevitability of the fate of 'being chosen'. Lévinas definitely deepened his analyses of responsibility in the 1960s ("Totality and Infinity"), when the relationship with the face of the Other opens up access to total responsibility for one's neighbour:

The face I welcome makes me pass from phenomenon to being in another sense: in discourse I expose myself to the questioning of the Other, and this urgency of the response – acuteness of the present – engenders me for responsibility; as responsible I am brought to my final reality (Lévinas, 1991, p. 178).

At this point, what becomes conspicuous is the significant differences in Lévinas's and Buber's approaches to responsibility. For Buber, responsibility is based on a certain symmetry, partnership, and reciprocity of the 'I' for the 'You' and the 'You' for the 'I'; for Lévinas, the Other comes to me from the position of Lord, Master, and Teacher. This signifies the superiority and prior existence of the Other in relation to me, and also my passivity and inactivity in relation to him. The face of the Other speaks to me from a certain height and carries within it traces of the Infinite, so it is my moral duty to take responsibility for the Other, regardless of his attitude towards me. The face of the Other, which comes to me from the dimension of transcendence, calls me to be-for-the-Other, appeals for sensitivity to the Other, and forbids any violence even in the form of indifference (the famous ethical imperative that comes from the face of my neighbour: 'Do not kill me!'). Lévinas expresses this in the words: "The original function of speech consists not in designating an object [...] but in assuming towards someone a responsibility on behalf of someone else" (Lévinas, 1990, p. 21). His understanding of the relationship between freedom and responsibility is different than Buber's or Rosenzweig's. For Lévinas, responsibility is no longer the result of

my free choice in which I consciously decide to accept responsibility for someone else. The first, or even primary, responsibility is the one that comes from the time of anarchy and marks me, and my freedom must submit to it. The Other does not come in order to limit my freedom but to establish me as a free subject – in the sense of being ready to sacrifice and offer myself for the Other – through his calling on me to take responsibility for him.

At the beginning of the 1970s, Lévinas's understanding of responsibility became radicalised: the egoistic and egologic subject must give way to another person, which in practice translates into an ethical formula of retreating into oneself, of shrinking the 'I' to a position of total self-sacrifice for the Other, and of making space for him at the expense of oneself. Being-in-oneseff or even being-for-the-Other must be replaced by being-instead-of-the-Other. Substitution is treated here as radical resignation of oneself in the mode of sacrificing oneself for the Other in taking unlimited responsibility for the Other.

Like Lévinas, Hans Jonas, also a philosopher of Jewish origin, makes responsibility the axis of his ethical views. However, unlike Lévinas, he looks for the ontological basis for the establishment of responsibility. When Jonas writes about man's responsibility towards the Other, he understands this responsibility similarly to Lévinas as based on primordial, existential fragility and weakness. However, Jonas shifts the relationship of responsibility to the entire world and focuses on man's future. If we put the relationship between man and the world in the perspective of the subject-object relationship, we can look at it from two perspectives. From the perspective of the subject, man becomes responsible for the world and has the power, the authority, the possibilities, and the tools to take this responsibility on and to realise it ethically. The perspective of the object reveals the weakness and misery of the world, which is totally dependent on man; it also reveals the world's cry and plea to be taken care of by man taking responsibility for the future destiny of mankind and the earth. Thus, for Jonas, responsibility comes to man from the future, from outside of me. Understood in this way, it calls me to action, demands my concrete activities and decisions, and places me in a sense of duty and obligation towards what is yet to happen as a result of the realisation of my responsibility. Such responsibility binds me not only to another person but to the entire world, interpreted as a work of

creation for which I am responsible. The relationship of dependence between the object and the subject imposes on man responsibility, understood as a certain obligation towards the future. For Jonas, the good of creation takes priority, and man should take responsibility for this good to preserve it and should defend this good from the evil that is also present in the world. The protection of the good in the perspective of the future points to the dependence of the object (the created world) on the subject (man); it also points to the care for the world and its future, which, according to Jonas, man should provide.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is another philosopher affected by the war whose thinking about responsibility grew out of the experience of the enormity of evil. Given his tragic death in a concentration camp in 1945, he appears not only as a thinker-theorist but as a man who testified with his life for his beliefs and paid the highest price in the name of his convictions. This makes him, in retrospect, one of the most reliable thinkers to reflect on responsibility, its sources, limits, and consequences. Bonhoeffer undoubtedly belongs to the school of dialogical and relational thinking in 20th-century philosophy; his ethical reflections focus on the concept of substitution (similarly to E. Lévinas). Bonhoeffer also believes that the relationship with the other person is not based on cognition but on recognition of the Other, which translates into respecting his otherness and his boundaries, which are ethically impassable for me. The subject is constituted at the moment when the Other approaches him, and responsibility is established in the I-you relationship (Buber, 1963). In one of his texts, Bonhoeffer writes: "At the moment of being approached by the Other, the person is placed in a state of responsibility", and the person "exists continuously only as long as he remains in ethical responsibility" (Bonhoeffer, 1986, pp. 20, 28). It is precisely this dialogical relationship that establishes the field of mutual responsibility in the sense of a certain symmetry and reciprocity. The ethical relationship is constituted as much by the 'I' as by the 'You'. It is impossible to think of the 'I' without reaching out to the 'You' because it is this Other who places me in the ethical sphere. In his early works, Bonhoeffer embeds the notion of responsibility in a religious perspective by writing that "responsibility arises only because of a claim", and the claim he has in mind is the absolute claim (Bonhoeffer, 1986, p. 32). This claim does not stem from the presence of other people alone because then it would

not be absolute and it would not have the power of the absolute claim. God speaks through other people and therefore the claim of the Other takes on an absolute dimension. Obligation towards the Infinite must therefore translate into taking responsibility for other people because “to live is to be responsible” (Bonhoeffer, 1986, p. 222).

Thus, up to a point, Bonhoeffer’s understanding of the relationship between the Other, freedom, and responsibility is similar to Lévinas’s. For Bonhoeffer, freedom must translate into being responsible and especially into being ready to die for the Other, i.e., sacrificing oneself: “The right to life exists only through the possibility of dying for someone else, it exists in responsibility” (Bonhoeffer, 1986, p. 223). In this way Bonhoeffer, like Lévinas, arrives at a concept central for understanding responsibility: ‘substitution’, although it is worth mentioning that both philosophers interpret this term differently. For Bonhoeffer, both the principle of responsibility for the Other and the idea of self-responsibility that is binding on every man are equally firmly embedded. This means that my responsibility for the Other must stop at the limits set by the Other, who is also responsible for himself. The ethical understanding of substitution for the Other means that I do not violate his self-responsibility. The limit of my substitution is the self-responsibility of the Other, which makes my responsibility for my neighbour neither radical nor absolute, as is postulated in Lévinas’s conception. Bonhoeffer also understands freedom differently to the French dialogist, for whom freedom was secondary to responsibility and was in practice abolished by this responsibility. Bonhoeffer upholds freedom because it is through freedom that responsibility can be realised in selfless self-sacrifice for the Other.

In the 20th century in Europe, alongside the philosophy of dialogue, relations, and the encounter, existentialism – which primarily reflects on the absurdity of human existence – also places freedom and responsibility at the centre of its interest in man. The best-known existentialists are J.P. Sartre and A. Camus, but, of these two, it is the former who makes human responsibility the foundation of his reflections on the human condition. For Sartre, human nature does not exist because there is no God to provide it; thus, at first, man is nothing. He becomes someone only as a result of the actions he takes, his engagement with the world, and through the choices he makes. Man creates himself and is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. At the same time, no higher

transcendent authority or purely human signposts exist that could help man create his existence. Man is absolutely free, which makes him also absolutely responsible for everything he does. This is how Sartre puts it:

Thus, the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders (Sartre, 1946, p. 3).

The entire process of commitment to action is accompanied by anxiety, loneliness, and hopelessness, because man cannot find support and backing from the Other, who, like me, is absolutely free and seeks to realise this freedom in every possible way. Sartre also recognises that in his absolute responsibility for his own actions and decisions, man cannot use freedom as wilfulness:

And, when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men. [...] [I]n choosing for himself he chooses for all men. For in effect, of all the actions a man may take in order to create himself as he wills to be, there is not one which is not creative, at the same time, of an image of man such as he believes he ought to be (Sartre, 1946, p. 3).

This places in the hands of the solitary individual the burden of responsibility not only for himself but also for being an example and a model for other people. Therefore, the responsibility of the single individual in his choices is greater than it might seem, for it involves, in a way, the whole of humanity, since “[i]n fashioning myself I fashion man” (Sartre, 1946, p. 4).

The second existentialist, Albert Camus, also makes the relationship between freedom and responsibility a guiding axis in his ethical reflections on the human condition in the 20th century. Unlike Sartre, he treats responsibility less radically and ruthlessly. Camus claims that man remains alone all his life in a world that is alien to him. Reality appears hostile and absurd to him because the world does not answer man’s courageous questions about the nature, cause, and purpose of human existence. Man may try to annihilate the absurdity surrounding him by choosing total resignation, i.e., suicide, but this would be evidence of his escape from freedom, his weakness, and his surrender to reality. Thus, it is man’s moral duty to constantly face the meaninglessness of the world, the absurdity of his existence, and the evil that is omnipresent

in various forms. Only rebellion, epitomised in Camus's work by the two mythological figures of Sisyphus and Prometheus, can show man the right path of dissent and resistance to the all-embracing absurdity of human fate. Man gives value to his life when he realises his freedom in resisting evil and in taking responsibility for what he is aware of and where he can make a difference thanks to his commitment. In his struggle, man realises his freedom to be responsible, i.e., he takes up the absurdity of life by disagreeing with this state of affairs and seeking a way to make life more bearable. An escape from life, an escape from confrontation with the meaninglessness of existence, would mean escaping from freedom and giving up responsibility, thus it would be evidence of man losing his humanity.

Discussion of the term

The historical outline of the understandings of responsibility within the traditions presented in the previous section allows us to point to the key problematic and debatable issues in this area:

1. What is the source of human responsibility? For some, this source was reason and law; for others, human will and freedom of choice; for yet others, a higher, superhuman being that came from the dimension of the Infinite. Some have believed that responsibility originated in man himself, was born in him as a conscious and thinking subject; others have believed that the source of responsibility is another human being – the Other, who calls me and nominates me to take responsibility in the name of certain principles, values, and priorities.
2. What is the scope and limits of the responsibility we undertake? Are we responsible only for ourselves or also for other people, or perhaps for the entire reality in which we live? If so, to what extent and in what proportions? Most of the aforementioned philosophers primarily advocated individual responsibility (Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and others), but there have also been those who advocated collective responsibility (Hegel).
3. Who decides whether a person takes responsibility? Is it me myself – as an individual who is free and autonomous in my

choices and decisions – who determines the area and scope of my responsibility? Or is it the other person who, through his expectations, requests, and demands, points out to me the scope of responsibility that I should take on? Or is there some higher moral being, transcendent over this world, that decides on responsibility? Is responsibility the result of my free choice (Sartre, Camus), or is it perhaps imposed on me by the Other: man, God, the Good, the time of anarchy (Lévinas)? Józef Tischner asked: what is the relationship between freedom and responsibility? Is freedom the foundation of responsibility, or is responsibility the foundation of freedom? Can freedom be described without referring to good and evil? The question of the relationship between the scope of human freedom and the dimension of our responsibility would thus be problematic.

4. How can responsibility itself be characterised? Some thinkers argue for negative responsibility, which is guided by the evil done in the past and prescribes responsibility for it now (Lévinas). Characteristic features of this responsibility are guilt, remorse, shame, regret, and anger. However, other thinkers talk about positive responsibility, which they call prospective responsibility and which is directed towards the future and reveals to man his own potential, the opportunities he should seize, his agency, and the possibility of creating reality (Jonas, Bonhoeffer).
5. Is it possible to identify specific and universal formal (ontic) conditions that would define human responsibility in every perspective and facilitate its systematic analyses and characterisation? Roman Ingarden, a Polish contemporary phenomenologist, formulated a proposal for such conditions (Ingarden, 1987):
 - the reality of man as a corporeal-spiritual-psychic person;
 - the “free” and “own” actions of man, conditioned by his basic structure;
 - the existence of the real world as a being composed of a large number of ‘partially open’ and ‘partially shielded’ systems between which causal relations exist;
 - the reality of time, after all, the future follows from the present;
 - the existence of interrelated values and the existence of the possibility of their realisation in concrete situations.

This also raises another problem: what is the relationship between values and responsibility? For Ingarden, this relationship is based on values, which exist in a purely intentional way as a cultural reality.

6. What methodology should be used to study responsibility? Referring to the most recent – Polish – tradition of thinking about responsibility, one can distinguish at least two approaches. Karol Wojtyła, a representative of Christian personalism, thinks that the methodology used to study responsibility should be based on the doctrine of freedom of human will, which stems from the moral order in which the dignity of the human person has the highest priority. Starting from Thomistic premises, Wojtyła recognises responsibility not only as man's right and duty but also as his destiny. For him, free will is the instrument for responding to the value that calls man to take responsibility. Józef Tischner, a representative of the phenomenological tradition, proposes a different methodology. Reaching back to the origin of the word 'responsibility', he writes: "I answer because the question was a request and a call, and the request and the call established ethical responsibility. I answer in order not to kill. My silence would be an act of contempt – metaphysical contempt against which no physics, no ontology, can argue. An answer must be given [...]. I give an answer and in doing so I prove that I am responsible' (Tischner, 1999, p. 103).

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

In the above (necessarily very brief) outline of the phenomenological tradition of thinking about responsibility, we have attempted to summarise the evolution of the concept of responsibility in a contemporary approach. If we accept the division of philosophical thinking presented by J. Filk, we must point to three arbitrary epochs: antiquity, modernity, and contemporaneity (Filek, 2003). Each of these has its main representative and upholds a particular paradigm of philosophical thinking: antiquity is led by Aristotle, and his philosophy is based on the third-person form, 'is'; modernity is headed by Descartes, who defends the

first-person form, i.e., 'I am'; and modernity is represented by Lévinas, who advocates the primacy of the second-person form, i.e., 'you are'.

This account of the history of European thinking paves the way for us to understand the present role played by the paradigm of 'You' thinking, which is directed not at me as a subject, not at an entity in the third person understood as he/she, but precisely at the Other, i.e., the other man. From this perspective, we see that my freedom can and should be realised as responsibility: for myself, for the world, and for the other person. The chronology of the ways of thinking about responsibility presented in this article reveals a growing departure from the first- and third-person perspectives towards an ever deeper thinking of man in terms of 'You', understood as a priority. The traditions of contemporary thinking about man described in this article – existentialism, the philosophy of dialogue, relations, and the encounter, and the post-Holocaust Jewish philosophy – reveal that the essence of man's subjective responsibility lies in concern for and commitment to the other person. This seems to be a necessary and desirable line of thinking for the horizon of the times and the cultural and social changes that are taking place before our eyes. In the 21st century, responsibility for the other person in the perspective of the future and the existence of future generations seems to be the foundation of ethical thinking. The contemporary ways of thinking about responsibility outlined in this article are also of particular importance because they explicitly focus on human responsibility in the face of the presence of evil in the world. Existentialism, the philosophy of dialogue, relations and the encounter, and the tradition of Jewish thought unanimously demonstrate that there is no escape from the problem of evil and that our human responsibility is verified precisely in the face of it. Man, who wants to shape his responsibility in a mature way, must confront the various forms of evil on a daily basis and face them in a courageous manner. This is another signpost for the ethical attitude of responsibility today, which is also a potential platform for the development of its contemporary conceptualisations.

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Agnieszka Thier
Cracow University of Economics
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5915-2071>
<https://doi.org/10.35765/slowniki.327en>

Moral disputes in environmental ethics

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: Environmental ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the normative aspects of man's relationship with the environment.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: Historical analysis is an important element in understanding the development of philosophical reflection on the norms and principles that govern man's relationship with the environment. Recognition of the environmental crisis caused by man's irresponsible activity proved an important stage in the development of environmental ethics.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: Different concepts and approaches clash in environmental ethics. This stems from their adoption of different assumptions which determine man's normative approach to the environment. The approaches that dominate the discourse today are anthropocentrism (extreme and moderate), biocentrism (extreme and moderate), and ecocentrism.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: In its theoretical dimension, environmental ethics provides norms and rules for practical behaviours that aim to normalise man's actions towards natural ecosystems. In the practical dimension, environmental ethics should lead to changes in man's awareness and approach to the natural world. Hence, key roles are played by ecological education, support for pro-ecological attitudes, and developing ecological intelligence, which in practice should translate into the responsible treatment of natural resources.

Keywords: environmental ethics, anthropocentrism, biocentrism, ecology, ecocentrism

Definition of the term

In this article, environmental ethics is understood as a branch of practical philosophy which undertakes critical reflection on man's normative relationship with the environment. Environmental ethics seeks to answer the question of how human moral agents should care for and value nature, and what obligations they have towards it (Keller, 2012). Environmental ethics is a normative science whose task is to distinguish right from wrong in man's attitude towards the natural world. However, the term itself is ambiguous. Some even question whether such a branch of ethics deserves to be distinguished separately. Regardless of these voices, there are many different concepts and models for practising environmental ethics in contemporary philosophical discourse. This diversity is determined by the ethical, anthropological, and metaphysical assumptions adopted by the participants of this discourse. As a branch of philosophy, environmental ethics employs philosophical methodology to investigate man–environment relationships. Many authors emphasise that it would be difficult to practice autonomous environmental ethics today independently of the empirical sciences which address environmental issues. Thus, ethical reflection on this subject should be formulated with an attitude of openness to dialogue with the empirical sciences. Ethicists who focus on environmental issues should be familiar with the findings of the natural sciences, which provide knowledge about the evolution of ecosystems, sustainable development, etc. and make the research subject of environmental ethics truly diverse (Dzwonkowska, 2023). Depending on the stance taken, researchers focus on different theoretical and practical issues. Contemporary environmental ethics is naturalistic: its proponents accept the assumptions of methodological and ontological naturalism, one of the main assumptions of which is the acceptance of the biological theory of evolution. Normative status is granted to the totality of nature, which – compared to anthropocentrism – translates into different understandings of obligation and responsibility. The Christian tradition represents an anti-naturalistic and theistically oriented view of environmental ethics (Ślipko & Zwoliński, 1999).

Historical analysis of the term

Ernst Haeckel coined the word 'ecology' in 1886 to describe the study of interactions between organisms and the organic and inorganic environment around them. Understood in this way, ecology is two things: a descriptive science, i.e., a normologically explanatory natural science which, due to the complexity of the systems described, differs from other natural sciences in its limited predictive ability; it is also a normative science which seeks to determine the appropriate relationship between man and the environment (Birnbacher, 2009).

Contemporary environmental ethics is a young discipline that emerged in the 1970s in the United States partly due to recognition of the ecological crisis that was unfolding. In the 20th century, it was recognised that

the result of man's alienation from and instrumental treatment of nature is a real and serious threat to the health and life of humanity and the entire biosphere in its present form. The environmental crisis is the result of the disruption and irreversible destruction of those relationships that are key for the functioning of the earth's ecosystem and is manifested in the radical and rapidly progressive decline in biodiversity, which is necessary for the existence of life (Ganowicz-Baczyk, 2015, p. 42).

Various international bodies have joined the debate on the environmental crisis, and among the most significant examples of their responses to the environmental crisis is the UN Secretary-General U. Thant's 1969 report *Problems of the Human Environment*, which addresses the state of the environment in various regions of the world, and the 1987 report *Our Common Future* (edited under the chairmanship of Gro Harlem Brundtland), published by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. In this document, the concept of 'sustainable development' was defined for the first time, and it has now become firmly grounded not only in environmental ethics but also in almost all the environmental sciences.

The forerunners of environmental ethics come from the United States. The earliest theorists to reflect on man's relationship with the world of natural ecosystems include Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), John Muir (1838–1914), Aldo Leopold (1887–1948), and Albert Schweitzer

(1875–1965). Schweitzer, a German musician, composer, and humanist, played a significant role in the development of contemporary environmental ethics. The first discussions held within this new discipline were strictly methodological: what is environmental ethics, what philosophical assumptions is it based on, and what is the scope of its research area? It was also important to decide whether it would lead to confessional or non-confessional propositions. Bonenberg comments on all these endeavours in the following words:

The interest of traditional ethics in the environment arose from the recognition that, in spite of man becoming progressively independent on the natural world through the creation of his own civilisational structures, he is still substantially linked to the biological environment, and this link is so strong that actions which have a direct negative impact on the natural environment sooner or later lead to concrete – also negative – consequences for people themselves. [...] Of course, there are various reasons for considering the activities that affect the environment to be morally significant; these reasons depend on the general criteria that traditional ethical branches are based on. However, they all share the basic premise that the natural environment is an indispensable (at least for the time being) means – but only a means – for man's attainment of the various goods that are important to him, from the possibility of sustaining life, health, well-being, and proper physical and psychological development, through the possibility of making use of material values and pleasurable values, to the realisation of higher needs (e.g., aesthetic and cognitive needs) that are satisfied through contact with nature. The natural environment may also be considered indispensable for a human person to attain moral perfection. In each of these cases, however, the environment is treated merely as an area of man's activity and plays the role of a mediating element between people. Thus, the human–environment relationship is in fact part of the human–environment–human relationship and, for this reason alone, is of interest to traditional ethics (Bonenberg, 1992, pp. 14–15).

The issue of how traditional ethics and morality could be broadened to include the world of natural beings has been hotly discussed (it is worth remembering that ethics and morality were traditionally limited to interpersonal relationships). Some theorists claimed that establishing a new branch of ethics was not necessary as it was sufficient to reformulate the existing ethics, while others argued for a need to create a completely new formula that would approach the issue of man–environment relationships in a radically different way. Zdzisława Piątek wrote on this subject:

Passmore believes that no new ethics is needed as moral rationales can be found within traditional ethics that justify preventing the devastation and pollution of the natural environment. In justifying his position, Passmore discusses two such rationales. The first is that the Western European tradition is so rich and diverse that within it one can find views that oblige man to account in his behaviour for the interests of all creatures, to care for them, and to look after their welfare. These elements, which are present in this tradition, must be developed and made to flourish. [...] The second rationale is Passmore's conviction that real success in reforming man's relationship with non-human nature depends on the extent to which reforms and reformers can relate to and develop the existing tradition. Indeed, various systems of ethics can be invented and promoted, but their chances of success are directly linked with the distance of their proposals for change from traditional human relationships with nature: the greater the distance, the less likely the chances. [...] He believes that both the environmental crisis and even the most difficult ecological problems can be solved within the existing tradition if people behave rationally (Piątek, 1996, p. 45).

In the 1970s, Arne Næss, another theorist of environmental ethics, made an important distinction between shallow ecology and deep ecology. For him, shallow ecology was an extension of anthropocentrism and was focused on the protection of man's well-being. From the perspective of shallow ecology, the natural world is viewed as a resource that fosters man's well-being, and man – not nature – is the centre of the world of values. Deep ecology opposes the notion of anthropocentrism and is a new perspective on man and his relationship with the natural world, which is no longer seen as a means of securing man's well-being but is treated as a value in itself (Keller, 2012, p. 8).

Holmes Rolston III is considered the father of contemporary environmental ethics. He developed a new conception of axiology in which he criticised the traditional conception of ethics for being anthropocentric and for restricting morality to the human realm. He was a proponent of the thesis that values exist objectively in the natural world – individual organisms as well as species and ecosystems have intrinsic value. Rolston believed that nature also possesses many instrumental values that are beneficial to the species *homo sapiens*. He argued that nature has systemic value. He emphasised the importance of efforts to overcome the modern hiatus between the natural sciences and religion (Cafaro, 2009, p. 211). The ethics postulated by Rolston is holistic and absolutist: for him, nature has intrinsic value and determines man's concrete duties that cannot be reduced to securing the well-being of *homo sapiens*.

The crowning of the development of this new philosophical branch was the establishment in 1979 of the first journal devoted exclusively to environmental ethics, aptly named “Environmental Ethics”. It was founded by the American philosopher Eugene Hargrove (b. 1944) at the University of New Mexico. In 1981, it moved with its creator to the University of Georgia, and since 1989 it has been published by the University of North Texas, where Hargrove founded The Center for Environmental Philosophy (Ganowicz-Bączyk, 2015, p. 55).

Discussion of the term

Following Anita Ganowicz-Bączyk, the following types of environmental ethics can be identified:

1. Strong or radical anthropocentrism (absolute, sometimes called homocentrism, i.e., human speciesism) – this view proports that only humans possess intrinsic value, while other species and natural ecosystems have utilitarian value. This version of anthropocentrism is opposed by P. Singer.
2. Weak anthropocentrism (moderate, relative) – in this view both people and the natural environment have intrinsic value, but the value of man is incomparably higher than the value of the rest of nature. Man has the right to secure his basic needs, i.e., food, water, shelter, sanitation, health care, and education, but this should not have a destructive impact on the health and integrity of ecosystems (J. Passmore, B. Norton). This view is supported by some Christian environmental ethicists (such as the Polish thinkers T. Ślipko, T. Biesaga, G. Hołub, and D. Dzwonkowska).
3. Weak biocentrism (called hierarchical biocentrism) – the proponents of this view argue that living creatures have different values depending on the extent to which they are conscious of their own good, goals, and interests. The good of other creatures must always be taken into account, but ultimately – if their interests are in conflict – the good of man is of the highest value (R. Attfield, Z. Piątek, A. Thier).
4. Strong or radical biocentrism (egalitarian) – in this view, the life of every species is of equal value. They are incommensurable; hence,

it is impossible to decide which is superior and which is inferior. Man's actions must be considered in terms of the possible harm done to other ecosystems; the protection of endangered species requires the absolute limitation of the human population (called biocentric chauvinism). Proponents of strong biocentrism postulate depopulation of the species *homo sapiens*, which they believe is detrimental to biological ecosystems (Ganowicz-Bączyk, 2015, pp. 56–57).

In addition to these types of environmental ethics, there is also ecocentrism, whose proponents claim that all nature, animate and inanimate, has intrinsic value. This is an example of radical anti-anthropocentrism. All nature has a normative character and is included in the moral sphere. Ecocentrism is a holistic view in which proponents argue that preserving the integrity of the ecosystem is far more important than the good of individuals or even species. Concern for biological ecosystems is concern for fundamental well-being, which is a condition for the existence of diverse beings. For this reason, proponents of this approach emphasise the value of the relationships between all the components of the environment (the main representatives of this approach include Aldo Leopold, Holmes Rolston III, John Baird Callicott, and Edward Goldsmith).

The next part of the article focuses on moderate biocentrism. However, in order to understand its essence, it is necessary to discuss its radical faction. A key theorist of modern environmental ethics was Albert Schweitzer, who formulated the concept of the ethics of reverence for life. He was a radical opponent of anthropocentrism – a view that places man at the centre as a being to whom the whole of nature is subordinated. He also pointed to the need to broaden the concept of responsibility, which should not be limited to the world of humans alone but should include the world of all forms of life (Lazari-Pawłowska, 1976; Piątek, 2008). Schweitzer believed that a concept of responsibility limited only to *homo sapiens* life forms is too narrow. He argued that it is necessary to extend it to other living beings, which deserve the same respect as man. Schweitzer claimed that any manifestation of life is an end in itself, and this does not apply only to people. He formulated his principle of reverence for life in September 1915 while he was working as a doctor and was called to a sick missionary who lived 200 km up the Ogowe River. During the journey, he experienced a mystical union with all that is alive. On this basis, he arrived at the formulation of the

guiding norm of his ethics, which is the reverence for life. The injunction to revere life stems from the direct experience of one's own life and the lives of other beings – a principle based on mystical insight into the essence of all life. According to this philosopher, in ethics we must adopt a boundless vision of responsibility for every living thing.

The ethic of reverence for life rejects all forms of relativism. The main aim of all activity is to sustain and support life. Schweitzer approached life holistically and saw in every manifestation of life an intrinsic value worthy of respect, which is a fundamental good. All forms of existence – not only man – are our neighbours. The idea of reverence for life expresses the essence of love, which must be extended not only to the species *homo sapiens* but also to all other forms of life. Schweitzer ruled out the possibility of comparing living beings with one another as this would lead to conclusions that some are more or less worthy of existence, e.g., because they are better organised. He questioned the gradation of life based on higher or lower categories and the ranking of the value of life, with man at the top and less developed forms of life at the bottom. All forms of existence have equal value. This German philosopher adopted an attitude of absolute reverence and responsibility for everything that lives.

The question arises as to whether such a conception of ethics is at all feasible. Can man carry such a heavy burden of responsibility? The postulate of reverence for all life is correct in and of itself, but is an ethics of responsibility for life based on a primordial mystical experience attainable for man? After all, life is lost every day – animals die in the food chain, people are killed in accidents – but man cannot be responsible equally for all these events. Schweitzer's conception is based on a fuzzy notion of responsibility whose scope is too broad. The main categories of his ethics are not precisely defined, and the very category of life is understood in a vitalist spirit. The postulate for a broadening of responsibility is correct, but the scope of this extension is too radical. It imposes too restrictive a notion of responsibility on the subject, and it seems that man will not be able to live up to it. At the root of the extended concept of responsibility lie not objective reasons but the mystical experiences of Schweitzer himself, who loved everything that exists and sought to clothe this love for all manifestations of life in an ethical concept that would have universal status.

Moderate biocentrism – which I advocate – differs from the anthropocentric approach to the natural world, in which, as Z. Piątek writes, man is the Archimedean point of nature: the end of all things, as Kant called it (Piątek, 2008). Extreme anthropocentrism treats man as the titular ‘Lord of Nature’, who can exploit it at will for his purposes. The ethics of responsibility have been built on such anthropocentrism for centuries. They stemmed from a particular conception of morality which was understood as the relationships between people. Piątek identifies Kant’s moral conception as a good example of this understanding, as his categorical imperative is formulated precisely in an anthropocentric spirit. Kant wrote:

I maintain that man—and in general every rational being—exists as an end in himself and not merely as a means to be used by this or that will at its discretion. Whenever he acts in ways directed towards himself or towards other rational beings, a person serves as a means to whatever end his action aims at; but he must always be regarded as also an end. [...] whereas rational beings are called ‘persons’, because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves (i.e., as not to be used merely as means)—which makes such a being an object of respect, and something that sets limits to what anyone can choose to do (Kant, 2017, pp. 28-29).

Man is the end of moral action. He constitutes an end in itself that demands absolute respect. In the kingdom of ends, he occupies first place. Man is the end of all things and occupies a privileged place in the natural world. Kant forbids treating man as a means to an end, by which he means ends that would violate man’s inherent dignity. Although Piątek believes that this postulate is valid, for him the problem lies in the fact that Kant limits it to only one form of life, which stems from his adoption of an anthropocentric view of the world. Philosophical ideas quickly found their expression in technical activity. The titular ‘Lord of Nature’ and creator of civilisation soon began to use technology to ruthlessly exploit the resources of natural ecosystems, and this exploitation frequently had no legal or moral limits. Brutal interference was justified by man’s unique position in the natural world.

In anthropocentrism, nature has a relative and utilitarian value, which is why it can be exploited. It is valuable insofar as it is valuable for man, who has a special ontic and normative status within it. This entitles man to undertake activities that degrade nature and its natural resources.

Biocentrism breaks with this approach in order to restore the proper harmony between man and nature and rebuild man's sense of responsibility for nature. This new understanding of responsibility is a consequence of a new approach to man's attitude to the natural world and other non-human life forms. Modern anthropocentrism tore apart the original symbiosis between man and nature and led to the alienation of man from the natural world. Biocentrists seek to restore man's relationship with the world of natural ecosystems. Nature cannot be understood as a creation to be exploited at will. Proponents of biocentrism believe that nature did not evolve for humans, as evolution has no purpose. It accepts the assumptions of the theory of evolution, in which the primary aim was not the emergence of a human life form. As is the case with all other organisms, humans are the result of a random evolutionary process. In biocentrism, nature is treated in a subjective and systemic manner, i.e., it is recognised as having intrinsic value. Although man differs in complexity from other life forms, this does not entitle us to treat *homo sapiens* as an end in themselves. It does not give man the right to crown himself as the titular "King of Nature", who has ultimately become its ruthless tyrant in anthropocentrism. Of course, such ideas were advocated by philosophers who clearly had problems with recognising that man is part of the natural world, which, however, does not mean that he has no value. Z. Piątek aptly writes in this context:

However, philosophers love illusions. Perhaps this is why man's majesty and dignity are defined in Western European philosophy by qualities that have nothing to do with his biological nature, thus he becomes an entity separated from Nature, which acquires a secondary instrumental value for man's sake alone. Nature becomes something valuable because it is useful for man. It is something to which man is entitled as a rational being who possesses intrinsic value and is an end in itself (Piątek, 2008, p. 139).

In ethical terms, biocentrism leads to respect for non-human life forms; even more than that, it leads to a fascination with their otherness, which man can never fully penetrate. One does not have to be a mystic to experience the miraculous phenomena of nature (Piątek, 2008). Every living creature is here recognised as a subject, i.e., a being whose nature determines the goods to which it is entitled, without which it could not realistically exist. Subjectivity means that every such being deserves respect; it is an end in itself and man must take responsibility for it.

How does this widening of the boundaries of responsibility take place? In the first place, by raising awareness of the fact that *homo sapiens* is part of the natural world and that responsibility is not limited to human forms of life. This limited understanding of responsibility was a consequence of philosophers treating man as a being who is freed from his biological heritage, which obviously neglected the fact that man is an entity derived from the natural world. For some philosophers, even today, to speak of man in biological terms is considered an insult. This is why it was so difficult to imagine that man could be responsible not only for himself and other *homo sapiens*, but also for the non-human life forms that live, feel, and demand that the integrity of the goods linked with their nature be secured. Some of these beings cannot do this on their own, so it is up to man to secure all goods for them. Proponents of biocentrism observe that man does not have a high axiological position in the natural world, but this does not mean that he is worthless. He has consciousness/self-awareness and the ability to recognise the goods associated with his nature, which is shaped by biology and culture, both of which are necessary for his survival. According to Z. Piątek,

within biocentrism, however, the idea is to make people aware that frogs, which are the descendants of the amphibians that colonised land, have always had their own unique value in the evolution of life in that they came out of water onto land. Frogs are hundreds of millions of years older than *hominids*, and because of what they represent in the adaptation to aquatic and terrestrial life, they deserve respect and to be given a small patch of their natural habitat (Piątek, 2008, p. 142).

Thus, man has his venerable ancestors, with whom he has to reckon for his actions.

It is worth emphasising that environmental ethics developed within the cognitive perspectives of biocentrism is rather controversial. It is criticised by, e.g., proponents of moderate anthropocentrism and environmental ethics with a Christian and theocentric background, who accuse biocentrism of scientism, naturalism, and reductionism. The most serious criticism is levied against the thesis that equates the existence of the human species with other species. Critics of this view emphasise that biocentrism blurs the axiological and ontic difference between man and the natural world: “in place of proper human morality and spirituality, a pseudo-religious vitalist sentimentalism is proposed in which we are

to worship all manifestations of life, including bacteria, insects, sacred groves, ecosystems, and the spirit of the Earth” (Biesaga, 2009, p. 55). Christian ethicists advocate moderate anthropocentrism, in which man is not treated as the titular Lord of Nature and it is acknowledged that man’s task is to care for natural ecosystems and to remain in a symbiotic relationship with nature. Man, who, since modernity, has broken the symbiotic relationship with the natural world and replaced it with instrumental use expressed in irresponsible exploitation, is responsible for the ecological crisis. Man’s primacy implies not an entitlement to his domination over nature but his primacy in relation to that nature, which stems from the notion of spiritual transcendence. According to Christian ethics, every being willed by God is true, good, and beautiful and is an intrinsic value in itself. The materiality of the human body enables man to maintain symbiosis with nature, while the presence of an immaterial spiritual element (i.e., the rational soul) enables its radical transcendence (Ślipko & Zwoliński, 1999). Christian authors argue that biocentrism reduces man to a purely material dimension that is subject to the laws of biological evolution. The symbiosis with nature advocated by Christian environmental ethicists need not, of course, exclude human activity in the form of work (such as agriculture, culture, and technology) which tames nature rather than exploiting it irresponsibly. In this activity, nature is included in the construction of a civilisation that does not entail the devastation of natural ecosystems. Work is a means through which man realises his personal perfection, rather than the realisation of his greed or desire to rule. In the theistic perspective, man can overcome the ideology of paradise on earth and the greed associated with it (Biesaga, 2009).

Christian ethicists aptly observe that biocentrism is based on the assumptions of naturalistic philosophy. However, their criticism is directed at extreme biocentrism rather than moderate biocentrism, which is non-reductionist and within which, although man belongs to the order of natural beings, he is not devoid of value, and human nature is not reduced to the biological dimension alone, for culture, art or religion play a vital role in its development. Moderate biocentrism recognises the ontic and axiological difference between man and other forms of life and considers this difference to be qualitative rather than an essential difference, unlike Christian ethicists. Moderate biocentrism rejects the

axiology of anthropocentrism that leads to the instrumental treatment of nature. Its proponents aim to create a new conception of ethics. This is explained by Z. Piątek:

Biocentrism is supposed to lay the foundations on which *homo sapiens* will build a new ethics of his extremely complex relations with the natural environment [...]. After all, the attribution of intrinsic value to other living beings and to all ecosystems whose functioning sustains earthly life obliges moral agents to treat them as ends and not merely as means. On the other hand, the nature of life that has evolved in this corner of the Universe imposes on heterotrophic beings the necessity of instrumentally using other living beings in order to live. This naturalistic constraint poses moral dilemmas that moral philosophers who preach biocentric ideas must face (Piątek, 2008, p. 147).

She also claims that in such understood biocentric ethics, “moral agents are forbidden from deviating from doing good due to thoughtlessness, hubris, and irresponsibility”; she adds that:

[this ethics] would be an open-ended system, since the resolution of moral dilemmas must take place in confrontation with the real and constantly changing situation in the environment. The resolution of moral dilemmas within the framework of the new ethics should take place after first recognising the necessities of Nature and the needs of culture and on doing what is possible within what is necessary (Piątek, 2008, p. 149).

It is thus a question of protecting nature not only for man but also for nature itself, for its inalienable good, and for other creatures that inhabit it, e.g., polar bears, wolves, and small rodents. The extended version of responsibility is based on the assumption that nature as a whole has intrinsic value, i.e., that it is valuable in itself. Its value is not merely utilitarian or instrumental. Moderate biocentrism does, however, admit that people must use the resources of natural ecosystems, otherwise they could not survive. From the perspective of the survival of *homo sapiens*, nature has a utilitarian value, i.e., it is a means to a specific end, which, however, does not exclude its intrinsic value. The biological food chain in which one animal exists at the expense of killing another animal is a natural phenomenon in nature. In order to survive, man also has to kill other living beings because there is no other way to survive. Not all people can be vegetarians. In his use of nature’s resources, man should know what the limits are and when these limits have been reached

(Thier, 2016). In the biocentric concept, responsibility encompasses not only living creatures but also natural resources as the fundamental goods of the earth which are the condition for the existence of different species, including hominids. Therefore, the question of responsibility must also be asked in the context of the protection of natural resources. Man's task is to recognise their value and adapt His actions accordingly. It is not people themselves who decide what they are or are not responsible for: it is nature that determines the object and scope of this responsibility. This justification is also axiological in nature because the intrinsic value of resources determines the ends and means of action for which man is responsible.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

I would like to conclude my analyses with a recommendation to change our style of thinking about and attitude towards the natural world. This should translate into a set of concrete actions to protect natural ecosystems. Reforms in thinking and action should start with a change in our key beliefs about the natural world and its role in man's life. Furthermore, acceptance of biocentric solutions must involve a reconfiguration of the way we think about biocentrism itself. Above all, prejudices and false assumptions must be eradicated. After all, biocentrism is not a concept that threatens man's ontic position in nature – it does not undermine the fact that man is entitled to the intrinsic value of dignity and does not reduce him to a biological dimension. Also, biocentric thinking does not lead to the acceptance of euthanasia or new eugenics. Acceptance of the findings of the theory of biological evolution shows that man is a natural being, that he comes from the natural world, and that he will return to it, at least in the biological dimension. Moderate biocentrism, which I recommend, is a conception that emphasises that nature is a necessary condition for the survival of *homo sapiens*. Without natural ecosystems, we are doomed to extinction. Therefore, in the spirit of extended responsibility, people should become aware of how great the intrinsic value of nature is and that it is worth extending conscious and empathetic care to it. So far, the efforts of various environmental

organisations and their educational campaigns have not – unfortunately – translated into an increased awareness of the value of natural ecosystems. Research indicates a rather low awareness of the need to care for natural ecosystems. Therefore, ecological education, especially of the younger generations, is so important. Environmental ethics is not only a theory but is also a practice, and as a practice it should be translated into training programmes through which a pro-ecological attitude would be implemented in the broad social structures and expressed in showing respect and taking responsibility for the surrounding ecosystem and the natural resources present in it. It is important to develop ecological intelligence, pro-ecological attitudes, and healthy lifestyles; it is also important to influence the consciousness of children and young people in particular; these are the main goals of sustainability-oriented ecological education. Ecological intelligence should be developed through the implementation of training programmes conducted by economists, psychologists, and ethicists. It is also important to obtain EU funds that would enable the creation of, e.g., various environmental organisations that promote an ecological mentality, particularly among the younger generation. A pro-ecological attitude would be expressed in specific actions whose aim is to protect the natural environment. Such an attitude would be the result of internalising knowledge and social competences and skills acquired during trainings and workshops. Shaping ecological sensitivity and developing empathy towards natural ecosystems seems particularly valuable and should be combined with the development of an ecological imagination which allows people to modify their beliefs. A pro-ecological attitude and a healthy lifestyle relate to the four spheres of human existence – social, natural, cultural, and economic – and relative harmony should be maintained between each of these spheres. Thus, a fundamental change in thinking about the environment and its inhabitants is needed. It would be good if the recommended ecological education were planned in the spirit of a moderate biocentric ethic of respect for all nature, which is an autotelic value in itself. It should be remembered that the measure of man is not only what we give to other people but also what we give to the natural world, i.e., to animals and plants. Sometimes they remember us longer than people to whom we often devote our entire lives, without getting anything in return. Many things are lost in people, but nothing is lost in nature.

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Anna Bugajska
Ignatianum University in Cracow
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6078-7405>
<https://doi.org/10.35765/slowniki.291en>

Controversies over human enhancement

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: The term 'human enhancement' refers to the use of (bio)technology for the improvement of human functioning by means of, e.g., implants, pharmacology, or genetic modifications. It is usually divided into physical, cognitive, emotional, and moral enhancement.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: Human enhancement is endorsed in neoliberal societies with decentralised governance of the individual's biology, which is often embedded in biocapitalism and social functionalism.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: The fundamental problem with human enhancement is the lack of any universally accepted definition of what a human is, which stems from today's anthropological crisis.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The debate on human enhancement is primarily held between technoprogessivists and bioconservatists. Moderate critics seek to outline the limits of enhancement practices in order to avoid dehumanisation and to defend the value of the person.

Keywords: human enhancement, transhumanism, technology, ethics

Definition of the term

The Polish term *ulepszanie człowieka* (which literally means improving a human) has been adopted in the Polish language as a carbon copy of the English term 'human enhancement', which emerged in the ideology of transhumanist discourse in the second half of the 20th century. Broadly speaking, it refers to the use of (bio)technology to improve human functioning. The Polish term sounds somewhat artificial and is more problematic than its English original, which has connotations of strengthening or deepening existing qualities and usually does not refer to radical valorising changes – hence, a colour can be 'enhanced' (it becomes more vivid) or an experience can be 'enhanced' (it becomes fuller and deeper). 'Improvement' also implies qualitative changes in the moral sphere and provokes considerations as to whether it is possible to be a 'better' human, and if so, who would implement these improvements? In the Polish language, being 'better' refers to a certain hierarchy as well as to the individual's moral constitution, and the word *ulepszanie* ['improvement'] is hardly ever used with reference to humans. It is most often found in relation to technology (e.g., improvement of a steam engine) or games (e.g., improved armour) and numerous differences in the connotations between these two terms may lead to confusion in the debate. The Polish term merely reveals and emphasises the problematic nature of the phenomenon, which is also acknowledged in international debate on human enhancement. However, the debate has a different gravity or expression in Poland to that of the international arena.

Before embarking on a more detailed discussion regarding the debate to clarify the concept and the phenomena it describes, it is worth referring to the English etymology of the word 'enhancement'. It probably derives from the Old French word *enhancier*, meaning 'to make greater/higher/louder', 'to increase', 'to strengthen', 'to raise', 'to elevate'. The roots of the word go back to the Latin word *altare* (altar). Originally, 'enhancement' referred to 'elevation', and even if such connotations are no longer present in modern English, it is worth noting that this elevation of the individual, body, or human is theoretically implied in the ideological framework of human enhancement, which simultaneously problematises all these realities (Duchliński & Hołub, 2019).

If we decide to adopt the simple definition proposed above, it would be necessary to specify which technological interventions it covers in order to avoid equating certain therapeutic measures (e.g., wearing glasses or contact lenses) with actual enhancements (e.g., selective eye surgery that improves the individual's vision beyond the average level in order to achieve specific goals). Typically, technologies used in human enhancement involve invasive technologies such as prostheses, deep brain stimulation (DBS), genetic modifications (e.g., using the CRISPR-Cas9 method), and the use of pharmacology (e.g., nootropics) or biometrics (using wearables such as smart bracelets or watches with heart rate sensors). Most often, this involves experimental emergent technologies. Enhancement is usually divided into moderate and radical and can also be divided into physical, cognitive, emotional, and moral enhancements. Since the terms used in the Polish language can be confusing, one could specify here that it is about improving specific spheres of human functioning: man's physicality, cognitive processes, emotional stability, or morality (Agar, 2014; Bugajska, 2019; Hauskeller, 2016; More & Vita-More, 2013).

Physical enhancement would be carried out by means of pharmacology and surgeries that can equip man with prostheses or implants as well as exoskeletons, transplants, blood transfusions, and genetic modifications. Potential technologies that are in the orbit of interest here are human cloning, mind uploading between carriers/bodies, the creation of animal-human hybrids and chimeras, and artificial life (ALife), as well as plastic surgeries, especially those that introduce invasive changes such as subdermal implants used for decoration (this practice is associated with the biohacking movement). The main goal of physical enhancement is to eliminate disease and suffering and to achieve immortality, either by stopping ageing (the SENS initiative: Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence) or through the aforementioned mind uploading. For the sake of accuracy, it is worth adding at this point that what is often described as immortality within human enhancement simply means an unlimited healthspan: the technology of stopping ageing would not eliminate human mortality as such but would only postpone death or subject it to the will of the individual. Mind uploading assumes that it is possible to map human consciousness onto an external medium, create copies of human subjectivity, and then freely transfer them between bodies.

Thus, there is no question of the immortality of the body, but one could possibly speak of the theoretical possibility of repeatedly reproducing certain data that would make up a human's subjectivity (e.g., their emotions or consciousness).

Cognitive enhancement is already quite widely available with the use of a variety of techniques – whether soft (e.g., through supplementation or neurofeedback) or highly invasive (e.g., brain implants). It aims to make humans fitter to compete with artificial intelligence, to 'pair' humans with artificial intelligence (thus, to achieve 'collective intelligence'), and to prevent the effects of existential risk, which can also stem from human enhancement itself. Existential risk should be primarily understood as a high-level risk associated with powerful emerging technologies and the impact of human activity on the environment (as defined by the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk in Cambridge). In practice, the demand for cognitive enhancement arises as a result of the enormous competitiveness in the labour market and in education, where the ability to concentrate and to constantly acquire new interdisciplinary skills is increasingly a must. Hence the use of pharmacological agents such as modafinil, Ritalin, or Adderall, which are usually used in the treatment of ADHD. More experimental techniques include the DARPA trials related to downloadable learning (i.e., downloading information from external carriers directly into the brain and nervous system).

Emotional enhancement is usually understood as balancing the individual's emotional state and equipping them with the ability to regulate emotional reactions according to the situation. Any emotion, even the strongest ones, such as anger or love (treated here merely as emotional states), would remain under control. Another aim of this enhancement is the removal of suffering caused by mental illness, which is often achieved by means of pharmacological agents, the regulation of sleep quality, or the meditation techniques used in biohacking. One of the reasons for seeking emotional stabilisation is to prevent the side effects of physical enhancement technologies (e.g., roid rage, which is a psychotic reaction that can occur when taking anabolic steroids). The 'parental love pills' proposed by S. Matthew Liao (2011) is another example of emotional enhancement.

Moral enhancement is related to the previous types of enhancement insofar as the envisaged perfect, immortal human should also be able

to distinguish between good and evil. One example of this is the well-known and widely discussed Genetic Virtue Project (GVP) of Thomas Douglas and Mark Walker, which involves isolating the genes responsible for being 'bad' or 'good' and programming the organism accordingly. Other ways of achieving a 'good life' include the use of pharmacological agents to achieve cognitive enhancement and stabilisation as well as the manipulation of an individual's assessment of a situation through brain stimulation or behavioural conditioning. In practice, however, the most widely used means is simple persuasion, which can also be obtained through technological devices such as wearables (which enable individual biometrics) and social conditioning systems similar to the Chinese Social Credit System.

Historical analysis of the term

The phenomenon of human enhancement is sometimes traced back to the very distant past, and some researchers point to the continuity of this idea from the philosophy and mythology of the antiquity to the present times. Alchemists who sought immortality are also frequently mentioned in this context, as are 18th-century experimenters, including the creator of a mechanical duck Jacques de Vaucanson, whose experiments illustrate the fact that many thinkers from this century held mechanistic views of the human body. Some scholars also notice the recurrence of certain ideas in both Christianity and transhumanism (Duchliński & Hołub, 2019; Mercer & Trothen, 2017). Most frequently, however, it is thought that the origins of human enhancement lie in eugenic and dysgenic approaches, with their roots in the 19th century, and in science-based population control and biopolitics. The similarities between eugenics and human enhancement are clearly visible, one of which is the shared desire to create 'better people' via scientific or technological interventions. Other examples include a particular interest in reproduction, and the understanding of the adjective 'better' in a naturalistic-physicalist paradigm, in which 'good' means physical and mental fitness while 'bad' relates to disability or suffering. Both approaches can be situated in utilitarian thinking (representatives of the enhancement movement such as David Pearce, for example, are negative utilitarians,

i.e., they seek to eliminate suffering); still, it would be a mistake to equate eugenics with enhancement, even though a continuity of certain ideas can be observed. Eugenics is usually linked with biopolitics constructed around the nation-state and the totalitarian state, which implies a centrally oriented and authoritatively imposed norm. The very idea of human enhancement is developed in neoliberal societies with decentralised governance of the individual's biology, often embedded in biocapitalism and social functionalism. The emphasis is on the individual, on the pluralism of values, and on individual freedom. Understandably, thanks to technological development and the advancement of capabilities for the manipulation of human biology, today it is possible to exert a greater impact on the human body and to produce a greater variety of specific types of organisms than in the past. Moreover, because human enhancement procedures must be verified in the same way as therapeutic procedures, stricter control over them can be maintained. It can also be stated that human enhancement mostly concerns concrete technologies as well as their development, while the ideology behind them and their philosophical background remain varied. Those participants in the debate that focus on a concrete ideology rather than technology make up only a small percentage of the entire phenomenon (Bugajska, 2019; Hauskeller, 2016).

The term 'human enhancement' is frequently used interchangeably with the term 'transhumanism', which is a bit of a simplification but reflects reality in the sense that transhumanists are the main proponents of human enhancement and the authors of the seminal works in the literature (e.g., More & Vita More, 2013). They constitute the majority of voices in the debate, while criticism of human enhancement is more diverse. Transhumanism is the search to improve human functioning using technology in such a way as to transcend existing bodily limitations, including death.

Debates on human enhancement held within transhumanism usually address the various types of enhancement linked either to its purpose (e.g., immortalism: the pursuit of immortality) or the technology (e.g., singularitarianism: the pursuit of technological singularity) separately. Human enhancement can also be analysed chronologically and its development divided into three phases: 1960–1970; 1980–2000; 2000–present. During the first phase, eugenics, which was discredited during

the Second World War, was subject to rethinking and rebranding. This period also witnessed the first experiments with cryonics and extensive research into neuroscience and artificial intelligence. Phase two brought the institutionalisation of transhumanism. In 1983, at a meeting in California, futurists published *The Transhumanist Manifesto*, and the Extropy Institute was founded by Max More. Other important figures of the period who are still widely recognizable today include Nick Bostrom, Natasha Vita-More, Aubrey de Grey, and James Hughes. The first publications dedicated to transhumanism appeared, including “*The Journal of Transhumanist Thought*” (first issued in 1996). In 1998, the Transhumanist Declaration was drafted, and the World Transhumanist Association was established. Initially, transhumanism developed in the United States, but during this period it also reached Sweden, the Netherlands, and Germany. It is worth mentioning that in 2018 the Polish Transhumanist Association [*Polskie Stowarzyszenie Transhumanistyczne*] was established in Poland.

Although transhumanism is primarily discussed in the context of its development in the USA and the UK, it is currently being developed and funded in various countries. Russia is an important centre for the development of both enhancement thought and enhancement technologies, which is worth mentioning separately as this culture has a long tradition that is distinct from the Western culture and that is particularly receptive to the adoption of enhancement thinking. Nikolai Fyodorov (1829–1903), an advocate of using technology to achieve immortality or even reverse death (raising the dead), is considered the forerunner of Russian transhumanism. These aspirations are rooted in what Fyodorov called ‘active Christianity’, in which liberation from death would be achievable through human agency. Compared to the Western version of transhumanism, the emphasis in Russian transhumanism is placed on immortalism. Today, the best-known transhumanist initiative in Russia is Dmitry Itskov’s 2045 Initiative, the main goal of which is to stop ageing and eliminate death. The key image associated with this vision is the one of an avatar or artificial body into which the human mind would be downloaded.

Phase three of the development of transhumanism brought numerous debates and criticism of transhumanist philosophy, mainly voiced by opponents of eugenics, which led to the rebranding of transhumanism as Humanity+ (in 2008). Here we can speak of the popularisation

of the term ‘human enhancement’, which sounds more neutral than transhumanism. However, criticism did not cause the movement to lose momentum: quite the opposite. In 2004, the *Proactionary Principle* (Steve Fuller, Max More) was published. It stated that biotechnological modification of humans was necessary due to existential threats; this narrative is still strong today. Centres such as the Future of Humanity Institute and the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies were established and enjoy certain prestige. The movement’s influence can also be seen in religion (various types of cults), business (especially in immortality technologies), and politics (e.g., political parties). Its ideas are popularised in the media and in various publications; they are also strongly present in popular culture. Thinkers who have had a significant impact on the human enhancement movement include Anders Sandberg (the author of the concept of morphological freedom), Julian Savulescu, and Yuval Noah Harari (Bugajska, 2019; Hauskeller, 2016; More & Vita-More, 2013).

Discussion of the term

As a phenomenon that encompasses many spheres of human life and is of interest to numerous scientific disciplines, human enhancement can be associated with a number of problems that can be studied and perspectives that can be adopted. For example, within bioethical reflection we can talk about humans as research subjects, cloning, genetic modification, and preimplantation genetic diagnosis. Particular issues related to human enhancement are discussed in debates within specific branches of ethics and in disputes devoted to particular issues, while the discourse around the idea of human enhancement addresses the most fundamental notions and introduces new ones, which will be discussed below.

The basic problem generated by human enhancement is the adoption of a shared definition of “human”, which is problematic as a result of a more deeply set anthropological crisis of our times, aptly described by Jean-François Lyotard in his book *L’inhumain. Causeries sur le temps* (1988), which, among others, draws attention to the crisis of ontological certainty. The anthropological crisis is growing more serious, with one of its symptoms being the drive to ‘enhance’ humans and, above all,

to overcome their dependence on natural processes or evolution. An important axis of early debates was the existence of Factor X (Bugajska, 2019; Hołub, 2018), i.e., the one essential human quality that is shared by all humans. Francis Fukuyama introduced this term but did not define it clearly, which earned him criticism from technoprogressivists. While transhumanists do not accept that an undefined 'ego' or 'soul' is the essence of the human being, they quite often refer to arguments derived from human rights, which they make the main reference point of this discussion. What this entails is *l'homme rêvé* ('ideal man'), namely a very imprecise vision of a perfect human seen from the perspective of broadly understood naturalism.

John Locke's thought concerning psychological continuity, i.e., the existence of a certain psychological configuration identical with the 'self' that essentially consists of memories and includes self-consciousness, is often referred to in this context. In this perspective, a human being is not synonymous with a person; sometimes such provocative terms as 'non-human people' or 'wide humans' are even used. These are categories that include, e.g., dolphins, rivers, or everyday objects. The adoption of such categories naturally arouses both interest and opposition, e.g., from personalist philosophers (Hołub, 2018; Duchliński & Hołub, 2019).

An important element of the dispute over the concept of the person in human enhancement proposals is the denial of the right of certain people to be recognised as a person, e.g., those in the early stages of development or those with far-reaching neurological degradation. This debate also includes the issue of granting the personhood status to animals or other entities, even inanimate ones. This is not only a question of their legal status, but also, in a way, of respecting beliefs about the animisation of the surrounding world. Transhumanist thinking is often inspired by posthumanist thought, which has its consequences: it opens up the concept of the person to non-human and spiritual entities, and at the same time it places limitations on this concept that are linked to the postulate that individual freedom should be respected (e.g., the issue of reproductive rights) or the utilitarian imperative to experiment on some people for the good of humankind as a whole.

This approach to the human body is problematic because the right to do whatever one wishes with one's body is usually subject to a number of restrictions, e.g., the sale of organs is prohibited. However, one of the

fundamental freedoms in the ‘enhancement’ discourse is morphological freedom, which, following Anders Sandberg, can be defined as extending the right of unlimited freedom to allow one to modify one’s body in any way one chooses, e.g., by biohacking, sex reassignment surgery, and the use of nootropics. The adoption of this principle is crucial for the spread of human enhancement as it fits into neoliberal politics and biocapitalism (Bugajska, 2019; More & Vita-More, 2013). Two ideas are of particular importance here: shifting responsibility for one’s health and life to the individual, and facilitating the individual’s identification with their body and its functional and aesthetic value. Both these values translate into concrete capital and can constitute sites of investment as well as capital that the individual has to offer. Relationships with other people (e.g., investment in a partner, in children, etc.) are perceived in the same way. In the enhancement discourse, whatever increases the individual’s subjectively perceived well-being is considered positive.

However, while morphological freedom is a broad concept which emphasises the individual’s freedom to do whatever they want with their body, it is worth relating it to biohacking, which is part of a trend for manipulating biology with the aim of slowing down the ageing process and ensuring the best possible functionality of the body. Although the basic idea behind morphological freedom and biohacking is similar, some biohackers claim that they act for the good of humankind as they are willing to experiment on themselves to test the effects of, for example, genetic modification or hormonal drugs. From the perspective of a civic attitude, morphological freedom is an expression of the freedom to experiment with one’s biology, which would ultimately result in the greater good of humankind. Nevertheless, such manipulations entail risks (e.g., adverse side-effects or bioterrorism). They also reflect a version of thinking of the body as a mechanism that can be reprogrammed.

In the context of human enhancement, the body is relegated to being viewed as a fabric or a space for self-expression; moreover, the very definition of the body has undergone a radical transformation. In extreme ‘enhancement’ thinking, the biological body is not the only one that a human can have; it can even be said that it is undesirable in itself because of its vulnerability to harm. This is why some proponents of human enhancement propose transferring consciousness to a digital medium so that it can be ‘uploaded’ to an endless number of

technological bodies which are more resistant to wear than the human body. Dataism is another concept linked to the increasing tendency towards self-observation (*sousveillance*) and detailed digital imaging of the individual (e.g., digital twins) (Harari, 2017). Within dataism, the body is either equated with a bundle of data, or the 'digital body' is treated as an extension of the physical body. All this leads to further questions, e.g., about ownership, privacy, and even the dignity of the digital body.

In bioethics, enhancement and therapy are two separate concepts. 'Enhancement' technologies are frequently implemented first in people who suffer from certain medical conditions, disorders, or disabilities. This is the case with 'smart drugs' or various prostheses. Therapy requires determining the purpose of treatment, which in turn requires defining disease and health. Enhancement concerns healthy individuals. However, transhumanism is not interested in defining health because it is based on the premise that performance – whether physical or mental – can always be better. Thus, a human being never reaches their optimal functioning nor achieves *optimum potentiae* as an individual. The optimum state presupposes the existence of limits, whereas transhumanism proposes constantly transcending them, with no specific goal in mind.

Immortalism, one of the most radical varieties of transhumanism, and the problems associated with 'digital death' have prompted the debate on the definition and value of death. For proponents of human enhancement, death is the main enemy: they see it as the end of the individual's existence and usually equate it with the destruction of both the physical body and the data, where data can signify a digital body, although it usually refers to consciousness, which is hypothetically reproducible, at least in the form of interactive avatars (as proposed by Eternime and Replika). The problems with defining death thus stem directly from the problems with defining the body. Moreover, in the name of individual freedom, the idea of death on demand, i.e., euthanasia, is advocated. Within transhumanism, however, this is a highly contentious issue as the paradox between life as the greatest good and the individual's desire to die is still unresolved. The two supreme values of life and freedom collide here, and the 'enhancement' discourse offers virtually no solutions. Nick Bostrom once said that the death wish is a disorder and, as such, should be subject to treatment. He thus placed the imperative to live above individual freedom, which can generate further problems.

Not everyone accepts naturalistic definitions of life and death, which results in violations of individual freedom and human rights (Duchliński & Hołub, 2019; More & Vita-More, 2013).

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

Allowing for a certain level of simplification, it can be said that the critique of transhumanist positions is essentially the debate between technoproggressivism and bioconservatism. Both terms are value-laden, so they should be used with caution, but they do function in the literature of the subject. Not all technoproggressivists have unlimited faith in technology that is devoid of critical reflection or risk assessment. Nor do all bioconservatives aim to block biotechnological progress for the mere principle of not altering the existing cognitive models or protocols of conduct. Rather, the debate concerns certain values endorsed by bioconservatists that transhumanists oppose.

Transhumanism has become known as “the most dangerous idea in the world” (Fukuyama, 2004). This now famous phrase is characteristic of the early critiques of human enhancement. Philosophers such as Michael Sandel, Chantal Delsol, Leon Kass, and Jürgen Habermas strongly oppose ideas related to human enhancement (Fukuyama, 2002; Habermas, 2003; Hołub, 2018), as does Julia Annas, who criticises moral reductionism. This position has often been described as ‘bioconservative’. Bioconservatives adopt the ‘imperative of responsibility’, as described by Hans Jonas in 1979, which advocates avoiding risks linked to technological development by refraining from action (the heuristics of fear). What is most feared is the objectification of human beings that could deprive them of their personhood status or dignity, or it might violate basic bioethical principles, such as the individual’s autonomy or the no-harm principle. Critics of human enhancement also mention the frequent non-medical motivations behind it: the desire for obtaining profit, arrogant attitude towards the laws of nature, and excessive self-centredness.

From the perspective of virtue ethics, human enhancement arouses many concerns (Bugajska & Misseri, 2020). Importantly, self-improvement and enhancement, especially moral enhancement, are

not synonymous. Self-improvement consists in the development of appropriate virtues, which sometimes requires a long process of work on oneself to develop as much self-control and discernment as possible. Only after achieving this will the individual be able to control their emotions, improve their concentration, adopt altruistic attitudes wisely, etc. Technological enhancement basically reduces human beings to crippled beings who, without appropriate 'prostheses', are unable to function independently.

Another significant issue is freedom from enhancement. It is worth determining whether there is a place in a transhumanist world for the unenhanced. This question has already been partly addressed in the context of the discussion on immortalism. After all, what would we do with people who do not want to undergo various types of enhancement, especially of the cognitive type? They would be less likely to get good jobs or hold high social positions. Such scenarios are frequently exploited within science-fiction, with one of the best-known examples being the film *Gattaca* (1997), which tells the story of a class divide between genetically modified humans and those who are not enhanced. *Gattaca* is often used as an argument against human enhancement, which does not seem to allow full freedom to human beings as it forces them to submit to the imperative of super fitness because otherwise they will risk exclusion. Upgrading is sometimes presented in the form of an imperative. In their book *Unfit for the Future* (2012), Julian Savulescu and Ingmar Persson reiterate the Darwinian slogan of the "survival of the fittest", which implies the risk of death for those that do not adapt to the new world. Technoprogessivism is characterised by the principle of proactivity and the hedonistic imperative that was formulated by David Pearce, which in fact, refers to utilitarianism rather than hedonism. Proponents of human enhancement often insist that the main motivation for their actions is the desire to do good. It should be noted, however, that within the transhumanist movement (which in principle supports human enhancement) criticism is voiced regarding implementing enhancements, mainly because of the risk of overpopulation, the exacerbation of social inequalities, or unequal access to technology. It is, of course, true that ways of more inclusive thinking about transhumanism are being sought (Bugajska & Misseri 2020), but these are still new topics and there are few proposals that can be put into practice, which is probably

because, for the time being, people with significant body modifications voice their claims from the position of minority.

It is also necessary to address here the critique of the enhancement of human subjectivity, which has been briefly described above. Subjectivity here includes the cognitive, emotional, and moral spheres of the human being. Proposals for technological manipulations on these levels have caused a great deal of controversy, if only because of the reductionist vision of the human being that has been adopted and the actual desire to control and manipulate people by means of genetic modification, pharmacological agents, or programming based on behavioural techniques. In current biopolitical reflection, promoting technology-mediated self-control is criticized because it could, in theory, lead to the adoption of a preferred form of lifestyle that is hailed as 'the good one'. Ideas related to social conditioning (e.g., the Chinese Social Credit System), like the previously mentioned techniques, have met with concern among ethicists.

As far as pharmacological agents are concerned, it is necessary to mention their possible side effects, which is particularly important in the case of drugs or medications that allow one to function more effectively, such as cocaine or Adderall. However, it can also be argued that the mood-enhancing nootropic drugs available on the market often have the value of supplements or are simply placebos. Emotional or moral enhancement achieved in this way will mean monetising the human quest for perfection. Moreover, the question of funding such enhancements and their availability within public health systems remains contentious. Questions arise as to whether, as a society, we should ensure a level playing field for all, especially when it comes to interference with the mind and human functioning on a cognitive or emotional level, let alone a moral one.

The authors of most recent publications often take an interdisciplinary and in-depth approach to transhumanism. Examples include the works of Michael Hauskeller, Nicholas Agar, Calvin Mercer, and Tracy Trothen, and, in Poland, a series of conferences and publications organised and edited by Grzegorz Hołub and Piotr Duchliński, as well as the initiatives of the Centrum Aksjologii Nowych Technologii i Przemian Społecznych [Centre for the Axiology of New Technologies and Social Change] in Poznań. All these initiatives indicate the need to seek dialogue and

develop solutions for the existing technological possibilities for human enhancement. Debates, conferences, and courses are organised to exchange constructive criticism and find ways to agree on a shared position regarding our relationship with these new technologies. The changes related to human enhancement can be radical or moderate, and the ethical response to them should be formulated accordingly. Moderate critics observe that biotechnological human modifications are already happening, and they seek to outline the limits of such practices so as to avoid dehumanisation and defend the value of the person. Moderate human enhancement should not completely break with certain 'norms' of human existence, e.g., it should not target humans' mortality but should accept their limitedness and the concept of life as a gift and not as a project. Bioconservatives defend the human being as imperfect, vulnerable, and incomplete, whereas vulnerability in the transhumanist narrative is understood as sensitivity to data reception.

Agar's (2014) notion of 'truly human enhancement' as an aid in becoming more human is particularly worth mentioning. This critique seeks to identify certain norms or standards that will help to recognise any radicalism which could lead to dehumanisation. The following vivid metaphor helps to understand this point (Delsol, 2017): a gardener takes care of the quality, development, and growth of their plants within the constraints imposed by the laws of nature. Similarly, the same thing happens in anthropology: the determinant of the use of technology should not be the desire for profit or competition but love for the object of enhancement. This is related to theses on the humanisation of technology, in which technology exists to serve humans rather than vice versa.

Criticism is also directed against the utopian nature of transhumanist visions, such as the one presented in Nick Bostrom's oft-quoted essay *Why I Want to Be a Posthuman When I Grow Up* (More & Vita More, 2013). Researchers analyse relationships between fiction, ideology, and utopia, and they pose questions about the non-rational foundations of morality or the ethics of the future, such as narratives, emotions, or the imagination. Within utopian studies, human enhancement is most often analysed from the perspective of technoutopianism and eugenic utopias. A new term, 'evantropia', has been put forward (Bugajska, 2019), which treats the human body as a contemporary *locus* of utopia and signals a total utopia which aims to remodel the human being as a whole. *Eu*

anthropos here means a 'good human'. It is worth remembering that the original utopia is both a place and a non-place (*ou topos*); although, in the discussion on evantropia, the association with *ou anthropos* is never made, it will certainly be a vision close to what Max More calls extropianism, i.e., endless progress that does not find its solution in an explicit, static vision but aims to achieve never-ending movement and change. This explains the lack of concretisation of the anthropological vision in transhumanism, which nevertheless denies the association with utopianism, pointing only to Pearce's hedonistic imperative as typically utopian. This stems from associating utopia with a fiction or pipe dream that is detached from reality, whereas 'enhancement' practices already exist.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the proposal for a dialogue of rationality in the book *Ulepszanie człowieka. Fikcja czy rzeczywistość?* [*Human enhancement. Fiction or reality?*] (Hołub, 2018). Symbolic rationality, scientific rationality, scientistic rationality, ontological rationality, axiological rationality, and critical rationality are all present to varying degrees in the voices of all participants of the debate. The idea of a dialogue of rationalities is not to categorically exclude the position of one side in the debate but to work out some complementarity. The first stage of any such dialogue should be dialogue at the meta level, followed by dialogue regarding the subject matter, which would allow consensus to be worked out on concepts problematised within human enhancement such as human, dignity, consciousness, as well as life and death.

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Stefan Florek

Jagiellonian University

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4052-9585>

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Neuroethics from an empirical perspective

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: Neuroethics is a discipline with two distinct research areas: the ethics of neuroscience and the neuroscience of ethics and morality.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: The term 'neuroethics' was first introduced as a research discipline in San Francisco in 2002 at the 'Neuroethics: Mapping the Field' symposium, organised by Stanford University and the University of California. Since that event, the term neuroethics has been used by philosophers, scientists, and journalists in various contexts.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: Within the ethics of neuroscience as a philosophical discipline, ongoing debates are held concerning the permissibility of using knowledge gained from imaging the structure and workings of the brain and the permissibility of making modifications to its structure and functioning. Within the neuroscience of ethics as a meta-ethics and empirical science, research is conducted on the neurobiological correlates of moral cognition, moral action, and moral emotions.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The consequences of the development of neuroscience are difficult to predict as it may lead to enhancement of the cognitive efficiency of the brain, which would have effects that are difficult to estimate. As a result, humanity would face new problems, some of which would be incomprehensible to cognitively unmodified brains.

Keywords: ethics, neuroethics, neuroethics of ethics, ethics of neuroethics, neuroimaging

Definition of the term

The term neuroethics refers to two fields of knowledge: (1) the ethics of neuroscience, and (2) the neuroscience of ethics (Roskies, 2021). This understanding of the term was proposed by Adina Roskies (2002), who first distinguished the ethics of neuroscience treated as a speculative philosophical discipline, which is a sub-branch of ethics. This sub-branch studies a particular area within the empirical sciences – known as neuroscience – and its potential applications. The ethics of neuroscience is a normative discipline that formulates and justifies prescriptive judgements. It is primarily concerned with issues relating to neuroimaging, the use of psychoactive drugs, neurosurgical procedures, modifications of the brain using implants and brain-machine systems, and other issues related to the development of the neurosciences.

Identifying the subject of ethics in this context requires providing a precise definition of the concept of neuroscience itself. This is because, contrary to appearances, it does not refer to a single discipline but encompasses a group of sciences that study the structure and functioning of the nervous system, in particular the human brain. This group includes neurobiology, neuropsychology, cognitive science (including neurocognitive science), and neurophilosophy. Insofar as it concerns the pathology of the nervous system and therapeutic measures, it can also include neurology, neurosurgery, psychiatry, and clinical psychology.

According to Roskies (2002), the neuroscience of ethics is concerned with the neurobiological determinants of ethics and morality. However, it should be remembered that, in line with the Anglo-Saxon tradition, Roskies understands ethics not only as a field of science but also as the individual and social dimensions of morality. The neuroscience of ethics is thus primarily an empirical discipline constituted by research conducted within the framework of neuroscience in the sense described above. The neuroscience of ethics as a field of science also includes philosophical considerations within metaphysics based on the results of neuroscience. These considerations primarily concern freedom of will, the identity of the moral agent, the neurobiological correlates of moral cognition and moral action, and the possibility of naturalising ethics.

As Roskies (2021) observes, the fact that the findings of neuroethics are relevant to metaethics means that neuroethics transcends bioethics.

There are at least two other significant reasons why considering neuroethics solely as a branch of bioethics is erroneous. First, neuroethics revises the fundamental anthropological assumptions on which classical ethical concepts, including bioethics, were based. Second, neuroscience, together with the science of artificial intelligence, is creating methods of influencing the brain that can be used to enhance human cognitive competences. This is a unique situation in the sense that it can lead to a positive feedback loop with unpredictable consequences: cognitively enhanced brains will produce increasingly better tools for their further enhancement.

In this article, issues related to the ethics of neuroscience will be presented from an empirical perspective, in particular from a neuropsychological perspective. I will not consider their possible resolutions as I am convinced that they are determined not only by anthropological premises but also by metaphysical ones, which are different for different branches of ethics. I will also present important findings on the neuroscience of ethics. My reflections on the problems of neuroethics will be primarily made from an empirical perspective.

Due to the limit of bibliographical positions, I will not use any bibliographical references while talking about classical philosophical concepts and well-known facts from the history of science. I must assume that they are known to potential readers interested in neuroethics. For the same reason, when discussing research results, in most cases I will refer to reliable review publications rather than to the source publications.

Historical analysis of the term

Although attempts may be made to identify other precursors of research into the neurobiological determinants of morality, it is generally accepted that it was first undertaken in the early 19th century within phrenology. Franz Joseph Gall, who is considered its founder, argued that the structure of the brain determines a person's character and the shape of their skull. On this basis, phrenologists erroneously inferred the psychic properties of the individual (Damasio, 2021). Gall wrote a book under a telling title *Sur les fonctions du cerveau et sur celles de chacune de ses parties, avec des observations sur la possibilité de reconnaître les instincts, les penchans, les talens, ou les dispositions morales et*

intellectuelles des hommes et des animaux, par la configuration de leur cerveau et de leur tête, which was translated into English in 1835 by Lewis Winslow as *On the Functions of the Brain and of Each of Its parts: With Observations on the Possibility of Determining the Instincts, Propensities, and Talents, Or the Moral and Intellectual Dispositions of Men and Animals, by the Configuration of the Brain and Head*, and into Polish in 1865 by Jan Nepomucen Kurowski as *Józefa Galla Frenologia czyli Sztuka poznawania ludzi i zebrana w skróceniu: szczególnie pod względem ułatwienia poznawania w dzieciach szkodliwych skłonności celem wczesnego ich tłumienia [Józef Gall's Phrenology or the Art of knowing people collected in an abridged form: especially in terms of facilitating the discovering of harmful tendencies in children with a view to their early suppression]*. One can only wonder how many children, having the shape of their skulls examined, experienced the suppression of their presumed harmful tendencies by parents and educators who were enlightened by the latest findings of 'science'.

A particularly important case in the history of the neuroscience of ethics is that of Phineas Gage, who was of special interest for phrenologists of the time (Damasio, 2022). His case provided a spectacular example of the fact that human morality depends on the brain to a very large extent. Gage had an accident at work: an iron rod pierced his brain, yet, surprisingly, he survived. Moreover, he suffered no obvious cognitive impairment. However, the damage to the *ventromedial prefrontal cortex* caused a drastic change in his behaviour. Gage began to break the moral norms he had previously adhered to. This case provided phrenologists with evidence that brain damage can result in adverse behavioural changes of character.

Arguably, the observations of neurologists and psychiatrists concerning the links between the brain and moral action were far more important to the development of neuroethics than the work of phrenologists. These links were identified through studying people who had suffered various brain injuries. Gerd Mietzel (2002, p. 27) describes the case of a patient from 1908, which illustrates the thesis that brain damage has much to do with morality, or rather the lack of it:

The woman drew the attention of the doctors by her behaviour. The patient had lost all control of her left hand. The woman would throw cushions around,

destroy furniture, and even tried to suffocate herself once. With her right hand, however, she would try to stop her left hand.

It turned out that she had suffered damage to the structures that connect the right and left hemispheres of the brain. This case fits well with the symptoms of the disorder known as 'alien hand syndrome' or 'Dr. Strangelove syndrome', in which a patient treats one of their hands as an alien element of the external world which takes actions against his will. A patient can only try to counteract them with the other hand.

Similar symptoms are observed in patients who suffer from a dissociative disorder known as multiple personality disorder, which manifests in different, usually alternating personalities, which do not always know about each other. Eve White's case is often discussed in the literature as an example of a person with this disorder. Three personalities coexisted in her. One of them, unlike the others, was aggressive and committed immoral acts; among other things, she attacked her child. In patients suffering from multiple personality disorder, anomalous activity is often detected in the temporal lobe in electroencephalographic (EEG) recordings (Rosenstein, 1994).

This and numerous similar clinical cases provide strong arguments for the rather obvious thesis that the individual's morality largely depends on the workings of the brain. However, they also reveal something more: when this organ is dysfunctional, extraordinary disturbances of the person's identity in the cognitive, emotional, and volitional spheres occur. Equally strong arguments in favour of this thesis are provided by the consequences of surgical operations, in particular the severing of the corpus callosum. Groundbreaking findings in this area were made by Roger W. Sperry, who demonstrated that people with damaged or cut corpus callosums behave in many situations as if they had two independent brains (Bremer, 2013).

Although clinical cases have played an important role in identifying the functions of different brain centres, establishing the neuronal correlates of psychiatric phenomena only gained real momentum in the second half of the 20th century thanks to the development of non-invasive neuroimaging methods such as electroencephalography (EEG), computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), positron emission tomography (PET), and transcranial

magnetic stimulation (TMS). The proliferation of these methods was accompanied by the realisation that they could be used unethically.

Indeed, neuroimaging makes it possible to obtain knowledge about the patient which, if disclosed, could be harmful to him. For example, brain dysfunctions are indicators of mental disorders, psychopathy, or other traits which, in some contexts, e.g., while applying for a job or participating in a trial, can be disadvantageous to him.

Developments in neuroscience have led to advances in pharmacotherapy. Great progress has been made in the treatment of psychosis and anxiety disorders using medications that affect neurotransmission. However, sometimes healthy people turn to psychoactive agents to enhance their cognitive or emotional functioning; antidepressants, which improve mood, are a good example of this. This led to the dilemma of whether psychoactive agents used in medical treatment could be used to enhance the mental functioning of healthy people, i.e., in cosmetic pharmacology. Some people have even unsuccessfully advocated adding psychoactive agents, such as Prozac, to the water supply in order to improve people's mental wellbeing on a massive scale (Roskies, 2021).

The achievements in neuroscience have not escaped the attention of philosophers. In 2002, the Dana Foundation organised a symposium in San Francisco attended not only by philosophers but also brain scientists (Roskies, 2021). In the same year, Adina Roskies published an article entitled *Neuroethics for the New Millennium*, in which she proposed using this term to describe two research areas: the ethics of neuroscience and the neuroscience of ethics. The symposium resulted in a multi-author monograph entitled *Neuroethics. Mapping the Field*, which is a record of the state of neuroethical knowledge at the time of the discipline's creation.

In recent years, methods of influencing brain function using transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) or brain implants have been developed. These are already widely used in the treatment of conductive and sensorineural deafness (or hearing loss). The first attempts have also been made to use them to treat blindness caused by irreversible damage to the eyeballs. Research into the use of implants in the treatment of depression is ongoing and clinical trials have already been undertaken. The use of implants to treat people diagnosed with dyssocial personality brain disorders is also being discussed.

Moreover, advances in behavioural genetics make it possible to modify the brain by genetic manipulation, which introduces numerous ethical dilemmas. However, although these modifications concern the brain, they are a subcategory of genetic engineering and thus belong to the domain of bioethics rather than neuroethics.

Neuroscience, which has great numbers of scientists and unprecedented resources at its disposal, is advancing vigorously. This is probably because detailed knowledge of the brain not only holds the key to learning about man but also offers the prospect of almost unbelievable practical gains. However, as is usually the case with breakthroughs, these improbable benefits are accompanied by at least equally improbable risks.

There is no doubt that the spectacular findings of neuroscience undermine the common-sense image of man, just as the common-sense view of reality was undermined by physics more than a century ago, and the moral dilemmas associated with these findings elude intuition and pose a difficult challenge for reason.

Discussion of the term

The neuroscience of ethics. The range of issues addressed by the neuroscience of ethics is so broad that it is only possible to reflect on a select few of them in this article. One of these is the issue of the neurobiological determinants of free will, experimental research on which was initiated by Benjamin Libet (Bremer, 2013).

Libet's research was widely commented on in philosophy. Using an electroencephalograph and applying an ingenious procedure, he showed that when a person is tasked with making a wrist movement, before the conscious decision to move it is made, it is preceded by approximately 350–400 milliseconds by motor cortex activity, which is called readiness potential. This result suggested that the real initiator of the response is this unconscious process in the brain rather than the person's conscious decision to make it.

A thorough analysis of the research paradigm employed by Libet, however, does not legitimate his radical conclusion that conscious decision-making acts, and especially those involving issues more complex

than moving a wrist, stem from ‘decisions’ that are not free (Bremer, 2013). Libet’s research, however, motivated a number of scientists and philosophers to undertake further research into this issue, and some of them, based on its findings, began to put forward the thesis that free will is illusory (Bremer, 2013). A number of experimental studies have been undertaken, the spectacular results of which are used to justify this thesis. However, its acceptance seems unfounded. The arguments for and against the existence of free will are discussed and analysed in detail by Józef Bremer (2013) in his book *Czy wolna wola jest wolna [Is Free Will Free?]*, in which he argues in favour of its existence.

On the grounds of science, it cannot be ruled out that the mind influences the brain because empirical refutation of this thesis is impossible; so, on the grounds of Popperian falsificationism, this thesis is evidently metaphysical rather than scientific. It is worth mentioning here that Karl Popper, together with John C. Eccles, a Nobel laureate in physiology and medicine, put forward arguments for interactionism which postulated the interplay between the mind and the brain in their book, which has the telling title *The Self and its Brain: An Argument for Interactionism* (Bremer, 2013).

Even proponents of materialist reductionism argue that free will exists, or, slightly differently, that there is freedom in decision-making as long as the mind/brain can choose between different options and its decisions are not forced by external factors. This position is called compatibilism, and Daniel Dennett (1984) is perhaps its best-known proponent. Dennett and other compatibilists argue that the brain activity of a moral agent who is making decisions is precisely the activity of that agent. In this perspective, the fact that acts of will are determined by brain processes does not undermine the idea of freedom of will.

However, according to some philosophers and neuroscientists (Flanagan, Sarkissian and Wong, 2016), the illusory nature of free will is evidenced by the fact that it is impossible to identify specialised modules in the brain which would be responsible for faculties such as will, reason, or imagination (which would be analogous to the centres responsible for sensory experiences). This is, however, a weak argument because following this line of eliminativist reasoning would lead to the thesis of the non-existence of reason and imagination, which, in spite of everything and to varying degrees, people nevertheless possess. What is more, it

is easy to turn it into an argument for the existence of free will: if we have no doubt that people are capable of reasoning and imagining things – for which certain regions rather than specialised centres of the brain are responsible – it could be assumed, by analogy, that free will also exists. After all, we subjectively experience it, even without a distinct brain module that controls it.

The results obtained by neuroscientists have also been of interest to philosophers, particularly ethicists, because without acknowledging the existence of freedom one cannot be held responsible. Nevertheless, the problems associated with the neurobiological background of volition have given rise to a number of interesting philosophical proposals, including the aforementioned compatibilism, which reconciles freedom with determinism. An alternative non-deterministic proposal has been put forward by Roger Penrose, who argues that quantum phenomena can occur in brain structures (called microtubules) that play an important role in neurotransmission, which makes the brain a non-deterministic system, at least in an epistemological sense (Bremer, 2013).

Although Dennett's and Penrose's proposals go in two very different directions, they are remarkably similar in one respect: they seem unintuitive and difficult to understand (Bremer, 2013). However, the fact that our intuitions about freedom of will can fail should come as no surprise given what is known about the brain/mind, its origins, and its limitations in processing information linked to the need to conserve energy.

This is because the brain has evolved to solve concrete problems, i.e., those related to survival and reproduction, rather than abstract ones, including those related to itself, such as the problem of free will. This is why our brains don't always manage to think logically and abstractly. Most of the time, they resort to cognitive simplifications and use unreliable heuristics to save energy. Human rationality, as Herbert Simon argued, is limited (Nęcka, Orzechowski, Szymura & Wichary, 2020). Thus, when the brain makes an effort to solve a riddle – perhaps the most complicated it has ever faced, that of understanding itself – it might find itself in the position of Baron Münchhausen, who pulled himself out of a swamp by his own hair.

Findings on the affective background of decision-making processes are also important for the neuroscience of ethics. Antonio Damasio's (1994) famous book *Descartes' Error. Emotion, Reason and the Human*

Brain, presented the findings of his research and argued that making decisions, not only moral ones, through a purely rational analysis of the arguments ‘for’ and ‘against’ is not possible because it is impossible to conduct such analysis conclusively in finite time and with limited cognitive resources. Thus, making a decision requires the participation of an affective factor. Damasio (1994) demonstrated that people with damage to the regions responsible for integrating cognitive and affective processes, in particular people with damage to the *ventromedial prefrontal cortex*, are unable to make good decisions.

There is no doubt that, among other things, impaired interaction between the brain regions responsible for cognition and affect is the source of neural problems relating to morality. Research into the structure and functioning of the brains of criminals has revealed specific anomalies and dysfunctions in people diagnosed with disorders such as psychopathy, antisocial personality disorder, and dyssocial personality, whom I will call sociopaths for the sake of simplicity. These people have deficits in the sphere of their affective-cognitive competencies, e.g., affective empathy, and in the sphere of moral emotions, such as guilt and shame. Typically, abnormalities are observed in the structure and function of the frontal lobes, which are responsible for decision-making, planning, and behavioural control, and in the limbic system, which, broadly speaking, is responsible for the emotional sphere. In particular, the activity of the dorsolateral and ventrolateral prefrontal cortex, the periaqueductal cortex, and the amygdala is impaired (Canavero, 2014; Damasio, 1994). Thus, it appears that a malfunctioning brain is the cause of many manifestations of moral evil.

Affective empathy is crucial in resolving moral dilemmas. The brain abnormalities observed in sociopaths render them incapable of such empathy, at least to the same extent that other people are capable of it. Deficits in affective empathy are also associated with an inadequate or dysfunctional system of mirror neurons, which enable empathy between people (Casebeer & Churchland, 2009).

Research into the neural correlates of moral cognition reveals the existence of at least two relatively independent neural systems responsible for making moral judgements. These can be most generally described as affective-intuitive and linked with reasoning. The first is related to moral intuitions, which have the character of non-inferential

judgements that arise from unconscious processes. Its neuronal correlates are mainly the structures of the limbic system. The second, which is phylogenetically younger and responsible for conscious moral reasoning, is related to the frontal cortex, which is responsible for conscious reasoning (Casebeer & Churchland, 2009; Damasio, 2021).

Neuroscience is also interested in the extent to which classical ethical theories can be considered feasible in the context of brain capacities. William Casebeer and Patricia Churchland (2009) attempted to establish this by referring to utilitarianism, Kantian deontology, and virtue theory. They concluded that it is virtue theory that fits best with what we know about the brain.

Ethics is also concerned with the creation and use of general concepts. Due to the nature of the semantic networks embedded in neural networks, the meaning of such general concepts is fuzzy and largely depends on the individual's experiences (Nęcka et al., 2020). Strict moral thinking is thus a postulate rather than a reality. Moreover, language is embodied, thus conceptual thinking is metaphorical in character (Nęcka et al., 2020), e.g., the use of the word 'character' in reference to thinking.

Based on the findings of neuroscience, attempts to naturalise ethics have also been undertaken. These are based on the epistemologically dubious denial of the existence of 'non-natural' reality and hasty comparisons that equate an organisms' striving for survival and reproduction with duties, or equate vital values with moral values. In my opinion, a good example here is Patricia Churchland's (2011) attempt to circumvent Hume's dichotomy. Following Hume's warning against making claims about what *ought* to be based solely on statements about what *is*, she argued that, from the perspective of neuroscience and brain evolution, the routine rejection of a scientific approach to moral behaviours seems unfortunate, especially since she bases this warning on deductive inference alone. However, it is enough to notice that logically correct reasoning on this issue actually does require deductive inference, since inductive inference, which is an alternative here, is unfortunately unreliable.

Responding to Moore's conception of the naturalistic fallacy, Churchland (2011) observed that Moore got entangled in identity theory and strange ideas about 'non-natural properties'. Our brains – and the brains of animals in general – are organised to value survival and well-being.

Survival and well-being are values. Churchland seems to imply that vital values should be equated with moral values, but this is difficult to agree with since it is impossible to place moral blame on someone who has chosen to sacrifice his health or even life in the name of justice. Also weak are Churchland's (2013) objections to classical ethical theories, which are based on the claim that the concepts used in ethics cannot be precisely defined for the reasons given above.

Such argumentation at best leads to the conclusion that the nature of the concepts people use in science and ethics makes justifications and inferences in the empirical sciences less accurate than justifications and inferences in the formal sciences. However, this objection, although valid, also applies to itself as it is precisely with the help of such concepts that it is formulated. It also applies to all alternative theories that make use of equally vague concepts.

The ethics of neuroscience. The range of ethical problems associated with the neurosciences is extensive because there are many spheres of life in which the neurosciences can be and are applied. Among the most important are those related to (1) neuroimaging of the nervous system, (2) influencing the brain by means of (2a) pharmacological agents, (2b) surgical interventions, and (2c) brain implants used for therapeutic and rehabilitative purposes and to enhance functioning.

The issue to which chronological priority should be granted is influencing the brain by means of psychoactive substances. This is an old practice that dates back to the beginnings of culture, and it is how shamans have induced themselves into altered states of consciousness throughout time. The use of such agents in pharmacotherapy is a standard way of correcting disturbed neurotransmitters in the treatment of mental illnesses and disorders. This raises ethical issues similar to those faced in other areas of medicine, such as the availability of medicines to those in need, the side effects of pharmacotherapy, and, in particular, the risk of addiction. The issue of pharmacological cosmetics is relatively new and yet it is serious. It raises ethical controversies, with regard both to the modification of affective states and to the use of psychoactive substances to enhance memory, attention, and other cognitive abilities. Ethicists are concerned with, e.g., workers being pressured into using pharmacological cosmetics to improve their performance, or the potential widening of social inequalities resulting from less affluent

people not being able to afford drugs that are available to the wealthy. This will increase the differences in affective and cognitive functions that facilitate socio-economic success (Roskies, 2021). The problems faced by pharmacological cosmetics can, of course, be extrapolated to other neurotechnologies.

Surgical procedures performed on the brain to prevent burdensome symptoms of diseases such as epilepsy are also ethically controversial in the ethics of neuroscience. The case of Henry G. Molaison, the so-called patient H.M., is particularly well-known. His medial temporal lobes, including parts of his hippocampus, were removed, which caused amnesia and an inability to remember new facts, including about his life, i.e., what had happened to him since the operation. This made him constantly confused about the situation in which he found himself. His case was not the only one – there have been many similar patients.

Similar disorders have been observed in other patients who have had sections of their brain resected in a (successful) attempt to alleviate the symptoms of epilepsy. Was it worth it? This is an easy question to answer positively when the losses clearly outweigh the benefits, but only then. Analogous questions arise in relation to situations in which surgical intervention leads to the disruption or deprivation of important cognitive or affective functions, although at the same time it alleviates pain or eliminates the recurrence of a serious illness or criminal behaviours. This problem applies, e.g., to lobotomy, which, from the 1930s, was performed on violent criminals to prevent them from behaving aggressively, and on mentally ill people to eliminate unwanted symptoms of their illness. However, a side effect of these treatments was the disruption of other mental functions which are crucial to a person's identity.

Currently, the use of implants that perform the functions of damaged brain structures is the focus of serious ethical controversy. Brain implants are also used to stimulate brain function in the treatment of depression or neurodegenerative diseases. Cochlear implants for hearing are widely used. There have also been pioneering implantations of prosthetic eyes in the form of cameras directly connected to the occipital cortex. At present, the image resolution from this source is very low, but work is underway to increase the number of electrodes in the interfaces integrated into the primary visual cortex, which will enable increased resolution of vision. One may wonder what the consequences might be

of placing detectors for signals other than light into eye sockets. This would mean going beyond the limits of human perception, which is in line with the idea of transhumanism. If implants that enhance the capacity of working memory are developed, which cannot be ruled out, it would also be possible to go beyond the limits of human thinking. If this were to happen, one might wonder whether people equipped with such modified brains are still human. One would also have to question whether this radical cognitive advantage would not be used against other people.

The use of brain implants has been postulated by neuroscientists researching crime. They believe that in the case of psychopathy caused by inactivity of certain brain regions, particularly areas of the prefrontal cortex, the use of implants to stimulate dysfunctional brain regions will have a positive effect. There have been a number of promising clinical trials in this area (Canavaro, 2014), and conventional methods of rehabilitation yield rather meagre results in the case of sociopaths. In these circumstances, can it be considered acceptable to apply this type of treatment with the offender's consent? An even more difficult problem is whether, in the case of particularly dangerous offenders, such treatments could be applied even without their consent?

The stimulation of different regions of the brain is also possible using external devices such as transcranial magnetic stimulation (PSM), which makes it possible to stimulate or inhibit selected regions of the brain using a small device. This method is used for therapeutic and research purposes when, for various reasons, it is inadvisable to place the patient inside equipment that restricts contact with them or restricts their movement. It is also possible to effectively stimulate the brain into activity by using transcranial electrical stimulation (tES), called brain micropolarisation, and its various variations, such as tRNS (transcranial random noise stimulation). This is used as an alternative method for the treatment of neurological disorders and to enhance cognitive functioning (Chenot, Hamery, Lepron, Besson & others, 2022). There are also companies in Poland that offer therapies based on brain micropolarisation.

With regard to the aforementioned applications of neuroscience and the ethical dilemmas associated with them, the precautionary principle is often invoked. One of the formalisations of this principle (Taleb, Read, Douady, Norman & Bar-Yam, 2014) states that even high-benefit, high-probability outcomes do not outweigh the existence of low probability,

infinite cost options, i.e., ruin. This principle can be applied to certain applications of neuroscience, although it is ultimately difficult to assess which ones specifically.

Potential negative side effects of the application of neuroscience can be divided into two categories. The first is the negative effects on the physical and mental health of those whose nervous systems will be modified in this way. The second is the undesirable consequences for those with unmodified brains: those with brains artificially enhanced by neurotechnology will gain an advantage over others in gaining mental competences useful in different life contexts.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

The neurosciences have made tremendous progress in recent decades. They have discovered the neuronal mechanisms responsible for human thought and behaviour and they have done so within the deterministic paradigm that dominates the natural sciences, which has translated into numerous theoretical and applied benefits.

However, the development of the neurosciences has also given rise to just as many threats related to, among other things, interpretations of the results of experiments based on questionable metaphysical foundations that in turn are based on reductionism and eliminativism, which question freedom of decision and contribute to a weakening of the sense of moral responsibility. Among other things, this is a manifestation of ignoring what philosophers have established about causal relationships: that their existence cannot be proven. Scholars who make interpretations of this kind bring to mind Plato's words about those who, not knowing the world beyond the wall of the cave, became skilled in guesswork, which they based on the succession of shadows that appeared on the wall:

[...] they were in the habit of conferring honours among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future (Plato, 1998, Book VII).

In this context, it is worth recalling here the crucial epistemological finding that we are locked in the cognitive 'cave' of our own minds/brains.

Neuroscience makes it easier for us to understand that perceiving phenomena in terms of cause and effect is an innate way in which the human brain functions. It facilitates our understanding of certain dimensions of reality and supports the advancement of the natural sciences. However, the paradoxes of modern physics reveal that the explanatory power of such thinking is exhausted in relation to certain phenomena, such as those debated in quantum mechanics.

When resolving ethical dilemmas related to the practical application of neuroscience, it is important to bear in mind that sometimes their costs are revealed later than their benefits. Due to the cognitive limitations inherent in the human brain, man is unable to predict the far-reaching consequences of his actions.

Finally, it should be emphasised that the efforts of human reason, of which neuroscience is a manifestation, are of a rather paradoxical nature. Neuroscience has revealed that *Homo sapiens* is a generic name that man granted to himself; however, it can be considered as an expression of his cognitive hubris since, in fact, we think logically only sometimes, and when we do, our reason often fails due to fatigue. At the same time, neuroscience, while enlisting a fallible mind to search for its improvement, can, as a result of natural human mistakes, achieve the opposite.

The bottom line, however, is that, thanks to neuroscience, we humans know a lot more about ourselves and especially about our imperfection, which is a good thing that has proved extremely fruitful in the past and will undoubtedly continue to be so in the future.

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Dariusz Dańkowski
Ignatianum University in Cracow
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7668-8698>
<https://doi.org/10.35765/slowmiki.373en>

The limits of ethical pluralism in Catholic social teaching

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: Ethical pluralism can be understood in two ways in Catholic social teaching (CST): first, it refers to the stance taken in CST on the plurality of ethical and worldview systems in the contemporary world (external pluralism); second, it refers to the plurality of values, norms, and ethical judgements on the same issue adopted by different subjects within the axiology of CST. Both types of pluralism are relevant for addressing social issues in the social teaching of the Church.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: In this section, both the documents of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church and the literature dedicated to religious freedom, ethical rationality, and ethical and worldview pluralism are analysed. While the Second Vatican Council was a breakthrough in the area of external pluralism, Catholic doctrine maintained doctrinal continuity in the area of internal pluralism in the conciliar and post-conciliar periods. A multifaceted reflection on the pluralism of values declared in the context of the autonomy of secular matters is now developing within CST.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: This section focuses on internal pluralism and addresses the following research question: does CST expand the permissible scope of pluralism of moral judgements compared to the pluralism allowed in moral theology? In other words, does the declared autonomy of the political, economic, and cultural worlds mean that, within the CST paradigm, two people can have different ethical evaluations of the same institution in the same circumstances, and if so, what are the limits of this permissible pluralism?

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Analyses of the sources and method used in CST lead to the conclusion that it contains a broader scope of plurality of opinions and evaluations than traditional moral theology, which can be explained by the fact that it addresses social institutions and structures that are largely of a morally indifferent nature. The criterion for evaluating these institutions is prudence in the realisation of the common good. Further conclusions may result from scholarly studies dedicated to political friendship and the culture of encounter advocated by Pope Francis. The results of these studies can initiate a systematic reflection on justice in cultural dialogue in which the evaluation of a human act would be complemented with a diagnosis of the intrinsically good or intrinsically bad components of culture. Such studies require metatheoretical and metaethical reflection in accordance with the Magisterium of the Church.

Keywords: Catholic social teaching, ethical pluralism, natural law, culture of encounter, autonomy of lay matters

Definition of the term

In Catholic social teaching (CST), ethical pluralism can be understood in two ways: first, it refers to the stance taken in CST on the plurality of ethical and worldview systems in the contemporary world (external pluralism); second, it refers to the plurality of values, norms, and ethical judgements adopted by different subjects on the same issue within the axiology of CST. Both types of pluralism are relevant for addressing social issues in the Church's social teaching and for finding practical solutions to social problems. This article focuses on internal pluralism and examines the necessary and sufficient conditions for permissible pluralism in the evaluation of political, economic, and cultural issues. The terms 'Catholic social teaching' (CST), 'social teaching of the Church' and 'Catholic doctrine' are treated interchangeably here. The aim of the article is to present the position on social pluralism expressed in the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

While ethical principles are formulated in an abstract and universal way, a doctrine always presupposes a certain guiding idea that merges problems and relates them to concrete historical conditions. In the case of the Catholic doctrine, this guiding idea is the universal salvation of people and the mission to proclaim the Gospel in real social conditions. In this article, the term 'Catholic social teaching' refers to the theses proclaimed by the Magisterium of Church, as defined in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (Pontifical Council *Justitia et Pax*):

The Church's social doctrine is not only the thought or work of qualified persons, but is the thought of the Church, insofar as it is the work of the Magisterium, which teaches with the authority that Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors: the Pope and the Bishops in communion with him (Compendium, 2004, 79).

Whenever the term 'Church' appears in this article, it means 'the Roman Catholic Church'.

Historical analysis of the term

External pluralism. The doctrine of the Church has undergone a notable evolution in its approach to worldview pluralism in the world. Pope Leo XIII was openly opposed to freedom of speech and religion. In the encyclical *Libertas Praestantissimum* (1888), he claimed that civil rights should be subject to “the prescriptions of the eternal law” (LP, 1888, 10) and called the separation of the Church and the state “the fatal theory” (LP, 1888, 18). His criticism of religious liberty was based on three premises: the first was that it offended God himself by the “degradation” of liberty (LP, 1888, 20); the second was that it was a logical and axiological contradiction (“it is absurd to suppose that nature has accorded indifferently to truth and falsehood, to justice and injustice” [LP, 1888, 23]); the third was that it was a demoralisation of society.

Before the Second Vatican Council, the social teaching of the Church reflected clear double standards: in countries where Catholics were in the minority, the need for religious freedom in practice was emphasised; however, in countries where Catholics were in the majority, it was advocated that the legal order should be based on values derived from Christian revelation. The Magisterium of the Church derived the justification for this position from natural law:

From what has been said it follows that it is quite unlawful to demand, to defend, or to grant unconditional freedom of thought, of speech, or writing, or of worship, as if these were so many rights given by nature to man. For, if nature had really granted them, it would be lawful to refuse obedience to God, and there would be no restraint on human liberty (LP, 1888, 42).

A breakthrough in terms of attitudes towards other religions and worldviews came with the Second Vatican Council. In the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions – Nostra aetate*, the Council expressed respect for religious values in non-Christian traditions, seeing in them a “profound religious sense” (NAE, 1965, 2). Referring to Hinduism and Buddhism, the Council Fathers acknowledged that “the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions” (NAE, 1965, 2). They also admitted that these traditions “reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men “ (NAE, 1965, 2). The affirmation of religious values was further emphasised in relation to

Muslim and, more especially, Judaic traditions. The Church, faithful to the belief that the fullness of God's revelation was accomplished in the Person of Jesus Christ, called for the promotion of spiritual and moral goods in other religious traditions.

In the *Declaration on Religious Freedom – Dignitatis humanae*, the Council Fathers stated that:

all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits (DH, 1965, 2).

Religious freedom derives from personal dignity and can be justified either rationally (philosophically) or religiously (theologically), and these two justifications are complementary to each other. With regard to the Eastern Churches, the Council's *Decree on Ecumenism – Unitatis red-integratio* (1964) acknowledged that "various theological expressions are to be considered often as mutually complementary rather than conflicting" (UR, 1964, 17).

This turn that took place within the framework of the Second Vatican Council is of great importance for the development of dialogue and world peace, as is best exemplified by John Paul II's historic meetings with religious leaders from around the world in Assisi in 1986 and 2002. In his proclamation of universal brotherhood, forgiveness, and reconciliation, also Pope Francis explicitly refers to diverse theologies. For example, in the Vatican in 2019 he met with Bartholomew, the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque and University in Cairo, in order that they join together, with one voice, to speak about the equal rights and dignity of all people in the world and the need for peace: "accepting our differences and rejoicing that, as children of the one God, we are all brothers and sisters" (FT, 2020, 279).

Internal pluralism. This article focuses on the issue of the permissible limits of internal pluralism within CST, i.e., the limitations imposed in situations in which two people evaluate the same issue differently from a moral point of view and both do so in accordance with the Catholic doctrine. The Church has a long tradition of polemics with advocates of moral relativism and subjectivism, but theses in social

encyclicals regarding the autonomy of secular matters and the openness to new things (*res novae*), to the signs of the times, and to dialogue with the world, are often formulated in very general terms and require further studies and interpretations. The eminent Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, emphasised that this issue is extremely difficult, but it is also crucial for the fruitful presence of the Church in the world (Baniak, 2004, p. 11).

The fundamental premise of Catholic views is the thesis that ethical disputes are resolvable and that the ethical order is founded on God's commandments, which are immutable and universal. St. Thomas Aquinas conceptually ordered the issues that are linked to the resolution of moral conflicts and those linked to particular goods in the logic of the common good (*bonum commune*):

Now it is evident that all who are included in a community, stand in relation to that community as parts to a whole; while a part, as such, belongs to a whole, so that whatever is the good of a part can be directed to the good of the whole. It follows therefore that the good of any virtue, whether such virtue direct man in relation to himself, or in relation to certain other individual persons, is referable to the common good, to which justice directs (Thomas Aquinas, 2017, p. 1915).

In the times of St. Thomas, it was possible to practise social ethics without referring to complex social structures and institutions. Simple ancient categories, such as the household, the family, the state, a son belonging to his father, a servant to a master, etc., sufficed. Capitalist conflicts of interests and the democratic pluralism of values and opinions were non-existent. In the realities of the industrial revolution, these ancient and medieval categories were no longer sufficient to describe and evaluate vital social phenomena and processes.

Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891) marks the historical beginning of SCT as a systematic study. "New things" – *res novae* – included the labour question, the industrial revolution, the emancipation of the underprivileged classes of society, the involvement of the state in social life (legal regulations of working conditions and social security, the state's interference with the right to private property). New problems created the need for "a new discernment of the situation" (Compendium, 2004, 88). The novelty of the approach presented in *Rerum novarum* consisted first and foremost in comprehensive analysis of the extensive

social problems they were facing and in identifying new elements of social analysis which defined the social question rather than formulating new criteria for moral evaluation, which remained unchanged. The Church had matured into approaching the question of trade unions and the social character of private property in a new way – shifting away from appealing to the consciences of owners to now proposing new structural solutions.

The Second Vatican Council teaches the *autonomy* of political, economic, and cultural issues (e.g., evaluations of political party programmes, education systems, social security systems, etc., that are independent of theology). The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World – Gaudium et spes* refers explicitly to the pluralism of opinions in social and religious matters:

Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them (GS, 1965, 28).

The same document goes even further and discusses the plurality of right opinions:

Often enough the Christian view of things will itself suggest some specific solution in certain circumstances. Yet it happens rather frequently, and legitimately so, that with equal sincerity some of the faithful will disagree with others on a given matter (GS, 1965, 43).

Civil society has been recognised as a space for the plurality of “the legitimacy of different opinions” (GS, 1965, 75). The autonomy of worldly affairs is here understood broadly: the term world encompasses the totality of relations and activities of an interpersonal nature, not directly related to religious activity, which are here defined as earthly affairs, earthly matters, worldly dimensions, everyday life, temporal duties, etc. *Gaudium et spes* speaks of the plurality of cultures in a sociological and ethnological sense. The Church is open to the achievements of many different cultures and “is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, any particular way of life or any customary way of life recent or ancient” (GS, 1965, 58). State-Church relations are regulated on the basis of independence and

autonomy, which means that the Church “is not identified in any way with the political community nor bound to any political system “ (GS, 1965, 76). The encyclical *Centesimus annus* specifies this as follows:

The Church respects *the legitimate autonomy of the democratic order* and is not entitled to express preferences for this or that institutional or constitutional solution (CA, 1991, 47).

This also applies to economic issues:

The Church has no models to present; models that are real and truly effective can only arise within the framework of different historical situations, through the efforts of all those who responsibly confront concrete problems in all their social, economic, political and cultural aspects, as these interact with one another (CA, 1991, 43).

Recognition of this autonomy does not mean that democracy or the free market economy are free from moral judgements. Helmut Juros speaks of the “relative but legitimate autonomy of the various domains: economy, politics, society” (Juros, 1998, p. 356). The Church “recognizes the positive value of the market and of enterprise, but which at the same time points out that these need to be oriented towards the common good” (CA, 1991, 43). The principle of the common good is also a fundamental criterion for evaluating political parties and state policies. The common good is “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment” (GS, 1965, 26). The prudent realisation of this good can be pursued in many different ways, which are ‘good’ in their own ways, and which might differ in the degree of stabilisation of society, degree of social trust, their real chances of success, and the long-term effects, etc. Catholics may differ in their evaluation of these factors as “social action can assume various concrete forms” (CCC, 1992, 2442).

The proclamation of the autonomy of secular matters initiated the treatment of Catholic social thought as a set of open-ended propositions (Juros, 1998, p. 354). The interdisciplinary character of this teaching and its openness to the achievements of the detailed sciences were emphasised. However, none of the above documents led to any ‘breakthrough’ on the question of ethical rationalisation in Catholic

doctrine. In addition, in the statements of the Magisterium of the Church at the turn of the 21st century, one can observe a revival of traditional teaching and intense opposition to the manifestations of relativism and ethical pluralism in the broadly understood Christian culture.

The 1993 encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, which recalled “the traditional doctrine regarding the natural law, and the universality and the permanent validity of its precepts” (VS, 1993, 4), was written in response to disputes, dilemmas, and doubts “within the Christian community itself” (VS, 1993, 4). Referring to the conciliar Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, it taught of the objective norms of morality, which are based on the universal and permanent natural law (VS, 1993, 52–53). In other words, moral judgements cannot depend solely on the mental states and intentions of the cognising and acting subject. Moral norms are rooted in the law that comes from God, who is the creator and giver of human nature. Consequently, it is the structures of being that influence the content of moral norms in accordance with the classical maxim: *agere sequitur esse*.

Moral perfection demands radical adherence to the person of Jesus Christ, while “the task of *authentically interpreting* the word of God” is made in collaboration with the Holy Spirit (VS, 1993, 27). Significantly, the truth discovered under the guidance of the Holy Spirit relates not only to human salvation but also to the “social order” and to the “fundamental human rights” (VS, 1993, 27).

In his teaching, John Paul II theologised SCT by recognising it as a branch of moral theology (SRS, 1987, 41; CA, 1991, 55) and thus indicated the theological method of practising this teaching, which is based on reason enlightened by faith. The theological character of SCT is also emphasised in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, which draws attention to the fact that the understanding of faith “includes reason, by means of which – insofar as possible – it unravels and comprehends revealed truth and integrates it with the truth of human nature, found in the divine plan expressed in creation” (Compendium, 2004, 75). According to the *Catechism*, SCT “comprises a body of doctrine, which is articulated as the Church interprets events in the course of history, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit” (CCC, 1992, 2422). In this sense, this teaching is binding on the faithful, who “have the duty of observing the constitutions and decrees conveyed by the legitimate authority of the Church” (CCC, 1992, 2037).

Pope Benedict XVI's objections to the relativisation of truth led to his recognition of love in truth (*caritas in veritate*) as a principle of the Church's social teaching (CV, 2009, 6). This principle is intended to help overcome social individualism and to act in the name of the common good. While generally continuing his predecessors' line of teaching, Pope Francis introduces new pastoral issues to it. He emphasises the need for dialogue and tolerance in a world of plurality of "legitimate convictions and concerns" and observes that "differences are creative; they create tension and in the resolution of tension lies humanity's progress" (FT, 2020, 203). Like many theologians and philosophers with a post-colonial sensibility, the author of *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli tutti* allows the voices of peripheral countries to be heard. In contrast to all other Popes, in the footnotes to his documents, he repeatedly refers to the statements of the local communities of the Church. It seems that this new perspective on the encounter of cultures and on the culture of encounter is, for Francis, the sign of the times.

Discussion of the term

The consequence of grasping social doctrine in theological terms is the adoption of a certain hierarchy of moral order: the order proposed by human society cannot overturn the order established by the Creator. In this vein, John Paul II condemns "a pluralism of opinions and of kinds of behaviour [...] being left to the judgment of the individual subjective conscience or to the diversity of social and cultural contexts" (VS, 1993, 4). The pluralism of opinions that is characteristic of democratic institutions and the world of contemporary media must not undermine the order based on revealed truth, must not obscure the "Catholic doctrine in its purity and integrity" (VS, 1993, 113). By definition, there can be no conflict between absolute and universal values, although there might be a problem with their coordination, i.e., "the limitation of their axiological ranges", e.g., in the case of aggression (Ślipko, 1984, pp. 210–214).

Among the threats to the integrity of Catholic doctrine, John Paul II mentions the absolutisation of freedom ("The individual conscience is accorded the status of a supreme tribunal of moral judgment" [VS, 1993, 32]). Extreme individualism leads to denial of the objective truth of the

existence of transcendent human nature directed towards contact with God. Another danger is “a relativistic conception of morality” (VS, 1993, 33) and distinguishing “between an ethical order, which would be human in origin and of value for this world alone, and an order of salvation, for which only certain intentions and interior attitudes regarding God and neighbour would be significant” (VS, 1993, 37). *Veritatis splendor* opposes the ethical theory called the fundamental option (VS, 1993, 65–68) and teleological theories of consequentialism and proportionalism (VS, 1993, 90). The question of the historical mutability of the moral consciousness of individual societies is not dealt with in detail in this document, which contains a brief statement stating that moral norms have been “specified and determined” throughout history (VS, 1993, 53). The encyclical also speaks in very general terms of the need to seek moral solutions through dialogue with “non-Catholics and non-believers, especially in pluralistic societies” (VS, 1993, 74).

It is significant that both *Veritatis splendor* and the *Catechism* analyse social issues in terms of traditional moral theology directed at evaluating the actions of the individual. Their reflections are placed within a doctrinal reflection on the seventh commandment (*Thou shalt not steal* – Exodus 20:15) and, in this context, the encyclical emphasises the importance of the traditional virtues of temperance, justice, and solidarity (VS, 1993, 100). As examples of behaviours and actions against the seventh commandment, it lists

theft, deliberate retention of goods lent or objects lost, business fraud, unjust wages, forcing up prices by trading on the ignorance or hardship of another (VS, 1993, 100).

In doing so, the document refers to the Old Testament *Book of Deuteronomy* and to the *Book of Amos*. The examples primarily include those that are traditionally analysed within detailed ethics (detailed moral theology), which refers to the behaviour of the individual rather than social institutions or structures (which are the main research area of the social sciences). Thus, *Veritatis splendor* does not analyse aspects of contemporary capitalism or contemporary political systems such as structural exclusion, discrimination, domination, the distribution of material, cultural, intellectual, and political goods, belonging, identity, etc. It focuses on traditional virtues – which are the most important from a moral perspective – of the

individual, who should be honest, impartial, and should not reduce other people to “use-value” (VS, 1993, 100). This encyclical places emphasis on the formation of the individual person, who should resist temptations, avoid sin, repent, and cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

In its analyses of the seventh commandment, the *Catechism* focuses primarily on the virtues of the individual and is very cautious about institutions and structures. It states that, in economic matters, the Church rejects both centrally governed systems and those systems that promote the domination of the economy over the good of the human person. Thus, it recommends “reasonable regulation of the marketplace and economic initiatives, in keeping with a just hierarchy of values and a view to the common good” (CCC, 1992, 2425). Undoubtedly, the methodology of moral theology has had a crucial impact on the final shape of these two documents, in which a sin is always the sin of the individual, and social sin can only be understood analogously to it:

The real responsibility, then, lies with individuals. A situation – or likewise an institution, a structure, society itself – is not in itself the subject of moral acts. Hence a situation cannot in itself be good or bad (RP, 1984, 16).

Autonomy or pluralism? The reticence in formulating the criteria for evaluating social institutions and structures may suggest that their moral value should depend solely on their consistency with fundamental Christian values; in particular, moral norms expressed negatively (do not kill, do not steal, do not violate human dignity) should be upheld and, within this consistency, individuals should act prudently. Such a conclusion, however, distorts the message of CST, especially in the age of globalisation, when many areas of social life remain outside any legal regulation. In addition, today the world is experiencing cultural pluralism on an unprecedented scale, which means that the problems of external and internal pluralism intersect and give rise to new questions related to social justice. The autonomy of secular matters is not an absolute autonomy. As shown above, prudent solutions to social problems should always be directed towards the realisation of the common good. Furthermore, CST formulates norms that are more specific. *The Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life* issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2002 reminds us that

no Catholic can appeal to the principle of pluralism or to the autonomy of lay involvement in political life to support policies affecting the common good which compromise or undermine fundamental ethical requirements (Note, 2002, 5).

The document formulates specific principles that regulate the obligations of Catholics engaged in politics, including the obligation to oppose any law that attacks human life (abortion, euthanasia), seeking to protect the environment, raising awareness of the value of the family (based on marriage understood monogamously as the union of a man and a woman), social protection of minors, promotion of the right to religious freedom, concern for economic development, and concern for peace (Note, 2002, 4).

Another document issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation – Libertatis conscientia* lists certain manifestations of evil in social life and condemns “violence exercised by the powerful against the poor, arbitrary action by the police, and any form of violence established as a system of government” (LC, 1986, 76). It gives torture, violence, terrorism, and hate-based campaigns as examples of unacceptable methods of bringing about social change. Ethical action requires taking into account all the principles of CST in a complementary way and not treating its teaching selectively:

The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church’s social doctrine does not exhaust one’s responsibility towards the common good (Note, 2002, 4).

The above directive is vital in the practical application of the principles of SCT since religious values and symbols are often manipulated to achieve ad hoc political goals in the social reality. However, the realisation of the social teaching of the Church requires not only impartiality in political or ideological matters but also honest consideration of goods and values and the search for a just measure in the realisation of competing claims. While there is no specific matrix for such consideration, the Church’s documents emphasise the personalistic aspect in the evaluation of social structures. Democratic practices are subject to moral evaluation in terms of respecting the subjectivity of society as a whole (not only Catholics) and developing the co-participation and co-responsibility of all members of the community (CA, 1991, 46).

At the same time, not all violations of CST theses are sins since it also includes contingent elements, and some of its theses require “the doctrinal weight of the different teachings” (Compendium, 2004, 80). As *Libertatis conscientia* clarifies, CST contains both universal and contextual theses:

Being essentially orientated toward action, this teaching develops in accordance with the changing circumstances of history. This is why, together with principles that are always valid, it also involves contingent judgments. Far from constituting a closed system, it remains constantly open to the new questions which continually arise; it requires the contribution of all charisma, experiences and skills (LC, 1986, 72).

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

Two complementary theses – on universal moral norms and on the autonomy of secular matters – require clarifying. According to Czesław Strzeszewski, there are two characteristic features of CST: immutability and developmentality. These derive from two types of ethical norms, general and specific: “[g]eneral norms are immutable and eternal, while specific norms are a synthesis of general norms and the life conditions and transformations of social and economic relations throughout history, and as such are changeable” (Strzeszewski, 1994, p. 169). The above thesis touches on a topic that is controversial and hotly debated in the academic world, in public life, and in Catholic activist circles. In the 20th century, the dynamic nature of morality and the norms of natural law was a hotly debated topic in which the term “natural law with variable content” was coined (Rudolf Stammler) and the publications of some Catholic writers were not always in line with the teaching of the Magisterium of the Church. According to the *Catechism*, the natural law is universal, immutable and permanent, although its application should be adapted to historical conditions “according to places, times, and circumstances” (CCC, 1992, 1954–1960).

This problem was analysed in the neo-Thomist tradition by the American scholar and Jesuit, John Courtney Murray, who argues that human nature consists of two levels. At the first level, the most basic principles of natural law are cognitively accessible to all people, e.g., the

commandments of the Decalogue and the most basic concepts, such as 'parent' or 'disrespect' (Murray, 1988, p. 110). Natural law is easily cognisable because it is universal and common to all people and is based on universal and immutable values. However, human nature also contains a second level that is changeable and historically determined because man's growth and self-improvement is dependent on the conditions in which he functions.

Murray repeats after Aquinas that the nature of man is susceptible of change (Murray, 1988, p. 113). The formal aspect of this nature remains unchanged, while its material aspect changes. In this sense, the same things are not always good and just, and they must be specified by law (Murray, 1988, p. 114). Commenting on Murray's views, Robert Cuervo gives an example of the relationship between shareholders and the board of directors of a corporation as a historically formed principle that functions as a discovered and particularised moral law (Cuervo, 1992, p. 86).

Tadeusz Ślipko, a Polish Jesuit ethicist, speaks of the 'evolution' of natural law. In his opinion, the norms of this law are universal and immutable and define intrinsically good and intrinsically evil acts. He also presents several arguments for a quasi-evolution in the moral space. Starting from the assumption that the norms of immutable natural law do not constitute the whole of morality, he points out that

the foundation built by these norms and under its normative influence – norms that are changeable and relativised to the determinants of place, time, and persons – are formulated within morally indeterminate activity (Ślipko, 1984, p. 262).

Morally indifferent acts are indeterminate in their moral content and are thus neither prescribed nor forbidden by the norms of natural law; as such, they are subject to changeable norms binding in the community. Moreover, the norms of natural law were neither discovered nor applied all at once because the conditions were not always conducive. With the development of civilisation and morality, mankind learned to discover the precepts of natural law and to make them more detailed; for example, the development of the idea of the right to private property was, at one point of civilizational development, extended to cover intellectual property rights. Another variable is "the moral consciousness of mankind" (Ślipko, 1984, p. 263). In his philosophical analysis, Ślipko states:

Mankind learns natural moral law through the cognitive faculties of individuals who, however, always live within specific conditions of social life. On this path, a system of moral judgements, norms, and patterns is developed, which is part of a particular social group's spiritual culture, according to which the moral consciousness of individual human persons is formed (Ślipko, 1984, p. 263).

Moral law does not change, but the concepts and moral consciousness of both social groups and individuals are subject to change. Assuming that people differ in their cognitive capacities and in their ideals of moral conduct, they may also differ in their perception of the aforementioned quasi-evolution and enter into various disputes over it. The evaluation of structures and institutions in which behaviours that are deemed morally indifferent lead to morally relevant effects needs to be elaborated on.

Social moral theology. In light of the above considerations, it can be assumed that the pluralism of ethical evaluations in the Church's social teaching is permissible, albeit to a limited extent. The limitations of permissible pluralism of moral values formulated within CST include boundary conditions, i.e., negatively formulated moral norms. However, the totality of social life, including both morally indifferent actions and actions that belong to universal moral norms, must at least be compatible with the basic principles of CST (the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, personal dignity). In addition, the social teaching of the Church formulates specific principles (e.g., pro-ecologicality, pro-family, preferential option for the poor, including the above-mentioned specific principles listed in the documents of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith). The aforementioned principles must be applied integrally, and none of them can act as a 'fetish' of social policy. This integrity calls for a holistic approach and for always considering a broader context for evaluating concrete structures and institutions. Even morally indifferent acts can indirectly promote or hinder the realisation of values based on natural law.

In summary, it is possible to identify two types of constraints on pluralism within the axiology of the CST: the first is a **hard constraint**, which applies to unambiguously unethical (sinful) behaviours such as racist practices or acts of genocide; the second is a **soft constraint**, which applies to morally indifferent behaviour of different levels of prudence. An example of such prudential disputes could be the debate among economists about different paths that lead to the economic development of a country. They agree that comprehensive, long-term

economic development is a common good, but they may differ radically in their choice of means leading to this goal. They may also sometimes define the components of this economic prosperity differently, placing emphasis on different aspects. For some, good social development implies radical equality in access to a broad package of economic, cultural, and political goods. For others, good social development excludes radical egalitarianism because they believe that the extensive services and social benefits offered by the state to ensure this egalitarianism hinder this development. In addition, among those who share the guiding criterion of radical equality, disputes may arise as to what kind of equality is at stake in any particular case.

Disputes of this kind are inherent in the functioning of free and democratic societies. However, it is not experts who formulate the guiding ideas of the Catholic doctrine, although they can contribute to sharpening its basic concepts. It is the task of philosophy to provide insightful and adequate clarification of such basic concepts of this doctrine as “the person, society, freedom, conscience, ethics, law, justice, the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, the State” (Compendium, 2004, 77). The detailed sciences provide tools for adequately describing complex social problems, but the fundamental questions and the ultimate evaluation of human choices belong to the area of reflection on human nature that is corrupted by sin and on man’s vocation of moral perfection. In the Christian tradition, this area belongs to moral theology. Reflections undertaken within CST are at risk of blurring the relationship between the theological method and the method used in the detailed sciences invited into the debate. In this context, Tadeusz Źeleźnik takes the following position:

Interdisciplinarity does not blur the very theological-ethical or theological-moral core of this science [CST – translator’s note] and does not make it a synthesis of these different sciences. It entitles one neither to abandon theology, nor to some “theological” practicing of, e.g., economics, nor to reproducing non-theological content in theological language (Źeleźnik, 2004, p. 102).

With reference to interdisciplinarity, John Paul II stressed that moral theology should not only be closely related to dogmatic theology but also be in its own way independent of the detailed humanities and natural sciences: it should “not rely on the results of formal empirical observation or phenomenological understanding alone” (VS, 1993, 111).

It is up to moral theology to decide definitively what is good and how one should act: “What is good or evil? What must be done to have eternal life?” (VS, 1993, 111).

Thus, it must be assumed that the ultimate answer to the question of the limits of pluralism in the changing world within CST must be sought within social moral theology and under the inspiration of the Gospel (Compendium, 2004, 86). The concept of justice is among the most important theological and moral concepts that refer to the behaviour of both individuals and social groups. The principles of justice, and its division into commutative justice, legal justice, distributive justice, and social justice (the last relates to the common good and respect for human dignity), are the foundation of the moral evaluation of the social order, while human rights form the basis of the Catholic concept of social justice (RH, 1979, 17). The *Catechism* clarifies that only “commutative justice obliges strictly” (CCC, 1992, 2411). Legal and distributive justice, which largely refer to (morally indifferent) structures and institutions, can never be fully realised and, by their very nature, presuppose a certain gradation in the realisation of the ideal of social order and a just balance of claims. The search for a just measure should be made with reference to the norms of natural law as well as to local practices and local discourses, including legal standards, in systems in which the law-making authorities have moral legitimacy.

The concept of social justice developed within the CST paradigm should not be limited to sketching out morally perfect institutions and principles. The realisation of justice is a process of continuous discernment and the search for a just measure – both at the level of abstract principles and at the level of subjects’ various entitlements and evaluations of specific behaviours (Dańkowski, 2020, pp. 113–144). The document issued by the International Theological Commission appointed by the Holy See *In search of a Universal Ethics: A New Look at the Natural Law* (2009) distinguishes between natural law and natural entitlement. The former contains universal and immutable norms, while the latter contains norms that are a synthesis of natural law and changing historical circumstances. Thus, ultimately:

Natural entitlement, the legal expression of natural law in the political order, appears as a measure of just relations between members of a community (ITC, 2009, 90).

Natural entitlement is the result of the judgement of practical reason in changing historical circumstances.

The ancient virtue of *epieikeia* prescribes man to rise above the letter of the law and to choose what is right from the perspective of the spirit of justice. This approach resonates in the social encyclicals quoted in this article. In the search for good solutions, it is important to “sit down and listen to others” (FT, 2020, 48), which corresponds with the teaching of John Paul II, who proclaimed that

As far as the Church is concerned, the social message of the Gospel must not be considered a theory, but above all else a basis and a motivation for action (CA, 1991, 57).

The witness of actions is more powerful than the “internal logic and consistency” of this social message (CA, 1991, 57). The totality of the message of the Catholic doctrine eludes scholarly-academic divisions and categories, especially since it is ultimately always about the concrete, not the abstract, person.

Responsible social moral theology has the tools to evaluate even complex social institutions and structures and to correctly distinguish between the universal norms of natural law and the autonomy of secular matters. The globalised world, however, gives rise to new problems, exemplified by culture wars, worldview tensions, and questions of the recognition, identity and cultural rights of different social groups, to name but a few. The evaluation of pluralism in these areas requires further studies and reflections, which Pope Francis encourages in his calls for universal fraternity and social friendship and calls to transcend borders and to abandon their “false universalism” (FT, 2020, 99). In the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, he recognises the seriousness of structural problems and the culture wars of the modern world. Abstract universalism can lead to an artificial or false peace: “Genuine social encounter calls for a dialogue that engages the culture shared by the majority of the population” (FT, 2020, 219). The same document reads:

A realistic and inclusive social covenant must also be a “cultural covenant”, one that respects and acknowledges the different worldviews, cultures and lifestyles that coexist in society (FT, 2020, 219).

The plurality of cultures is more than plurality in the sociological or ethnographic sense, since in Francis's writings the term 'culture' takes on a specific meaning:

The word "culture" points to something deeply embedded within a people, its most cherished convictions and its way of life. A people's "culture" is more than an abstract idea. It has to do with their desires, their interests and ultimately the way they live their lives. To speak of a "culture of encounter" means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone. This becomes an aspiration and a style of life. The subject of this culture is the people, not simply one part of society that would pacify the rest with the help of professional and media resources (FT, 2020, 216).

A culture that excludes some people or groups from participation in social life contains intrinsically evil elements. The common good cannot be realised without participation:

The social nature of human beings is not uniform but is expressed in many different ways. In fact, the common good depends on a healthy social pluralism (Compendium, 2004, 151).

Nor can there be a common good without peace – both external and internal:

The path to peace does not mean making society blandly uniform, but getting people to work together, side-by-side, (FT, 2020, 228).

Francis' statements may inspire further reflections on the limits of pluralism within CST. The writings of the American theologian and Jesuit, David Hollenbach, are an example of a search for new and creative reflections by Catholic scholars. He has coined the term 'intellectual solidarity', which he defines as the "common pursuit of a shared vision of the good life" (Hollenbach, 2003, p. 137). The very fact that people of different cultures and worldviews have a positive experience of living together, have knowledge of each other's beliefs, and are capable of philosophical analyses of the common good offers hope that even in a divided society the common good can be recognised and realised. In Hollenbach's opinion, this requires a continuous process of learning from

one another, which he justifies in two ways: theologically, by elaborating on the thought of St. Augustine and St. Thomas; and philosophically, by analysing contemporary classics of deliberative democracy.

Defining and detailing the relationship between the immutable and the changeable and diverse in our moral experience is a task that never ends. This task implies the need to develop social moral theology. The methodology and the interdisciplinary nature of CST also require further scientific analyses. This reflection will perform “a theoretical and critical function but will not replace its practicing” (Juros, 1998, p. 371). Ultimately, the development of Catholic social teaching must be done by a joint effort of the Magisterium of the Church and those who develop social thought in unity with the Church. Combining old things and new things requires openness to the challenges of our times and drawing on the entire tradition of the Church.

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LP – Encyclical *Libertas praestantissimus* (Leon, XIII, 20 June 1888).

MM – Encyclical *Mater et magistra* (John XXIII, 15 May 1961).

UR – Decree on ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio* (Second Vatican Council, 21 November 1964).

NAE – Declaration on the relation to the Church to non-Christian religions *Nostra aetate* (Second Vatican Council, 28 October 1965).

DH – Declaration on religious freedom *Dignitatis humanae* (Second Vatican Council, 7 December 1965).

GS – Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et spes* (Second Vatican Council, 7 December 1965).

RH – Encyclical *Redemptor hominis* (John Paul II, 4 March 1979)

RP – Apostolic exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* (John Paul II, 2 December 1984)

LC – Instruction on Christian freedom and liberation *Libertatis conscientia* (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 22 March 1986).

SRS – Encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (John Paul II, 30 December 1987).

CA – Encyclical *Centesimus annus* (John Paul II, 1 May 1991).

- CCC – *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (John Paul II, 11 October 1992).
- VS – Encyclical *Veritatis splendor* (John Paul II, 6 August 1993)
- Note – Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 24 November, 2002)
- Compendium – *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 29 June 2004).
- CV – Encyclical *Caritas in veritate* (Benedict XVI, 29 June 2009).
- ITC – The document issued by the International Theological Commission appointed by the Holy See *In search of a Universal Ethics: A New Look at the Natural Law* (2009)
- FT – Encyclical *Fratelli tutti* (Francis, 3 October 2020).

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List of authors

Anna Bogatyńska-Kucharska, Ignatianum University in Cracow
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7762-9518>

Anna Bugajska, Ignatianum University in Cracow
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6078-7405>

Adam Cebula, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7408-1593>

Dariusz Dańkowski, Ignatianum University in Cracow
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7668-8698>

Piotr Duchliński, Ignatianum University in Cracow
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9480-2730>

Stefan Florek, Jagiellonian University
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4052-9585>

Sebastian Gałecki, The Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2728-0447>

Stanisław Gałkowski, Ignatianum University in Cracow
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1084-0487>

Teresa Grabińska, General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military Academy
of Land Forces in Wrocław
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9131-2637>

Adam Jonkisz, Ignatianum University in Cracow
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9850-2137>

Jerzy Kopania, The Aleksander Zelwerowicz Theatre Academy
in Warsaw, Branch in Białystok
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5999-1713>

Magdalena Kozak, Ignatianum University in Cracow

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2549-8007>

Jarosław Kucharski, Ignatianum University in Cracow

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6129-4477>

Piotr Mazur, Ignatianum University in Cracow

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6399-8133>

Ryszard Moń, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7113-4730>

Ewa Podrez, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5805-0869>

Krzysztof Stachewicz, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3867-9691>

Andrzej Szostek, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5555-2297>

Agnieszka Thier, Cracow University of Economics

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5915-2071>

Ryszard Wiśniewski, The Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6626-4688>

