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Innocens sed nocens. The Multiple Layers of Ethical Experience



*In memory of Tadeusz Styczeń,
who explained to me the meaning of
"Innocens sed nocens".*

Religious Ethics

One way of approaching the domain of ethics goes through Religion. It contends that Ethics as a science receives its first principles from Religion. In Religion we learn that there is one God who created earth and sky. He created all things according to an intrinsic Law that orders the inanimate world of stars and planets and also the animate world of plants and animals and men.

We can see and calculate the way in which the orbits of the planets obey to this law and can also observe how they govern the world of man.

The Psalmist says:

Blessed is the one
Who does not walk in step with the wicked
Or stand in the way that sinners take
Or sit in the company of mockers,
But whose delight is in the Law of the Lord
And who meditates on his Law day and night...¹.

To the Law of the Lord all created things obey through the laws of nature. Ethics here coincides with the obedience to the Law that God has revealed.

Rudolf Otto has elaborated the original human experience of the Sacred, that we find in all religions. ²There are places and situations in which the reality of everyday life seems to open itself to give way to another reality. It is not always clear whether this reality originally dwells in the kern of the world or in the utmost depth of our own being or if these two distinct realities enter in touch with one another producing the specific experience of the Sacred. In any case in this experience we go beyond the limits of our individuality. Sometimes this experience is formalized in a ritual and its manifestation can be helped through the repetition of formulas or dances or even hallucinogen substances. Ernesto De Martino sees one of the forms of experience of the Sacred in the absolute perception of one's own contingency, in exposure to total risk and in overcoming this risk, in being spared.³

I don't know if anyone has ever tried to compare De Martino's analyses with what the Old Testament tells us about the God of hosts. The battle is the quintessential experience of being at risk, in which all my effort is not enough to guarantee the result and I am handed over to a power that exceeds all my categories and either kills me or spares me.

A more structured form of the experience of the Sacred is linked instead with the perception of cosmic harmony and beauty. In the experience of beauty we perceive reality as a sign of a reality that transcends it. We perceive this reality as the absolute equivalent of our heart's desire.

1 Ps 1, 1–2.

2 R. Otto, *Das Heilige*, München 2004 (1917).

3 E. De Martino, *Il Mondo magico*, Einaudi 2022 (1948).

That of the Sacred is a vast, intricate, contradictory and dangerous continent. It mixes the divine with the demonic. There is the experience of the cosmic harmony of perfection and beauty. There is, inextricably linked with it, the experience of anger, of the risk of annihilation, of absolute contingency in the face of a power that could destroy you but also spare you, reveal itself as a friend or an enemy.

Perhaps the philosopher who has had the most penetrating insight into the nature of the Sacred was Friedrich Nietzsche, not so much in the *Genealogy of Morals*⁴ as in *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*.⁵ He sees the way in which the greek spirit lives the strict interconnection of these two sides of the Sacred and how they are dependent on one another. It is the perception of the harmony of the Universe and the desire to adjust to this harmony the interior harmony of the soul. It is however at the same time the perception of the hidden wrath of the forces of nature lingering in the shadows that surround the life of man and waiting for him. It is the experience of being spared and it is unclear whether one is spared once and forever or he gains only for a short interval before the impending doom. Both the experience of the eternal harmony and the experience of being spared require the recognition of a Law that governs the Universe. One feels identified with the supreme harmony and at the same time is afraid in front of the Wrath of the gods.

The alliance of God with Noah after the Downpour and the refusal of the sacrifice of Isaac mark a turning point in the religious consciousness of Mankind. Here the Divine and the Demonic are sharply separated from one another: the God of Abraham is good, intrinsically good.⁶ He finds his glory not in the sacrifice but in the flourishing of human life. This is reflected also in the attitude of man in front of the Law of God. The Law is a gift of God in order for man to be happy.

4 F. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, [in:] *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. G. Colli & M. Montinari, Abteilung 6, Band 2, Berlin 1996.

5 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geist der Musik*, [in:] *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, op. cit., Abteilung 3, Band 1, Berlin 1972.

6 R. Buttiglione, *Platon, Nietzsche y la Virgen de Guadalupe*, [in:] R. Buttiglione, *Caminos para una teología del pueblo y de la cultura*, Valparaiso 2022, p. 155f.

Metaphysical Ethics

The course of the greek spirit runs, in one sense, parallel to that of the Law of Israel. It offers us a metaphysical equivalent of the religious ethics.⁷

In the beginning there is Pythagoras and his discovery of the magic of numbers. We discover mathematical laws that are universal and necessary. The truth of these laws is independent of the empirical observation. As a matter of fact no empirical object respects exactly the proportions determined by the laws of geometry. We discover mathematical objects and mathematical laws in ourselves. Mathematical objects are ideal objects and introduce us into the world of ideas. The harmony the religious spirit perceives in the starred sky is formulated by the mathematician in a priori laws of the movements of objects in space. Man, who understands the spiritual truths of mathematics, must be made of the same substance of those truths. That is: man must also possess a spiritual nature.

Socrates complements and enlarges the intuition of Pythagoras. He contends that there are not only mathematical but also a priori ethical truths. The universe of the human spirit can be constructed according to a priori ethical laws that are analogous to the mathematical laws that organize and make intelligible the material reality. In the centre of this ethical universe stands the idea of the Good. Also the gods of the greek pantheon are now measured with this ethical measure: they must be good and if they are not good they cannot be gods. The Divine is secured from the demonic in a way that is absolutely similar to that manifested by the God of Israel in the episode of the sacrifice of Isaac. There is however an important difference: the movement of the people of Israel goes from the religious to the ethical sphere: God manifests himself as good. The movement of the hellenic spirit moves from the ethical towards the religious sphere: the Good is in itself divine and therefore God cannot be bad.

In Plato's philosophy the idea of the Good is however not only an ethical idea. It is at the same time a metaphysical idea. Aristotle develops further the metaphysical side of this idea, According to him God stands in the center of the universe and all things are governed by a natural law that can be reflected in the human intellect.⁸

7 Ibidem, s. 164f.

8 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1072.

Religious ethics and metaphysical ethics converge in the idea of the law. Through the internalization of the law of God we become one with God and this is the perfect realization of human happiness. This presupposes however a radical askesis. In order to belong entirely to God one has to dispossess himself of love of all created beings. This does not mean that one should not love the things of this world. Correctly understood this means that one should learn to love the things of this world only in God and through God, with the same love with which God loves them and only this is perfect love. In this perspective ethics must be a heteronomous science: it receives its first principles either from Religion or from Metaphysics or from both of them.

St. Thomas Aquinas represents the perfect convergence of religious and metaphysical ethics.

The crisis of ethics in the modern age

A powerful objection has been leveled against both religious and metaphysical ethics. They are heteronomous. They tell me what I should do to comply with the law of nature. They take for granted that this law of nature exists and that it can be known by man. They presuppose, moreover, my identification with the universal law of nature or with the law of reason.

Galileo and Descartes have deconstructed the Aristotle's Physics that puts God in the center of the Universe and that imagines that all things are endowed with a soul, an interior principle of movement that inclines them to take their place in the order of the Universe. The world of modern science is made up of pure objects in movement in time and space. These objects have a geometrical form but no interior principle of movement. This questions the unity between physical and ethical laws.

Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard, criticizing Hegel, have deconstructed the claim that the subject finds his happiness in coinciding with the totality. This means that we cannot identify the fullness of human life and its perfect achievement with the performance of the duties pertaining to us in the order of nature, that make of us useful members of society. Through the performance of these tasks we produce and reproduce society but we do not find in them our fulfillment. It is perhaps just a "cunning of reason" through which the humankind reproduces itself while the individuals are just exploited and annihilated.

It seems that we cannot deduce the laws of ethics from metaphysics or from religion. How can we think ethics if it cannot receive from metaphysics its first principles? Must we come to the conclusion that ethics is based on the precepts of society and on the constraints that social powers bring to bear on the individuals? Or, on the other hand, shall we ground ethics on the emotions of the subject, that are of course variable in each human subject? Or is the basis of ethics the calculation of subjective utilities? None of these proposals seems to be satisfying or able to justify the discovery of the good that stands with Socrates at the beginning of western philosophy.

The ethics of values and the rediscovery of the socratic starting point

To answer this radical challenge we are forced, in one sense, to go back to Socrates beyond Aristotle's systematization. In Socrates the discovery of the moral good precedes that of the metaphysical good. Max Scheler, and after him many others offer us a phenomenological presentation of the experience of value.⁹ The perception of specific state of affairs is accompanied by an experience of value or disvalue that we spontaneously recognize as essentially linked to that state of affairs. This experience is surely emotional but possesses also an intrinsic rationality. The emotion contains in itself a judgment or, rather, is accompanied by a judgment of value. We see that a certain value judgment is due to that state of affairs. This experience of value opens up the field of moral experience. Ethics is then grounded on the moral experience and is the science that critically organizes the field of moral experience. In moral experience we go beyond the limits of self interest and/or of our emotional state of mind. We transcend those limits towards truth. It is a kind of going beyond oneself that allows us to discover another more profound layer of our own identity: one's self in relation to truth. The culminating point of moral experience is the discovery of the person of the other. The value of the person exceeds all other values, also because all other values discover themselves in relation to the value of the person. The person is the background on which all values manifest themselves and the value of the person is given

9 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*, Hamburg 2014 (1913).

together with the perception of all other values. With the utmost purity the value of the person becomes apparent in the human experience of love.¹⁰

This approach is not entirely new. If we go back to Plato we find something similar in his conception of love as a divine folly in which man displaces his emotional centre in the person of the beloved. This love, Socrates teaches in the *Symposium*, is not directed towards the body but towards the soul of the other.¹¹ It is the love of Good in the other. In their theology of the Divine Virtues Christians will consider this love as a participation in the love of God for the other. In it we love God in the other and the other in God.

This is not, of course, something immediately given in the phenomenological analysis of love. It is a metaphysical (and/or religious) affirmation that goes beyond the limits of phenomenological analysis but is entirely coherent with it.

In the perspective we have been illustrating ethics is not dependent upon metaphysics, does not receive from metaphysics its first principles. On the contrary: ethics offers to metaphysics an experiential starting point.¹² Metaphysics is the science of being qua being. In general ontology we consider the fact of being in its most general form, as it is given in all things that possess being. If we begin with the consideration of ethics and of the person a completely new dimension of metaphysics becomes accessible to us and this is the metaphysics of the person. The person offers to our consideration not just *τὸ ὄντως ὄν* (being as being) but *τὸ ὄν κατ' ἄριστον* (being in its most excellent form). In the person dimensions and qualities of being are manifested that cannot be detected in other, lower forms of being.

This access to metaphysics through the personal being is not open to the objections that some modern philosophers have leveled against a classical metaphysics supposedly based upon Aristotle's *Physics*. Here form and finality are not attributed to pure physical objects but are detected in the person, to whom they unquestionably belong. At the same time the unity is recovered on an experiential basis between the good of the individual and the good of the totality. This unity is found beyond the limits of any utilitarian or eudemonic ethics. I fulfill my nature in love and love is a free gift of oneself for those we love. This ethics is not at all vitiated by subjectivism but its objectivity is based on an objective analysis of the essence of the moral action

10 Karol Wojtyła, *Zagadnienie normy i szczęścia*, [in:] *Wykłady lubelskie*, Lublin 1986, p. 170–292.

11 Plato, *Symposium*, 212c.

12 T. Styczeń, *Etyka niezależna*, [in:] *Dzieła zebrane*, vol. 2, Lublin 2012. For a broader reconstruction of the positions of Wojtyła and Styczeń see A. Wierzbicki, *Osoba i moralność. Personalizm w etyce Karola Wojtyły i Tadeusza Stycznia*, Lublin 2021.

and of the human being. Human subjectivity has an objective structure and this structure is accessible to a phenomenological analysis of the human action or, rather, of man in action.

Objective Ethics

The phenomenological approach has allowed us to ground an objective ethics, recovering the classical approach. There is however an important difference. This objective ethics is grounded on the objective structure of the human person. It takes as its starting point the subject and in this it is thoroughly modern. It rediscovers the object in the subject, in so far as the subject is at the same time an object. The subjects here considered not as an abstract subjectivity but as a concrete living subject. This subject has an objective structure that manifests itself in the human action. Aristotle's metaphysics of potency and act helps us to understand the concrete dynamism of human action but at the same time the phenomenological analysis of the human action leads us to a new validation of this metaphysics. It is a successful hermeneutic hypothesis that leads us to a better and more profound understanding of the human action. We see now that in the action man transcends himself towards truth: He reaches out towards the truth of the action and the truth of the object of the action. The modern subjectivism and moral relativism seem to be overcome. But... can we remain satisfied with an objectivist ethics? Shall we consider the modern turn towards the subject as an unqualified error that has to be repealed and chased out of the field of philosophy? Can the error of philosophical subjectivism and relativism be really overcome if we do not recognize and incorporate in our vision of ethics "the relative truth of relativism"?¹³

Subjective ethics

We have seen the concrete form in which the person reaches out towards truth and overcomes the limits of the closure of the self upon itself. This form

13 This expression comes from a conversation with my friend the late Alice von Hildebrand, the wife of Dietrich von Hildebrand and a remarkable philosopher in her own right.

implies the experience of the encounter with the other person, of being one for the other and one in the other and, more broadly, of intersubjectivity and relatedness. Let me insist upon the fact that these are not just ideal forms of the life of the Spirit. These are real events that take place in the life of human persons. The path of the person towards truth takes place in an intricate web of human relations, first of all within the family and later within the different human communities in which the human person participates. The path towards truth has a purely theoretical dimension but also a practical one. It takes place in history. Truth has an historical dimension. Through the exchange of experiences within the human community and through the process of education archetypal experiences of truth are socialized, become tradition and culture.

Here we encounter the dichotomy of ethics and morals.¹⁴ With the word ethics we designate the pure research of the rule determining what is good and what is bad in itself, in the sphere of pure practical reason (pure reason applied to the sphere of human praxis). With the word morals we designate the rules that are observed in a given human community, within a specific human culture. The rules of pure practical reason have been discovered through different human experiences that have been handed down from one generation to the following, and then to the following again, each time enriched through the experiences of the new generation. The original form in which they were expressed was not that of philosophy but rather of art and poetry. In this way a cultural tradition is formed. As a rule we do not learn the rules of ethics through the study of an handbook of ethics. Those of us who are not professional philosophers are not likely to read an handbook of ethics throughout their whole life. We learn ethics through the precepts given to us by our parents, by observing the way in which they live and behave, by participating in the life of our society, by considering the examples of virtue and of vice provided by the songs and the poetry and the literature and the history of the community we live in. We learn ethics as a part of our culture. We examine, of course, this tradition and compare it with the evidences and existential needs that constitute our heart. In this sense the science of ethics, that critically examines the moral experience, is also a part of culture. This critical examination may transcend the limits of a given culture and also push these limits forward towards a better understanding of the truth on man. It takes place however always within the framework of a given culture. In relation to pure ethics morals have a disadvantage but also an advantage.

14 K. Wojtyła, *Elementarz etyczny*, Lublin 1999 (1957/1958).

The disadvantage is that they present to us ethical truths always from a specific (and therefore limited) historical standpoint. This historical standpoint may make it difficult to see and to fully appreciate certain ethical values and certain ethical norms. If we consider the morals of homeric Greece we are struck by the way in which the values of honor and friendship and many others are perceived and respected. We are however equally struck by the way in which some other precepts and values are under/evaluated or limited in their efficacy, like for instance the commandment “Thou shalt not kill”.¹⁵ In morals pure ethics is always to a certain point disfigured. On the other hand in morals values present themselves to us with a much greater force and have a much greater emotional impact. The passions that constitute our emotional world do not live isolated each one by itself, like anchoritic monks. They resemble rather cenobitic monks linked among themselves in groups or communities. In our emotional world live higher passions, that reflect one way or another the constitutive longing for truth of the soul (the “delectatio veritatis”) and lower passions that reflect the instinctual urges of the body. They are linked to one another in many different ways in emotional complexes.¹⁶

Schiller has given us a masterful representation of this state of affairs:

Laura nenne mir den Wirbel
 Der Körper an Körper mächtig reisst,
 Nenne meine Laura mir den Zauber
 Der den Geist monarchisch zwingt dem Geiste¹⁷

The sexual attraction and the encounter of the persons are here connected with one another in such a way that the leading role falls to the value of the person. This is not necessarily and always the case. Under circumstances lower values can become central and exploit higher values attributing them a subsidiary role. Think for example of the way in which the feeling of revenge and hatred is connected with that of friendship and honor in the character of Achilles in Homer’s Iliad. Or of the way in which the sexual urge and the value of the person are connected in the cultural trends dominating in our society.

15 K. Yamamoto, *The ethical structure of homeric society*, “Coll. Antropol.” 26 (2002), p. 695f.

16 R. Buttiglione, *Mysł Karola Wojtyły*, Lublin 1996 (1982), p. 227f.

17 “Laura tell me what is that storm | That forcefully draws two bodies together | O my Laura tell me what is the enchantment | That with sovereign force draws two souls together” (F. Schiller, *Phantasie an Laura*, [in:] *Sämtliche Gedichte und Balladen*, Frankfurt am M. und Leipzig 2004, p. 176, tr. R. Buttiglione).

Men are formed through the society and the culture they live in. They can transcend it towards truth but this is a long and complicated process. Take the case of slavery. In a society in which slavery was a generally accepted social institution it was very difficult to come to the recognition that it was in its essence egregiously wrong. Nevertheless some men arrived to recognize the evidence of this truth.¹⁸ Even after this recognition it was not easy to arrive to the abolition of slavery. Slavery was so deeply entangled in the web of social institution that its suppression implied a profound disorganization of the economic and social system that might cause its collapse. To disentangle slavery from the institutional network and to reorganize it without slavery was a complex cultural and economic operation that took, in the case of the Roman Empire, a few centuries.

Slavery is a good example of what St. John Paul II calls “social sin”.¹⁹ The social sin is the outcome of a social and cultural structure that powerfully inclines all its members to acts of injustice.²⁰ This structure is the result of individual sins and is the matrix of multiple individual sins or at least acts of injustice. The action of the moral subject must always be considered in relation to the transcendental horizon in which the subject is situated. The cultural context constitutes this transcendental horizon of the human action.

Here we must consider more in depth the difference between the concept of sin and that of act of injustice or morally unjust act. Objectivist ethics deals mainly with the justice or injustice of the action. Subjectivist ethics deals mainly with the responsibility of the subject of the action. It is possible that the action is unjust but the subject is not responsible or not completely responsible for the injustice of the action. In order to be held responsible the subject must possess a full awareness of the injustice of the action and must be free to commit or not to commit the action, that is must give to the action his full consent. In the case of the social sin it is quite possible that both these conditions are lacking.²¹ The subject judges the action, in these cases, with criteria that are defective and do not reveal the full disvalue of the action. The subject, however, receives these criteria from authorities he justly relies upon. He receives these criteria from his family or from the broader social context he is inserted in. They are a constituent part of his culture. He considers something to be good that is in itself evil. The proximate norm of the

18 Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, 47.

19 John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 16.

20 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1869.

21 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1747.

action is given by his conscience and he has the duty to act according to the judgment of his conscience.

This problem is not unknown to St. Thomas Aquinas. He tells us that “conscientia erronea obligat”.²² He explains also that some peoples do not see the objectively wrong quality of certain actions. We are here building upon the foundations laid by St. Thomas and complementing and enlarging them with the results of phenomenological analysis.

We have exposed the way in which culture and tradition enter in the formulation of the moral judgment. This action of culture and tradition is grounded on the very nature of human consciousness and of human conscience in general. The judgment of practical reason needs to be interiorized in consciousness. Only through this internalization we succeed in seeing the objectively good as our own good, the good in itself as good for us and we join the intellectual recognition of the good with the appropriate value and emotional responses. More broadly speaking we can say that through the internalization in consciousness of what we know we constitute the object of knowledge in consciousness and we shape our interior moral world according to truth.

Realist Ethics

For a long time a debate has been raging among ethicists. Some defended the rights to truth and some defended the rights of conscience. Some proposed an objectivist and some a subjectivist ethics. An objectivist ethics is not the same as an objective ethics. An objective ethics is an ethics that concentrates on the objective value of the action but does not exclude in principle the perspective of the subject. An objectivist ethics is an ethics that absolutizes the perspective of the object and refused to be complemented by an ethics of the subject. In the same way a subjective ethics considers the perspective of the subject, a subjectivist ethics absolutizes this perspective and refuses its integration with the perspective of the object. A realist ethics wants to consider and integrate both these perspectives.

A possible key to this integration is given by Karol Wojtyła with his distinction between knowledge and consciousness.²³ This is, in a certain sense, the basis for the distinction between Ethics and Morals. We can know a cer-

22 Erroneous conscience obliges. St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Sec. Sententiarum*, d. 39, q. 3, a. 3).

23 K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i Czyn i inne studia antropologiczne*, Kraków 1994 (1969) s. 73nn.

tain truth without being conscious of it. To constitute a certain truth in consciousness means to insert it in the structure and the living process of our personality, to bind it with the way in which we constitute the synthesis of our personality. The constitution in consciousness must not be confused with a constitution through consciousness. The object exists in itself quite independently of my constitution in consciousness. What is constituted in this process is not reality in itself but reality for me. Man is the microcosm that reflects and interiorizes the macrocosm. My reflection of the macrocosm will never be perfect, but it will be mine. Through this process truth becomes a living force and the form of my personality.

If we properly understand the distinction introduced by Wojtyła we become able to see the relation between the subject and truth as a process through which the subject constitutes itself in truth.²⁴ This process takes place in time, that is in history. This implies the possibility of imperfection and error. The imperfection and the error has an individual dimension: it is my imperfection and error and finds its explanation in my personal and family history. They have however also a social dimension. They reflect the limits of the culture of my society and the social structures of sin that are present in it.

A realist ethics recognizes both the value of the objectivist and of the subjectivist ethics, both the role of Ethics in the proper sense of the word and that of Morals, of the social structures and processes through which the social conscience of a society is formed.

The objective Ethics is concerned with the human action and characterizes it as right or wrong. The Science of Morals is concerned with the way in which the action is appreciated within a given social context and therefore with the pressure it brings to bear on the conscience of the individual.

The subjective Ethics is concerned with the relation of a given human subject to truth, with the process of the constitution of his moral personality and with the responsibility for his action.

The realist Ethics connects all these dimensions with one another and considers both the objective and the subjective, the individual and the social

24 A possible antecedent of the distinction of knowledge and consciousness in Wojtyła can be found in the doctrine of attention in Descartes and Pascal, Although the intellect sees a certain truth I am not obliged to give to this truth my assent, I can divert my attention from this truth and so indefinitely procrastinate my assent. In Pascal this procrastination takes the form of the "divertissement". The divertissement is something produced by me but also the effect of the social environment surrounding me in which I can go lost. (Pascal, *Pensées*, 139).

dimensions of the act.²⁵ A human subject can perform an objectively evil act with good conscience. He will not become evil through this act if his intention is good. The intention however does not redeem the act: the act remains evil. The true friends of this subject have the duty of waking up his slumbering conscience. It is the so called fraternal correction. Although misguided by the dominating moral convictions and by her own disordered passions the person has always the capacity of transcending her state of consciousness towards truth.

The defect of subjectivistic ethics consists in not considering the objective character of the action and the constitutive capacity of the human intellect to transcend the given situation towards truth. They only see the problem of responsibility, they correctly state that the subject does not become evil because of any action performed in good conscience. They do not see the intrinsic nature of the action and the fact that the subject can in good conscience commit injustice against other human beings and also against himself. This is the defect of the so called Ethics of Conscience or Ethics of the Intention.

The defect of objectivistic ethics consists in the fact that it does not consider the complexity of the human act, the social conditioning of this act, the fact that the transcending of the intellect towards truth often demands time and is also a social process. The path leading to truth begins for the vast majority of human beings from within a given social context and has to overcome the obstacles that the structures of sin present in this context oppose to the research of truth.

The Convergence of Styles

Hans Urs von Balthasar has spoken of different styles in the human approach to truth. He divides those styles in two families: ecclesiastical and lay styles.²⁶ The distinction that I propose here does not coincide with that of von Balthasar but is broadly inspired by him. There is a style of searching the

25 R. Buttiglione, *Così Amoris Laetitia si fonda su S. Tommaso*, <https://www.lastampa.it/vatican-insider.it/2018/03/09/n>.

26 Von Balthasar has in his mind mainly the human approaches to revealed truth but the model can be extended to the human approach to truth in general. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik*, Bd. 2: *Fächer der Stile*, 1: *Klerikale Stile*, Einsiedeln 2020; 2: *Laikale Stile*, Einsiedeln 1984. Both books are parts of *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologischen Ästhetik* originally published 1961/1969.

truth that is concentrated on truth in itself. It is a monastic style. One leaves all concerns of this world in order to be entirely absorbed in the contemplation of truth. Another style is fully involved in the life of this world, all its deceptions included. It does not abandon the search for truth but searches for it in the intricacies of the life of the world and adopts as its starting point the position that is given to it in this world. These two styles need each other. Without the ecclesiastical styles the laical styles might remain prisoners of their historical horizons. Without the laical styles the ecclesiastical styles would become abstract and far from the life of the people. It is typical of the christian vision of the world to think that the wise man does not search truth for himself alone. Truth wants to become the form of the life of all the people. The wise man has the task of putting his wisdom in the service of the people, so that the people may learn to live in the truth.

In his drama *The Jeweler's Shop*²⁷ Karol Wojtyła gives us an extraordinary poetical representation of the correlation of the two styles. The protagonists are three couple who live the most human experience of falling in love and then of living in marriage with all the hardships and the temptations of the worldly life. There is however also another character: Adam. Adam has not a destiny of his own, a wife or children or a family. He belongs entirely to truth. We can characterize him as an ecclesiastical style with a particular Carmelite flavor. He does not live however retired in himself. He is the presence of truth in the life of others helping them to see their destinies in the light of truth and to take their decisions according to truth. I think young Wojtyła identified very much himself and the idea of his priestly vocation with Adam. He was fascinated by Carmelite spirituality and accepted without difficulty the metaphysical and deontological approach of the Catholic University of Lublin. He studied however phenomenology in order to help the University students entrusted to his pastoral care to find the path towards truth starting from within their existential condition. Ecclesiastical styles and laical styles stand in need of the reciprocal support. A realist ethics requires the interconnection of both.

A realist ethics sees both the objective order of creation and the subjective order of the human heart. They are made for one another but their encounter and final coincidence is not given since the beginning. It is the result of a history and this history is the human adventure in the world, both in its individual as in its social dimension.

27 K. Wojtyła, *Przed Sklepem Jubilera*, Wrocław 2011 (1960).

Abstract

Innocens sed nocens. The Multiple Layers of Ethical Experience

Religious Ethics and Metaphysical Ethics begin with God as the creator of the Universe and of Man. From man's status as a created being, they derive the duty to obey God's Law. In contrast, the modern approach to Ethics is different: it starts not with God but with Man, who constitutes his own interior ethical world. Ethics, in this view, does not depend on Metaphysics nor derive its first principles from it. Karol Wojtyła bridges these two approaches. Through a profound phenomenological analysis of human ethical experience, he highlights the objectively given, non-arbitrary structures of individual subjectivity and the transcendent movement through which the person transcends individual subjectivity to form a collective experience: love and community. The person creates an interior order of values and moral world but does so based on an objective structure of human experience that is pre-given. Where does this objective structure come from? Ethics cannot avoid this question, but at the same time, it cannot answer it. The answer requires meta-phenomenological or metaphysical inquiry. Rather than deriving its first principles from metaphysics, Ethics, in the view we have outlined, provides the presuppositions for metaphysical inquiry. One consequence of this model is the distinction between Ethics and Morals. Ethics, as a science, investigates the a priori structures of ethical experience, while Morals concerns itself with how a human community establishes its moral order. This moral order is always partial and limited; it often happens that some values within a historically given moral order are neither recognized nor integrated. An individual who acts according to an erroneous conscience, especially when that error is socially ingrained, bears no personal responsibility for it. He is innocent (*innocens*) because he acts in accord with his own conscience, yet he is mistaken. The task of Ethics is to transcend the historical limitations of a given self-consciousness in pursuit of truth. The traditional approach that begins with God and the phenomenological approach complement each other, offering two distinct perspectives: the ecclesiastical and the secular approaches to truth about man.

Keywords: conscience, ethics, metaphysics, morals, person, phenomenology, Wojtyła

Abstrakt

Innocens sed nocens. Wielowarstwowe doświadczenie etyczne

Etyka religijna i etyka metafizyczna rozpoczynają się od Boga jako Stwórcy wszechświata i człowieka. Z aktu stworzenia człowieka wynika obowiązek posłuszeństwa Prawu Bożemu. Współczesne podejście do etyki jest inne: punktem wyjścia nie jest Bóg, ale człowiek, który tworzy swój własny wewnętrzny świat etyczny. W tej perspektywie, nauka etyki nie zależy od metafizyki, ani nie wyprowadza z metafizyki swoich pierwszych zasad. Karol Wojtyła łączy te dwa podejścia. Poprzez głęboką fenomenologiczną analizę ludzkiego doświadczenia etycznego, ukazuje obiektywnie dane, niearbitralne struktury indywidualnej podmiotowości oraz transcendentny ruch, przez który osoba przekracza granice indywidualnej podmiotowości i tworzy to, czego doświadczamy: miłość i wspólnotę. Osoba konstytuuje (tworzy) swój wewnętrzny porządek wartości i świat moralny, ale czyni to na bazie z góry danej obiektywnej struktury ludzkiego doświadczenia. Skąd pochodzi ta obiektywna struktura? Etyka jako taka nie może uniknąć tego pytania, ale jednocześnie nie może na nie odpowiedzieć. Odpowiedzi można udzielić jedynie w ramach badań metafenomenologicznych lub metafizycznych. Zamiast czerpać od metafizyki swoje pierwsze zasady, etyka, w nakreślonej przez nas perspektywie, dostarcza przesłanek dla dociekań metafizycznych. Konsekwencją nakreślonego przez nas modelu jest rozróżnienie między etyką i moralnością. Etyka jako nauka bada aprioryczne struktury doświadczenia etycznego. Moralność zajmuje się tym, w jaki społeczność ludzka ustanowiła swój porządek moralny. Ten porządek moralny jest zawsze częściowy i ograniczony. Może się zdarzyć, i zdarza się, że pewne wartości w historycznie danym porządku moralnym nie są dostrzegane ani integrowane. Człowiek, który postępuje zgodnie ze swoim błędnym sumieniem, zwłaszcza gdy błąd ten jest konsekwencją utrwalonego społecznie przekonania, nie ponosi odpowiedzialności osobistej. Jest niewinny (*innocens*), ponieważ postępuje zgodnie ze własnym sumieniem, mimo że jest w błędzie. Zadaniem etyki jest przekroczenie historycznych ograniczeń danej samoświadomości historycznej w dążeniu do prawdy. Tradycyjne podejście rozpoczynające się od Boga i podejście fenomenologiczne uzupełniają się, oferując dwa odmienne style: kościelne i świeckie podejście do prawdy o człowieku.

Słowa kluczowe: sumienie, etyka, metafizyka, moralność, osoba, fenomenologia, Wojtyła

