



THE POLISH
CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY
IN THE 20TH CENTURY



Tadeusz Styczeń

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Tadeusz
Styczeń

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THE POLISH CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY IN THE 20TH CENTURY

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IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Tadeusz Styczeń

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I.

TADEUSZ STYCZEŃ SDS:
PERSON AND WORK

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Tadeusz Józef Styczeń was born on 21 December 1931 in the village of Wołowice near Krakow as the second child of Anna and Tadeusz. His father worked as a mason tender and a village shopkeeper.

Tadeusz began his secondary education during the years of the Nazi occupation, attending underground classes run by the Salvatorian Friars in Zakrzówek, a district of Krakow. After the war, he continued education at Salvatorian schools in Krakow, Bagno and Mikołów. In 1947, he graduated from Władysław Sikorski Middle School and joined the novitiate of the Society of the Divine Saviour (the Salvatorian Friars) in Bagno near Wrocław, adopting the monastic name of Józef. He took his perpetual vows in the Society in 1953 in Trzebinia, and was ordained a priest in 1995 by Bishop Franciszek Jop.

In the years 1949–1955, he studied at the Theological Faculty of the Jagiellonian University, and after the Faculty was closed, at the Institute of Philosophy and Theology run by the Dominican Friars in Krakow. During his studies at the Jagiellonian University, he attended seminars in the philosophy of nature taught by Rev. Professor Kazimierz Kłósak. He also took music lessons from a Krakow teacher, Paweł Mastela, learning to play the piano and the organ. After he was ordained a priest, he wanted to continue his musical education, but did not receive permission from the Provincial Superior.

In 1995, he began studies in philosophy at the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), where he defended his M.A. thesis in 1959 (entitled “The Concept of Virtue in Nicolai Hartmann”), and in 1963 was awarded doctorate based on a thesis entitled *The Possibility of Scientific Ethics in John Locke*. He wrote both theses under the guidance of Karol

Wojtyła. During his years as a student, he worked as an assistant-volunteer at the Department of Ethics chaired by Karol Wojtyła at the Catholic University of Lublin, and after defending his Ph.D. thesis became a full-time faculty member. In 1971, he wrote a postdoctoral dissertation on *The Possibility of Ethics as an Empirically Substantiated and Universally Valid Theory of Morality*. In 1978, after Cardinal Karol Wojtyła was elected Pope, he was appointed chair of the Department and Institute of Ethics at the Catholic University of Lublin. In 1981, he was conferred the title of Associate Professor, and in 1992 awarded the title and position of full Professor. He promoted ten doctors and the doctoral theses written under his guidance encompassed a broad spectrum of issues in ethics and moral theology:

Philosophical Aspects of the Discussion Around Universally Valid Norms in Contemporary Theology (Andrzej Szostek),

Dietrich von Hildebrand's Concept of Spousal Love (Teresa Wojtarowicz),

Determination of the Principles of Social Coexistence According to John Rawls (Ryszard Moń),

Anthropological and Ethical Implications in the Poetry of Karol Wojtyła (Anna Zmora),

Person as a Being and Norm in the Philosophy of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła (Henryk Tomasik),

The Standpoint of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II in the Dispute Over Love as a Criterion in the Moral Evaluation of Contraception (Marek Czachowski),

Man as a Gift: The Anthropology of "Familiaris Consortio" (Bogusław Szpakowski),

Ethics as the First Philosophy: Experience of the Normative Power of Truth as the Source and Foundation of Ethics as the First Philosophy (Kazimierz Krajewski),

Natural Law and the Naturalist Error. Josef Fuchs's Criticism of the Scholastic Concept of Natural Law (Jarosław Merecki),

The Problem of Imperfect Laws: The Democratic Rule of Majority and the Human Right to Life and Freedom of Conscience (A Logical and Ethical Analysis) (Piotr Ślęczka).

Apart from his lectures on ethics at the Catholic University of Lublin, he taught for many years at the Higher Salvatorian Seminary in Bagno. In 1975, he was a guest lecturer at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, and in 1994 at Ateneo Romano della Santa Croce in Rome. From 1981, he regularly delivered lectures and seminars at the John Paul II Pontifical Theological Institute for Marriage and Family Sciences (Pontificio Istituto Giovanni Paolo II per studi sul matrimonio e sulla famiglia) at the Lateran University in Rome. In 1981, together with Professor Josef Seifert and Professor Augustin Basave, he founded the International Academy of Philosophy in Dallas, USA, which was transferred to Europe five years later and now operates as Die Internationale Akademie für Philosophie im Fürstentums Liechtenstein. He was a member of the Academy's Senate, delivered lectures and developed academic cooperation between the Catholic University of Lublin and the International Academy of Philosophy.

As a result of his efforts, the Academic Senate of the Catholic University of Lublin established the John Paul II Institute on June 25, 1982 as an interdepartmental academic and educational facility with the goal specified in the Statute as "studying the thought and work of Pope John Paul II and building a community of persons in the spirit of Christ's teaching as taught by the Pope." The work of the Institute is focused mainly on ethical and anthropological problems from the perspective of philosophy and theology. In the years 1982–2006, Styczeń held the office of Director of the John Paul II Institute, and in the years 1988–2006 he was the editor-in-chief of the *Ethos* quarterly, issued by the Institute since 1988 in cooperation with the John Paul II Foundation in Rome. Its goal was a broadly conceived reflection on contemporary intellectual challenges from the personalist perspective inspired by the thought of Karol Wojtyła, and then John Paul II.

Aside from working as the editor-in-chief of *Ethos*, Styczeń also co-edited the *Roczniki Filozoficzne* [Philosophical Annuals] issued by the KUL Scientific Society for many years, as well as scientific magazines issued abroad: *Aletheia* (IAP Liechtenstein) and *Anthropotes* (Lateran University in Rome). He also cooperated with the Italian magazines *Il Nuovo Areopago* and *La Nuova Europa*. Styczeń was a member of several Polish and foreign scientific societies, including Societas Ethica, the KUL Scientific Society, the Polish Philosophical Society and the Polish Theological Society, as well as the Board of Directors of the

Pontifical Academy for Life (Pontificia Academia Pro Vita). From 1981, he was a consultor to the Pontifical Council for the Family and the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Health Care Workers. He was a member of the Scientific Council of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University Institute for Family Studies. In 1990, he was appointed an expert of the Senate Constitutional Committee.

In 1994, the University of Navarra in Pamplona, and in 2007 the Pontifical Theological Institute for Marriage and Family Sciences at the Lateran University in Rome awarded him an honorary doctorate.

Styczeń's academic work includes approximately 500 publications. His most important books are: *Problem możliwości etyki jako empirycznie uprawomocnionej i ogólnie ważnej teorii moralności* [The Possibility of Ethics as an Empirically Substantiated and Universally Valid Theory of Morality] (1972); *Zarys etyki: Metaetyka* [An Outline of Ethics: Meta-ethics] (1974); *Etyka niezależna?* [Independent Ethics?] (1980); *ABC etyki* [The ABC of Ethics] (1981); *W drodze do etyki* [On the Way to Ethics] (1984); *Wolność w prawdzie* [Freedom in Truth] (1988); *Solidarność wyzwala* [Solidarity Sets Free] (1993); *Urodziłeś się, by kochać* [You Were Born to Love] (1993); *Wprowadzenie do etyki* [An Introduction to Ethics] (1993); *Rozum i wiara wobec pytania: kim jestem* [Reason and Faith Facing the Question: Who Am I?] (2001); *Gratias ago, ergo sum* (2007).¹ He also edited several books by Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II, as well as works dedicated to the Pope's thought.

Awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta (2006), he was also the recipient of the Medal of Merit from the Catholic University of Lublin (2007). He was with John Paul II during the last moments of his life on April 2, 2005. He died on October 14, 2010 in the St. Hedwig of Silesia Hospital in Trzebinia and was buried in the Salvatorian shrine at the church in Trzebinia on October 21, 2010.

¹ All of Styczeń's works have been published as *Collected Works*, in seven volumes; their titles and the editors' names are provided in the Bibliography. The respective years of first publication are provided in parentheses.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE EPOCH

No philosophy is conducted in a vacuum and it is not only the very practice of philosophy which is determined to an extent by the political, economic, and organizational circumstances, but also its contents; philosophy is no different in this respect than other sciences. Particularly influential is the immediate and more distant intellectual *milieu* in which philosophy is conducted and to which it refers, both directly and indirectly, through a critical analysis of the views of others and the positive presentation of one's own thoughts.

The immediate environment of Styczeń's ethical reflection was the Catholic University of Lublin, now named after John Paul II. The history and significance of the University are an important factor in understanding the philosophical achievements of its professors. The University was founded in 1918 as Poland regained its independence after nearly a century and a half of partitions, when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had lost its sovereignty and its territory was partitioned among its neighboring countries: Russia, Prussia and Austria. This period, present in the Polish national consciousness as a form of slavery, affected Polish lands differently, in terms of how its territories were governed by the three different partitioning powers and the duration of the occupation. It was characterized to differing degrees by the restrictions which were imposed on education and the development of science; many Polish schools and academic centers were closed down as a result of Russification and Germanization policies aimed at eliminating the Polish intelligentsia. At the end of the 19th century, higher education institutions in the former territories of Poland only remained in the Austrian partition and included

two universities: in Lvov and Krakow. One of the consequences of political developments in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century was the reopening of the Polish University in Warsaw in 1915. One month after Poland regained its independence, in December 1918, the Catholic University of Lublin was opened, and in May 1919 the University of Poznań, now named after Adam Mickiewicz; in October 1919, the University in Vilnius was restored and today it is known as the Stephen Báthory University.²

The Catholic University of Lublin was the outcome of efforts made by Polish Catholic society.³ It was established at the initiative of the Rev. Dr. Idzi Radziszewski, the last Vice-Chancellor of the Theological Academy in St. Petersburg. As stated in its first Statute: “it remains under the supreme power and in the care of the Polish Episcopate.” Its founders included Karol Jaroszyński, an industrialist, and Franciszek Skąpski, an engineer, both of whom were related to the Polish community in St. Petersburg; Theological Academy Professors: Czesław Falkowski, Bronisław Żongołłowicz and Piotr Kremer, as well as Klemens Jędrzejewski, a lecturer. As the intelligentsia had grown apart from faith, and with the spread of the Marxist-Leninist ideology of Russian revolutionaries⁴ which Radziszewski had encountered personally in Russia, he was one of the many who saw the need to educate a Catholic Polish intelligentsia⁵ to serve the needs of the Church and the newly reborn state⁶; in pursuing this task, he believed the primary role was to be played by philosophy.

² For more on this subject: see M. Krupa, “Stan szkolnictwa wyższego na ziemiach polskich od końca wieku XIX do drugiej wojny światowej,” in *Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski. Wybrane zagadnienia z dziejów Uczelni*, ed. G. Karolewicz, M. Zahajkiewicz, Z. Zieliński (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1992), pp. 11–29.

³ For more on the establishment of the Catholic University of Lublin, see G. Karolewicz, “Geneza Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego,” in *Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski*, pp. 47–70.

⁴ Other philosophers related to the Catholic University of Lublin (including Rev. Józef Pastuszka and Czesław Matyniak) had also pointed to the dangerous ideologies of communism and Hitlerism before the war, for which they suffered repressions and even death at the hands of German occupiers or communists.

⁵ This term should not be construed as exclusive: students at KUL (also in its beginnings) included young people of other Christian denominations (Protestants and Orthodox), as well as nonbelievers.

⁶ This idea is concisely expressed in KUL’s motto: *Deo et Patriae*.

The founding idea of the Catholic University of Lublin, whilst present throughout its history, may be discerned particularly clearly in its emphasis on philosophy, and especially the ethical framework that it worked within. In the interwar period, even though it was not possible to establish an independent department of philosophy, it was taught as a subject at the Department of Liberal Arts. Courses in ethics were also offered at the Department of Theology, and the Department of Law and Social and Economic Studies. Their faculty included Rev. Jacek Woroniecki, Rev. Antoni Szymański, and Czesław Martyniak. It was not until after World War II, in 1946, that it was possible to establish a Department of Christian Philosophy (and within its structures, first a faculty and then faculties of ethics),⁷ largely thanks to the initiative of Grand Chancellor of KUL, Stefan Wyszyński, the Bishop of Lublin. The first Dean of the Department was Rev. Józef Pastuszka. The University as a whole opened already in the summer of 1944, soon after the Germans had been expelled and the Red Army entered Lublin together with the Polish Army—as the first university on the Polish territory after the war. This was made possible due to skillful endeavors of the Vice-Chancellor, Rev. Antoni Słomkowski, with the Polish government in London, the new Communist government in Lublin (Polish Committee of National Liberation), and the military command of the Soviet Army. Up until 1989, when a radical transformation took place in social, political and economic life, restoring democracy in Poland and throughout the entire Soviet bloc, it was a time of totalitarian communist rule, pervaded by the ideologization of both individual and social life along “the only right” doctrine of Marxism-Leninism, and also of Stalinism for a period. It took the form of repression and barriers which were directed, with various degrees of intensity, against independent institutions and bodies, including Catholic academies and independent (non-Marxist) scholars elsewhere. Paradoxically, this enhanced the significance of the Catholic University of Lublin, and then also of the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw,⁸ as the only academic

⁷ In 1991, it was renamed the Department of Philosophy, to emphasize the autonomy of philosophy.

⁸ It was established by state authorities in 1954 based on departments of theology removed from Warsaw University and Jagiellonian University; their removal was an element of repressions against the Church.

institutions recognized by the state in which Marxism was not embraced as the mandatory paradigm in research and education. This also contributed to bringing non-Marxist philosophers, particularly the Lvov-Warsaw School and phenomenologists,⁹ closer to KUL's philosophical line; in time, Marxist lecturers also began to appear at KUL.¹⁰ The possibility to travel and establish cooperation with numerous philosophical centers abroad enabled the philosophy of the Catholic University of Lublin to enter international circles.

For philosophy at a Catholic university, a fundamental role was played by the Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1879. According to Radziszewski, it was not so much an impulse, but rather the fruit of the renaissance of Thomism and scholasticism. It emphasized the need for source-based research into medieval thought in order to discover its universalism, and thus opening up to the truth present in other philosophical trends and the positive sciences. In particular, in Aquinas' philosophy the Pope saw the foundations for a social philosophy and a philosophy of education which would be capable of overcoming the errors of two antagonistic ideologies: individualist liberalism and collectivist socialism.¹¹

In the interwar period, KUL followed the style of doing philosophy at the theological departments of state-run universities and theological seminaries. First of all, it drew on the Louvain school of Neo-Scholasticism which referred to the heritage of scholastic philosophy, while at the same time dialoguing with contemporary culture, philosophy and science. In the interwar period, the Louvain school of Neo-Scholasticism was embraced by Rev. Idzi Radziszewski, already mentioned above, Rev. Stanisław Domińczak (logician), Rev. Józef Pastuszka (psychologist), Bohdan Rutkiewicz (psychologist and

⁹ Guest lecturers at KUL included: Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Izydora Dąmbka, Janina and Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Roman Ingarden, and others.

¹⁰ Including Tadeusz M. Jaroszewski, Zdzisław Cackowski, Adam Schaff, Janusz Kuczyński, Michał Hempoliński, Leszek Nowak, Adam Synowiecki. A forum at which the Lublin school could meet with other philosophical currents (the Lvov-Warsaw School and phenomenologists) was provided, among others, by students' Philosophical Weeks organized since 1958 and also repressed by state authorities. The Weeks have always been and still are characterized by a great diversity of topics.

¹¹ Cf. B. Dembowski, "Encyklika *Aeterni Patris* w Polsce," in B. Dembowski, *Spór o metafizykę i inne studia z historii filozofii polskiej* (Włocławek: Włocławskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 1997), pp. 220–236.

philosopher of nature).¹² After the war, Louvanian Thomism was still embraced by Rev. Józef Pastuszka, as well as the philosophers of nature Rev. Kazimierz Kłósak and Rev. Stanisław Mazierski.

Along with the Louvanian current, the Catholic University of Lublin also followed traditional, so-called Roman Thomism. Its main representative before the war was Rev. Jacek Woroniecki, already mentioned above, and after the war it was mainly advocated by Rev. Stanisław Adamczyk (epistemologist and metaphysician).

The essential solutions of Thomist ethics in the interwar period and during the first years after the war, continued in KUL's ethics in the following years, including in the work of Tadeusz Styczeń, were first of all Christian personalism, present in the works of the ethicists listed above. Rev. Jacek Woroniecki had set off down the road to personalism even before the ideas of Jacques Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier reached Poland. His ethics, strongly rooted in Thomism, were in fact an anthropology from which ethics and pedagogy stemmed in turn. It is not a religious ethics, but a universal one which encompassed the entirety of human behavior, free from the one-sidedness of eudaimonism and deontologism. Even though the shape of KUL's ethics was influenced to a lesser degree by Rev. Antoni Szymański, who focused on social problems, his defense of the normative nature of ethics in the face of methodological reductionism (sociologism and legalism) also deserves a mention. As for the works of Czesław Martyniak, emphasis should be placed on developing his own perspective on natural law as a moral norm rooted in reality, providing foundations for legal norms.

The most immediate theoretical base which Styczeń relied on was the so-called Lublin school of classical philosophy with its core of existential Thomism. Paradoxically, it was formed in the period of Stalinist repressions aimed, among others, against Rev. Józef Pastuszka and Rev. Stanisław Adamczyk (they were forced to leave KUL in the years 1952–1953¹³). The school was never monolithic,

¹² The allocation of disciplines to the philosophers listed here is only approximate, based on their main line of interest and research directions.

¹³ They did not return to KUL until the Polish October 1956 which ended the period of Stalinism in Poland. Power was seized then by Władysław Gomułka, promising liberalisation of the system. The Primate of Poland, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, was released from internment.

however.¹⁴ Its founders, first of all Rev. Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec and Stefan Świeżawski, assisted in the initial period by Jerzy Kalinowski, Rev. Stanisław Kamiński, Rev. Marian Kurdziałek, and from 1954 also by Rev. Karol Wojtyła, drew on the achievements of Étienne Gilson and the discovery of the existential, Thomist, concept of existence. Studies along the lines of this concept of Thomism were conducted in three interwoven currents: the logical and methodological, the historical, and the subjective (metaphysical). They are characterized by an attention to methodological precision, reliability of reflection, realism, universalism, rationalism, autonomy, and maximization of cognitive goals; consequently, metaphysics is considered to be the basic philosophical discipline, or philosophy *par excellence*.

The work of Tadeusz Styczeń continued the line of philosophy characteristic for the Lublin school in that he appreciates the significance of metaphysics also for ethics, and his sensitivity to the methodological and logical precision of ethical discourse. He followed directly in the footsteps of his teacher, Karol Wojtyła, who later became cardinal, and then Pope John Paul II. He supplemented the objectivism of existential Thomism by including the subjective dimension of human experience, which should be seen as an influence of phenomenology. In his works, this is manifest in considering the dignity of the human person as the basic norm of morality. It gave rise to important disputes within the Lublin school; the most important of them concerned the concept of anthropology and the combination of Thomism and phenomenology in *Osoba i czyn* [Person and Act] by Karol Wojtyła.¹⁵ The disputes which followed, and in which Styczeń played the most prominent role, concerned the experiential starting point of ethics—the essence of moral existence and the norm of morality. In a broad discussion, mostly within the Lublin school, the foundations were laid thanks to Karol Wojtyła and Tadeusz Styczeń for an original metaphysics of the person.

¹⁴ This is manifested in internal disputes over the division of philosophy and the relationships between metaphysics and the theory of cognition, the problem of intentional being, experience and existential judgment, the applicability of phenomenological methods to classical concepts of philosophy and its use of formal logic, the foundations of ethics.

¹⁵ The entire issue 5–6 of *Analecta Cracoviensia* (1973–1974) is devoted to a discussion of this work. Rev. Tadeusz Styczeń was one of the contributors.

Already in the interwar period, the Lvov-Warsaw School¹⁶ influenced the way philosophy was done at KUL by emphasizing methodological accuracy and drawing on the achievements of contemporary logic in philosophising *ad mentem Sancte Thomae Aquinatis*. In this respect, the achievements of the Krakow Circle, remaining in a close relationship with the Lvov-Warsaw School, were creative on a global scale; its objective was to rejuvenate and render Thomist philosophy more scientific by using modern logical tools.¹⁷ This influence became even clearer after the war, when the faculty of the Department of Christian Philosophy were joined by Rev. Antoni Korcik (a student of Jan Łukasiewicz); Rev. Józef Iwanicki (a student of Alexandre Koyré, taking up the ideas of the Krakow Circle); Rev. Stanisław Kamiński (maintaining scientific contacts with Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, Tadeusz Czeżowski, Jerzy Śłupecki, Tadeusz Mostowski, and others), who incorporated the requirements of the Lvov-Warsaw School into building existential Thomism; and Ludwik Borkowski (an alumnus of the Lvov-Warsaw School). This influence became even more pronounced with the introduction of analytical philosophy, at least in a broad understanding.

With regard to ethics, the meta-ethical works of Tadeusz Czeżowski, Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Maria Ossowska (her seminars were attended by Tadeusz Styczeń), and Tadeusz Kotarbiński were particularly important; all of them followed in the footsteps of Kazimierz Twardowski in pursuing a scientific ethics, and distinguished between descriptive and normative ethics. The influence of the Lvov-Warsaw School on the achievements of KUL ethics can be seen, as well as elsewhere, in a more precise definition of Thomist terminology, which was emphasized in the interwar period by Rev. Jacek Woroniecki, and in attempts at formalizing ethical problems made by Rev. Feliks Bednarski¹⁸ (who attended lectures by Mieczysław

¹⁶ In the interwar period, representatives of the Lvov-Warsaw School held chairs in philosophy at every Polish University, with the exception of KUL. Also, after World War II and despite severe losses, they were significantly represented. Cf. J. Woleński, *Filozoficzna szkoła lwowsko-warszawska* (Warszawa, PWN: 1985); J. Woleński, *Szkoła Lwowsko-Warszawska w polemikach* (Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar: 1997).

¹⁷ Its main representatives were: Rev. Jan Salamucha, Rev. Innocenty Józef Maria Bocheński and Jan Franciszek Drewnowski.

¹⁸ The first Head of the Department of Ethics at KUL in the years 1950–1954.

Kreutz, Leon Chwistek and Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz during the war). In the works of Tadeusz Styczeń, the impact of the Lvov-Warsaw School (as well as the Lublin School and phenomenology) was visible first of all in his meta-ethics, in particular in emphasizing the experience of morality as a source of ethical knowledge (in close cooperation with Rev. Stanisław Kamiński and Rev. Helmut Juros). Styczeń referred directly to the concept of independent ethics proposed by Tadeusz Czeżowski and Tadeusz Kotarbiński in his book entitled *Etyka niezależna?* [Independent Ethics?], pointing out that its autonomy is based on moral experience consisting in the absolute imperative to affirm the human person in view of their dignity.¹⁹

Another important philosophical movement appreciated in the Lublin School was phenomenology, present first of all in epistemological and aesthetic studies of Antoni B. Stępień and Władysław Stróżewski (who later became professor of the Jagiellonian University). Through Karol Wojtyła, phenomenology inspired KUL's ethics above all, linking the objective approach of existential Thomism and the phenomenological analysis of consciousness and axiology. As for phenomenologists, in his works Tadeusz Styczeń clearly references Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler and Roman Ingarden, as well as the phenomenology of Nicolai Hartmann. He was one of the first scholars to notice the original concept of ethics in Husserl's approach.

One of the important Polish philosophical circles which indirectly influenced the ethics of Tadeusz Styczeń was Marxism. Styczeń did not target individual elements of Marxism as much as he opposed the Marxist concept of man and morality as a whole by making a positive contribution to anthropological and ethical problems.²⁰ Members of the Catholic University of Lublin community who participated in a direct dialogue with Marxism were: Rev. Kazimierz Kłósak, Rev. Stanisław Kowalczyk and Antoni B. Stępień.

A good illustration of the influences which shaped the anthropology and ethics of Tadeusz Styczeń is provided by footnotes to his

¹⁹ Already the early works of Rev. Tadeusz Styczeń were noticed by Tadeusz Czeżowski, Andrzej Grzegorzczak or Ija Lazari-Pawłowska, as well as others.

²⁰ He expressed this in a chapter written together with A. Szostek, "Liberalizm po marksistowsku. Antropologiczne implikacje marksistowskiej soteriologii," in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 5)*, ed. C. Ritter (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2014), pp. 329–347.

works. From among the classics, they included first of all Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and David Hume, with his thesis about the impossibility of transitioning from “is” to “ought”; Immanuel Kant with his concept of categorical imperative; Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, Dietrich von Hildebrand and Nicolai Hartmann with his concepts of experience and value; and Jacques Maritain from among Thomists. They are accompanied by a large group of contemporary authors, particularly from the circle of analytical philosophy and contemporary German ethics and moral theology who discussed problems which Styczeń was interested in. Another essential influence was that of the Scripture and teaching of the Church, properly adapted to philosophical discussions.

The influence exerted by the scientific achievements of Tadeusz Styczeń beyond his students and circles in Poland was manifest in his international contacts, already mentioned above, and intensified after Cardinal Karol Wojtyła was elected Pope. He was regarded as an authentic interpreter of the thought of his teacher.

A separate chapter in his works and another circle he influenced is related to his “civic ethics.” Feeling responsible for the nation and for the shape of Polish democracy after the transformation, he joined social discussions over problems related to the protection of human life, the concept of marriage and family, the state and law; he wrote letters addressed to state authorities discussing these issues, in which he emphasized the primacy of the human person and morality over law and economy.

THE PHILOSOPHY

When discussing the most important assumptions in the ethical views of Tadeusz Styczeń, it should be noted that he first of all defends cognitivism, i.e. the view that it is possible to know good. He claims that the subject matter of cognition is the obligation to respect the human person for their own sake, given in a specific normative experience. This way, he avoids the charge brought against ethical procedures by David Hume that statements about what should be are made based on what is, or the charge that one moves from sentences which state something to normative ones. Styczeń treats ethics as a theory of morality, or, to be more precise, a theory of the moral obligation to act, given in experience.²¹ He assumes that it is independent at the starting point, as it refers to a particular experience which cannot be reduced to any other. In his discussion of ethics, however, he says that it must draw on other sciences, particularly philosophical anthropology and metaphysics. He thus distinguishes between ethics as a normative science from ethology, which is a discipline studying that which is considered good or bad in a particular culture.

Styczeń's views underwent a certain evolution. He first referred to the concept of the dignity of the human person, which some refer to as the "dignitive" period (from *dignitas*—dignity), and then (after 1988) devoted more of his attention to the issue of truth as the safeguard of human freedom—which some refer to as the "veritative" period (from *veritas*—truth).²² In the first period, he became engaged in

²¹ *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, vol. 10, s.v. "Styczeń Tadeusz," p. 409.

²² *Ibidem*.

a discussion with eudaimonism and deontologism. Eudaimonism is an ethical view which emphasizes happiness as the ultimate moral good, and its achievement as man's ultimate goal. Deontologism is an ethical direction in which the legislator (an authority) determines what actions are proper and obligates man to perform them. Styczeń proposed personalism, i.e. the ethical direction which emphasizes man's autonomous value and postulates its full affirmation. In doing that, he did not entirely reject the above-mentioned ethical currents, but rather showed their shortcomings. His most serious objection against eudaimonism was the conviction that it does not present moral obligation as an unconditional, but only as a hypothetical one, i.e. dependent on the desired goal of happiness—or rather that which one imagines happiness to be. He used specific examples to illustrate the fact that people often act contrary to the means—goal scheme, i.e. choose such actions (means) which do not correspond to the goal which they consider ultimate, and yet, even though they seem to miss the goal considered supreme, we believe they act right. This shows that there may be reasons for acting in a particular way which are different from the goal which is considered to be the ultimate one. Styczeń also charged eudaimonism with following personal interests, often having the outside form of altruist deeds while being done for personal, self-interested reasons—which makes them more difficult to see—aimed at individual perfection, or the desire to be praised or admired. The third charge he brought against eudaimonism was concerned with the logical error called *pars pro toto*, i.e. identification of a part with the whole—the error of identifying the desired happiness with a fulfilled life.

With respect to heteronomous deontologism, looking for the final substantiation for an act in the will of God, he charged it with identifying moral obligation with the will of an external authority; as for autonomous deontologism, which says that man is his own legislator (in Immanuel Kant's version), he accused it of irrationality, or, to be more precise, of failure to substantiate moral obligation, and thus of depriving the subject of rationality (the right to ask for reasons substantiating the imperative).

Styczeń believed that the kind of moral obligation found in experience has three characteristics: categoricalness, disinterestedness, rationality, and subjectivity. The obligation flows, in his opinion, not from a desire of happiness, however we choose to understand it, but from the awareness of one's dignity and that of the other person. He thus distin-

guished between a good act (with the will aiming at the good of the person) and a right act (proper to affirm a person as person). The goodness of an act is therefore determined by taking into account the disposition of man's will, and its rightness—by referring to natural law. This law can be recognized in the acts of human conscience through which the subject commits themselves to respect a particular obligation and putting it into effect. Styczeń believed that the main obligation is to affirm persons, as well as other beings, depending on the rank of their existence. The awareness that a person is not entirely perfect made him look for the final substantiation of this dignity in their relationship with God (Absolute) as their Creator and ultimate goal. He thus believed that one must recognize that it is God who is the ultimate reason of morality.²³

In the second period of his work, Tadeusz Styczeń focused on demonstrating the significance of the very act of ascertaining the truth. He said that every logical judgment is also a self-imperative, irrespective of its content. It obligates one to follow the truth one has recognized. In every act of learning the truth man engages his freedom, therefore an act which is inconsistent with the truth one has recognized is a betrayal of one's own self and a violation of one's identity. Thus, at the starting point, ethics is a normative anthropology and shows the experience of man as a person. When learning a truth, man becomes a witness of the truth he has recognized about himself and the world around him. Thus Styczeń believes that the obligation to respect the dignity of a person is secondary to the obligation to respect truth for its own sake.²⁴ Only faithfulness to the truth about a person can warrant that person's dignity and all of the rights vested in them. Consequently, he endeavors to defend the rights vested in the person in view of their dignity, written in the form of norms, some of which allow no exceptions. The understanding of ethics as a theory of the moral obligation to affirm a person for their own sake leads to the conclusion that ethics is the basis of politics, particularly when it comes to establishing norms warranting a person's unconditional right to life. Styczeń believes that responsibility for protecting persons in view of their dignity rests first of all on the state, which should defend particularly those who cannot defend themselves, i.e. the unborn. He was very much personally involved in defending the unborn, as a citizen and

²³ Ibidem, p. 410.

²⁴ Ibidem.

author of numerous publications, treating life as a fundamental value, only based on which any other values may be realized. Thus, he also opposed death penalty as a fully deliberate act of taking someone's life.

A large portion of his works is devoted to discussing the thought of Karol Wojtyła (and later John Paul II). He edited his speeches and popularized them in Poland and abroad. First of all, he showed that Wojtyła (John Paul II) tried to present man as a personal subject, who can only find himself in a community with others. Only in a community can we discover the truth about ourselves and about our aspirations and hopes, because it is there that our kindness comes to life and personal rights can be respected. Only through a disinterested gift of himself can man find happiness and reach the fullness of life.

Looking at the achievements of Tadeusz Styczeń from the methodological point of view, it should be noted that he was most profoundly convinced that ethics could only be done as part of philosophy. While appreciating the attempts made by Tadeusz Czeżowski or Tadeusz Kotarbiński to build an independent ethics, he believed what they proposed was insufficient. He was convinced that it is the type of questions that determines their final solution. Thus, he distinguished between questions asked by ordinary people about how they should act from questions asked by philosophers who look for the final explanation of the problem of moral obligation and who want to know whether and why one ought to do anything at all? Such questions are asked by everyone, but philosophers express them in a more precise way.

He claimed that ethical explanations require a philosophical foundation and believed that they are only possible when we properly define the place of ethics among other philosophical disciplines and various philosophical directions. He applied a triple criterion in classifying explanations. The differences may be concerned with: (1) the attitude towards philosophy; (2) the concept of philosophy; (3) the content of individual philosophical statements. He was an advocate of a complete knowledge of morality in all of its specificity, given in experience and irreducible to any other reality. He claimed that it is the task of an ethicist to not only describe the phenomenon of morality, but also provide its ultimate explanation.²⁵

²⁵ T. Styczeń, "Zarys etyki – metaetyka," in T. Styczeń, *Metaetyka. Nowa rzecz czy nowe słowo (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 1)*, ed. A. Szostek (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2011), p. 360.

When defining the attitude of ethics towards other philosophical domains, Styczeń used to say that it cannot draw on any other discipline of philosophy for its subject matter. He repeatedly stressed that the fact of morality can only be recognized experientially. He assigned methodological autonomy to ethics, particularly at its starting point. It is experience which demonstrates that morality is an interpersonal relationship. This fact makes it necessary to explain its extreme poles, i.e. to show man as the acting subject and as the object towards whom the activity of the subject is directed. The ultimate explanation of morality thus requires an explanation of the problem of man.²⁶ This is accomplished by philosophical anthropology together with metaphysics. The explanation cannot be a deductive one; in fact, it is not even necessary to explain obligation through deduction. Rather, this should be a reductive procedure, where statements of normative facts are linked to relevant statements about man and existence in general. And since statements made by ethics, just like those made by other disciplines, require constant critical review, Styczeń concluded that ethics as a philosophical discipline (particularly meta-ethics) requires epistemological controls, and thus needs to remain in a relationship with the theory of knowledge.

He insisted that the subject matter of ethics is morality as a certain reality captured in experience, and its goal is the ultimate explanation of the data of this experience. He was convinced that the scope of the concept of morality includes acts, attitudes and persons as the subjects of these acts and attitudes. By analogy of attribution, the notion of morality is also used to decide on judgments about acts, attitudes and persons (appreciation, reprehension, evaluation, principle), the judging criteria (exemplar, touchstone), as well as the cognitive powers which issue moral judgments (moral awareness, conscience, moral sense, moral sensitivity).²⁷

Styczeń believed that everyday language carries a great variety of moral content, and listed such expressions as: “merit,” “fault,” “goodness,” “meanness,” “good,” “evil,” “noble,” “ignoble,” “absolutely mandatory,” “unconditionally due,” etc. He also said that the content shared by all of these expressions is “the absolute duty of the person to perform acts which affirm personal dignity, or to refrain from performing

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 361.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 363.

acts which negate personal dignity.”²⁸ He compared obligation understood this way to terms used by such thinkers as Tadeusz Kotarbiński (“the ideal of reliable guardianship,” or of someone who can be relied upon), Czesław Znamierowski (“the principle of universal kindness”), Jacques Maritain (“the postulate of acting in accordance with nature”), or Karol Wojtyła (“the personalist norm”).²⁹

Styczeń repeatedly said that ethics should consider man as a person, being both the subject and the object towards whom the subject’s action is directed. Consequently, he rejected certain concepts of ethics, claiming that they present moral obligation in a selective way. He had in mind particularly the views of George E. Moore, who understood ethics as the study of the autonomous property of good, perceived intuitively; the concept of Nicolai Hartmann, for whom ethics was a theory whose subject matter was the world of autonomous values; or some of the neo-Thomists concepts, which identify ethics with the theory of man’s actions (decisions).³⁰ He claimed that the subject matter of ethics cannot be defined solely in the categories of good or bad since that would make it too narrow. It is therefore necessary to consider the content of an act both before and after it has been performed.

As far as the method of ethics is concerned, he defined it by reference to other methods, among which he listed generalizing induction, analysis of everyday language, analytical description, phenomenological description, universalizing intuition. He was convinced that the choice of method was determined mainly by the philosophical standpoint of the ethicist. He himself was an advocate of universalizing intuition. Its understanding will be discussed further on in this work.

Styczeń rejected certain ethical methods in view of their specific understanding of ontology. He had in mind particularly the theories of Nicolai Hartmann, Roman Ingarden, as well as the views of Edmund Husserl and Max Scheler. He charged them with (considerably) expanding the scope of ethics by the entities they created when talking about the kingdom of values (*Reich der Werte*), or by rendering autonomous certain states of existence which are not autonomous

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 364.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 365.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 366, footnote 116.

(*An-sich-Sein der Werte, Wertontologismus*), while neglecting to explain morality actually given and available in experience.³¹

He also rejected neo-positivist thinking, claiming that it drew false conclusions about moral obligation from dogmatically accepted epistemological assumptions. This referred to reducing proper cognition only to empiricism understood in a sensual way, which usually leads either to the conclusion that there is no good in the ontic sense (the axiological nihilism of Charles L. Stevenson, Alfred J. Ayer), or that it is something different from that which it is universally believed to be (the ethical naturalism of Moritz Schlick).³² Styczeń also wanted to avoid both ontological maximalism and minimalism, and in order to do this proposed a metaphysical description of morality. He argued that obligation is something real which is really due to an existing person from a really existing person. “The real person is the *object* of this obligation, its source, as well as the *criterion* of that which is due or what is owed to them. The real person is also the *subject* of this obligation.”³³ Therefore, he also added that there is no obligation outside of experience and this is in marked contrast to what Immanuel Kant claimed about obligation being the imperative of practical reason, not related to non-mental reality.

With such an understanding of ethics, Styczeń divided it into several departments based on the three issues he believed to be most important: I. determination of morality; II. the relationship between morality and man as the subject and object of morality; III. the relationship between morality and the Absolute as its ultimate reason. On this basis, he performed a more detailed classification of ethical content:

- I. Determination of morality
 1. Morality and related domains
 2. The essence of morality
 3. The features of moral obligation
 4. The determinants of morality

³¹ Ibidem, p. 377.

³² Ibidem.

³³ Ibidem, p. 377ff.

II. The relation between morality and man as the subject and object of morality

1. Sources of moral obligation
2. The norm of morality
3. The detailed view of morality
4. Autonomy of the subject and objectivity of the moral norm
5. Morality and self-fulfillment

III. The relationship between morality and the Absolute as its ultimate reason

1. Why morality at all?
2. The ultimate explanation of morality.³⁴

³⁴ This is an abridged version of the division. For the complete version see: T. Styczeń, *Zarys etyki – metaetyka*, op. cit., pp. 385–387.

DETAILED THEORETICAL ISSUES

4.1. META-ETHICAL PROBLEMS

Styczeń's interest in meta-ethical issues began already during his work on his master's thesis on the ethics of virtue according to Nicolai Hartmann. Of particular interest, however, is his doctoral dissertation entitled *Możliwość etyki naukowej u Johna Locke'a* [The Possibility of Scientific Ethics in John Locke].³⁵ The theses he proposed there are also presented in a new way in his article "Metaetyka: Nowa 'rzecz' czy nowe 'słowo'?" [Meta-ethics: A New "Thing" or a New "Word"?],³⁶ later repeated in his articles "Spór o naukowość etyki" [A Dispute Over the Scientific Nature of Ethics]³⁷ and "Tradycyjne i współczesne ujęcia etyki" [Traditional and Contemporary Approaches to Ethics]. He asks there: "Was Locke able, and if so, then how—believing in an inflated ideal of science on the other hand, and making assumptions relied on by contemporary logical empiricism on the other—to epistemologically and methodologically substantiate ethics as a science."³⁸ Referring to Locke's views, Styczeń tried to demonstrate that the English

³⁵ T. Styczeń, "Możliwość etyki naukowej u Johna Locke'a," in T. Styczeń, *Metaetyka. Nowa rzecz czy nowe słowo* (*Dzieła Zebrane*, vol. 1), ed. A. Szostek (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2011).

³⁶ T. Styczeń, "Metaetyka. Nowa 'rzecz' czy nowe 'słowo'?", in T. Styczeń, *Metaetyka. Nowa rzecz czy nowe słowo*, pp. 23–32.

³⁷ T. Styczeń, "Spór o naukowość etyki," in T. Styczeń, *Metaetyka. Nowa rzecz czy nowe słowo*, pp. 391–412; T. Styczeń, "Tradycyjne i współczesne ujęcia etyki," in T. Styczeń, *Metaetyka. Nowa rzecz czy nowe słowo*, p. 408.

³⁸ T. Styczeń, "Możliwość etyki naukowej u Johna Locke'a," p. 163.

philosopher interpreted reality in both a rigorous and a liberal way, allowing for a certain margin of discretion. Styczeń believed that Locke's formal studies had only partially been accomplished, and argued that while the notions he constructed, describing behavioral archetypes, may be consistent or inconsistent (falsehood and justice), ethics then becomes like mathematics, as he does not provide a clear criterion for establishing the correspondence between notions and reality. Moreover, ethical definitions refer to man as a real being, and are therefore of a different nature than in mathematics.³⁹ The similarity between ethics and mathematics presented by the British philosopher was only partially substantiated in Styczeń's opinion; nevertheless, he appreciated Locke's contribution to developing an axiomatic and deductive ethics. He believed, however, that providing a formal definition of a notion is not equivalent to stating that it is enough to define a behavior in order to say that it is binding. Formal definitions can show, at the most, the lack of inconsistency in one's behavior, but neither make anything imperative nor substantiate it—particularly as regards the rightness of a particular act with respect to the defined models of behavior. What Locke did in fact reveals the reference of particular actions to divine law or the will of the legislator. It is therefore an etiology rather than a normative ethics. Styczeń charges Locke with “defining as morally good that which is generally considered to be morally good.”⁴⁰

In Locke's thought, Styczeń points out, there are two heterogenic elements, which can be seen from the methodological point of view: general models of conduct constructed by the mind (the *a priori* element), and empirical substantiations provided by the desire for pleasure (the *a posteriori* element). “In the end, then,” he says, “Locke's empiricism is responsible for an inner structural ‘inconsistency’ between his ethical notions and its consequences for the methodological nature of ethical judgments, and thus for ethics in general.”⁴¹ In the conclusions of his doctoral dissertation, Styczeń says that contemporary ethics influenced by Locke followed two roads. One of them is that of the advocates of naturalism in the French version, Moore, emotivists; the other—that of so-called scientific ethics constructed based

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 244.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 232.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 250.

on axiological empiricism.⁴² He finally concludes: “In order to rescue the necessity of ethical judgments, it is necessary to review epistemological assumptions; if we want to stick by them, we must abandon the thought about the necessity of ethical judgments (in the generally accepted meaning of the word).”⁴³ Styczeń then developed the theses he made in his doctoral dissertation both in his post-doctoral thesis and in some of his articles, including “Metaetyka. Nowa ‘rzecz’ czy nowe ‘słowo’?” [Meta-ethics: A New “Thing” or a new “Word”?].⁴⁴

When analyzing Styczeń’s views, both meta-ethical and ethical ones, we can find three types of theories he referred to. The first one is ethics as a theory of the normative fact of morality; the second—a theory of the language of this fact, i.e. the language of the studied subject (the language of ethics); the third—a theory of the language we use to talk about ethics, i.e. a second-degree language, the language of meta-theory (meta-language). In other words, he distinguishes between morality, ethics, and meta-ethics, each using a different language. On this basis, he points to three meta-ethical directions, i.e. intuitionism, naturalism and emotivism. In each of them he distinguishes between ontological, epistemic and semiotic theses, and on the level of meta-language, he discusses certain statements about the language of ethics.

Thus, the philosopher says, intuitionism claims that the designate “good” exists subjectively, that good can be known, and that the term “good” is a name. As far as the intuitionists’ views about the language of ethics, they say that statements about good are sentences in the logical sense, that they are intuitively decidable, and that ethics is a science.

Naturalism, on the other hand, says that good exists as an objective property, that it can be known by observation, and that the term “good” is an observational and empirical name. As for the language of ethics, they say that statements about good are sentences, that they can be decided based on observation, and that ethics is a science in the scientific sense.

As far as emotivism is concerned, its representatives believe that good does not exist objectively, that it is not the object of knowledge,

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 259.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 260.

⁴⁴ T. Styczeń, “Metaetyka. Nowa ‘rzecz’ czy nowe ‘słowo’?”, pp. 113–120.

and that the word “good” is not a name, but a way of expressing emotions. Referring to the language of ethics, they claim that statements about good are not sentences in the logical sense, that they are undecidable, and that ethics is not a science.

Styczeń also says that intuitionism and naturalism assume axiological objectivism and claim that values (good) can be known, albeit in different ways. Emotivism, on the other hand, predicates axiological nihilism and maintains that values (good) cannot be known, hence it is called acognitivism. Styczeń believes that only in the case of intuitionism can we say that meta-theory is the same as meta-ethics; in the case of naturalism, meta-theory is a meta-ethology, or a reflection on ethology which studies what people believe to be good or bad. In the case of emotivism, meta-theory is the semiotics of value statements.

Styczeń also discusses the above directions at the level of ethical theory. He believes that intuitionism considers ethics to be a theory which describes and explains the normative moral fact, and descriptive ethical statements to be normative value judgments. For naturalists, on the other hand, ethics is a theory which describes and explains the mental fact of experiencing morality and the social fact of moral behavior. It reduces normative value judgments to statements expressing the experience of obligation, however. For emotivists, ethics does not exist as a science; it is merely a logical analysis of valuating and normative expressions. It treats all evaluations and ethical norms as pseudo-sentences. As far as the perception of normative facts is concerned, intuitionism treats it as a normative moral fact, expressing the obligation to love persons as fulfilled or not, that is as goodness or badness. The language presenting this fact reveals the object and content of the moral act. Naturalism treats moral fact as the fact of experiencing morality, thus reducing the object of mental or social acts to acts of judging or valuating, and to their content, i.e. evaluation or norm. Language expresses both the content of the act and the act itself. For emotivists, moral facts are merely linguistic expressions of our emotions. While language does communicate acts of emotion, it does not communicate any content about the subject or the object, though. These are expressions of evaluation used in colloquial language.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ T. Styczeń, “Zarys etyki – Metaetyka,” in T. Styczeń, *Metaetyka. Nowa rzecz czy nowe słowo (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 1)*, ed. A. Szostek (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2011), p. 388.

Having discussed Styczeń's evaluation of various meta-ethical directions, we should now present his view of ethics and its currents, to then analyze certain detailed meta-ethical issues specific for the said philosopher. Styczeń tries to order and arrange various ways of understanding ethics in view of the material and formal object and the degree of language, distinguishing objective (ethical) and meta-ethical language.⁴⁶ He understands ethics as a theory of moral obligation, and adds that this term is equivalent (but not synonymous) to many other terms in this field, which makes it generally acceptable. Differences appear when it comes to defining the norm of morality determining the moral sense of the obligation to act. He lists several various ways in which obligation can be understood (eudaimonist, deontologist, personalist). The dispute between representatives of these ethical currents concerns the proper understanding of the essence of obligation—which is the main subject matter of ethics as a scientific discipline.

Styczeń distinguishes between moral and non-moral obligation, asserting that the former is revealed in experience (intuition) and reaches man in the judgment of his conscience as an “ought” statement. He believes that moral obligation is independent from the acting person's desire for happiness (which is why he makes objections against eudaimonism), but is binding upon the acting subject, as long as he is the author of the “ought” judgment (which rules out heteronomous deontonomism which assumes that someone else may tell us what we ought to do). According to Styczeń, the judgment that I ought to do something may only be made when the subject ascertains and recognizes, by way of his own act, the truth about reality, at least by supposition. And this reality consists in the inherent value of the addressee of the act. It is this value which shows that autonomous deontonomism (even in Kant's version) is wrong, as it is based only on a judgment made by the subject, without any reference to that which is external.⁴⁷

Styczeń believes that the disputes we engage in as part of our everyday lives (for example about telling the truth to a sick person: should they be told, or should the truth be withheld from them?)

⁴⁶ T. Styczeń, “Etyka,” in *Leksykon filozofii klasycznej*, ed. J. Herbut (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1997), p. 177.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

show that their source is not the desire for happiness (or perfection) of the disputing parties, and they do not refer to any commands or authorities. The disputes people engage in over the right thing to do have their foundation in the value of the person, in that person's dignity.

The norm of morality that is sought, or the criterion according to which an action becomes obligatory or valuable, is the inherent value of the one towards whom the action is directed. Consequently, Styczeń says that "the moral obligation to act proves to be an obligation through which a person affirms another person or a thing in view of their inherent value."⁴⁸ And ethics is a theory of this obligation. On this basis he claims that the name "ethics" properly applies only to its personalist understating. As for the eudaimonist approach, he calls it a theory of happiness, or eudaimonology, the theory of prohibitions—deontology. Moreover, he believes that man's personal dignity is founded upon "his subjective existential structure (nature)."⁴⁹ Consequently, he lists two elements of a fully valuable moral act. The first one is the will to affirm the person as the addressee of the action (intention, purpose); the other is the objective appropriateness of such action. The former serves to judge an action as good, the latter as right. Styczeń calls good and right actions equitable, and bad and wrong actions—unequitable.⁵⁰

Continuing his discussion of ethical currents, Styczeń says that in eudaimonism, called teleologism, consequentialism, utilitarianism, it is the results that determine the rightness of an action, while in deontologism it is determined by the inner content of the action, or its object. He therefore believes that only if the person is recognized as the norm of morality, the apparent contradictions disappear between moral autonomism, saying that the norm of morality resides within the acting subject, and heteronomism, which says that such norm exists outside of the subject. He is profoundly convinced that a person seen as the norm of morality is the instance which resides both within and without the acting subject. He thus wants to show that "the personal dignity of the acting subject themselves is always for them—directly or indirectly, independently or together with other addressees of the action—the objective norm of morality." Being

⁴⁸ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 177ff.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 178.

outside of the acting subject, it resides “within the personal or non-personal addressee of the action.”⁵¹ Styczeń distinguishes between person as the norm of morality and personal dignity which is also a norm of morality. It does not depend on the subject, but it is given to them as an object to be recognized, while at the same time being submitted to his freedom to affirm by acts of love both in himself and in other persons. It is therefore an internal norm, in line with what the advocates of ethical autonomism assert, as well as an external, objective one, as maintained by representatives of heteronomism. “The performance of a moral obligation is thus faithfulness to the objective ‘order of goods’ most closely linked with faithfulness to oneself.”⁵²

The autonomy of an action does not allow for moral obligation to be identified with any pressure exerted on the will, and thus does not permit any heteronomy. The subject acts in accordance with the judgment of their conscience. On the other hand, however, through an act of conscience the subject subordinates themselves to the truth about the value of persons or things they have ascertained in their own judgment, at least implicitly. Therefore, the subject’s act is not the result of their self-will, it is an arbitrary, free choice. Through his conscience, man aligns his own actions with the objective norm of morality. On this basis, the philosopher distinguishes between three aspects of moral obligation as the subject matter of ethics, and says that they correspond to the “three-dimensionality of conscience as a judgment about moral obligation,” which determines the methodological structure of his way of doing ethics.⁵³ Firstly, the conscience is the source of direct knowledge about moral obligation, while at the same time revealing the dignity of a person or the value of a thing. It directly answers the question: Why ought I? “It is at also the experiential starting point and the experiential basis for the formulation of the supreme ethical principle, e.g. a person is owed affirmation from a person (anything that is valuable is owed affirmation).”⁵⁴ Consequently, Styczeń says that ethics is a discipline that is epistemologically and methodologically independent. Secondly, conscience makes the accuracy and validity of one’s own judgments dependent on the

⁵¹ Ibidem.

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 179.

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

accuracy of the recognition of the nature of the human person, points to the need for the best knowledge about man available. This is necessary to formulate equitable norms. In this aspect, ethics is methodologically subordinated to anthropology. Thus, the equity of ethical norms depends on the right (equitable) anthropological knowledge.⁵⁵ Thirdly, the conscience, by issuing the subject's judgment saying that they ought to do something, "actually," though not explicitly, "ascertains" the real objectivity of the moral obligation (rather than only a sense that something is due), which makes the judgment an existential one of "an obligation ... exists" type.⁵⁶ Therefore, if we want to understand how an obligation exists, we must refer to some kind of metaphysics. The conscience is supposed to show us the road which makes this explanation possible by referring to the notion of a personal Absolute and his creative intervention, his love. "An act of love, as an act of affirmation due to a person, proves to be a religious act in its most profound dimension. And ethics, as a theory which moves from explaining the subject matter (phenomenology of morality) to its ultimate explanation, becomes a metaphysics of morality."⁵⁷

It should be added that in his reflections on ethics, i.e. building meta-ethics, Styczeń referred on the one hand to the views of Max Scheler, and on the other to Tadeusz Kotarbiński. Still, he chose his own research path by concluding that the starting point of ethics is external to man's experience. Ethics is a science based on experience available to the subject. It cannot be reduced to mere description, but aims at explaining the data of experience. It is a search for reasons, and for ultimate reasons at that. In his comments on the views held by Styczeń, Rocco Buttiglione says that he concluded the hierarchy of (experienced) values does not correspond to the hierarchy of obligations, and often said that it is the task of ethics to define the latter.⁵⁸ The point is that while experience may begin by perceiving something as valuable (value) and disregarding the obligation, obligation will nevertheless emerge and demand its ultimate substantiation by demonstrating what the greatness of the subject ultimately

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, p. 180.

⁵⁷ Ibidem.

⁵⁸ R. Buttiglione, "Etyka jako wierność doświadczeniu," trans. P. Mikulska, *Ethos* 24, no. 3 (2011), p. 131.

rests upon and why one value should be chosen over another. Moreover, the recognition of an obligation as the experienced content is necessary because values often collide with one another, and one of them must be given priority. Emotions also play an important role in the process of judging something as valuable, so that we assign special value to something even though it has none. According to Styczeń, as he tried to show in many ways, an act does not appear as something external to the acting person, and thus may not be arbitrarily embraced or rejected, or even subordinated to an explicitly specified, yet external goal. This is not an option, because the person who performs an act is present in it; they reveal themselves and show what they are like in moral terms. Such a depiction of experience demonstrates the integrity of the content and the person, and such an approach differs from that of the ethics of consequence, which treats the person as external to the act, arbitrarily choosing one action over another.⁵⁹

Styczeń claimed that in order to analyze experience, he needed the simplest language possible, while to explicate it, a more sophisticated, finer one was required.⁶⁰ Answering the question of how he saw his role as an ethicist, he wrote: “Ethics only finds itself when it becomes a proclamation of personal dignity. Thus, the main, if not the only task of the ethicist, his proper role, his social mission, is to be in the service of this proclamation. To proclaim it in the most compelling, effective way possible.”⁶¹ Thus, the task of an ethicist for Styczeń consists in demonstrating, in various ways, the value of a person. Man is a being who exists “differently” and “in a higher way.”

He thus referred to several ways of knowing and talking about a person, particularly about their dignity. Firstly, the dignity of the human person is most fully revealed when it is threatened, as we realize a person is someone, rather than something. There is no room there for calculating profits and losses resulting from particular actions, like in the famous dispute about whether a sick person should be told the truth about their condition, or whether the truth should

⁵⁹ Ibidem, p. 132.

⁶⁰ Cf. K. Krajewski, “Prawda jako podstawa etyki w myśli księdza Tadeusza Styczenia,” *Ethos* 24, no. 3 (2011), p. 135.

⁶¹ T. Styczeń, “Objawiać osobę,” in T. Styczeń, *Objawiać osobę (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 3)*, ed. A.M. Wierzbicki (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2013), p. 17.

be withheld from them. Secondly, we capture this dignity when we consider taking a particular action and not another; we then both get to know the person and reveal them. Thirdly, talking about a person consists in showing the truth about them. The truth about who we are and about the other person is revealed when we stay faithful to the truth we have recognized ourselves. Which is why Styczeń says: “Assertion, then, is not only a passive statement by the subject of the truth about an object, but also an expression of the knowing subject becoming engaged on the side of truth about the object being known.”⁶² In such an approach to the dignity of the self and the other, the most important role is played by intellectual intuition, which he refers to in Latin as *universale in concreto*, and which is similar to that which Harold A. Prichard talked about—capturing both that which is individual and that which is general. This way Styczeń points to the possibility of moving from the obligation to affirm oneself to the obligation to affirm the other. He says that the starting point for ethical reflection is the kind of experience which demonstrates the normative power of truth. We are supposed to discover what is true, but never impose anything for the sake of some theoretical presuppositions. He does not embrace, as an ethicist, the normative order taken from metaphysics or anthropology. This way, he avoids “Hume’s guillotine”⁶³ by showing the unity between the informative and the normative moment, consisting in the conclusion: “What I have asserted myself (self-information) is what I cannot contradict (self-imperative).”⁶⁴ In other words, Styczeń expresses the essence of his meta-ethical argumentation using the Latin formula: *primum anthropologicum et primum ethicum convertuntur*. Ethics thus becomes a science of morality, and of the subject who governs their actions by the fact, and thanks to the fact, that they inform themselves of it in their

⁶² T. Styczeń, “Etyka jako antropologia normatywna. W sprawie epistemologicznie zasadnego i metodologicznie poprawnego punktu wyjścia etyki, czyli od stwierdzenia: ‘jest tak’ – ‘nie jest tak’ do naczelnej zasady etycznej,” in T. Styczeń, *Wolność w prawdzie (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 4)*, ed. K. Krajewski (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2013), p. 330.

⁶³ This term refers to the view of the Scotch philosopher David Hume who believed there is no way one can logically move from descriptive to normative/value statements.

⁶⁴ K. Krajewski, “Prawda jako podstawa etyki w myśli księdza Tadeusza Styczenia,” p. 148.

proper way. In view of the very methodological nature of its starting point, ethics is a normative anthropology.⁶⁵ In other words, that which man ought to do results from who he is. Yet the subject does not deduce this from some theory about man. Who they are and who they must not be is revealed to them in the experience of the normative power of truth.

In this context, it is worthwhile looking at how Styczeń understood the relationship between ethics and science as such. Or, to be more precise, how he understood the relationship between ethics and science as a theory of effective action, represented in Poland by such thinkers as Tadeusz Kotarbiński or Stefan Amsterdamski. Styczeń rejected the possibility that methodological norms could be identified with ethical ones. He firmly believed that if science is to be done reliably, it must be committed to methodological quality, which he treated as an obvious moral requirement. When analyzing this issue in more detail, it must be admitted that both Styczeń and Kotarbiński distinguished between ethics in a broader sense, including also eudaimonology and praxeology, from ethics in the narrower, stricter sense, referring to the dignity of man. Together with Kotarbiński, he embraced this difference in the approach to ethics and ethics understood in this way in the strict sense. Nevertheless, he made sure that praxeological norms should not be identified with ethical ones. Otherwise, only a top-notch scientist could be considered an ethically irreproachable person. Moreover, such a scientist would become an oracle, saying who has not become a man yet, or who has ceased to be one. Humanity could be decided administratively. There is no special ethics only for scientists. There is, however, an ethics of scientists, as knowledge is the common good of all mankind. Styczeń wrote: “Therefore, one cannot—and must not—in the name of affirming a person as person either reduce them to something that turns out to be merely a good for the person, even as important as knowing the truth; or fail to affirm goods without whose affirmation the affirmation of a person is either incomplete, or downright impossible.”⁶⁶ He claimed that affirmation should apply to all praxeological norms which serve the development of various goods for a person, yet one must be also aware that they may collide with ethical norms which

⁶⁵ T. Styczeń, “Etyka jako antropologia normatywna,” p. 328.

⁶⁶ T. Styczeń, “Czy istnieje etyka dla naukowca?,” *Ethos* 11, no. 4 (1998), p. 80.

defend the value of the person, reducing the person to an instrumental role.⁶⁷

In this manner Styczeń contradicted many philosophers who believe that truth is relative to a particular theory (e.g., Hilary Putnam, Thomas Kuhn). He also distinguished between cognitive skills from virtues in the moral sense. For him, praxeological necessity was not the same as moral necessity. The foundation of praxeological obligation is moral obligation. The scientist cannot only take into account the effectiveness of an action.

When studying the works of Tadeusz Styczeń, one can easily see that anthropology and ethics are two sides of the same reality for him. He thus begins meta-ethical reflections with stating that ethics is based on the experience of obligation, or, to be more precise, of that which appears as due. It is specific and cannot be reduced to any other. Its specificity warrants the methodological and epistemic independence of ethics. Both of these autonomies are anchored in truth about person.⁶⁸

Styczeń talked about the experience of the content of obligation, which he briefly referred to as that which is “due,” as something really existing because it is rooted in the reality of the extreme poles of an interpersonal relationship and these extreme poles are actually existing persons. He referred to the experienced content as *datum morale*. Showing that a person is the reason of an obligation is, in his opinion, something different than recognizing a certain property as a good. It is not only turning the description of experience into a norm by way

⁶⁷ “In the name of affirming the good which is a person, that is in the name of affirmation due to a person—as a value which gives rise to obligations by its very nature—all praxeological rules which serve to realise (multiply, maximize) values specific for this domain of action, called goods for a person, should be respected, as long as the realization of these goods or the application of the rules of their realization does not collide with the value of the person themselves; that is, as long as the affirmation of particular goods for a person or the application of the rules of their realization precludes the possibility of any human person being treated instrumentally (manipulated).” T. Styczeń, “Czy istnieje etyka dla naukowca?,” p. 81.

⁶⁸ T. Styczeń, “Etyka niezależna?,” in T. Styczeń, *Etyka niezależna (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 2)*, ed. K. Krajewski (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2012), pp. 304–319; T. Styczeń, “Problem autonomii etyki,” in T. Styczeń, *W drodze do etyki. Wybór esejów z etyki i o etyce* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 1984), pp. 228–230. Cf. A. Wierzbicki, “Doświadczenie moralne a wiara,” *Ethos* 24, no. 3 (2011), p. 21.

of induction or generalization. The content which we discover in experience is given to us in an existential judgment which ascertains the existence of something as binding us, and thus as normative. This is how Styczeń understands this obligation: “from the ontic point of view, it is a type of an interpersonal relationship, a special kind of meeting with a person, or of rejecting that meeting.”⁶⁹ It reveals all of the features of moral obligation, or its categoricalness, rationality, disinterestedness, and inherence.⁷⁰

In the judgment about an experienced obligation (the content of obligation, or “the due,” as he called it), Styczeń distinguished between its obligatory nature (that I absolutely ought to do something) and its equitable nature consisting in adding detail to the experienced content, or enriching it with detailed anthropological insights revealing that which is important for man as a person, i.e. the truth about person. He was aware that various anthropological views lead to different interpretations of what is equitable. He said, therefore, that it is precisely the equitable consideration that is most often the subject matter of principal ethical disputes. The history of ethics clearly shows that man as a person has been considered the subject of rights vested in him or respect due to him; that he was seen as deserving of affirmation for his own sake. The personalism which teaches this is a very young ethical trend and comes in many varieties. Nevertheless, the truth it proclaims has been expressed in many ways, and its main message has always been the same: the person deserves to be affirmed for their own sake.

Styczeń was convinced that there is a solution to the problem put forward by David Hume when talking about the impossibility of logically moving from descriptive to normative judgments, as ethical theses are not arrived at from metaphysical statements by deduction, but by reduction. This method consists in revealing the anthropological and existential reasons of an obligation given to us in the experience of morality. This is how he described it: “A person can never be discovered by thought which operates on general notions derived from comparisons. This is why they can never be expressed in a language in

⁶⁹ T. Styczeń, “Etyka niezależna?,” p. 354.

⁷⁰ T. Styczeń, “Uwagi o istocie moralności,” in T. Styczeń, *Etyka niezależna (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 2)*, ed. K. Krajewski (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2012), pp. 515–529. Cf. A. Wierzbicki, “Doświadczenie moralne a wiara,” p. 23.

which names, even proper names, are doomed to performing generalizing functions.”⁷¹ He claimed that there is a similarity between an existential judgment which asserts the existence of something, and an “ought” judgment which captures the obligation together with its normativity as a content which really exists. Thence he added: “The obligation to affirm a person as person by a person is.”⁷² The dignity of a person most often appears in the form of guilt, but not only.⁷³ It also appears when man experiences that he did not behave the way he should have towards another as a person. It is not only a subjective feeling of guilt, as the betrayal of man as a repository of truth, but guilt which has an objective meaning.⁷⁴

Styczeń believed that the real existence of the obligatory content of the affirmation of a person, and which appeared in all of its absolute power, applies to a person as an incidental being. He pointed out that this element had not been noticed by Immanuel Kant who treated man as the ultimate and absolute legislator. Man, however, is an incidental and thus fallible being; he needs an ultimate substantiation of his actions, and above all the content that appears to him as absolutely due, even though the extreme poles of an interpersonal relationship (particular persons) in which this content is revealed are incidental, nonessential. Why, then, does it appear to us as absolutely due and binding? The only explanation of the absolute character of this relationship may, Styczeń claimed, be its rooting in the Absolute as the ultimate reason of human dignity and the existence of man as a person.

In the later period of his work, Styczeń even began to invoke theology, to which he looked for a substantiation of man’s dignity despite his weakness and incidentality. Some of the commentators of his thought call this period a philosophy of the Advent, as he refers there to the fact the Son of God came to the world in human flesh. According to Styczeń, an authentic anthropocentrism leads to theocentrism, and *vice versa*: “leading from man to man through God as the best

⁷¹ T. Styczeń, “Objawiać osobę,” p. 22.

⁷² T. Styczeń, “Etyka niezależna?,” p. 346.

⁷³ T. Styczeń, “Dlaczego Bóg stał się chlebem? Etyka a teologia moralna. Między doświadczeniem winy a Objawieniem Odkupiciela,” in T. Styczeń, *Rozum i wiara wobec pytania: Kim jestem?* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2001), p. 127.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 126.

possible way of man to man.”⁷⁵ Thus, the ethics of Tadeusz Styczeń, which began as independent kind of ethics, based on the experience of a content as obligatory, becomes a theological anthropology at the point of arrival, as it includes religious content. For one cannot avoid the question about man’s incidentality, and even more so about his mortality or immortality—if we assume that man is a mortal being, both the equitable and the obligatory sphere will appear to us differently than if we assume that a person is an immortal being. This refinement is made on the theoretical plane, yet the content itself appears to us in the primary experience, as existing in its proper way.

When analyzing the meta-ethics of Tadeusz Styczeń, we should distinguish between its two essential elements. Firstly, the philosopher adopts the perspective of the first person as the one who experiences, or discovers, a moral obligation. Secondly, at the starting point he places the relationship between obligation, truth and freedom. Freedom is revealed in the truth about the due content. It is the normative power of truth, freely recognized by man, and thus compelling him to be faithful to it. Such a way of understanding the relationship explains why he assigns such tremendous importance to conscience and anthropology, to showing who man is. Besides, Styczeń’s meta-ethical thought should be seen as part of cognitivism, the view that it is possible to know good. Some believe that it is a moderate form of ethical intellectualism, in which knowledge of what is good and just leads to the right behavior.⁷⁶ Jacek Frydrych says that Styczeń’s theory is a practical form of internalism, but finally includes it with “externalism of content and externalism of recognition, as the content and its recognition come from without the subject’s desires. On its grounds, it is not the case that reasons are considered true only as grounded in the set of the subject’s desires. Externalism says that moral reasons may be true without being grounded in the set of the subject’s desires.”⁷⁷

The question about the possibility of ethics is, according to Styczeń, central to the whole of meta-ethics. Moreover, he believes that

⁷⁵ T. Styczeń, “Kim właściwie jest Jan Paweł II?,” in T. Styczeń, *Rozum i wiara wobec pytania: Kim jestem?*, p. 227.

⁷⁶ J. Frydrych, “Intelektualizm w etyce Tadeusza Stycznia,” *Ethos* 95, no. 3 (2011), p. 202.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 203ff.

it is a question proper to all meta-ethical directions, even those which deny the scientific nature of ethics. It is about the problem of whether it can be decided if ethics is possible as a science. The philosopher asks this question in the title of his post-doctoral thesis: *The Possibility of Ethics as an Empirically Substantiated and Universally Valid Theory of Morality*.⁷⁸ He believed that the asking of this question is natural to a scientist, but added that at some point he must ask about the way this question is to be decided. The final answer depends on the ability to determine how this is to be done. An ethicist cannot only ask “What?” type of questions but should also as “Why?” In other words, he must look for the ultimate reason. Ethics is not possible without meta-ethics. Nearly all ethicists have been aware of this, beginning with Socrates when he combined ethics and logic. Nevertheless, the novelty of contemporary meta-ethics compared to that done for centuries does not consist in the name “meta-ethics,” but in the approach to ethical problems. In the past, it was instrumental, it helped study and decide ethical problems; now, it has become an end in itself. Meta-ethical studies are carried out to investigate terminological issues, taking way too much time that could otherwise be used to look for answers to ethical questions.

Styczeń sees both the advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches as far as the manner of conducting meta-ethics is concerned. The final (new) approach, as he calls it, risks carrying out its studies on a sample that is not of the best quality, i.e. on utterances coming mainly from everyday speech, or obtained in result of referring to second-best theories of knowledge, accepted by way of general consent, without any kind of confrontation with empirical material.

The risk faced by the instrumental approach is that in trying to reach the final result too fast, the employed research methods are not sufficiently validated. Thus, ethics may be deprived of a reliable substantiation. In order to avoid these dangers, Styczeń proposes that researchers should go beyond the studies performed in their own philosophical school.

⁷⁸ T. Styczeń, “Problem możliwości etyki jako empirycznie uprawomocnionej i ogólnie ważnej teorii moralności. Studium metaetyczne,” in T. Styczeń, *Etyka niezależna (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 2)*, ed. K. Krajewski (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2012), pp. 17–246.

In order to show that ethics as a science that is empirical and validly substantiated is possible, he often stressed that it does not refer to names but to existential judgments which ascertain the existence of moral obligation. Its content captured in moral experience is not the content of a name, but of a judgment. It is captured as something that exists. Even if he used the word “due,” he treated it as a linguistic shortcut. He claimed that in experience, we capture both that which is universal and that which is specific at the same time, as he was most firmly of the opinion that neither the deductive nor the inductive method can provide a way for solving the question about the possibility of ethics. In the former case, we would receive norms which are logically correct, but which do not always apply to concrete reality. In the latter, we would not only be unable to show as great a number of similar instances as possible, like in biology or chemistry, but even come close to showing a few, as in the sphere of moral life that which is right in one case may be wrong in a very similar, but not identical one. He therefore proposed the so-called “paralleling method” which, referring to Leon Petrażycki, he called “neither limping nor jumping.”⁷⁹ In this way he wanted to show that judgments about a particular behavior are issued by analogy and may be sufficient. As an ethicist, he maintained that what we are given in the experience of morality is the interpersonal or intrapersonal relationship. As a meta-ethicist, he added that its extreme poles are real, actually living persons, who are both the subjects and objects towards whom this relationship is oriented. Each and every time, the relationship between them is revealed as a relationship of the obligation to love a person for their own sake. It was not by mere accident that he saw some similarity between his views and Kant’s thought, or, more precisely, the latter’s expression used in the second version of the categorical imperative which points to “necessary conditions for possibility,” or the reality of the *datum morale*. These conditions are supposed to be identified by intellectual intuition. “That which is absolutely due,” Styczeń writes, “is always and only co-given with the person as the *terminus a quo* and, correspondingly, with the person as the *terminus ad quem*, in accordance with the classical formula: *Omni, soli, semper*.”⁸⁰ He thus believed that

⁷⁹ T. Styczeń, “Problem możliwości etyki jako empirycznie uprawomocnionej i ogólnie ważnej teorii moralności. Studium metaetyczne,” p. 186.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 191.

this principle can only be encountered through its “concrete embodiment,” as it does not exist otherwise.⁸¹ The philosopher wanted to show that both specific persons and individual actions should be treated as unique. He believed that in the case of reflections on obligation, we are dealing with notions similar to the transcendentals. They are similar, but not identical, because their scope is limited. Thus, the relationships, their contents, and the situations in which we recognize our obligations are analogous, but not identical; neither are they ambiguous, however. Styczeń tried to avoid (consciously or not) the charge which Jacques Derrida made against Lévinas, asking him how the Self, as someone entirely different from the other, can know what the other needs. He strove to combine the empirical with the general, or, more precisely, the way of experience with the way of generalizing the experienced content as obligatory but revealed in judgments. In doing so he joined the discussion with Max Scheler, who found moral content in human consciousness, but placed existence, whose quality he wanted to examine, outside of the brackets. He claimed that the more precise the content of experienced obligation, the more detailed the explanation that is required. Styczeń, on the other hand, believed that one must not ignore existence which appears together with the content, which he thought Husserl had realized and therefore replaced the eidetic method with the transcendental one. Besides, staying true to his assumptions about the need for an ultimate explanation of how ethics is possible as a science, Styczeń postulated a reference to metaphysics; he believed that the problem of ethics concerns the problem of the existence of a real person—a real, but weak one, existing as an incidental being. He wanted to show how it is possible that the experienced content of affirming a person (the relationship of obligation) appears with such absolute power even though its extreme poles are incidental beings. Talking about the experience of content as due, he distinguished it from the metaphysical experience in which we capture existence as existence, from the experience of man’s existence as a man, as a being who is free or who desires happiness. He did not rule out the possibility that the one experience is affected by the other, as man experiences various things; still, he claimed they were not the same thing. And the subject matter of ethics is built-in, as he called it, into the subject

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 192.

matter of anthropology and metaphysics. He said that the building-in of moral data into metaphysical data takes place with the mediation of anthropological data, concerning the existence of man as man. This consists in our becoming aware that moral content would never exist unless man existed as a person who actualizes in practice the content that appears to us as morally due. The experience of obligatory content is thus inevitable. “The obligation we experience comes to us as an analogon to the experience of a person. By experiencing any real content—including the content of the moral datum—we always experience an analogon of existence.”⁸²

Styczeń claimed that metaphysics only suggests that even though ethical statements have a peremptory nature, they do not show the specific nature of ethical content, but only its existence. The reason for this is that it is not possible to deduce ethical content from metaphysical content. In this respect, he agreed with Hume who said that there is no way one can logically move from descriptive to normative statements. Ethical content has a specific existence. Thence, he also distinguished between metaphysical experience from categorical/moral experience. The former is concerned with the existence of content, the latter—with the existing content,⁸³ or the obligation to act in one way and not another. At the point of departure, both metaphysics and other autonomous disciplines of philosophy, including ethics, exist as independent domains which supplement one another. Ethics, drawing on metaphysics, by explaining the necessary nature of obligation which appears to us, becomes a metaphysics of morality. Here Styczeń agreed with both Kant and Husserl. The former believed that meta-ethics was supposed to examine the substantiation (possibility) of a “metaphysics of morality,” which he thought ethics to be. The latter assigned meta-ethics the role of solving the problem of transcendental consciousness by suspending the phenomenon of morality.⁸⁴ Styczeń, on the other hand, was convinced that the ultimate reason of moral facts has a metaphysical nature, and ethics, based on the experienced moral content, is a metaphysics of morality, or a theory which explains it by combining the empirical with peremptoriness. Once the existence of an obligation is perceived as something real, it needs—he believed—to be provided

⁸² Ibidem, p. 222.

⁸³ Ibidem, p. 224.

⁸⁴ Ibidem, p. 226.

with a Necessary Reason for its existence. He considered this Reason to ultimately be Personal Creative Love. An obligation understood in this sense differs from those imposed by law. Its nature is existential. Its content is specific, but not to the extent that it is not the content of anthropological experience, that is, content which shows the acting person. And in the dimension of that which is equitable, it becomes an ethics with an adjective, i.e. a catholic, lay one, depending on how we understand man, particularly on whether we consider him to be a mortal being, or one who continues to live after death in the supernatural dimension.

Styczeń claimed that the content of obligation comes from experience. It is not created by a calculating, deducing mind, but the intellect which captures its existence directly as an obligation. It is the capturing of truth as something that exists, and not only as the content of our consciousness. This truth is related both to the way a person exists and to their dignity. We do not discover it by reflection, but through a specific experience. Thus, its nature is not epistemic, but ontic. The truth of a person is the truth of the way they exist. The obviousness of the experience of truth is of a different kind than the logical one. Ethics is thus a peremptory discipline, which examines reasons behind the existence of necessary relationships between moral content given in direct experience.

4.2. THE SCIENTIFIC NATURE OF ETHICS

Discussing the meta-ethics of Tadeusz Styczeń, we should also take a look at his standpoint on the scientific character of this philosophical discipline. The fundamental dispute around this issue is concerned with whether it is to have an empirical or an a priori character. This is the well-known dispute between naturalists, who claim that good has natural properties, such as that of giving pleasure, and intuitionists who believe this is not the case. The problem concerns that which George Edward Moore called the “naturalist error” which consists in identifying such predicative as “good” and “yellow” or “blue” in language, and on the ontic level—in identifying moral good with pleasant or useful good, thus reducing it to its empirical properties. Styczeń believed, however, that Moore performed a certain “alienation” of good by depriving it of the features which are discovered in

experience, despite his best intentions to the contrary. The emotivists pointed out this reduction to him; yet, as Styczeń rightly noticed, while justly criticizing the reduction of good to properties which cannot be known empirically, the emotivists made another mistake. They concluded that since something does not have empirical properties, then it either cannot exist or be known. For Styczeń, however, ethics is both an empirical and an a priori science, though he understands experience in a broader way than typical naturalists. He distinguishes it from simple empiria, and claims that the dispute between Moore and emotivists “has the fault of coming from an illicit union, sharing in the “original sin” of the same mother. And the mother who gave birth to evil in this case is this very dogmatic disjunction.”⁸⁵ What he has in mind is the juxtaposition of empirical and a priori knowledge. He puts the blame for over-emphasizing this disjunction on Anglo-Saxon thinkers. He refers to the views of Richard M. Hare who claimed that a judgment about good is somehow related to its description, even though the features of good are not the same as those depicted in the description. Therefore, one cannot predicate about good as something natural, since it has specific properties. Consequently, he believes that something could be good if it only had the best properties, and no such can be recognized. Moreover, descriptions of what is good would change on a case by case basis, depending on developments in natural reality. Thus, Hare only recommended the choice of something as good, for he believed we are unable to know what is good objectively (acognitivism). Styczeń, on the other hand, maintained that one can know and experience good rather than just postulate a particular action believed to be good. He says that Hare (and his colleagues) missed a very important thing. They failed to notice the function of “realizing that which for a particular thing was essentially possible, attainable, achievable, and which became—though it did not necessarily have to become—actually realized, achieved, effected. And it did not necessarily have to become so in the sense that an interference “from the outside” could have brought to naught that which “from the inside” (but not only from the inside) was doomed to materialize.”⁸⁶ The point is

⁸⁵ T. Styczeń, “Spór o naukowość etyki,” in T. Styczeń, *Metaetyka. Nowa rzecz czy nowe słowo (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 1)*, ed. A. Szostek (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2011), p. 408.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 410.

that the actualization of a certain thing is its good if it has the properties determined by its proper physiognomy. Good, therefore, is not some special (absolute) property, but is a property (a set of features) in view of something; “a property of actualizing that towards which the thing is spontaneously headed, or, in other words: it is a property (or a set of properties) actualized in relation to the possibility of its being actualized in a *given* thing.”⁸⁷ Styczeń calls this the “genotype” which “writes” one story for a strawberry, another one for a titmouse, and yet another for man; and among men, a story peculiar to each one of us. Thus, there are properties which exist as properties and as absolute properties. He believes that a property referred to its possibility of actualization is something more than just a property. It is not the activity of the subject that creates this property, but it exists independently from the subject’s activity; it is something real, and not only some created knowledge or a particular attitude towards it. It is the reality of a given property that determines, in his opinion, the ontic nature of good, defines its status as being good. It is good understood objectively, i.e. existing independently from the cognitive activity of the subject. It is the basis for any rational instruction and man’s attitude towards it.⁸⁸

Styczeń agrees with Hare who says that good cannot be entirely identified with things. They are good only if they have particular properties, such as enable the actualization of their potential. Such feature(s) enable(s) a close relationship between the description of a thing and its evaluation. Styczeń believes, however, that Hare only postulated the existence of this relationship instead of substantiating it. He nevertheless partially agrees with him that there is a close relationship between the description of a thing and its evaluation, but points out that Hare over-accentuated the lack of identity and the mutual irreducibility of the description of a thing and its evaluation. By doing this, Hare concurred with acognitivists who believe that good cannot be known. Styczeń claims that the three meta-ethical standpoints of Anglo-Saxon thinkers (naturalism, emotivism, intuitionism) revealed something very important, yet at the same time each of them failed to take into account some crucial aspect.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ibidem.

⁸⁸ Ibidem, p. 411.

⁸⁹ Ibidem.

Moreover, he claims that there is a lot to be learned even from the failures of Anglo-Saxon thinkers. After all, they showed the problem of good in a modern way, revealing that things have their inner nature, which, he admits, may be difficult to understand for the contemporary man. Yet they omitted reflections on the inner structure of things that are good. They did this for the sake of the prevailing “fashion” of rejecting metaphysics.⁹⁰ In Styczeń’s opinion, reflection upon this structure is very important, however. One must ask about the nature of good, which is expressed in the form of a question about the “actualisable possibility of things” or about the “actualization of the possibility of things,” i.e. about their inner physiognomy, as he calls it.⁹¹

Discussing the meta-ethics of Tadeusz Styczeń, one should also pay attention to his division of ethics into traditional and contemporary ones.⁹² The key word here is the term “views of ethics.” What he means is ethics as a normative discipline, and not merely a descriptive one, such as psychology or sociology, for instance. It should answer two questions, he believed: what is morally good, and why? It should also define what man should be like, or, even more precisely, say who I am as a man. Referring to ancient concepts, very different ones, Styczeń sees one feature they have in common. They were an attempt at capturing something as one, i.e. the nature of existence.⁹³ This approach was still prevalent in Middle Ages. The fact Aquinas pointed out the primacy of existence over essence changed the approach to ethics, Styczeń says. While consistency between actions and human nature still determined the quality of an act, it was no longer the final determinant. Instead, God’s intent now took over this role and, while Aristotelian ethics was anthropological, Thomas’ ethics turned into a theocentric one. The Stagirite considered action inconsistent with nature to be man’s failure; Aquinas called it sin. Ethics became an extension of metaphysics. What is more, it presumed the existence of an extra-subjective reality which could, and should, be cognitively achieved. This slowly led to its rejection in modern times.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Ibidem, p. 408.

⁹¹ Ibidem, p. 412.

⁹² T. Styczeń, “Tradycyjne i współczesne ujęcia etyki,” in T. Styczeń, *Metaetyka. Nowa rzecz czy nowe słowo*, p. 418.

⁹³ Ibidem, p. 419.

⁹⁴ Ibidem, p. 421.

First, it was said that there exists a moral sense which allows man to feel what is good, without referring to God's will. In time, the notion of moral sense was abandoned, and priority was given to feelings. Kant's ethics was just a reaction to such a way of doing ethics. He called for priority to be given to reason. Just as at the threshold of modernity the existence of a separate reality was rejected, so in modern times separate and specific knowledge was no longer considered the foundations of ethics. And this led to questioning the existence of objective values and the possibility of knowing them, which was expressed in emotivism. The emphasis which emotivists placed on linguistic issues led, in Styczeń's opinion, to doing away with the main problem of ethics, i.e. the issue of obligation and good. Comparing various views on ethics over the ages, he lists three basic approaches to ethical problems: the metaphysical (antiquity and Middle Ages), epistemological (the early modern period until contemporary times), and linguistic one (a product of the 20th century). By making this division, he also adds that these takes on ethics, considered in the chronological order, do not fully allow for an adequate division of ethics into traditional and contemporary ones. Problems appear mainly when attempts are made at qualifying epistemological approaches. Where should we include the ethics of Kant, Hartmann, or Maritain?—Styczeń asks.

A more adequate classification criteria would be, in his opinion, a distinction between approaches based on the philosophy of existence and those derived from the philosophy of consciousness. And adds that replacement of the philosophy of existence with the philosophy of consciousness should be considered one of the main reasons behind the crisis of ethics. Consequently, he postulates that metaphysical reflection should be appreciated again without eliminating either epistemological or linguistic research. They should supplement one another. This would, in fact, contribute both to ethical and meta-ethical reflection.

Having discussed these meta-ethical problems, it is now time to look at how Tadeusz Styczeń understood certain (selected) issues of a purely ethical nature.

4.3. THE OBLIGATION TO AFFIRM A PERSON REVEALED BY THE CONSCIENCE

The foundation of ethical personalism developed by Tadeusz Styczeń is moral experience which consists in “directly capturing the absolute obligation to affirm a person in view of their dignity.”⁹⁵ Thanks to this experience, man can formulate the fundamental ethical principle: “A person should be affirmed for their own sake” (*Persona est affirmanda propter se ipsam*), or “A person is owed love from any person.”⁹⁶ The moral obligation to act is the obligation to affirm a person or a non-personal being for the sake of their inherent value. While the value of any addressee of an action generates moral obligation, among all of these addressees, the personal addressee enjoys a special status. Their value generates obligations in a way characterized by unlimited unconditionality, categoricalness. The inherent value of a non-personal addressee allows for limited unconditionality, and even for its instrumental treatment for the sake of affirmation due to persons. In the case of a personal addressee, their dignity absolutely precludes the moral permissibility of treating some persons instrumentally for the sake of other persons, both in the form of sacrificing an individual for many persons, or of many persons for the sake of an individual.⁹⁷

Styczeń emphasizes that the principle of affirming a person for their own sake derives all of its content and legitimation “solely from the direct insight of every one of us into the structure of our own ‘self,’ the structure which is revealed to us most primarily, as though in its ovary, in every single act—and fact—of knowledge we make.”⁹⁸ The act of knowing anything in its source form of self-information is also a categorical self-imperative addressed to the subject.⁹⁹ Styczeń says that the value of every man is visible already in our natural moral intuitions. Yet, the proper discovery of a person lies beyond the

⁹⁵ K. Krajewski, “Wprowadzenie do tomu czwartego *Dzieł Zebranych* ks. Tadeusza Styczenia,” in T. Styczeń, *Wolność w prawdzie (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 4)*, ed. K. Krajewski (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2013), p. 27.

⁹⁶ T. Styczeń, “Etyka jako antropologia normatywna,” p. 346.

⁹⁷ T. Styczeń, “ABC etyki,” in T. Styczeń, *Objawiać osobę*, p. 409.

⁹⁸ T. Styczeń, “Etyka jako antropologia normatywna,” pp. 346–347.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 347.

sphere of research, “above the limits of that which is comparable and which can be brought to a common denominator.”¹⁰⁰ The face of a person makes them unique and incomparable, and it is therefore impossible to discover a person by thought which operates on general notions derived from comparison. For the same reason, it cannot be expressed in a language, as names play generalizing functions.¹⁰¹ Moreover, one cannot see oneself until one discovers oneself as called by the truth of one’s own judgment to affirm any other self for their own sake. The fullness of self-knowledge does not come until one discovers oneself as being called to love. Consequently, man’s self-fulfillment consists above all in answering the call inherent in the self-discovering judgment, that is in effectively choosing love.¹⁰² Man is not himself if—when called to love—he does not love.

According to Styczeń, when experiencing the truth of something that happens before our very eyes, we cannot remain neutral. This applies in particular to the truth about ourselves, “the truth of self-knowledge.”¹⁰³ This act of knowing the truth binds man to recognize it as truth. Man “besets himself with it,” “binds himself with it.” This is what his autonomy consists in. Thus, man makes himself dependent on a truth which does not depend on him. He “goes beyond himself” towards this truth. He governs and rules himself by being governed and ruled by truth.

As a student of Karol Wojtyła, Styczeń distinguishes between moral experience and the experience of morality. In the former, he perceives an axiological and normative element; in the latter, what moves to the foreground is the experience of a certain culturally and socially conditioned ethos.¹⁰⁴ Like Wojtyła, he believes that the moment of obligation and the moment of value are co-given in moral experience. Moral obligation is relational, as it is the obligation of a person-subject to act with respect to a person-object.¹⁰⁵ Styczeń emphasizes that only in moral experience is the dignity proper to

¹⁰⁰ T. Styczeń, “Objawiać osobę,” p. 22.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem.

¹⁰² T. Styczeń, “Osoba – podmiot we wspólności,” in T. Styczeń, *Objawiać osobę*, p. 41.

¹⁰³ T. Styczeń, “Wolność w prawdzie,” in T. Styczeń, *Wolność w prawdzie*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁴ A.M. Wierzbicki, “Doświadczenie moralne a wiara,” p. 21.

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem.

a person revealed. This aspect of a person is not given other than in this experience as objectively determining what, how, and that anything at all is owed to a person from all persons-subjects. The mutual alignment of “that which is absolutely due and the person in the person-object aspect, i.e. in the aspect of the dignity of a person as the direct reason for that which is absolutely due (*commensuratio ad personam-obiectum, ad dignitatem personae*), reveals from a new angle, and even more emphatically than in the case of a person-subject, the personal nature of the moral *datum*.”¹⁰⁶

Moral obligation is relational, it is experienced by a person as the obligation to affirm a person for their own sake in view of their dignity. It is also categorical, as it reflects the absolute value of the person. A reflection on the “ought” judgment reveals the moral obligation—unlike what is claimed by eudaimonism—as independent from the acting subject’s desire for happiness. Moreover, moral obligation—contrary to what is asserted by heteronomous deontonomism—binds the acting subject to the extent that they themselves are the authors of the “ought” judgment. Contrary to autonomous deontonomism, the subject makes an objective judgment only when by the very act of making it they ascertain and recognize the truth about reality, independent from them, which reality is always the personal value of the addressee of the action, i.e. the dignity of a person or the value of a non-personal being.¹⁰⁷

In Styczeń’s opinion, the colloquial understanding of conscience suggests that its reality is an appeal addressed to man as the potential doer of a particular act. The conscience appears as a “voice” within the subject. Yet since it is a call which often appears with an insistency which does not tolerate any alternatives, it makes the impression of being an alien and enslaving power.¹⁰⁸ Styczeń points, however, to conflicts which occur between external imperatives (“You ought!”) and man’s inner consent (“I ought!”), as exemplified in the situation of Antigone. We see such collisions as occurring between an authority and the conscience, demanding a reflection on whether

¹⁰⁶ T. Styczeń, “Problem możliwości etyki jako empirycznie uprawomocnionej i ogólnie ważnej teorii moralności. Studium metaetyczne,” p. 169.

¹⁰⁷ T. Styczeń, “ABC etyki,” p. 395.

¹⁰⁸ T. Styczeń, “Sumienie: źródło wolności czy zniewolenia?,” in T. Styczeń, *Objawiać osobę*, p. 184.

the difference between “I ought!” and “You ought!” results from the fact the subject ignores the reasons of a moral authority, or on the contrary, from the subject ignoring their own reasons. It is a call to reflect on reasons validating the subject’s “I ought!,” but also the authority’s “You ought!” Removing the collision which results from such reflections means translating “You ought!” into “I ought!” This translation is indispensable for the constitution of a moral obligation—the one in which “we only discover and identify the essence of conscience.” “You ought!” becomes morally obligatory for me only when I perceive it and recognize it as such, only when it becomes the content of my own judgment “I ought!,” a judgment I have made myself.¹⁰⁹ Styczeń emphasizes that obligation addressed to me can only appear in the form of *my own* judgment. Only I am and must be the subject of this judgment, it is *my act*. No moral obligation exists for me until *I myself* make the judgment “I ought!” It is not possible for anyone else to make this judgment for me, to replace or relieve me from this. By making the judgment “I ought!,” the conscience imposes certain tasks upon the subject, binds them with an obligation. Styczeń stresses that the above does not mean the subject’s freedom is undone, even though it clearly puts restraints on it by demanding that it be used in a particular way. The operation of conscience leads to one’s freedom becoming involved, as by their own act of “I ought!,” that is by the conscience imposing tasks upon freedom, the subject becomes bound by the obligation, because *they have bound themselves by it through their own act*. Consequently, the subject is obliged to perform a particular action only when they make the relevant judgment themselves, the one that is the source of the obligation, the judgment about an unconditional obligation addressed to themselves. The “ought” judgment is “an absolute dictate, a categorical imperative.” Still, it remains a judgment which can only be made for the subject by themselves. It is a *self-dictate*, a *self-imperative*. In result, the subject is for themselves both the moral *legislator and the legislatee*.¹¹⁰

Styczeń agrees with Kant who perceived conscience as a manifesto proclaiming man’s freedom, autonomy, inner sovereignty and inviolability. He also shares his conviction that a threat to freedom can only come from the “outside,” i.e. in a situation in which an external dictate

¹⁰⁹ Ibidem, p. 185.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 186.

is not approved internally. As far as the operation of conscience is concerned, there can be no threat to freedom, as the dictator and the dictatee are a *specie diversus, sed numero idem*.¹¹¹ Consequently, the dictate of conscience is always entirely approved internally.¹¹²

Conscience in Styczeń's view thus means moral self-awareness which captures an act against the background of a person's dignity and their subjective structure (that I ought and what I ought). In the strict sense, conscience is a judgment which asserts the obligation to perform a particular act with respect to a particular person.¹¹³

Styczeń notes contemporary tendencies aimed at absolutizing the aspect of conscience which is revealed in being "the subject's *own* act," leading even to man's deification. He points out that while it is not contemporarily claimed directly that man can achieve the fullness of freedom outside of truth, yet "the power of conscience extends to its creative formation."¹¹⁴ This leads to the emergence of a conviction that man reaches freedom by subordinating truth to himself, and not by subordinating himself to truth.

Expressing his objections to the above approach, the philosopher stresses that while conscience is the subject's own act, yet this act is a judgment, that is, an act of knowledge. The subject, as a rational being, issuing judgments about obligations which are binding for themselves, for the sake of being faithful to themselves does not want to act in contradiction of what they have discovered. Thus, unless he assigns the decisive role to truth, man dooms himself to acting in a way that is limited by ignorance or error.¹¹⁵ By making the judgment: "I ought!", the subject is not acting irrationally, erratically. The making of such judgment is often preceded by deliberations, by inner disputes even, by looking at all the "for" and "against." Such deliberations, weighing up the reasons, hesitation, would not take place if the subject's freedom expressed in issuing an order about an obligation addressed to themselves were an operation performed without reckoning the truth. The final expression of deliberations and hesitations is the making of a judgment, i.e. an act of knowledge whose

¹¹¹ Ibidem.

¹¹² Ibidem, p. 187.

¹¹³ T. Styczeń, "ABC etyki," p. 404.

¹¹⁴ T. Styczeń, "Sumienie: źródło wolności czy zniewolenia?," p. 188.

¹¹⁵ Ibidem.

feature is that it expresses the truth.¹¹⁶ The subject always issues an “ought” judgment for a reason, which they can then invoke to defend their stance, for example against an external dictate which contradicts it. The subject is able to defend their judgment not based on the conviction they had when making it, or the fact it was them who made it, but based on the reason which can be invoked to demonstrate its truth should it be negated, or should attempts be made at forcing the subject to violate it. It then turns out that the obligation expressed in the subject’s judgment obligates the subject on the same grounds on which it would be obligatory for anyone else in their situation. It is an obligation that is objectively valid. It is not created by the subject’s judgment, but only ascertained and recognized in this judgment, even though the subject is its only author.¹¹⁷

According to Styczeń, conscience is the subject’s own judgment through which the subject attests to the truth they have recognized and acknowledged.¹¹⁸ Thence the obvious relationship between conscience and truth.¹¹⁹

In the philosopher’s opinion, conscience plays the role of “an instrument protecting the person’s freedom from becoming dominated by the world of things,” while at the same time an instrument enabling the person “to rule over the vehemence of spontaneous desires.”¹²⁰ Through conscience, the subject has the ability to master their own willfulness. The judgment “I ought!” does not only show which values are true, that is, deserve to be embraced by the subject, but also which of the subject’s desires are true, worth having, that is worthy of the one who decides to follow them, and which ones are but giving in to the inrush of the “world of things.”¹²¹

Even though truth demands to be recognized by the subject, it does not enslave them. In stating this, Styczeń seems to mean not

¹¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 189.

¹¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 190.

¹¹⁹ Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2000), p. 203. “Conscience conceived as a whole is an entirely inherent effort of a person aimed at capturing truth in the sphere of values. It is first seeking the truth and looking for it before it becomes certainty and judgment.”

¹²⁰ T. Styczeń, “Sumienie: źródło wolności czy zniewolenia?,” p. 191.

¹²¹ Ibidem.

only truth expressed in a true judgment, but also in a judgment consistent with the subject's honest belief, which belief may be wrong. He points out that enslavement and limitation is related to a lack of knowledge, to error. He also says, however, that conscience is "a witness to the subject of the truth that is at least presumed by them."¹²² Thus, he does not rule out a situation in which, due to an error for which the subject cannot be blamed, the subject remains free despite being bound by a truth which is only presumed. Truth, therefore, is the source of freedom. It does not enslave but sets one free. In order to be free, self-dependence as such is not enough. It is freedom that constitutes the subject's self-binding with truth, and through this truth with the judgment "I ought!" This judgment binds me for two reasons. Firstly, it is my judgment. Secondly, it is a true judgment and it is only "in presuming its truthfulness that am I able to and want to make it."¹²³ Consequently, conscience as the sole source of information about the compliance of an action with the objective norm of morality becomes the subjective expression of this norm, i.e. a subjective and subjectively final norm of morality.¹²⁴ And when it comes to the objective content and way of acting which affirms a person, that is, to the rightness of an action, these, according to Styczeń, result from the nature of the person who is affirmed.¹²⁵

Styczeń does not reject the existence of natural law nor the possibility or the actual fact of knowing it either. He points out that in common knowledge, natural law appears as something that obligates man with respect to everyone (including himself). At the same time, the reality of natural law is perceived as independent from man, but "written in" him, available to the mind and exerting "pressure" on the will by obliging him to act in a particular way.¹²⁶ He emphasizes that natural law cannot be identified with the laws of nature, noting that in classical philosophy the difference between these two orders is visible already in their names (*lex naturalis* and *lex naturae*). *Lex naturae* applies to all beings and forces a particular course of events in nature;

¹²² Ibidem, p. 194.

¹²³ Ibidem, p. 193.

¹²⁴ T. Styczeń, "ABC etyki," pp. 404–405.

¹²⁵ Ibidem, p. 398.

¹²⁶ T. Styczeń, "Problem poznania prawa naturalnego," *Studia Theologica Varsaviensia* 6, no. 1 (1968), pp. 135–136.

lex naturalis, on the other hand, applies to all people and to people alone, obliging them only to perform a particular action, and was the source of their sense of duty.¹²⁷ In common view, natural law is a certain determination flowing from human nature and applying to all those who carry this nature, and in this sense it is universal.¹²⁸

In an attempt to characterize natural law in philosophical terms, Styczeń points to the empirical validation of this concept rather than to a discussion with opinions about it. He believes that it is facts that represent the control factor for a theory, and not the theory for facts. Referring to the common understanding of natural law mentioned above, the philosopher points to the fact that every man is faced with actual situations in which he can say that he feels a sense of duty towards someone (others and/or himself). Among obligations experienced by man, it is possible to exclude, by deduction, those which result from a government directive, social opinion, or the desire to achieve certain goals or desires.¹²⁹ This will leave us with cases of unconditional “I ought” whose sole goal and reason is the “objectively given value (dignity) of the person who acts and/or the person with respect to whom the action is performed.”¹³⁰ In Styczeń’s opinion, it is precisely because of this type of “I ought” that Socrates decided to stay in prison when his friends offered to help him escape. The obligation he experienced was absolutely unconditional, i.e. did not depend in its obligatory character on the ancillary function it performed with respect to goals or intentions.

Styczeń points out that neither the acting person nor the addressee of the action affects the value of these persons; their value is a pre-existing and given goal. Man as a free being may refuse to accept the value vested in him or in another person. He then experiences an abuse of freedom, by betraying that which is absolutely due.¹³¹

The facts of the absolute “I ought” are given to the subject in conscience; it is there that they are recognized and identified as authentic, original moral facts. They form a dynamic structure within the

¹²⁷ Ibidem, p. 137.

¹²⁸ Ibidem, p. 139.

¹²⁹ T. Styczeń, “Filozoficzna koncepcja prawa naturalnego,” in T. Styczeń, *Objawiać osobę*, pp. 200–202.

¹³⁰ Ibidem, p. 203.

¹³¹ Ibidem.

framework of an inter-(intra-)personal relationship. The philosopher believed that conscience, being a cognitive experience of the absolute obligation to act in a particular way with respect to another, should be distinguished from the very fact given in this experience, i.e. the obligation itself. Conscience is an act in which and through which an absolute obligation is given, a moral fact. Obligation, in turn, is the subject matter of this act.¹³²

In his philosophical reflections concerning the moral fact, Styczeń emphasizes the need to look for an answer to the fundamental question about the reasons and sources of its absolute obligatory power. In his opinion, man intuitively recognizes that the reason behind facts of absolute obligation is that what (or who) man is as a man. He believed that in order to determine whether there is in man as a man a truly adequate reason for the moral fact, it is necessary to examine the content, scope and nature of this fact by asking three questions: “What ought I to do?,” “Why ought I to do this particular thing?,” and “Why ought I to this at all?”¹³³

Since the personal dignity of the addressee of an action is the source of the obligation for the acting person to affirm them, then the objective structure of the addressee must be a criterion determining the detailed content of the acts of affirmation due to the person by a person. Consequently, the personal dignity stemming from and permeating the whole of man’s existential structure is the integral norm of the morality of man’s action.¹³⁴

According to Styczeń, people derive the answer to the question about what they ought to do from an in-depth reflection on who they are; nevertheless, the “call of nature” alone and its immanent goals are not able to ultimately explain the fact of absolute obligation in terms of its character. There is no sufficient reason for the authority with which moral obligation and its absolute character become present.¹³⁵ Styczeń suggests therefore that we should ask about the manner of man’s existence, i.e.: “How does man exist?,” and points out that man’s existence is incidental. The incidental nature of man’s existence shows us the way on which we can find the reasons, as it

¹³² Ibidem.

¹³³ Ibidem, p. 205.

¹³⁴ T. Styczeń, “ABC etyki,” p. 398.

¹³⁵ T. Styczeń, “Filozoficzna koncepcja prawa naturalnego,” p. 207.

means the non-necessary nature of the relationship between the fact that man is and what (who) man is, as well as that there is a necessary dependence of the non-necessary existence of man and human nature on God, i.e. the Absolute of Existence. It is in the Absolute and in the necessary reference of human nature to Him through its incidental existence that the necessary reason resides, according to Styczeń, for the fact of absolute obligation registered in the conscience. In the light of this reason, it turns out that also nature does not have only immanent goals, but that these goals reveal the intentions of its Creator, thus participating in His absolute authority and that recognizing these goals means discovering absolute tasks to be performed, i.e. that which has been recognized in the conscience as a moral fact.¹³⁶

Styczeń claims that only from the perspective of the ultimate “anchoring” of the human nature in the Absolute is it possible to ultimately determine what it is, and what is the experienced absolute obligation to perform particular acts. The fact that the human nature existentially depends on the Absolute means that man in his existence and in his essence, as well as through his existence and his essence, “is *towards God*.” Since man’s existence is necessarily dependent upon God, then man’s essence—his nature—is absolutely “inclined” towards Him as its proper Act, and it is a “dynamic inclination.”¹³⁷ Man is not only “inclined” towards God, but also “drawn” by Him according to the measure which is the status of being a person incarnate, i.e. a being who is rational and free, while at the same time being carnal. This “drawing” is the call of Love to love, since as on man’s part the only reason which makes his existence non-contradictory is the Absolute Existence of a Personal God, so this reason on the part of a Personal God may only be Love. Consequently, facts which appear in the conscience must necessarily represent the absolute obligation to perform a particular act, that is, to respond to Love with love.¹³⁸

In Styczeń’s view, only in the context of man’s moral activity is it thus possible to properly read the sense and role of human nature—which is a language, God’s word addressed to man, and the only instance through which God communicates His expectations to man. The fact God’s expectations are written into human nature

¹³⁶ Ibidem, pp. 208–209.

¹³⁷ Ibidem, p. 210.

¹³⁸ Ibidem, pp. 211–212.

has also determined the form of response to these expectations. God-Love calls every man to love.¹³⁹

In light of the above, human nature represents unwritten moral law, i.e. so-called natural law. For it is a space in which God has planted His expectations concerning man and his free action. The meaning of this law consists in revealing the content of these expectations, and consequently enabling a personal meeting between man and God in an act of love, which is man's response to God's call.¹⁴⁰

Tadeusz Styczeń points to the consequences of negating natural law. He notes that if we assume it is not possible to read the content of God's calls addressed to man from nature, they need to be considered as lacking any content—and thus as objectless, empty. Such calls could never exist, and since they are a fact, elimination of nature would result in ignoring facts. Dismissing nature as the carrier of God's expectations also results in dismissing the only possibility of recognizing the content of these expectations or of responding to them in an act of love. If natural law is not accepted, a dialogue with God is no longer possible.¹⁴¹

In the concept of natural law embraced by Styczeń, the key role is played by reason which performs two functions. Firstly, it extracts the meanings which reside immanently in nature as God's intentions with respect to man, and their truth. Secondly, it is the sole tool with which these meanings can be arrived at. It is not a function of reason to create the meaning of objects, but to recognize it. Neither does reason create truth or law, but it recognizes and acknowledges them. It is at the same time the sole instance able to read and reveal God's intentions deposited in nature to a subject of free action. Since we learn from experience, however, reason is not an infallible instance, and it is man's duty not only to absolutely respect judgments of conscience, but also to control it and make sure that it functions properly, i.e. provides reliable information.¹⁴²

The philosopher thus proposes an approach to natural law consisting in three tiers. The first one is natural law *ante naturam* (eternal law) established by God as the initiator of the entire world order. The

¹³⁹ Ibidem, p. 213.

¹⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 214.

¹⁴¹ Ibidem, pp. 215–217.

¹⁴² Ibidem, pp. 219–222.

second tier is the existing man and his proper nature (natural law *in natura*). The last tier is the picture of objective natural law in man's awareness, given in acts of conscience (natural law *post naturam*).¹⁴³

4.4. TRUTH AS A CONDITION OF FREEDOM

Another issue which Styczeń studied with considerable attention is the relationship between truth and freedom. As Kazimierz Krajewski rightly points out, Styczeń's personalism should be called "veritative" (from Lat. *veritas*—truth).¹⁴⁴ In many of his works, as can be clearly seen, what moves to the foreground is the issue of truth, most strictly related to freedom. This is particularly visible in the second period of his work.

For Styczeń, the starting point of ethics is the knowledge of objective truth. In a very illustrative way he presents this process by analyzing the attitude of Socrates and Crito from the *Apology of Socrates*. He shows the Athenian philosopher facing the decision: should I escape from prison or stay in it? For Plato, disguised as Crito, the choice is obvious. For Socrates, however, passing the prison threshold is, in Styczeń's interpretation, the border between freedom in truth and freedom in untruth. These opposites are so extreme that an act of choosing untruth would be an act of abandoning freedom. Why? Because the choice of untruth is an act of self-hypocrisy and self-slavery, which rules out freedom.

To provide a better understanding of the way truth is arrived at, Styczeń shows the figures of Plato himself and of Crito. After his failed attempt to persuade Socrates into escaping, he leaves the prison transformed. His perception of consistency between that which Socrates taught and that which he did is for Plato an experience of absolute freedom, which changes, and perhaps even frightens him. The moment of assertion is the moment when the knowing subject concludes that the reality is what they have recognized it to be in their act of knowledge. The essence of assertion, as an act of knowledge by judgment, is precisely the realization of consistency between

¹⁴³ T. Styczeń, "Filozoficzna koncepcja prawa naturalnego," p. 223.

¹⁴⁴ K. Krajewski, "Wprowadzenie do tomu czwartego *Dzieł Zebranych* ks. Tadeusza Styczenia," pp. 7–9.

the act of knowledge and the object or state of affairs to which it applies. Socrates, as a free man, chooses faithfulness to that which he has recognized as true and which he taught. This way he shows that it is thanks to the moment of assertion that the category of truth appears in the judgment, as the act of asserting something is an act of knowing a certain truth. As Styczeń describes it, it is here that a meeting occurs and at the same time an interface is created between the truthfulness (truth) of a thing and the truthfulness (truth) of a judgment.¹⁴⁵

The act of knowing a particular object itself is not only a neutral statement which provides information about the existence of a certain state of affairs. The act of knowledge is accompanied by the moment of recognizing that which is known as true. The subject cannot contradict that which they have learned to exist. Therefore, assertion also expresses the engagement of the knowing subject on the part of that which has been learned, that is, the truth about the object of their knowledge.¹⁴⁶ In other words, judgment is the fundamental approval of the subject for the object being known. In it occurs an inseparable relationship between knowing and recognizing truth. A specific truth recognized by man at the same time represents an inner obligation to acknowledge and respect it. In the moral dimension, when it requires the engagement of man's freedom, it also represent an obligation to act. This is what Plato understood—Crito cannot contradict it, because he has recognized it himself. Thanks to this act of knowledge, truth appears to him now as a truth which he has acknowledged. From now on, it speaks to him, as the subject, with his own voice. A momentous thing occurs here in which *self-information* proves to be a *self-imperative*. Styczeń adds that this is always the case, even if not always immediately obvious.¹⁴⁷

Truth and freedom are therefore inseparably related, one may ask, however: What happens in a situation of incorrect knowledge? The kind of answer provided is the logical development of one's adopted standpoint. The subject cannot contradict that which they have learned (truth) and that how they have learned it. Even if after some reflection the subject finds that they have learned wrongly, the

¹⁴⁵ T. Styczeń, "Wolność w horyzoncie prawdy. W sprawie filozoficznych podstaw teologii moralnej," in T. Styczeń, *Wolność w prawdzie*, pp. 227–248.

¹⁴⁶ T. Styczeń, "Etyka jako antropologia normatywna," pp. 313–349.

¹⁴⁷ T. Styczeń, "Wolność w horyzoncie prawdy," p. 237.

truth accompanying the act of assertion is indisputable. Styczeń asks rhetorically: Doesn't man's authentic freedom depend on the possibility to distinguish between truth and error in self-knowledge? Doesn't it depend on following truth instead of subordinating truth to ourselves? Doesn't only he truly govern himself (autonomy) who governs himself by the truth of his judgments? And should an error not be one only because someone else or a majority of others do not believe it to be one? Should a true judgment, even if upheld by a single person, lose its property of being true only because it encounters the contrary opinion of nearly everyone else?¹⁴⁸ These are questions which most emphatically reveal his understanding of truth and freedom.

While analyzing Socrates' attitude and views, Styczeń suggests that people similar to the Greek philosopher today are treated somewhat differently. Contemporary Socrateses are not brought to court or thrown in prison; instead, they are referred for treatment on the charges of being obsessed with objective truth. What is this objective truth? Is it faithfulness to the outcome of one's own recognition? Or is it perhaps some form of ethical intellectualism, as suggested by Jacek Frydrych?¹⁴⁹ We should therefore ask what Styczeń would consider to be the foundation of objective truth. Is it closer to being or rather cognition? For Frydrych, following in the footsteps of Krąpiec, it is closer to being, but for Styczeń, as a student of Wojtyła, it is closer to the latter. It is important, however, to pay attention to a certain assumption which is often not sufficiently articulated. Cognition itself is honest, it wants to know the world for what it is. In this sense, it corresponds to the third of man's natural inclinations distinguished by Thomas Aquinas, the one he called striving towards truth.¹⁵⁰

The way in which Styczeń primarily understands objective truth is the state of what has become known and how. This perceptive state, with respect to oneself, is both objective and absolute. Nothing can change it. Secondly, objective truth seems to be faithfulness to what has become known and how. In this second meaning, truth is strictly related to freedom. For some, the problem may be human

¹⁴⁸ T. Styczeń, "Prawda o człowieku a etyka," in T. Styczeń, *Wolność w prawdzie*, pp. 51–52.

¹⁴⁹ J. Frydrych, "Intelektualizm w etyce Tadeusza Stycznia," p. 196.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I–II, q. 94, art. 2, in Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna w skrócie*, trans. F. Bednarski (Kęty: Wydawnictwo Antyk, 2004).

ignorance or weakness of will, which Frydrych points out along with others. Therefore, the important question is whether ignorance or weakness of will may change objective truth. The answer is firmly in the negative. Ignorance affects the cognitive process and its potential errors, but not the state of cognition itself.

Styczeń believes that some may confuse the value of what has become known and how with the state of cognition itself (the subject's knowledge) and the same is true of the weakness of will. It refers to truth understood in a secondary way, or, more precisely, faithfulness to that which has become known. In order to be more exact, we must specify that ignorance and weakness of will do not strike at truth, but at freedom. The evaluation (value) of this knowledge, the judgment, may change. What should be done, however, in a situation in which something has been recognized as black, while in reality it is grey? The subject cannot contradict that they have recognized it as black and for them it is black. They may refer to someone else's authority and accept that it is grey. This will not change the fact, however, that the knowing subject still sees this object as black. Only if they see the object of knowledge in another light may they be able to see it as grey. Perceiving the object as grey, they will recognize and acknowledge it as such. When this happens, the subject cannot contradict it.

Styczeń thus understands normativity, or, more precisely, normative power, to be a commitment or obligation. In his understanding, this obligation (normativity) is always the knowledge of something as a particular thing, but also the knowledge of something as having a particular property. This specific way in which the subject captures reality reveals not only the content which informs about something, but at the same time such reality of a particular state of things (being) whose content creates a commitment (obligation) towards that which has become known. The uniqueness of his philosophical thought consists in that the warrantor and authority behind that which has become known as being so and so and not otherwise is the knowing subject themselves. The validity of the content, once perceived, becomes binding. It is not only about the content itself, however, but about that which stands behind this content, namely a particular state of affairs which is the foundation for moral commitment and which engages the emotions as well. The obligation to be faithful to truth does not result from the validity of the recognized

content, but from its acknowledgement, and this recognition (of truth) becomes the primary commitment. The status of this commitment may be defined as moral, as it precedes any other commitments. In this regard, Styczeń's ethical thought remains under the influence of Aquinas, and in particular of his teaching on conscience as the ultimate subjective norm of human conduct.¹⁵¹

Is Styczeń's position that of ethical intellectualism? Absolutely not. We are not dealing here with knowing a particular content, but with recognizing it in an act of assertion. This recognition reveals another dimension of human existence, namely the experience of obligation, or a commitment with respect to that which has been recognized. Acts of choice may contradict that which has been acknowledged as recognized, but do not change the recognized obligation. Therefore, morality in Styczeń's understanding goes beyond the act of choosing. Morality may be defined as the relationship to truth acknowledged through recognition. The attitude to truth acknowledged in the act of knowledge is permanent. So in the very act of making a choice the subject takes a stance not only with respect to the truth they have learned, but first of all to freedom and to their identity. Thence Styczeń says that Socrates, apparently dazzled himself by his discovery of man's transcendence through the truth of self-knowledge, found self-knowledge to be not only a necessary condition, but even a condition sufficient for man's moral transformation. Styczeń's poetic words become philosophical ones: "This is why: 'Woe to me! Yes, woe to me if having encountered truth, having experienced it, I do not stay faithful to it until the very end—until I choose it!—as a witness. ... The truth I betray will remain what it is anyway: it will still be truth. And it will judge my deed and myself—its doer.'"¹⁵² The philosopher points out that the acting subject who strikes at truth in an "act of betrayal," at the same time deals a mortal blow to himself by means of a suicidal stroke. The only thing that can save the subject is remaining faithful to the truth. Freedom is expressed in that the subject "may—not must." Freedom to live in truth is freedom to a freedom higher than itself. It is the freedom to choose truth and to be in truth by choice. Thus, on the one hand, only the choice of truth may release the subject, man, towards his fullness and towards

¹⁵¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 19, art. 5.

¹⁵² T. Styczeń, "Wolność w prawdzie," p. 28.

the fullness of freedom, and on the other—only this will safeguard him from self-destruction.

4.5. FAITHFULNESS TO RECOGNIZED TRUTH AS A CONDITION OF BEING A SUBJECT

As part of his learning the truth, man also learns the truth about himself, arrives at the truth of self-knowledge. He may not be indifferent or neutral to it. Due to his own act of learning this truth, he becomes committed to it. In self-knowledge, man learns that he did not have to come into existence, and even though he does in fact exist, he does not have to exist, he might as well not exist. In self-knowledge, man discovers that his existence is incidental, and so it must have been given to him. And since it was given to him, that who he is must also be and is a gift.¹⁵³ Man's discovery of his own fragility and that who he is leads him to acknowledging the fact of his own incidentality. It is a reason which substantiates the fact of being a human person, and at the same time a necessary criterion for understanding human freedom, or, to be more precise, its foundations and its ultimate boundaries. Acknowledgement of this elementary fact is the basis for distinguishing the authentic view of man, anthropology, from anthropodoxy, i.e. beliefs or even fantasies about man, stoking his vanity and often functioning under the name of anthropology.¹⁵⁴

Man himself becomes a witness to the truth of self-knowledge. His auto-nomy becomes auto-transcendence in truth.¹⁵⁵ When man recognizes a given truth, he may try to stay faithful to it, or—as Styczeń puts it—“stretch” himself to the level of truth about himself. When he learns the truth about himself which he cannot contradict, he faces the question: Do I want to be myself? For Styczeń, freedom is “the power to be oneself by choice.”¹⁵⁶ Man's freedom consists in that by the act of his own choice he may confirm or negate the truth he has recognized and acknowledged through his own act of knowledge. It is thanks to this assertion that man becomes an engaged

¹⁵³ T. Styczeń, “Prawda o człowieku a etyka,” p. 53.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 54.

¹⁵⁵ T. Styczeń, “Wolność w prawdzie,” p. 27.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

witness of this truth. If he contradicts it, however, he risks violating his own identity.¹⁵⁷ Through the personal act of asserting a given truth, its normative power with respect to the knowing subject is confirmed.¹⁵⁸ We may add that it is a moment of broader, moral experience, in which the obligation to act is recognized. In the moral dimension, the recognition of truth forces one to follow it. This is when man is free in truth. From the perspective of ethics, we are thus dealing with a momentous event in which obligations towards oneself are recognized and at the same time constituted.

The knowing subject who wants to confirm for themselves that they are a subject cannot do so otherwise than through an act of freely choosing the truth which the same subject has previously acknowledged in their own act of knowledge. The subject cannot betray the truth they have recognized other than by betraying themselves. They cannot ignore the truth they have learned by an act of choice, even if it appeared to be trivial, without causing a “split within oneself.”¹⁵⁹ It should be noted that Styczeń points to two different acts: the act of knowing and the act of choosing. Betrayal can only occur in the act of choosing, never in the act of knowing. He thus suggests that learning the truth has a metaphysical status and belongs to the existential structure of the knowing subject, i.e. man. The act of choice, on the other hand—that of contradicting, betraying truth—results in destruction of one’s own “self”; or, to use a different expression—contributes to destroying subjectivity. This act, however, is not performed on the metaphysical, but on the ethical plane.

Discovering the truth about himself, man also discovers the truth about every other. We might almost say that in himself, he discovers every other. How is this possible? Styczeń says that by discovering the structure of one’s own “self,” of one’s subjectivity, the subject in their own “self” discovers the structure of the “self” as “self.” In other words, by analogy and by recognizing the ontic structure of this “self,” man recognizes the structure of every other “self,” or, more precisely, the ontic truth about every other. The recognition of truth about another “self” also has an ethical dimension. The other is recognized as someone who, just like me, committing himself to

¹⁵⁷ T. Styczeń, “Wolność w horyzoncie prawdy,” p. 236.

¹⁵⁸ T. Styczeń, “Wolność w prawdzie,” p. 27.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

the acknowledgement of the truth he learns, binds himself to choose it under the threat of self-destruction in the case of its negation. The recognition of another through the structure of one's own "self" leads the subject to acknowledging the fact that only by affirming their inner self-commitment to the truth they have learned ("from within"), as though "from within" the subject is able to satisfy the requirements of truth about themselves.¹⁶⁰ In other words, man is unable to find or meet himself other than by finding and meeting along the way every other and all others together.¹⁶¹

By emphasizing the importance of discovering the truth about oneself, Styczeń leads his readers to the conclusion that the place where truth is discovered is in solidarity between each and every individual and everybody with everyone else. The figure of an ordinary Smith or Jones, or Everyman, which the philosopher likes to use, allows us to see not so much our view about ourselves, but rather our view about man. From another perspective, the subject's insight into themselves, or of man into himself, is for him an insight into that which he owes to himself, and into that which is owed by man to man. Which in consequence leads him to the conclusion: *Primum anthropologicum et primum ethicum convertuntur!* Going further along these lines, he announces that David Hume "discovered" a chasm which does not exist.¹⁶²

According to Styczeń, both the Polish Everyman and Socrates, having discovered the truth about man's greatness, disarm themselves once and for all from the possibility of using violence even against those who use it against them. They are left with a weapon which Styczeń claims to be the most difficult to use. In order to effectively overcome aggression, they must awaken humanity in their neighbor who is the aggressor. By refusing to escape and accepting the poison, Socrates bears witness to the truth about the greatness of humanity in man. Not only does he save his own humanity, but at the same time most effectively awakens their humanity in those who

¹⁶⁰ Ibidem, pp. 29–30.

¹⁶¹ These theoretical analyses of man's self-knowledge performed more than 20 years ago are now endowed with a new dimension today, particularly in the area of studies into the evolution of morality. Special mention is owed here to the research of Michael Tomasello about shared intentionality and the emergence of norms.

¹⁶² T. Styczeń, "Wolność w prawdzie," p. 30.

have used violence against him. In this way, he gives an extraordinary proof of solidarity—instead of breaking up with them, he establishes a bond that is most profound of all. The act of refusing to escape is a testimony and a tribute paid to the truth about the humanity of them all. It is an act of concern about the Athenians, and not of contempt for them.¹⁶³

4.6. AFFIRMATION OF MAN AS MANIFESTATION OF DISCOVERED TRUTH

For Styczeń, “man is much too ‘differently’ and ‘in a higher way’ than anything else around him in the visible world. ... Thus, a formula like ‘Man should be affirmed for his own sake’ is merely a mental expression and verbal record of the experience of who man really is, how he becomes present, and how he appears to himself and to other men. This formula is also an expression and a record of man’s experience in the aspect of his value, also referred to as his personal dignity.”¹⁶⁴ In other words, in order to really be able to affirm man for his own sake and in himself, one must know the real, subjective structure of the affirmed, that is, reach the objective truth about man. Therefore, the will to affirm man for his own sake and in himself would not reliably be “good will” if it did not imply the will to know the objective truth about the affirmed object, that is about man as a person.¹⁶⁵

The proper task of anthropology is thus to learn the objective truth about man. Styczeń adds that this also applies to learning the objective truth about what is objectively good for man, for upholding his identity, integrity, proper development and self-fulfillment. In this respect, an important role is played by the will. The willingness to know the truth about the objective ontic and axiological structure of the affirmed person by the affirming person—the subject—is a test of the authenticity of good intentions (“good will”) of the acting person. “Good will” is an elementary binder of the declared pro-personal attitude and its effective expression and realization in action.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ *Ibidem*, pp. 30–31.

¹⁶⁴ T. Styczeń, “Prawda o człowieku a etyka,” p. 39.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 41.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 41–43.

Styczeń distinguishes between anthropology as a science, which seeks and discovers truth about man, from anthropodoxy. The latter tries to replace the cognitive process of seeking the truth about man with a unique way of creatively defining it.¹⁶⁷ In anthropodoxy, the act of decision is ranked, as the philosopher explicitly points out, as an act of knowledge; the act of deciding about truth is alleged to be its discovery. This is particularly significant in the case of arbitrarily excluding unborn people from the right to exist, because unborn people are not—yet!—subjects of the right to live, because they are not—yet!—people.¹⁶⁸

Styczeń is thus the heir to the Thomist tradition which asserts that man has certain natural inclinations, including the inclination to learn and discover the truth. Thus, from his perspective, the will not only takes the decision but primarily strives to know the truth. In his ethics, much emphasis is put on Socrates' "Know yourself!" Knowing oneself, knowing the subjective structure of one's own person, means discovering the objective truth about man. This is indispensable if one wants to substantiate the fundamental norm of ethics: *Persona est afirmanda propter se ipsam*. A person deserves to be affirmed for their own sake.

Even though the entire argumentation proposed by Styczeń represents a logical line of reasoning which shows the passage from acknowledging the structure of one's own subject to acknowledging such a structure in another, such approach may seem too optimistic for some. This optimism may be concerned, firstly, with the search for, the willingness to know oneself; secondly, with considering another to be the same as myself. The first problem will apply to first and second-order desires discussed by Henry Frankfurt.¹⁶⁹ He believed that apart from basic desires, there are higher-order desires as well which could be described as wanting to want. It appears that the desire to know the truth in Styczeń's understanding may be considered as a second-order desire. It does not apply to the "external" object

¹⁶⁷ Ibidem, pp. 47–48.

¹⁶⁸ Ibidem, pp. 60–61.

¹⁶⁹ H.G. Frankfurt, "Wolność woli i pojęcie osoby," in *Filozofia moralności. Postanowienie i odpowiedzialność moralna*, ed. J. Hołówka, trans. J. Nowotniak, W. Popowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Spacja, Fundacja Aletheia, 1997), pp. 21–39. [English original version: "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971), pp. 5–25].

but to the “inner” knowledge of oneself. If the desire to know the truth about oneself were as obvious and natural as the philosopher suggests, Socrates would not have had to formulate his imperative. The other problem is encountered in other ethicists. Alain Badiou, criticizing contemporary ethics, points out that it is dominated by an approach which could be expressed as: “Become like me, and I will respect your differences.”¹⁷⁰ It seems that Styczeń fails to see that I can recognize another as different, though not necessarily as the same as myself. His optimism builds a bridge over the chasm perceived by other contemporary thinkers.

The question that still remains open is whether Styczeń’s optimism is not justified anyway. Unlike the authors mentioned above, the source of truth for him is not the will of a person, or a consensus, but being. And this is not about some anthropological or ontological vision, but about this “in a higher way” and “differently” which man is with respect to the world around him. Through this “in a higher way” and “differently,” man can encounter the truth about himself, but also the truth about another, even if once he saw him as different, or alien. Like the Nazi soldier who, upon hearing Maximilian Kolbe’s offer to give up his life for a family father, asked with astonishment: “Who are you, Sir?”¹⁷¹ so the encountered truth is revealed in contact with a being, with the personal structure of human subjectivity which cannot be rejected. It may be contradicted but it cannot be rejected. Understood in this way, objective truth, the truth about man, speaks through Styczeń’s writings.

4.7. MAN IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF RESPONSIBILITY

One cannot pass indifferently by the issue of responsibility, which becomes endowed with a special significance from the perspective of the understanding of truth and freedom in the philosophical

¹⁷⁰ A. Badiou, *Etyka. Przewodnik krytyki politycznej*, trans. P. Mościcki (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2009), p. 42.

¹⁷¹ M. Micherdziński, “Jeden z nas był świętym...”, rozmowa przeprowadzona przez o. W. Pobiedzińskiego, *Tygodnik Niedziela* 31 (2005), Przemyśl edition, quoted after S. Kłosowicz, *O wierności wydarzeniu. Studium na temat poglądów etycznych Alaina Badiou* (Warszawa: Liberi Libri, 2016), pp. 175–176.

thought of Tadeusz Styczeń. Even though the problem of responsibility is not one of the main areas he studied and wrote about, it can easily be seen that he believed responsibility is an essential element in the encounter with another man, another “self.” Consequently, it affects the understanding of man, of oneself and or one’s place in the world.

A good starting point for analyses on Styczeń’s understanding of responsibility is his analysis of the “ought judgment,” i.e. the judgment which a subject addresses to themselves: “This is what I ought...” On the one hand, this judgment delineates the area of self-determination, on the other—it reveals the power of acts of self-determination which are an expression of freedom as such. It is precisely in this area, which is a place of self-determination and expression of freedom, that the framework of man’s self-government crystallizes and is verified, and the ultimate limits of responsibility for his own deeds, and consequently also for himself, crystallize as well. Styczeń places before us a vision of man who is a self-governing subject responsible for himself. He answers to himself for his own self-fulfillment or failure to fulfil himself. This power to decide and take responsibility for himself is possible by following the truth of his own judgments in making his decisions. It is thanks to this truth that man’s autonomy takes its ultimate form of responsible self-control in the light of truth. The truth that has been discovered and acknowledged by the subject allows them to consider certain goals as worthy of pursuing. Man’s responsibility for himself, in turn, consists in his autonomy in following the truth as a goal worthy of the subject, and in responding to the recognized self-appeal to realize goals that are truly worthy of oneself.¹⁷²

Does responsibility consist only in responsibility for oneself? Will the Other play any role in constituting the responsibility of my “self”? According to Styczeń, ultimate self-identification of the “self” as “self,” of man as a self-governing subject, consists in discovering oneself as a subject called to affirm any other person, any other “self,” who is called to love. Thus, giving the right response to the other in an act of affirming them for their own sake turns out to be the culmination of the act of self-fulfillment. Therefore, there is no responsibility for oneself, as the philosopher most explicitly emphasizes, without

¹⁷² T. Styczeń, “Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich,” in T. Styczeń, *Objawiać osobę*, p. 88.

responsibility for others.¹⁷³ In this manner he presents his vision of responsibility to us as an active commitment to others, inseparably related to effectively exercised responsibility for oneself. Active involvement, or even commitment to the self-fulfillment of other “selves” is an expression of responsibility which proves to be the only way my own “self” can find fulfilment. It is at the same time a way of giving oneself an answer without which the process of looking for one’s own identity would be doomed to failure. Styczeń makes one additional comment. He claims that the opposite of self-fulfillment cannot only be a lack of self-fulfillment. He believes that the opposite is anti-fulfilment, or even a split within the “self.”¹⁷⁴ In other words, the inner bond between responsibility for oneself and responsibility for others is so strong that it is not possible for the former to be actualized without the latter. In Styczeń’s ethics, this is very strongly linked to the structure of the human “self” which “constitutes itself as a self-appeal to affirmation due to everyone on account of their dignity, [and] may reach the fullness of its identity only in acts of fulfilling this self-appeal.”¹⁷⁵ Thus, he who gives others a chance of fulfilment offers himself a chance of self-fulfillment as well.¹⁷⁶

For Styczeń, it is natural that the meaning of love is expressed in terms of responsibility for “you.” At the same time, he challenges the claim that this is solely the effect of cultural influences, often expressed as the commandment to love one’s neighbor.¹⁷⁷ Which is why he likes to quote Martin Buber who says: “Love is a sense of responsibility for ‘you’ rooted in the ‘I’”¹⁷⁸ and treats this statement as a procedure “testing” our own experience.

Analyzing what love is, Styczeń discovers essential subtleties for us which reveal previously unnoticed riches. First of all, he notes that love in its broader understanding is an answer given to “you” by the “I” only because “you” is simply someone rather than something. It is an answer not only given but also due to the other, and can be

¹⁷³ Ibidem, p. 93.

¹⁷⁴ Ibidem, p. 94.

¹⁷⁵ Ibidem, p. 95.

¹⁷⁶ Ibidem, pp. 94–95.

¹⁷⁷ Ibidem, p. 72.

¹⁷⁸ M. Buber, *Ich und Du* (Köln: Verlag Jakob Hegner, 1966). Quoted after T. Styczeń, “Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich,” p. 72.

given because I can recognize a “self” in the other. This conviction leads Styczeń to the conclusion that, in light of this experience, I do not have the option of excluding anyone from the field of the answer due to them from the “self.” He also adds that love in this sense would no longer be love unless it included everyone. Going further along this path, Styczeń discusses the social dimension of love which imposes upon the “self” the obligation to actively (to the extent possible for the “self”) commit to ensuring that everyone and all together become fully themselves. Love expressed in concern for others is a proper response of the “self” to others. Proper in view of who they are, but also proper in view of who shows it. Following in the footsteps of Buber, the philosopher says love as this kind of answer to the other is responsibility,¹⁷⁹ adding that love is the way to self-actualization. Therefore, the earnest taking of responsibility for one’s own self-fulfillment can only be expressed through love.¹⁸⁰

Referencing Karol Wojtyła,¹⁸¹ Styczeń tries to define love. He writes: “Love in the sense of an act of affirmation offered by a person to another person, in view of the dignity of the affirmed and the affirming, appears to us directly as something *due* by a person to another person on account of their personal dignity.”¹⁸² This confirms him in his belief that “every person is not only cognitively given to any other person, but also morally *set* before them as a task. Love in this sense is the very *groundwork of moral obligation*, the essence of moral obligation, and thus the *supreme ethical principle*, the principle of coexistence and cooperation between persons.”¹⁸³ The perspective adopted by Styczeń reveals yet another aspect of responsibility: the limits of responsibility become the boundaries of the world of persons. Therefore, as he puts it, in the visible world these are the boundaries

¹⁷⁹ T. Styczeń, “Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich,” p. 72.

¹⁸⁰ Ibidem, p. 73.

¹⁸¹ K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1982). [English edition: *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H.T. Willetts (London: Collins, 1981)]. See also K. Wojtyła, “Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota,” *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 24, no. 2 (1976), p. 29. [English edition: “The Person: Subject and Community,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 33, no. 2 (1979), pp. 273–308].

¹⁸² T. Styczeń, “Ciało jako znak obrazu Stwórcy,” in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 5)*, ed. C. Ritter (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2014), p. 137.

¹⁸³ Ibidem.

of the human family which delineate the scope of solidarity, without which one can hardly speak of responsibility for their own “self.”¹⁸⁴

One might ask, however, whether responsibility for oneself as commitment to self-fulfillment does not collide with love as responsibility for others. This question can also be phrased in slightly different terms. The problem of responsibility for oneself and for others appears to Styczeń to be the central problem of anthropology and ethics.¹⁸⁵

The understanding of responsibility presented by Styczeń becomes at the same time a requirement made of philosophers, particularly of ethicists. If they agree to be victims of manipulations in truth, they automatically become guilty of misleading the society. Others, on the other hand, as the society, have the right to demand clarity and explicitness. Therefore, in the name of responsibility for the personal “self,” one must not, as Styczeń most emphatically stresses, “not say ‘no’ to anything that strikes at it in theory or negates it in practice.”¹⁸⁶

4.8. THE FLESH AND MARITAL UNION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Encountering the other and perceiving their “self” without including the body is not possible. Also taking full responsibility for oneself and for another without considering the bodily dimension is unattainable. In his philosophical analyses, also Styczeń notices this, and referring to Étienne Gilson’s reflections on Christian anthropology¹⁸⁷ considers the role of the body as a go-between. He points out to a certain phenomenon and a specific function of the body which becomes “transparent” in its going-between and shifts the entire attention to the object with which it enables a direct contact. Transparency becomes the basis for formulating a definition of the body as a special kind of sign or image. This state described by Styczeń

¹⁸⁴ T. Styczeń, “Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich,” p. 96.

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem, p. 74.

¹⁸⁶ Ibidem, p. 97.

¹⁸⁷ É. Gilson, *Duch filozofii średniowiecznej*, trans. J. Rybałt (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1958), pp. 174–191.

reveals a special existential status of the human body. It is the status of an image-sign which remains in an existential and axiological union with its archetype. The philosopher points out that there is no concrete “self” outside of their body, or no concrete “you” outside of their body. This means that the “being” of a human body is “being the image of its personal archetype,” or, in other words, “depicting the human ‘self’” and expressing it.¹⁸⁸

Referring to Styczeń’s understanding of the role of the body as an image, one may ask whether the gift of the body may perhaps be the gift of a person to a person. Yet in what sense is the acceptance of the gift of a body the acceptance of the gift of the person by a person? The philosopher provides a clear answer to this question. The body may be the gift of a person to a person in the sense in which it expresses it. Furthermore, it expresses the human person together with their dignity which is the source of and reason behind the moral obligation to affirm a person for their own sake.¹⁸⁹ Do we ask whose hand has touched my hand? Or rather who touched me? The role of the go-between, the body-sign in a direct contact of a person with a person not only does not decrease, but increases. Its meaning increases in direct proportion to the extent to which the sign becomes more and more transparent with respect to that which it reveals, that is the person and the dignity that is vested in them. The body-sign gains in importance the more it becomes transparent, when it starts to “disappear from the field of attention” of the perceiving person, and directs their attention entirely to the object of which it is a sign.¹⁹⁰ In Styczeń’s anthropology, and thus in his ethics, the body has the metaphysical status of man’s image. The adoption of such a stance is of fundamental importance for defining the place of the body in the entirety of the personal structure of the human person as a structure of self-possession.¹⁹¹

We should bear in mind, however, the experience which provides information about the possibility and actual facts of a split within a person’s unity, i.e. between man’s “self” and the “body” as his image. Styczeń calls the state of breakup in the unity between the “self” and

¹⁸⁸ T. Styczeń, “Ciało jako znak obrazu Stwórcy,” p. 125.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 115.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

¹⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 126.

their body the state of self-destruction. Such special state is the moment of death. It allows us to see and deepen our understanding of the unity between the “self” and its image—the body. During his life, man’s body depicts his “self” when it is an instrument of his causative power. At the time of death, the body becomes endowed with another meaning. It is the “self” that is the reason why the body (the “self’s” image) becomes only the man’s body when through death it is deprived of the existential bond with the “self.” At the time of death, the body also ceases to be the man’s image, as it now only points to itself.¹⁹²

According to Styczeń, the recognition of unity between my “self”-person and my body leads to the recognition of the moral obligation of unity with another. When man recognizes another “self” through the mediation of their body, at the same time he recognizes the obligation to affirm the whole truth about this “self.” It is an encounter with truth which the philosopher mentions more than once, and at the same time a necessary condition for fully understanding oneself. The “self” can only fully recognize itself when it perceives its self-reliance in self-dependence on the truth of its own “ought” judgments. And these, in turn, point to, or reveal, the self-appeal to love.¹⁹³ Therefore love is a call to unity, to communion with another, the only way to self-fulfillment, and consequently to achieving full self-identification and self-realization.

When the “self” expresses itself through the body, it becomes a gift to another “self,” to another person, who can recognize themselves as a person as well. The body shows man’s concrete possibilities and expression of the “self” through work, the pursuit of common goals, or striving through hardships. All of these become an expression of love and allow one to give one’s “self” to others as a gift not of their body, but of this unity of the body and the “self” which constitutes a man (person). A special form in which one can offer oneself to another is conjugal love. In this form of love, the emphasis is on the uniqueness of each individual “self.” In this relationship, a concrete unique “self” gives itself to another unique “self.” This uniqueness is expressed in a special way through the two opposite sexes of humanity and their mutual supplementation. The opposite sexes

¹⁹² Ibidem, p. 128.

¹⁹³ Ibidem, p. 136.

of concrete bodies become for them most clearly explicit. Being for each other as a man and a woman, or as “I” for “you,” becomes a special form in which they offer themselves to each other as a gift. Already the corporeal structure of the two opposite sexes, femininity and masculinity, reveals a communion between “I” and “you,” as well as a special aspect of this communion expressed through the “I” for “you” and “you” for “I.”¹⁹⁴

In the context of contemporary analyses concerning human corporeality and often the objectification of the human body, Styczeń highlights the role and meaning of the body as a means of expressing oneself. If there is no human person outside of their body, and if they have no visible and more profound medium to express themselves as their “self,” then the gift of one’s body offered to another person is objectively the highest form of the mutual giving between persons. In other words, through the body man can most fully express his own existential structure. Consequently, by offering to another “self” one’s only and most complete medium of expressing oneself, namely one’s body, one offers the full potential of expressing who one is. Understood this way, the offering of oneself as a gift constitutes the “unity of two persons,” or the inseparable communion of the “I” and “you.” The essence of offering oneself as a gift resides in irreversibility, which in this context may be expressed by the term “forever.” Marriage, as a community of persons, is inseparable for this reason. Consequently, any relationship which is not characterized by inseparability, among other features, is not, according to Styczeń, entitled to the status of marriage.¹⁹⁵

The body enables the two persons who meet, two unique “selves,” to offer the most intimate gift of oneself to the other. The existence of this possibility serves the transition of their dual subjectivity: “I”—“you,” into a single subjectivity (unity) of the two: “both of us.” This fact enables their creation as parents and reveals to them the unity of their mutual giving themselves to each other. It is revealed to them as fertile and is expressed in the miracle of a new personal existence which, by giving themselves to each other, they have been given themselves. This mutual giving has a special dimension expressed in that she as a wife and a mother offers to him the fatherhood

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 141–143.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 143.

of her child, and he as a husband and a father offers her the motherhood of his child. The child who is conceived and born is their child, and not of either of them individually. With the child, their marital unity of persons will become endowed with the dimension of a familial unity of persons, in which every “I” becomes a gift-person.¹⁹⁶

The freedom of a personal subject provides the basis for loving another and fulfilling oneself through acts of love. A personal subject always discovers themselves as called to a personal relationship with another. This is why only through acts of free choice can another be effectively loved, and the self can become fulfilled. This is possible through self-identification, the only road to which is love, as it is its result. Self-identification is thus based on an act of love, as no one can perform this act in the place of a personal subject. Similarly, only the subject themselves, and not anyone else, can contradict it. This is the most profound dimension of man’s life, which is not subject to determination. One cannot be forced to love, and an act of love leads to self-identification which is the key to self-fulfillment. In an act of love, man begins to know and understand who he is.¹⁹⁷ Most often this begins with becoming interested in that the other, another “self,” is not only “differently” and “in a higher way” than anything else in the world, but also in that every human being is “differently” than any other human being.¹⁹⁸ Opening to this “differently” and “in a higher way” of the other leads to a decision to offer oneself as a gift. “The road towards this decision leads from ‘It is good that you are,’ through ‘It is good *for me* that you are!’ and the reciprocal ‘It is also good *for me* that you are!’, to the joint ‘It is good *for us* that we are!’, expressed in a desire for unification, *intentio unionis*, the desire to fully belong to each other and to be for each other by choice.”¹⁹⁹

Complete giving oneself to the other as a gift is the basis of marital union and is both irreversible and eternal (forever). Styczeń points out that a gift of oneself expressed in the words: “Yours forever!” can

¹⁹⁶ Ibidem, p. 156; K. Wojtyła, “Rodzina jako *communio personarum*,” *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 83, no. 3 (1974), p. 348.

¹⁹⁷ T. Styczeń, “Istota więzi małżeńskiej w perspektywie filozoficzno-teologicznej,” in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 5)*, ed. C. Ritter (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2014), p. 230.

¹⁹⁸ Ibidem, p. 233.

¹⁹⁹ Ibidem, p. 234.

never be fully understood by anyone who does not fully understand themselves. In other words, in order to understand what it means to offer oneself forever, one must first comprehend the meaning of “Yours completely!” If one does not fully understand this statement, i.e. whom they give to the other by giving themselves and who is received when a gift of the other’s self is received, one will not understand love, and thus one will not understand oneself. Failure to understand what the gift of oneself consists in leads to a state in which the process of coming to fully understand oneself and self-identification cannot take place. Therefore, love which is authentically accepted is a special kind of good. It consists of the willingness to stand in the service of the other entirely and until the end, which is accompanied by knowledge of the tragic (though by ignorance) possibility of dealing blows to them which are particularly painful due to the closeness to which the other dooms him- or herself by offering themselves as a gift. This good cannot be left unexpressed, however, as Styczeń points out, first of all in a self-appeal to know oneself and to know the beloved person, another unique “self.”²⁰⁰ In the experience of the other as “different” than anyone else consists the uniqueness of this particular person, the “differently” that applies to them from among all other persons. This is why the words: “It is good that you are!” in fact mean “It is good that it is *you specifically* who are!” In other words: “Without you, the world would not be the same.”²⁰¹

4.9. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE UNBORN

For Styczeń, the ultimate ethical principle is that which Karol Wojtyła called the personalist norm. It says that “A person should be affirmed for their own sake.” What does this mean? Simply that everyone has sufficient reason within themselves to be considered a good. This rules out any situation for Styczeń where a person, including oneself, could be affirmed at the cost of another person. The recognition of this fact is the foundation of ethical thinking and the very essence of ethics and morality. This explains why Styczeń devoted so much attention to defending the life of the unborn. It should be

²⁰⁰ Ibidem, p. 236.

²⁰¹ Ibidem, p. 237.

added that he was aware that for some his stance would not make sense. Therefore, it is necessary within the framework of personalist assumptions, in his opinion, to identify and remove the sole reason for this: failure to see the relationship between affirmation of man and affirmation of unborn man. This relationship is more and more often not only neglected, but even explicitly negated or suppressed. The existence of this situation reveals the ethical importance and moral significance of the question Styczeń asks: Why defend unborn life? While answering this question he came to understand—as he confessed—his task as an ethicist. For him, man is always a person, never a thing. He is someone who should be affirmed for his own sake. Therefore, he can never be used as though he was a thing. At the same time, he claims that the road to accomplishing this task is rather simple and involves only two stages. The first one focuses on demonstrating that it is impossible to affirm a man without affirming his life, and the second on showing that an unborn human being is also a man.²⁰²

In the context of contemporary debates on the right to decide about one's own body and the right to life, Tadeusz Styczeń asks a very important and interesting question: Should the effectiveness of an action be disregarded for the sake of its morality? The problem he highlights, and which is still valid from the perspective of practical ethics, concerns the supremacy of the criteria of moral action over those of its efficiency. Approaching this issue from a slightly different angle, he points out that the problem concerns the importance of the efficiency of an action (technique) and its morality (ethics). The question is whether the inefficiency of a prospective action will represent an overriding reason for moral action as such. More specifically, one can ask: Should a bill be proposed to introduce a particular solution even if it is clear that such bill will not be approved in the present political situation? Should people be admonished even if we know they will not comply? What the philosopher wants to do in the first place, however, is to show the borderline beyond which the efficiency of an action turns against the person, and at the same time the borderline up to which the efficiency of an action is what the very internal logic of affirming a real person requires.²⁰³

²⁰² T. Styczeń, "Dlaczego obrona życia nienarodzonego?" in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo*, pp. 297–298.

²⁰³ *Ibidem*, p. 298.

Styczeń's analyses and reflections refer to issues discussed by his contemporaries. He points out that the proclamation of inalienable human rights is first of all a proclamation of the inviolability of all that human dignity consists in, namely of man's existential structure. His position is even stronger than this, for he claims that the proclamation of universal human rights is the proclamation of the absolute validity and inviolability of moral natural law.²⁰⁴ At the same time, being an active advocate of the right of unborn children to have their lives defended, he expresses a view which may come as a surprise to some, namely that biological life is not man's highest good. Naturally, this does not in any way diminish the fact that life is a basic and fundamental good. He agrees with Aristotle that life is existence for living beings, something that was also invoked by Thomas Aquinas. Consequently, he says that life is a fundamental value for man.²⁰⁵ Only based on life can other values and rights be established. Without this foundation, there are no other rights.

Styczeń refers to Socrates who reminded his contemporaries that the point is not to live, but to live well. He seems to be following the ideal set out by the ancient philosopher, who believed one lived in order to bear witness to values higher than life itself. Being a witness of higher values forces one, in situations where there is a tragic collision of values as in the case of Socrates, to be willing to freely decide to surrender one's own life.²⁰⁶ To support his stance, he invokes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in which the fundamental value of human life is exposed to light. This value, by the power of the inherent logic of man's goods, takes precedence before all others. One of its manifestations is the postulate, made and embraced by a number of countries, that death penalty should be abolished. This leads to the conclusion that one cannot consistently defend anyone's right to anything as a human right once the very foundation of any human right to anything, i.e. man's right to life, has been questioned with respect to anyone.²⁰⁷

By focusing on life as the foundation of all rights and values, Styczeń can proceed to discuss the problem of the rights of unborn persons. In his analyses, he asks an important question: Is there any

²⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 299.

²⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 300.

²⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 299.

²⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 301.

essential difference between a man who is to be born and a man who has already been born? For him, there is none. He argues that from the point of view of being this particular human being, it does not matter at which point he or she is born. It is much more important when man comes into existence and begins to be this particular human being. In other words, the question is when man is conceived. For Styczeń, the only reasonable answer which respects the demands of both experiential data and logic is that it is the moment of conception. Thus he repeatedly attempts to present and reconstruct his argumentation, starting with the self-evident fact which is accessible to everyone in their everyday experience. He points out that human life is a continuous and homogenous one thanks to the identity of its subject. Therefore, with respect to human life which is a homogenous and continuous process, the principle of sufficient reason rules out the possibility of a non-contradictory identification of this process (as the process of the life of a particular “self”) without recognizing that it is the same already at the point when it began, and then continuously the same all the time from that point onwards. These are reasons which, when a question is asked about the beginning of life, refer us back to the moment of conception. From the biological point of view, this happens when the child’s father’s sperm cell unifies with the mother’s egg cell. Any other attempts at pinpointing the moment in time when man comes into existence have against them, as Styczeń points out, the principle of sufficient reason, and with it the principle of non-contradictoriness and identity.²⁰⁸ From his perspective, the victim of murder is better off than their murderer, as it is impossible to physically kill someone without at the same time morally killing oneself. One of the most difficult things is then the fact that by doing this, one dooms those around him or her (mainly their family members) to living next to a murderer. The philosopher is very explicit about this. Elimination of the unborn results in silently removing the weakest, and the society becomes a group of morally dead people.²⁰⁹

According to Styczeń, in order to see the above-mentioned facts which are obvious from the logical point of view, one must have sufficient sensitivity to the nearly unnoticeable and extremely vulnerable human being in its prenatal state. An unborn child is even more

²⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 301–302.

²⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 304.

vulnerable than a new-born baby, which can at least defend itself by crying and thus affecting the senses of sight and hearing of those around it. Man in the prenatal state can only count on the imagination and good will of those on whom he depends. One may entirely fail to see in him who he really is—a man, another “self” who should be affirmed for his own sake. Man in the prenatal state can be killed without it being realized that a man is being killed and eliminated from the human society. The condition of this appalling ignorance can even lead to an unborn and innocent man being killed without the killer being guilty. This chasm between the unborn human being and the man who attempts to take his life is so explicit that it provides the reason and place for the moralist to stand up for a defenseless, silent human being. These are the reasons why ethics must do all it can to expose and remove the extreme threat to the life of innocent people. The life of innocent people is at risk from those who, disarmed by ignorance, become aggressors free of a sense of guilt. Therefore not only ethicists, but ethics itself as a theory of morality must stand up for those who pay with their lives for the ignorance and hatred of their murderers. Otherwise, ethics would betray the purpose it is supposed to serve, the affirmation of man.²¹⁰

4.10. MAN AS THE MEASURE OF DEMOCRACY

The most important of Styczeń’s essays about issues in political culture were written between the 1970s and the end of the 20th century. Despite the passage of time, they still remain valid and applicable; indeed, they become endowed with new, deeper meaning in the changing realities of contemporary Europe. The philosopher does not hesitate to describe the cultural and political situation on the Old Continent in his times as a state in which Europe is under siege by itself. He believes that the Europe which says “Reason means more than force” is in deadly peril from the Europe which believes that “Force means more than reason.”²¹¹ The condition of “warlike turmoil”

²¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 300.

²¹¹ T. Styczeń, “Narodzić się, aby kochać,” in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo*, p. 290. *Plus ratio quam vis* (Reason means more than force) is the motto of the Jagiellonian University.

which Styczeń wrote about seems to still exist today. This applies in the first place to defending the unborn. When Styczeń challenges Poles with the problem of the state's and law's consent to putting unborn life at risk, he also challenges Europe. He discusses this problem acting on behalf of unborn children who cannot speak for themselves. The philosopher asks whether Europe is truly solidary with every human being and demands that everyone answers this question honestly for themselves. At the same time, he says that this is the "truth test" of the spiritual condition of Europe,²¹² as well as that of European democracy and observance of fundamental principles, including that which says that all people are equal before the law. A situation in which the principle of equality of all people, including the unborn, is rejected, requires a substantiation. Styczeń asks a rhetorical question about the difference between today's Europe and that which identifies with "the violence of the strong against the weak, since the weak have lost in the eyes of Europe any title to having their life protected by the law, not because they have ceased to be people, but because they are unable to counteract the violence of the strong."²¹³

In an age which has seen a migration crisis in Europe and the accompanying rhetoric, as well as the question about man and his dignity, it is most meaningful that the attitude to the unborn is an important test today for the identity of "humanist" Europe. Violence has become the law, usurping all claims to make everything the law. Styczeń points out that this would stand in opposition to the words of Europe's wisest men who stressed that *Homo homini res sacra* (Man is a sacred thing for man), or *Hominum causa omne ius constitutum est* (Every law has been created for the sake of men). In the context of this problem, the philosopher wonders if the Europe of reason and that of wisdom will be able to confront the Europe of ignorance and the Europe of force which relies on the kind of learning which Herbert Marcuse calls "scientific idiotism" (*wissenschaftlicher Idiotismus*).²¹⁴ Styczeń refers in particular to attitudes, situations and laws which may be illustrated by the ruling of the Constitutional Tribunal in Karlsruhe in a case concerning protection of the life of an unborn child. The Tribunal stated that the act of abortion, being an attempt at the child's

²¹² Ibidem.

²¹³ Ibidem.

²¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 291.

life, is both “unlawful” and “penalty-free.”²¹⁵ The German citizens’ and, more generally, Europe’s attitude to such an ambivalent resolution leaves much to be desired, in his opinion.

The problem of laying violent hands on the life of innocent people has many dimensions. It also concerns the condemnation in 1952 by the German Federal Court of physicians who had participated in the selection of those from among the mentally ill who were to be euthanized during the National Socialist regime. The Court invoked the universal moral sense of Christian Europe and declared that “the prevention of greater evil” cannot justify the intention to kill an innocent person. From the Court’s substantiation it results that this kind of killing is always a crime, and even the noblest goal does not justify every means. When analyzing this case, Styczeń agrees with Robert Spaemann who pointed out in his comments on this ruling, published in *L’Osservatore Romano*, that the belief expressed in the Court’s substantiation is not only Christian or European; it refers to the belief that there are actions which degrade man irrespectively of the circumstances or intentions behind what he does.²¹⁶

When discussing the problem of law, one should ask about the axiological foundations of the political culture around it. For Styczeń, they are identical to the axiological foundations of moral culture as the culture of man. They reveal directly to every “self,” through their own acts of knowledge, the obligation to unconditionally respect the truth about themselves which has been ascertained in acts of self-knowledge and acknowledged by free choice. As has already been mentioned, this truth appears to the subject as inseparably linked to the normative power of truth and to each of us as a reasonably free and unique “self,” while at the same time always being actually related to the “self’s” unique body.²¹⁷

Styczeń’s search for the axiological foundations of ethical culture is focused on two issues which represent the subject matter of ethical studies.²¹⁸ One is concerned with revealing the sources and looking for an answer to the question about where the foundations of this culture

²¹⁵ Ibidem.

²¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 291–292.

²¹⁷ T. Styczeń, “Aksjologiczne podstawy kultury politycznej,” in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo*, p. 305.

²¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 309.

come from. The second reveals the reasons behind the human person's moral obligation to act, expressed in the search for an answer to the question why the foundations of ethical culture are supposed to be such and not otherwise. Discussing both of these issues, the philosopher provides his answers. For him, the evident source and reason behind the axiological foundations of ethical culture is firstly that which the subject comes to know, i.e. (1) the truth about an object they acknowledge, which he calls horizontal self-transcendence; and secondly the fact that it is him or her themselves that ascertain the truth about this object. More precisely, it is (2) the truth about themselves that the subject recognizes as the truth about the subject who ascertains it. Styczeń calls this truth vertical self-transcendence. Finally, Styczeń calls (3) the truth about oneself as the eye witness and guardian of the truth about oneself accumulated vertical transcendence. These three facets of truth are the source and reasons for the axiological foundations of ethical culture. The understanding of truth and freedom which the philosopher devotes so much attention to in his essays becomes endowed with a new, social meaning. The important thing is that the subject may affirm the subjective truth only and always in the form in which it is interiorized by their own reason (conscience). Their "new" quality appears, however, in the perspective of the common good of all citizens. This good is the state within the framework of which freedom and truth are revealed in their releasing role of discovering the citizen's and state institutions' own errors.²¹⁹

In the context of the above comments, we should return to the question Styczeń asks about defending the vulnerable and innocent: What is the act of denying any legal protection to those who are killed while ensuring protection, in the same legal act, to those who kill them, and even subsidizing them from the state budget? We are clearly dealing here with a two-fold situation. Firstly, with an act of falsifying the law, where lawlessness becomes the law; and secondly, with an act of falsifying the state where the state becomes a lawless institution.²²⁰ The problem he discusses reveals the two mutually

²¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 313.

²²⁰ T. Styczeń, "Nigdy więcej! Aby kultura śmierci nie doprowadziła do śmierci kultury," in *Medycyna i prawo: za czy przeciw życiu? Materiały z sympozjum zorganizowanego w 50. rocznicę uchwalenia przez Organizację Narodów Zjednoczonych Powszechnej Deklaracji Praw Człowieka*, ed. E. Sgreccia, T. Styczeń, J. Gula, C. Ritter (Lublin: Instytut Studiów nad Rodziną ATK, 1999), pp. 7–13.

complementary axiological foundations of ethics and at the same time of political culture. These are: (1) the value of the human person as a reasonably free “self,” an axiological absolute; and (2) the value of human life as the fundamental good for this absolute, i.e. for the person. Consequently, there are two motives, inseparable from these two values and from each other, behind actions which form the proper moral attitude of man as a citizen towards others, i.e. his political culture. Firstly, it is an unconditional “yes” in action for his freedom in truth, expressed through dialogue; and secondly, an unconditional “yes” for his life as a person’s fundamental good.²²¹

4.11. HUMAN LIFE AS THE FOUNDATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

In his philosophical analyses, Tadeusz Styczeń often refers to figures which may illustrate the contemporary condition of man. One such classical figure is Sophocles’ Antigone and her attitude to Creon, expressed in the words she says and which the philosopher often quotes: “I am disposed to love by nature not to hate.”²²² They touch not only upon an important aspect of personal life, but also of coexistence in public space. From the philosophical perspective, Antigone’s stance embodies an issue which was very important for Styczeń: Can law turn into lawlessness? Can law destroy itself?

Pursuing an answer to these questions, Styczeń refers to fundamental issues of essential importance for the functioning of societies, also in the global dimension. Referring to Antigone’s words, he says that any law which does not warrant man the honor owed to him or defiles this honor even in a single case, defiles itself and undermines the very reason of its existence. And if this is so, such law annihilates itself as being anti-human. Antigone objects to calling it law. Refusing to obey such law becomes a crime, indeed, a “sacred crime” perpetrated in defense of man’s dignity. Socrates, on the other hand, did not reject loyalty to law. On the contrary, when Crito tried to persuade him to escape from prison, he chose to stay and submit to law. Styczeń only emphasized that Socrates had been sentenced to death

²²¹ T. Styczeń, “Aksjologiczne podstawy kultury politycznej,” pp. 317–318.

²²² Literally: “I have come to co-love, and not co-hate.” Sofokles, *Antygona*, trans. K. Morawski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Kama, 1994), p. 34.

for his integrity, for his faithfulness to truth. Nevertheless, in his eyes Antigone, just like Socrates, becomes a victim—a witness to that no man can be denied the honor due to man as man, since the honor due to man is inseparable.²²³

For Styczeń, people who establish laws which protect the killer and deny any protection to their victim morally kill themselves and assault the institutions of law and the state.²²⁴ This most often stems from the basic error which the philosopher calls the error of calculation. It is based on the utilitarian attempt to calculate everything, even human life. Such an approach will necessarily result in reducing various issues to a common denominator, and in looking for a solution which warrants the highest sum of happiness, welfare and profits. In the case analyzed here, however, what is at stake is not objects whose properties, such as functionality, price, or availability, can be compared. This is about man and about who he is, and not about what he has to offer. Therefore, an execution performed by the state by the operation of its law on an innocent and defenseless human being, including an unborn human being, cannot leave other people indifferent to who they are.²²⁵

Truth about oneself, about who one is, recognized and acknowledged by the knowing subject as truth by way of his or her own act of knowledge, has the highest binding power. Failure to comply with this truth means nullifying oneself and consenting to a crime of violence to one's own identity and self-identification. Styczeń asks rhetorical questions: Can anyone perpetrate this crime only because someone else demands this in the name of law? Doesn't law exist precisely in order to protect people from perpetrating such crime on anyone, themselves included? He calls Socrates as his witness, who rejected loyalty to law or circumstances at the price of consent to violence against himself "with the aid of law."²²⁶

For Styczeń, nothing invalidates the law as radically or as explicitly as violence inflicted on a person with the aid of law; nothing deprives it of the status of law and morally disqualifies it in the eyes of

²²³ T. Styczeń, "Narodzić się, aby kochać," p. 287.

²²⁴ Ibidem, p. 288.

²²⁵ Ibidem, p. 289.

²²⁶ T. Styczeń, "O etos dla prawa," in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo*, p. 320.

the society. Nothing reveals the relationship between law and ethos as explicitly as its violation of personal integrity.²²⁷ This is most emphatically evident in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Respect for any rights, including fundamental rights—and the right to freedom in the first place—makes sense only to the extent its inviolable foundation is the absolute respect for the life of every human being. This applies in particular to unconditional respect for the right to live of everyone without any exceptions.²²⁸

The state derives all of its dignity from the dignity of those it serves. The philosopher reminds us that to govern means to use the law to serve every individual and all people together. This kind of service allows for no exceptions, as it is the state's ultimate purpose to protect every single one of its citizens. What is this purpose based on? The fact that its citizens are simply human beings. For the sake of protecting them, the state must first of all protect their life as their fundamental good. Man is who he is because he exists. It would be absurd to proclaim a principle of justice as the foundation of democratic social order and of all democratic legislation without respecting and protecting human life by statute against any violence inflicted by anyone. Styczeń points out that unless the life of every single man is unconditionally respected without any exceptions, no one is respected for the sake of being a man. At the most, such respect is offered for some other, inessential reasons. It may be the person's lifespan, their health, being part of a particular group such as race, social class, or their usefulness. The important thing is that such respect is not offered on account of their being a man.²²⁹

In contemporary democratic states, the principle of justice is supposed to warrant to all, without exceptions, due to the dignity vested in every individual, equal opportunities of life and development. The inner logic of the principle of justice reveals the postulate of "equaling up" the most disadvantaged members of the society. Styczeń refers to the views of John Rawls, in which the preferential nature of the principles of justice with respect to the weakest and poorest is revealed.²³⁰

²²⁷ Ibidem, p. 325.

²²⁸ T. Styczeń, "Nienarodzony – miarą i szansą demokracji," in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo*, p. 377.

²²⁹ Ibidem.

²³⁰ Ibidem, pp. 378–379.

Together with Rawls, he asks: “What is the value of a democracy which solves the problem of promoting the weakest and poorest by creating laws which allow for their removal from the society by way of state-legalised extermination?”²³¹ Therefore, an assault on unborn people performed in the majesty of law and in the name of the state becomes for him the suicide of democracy. In other words, it is a blow dealt at the very heart of the democratic order.²³² Styczeń also refers to Joseph Ratzinger, who commented on the democratic election of Adolf Hitler as the Chancellor of the Third Reich by the German nation. He points out that the election of a future criminal as Chancellor was also an act of democracy. Soon afterwards it resulted in the establishment of Nuremberg Laws about the “purity of blood,” with the specter of concentration camps in Dachau, Auschwitz and Majdanek already looming on the horizon.²³³

In the philosopher’s opinion, commitment to solidarity with everyone makes it imperative that the constitutions of democratic states declare the equality of every man before the laws they enact. Otherwise, already in its constitution a state based on solidarity would be replaced with its utilitarian version. The dispute over the unborn is not only a dispute over them, but also over the character of the political community we all make up.²³⁴ Consent to violence being inflicted on defenseless people which has been additionally sanctioned by statute law, is a negation of the ethical foundations of democracy: the equality of all before the law.²³⁵

The above arguments proposed by Styczeń and the references he made reveal the logic of the primacy of the right to freedom of some over the right to freedom of others. This “logic,” called into existence solely by an act of an arbitrary decision of the stronger against the weaker, exposes its inner logic of freedom as the logic of violence.²³⁶ It is the same “logic of democracy” which bears the banners of “freedom

²³¹ Ibidem, p. 379.

²³² Ibidem, p. 381.

²³³ Ibidem, p. 383.

²³⁴ T. Styczeń, C. Ritter, “O prawo solidarne z każdym człowiekiem,” in T. Styczeń, *Myśli serca (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 7)*, ed. A.M. Wierzbicki (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2016), p. 207.

²³⁵ Ibidem, p. 209.

²³⁶ T. Styczeń, “Nienarodzony – miarą i szansą demokracji,” p. 383.

for women” and “pluralism.” The philosopher rhetorically asks once more: Is it really the woman’s free choice that decides whether the fetus in her womb is a human being or not? Should her decision really be accepted by all?²³⁷ Moreover, he wonders when we will no longer need to fear democracy. According to him, only when none of the littlest ones needs to fear it. This may be the only infallible “truth test.”²³⁸

²³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 384.

²³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 386.

DISCUSSIONS AND POLEMICS

When introducing the Reader to the views of Tadeusz Styczeń, we should also mention the discussions and polemics he held with others, as well as those others held with him. It would not be possible (or necessary) to analyze all of them, so we will limit ourselves to those which best present his way of thinking.

He had to face the most serious charges against what he proposed from the circle of the Catholic University of Lublin. His theory was most radically challenged by Mieczysław Krąpiec. Recently, the same charges have been taken up by Ludwik Wiśniewski in his book entitled *Blask wolności* [The Glare of Freedom].²³⁹ Being Dominicans, raised on the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, they questioned the views presented by Styczeń. Their doubts were concerned mostly with the reasonability of his criticism of eudaimonism/teleologism, as well as his understanding of obligation. They accused him of reducing ethics to a theory of justice. They claimed that obligation refers to interpersonal relationships which constitute law in the meaning of *ius* rather than *lex*.²⁴⁰ In a subjective understanding of law, obligations determine the course of action due in view of a common good, thus showing the necessity for two persons to exist between whom a particular relationship of obligation occurs. Consequently, in the case of acts performed by an individual man, his deeds cannot be judged from the moral point of view. Krąpiec repeatedly stressed that obligation can never take precedence over decisions. The moral quality

²³⁹ L. Wiśniewski, *Blask wolności* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2015).

²⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 70.

of an act is determined by the decision about compliance or noncompliance with a recognized norm, or, more precisely, the decision to realize a recognized good. Even if we treated obligation, of which we become aware as a type of assignment to good, this, according to Krąpiec, does not solve the problem, as we are then only dealing with potential good, that is with the possibility of taking an action rather than with an actual action, which only takes place with the taking of a decision as a moral instance. He called Styczeń's references to the experience of obligation newspeak, which in his opinion did not introduce any novelty, as it did not show what should be done or how. People would have to be angels to know exactly what should be done solely based on a sense of obligation we are supposed to experience.²⁴¹ Krąpiec refers to theoretically practical and practically practical judgments, and from them deduces particular ethical principles. He places the ethical relationship "inside the act" as a relationship of necessity between man's decision and moral judgment/recognized norm. Every human deed is a moral deed, since, as he says, "it cannot be separated from the relationship of compliance or noncompliance with a theoretical judgment capturing a being-good, motivating my actions."²⁴² As for the problem formulated by David Hume about the impossibility of deducing normative from predicative statements, Krąpiec replied to the Scottish philosopher by saying that his otherwise accurate conclusion only refers to empirical sciences or the description of the simplest activities. He thus brought it against Styczeń that what he called the experience of something absolutely "obligatory" is but a "vision of man's activities and their formal objects."²⁴³ He therefore suggested that the looking at the "pressure" of objects, as he called it, should be rejected and that actions should be referred to good. He was convinced that a vision of relationships between formal objects is not sufficient, as it is merely a derivative of the intellect; in addition, also actions which are derivatives of the will should be taken into account, and the will may not want to do something. Krąpiec thus rejected the understanding of morality as the object of experience, as this does not exist yet. It only comes into existence when man takes a decision.

²⁴¹ M.A. Krąpiec, *U podstaw rozumienia kultury* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 1991) p. 125.

²⁴² *Ibidem*.

²⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 128.

He also claimed that morality is more primary than duty/obligation.²⁴⁴ Man acts among beings which he did not create. By making the experience of obligation the foundation of further choices, it is easy to distort the whole of morality, which—he adds—was what happened to many Germans who allowed for the totalitarian system by doing that which was obligatory, and which was merely the will of Hitler and his collaborators.²⁴⁵ Krapiec charged Styczeń with placing justice before love; it seems, however, that he did not fully understand his views. For if Styczeń criticizes eudaimonism, he does so because he believes that by looking at human judgments we can see that we often consider to be good those actions which are performed spontaneously, without much reflection or theoretical deliberations, and which, in addition, appear to us as absolute. Moreover, Styczeń claimed that many actions performed in the name of pursuing happiness are taken for purely egotistic motives, only disguised as altruism.

Among the charges Krapiec brought against Styczeń there is also that which says he demanded that it must first be acknowledged that a person is a value in itself, and only then can appropriate actions be taken, which would limit proper action only to a group of specialists, while moral judgments of human deeds apply to everyone without exception. Others echo this opinion as well, for example Ludwik Wiśniewski who blames Styczeń for submitting to nominalist influences.²⁴⁶ Much seems to indicate, however, that they both failed to fully understand Styczeń's views. He did not have in mind an understanding of obligation in the legal sense but in the ontic, captured directly in the existential judgment which ascertains the occurrence of something. He was most decisively against understanding obligation as something ideal. Thence, he rejected the understanding of ethics proposed by Max Scheler or Nicolai Hartmann, who only examined the content of awareness while neglecting the existence of that which is revealed. Styczeń understood obligation as a specific (existing) interpersonal or intrapersonal relationship. He thus disagreed with those who claimed that one could talk about Scheler's personalism, as he only retained the notion of person-subject while neglecting the person-object and replacing it with an impersonal value. It should be

²⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 133.

²⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁶ L. Wiśniewski, *Blask wolności*, p. 36.

noted, however, that this polemic brought some important clarifications. Styczeń refined his understanding of the object of moral experience, i.e. the relationship which reveals an obligation, by adding non-personal beings which are revealed in the moment of experience and which deserve to be affirmed for their own sake rather than in view of their being useful to man. He thus suggested that the understanding of morality should be “stretched” into the formula *persona est affirmanda* na wyrażenie *persona est affirmanda a persona*.²⁴⁷ Man as a rational and free being should act so as to avoid anything that poses a threat to existing things, i.e. avoid thoughtless acts. Krąpiec in turn added more precision to his understanding of decision by saying that a decision becomes a moral occurrence when it finds its reference to recognized moral norms.

Another issue which also became the object not so much of polemic but of discussion is the way Styczeń understood truth. Andrzej Szostek claims that he failed to sufficiently show what is experienced by the subject, but only how they experience themselves, that is how they experience their freedom.²⁴⁸ Similar objections were raised by Józef Herbut or Andrzej Maryniarczyk (a student of Krąpiec). They blamed Styczeń for not showing sufficiently well what the subject experiences, but—how they experience it.²⁴⁹ They claimed that the examples he provides are so self-evident that while they do not raise any objections, they are nevertheless banal and therefore do not show sufficiently well how complicated the subject matter of truth and the process of knowing it can be, leading to its being neglected or misunderstood. The denial of many recognized situations does not automatically mean betraying oneself, but is a long process, motivated by a number of various reasons. Furthermore, the price which needs to be paid for faithfulness to the truth one has recognized is sometimes very high and this is why people depart from it. Not everyone is a hero. Thus, we should talk—they say—of various

²⁴⁷ T. Styczeń, *Etyka niezależna?*, p. 347.

²⁴⁸ A. Szostek, “O respekcie dla moralnej mocy prawdy. Niedokończone rozmowy z Ks. Tadeuszem Stycznem,” *Ethos* 24, no. 3 (2011), pp. 150–160.

²⁴⁹ J. Herbut, “Jaka prawda wyzwala?” in *Racjonalność w etyce. Normatywna moc prawdy*, ed. K. Krajewski (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2007), pp. 119–130; A. Maryniarczyk, “Racjonalność w etyce a normatywna moc prawdy,” in *Racjonalność w etyce. Normatywna moc prawdy*, ed. K. Krajewski (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2007), pp. 131–141.

degrees of guilt for betraying truth. The importance of truth itself for man as the moral subject who recognizes it should be taken into account. Styczeń was aware of this fact, however, which is why he wrote: “My auto-nomy is auto-transcendence in truth! I myself, knowing, co-define, so to say, the conditions of the way, commensurate with me, i.e. becoming of me, of enforcing my ‘I may—I do not have to,’ the conditions of such a way of enforcing my freedom that is worthy of me.”²⁵⁰ Szostek, however, believes that one must not be satisfied with merely acknowledging the existence of a relationship between truth and freedom, limiting oneself to showing absolute respect for truth irrespective of its content, of the validity of this content.²⁵¹ He writes: “The experience of this value determines what truth should be acknowledged and recognized in a particular moment—for the sake of this value, and not above all for the sake of upholding one’s own personal dignity. If we disregard this experience and focus on the destructive consequences of contradicting the truth once the subject has recognized it, we enter into the circle of eudaimonism, once so energetically—and rightly—criticized by Rev. Styczeń.”²⁵² Remaining faithful to the truth may become a commitment, motivated by egotism, to one’s own perfection, regardless of the consequences. What is paramount, therefore, is not so much knowing any truth, but the truth about the value of the being that is known, particularly a being who is a person.²⁵³ It is this that determines the moral value of human behavior. According to Szostek, only an analysis of the phenomenon of conscience fully reveals “a certain bipolarity of the obligation to respect truth: the grounding of this obligation both in the value (dignity) of that (whom) I learn, and in the personal structure of the subject who learns the truth.”²⁵⁴ The discussion about Styczeń’s understanding of truth was also joined by Jacek Frydrych, who said he engaged in a kind of ethical intellectualism. When showing such great importance of truth, he seemed to forget that man can reject it without explicitly betraying himself. This can be done out of ill will,

²⁵⁰ T. Styczeń, “Wolność w prawdzie,” p. 27.

²⁵¹ A. Szostek, “O respekcie dla moralnej mocy prawdy. Niedokończone rozmowy z Ks. Tadeuszem Stycznem,” p. 158.

²⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 159.

²⁵³ *Ibidem*.

²⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 160.

but also due to ignorance or weakness of the will. Ignorance may be caused by faulty moral judgments, i.e. by incorrect knowledge, or may be a consequence of the fact the subject does not fully understand what morality is.²⁵⁵ In this context, it is worth mentioning a brief but important polemic essay by Jerzy Wróblewski in which he discusses the issue of “naturalist illusion.”²⁵⁶

Aside from the polemics held with Styczeń, there were also those he held with others. The most important of these was concerned with the independent nature of ethics, or, more precisely, ethics with an adjective (or without an adjective) such as “Christian” or “lay.” He claimed that the problem was about how we understand experience and to what extent the inductive method is suitable for use in ethics. He said that ethics is methodologically and epistemically independent at its point of departure. In this respect he agreed with such thinkers as Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Tadeusz Czeżowski, or John Rawls. He did not share their view, however, that induction is the only scientifically appropriate method to be employed in ethics. If this were the case, we would have to use synthetic *a priori* judgments, while experience shows that these are rather *a posteriori* judgments.²⁵⁷ Therefore, he tried to show how experiential statements are both possible and necessary in ethics as *a posteriori* ones. He rejected the name of *a priori* synthetic judgment applied to ethical judgments, which “by emphasizing the methodological independence of a statement from future experiences, suggests that for the sake of its acknowledgment past experiences do not matter, or only count as part of the genesis of the judgment concerned.”²⁵⁸ He claimed that a better name, though not a perfect one, would be that of an “*a posteriori* analytical judgment.”²⁵⁹ Despite these reservations, he agreed with the above-mentioned thinkers that ethics is independent at the starting point,

²⁵⁵ J. Frydrych, “Intelektualizm w etyce Tadeusza Styczenia,” p. 196 .

²⁵⁶ J. Wróblewski, “Filozoficzna redukcja ‘złudzenia naturalistycznego’,” *Etyka* 10 (1972), pp. 137–141.

²⁵⁷ T. Styczeń, “Etyka niezależna?,” p. 333. This standpoint is similar to that of Maria Ossowska, related to the earlier works by Kotarbiński and Czeżowski. In his later essays, Czeżowski added more detail to the discussion by showing that empirical ethics leads to building a model of axiomatically deductive ethics, in which the axiom reckons with the experience of value.

²⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 334.

²⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

i.e. that it is an autonomous discipline. He approved of the fact they did not provide a definition of moral obligation, as in his opinion it could only be defined through an ostensive definition, i.e. by demonstration, description. Styczeń invoked the person of Christ who used just such a definition when he told the parable of the merciful Samaritan to define who a neighbor is, as well as Sophocles who did the same in *Antigone*, and Plato—in *Crito*. He provides a long list of thinkers who placed the person in the center of their reflections as someone who deserves to be affirmed for their own sake. And he often said that ethics with an adjective is determined by a certain minimum of action necessary for a person to be affirmed by a person.²⁶⁰ This minimum can be established based on intuition, which various thinkers call by different names. Some refer to “obviousness of the heart,” others of “a moral sense,” a sense of obligation, etc. In his opinion, when determining what is right, what should be done to affirm a person, it is necessary, however, to draw on relevant knowledge from other disciplines, including theology. And this is why at a certain point ethics is provided with an adjective: “Christian,” “lay,” or otherwise. Ethics, if it were to waive its adjective, would not be able to say a lot of statements of practical relevance.²⁶¹

Another issue which Tadeusz Styczeń polemicized about were the views held by representatives of the so-called new theology, often with a purely ethical overtone. He referred to their understanding of the human nature, or, more precisely, the fact they separated moral goods from physical goods, which lead to doing away with ethics referring to the order of nature. He charged them with changing the principle which says: *ens et bonum convertuntur* into another one, saying: *ens et bonum honestum convertuntur*. They say that most often it is impossible to realize a moral good without perpetrating some kind of physical evil. We must therefore choose between actions which have bad consequences, while maintaining a certain proportion. Moral good or evil only applies to the subject’s intentions. Styczeń called such views a logic of wanting and asked whether ethics can be an ethics of wanting.²⁶² He does not agree with the thesis that good

²⁶⁰ Ibidem, p. 337.

²⁶¹ Ibidem, p. 344.

²⁶² T. Styczeń, “Czy etyka jest logiką chcenia?” in T. Styczeń, *Etyka niezależna*, p. 465.

that is wanted can be identified with moral good, as the implementation of this wanting often causes physical evil. The problem consists therefore in determining the criterion of “good reason” for allowing physical evil to occur as inevitable. The philosopher believes, however, that the assumption that only the proportion of good and evil consequences determines the moral quality of an action is inappropriate, as only the external aspect of the action is taken into account here, the one which “could be photographed, so to say.”²⁶³ The quality of an action is made dependent mainly on the intentions of the acting subject. The same action, like giving someone money, may be the repayment of a loan, the payment of a fine, or the giving of alms. Styczeń therefore rejects the claim made by so-called new theologians that the circumstances of an action form part of the physical action and thus affect its quality, change the very *finis operis*.²⁶⁴ He refutes the charges that traditionally understood ethics is a Cartesian dichotomy of the “physics” of external action and internal intention, as is claimed by Peter Knauer who says that the moral character of an action is determined by the relationship between the external occurrence of something and the inner intention of the acting person.²⁶⁵ Styczeń points out that already Thomas Aquinas had noticed that for a free and rational subject, *appetibile* is also *affirmabile*.²⁶⁶ This means that when we are looking for an appropriate proportion of means necessary to achieve a desired goal, we must be aware that this does not involve only the quantitative dimension, but the qualitative one as well, and the latter is variously judged. Otherwise, we will not understand why man sometimes does not do what he wants on a higher level, which is a defect of his will. The above-mentioned relationship does not seem to explain the matter, unless we reduce ethics to a theory of effective action. Styczeń therefore charges Knauer and his followers with rejecting the existence of values *per se*, considering only that which we choose ourselves to be a value. In his argumentation, he refers to the views of Tadeusz Kotarbiński, the author of Polish

²⁶³ Ibidem, p. 467.

²⁶⁴ Ibidem, p. 468.

²⁶⁵ P. Knauer, “Das rechtverstandene Prinzip von der Doppelwirkung als Grundnorm jeder Gewissensentscheidung,” *Theologie und Glaube* 57, no. 2 (1967), p. 111.

²⁶⁶ T. Styczeń, “Czy etyka jest logiką chcenia?,” p. 471.

praxeology, who warned against identifying praxeology and ethics in its strict sense, even though their norms sometimes appear to be almost identical.²⁶⁷ It is also necessary to define, and define in detail, what actions will affirm a person instead of just being the most effective ones. For not all of them satisfy this condition.

Yet another issue was discussed in a polemic which Styczeń held with the abovementioned thinkers—this time concerning Norbert Hoerster in relation to his article published in *Roczniki Filozoficzne*.²⁶⁸ Styczeń did not agree with his assertion that general norms are a derivative of well-considered judgments of competent moral judges rather than being recognized intuitively. He claimed that even though Hoerster wanted to clear moral norms from the charge of relativity, he in fact endowed them with just such a character.²⁶⁹ He did not explain what the term “universally valid norms” means; it appears it was supposed to mean “universally recognized norms.”²⁷⁰ This way, he introduced ethics into ethology.²⁷¹ It should be based on facts which can be ascertained by experience. To support his thesis, he references Theodor Adorno who said that norms do not depend on methodological ideals but on things.²⁷²

To end this presentation of polemics and discussions held with and by Styczeń, we should mention those with Marxist thinkers. Some of them were concerned with specific solutions, other with systemic visions, and it is the latter which deserve some more attention. The most important ones were those he held with Mark Fritzhand and Adam Shaffe where he said that ethics in their version indeed had humanistic features.²⁷³ He did not agree with them, however, in how they understood ways of determining what actions affirm man

²⁶⁷ Ibidem, p. 475.

²⁶⁸ N. Hoerster, “W sprawie uzasadnienia norm moralnych,” *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 25, no. 2 (1977), pp. 131–136.

²⁶⁹ T. Styczeń, “W sprawie uzasadnienia norm moralnych,” in T. Styczeń, *Etyka niezależna*, p. 487.

²⁷⁰ Ibidem, p. 488.

²⁷¹ Ibidem, p. 489.

²⁷² T. Styczeń, “W sprawie uzasadnienia norm moralnych,” p. 48; Th.W. Adorno, *Aufsätze zur Gesellschaftstheorie und Methodologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 113.

²⁷³ T. Styczeń, “Sposoby uprawiania etyki w Polsce,” in T. Styczeń, *Etyka niezależna*, p. 503.

as a man/person. Thus, he did not share Mark Fritzhan's opinion that only Marxist ethics is truly humanistic. He agreed with him, though, that in methodological terms Marxist ethics coincided with independent ethics, as it considered the experience of morality to be "a methodologically indispensable starting point and the basis of accepting ethical statements."²⁷⁴ Nevertheless, he rejected the claim that it is fully humanistic, as it does not explain why something appears to be "obligatory," i.e. as the content of that which one ought to do. To support his objections, Styczeń referred to the saying of Karl Marx who expressed in his criticism of Hegel a very important thought: namely that man for man is the Highest Being.²⁷⁵ He then asked how, if this is so, was it possible to kill millions of beings to improve the living conditions of future generations. He demanded that an adequate anthropology be created. In an article written together with Andrzej Szostek, he discussed the issue of soteriology both in Marxist and in liberal understanding. He highlighted one essential similarity between Christian and Marxist way of thinking, namely the Marxist postulate that man should undergo a complete transformation unless he wants to vanish as a human being. In many other issues Styczeń disagreed with Marxists completely. The most important difference seems to be the very approach to the problem of truth, expressed in the question about whether man discovers or creates it. Marxism, as is well known, replaced the classical concept of truth with a pragmatic one. Such an understanding of truth and man's role in its creation leads, according to Styczeń, to the belief that an individual is the whole of social relationships and is formed (should be formed) in result of a "collective self-creation."²⁷⁶ And then, surprisingly for the reader, he says that in this respect a compromise has taken place between Marxism and the followers of Sartre. What they have in common is the intention to awaken man within man, to make him realize that there is no God, and that it is him who must transform the existing social and economic conditions.²⁷⁷ Styczeń used to say that the freedom presented

²⁷⁴ Ibidem, p. 505.

²⁷⁵ K. Marks, F. Engels, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie," in K. Marks, F. Engels, *Studienausgabe*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Bücherei, 1971), p. 30; T. Styczeń, "Prawda o człowieku a etyka," p. 77.

²⁷⁶ T. Styczeń, "Liberalizm po marksistowsku," in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo*, p. 339.

²⁷⁷ Ibidem, p. 341.

by Marx was a freedom “to everything.” It is also supposed to remove dependence on God and set man free to complete self-reliance.²⁷⁸ Substantiating his criticism of such an understanding of freedom, Styczeń referred to the Marxist criterion for verifying a theory—namely practice. Referring very briefly to the tragic consequences of implementing the Marxist thesis about freedom from God, without going into their detailed discussion, he pointed to the fact of man’s incidental nature and the authoritarian way in which obligation appears to us, which calls for its ultimate explanation, and consequently leads to the creation of a soteriology that is different from the Marxist one. We must decide whether salvation comes from God or whether it is a self-salvation. Styczeń returned to this problem in a number of his articles.

When discussing the debates Tadeusz Styczeń held with others, we should also mention that with Rev. Józef Tischner. The inducement to begin it came in an article by Tischner published in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, entitled “Wolność w blasku prawdy” [Freedom in the Light of Truth],²⁷⁹ in which he referred to John Paul II’s encyclical *Veritatis splendor* (no. 42) and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (no. 1955), and more precisely to the concept of natural law they refer to. Tischner wrote that we find there an ontological and objectivist understanding of human nature, which is based on the assumption that all people agree about their own nature, which he doubted. He expressed his doubts as follows: “Man, his ‘nature,’ is still an ‘unknown being.’ There are as many ‘natures’ as there are theoreticians of ‘nature’; we may fear that there will also be just as many ‘laws of nature.’ John Paul II is more careful in defining ‘nature’ and ‘laws of nature.’ He seems to believe that this might not even be necessary for ethics. He only points to one thing: the way to knowledge. The law of nature is that which is discovered by ‘reason,’ which is part of ‘human nature.’ We might say that the emphasis has been shifted from the ‘ontological’ to the ‘epistemological’ approach.”²⁸⁰

Styczeń disagrees with such an interpretation of the encyclical, particularly the understanding of natural law presented above. Firstly, he charges Tischner with not perceiving the difference between that

²⁷⁸ Ibidem.

²⁷⁹ J. Tischner, “Wolność w blasku prawdy,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 47, no. 48 (1993), p. 5.

²⁸⁰ Ibidem.

which is generally acknowledged about human nature and that which is a universally valid judgment about human nature. He says: “The lack of unanimity in this matter is not at all an argument against the general validity of judgments about human nature and the moral norms in which it is expressed.”²⁸¹ He claims that if there was consent about this issue, the Pope would not have to write the encyclical. Secondly, Styczeń claims that Tischner loosens if not breaks the cognitive relationship between knowledge and the thing being known. He agrees that reason belongs to human nature, but says that it is reason that captures nature cognitively, at least in some of its aspects, while in other aspects it remains unknown. This is enough, however, to formulate at least the most important norms that apply to it. According to Styczeń, “the encyclical shows and emphasizes the necessary relationship occurring between that *who* man is as a human person and that he *really* is who he is, if he is at all, if he exists and lives, and that by existing, he exists in the flesh.”²⁸² This enables the formulation of the most important norms. Styczeń does not agree with Tischner who says that it does not matter for ethics whether nature and its laws are explicitly determined. He believes that the emphasis on the epistemic dimension removes that which the encyclical is about. Thirdly, he charges Tischner with unwittingly making the mistake called “naturalist illusion” (“naturalist error”), which consists in that one moves from that which is acknowledged or not to statements that are normative, i.e. from “is” to “ought.” And says this is the reason why Tischner considers some of the argumentation contained in *Veritatis splendor* to be entirely void.²⁸³ He refers to comments made by Rev. Tadeusz Ślipko who, in relation to the same article, wrote: “Rev. Tischner fails to see the great space of thought which divides that which is real from that which is substantial also in the category of moral evil.”²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ T. Styczeń, “Wolność z prawdy żyje,” in T. Styczeń, *Wolność w prawdzie (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 4)*, ed. K. Krajewski (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2013), p. 208.

²⁸² Ibidem, p. 208ff.

²⁸³ Ibidem, p. 209.

²⁸⁴ T. Ślipko, “Filozoficzne aspekty moralności aktu ludzkiego w encyklice *Veritatis splendor*,” in *W prawdzie ku wolności*, ed. E. Janiak (Wrocław: Papieski Fakultet Teologiczny, 1994), p. 255.

INFLUENCE ON THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

When discussing the impact of the thought of Tadeusz Styczeń, we should first of all take note of his influence on pontifical documents, particularly on such encyclicals as *Veritatis splendor* or *Centesimus annus*. This was pointed out by Jarosław Merecki in his Laudation on the occasion of the philosopher's being conferred a doctor honoris causa title at the John Paul II Pontifical Theological Institute for Marriage and Family Sciences (Pontifical Lateran University, Vatican, December 6, 2007). At the end of the Laudation, Merecki mentioned Rev. Styczeń's contribution to the debate on the so-called moral autonomy of the conscience, and his involvement in works on the *Magisterium* document which was announced in 1993 as the encyclical *Veritatis splendor*.²⁸⁵

Tadeusz Styczeń was convinced that once the truth becomes known, it obliges and urges us to act in accordance with the content of the act of knowledge. No wonder, then, that he became actively involved in defending the life of the unborn on the public forum. His firm conviction about the inalienability of the right of every human being to live, including those human beings who are yet to be born, and the threats to their life in today's world obligated him to answer the calling of the truth he had learned. He believed that the issue of

²⁸⁵ P. Ślęczka, "Sprawozdanie z uroczystości nadania Księdzu Profesorowi Tadeuszowi Styczniewi SDS doktoratu honoris causa," *Studia Salvatoriana Polonica* 2 (2008), p. 214.

the unborn should be treated as a test of the integrity and democratic character of the state. In his opinion, denying anyone the protection of their life under criminal law is a sign of discrimination and subordination of the unborn to the born.²⁸⁶

Aside from his membership in the Pontifical Academy for Life, and his role as a consulter to the Pontifical Council for the Family and the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Health Care Workers, as well as his many years of work for the John Paul II Pontifical Theological Institute for Marriage and Family Sciences at the Pontifical Lateran University, Tadeusz Styczeń engaged in initiatives aimed at introducing the issue of the unborn to the public opinion and to politicians. One worth mentioning here is his address of April 11, 1990 to two Commissions of the Senate (Upper House of the Parliament) entitled “W sprawie człowieka poczętego i nienarodzonego” [On the Conceived and Unborn Man],²⁸⁷ and his speech of March 23, 1992 addressed to participants of the First National Meeting of Pro-Life Leaders,²⁸⁸ as well as his letter of July 5, 1996 to the President, deputies and senators of the Republic of Poland in relation to an attempt at liberalizing the Act on the protection of the life of the unborn child.²⁸⁹

The significance of Styczeń’s thought was appreciated by the Italian thinker Rocco Buttiglione. He writes: “The first advantage of Tadeusz Styczeń’s book²⁹⁰ is that it provides us with a model of philosophy which is in direct touch with history. It is a philosophy which, drawing on specific experiences of a people and a nation at a particular point in history, tries to understand them in the light of eternal

²⁸⁶ *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, vol. 10, s.v. “Styczeń Tadeusz,” p. 411.

²⁸⁷ T. Styczeń, “W sprawie człowieka poczętego i nienarodzonego. Przedłożenie wobec Senackich Komisji: Inicjatyw i Prac Ustawodawczych oraz Zdrowia i Polityki Społecznej, Warszawa, 11 kwietnia 1990 r.,” in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo*, pp. 431–435.

²⁸⁸ T. Styczeń, “Miłość jest niepodzielna,” in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo*, pp. 421–430.

²⁸⁹ T. Styczeń, “List etyka do prezydenta, posłów oraz senatorów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. W trosce o życie nienarodzonego oraz w trosce o życie nas wszystkich. Słowo etyka w związku z próbą liberalizacji ustawy o ochronie życia dziecka poczętego z dnia 5 lipca 1996 r.,” in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo*, pp. 439–441.

²⁹⁰ T. Styczeń, *Solidarność wyzwala* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1993).

truths, while at the same time trying to show the way that leads from heaven to earth, that is, to show how eternal truths may and should become our way of life today.”²⁹¹ Styczeń wrote a letter to the President and senators of the Republic of Poland and an open letter addressed to all those who are responsible for the protection of human life in the legislation of today’s democratic states in defense of the unborn, in which he tried to show that the attitude to those who cannot defend themselves in any way is the measure of democracy.²⁹²

In his comments on Styczeń’s views, Buttiglione emphasizes his contribution to the understanding of truth. He writes: “In order to teach us how to savor truth, Styczeń invites us—in a sense—to join Socrates. This way we take part in this primary experience from which the entire notional system of classical philosophy takes its source. Joining Socrates has one essential advantage over studying the great philosophical tradition. It is the advantage of the method.”²⁹³ The point is that the basis of ethics does not depend on any philosophical assumptions, but is founded on experience. Buttiglione refers to Styczeń’s reflections on truth, particularly those concerning the political context.²⁹⁴ He appreciates the accuracy of his judgment of the relationship between Marxism and liberalism in the context of his criticism of these directions and of how they show truth as something relative.²⁹⁵ He notes the philosopher’s commitment to the defense of unborn children, and the fact he considers the attitude to them as the measure of democracy.²⁹⁶ He concludes: “In his book²⁹⁷ Styczeń proposes another way. On the one hand, he is very much aware of the difficulties of western democracies at the end of our age; on the other, he sees the remedy in an alliance between democracy and the principle of solidarity. The first reason of the present crisis is a false anthropology which has failed to uphold the inseparable relationship

²⁹¹ R. Buttiglione, “Urok polskiej etyki,” in R. Buttiglione, *Etyka wobec historii*, trans. J. Merecki (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2005), p. 317.

²⁹² Zob. T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo*, pp. 439–441, 451–454.

²⁹³ R. Buttiglione, “Urok polskiej etyki,” p. 320.

²⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 320–321,

²⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 326.

²⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 332.

²⁹⁷ This is a reference to T. Styczeń, *Solidarność wyzwala* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1993).

between freedom and truth. Only based on this relationship can democracy be linked to the inviolable value of every human person, protecting them from going down the slippery slope of corruption which opens the road to a new tyranny. The problem of truth is the problem of politics.”²⁹⁸

Buttiglione demonstrated the significance of Styczeń’s philosophy in a conversation he held with him on the joint paper he was supposed to present during a congress organized on October 25, 1996 on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the International Academy of Philosophy in Lichtenstein, concerning Styczeń’s essay entitled “Osobie należy się miłość” [A Person is Owed Love]. Due to Buttiglione’s political engagement, the paper was never delivered, yet the very willingness to present it provided an opportunity for them to discuss it afterwards. The text itself was published in *Ethos*. Buttiglione says: “It seems to me that if we formulate Hume’s problem with due precision, your article contains an explanation, perhaps the only one; it explains what endows man with the unity that makes him a man: this thing is truth, the knowledge of truth. It constitutes man as a subject—or, rather, it co-constitutes him, as obviously this constitution is always preceded by the gift which is his existence. ... This means that truth in the logical sense and truth in the existential sense are strictly related to each other. And also that not only emotions, not only feelings, but the knowledge of truth is what constitutes a person.”²⁹⁹ And adds that only after he had read Styczeń’s essay did he understand how a Catholic interpretation of the thought of Johann Gottlieb Fichte was possible. Styczeń rightly showed, Buttiglione says, that the “Self” becomes separated from the “Non-Self” though an act of self-constitution with respect to truth. Only when man constitutes that which is universal/truth, can he define himself as a subject and distinguish himself from an object.³⁰⁰

The way in which Tadeusz Styczeń captures the relationship between the subject and truth is very important, as it enables a philosophy built on love. He shows that “firstly, without the light of truth

²⁹⁸ R. Buttiglione, “Urok polskiej etyki,” p. 341.

²⁹⁹ “Dzisiejsze moralne zwycięstwo jutro można przegrać. Rozmawiają Rocco Buttiglione i ks. Tadeusz Styczeń,” trans. P. Mikulska, *Ethos* 24, no. 3 (2001), p. 308.

³⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 309.

a real relationship with another is impossible; and secondly—that the light of truth is continuously handed over by one person to another, and that by reflecting the truth of the other we have a much more direct access to truth than by reflecting fragments of truth which can be found in the macrocosm.”³⁰¹

Moreover, Buttiglione believed that Styczeń succeeded in demonstrating the illegitimacy of Hume’s claims about the impossibility of transitioning from indicative to normative statements. What he has demonstrated is “a synthetic unity through which in the knowledge of the particular appears that which is general. At the same time, the knowledge of that which is general sheds light on that which is particular—this way theory and practice come together. ... And it could not be otherwise—or I would negate myself; I can only contradict truth by contradicting myself.”³⁰²

³⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 311.

³⁰² *Ibidem*, p. 317.

GLOSSARY

Affirmation of person: (1) The acceptance of a person just as they are, and recognizing them for their own sake. (2) In personalist ethics—the acceptance of a person and recognizing them in view of their ontic value (dignity) as the norm of morality saying *that* something ought to be done, *what* ought to be done, and *how* this ought to be done to a person in view of their dignity, being their inherent value *par excellence*. Affirmation owed to a person reaches its full potential when a person-subject affirms a person-object without regard to anything (happiness, dictate) other than their dignity, i.e. for their own sake.

Autonomism: The view that the norm of the morality of acts is *within the acting subject* and *depends on the acting subject*.

Common good: Good that is the goal of every individual and the entire human community or of certain societies, in accordance with the social nature of man; the sum of conditions in social life enabling associations or individual society members to achieve their own perfection more fully and easily.

Datum anthropologicum: Data obtained by means of the experience of man as man in the existential and essential aspect, and which is proper to anthropology.

Datum ethicum: Data relevant at the starting point of ethics as a science of morality, being an illuminating universalization of *datum morale*; they are the result of a universalizing and illuminating

perception (intuition) of *datum morale*. Intuition is understood here as direct, intellectual cognitive perception of that which is general in that which is particular, given directly by experience.

Datum metaphisicum: Data (theses) of the metaphysics of man and of general metaphysics, into which the structures of *datum morale* and *datum ethicum* necessarily become built in.

Datum morale: Data of the experience of morality; in personalism, the data which shows: *what* I absolutely ought to do, i.e. the content of obligation or the obligatory content, the content of that which is currently given to be absolutely done; the fact *that* I absolutely ought to do anything (i.e. the fact of obligation)—for example this particular thing; the fact that I *absolutely* ought to do what I ought to do, i.e. the manner in which I ought to do what I ought to do; that what I absolutely ought to do is an obligation to perform *a particular action* in the sense of at least taking a particular decision.

Decision: An act of will, guided by reason, causing the performance of an act and constituting man's moral reality. As such, it is an essential component of man's acts.

Deontologism (*deon*—obligation, duty; *logos*—science, theory) or **deontonomism** (*deon*—obligation, duty; *nomos*—law, rule): (1) A direction or view in ethics that the dictate of a reliable authority constitutes a moral obligation to act and obligates man to perform it. Heteronomous deontologism or deontonomism refers to a dictate-generating authority existing outside of the acting subject, while autonomous deontologism or deontonomism places the dictate-generating authority within the acting subject. (2) A view in ethics that at least with respect to some categories of actions their rightness may be determined already based on their inner content, called subject matter, and not only based on their consequences. This way, certain moral norms would be universally valid.

Due: (1) The content obtained in the experience of morality. (2) When used as a noun, an expression pointing to the dynamism proper to *moral datum* which in its real, concrete occurrence many be captured and expressed in a sentence.

Emotivism: A direction in ethics which treats ethical norms and judgments as a tool to express one's own emotional attitudes; a direction reducing moral statements to the subject's expression, while encouraging others to take a different non-rational attitude.

Ethics: *A discipline of philosophy* encompassing the issues of morality in relation to moral good and evil; studies man's actions, attitudes, man as the acting subject, or attitudes referred to the norm of morality; defines *the essence of moral obligation* (moral good or evil) and its *detailed content* (rightness); ultimately *explains the fact of man's moral act* (metaphysics of morality) and *the genesis of moral evil* (fall), identifying *ways of overcoming it* (ethical soteriology). Such ethics is called normative, in contrast to descriptive ethics which is a theory of ethos (norms of moral conduct actually recognized and practiced in a particular society).

The material subject matter of ethics are human actions (decision, act, conduct), attitudes (actual or habitual dispositions) of the acting subject, or man-person as the doer of an act or subject of an attitude. The formal subject matter of ethics are human actions, attitudes or man as the subject of an action or attitude referred to the norm of morality.

Eudaimonism: A direction in ethics which considers such acts to be morally obligatory that are a necessary condition for achieving happiness which the acting subject necessarily (by nature) aims at as their ultimate goal.

Evaluation: A rule or precept, expressed in a meta-language (linguistic stylization) of morally good conduct, being the result of referring an action (yet to be or already performed) to the norm of morality. Evaluation talks about judgments expressing an obligation or the moral value of an action.

Heteronomism: The view that the norm of the morality of actions is outside of and does not depend on the acting subject.

Human person: Man as an individual substantial being, autonomous in his existence and actions, the subject of his own actions (self), perceived in the aspect of rationality, freedom and responsibility,

and in self-improvement and relations with others; for this reason endowed with dignity which prevents him from being treated instrumentally, but requires him to be affirmed for his own sake.

Imperativism: The view that ethical norms and judgments have no cognitive value but are an instrument for inducing similar attitudes in others.

Independent (autonomous) ethics: Ethics as an *epistemologically and methodologically autonomous discipline* (i.e. independent from other disciplines, including philosophy and theology), having its own proper starting point not reducible to *ad aliud genus*, even though in the aspect of discerning ways of respecting a person it must refer to the science of man, particularly to philosophical anthropology, and ultimately to metaphysics open to the perspective of a Transcendental Being.

Meta-ethics: A philosophical discipline, methodologically and epistemologically independent from ethics or forming its part, being the study (or simply a theory) of ethical theory. The task of meta-ethics is to determine: 1. the specific semiotic (syntactic, semantic, pragmatic) functions of such *terms* as: “morally good,” “morally bad,” “morally right,” “morally due”; 2. the specific nature of morally valuating and morally normative *propositions* (judgments, statements) (categorical imperatives); 3. the *method of deciding* about the acceptance of such judgments, particularly about the cognitive value warranted by these methods to the results achieved by employing them.

Moral act (moral action or deed): A conscious and free act of man considered in relation to a moral norm: this relation (compliance or noncompliance with a norm) is the basis (reason and criterion) for the disjunctive division of acts into morally good and bad ones. In reference to a moral norm, intended acts appear to be either morally obligatory (imperative), impermissible (prohibited), or permissible; and once performed, they appear to have either a positive moral value, a negative moral value (to be anti-valuable), or to be morally neutral. The criteria of the morality of an act—its being good and right—are the intention behind it, its object and the circumstances. In order for a fully morally valuable act to be constituted, i.e. an act of affirmation (love) due to a person from a person, the acting person

must intend to affirm the addressee of their act (the intention of the act as the so-called determinant of its morality), and the act must be objectively suitable for this function, effectively serving perfection of the addressee (the subjective content, or subject matter of the act, and the way in which it is performed, or the circumstances, as determinants of the morality of an act). Every moral act causes intransitive results, i.e. such as the moral act accomplishes by the fact it is performed, and transitive results, i.e. such as the subject, by performing a moral act, accomplishes in the external world.

Moral experience and experience of morality: Moral experience is a direct perception of moral obligation; in the case of personalism—the absolute obligation to affirm a person in view of their dignity. It is the foundation of the experience of morality which is a culturally and socially conditioned ethos.

Moral intuitionism: The view that ethics is based on the subject's inner powers consisting in empathizing with the needs of others, or the so-called moral intuition, claiming that there exists a spontaneous harmony between the individual's attempts at satisfying their own needs and the love of their neighbors.

Moral norm: A rule or precept, expressed in the subjective language (material stylization) of morally good conduct, being the result of referring an action (yet to be or already performed) to the norm of morality; moral norm talks about obligation or the moral value of an action, or the subject of both (man).

Moral obligation: In personalism, a *sui generis* interpersonal relationship whose special and borderline instance is the obligation to affirm one's own person as an intrapersonal relationship. It is a normative reality, referred by nature to the acting subject, addressed to their freedom and calling them to take particular action.

Morally good act: An act consistent with the norm of morality *in the aspect of intention (intentional disposition)*.

Morally right act: An act objectively consistent with the norm of morality *in the aspect of subjective content and circumstances*.

Morally valuable act: An act both morally good and right; the opposite is a morally anti-valuable (ignoble) act, i.e. one that is both morally bad and morally wrong.

Natural law: Universally valid norms of moral conduct; a certain determination of actions having its source in the human nature which encompasses all bearers of this nature, i.e. obligating man with respect to everyone, while at the same time being independent from him and “written into” him, accessible by reason and exerting “pressure” on the will by obliging man to perform a particular action.

Naturalism: A direction in ethics which reduces moral good to the properties of objects which can be known through perception; propositions about good are statements decidable through perception, and ethics is a science in the scientific sense.

Norm of morality: The basic and final criterion for considering an action to be morally good and right (*norma normans*). In eudaimonism, it is happiness; in deontonomism—the dictate of an authority; in personalism—the dignity of the human person.

Personalism: A direction in ethics which considers such action to be morally obligatory as expresses affirmation due to someone or something for the sake of their inherent value, in the case of a person called dignity.

Prescriptivism: A view which treats moral norms and judgments as an instrument of non-rational argumentation in favor of certain prescripts of action.

Teleologism (consequentialism, proportionalism, or utilitarianism—in the narrower sense): A direction in ethics which says that the moral rightness of an action is determined solely by its positive or negative consequences, or advantageous or harmful results.

Teonomism (i.e. voluntarism or heteronomous deontonomism): The view that the moral obligation to act is constituted entirely by an arbitrary decision of God who could, if he wished to, freely change the content of his commandments.

Universally valid moral norm: A norm of morally right action adjusted to human nature, in particular to the objective hierarchy of goods determined by the structure of the human person (natural law). General validity (universality, constancy) of these norms is founded on the essential invariability of the objective structure of the human person, i.e. of human nature.

Utilitarianism: A direction in ethics which considers the so-called “utility principle” to be the moral basis for both individual and collective (political) decisions.

II.

TADEUSZ STYCZEŃ SDS:
SELECTED WRITINGS

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META-ETHICS: A NEW “THING” OR A NEW “WORD”?

Tadeusz Styczeń, “Metaetyka – nowa ‘rzecz’ czy nowe ‘słowo’?” in *Metaetyka. Nowa rzecz czy nowe słowo?*, ed. A. Szostek, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2011, pp. 23–32.

The term “meta-ethics” did not appear in the epistemological dictionary until quite recently. Since then, however, it has become exceedingly popular, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon toolbox of philosophical and moral reflection.¹ One feels compelled to ask about the reasons why it has come into such widespread use and found its way into literature of the subject. Is this an entirely new beginning of some new discipline of science which has never been practiced so far, or is it merely a new name for a discipline which has already been known and practiced? The question, simply put, is this: is meta-ethics a new “thing,” or is it just a new “word” for a “thing” which—perhaps—is not new at all?

Let us begin with the word “meta-ethics” itself. We should first notice the terminological and conceptual context in which it appeared. We can easily see that it has come along such terms as “meta-language,” “meta-science,” “meta-theory.” The introduction of such neologisms into the language of science is the result of the recognition by contemporary theoreticians of knowledge of the need to distinguish between the language used to talk about the *objects* of a particular

¹ This can be seen by reviewing the bibliography on meta-ethics, for example in *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, vol. 3 (New York; London: Routledge, 1967), pp. 117–134.

discipline from the language about the *language*² used to talk about such objects, namely its meta-language, which should in turn be distinguished from the meta-meta-language, and so on. Thus, we should for example distinguish between the language we use to talk about the green of trees or the chemical composition of wood and the language we use to talk about the semiotic or epistemological properties of such terms as “green” or “having a particular chemical composition.”

A precise distinction between the degrees of language, on the one hand, has proved to be the only way to effectively eliminate a number of theoretical difficulties (semiotic antinomies) resulting from the use of otherwise indispensable terms or notions, such as “truth,” “class,” “meaning”;³ on the other hand, it has enabled a systematic reflection on cognitive activities (and their outcome) performed within a particular science. This refers mostly to the description and characteristics of the terminological apparatus specific to a given field, and its specific statements (it is—in most general terms—the semiotics of a particular science or a semiotic analysis of its language), and then to the description and evaluation of the methods, specific to that science, of deciding about its basic statements and arriving at derivative ones (the methodology of a particular science). Thus, on the metalinguistic floor, or on the margin of particular sciences, their corresponding meta-sciences have developed, providing *the theoretical apparatus for a critical self-control of cognitive procedures employed in a given science*. It comes as no surprise, then, that the fact a particular science has its own, properly developed meta-science is considered to be a sign of its methodological maturity; indeed, even of its legitimation authorizing a particular field of knowledge to use the honorable name of science.

Even the above comments alone allow us to understand in most general terms what meta-ethics is about and give us some insight into the relationship between meta-ethics and ethics. While *ethics is a particular theory of a specific object, given experientially at the starting point of research, namely the moral value of an act and the absolute*

² Or, in other words: “the language whose subject is the language we use to talk about objects.”

³ Classical logic had its “degrees of language theory” in the form of so-called *suppositio terminorum*, distinguished from so-called intentions. The distinction between so-called primary and secondary substances served similar purposes.

obligation to perform it,⁴ *meta-ethics is the study (or simply a theory) of this theory*. It is mainly a logical analysis of the language and methods proper to ethics. It represents a semiotic and methodological reflection on ethics.

What we expect from meta-ethics, therefore, is to define for us: 1. the specific semiotic (syntactic, semantic, pragmatic) functions of *terms* like: “morally good,” “morally evil,” “morally right,” “morally due”; 2. the specific nature of morally evaluative *statements* (judgments, propositions) and morally normative *statements* (categorical imperatives); 3. *the methods of deciding* about the acceptance of such judgments, in particular the cognitive value which is warranted by these methods to the results they are used to obtain.

The tasks of meta-ethics listed above are not of the same rank; on the contrary, they are most distinctly arranged into a logical hierarchy. Of primary importance is the *decidability* of basic ethical statements. The problem of the semiotic nature of ethical terms is clearly subordinated to the issue of the epistemological nature of ethical statements, on the other hand. This, in turn, represents a preparatory task, which is instrumental with respect to the primary task of finding a well-based answer to the question: *How—if at all—are basic ethical statements decidable?* One cannot fail to notice that the form of this question is equivalent to the question *whether, and if so, how is ethics possible?* This question is therefore the central problem of meta-ethics.

Such a hierarchical structure of meta-ethical problems is reflected in the contemporary meta-ethics we can actually witness. The term is used here in the plural, as it turns out that not only in ethics, but in meta-ethics as well there is a plurality of views. Various meta-ethicists view and judge ethics differently. And yet, despite the differences in actual solutions, the above-mentioned hierarchy of problems is maintained. At the top, we always see the problem of the decidability of ethical statements. For example, the leading representative of the meta-ethical theory of *intuitionism*, George E. Moore, places the

⁴ The fact that this is a singular object does not in any way diminish its actual subjectivity, just like the singularity of a direct cognitive view, or the singularity of the experience of morality, does not in any way diminish its experiential, empirical character. The implication of the thesis expressed here is a particular methodological concept of philosophical ethics. I have discussed it together with Stanisław Kamiński in the article “Doświadczalny punkt wyjścia etyki,” published in *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* 4, no. 2 (1968), pp. 21–73.

problem of the semiotic nature of the term “good”⁵ to the fore (it is for him the name of a simple property which cannot be subdivided or reduced to empirical attributes), followed by the problem of the value judgment (being a judgment that is both non-analytical and non-empirical), and on this basis considers ethical statements to be intuitively decidable (synthetic *a priori*, synthetic requisite), and ethics to be a set of statements which are non-refutable and certain due to essential intuition.

A similar hierarchical arrangement of meta-ethical problems can be seen in meta-ethical theories antagonistic to Moore’s view—naturalism and emotivism. *Naturalism* (mainly Moritz Schlick) characterizes the term “good” as the name of an empirically verifiable property to show that ethical judgments are a kind of perception judgments, and as such are empirically decidable through confrontation with experience, while ethics is (only) possible as an empirical inductive science (most often in the form of a praxeology—built on an underlay of psychology—of a life that is individually or also socially happy).

Finally, the third partner to the meta-ethical dispute about the nature of ethics—*emotivism*—starts with taking away from the term “good” and other similar terms their naming function, or the function of designating any actual states (there is nothing *a parte rei* as a referent of the term “good”), to claim on this basis that value judgments are beyond the scope of inter-subjectively controlled ways of determining their cognitive value, and that consequently ethics is not possible as a science at all. As a side remark, we are dealing here with a certain methodological peculiarity. For while both of the former meta-ethical theories developed based on a particular ethics, the meta-ethical theory of emotivism believes itself to be a competitor of ethics, pretending not only to autonomy with respect to ethics, but even to exclusivity. It believes that its main task is to demonstrate the illusoriness of ethics: the unreality of its problems and the objectlessness of its statements. Ethics is impossible. Conversely, meta-ethics is possible—indeed, it is indispensable so that the impossibility of ethics can be demonstrated. This view has been held by Alfred J. Ayer, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Rudolf Carnap, Charles L. Stevenson, Hans Reichenbach, Moritz Geiger, William D. Ross, and others.

⁵ William D. Ross will say the same about the term “right.”

Despite the widespread popularization of views, it should be pointed out that all of these theories share one common concern. Its object is always the question about the decidability of basic ethical statements, in other words—the question about the possibility of ethics. Indeed, all other questions and problems are treated in these theories either as preparation to the posing and solving of the problem of decidability, or as the consequence of this main, overriding problem. In other words, this problem is posed in the meta-ethics discussed here as a goal in itself, as the supreme and ultimate cognitive goal of meta-ethics.

There are no obstacles to putting the matter this way. After all, everyone may choose their object of study at will. One may also, without defining any further goals—whether theoretical or practical—ask out of pure cognitive passion: how is ethics possible? In particular, this question may be asked irrespective of one’s commitment to the task which *an ethicist undertakes as an ethicist*.

It is an entirely different matter, however, whether *an ethicist as an ethicist must not* at a certain stage in their studies, or in result of the natural inner development of their own set of ethical problems, in order to solve them and provide an ultimate substantiation—*ask precisely the same question*: how are basic ethical statements decidable? Is the ethicist not compelled to do this in view of the commitment to their own methodological “duties of the profession”? Can they provide, without posing and solving the problem of the decidability of ethical statements—just as they have committed to do—an ultimately *substantiated answer* to their basic, ethical question? In short: *can an ethicist be a moral philosopher without doing meta-ethics?*

Naturally, views of ethics and approaches to ethical problems may vary. They are mostly dependent on the basic views of the very *subject* of philosophy and *goal* of philosophical knowledge.⁶ Ethics is,

⁶ The object of philosophy used to be understood as reality itself (existence), or its cognitive perception (awareness), or even the symbolic expression of the latter (language). The goal of philosophical knowledge was believed to be the final answer to the question “why” in the category concerned. The point was to answer the question about the subjective or objective conditions for requisite knowledge, or about how states of affairs or events are ultimately explained in the ontic order. Various possible combinations of the subject matter and goal of philosophical knowledge are possible. In effect, they produce various styles of doing philosophy.

after all, an integral part of philosophy.⁷ The styles of doing philosophy are therefore vividly reflected in the ways of doing ethics. There is no room for us to investigate this matter in more depth here.⁸ In any case, one thing must be made clear: if there is no reliable ethics outside of philosophy, and no reliable philosophy without asking questions like “why at all?” and looking for final, *per ultimas causa* answers to them, then some kind of “meta” reflection must be an integral part of the inventory of the works of a philosopher, and a moral philosopher in particular. For if an ethicist does not want to be limited to questions and answers about “what,” but both under the pressure of theoretical conundrums and man’s existential needs, faced with the data of moral experience, feels forced to ask: why?—for example, why is man obliged to do anything at all?—and if it then turns out that such questions, due to their very nature, require final answers which “deal with the matter” once and for all, then a moral philosopher would not stay true to his own cognitive agenda unless he “ultimately” authenticated for us the reliability of those tools based on which he persuades us to accept his proposed solutions as final, or “ultimately” substantiated. Thus, a moral philosopher cannot at a certain stage of “his job” fail to ask: how are basic ethical statements decidable? This means, however, that there is no other way to solve the main problem of ethics but by solving the main problem of meta-ethics, or, in brief: no reliable ethics is possible without meta-ethics. Indeed, any aspiring ethics, a moral philosophy, must have a meta-ethics as its supplementary element in order to legitimize its methodological structure.⁹

⁷ Attempts at treating ethics independently from philosophy, in imitation of empirical sciences, have always been ephemeral. Cf. T. Czeżowski, “Etyka jako nauka empiryczna,” *Kwartalnik Filozoficzny* 18, no. 2 (1949), pp. 161–171, and a English version of this article: T. Czeżowski, A.M. Galon, “Ethics as an Empirical Science,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 14, no. 2 (1953), pp. 163–171. Apart from Tadeusz Czeżowski, similar attempts have been made in Poland by Tadeusz Kotarbiński, who links them to an extent to certain kind of philosophy, however.

⁸ For the avoidance of doubt, a distinction should be made here between ethics which deals exclusively with the subjective study of its own subject from ethics which, aside from such subjective study, also includes a methodological self-reflection. Naturally, it is only in the latter case that ethics deserves to be called a *methodologically mature and consistently philosophical discipline*.

⁹ It would be very interesting and useful to perform detailed historical and analytic studies in this regard.

If the result of this analysis is correct, it should be confirmed by the history of ethics. Any serious and well-considered attempt at building a philosophical ethics should incorporate a properly broad margin of meta-ethical reflection. In fact, the most outstanding moral philosophers of all times provide us with excellent examples of just such a way of understanding their tasks and obligations of “the profession.”

As is well known, the personal union of the father of ethics and logic in the person of Socrates is not a simple coincidence, but a dependence. It was for the purposes of ethics that Socrates developed the logic of precise definitions. In particular, it was for the purpose of building knowledge about virtue that he constructed the foundations of the first ever theory of definition, thus preparing grounds for the theory of science. In this context it becomes clear why science “became aware of itself” first as knowledge that is necessary and real, that is—as philosophy. Was it not so because the science which in this case served as the material for reflection was ethics, or moral philosophy?¹⁰

Aristotle had philosophy in mind when he built the logical apparatus which is still admired today in his treatises, later referred to as the *Organon*. And the reader of his *Nicomachean Ethics* will find in it a great number of very interesting comments and descriptions of meta-ethical nature (e.g. about phronetic knowledge) interwoven with his ethical analyses.

A broad margin of meta-ethical deliberations is also to be found in the moral treatises of Medieval philosophers and theologians: including interpretation of the basic principle of natural law, or the so-called synderesis (pre-conscience), as a “*modi dicendi per se*” kind of proposition, or a statement that is analytically decidable.

The reorientation in the understanding of the subject matter of philosophy which has taken place at the threshold of the early modern period largely contributed to a revival of the meta-ethical type

¹⁰ Naturally, it is difficult for us today to determine how much of this should be credited to Socrates, and how much to his genius disciple, Plato. We know the philosopher Socrates mainly as the central figure of Plato’s *Dialogues*. Cf. W. Jäger, *Paideia*, vol. 1–2 (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1962–1964); M.A. Krąpiec, *Realizm ludzkiego poznania* (Poznań, 1959), pp. 336ff, 514, 66–76, 126–137; J. Maritain, *Moral Philosophy: An Historical and Critical Survey of the Great Systems* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1964), pp. 3–18.

of reflection. The author of this reorientation was John Locke. The most important attempt he made was that to provide ethics with a model of mathematical knowledge, which was followed by a similar attempt by Baruch Spinoza. And we must not fail to take notice of contrary attempts at including ethics among disciplines which are empirically decidable (Francis Hutcheson's "*moral feeling*," David Hume's "*moral sense*"). As for Hume, we must not overlook his famous meta-ethical thesis on the impossibility of moving from statements about what is to statements about what ought to be, a thesis which Max Black called Hume's guillotine for ethics.¹¹

Finally, the monumental work of Immanuel Kant, particularly his *Metaphysics of Morals* with its central question: how is a categorical imperative possible—a work which has been and is most likely to remain an all-time bestseller in meta-ethical literature.

Now, as we enter modern times and the current meta-ethical discussion between naturalism, intuitionism and emotivism bringing in such a wealth of historical heritage, we are not at all taken aback by any novelty of these problems. On the contrary: we feel quite "at home" here; indeed, we have at our disposal sufficient methodological equipment to enter into an effective discussion. Thus the thesis that reliable ethics is not possible without meta-ethics turns out to be both demonstrated as to the facts, and historically confirmed. For both an insight into the "work" of the moral philosopher, and a review of historically presented ethics reveals to us meta-ethics in the very core of ethics.

And this way we come back to the question asked in the beginning. If meta-ethical reflection turns out to be just as old as ethics itself, then is not contemporary meta-ethics merely a new name for a "thing" as old as ethics?

Despite the suggestion that presents itself to us here, the novelty of contemporary meta-ethics is not merely a novelty of the name. The novelty of contemporary meta-ethics—aside from the new name—consists in the emergence of a different *attitude* of the scholar to meta-ethical problems, a different *intention*, or *purpose* of taking them up. For while classical—let us say—anonymous meta-ethicists

¹¹ We are not making any assertions here about the legitimacy of this judgment. For more, see: T. Styczeń, "W sprawie przejścia od zdań orzekających do zdań powinnościowych," *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 14, no. 2 (1966), pp. 65–80.

engaged in meta-ethical problems in order to solve ethical problems, thus treating meta-ethics *instrumentally*, most contemporary meta-ethicists engage in meta-ethical issues *for their own sake* (finally), or at least without explicitly declaring any purposes serving the cause of ethics.¹² Such change of optics in the approach to meta-ethical problems has brought about an increase in the volume meta-ethical writings, as was to be expected. For what for an ethicist was only a stage in the journey to his goal, having now become a goal in itself, has attracted disproportionately more attention. Which probably explains the rather widespread belief in the absolute novelty of meta-ethics.

It appears, however, that aside from the difference in the approach to meta-ethical problems pointed out here, the issues themselves are identical both in anonymous classical meta-ethics, and in contemporary meta-ethics, now acting under its own proper name.¹³

As has already been mentioned, both approaches: the “instrumental” one of classical meta-ethicists, and the “final” approach of contemporary ones are equally legitimate and permissible. Both, however, may face certain threats.

The final approach risks exercising its powers of meta-ethical reflection on material that is not of the best quality, that is—on various pseudo-ethics, and then applying its findings to all ethics in general, or, in other words, to ethics as such. While attempting to avoid this danger, one may easily go as far as either treating them all as equal under the banner of “pseudo-knowledge”—and limit one’s analyses to moral expressions used in colloquial speech; or distinguishing one

¹² The instrumental approach to the issue of the decidability of ethical statements does not necessarily mean that the purposes in view of which ethicists discussed meta-ethical problems as part of ethics must be purely practical, moralizing, or propagandist in nature. The goal of philosophical ethics, just as that of any reliable philosophy, is of a theoretical nature (*propter ipsum scire*), but this does not need to mean that theoretical answers sought by ethicist do not have practical relevance. It seems that some meta-ethicists have a tendency to narrow down the tasks of ethics in order to emphasize the distinctness of meta-ethics even more.

¹³ The differences would probably be greater in terms of the proposed meta-ethical solutions and standpoints. Even in this respect, however, we should not overemphasize the differences. Indeed, even ultra-modern meta-ethical views may be derived from protagonists of ancient times. Wittgenstein, for instance, cannot see any material difference between the standpoint of emotivism and the views of Medieval voluntarists.

of them “on account of compliance” with a previously adopted or otherwise shared theory of knowledge, by way of a dogmatic apriorism instead of an earnest confrontation with the domain of moral phenomena. In fact, both versions may overlap, resulting in a rather quaint “analysis of colloquial speech” which instead of being a report on the actual use of moral expressions, which it claims to be, consists in persuading people how they use certain terms. Even cursory knowledge of views presented by some contemporary meta-ethicists (particularly from Anglo-Saxon circles) is sufficient to see that the eventualities mentioned above are more than just possibilities.

The risk involved in the instrumental approach, on the other hand, consists in that in a hasty effort to arrive at the final result of ethics one may easily narrow down, or even leave out the stage of an authenticating presentation of the tools and methods which are necessary to make the final result achievable and philosophical (ultimately substantiated). Moral philosophy which has been sterilized of meta-ethics will prove to be sterile itself in the end; indeed, it will cease to be ethics understood as a theory which provides the ultimate explanation for particular moral experiences.

Fortunately, an accurate identification of the sources of threats faced by the approaches to meta-ethics mentioned above suggests a very simple and effective method of avoiding the mistakes and errors resulting from partiality. This method consists in continually going beyond the barriers of one’s own “school” and constantly confronting one’s own attitude to research, study methods and findings with the attitudes, methods and findings of other researchers in a particular field, or those fields to which it is directly related.

THE PHENOMENON OF CONSCIENCE AND MORAL OBLIGATION

Tadeusz Styczeń, “Etyka niezależna?,” in *Etyka niezależna (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 2)*, ed. K. Krajewski, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2012, pp. 304–319.

If all that Kant set out to do was a misconceived exercise, was it not a waste of the Reader’s time and effort to be introduced to his concepts? It seems that the effort was not fruitless at all. The lesson we have learned allows us to have a better view of the conditions on which authority becomes an instance which not only does not violate the autonomy of the subject, but makes room for its fuller expression as well. These conditions have already been suggested to us by the lesson of Abraham. In spite of the drama involved in the conflict it presents, the lesson was a positive one. The lesson of Kant, demonstrating to us an apparently suggestive image of a “legislator without a reason,” is a thoroughly negative one. While stirring us to object, it sharpens our attention and points it in the right direction. “*Per opposita cognoscitur.*” Let us then go back to the context which Kant believed, not without reason, to be the most appropriate for deliberations on moral obligation. This context is conscience, something in us which commands us: prohibits or orders, approves or condemns. No one before Kant had made as much effort to theoretically secure and underpin the truth we sense to be self-evident—that an act may only be morally good if it is consistent with the dictate of one’s conscience; indeed, that its being in agreement with the conscience is enough to constitute its moral goodness. Where was the mistake, therefore? It consisted in that in an effort to eliminate the possibility of conflict between authority and

conscience, the dictate of conscience was defined as the *constitutivum* of moral obligation, i.e. a condition that is both necessary and sufficient; in short: the entire reason of moral obligation. The dictate of conscience, while indeed being a necessary condition for the moral obligation to act, needs to be accompanied by something else in order for moral obligation to exist. Let us recall that an act consistent with the dictate of conscience is, indeed, always morally good, but it may at the same time not be morally right.¹ Following one's own judgment about the necessity of an action, one may do harm or damage, after all. The moral goodness of an act is then owed—*sit venia ultimo verbo!*—by the agent only to the fact he made a mistake, that he erred. The error of conscience “saved” him from moral fault. It was the only reason why he acted well, even though he acted wrongly! Thus, the entire paradox of the situation consists precisely in that the dictate of conscience, while warranting the subject's autonomy if it is defined as a condition precedent of the obligation to act, becomes the undoing of autonomy if it is considered as the sole factor constituting the moral obligation to act both in fact and content. In other words, a dictate of conscience, despite being a self-dictate of the subject, still needs a reason for itself in order to constitute an obligation which morally commits the subject to act. Otherwise, it would constitute pressure “obligating” the subject under the banner of moral obligation to violate his own autonomy. Indeed, it is in failure to see this that the illusion consists of all those who, following Kant directly or through the mediation of Sartre, saw in the so-called principle of authenticity the sole rule of a morally equitable act: one that is both morally good and right. Consistency between action and conscience is supposed to warrant not only the moral goodness, but also the moral rightness of an act. This “self-dictate,” or “conviction,” indeed a central phenomenon in the field of morality, was not analyzed at sufficient depth. This conviction which is the “voice of conscience” points with all of its essence beyond itself, and derives all reason for its own existence from being a transparent sign which reveals to the subject an extra-subjective world, the world of persons and extra-personal

¹ This widely recognized distinction cannot be upheld in Kant's concept, where an act that is morally good is seen *eo ipso* as morally right. The same applies to all other concepts which, in line with Kant's, claim that the authenticity of an act is the constitutive principle of a morally good act.

values, which demands affirmation from him for the sake of truth about that world. It is that world that becomes the object and reason for the obligatory judgment of conscience, the self-dictate. In its role as a sign, conscience thus plays the role of its messenger to the subject, a messenger who has in fact been sent into the world as his scout by the subject himself. The message it communicates is a message from the trans-subjective world, while being at the same time the message of the envoy itself. The demands of the trans-subjective world thus cannot be satisfied other than by relying on the message of the conscience, and acting on it. The message may sometimes prove to be very imperfect. What can one do, however, knowing that it is the only way the subject can connect to the obligation-generating world? The subject must rely entirely on this message, which does not in the least remove the subject's concern about the content and reliability of the information it provides. This was an illustrative description. Let us now try to verify this illustration.

Elementary experience tells us that we are subject to moral obligation, that we simply discover it as something given and set to us. Not only do we not establish it, but—which must be stressed in opposition to Kant—we are not in a position to establish it. For if the existence of a moral obligation to act were the result of a legislative act of the subject himself, then the subject would be in a position to cancel it in the same way in which he called it into existence: by the power of his own will. In this respect, Kant's thesis has the entire experience of morality against it, including his own statements in which, oblivious of his theory, he gives expression, in a moving way at times, to this experience by saying that two things fill his heart with ever increasing awe and respect: "the starry sky above me and the moral law within me." With a matter-of-factness similar to that with which he asserts the real presence of stars, the subject experiences that his conscious and free "I" is "beset" by "the moral law within me," or moral obligation. It is, moreover—which Kant rightly, though mistakenly defends—a non-conditional obligation in the sense that it does not depend on any "I will" on the part of the subject as its condition, and cannot be reduced to such "I will" in any way. In this regard, it is superior and exterior to any aspirations and wishes of the subject. It is an appeal, a demand, directed to the will from the outside. Does the independence of this obligation from any "I will" on the part of the subject necessarily mean that it is—as claimed by

Kant—a self-dictate of the subject which is not substantiated with any reasons?² The “besetting” of the “I” by the obligation is revealed most explicitly in that the subject, in spite of expressing it in his own judgment of obligation, or a “self-dictate”: “This is what I ought to do!” does not for a moment cease discovering this state of being beset by obligation. The “self-dictate” is simply “self-information” about the obligation. Its legitimacy does not consist in the fact it is issued, but in that it accurately expresses that to which it applies and about which it informs. The object to which it applies and about which it informs is the obligation, really given and addressed to the subject, to perform a certain act. The discovery of this obligation, its being recognized by the subject as an obligation addressed to himself, is performed, naturally, by way of an appropriate act of the subject—the act of knowledge. Two observations are equally important here:

- (1) it is an act of knowledge, or a *judgment* by the subject; and
- (2) it is the subject’s *own* act of knowledge, his *own* judgment.

As an act of knowledge, this judgment is an expression of an extra-subjective reality. The fact it is a peculiar reality is a different matter. It is a normative reality, a reality which in its very essence is referred to the acting subject, addressed to his freedom and calling on him to perform a certain action. This reality does not in the least cease to be a reality because of this, however. An unreal obligation would not be an obligation. It is this obligation as something real that is asserted in the judgment made by the subject. In this function, this judgment does not differ from any other judgment asserting real states of affairs. This is the function of a judgment, after all, as a sign which reveals reality.³ The peculiarity of this judgment consists in

² It is worthwhile noting that Kant was not consistent. For this reason, there are within his ethical system categories which play the role of reasons for moral obligation we are looking for here. This refers to the category of person as a goal in itself. From the point of view of Kant’s moralism, this category is superfluous, and introduced into the system, it explodes its formalism. I have devoted a paragraph to this issue entitled “The hidden moral experience” in my book entitled *Problem możliwości etyki jako empirycznie uprawomocnionej i ogólnie ważnej teorii moralności* (pp. 96–109). In my opinion, the correct intuitions in both of Kant’s ethical concepts may and should—after appropriate review—be treated as components of a single coherent view of ethics.

³ These judgements, expressing an unconditional obligation of the subject to take particular action, take the grammatical form of a normative statement.

that the reality it asserts determines the very form of the judgment, including its grammar. For it can be no other than a normative, obligatory judgment. If it is not so explicitly, then it is so implicitly. The grammatical form of the “dictate” could, and has indeed, mislead many. One could easily assume that an “ought” judgment is not the subject’s act of knowledge, an act of the subject’s connection to trans-subjective reality, but an act of will establishing on its own the entire “reality” of this “dictate,” an act establishing the obligation to act.

The other distinctive feature of this kind of judgment is that it is the subject’s own act of knowledge. The subject only learns and can only learn what he ought, and what it is that he ought, from a single source: his own act of knowledge. After all, anyone else’s assistance in recognizing what the subject ought may only concern the subject to the extent that he finally recognizes this obligation himself—even if only with the help of someone else; in other words, to the extent it becomes the object of his own judgment, as long as he recognizes it. In this regard, Kant’s analysis aimed at characterizing an act of conscience as a self-dictate is correct. We must not, however, understand this self-dictate other than so that it is about information on how the

This is understandable considering the “nature of things” which they communicate to the subject. There is a rather widespread belief nowadays that these judgements do not have any logical value, and therefore the grammatical form of statement is inappropriate for them. Having a too powerful an ally in moral experience, we dare to object to this prevalent fashion. Based on the same experience, also Czeżowski and other logisticians (who are ethicists as well) point out further parallels existing between so-called descriptive statements and those which prescribe certain actions as morally imperative. Such statements may, for instance, just like any other, be preceded by the expression: “It is true that” or “It is not the case that.” Moreover, even the most ardent opponents of the logical value of normative statements, entirely forgetful of the demands of consistency, perform the same logical operations on them as they do on “descriptive” statements. In fact, they should not only refrain from doing this for the sake of consistency, but they would simply not be able to do this if ethical judgments belonged to some other logical category than utterances which are liable to such treatment. Cf. T. Czeżowski, “Dwojakie normy,” *Etyka* 1 (1966) pp. 145–155; T. Czeżowski, “Etyka jako nauka empiryczna,” *Kwartalnik Filozoficzny* 18, no. 2 (1949), pp. 161–171; T. Czeżowski, “Czym są wartości,” in T. Czeżowski, *Filozofia na rozdrożu. Analizy filozoficzne* (Warszawa: PWN, 1965). Cf. also: J. Kalinowski, “Teoria zdań normatywnych,” *Studia Logica* 1 (1953) pp. 113–146; J. Kalinowski, *Teoria poznania praktycznego* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1960); J. Kalinowski, *Le problème de la vérité en morale et en droit* (Lyon: Editions Emmanuel Vitte, 1967).

subject should act, which concerns him only to the extent it becomes self-information. There are two important consequences to this.

If a moral obligation exists for the subject only to the extent it is realized by him in a relevant judgment issued by the subject himself, then the subject has no possibility of bringing his actions in line with this obligation other than by acting in line with what he learns about it from his own judgment. Therefore, moral commitment to act must take the form of an absolute imperative to respect his own understanding of what he ought, in absolute obedience to the “voice of conscience.” There is and there can be no obligation morally valid for the subject until it obtains the approval of his conscience. This is why even in the case of a collision between the dictate of conscience and the dictate of authority, which survives even though the subject has performed an in-depth analysis of the pros and cons, the subject cannot comply with the dictate of authority against his conscience. He “cannot” means he “must not.” This is the essence of the autonomy of the subject of moral action.⁴ It is a negative approach to the matter, however. It must be supplemented with a positive one.

⁴ Here is what Gilson writes about Thomas Aquinas: “For example—and let us take what in Christian eyes would be extreme examples—‘To believe in Christ is good in itself and necessary for salvation: but the will does not tend thereto except inasmuch as it is proposed by reason. Consequently, if it be proposed by the reason as something evil, the ill tends to it as to something evil; not as if it were evil in itself, but because it is evil accidentally, on account of the way in which reason apprehends it’ [I-II, 19,5, Concl.]. St. Thomas Aquinas holds, then, that a will that tends to something really good as though it were an evil, by the very fact that it forsakes reason, even an erroneous reason, is an evil will. Conversely, to persecute Christ was clearly wrong, nothing could make such action good: nevertheless, if His persecutors, or those of His disciples, merely acted in accordance with their own conscience, then they sinned only by ignorance; their fault would have been much more serious if, against the voice of conscience, they had spared Him [*Scito te ipsum*, XIV, col. 657 D]. This affirmation of Abelard’s is quite in accordance with what the Thomists were soon to be saying: *voluntas discordans a ratione errante est contra conscientiam, ergo voluntas discordans a ratione errante est mala*” (E. Gilson, *Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, pp. 351–352). This right and obligation of the subject to always act in accordance with his own conscience corresponds to the obligation of all other persons to respect this right. This moral obligation has also been legally regulated in the *Declaration of Human Rights* enacted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948 in Paris. On the part of the Church, it was solemnly expressed in the *Decree on Religious Freedom* enacted by the Second Vatican Council and signed by Paul VI in Rome on 7 December 1965. Cf. M.A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek i prawo naturalne* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1975), p. 245.

Moral obligation as a reality addressed to the freedom of the subject certainly limits this freedom. Does it not enslave him, and thus cancel the subject's autonomy? The essential role of the act of knowledge needs to be emphasized here. The subject's act of learning something is at the same time an act of recognizing the truth about a state of affairs ascertained by the subject, an act which speaks "in favor" of the truth of that which is being learned. This way, the obligation to act ascertained by the subject's act enters most profoundly into the subject's interior, encompassing, so to say, his entire free "I" from the inside. It comes as no surprise, as this happens on the strength of his own assertion expressed in an "ought" judgment. Thanks to this regularity, something peculiar takes place: moral obligation not only does not infringe the inner freedom of the subject, but quite on the contrary, it provides an opportunity for his freedom to become manifest in a way that is most appropriate to his autonomy. For the subject, by deciding to perform an act which satisfies a moral obligation, ultimately chooses that which he finds to be true, having discovered it as an obligation. Deciding to act on an obligation which the subject has recognized and acknowledged, he stays true to himself. Any other action would mean giving in to some kind of violence. One should not believe, however, that an act which satisfies the voice of conscience is thus always easy, or that succumbing to various kinds of violence is never a temptation. It certainly is a temptation, and sometimes a very strong one. An act of will which in such conditions confirms the subject's judgment about what he ought to do is therefore an act of most definitive self-determination.

Traditional ethics had already proclaimed the autonomy of the subject before Kant, proposing that the conscience is the ultimate norm of morality. This ethics, by stressing the duty to always act in accordance with one's conscience (even an erring conscience must be acted upon!) was nevertheless able not to overlook something else, equally important, which we will not find either in Kant or in Sartre. Yes, it is indisputably true that only our own judgment may morally obligate us, since it is this judgment alone, after all, that informs us of our obligations. It is equally indisputably true, however, that our own judgment obligates us because it is a judgment, or an act of knowledge. Thus, it obligates us not insofar and not only because it is our own and has been issued by ourselves, but because it is a communicate about what subjectively obligates us. The judgment does not in itself

create a moral obligation. It only communicates it to be taken note of by the subject, though in this role it is, as we have seen, irreplaceable. This is why traditional ethics, by emphasizing the fact that the conscience is the ultimate norm of morality, also hastens to add that it is a norm of morality that is subjectively final. The conscience is bound to err, just as human knowledge is bound to err in any other, non-moral area. If the subject cannot refuse to respect his own conscience, neither can he refuse to control it lest he finds himself in a tragic situation: strictly obeying a conscience which is not of the “best assay.” This is why the requirement of traditional ethics that we continuously control our own moral recognitions, that we keep improving the culture of our conscience (the virtue of prudence) is an understandable supplement to the postulate which expresses the need to strictly obey the dictates of our own conscience. The fact both of these postulates are formulated in a single breath is a most meaningful evidence of how profoundly the masters of old investigated the essence of the phenomenon of conscience.⁵

Moral obligation to act is thus given to the subject always and only in his own judgment. Consequently, a morally good act may only be performed in result of its being in agreement with one’s own conviction of the obligation to perform it. This obligation is given in a judgment, however, which, as an act of knowledge, transcends the act of judgment itself, revealing the obligation as its object.⁶ This reveals the trans-subjective character of moral obligation, its extra-subjective origin. The subject who makes a judgment about the need to

⁵ Cf. Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, particularly vol. 2, Chapter 10: “Roztropność, cnota dobrze wychowanego sumienia.”

⁶ “‘Do good and avoid evil’ is the first principle of conscience as *synderesis* and the elementary formula of all human *praxis*. To do this, man must constantly transcend himself in conscience in the direction of true good. This is the fundamental direction of the transcendence which is the property or characteristic of the human person (*proprium personae*). Without this transcendence, without as it were outgrowing one’s self in the direction of truth and good, willed and chosen in the light of the truth, *the personal subject* would not be entirely *himself* [italics by T.S.]. This is why we do not enhance the personal properties of man in analysing his acts of knowledge or will and their connected world of values unless in so doing we bring to the surface the transcendence inherent in these acts. This is done through reference to truth and good as the true or honest, that is, as willed and chosen on the principle of truth. This is evident from the analysis of conscience.” K. Wojtyła, “The Person: Subject and Community,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 33, no. 2 (1979), p. 286.

act is convinced about it not so much because it was him who made the judgment, but because he is confident about its truthfulness, its objective validity. This is what forced him to make it. Such confidence exists only when the subject conjectures—at least—that his judgment is true. It is this very property of the “ought” judgment that most explicitly reveals its “transparency” to the object, its symbolic, transitive nature. Such judgment is an “ought” judgment not as an act, but as a sign in which the obligation-generating “thing,” its object, is directly revealed. Therefore, it is not only the power or strength of the confidence (*evidentia subiectiva*) with which the subject upholds a judgment that is the decisive criterion of its validity. It is the very obligation-generating “thing,” being “perceived,” that upholds the validity of the judgment, by taking over the role of an impartial gauge of its objective cognitive value (*evidentia obiectiva*). This is immediately made evident when the subject’s confidence about the obligation to act collides with the judgment of another subject. He will then try to persuade the other party to the dispute about the validity of his own judgment. Will he ever invoke the fact that he is the author of the judgment, or refer to the depth of his conviction? Instead, he will look for an effective way of presenting to the other party the “thing” which generates the obligation.⁷ And he expects the same of the other party, as a condition for accepting their standpoint. The same happens when the other party is someone in authority. We can do no other than ask about the reason, about the basis for the imperative.

What, then, is this obligation-generating “thing” which is the object and the basis for the “ought” judgment made by the subject? What might be an adequate reason for this call upon the subject to

⁷ “The truth on which the obligation depends moves to the foreground. ... Conscience conceived in its entirety is an individual effort of the person aimed at perceiving truth in the domain of values. It is first a search for truth and an inquiry into it before it becomes a certainty and a judgment. Clearly, conscience is not always certain—and neither is it always true, or in agreement with the reality of good. And yet this only confirms that it must be linked to the order of truth, and not just to consciousness alone. In this light, talking about an act as though it were merely “conscious” appears to be rather inadequate.” Even if the person-subject is objectively wrong, having fallen victim to a mistaken recognition, even then he acts—and cannot act properly other than—on the presumption that his judgment is true. “A fact of conscience is not subjective to such an extent that it is not inter-subjective to a certain degree as well.” K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn* (Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne, 1969), pp. 167, 169.

“transcend himself,” the challenge which is the contexture of every moral “ought” judgment? This “thing” that generates obligation par excellence is the dignity of the person. We do not need anything else besides it to “realize” the fact of a moral obligation, and at the same time we find in it everything that constitutes it and makes it unconditional. The person, by the very fact of being who he is, is one who should be affirmed for his own sake. Any other “sakes” for which he should be affirmed, for example in order to achieve happiness, or to comply with some authoritative dictates, are not *à propos*. The subject, being a person himself, does not exist other than in the field of the appeal addressed to him from the world of persons that they be recognized in this dignity. The subject is a person in the world of persons already by the fact that as a person-subject he always remains in a relationship to himself as a person-object. He encounters a person already in himself, and is not able to exit the circle drawn by this person’s dignity. It is in the obligation to affirm the person-object, both in others and in oneself, in view of this dignity, that experience identifies the essence of moral obligation.⁸

Naturally, the instance which generates moral obligation as a fact: that something ought to be done, also defines the measure of that which ought to be done, and the manner in which it ought to be done. If the normans of *that*, of *what*, and of *how* something is due by a person to a person is the personal dignity of the addressee, being a value inherent par excellence, then affirmation due to a person only reaches its proper end if a person-subject affirms a person-object irrespective of anything else (happiness, dictate) other than this person’s dignity, i.e. for the person himself. Consequently, moral obligation rules out any instrumental treatment of a person by another person. In this sense, it is an unconditional obligation which

⁸ “The most perfect and most complete example of an obligation released by a value [dignity of a person] along the positive line is and will certainly remain the evangelical commandment ‘You shall love’. Along this line, the value simply releases the obligation by its essential content and the power of attraction related to this content. This content and its power stops, so to say, at the threshold of the person—and it is the threshold of truth where obligation begins” (ibidem, p. 175). This may be seen as another way of expressing the “personalist norm” known from *Love and Responsibility*: “The person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love.” K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility* (London: Collins, 1981), p. 18.

does not in the least mean that it is without reason, as Kant believed. It has its objective reason in the dignity of the person.

Not only the way in which a person is affirmed by a person is objectively programmed by the dignity of a person, however. Also the content of the acts of affirmation is not left to the discretion of the person-subject: it is determined by the structure of the one to whom affirmation is due. A person is endowed with this structure by the very fact of his coming into existence. It may thus be called nature. The person-subject does not, therefore, determine the content of the acts of affirmation (equity), but is always faced with the task of recognizing it in the objective structure of the person-addressee.

The personal addressee of affirmation also requires the personal presence of the affirmer in the act of affirmation that is due to him. Therefore, the person of the addressee would not be affirmed by the person-subject as a person, if he was affirmed only in an act of cognitive recognition, expressed in a judgment of the "You are a person, not a thing" kind. Neither would he be affirmed as a person if the person-subject considered him only in aesthetic terms as a *sui generis ars*: "I have admiration for your dignity." The person of the addressee is only affirmed as a person if the entire personal dynamism of the affirmer is present in the act of affirmation. This dynamism is only revealed in action as an act of free choice, an act which at the same time engages the entire mechanism of external actions which the person-subject is capable of performing. By his act, the person-subject totally recognizes and maximally confirms all that which he has already partially (in cognitive, aesthetic terms) recognized in the person-addressee. In the act of affirmation, the person-subject, in this way being immanent in his act, offers a gift of himself to the person being affirmed. Giving himself in the act of affirming the person of the addressee for his sole sake, he acts selflessly, he "transcends himself." At the same time, however, this action brings about, as a side effect, an integrity which runs down to the very depths of existence. The refusal to duly affirm another person inevitably results in a fracture in the inner integrity of the person-subject. For by refusing to affirm the person-addressee by an act which he has previously recognized as something due to the person-addressee, the person-subject defies and fractures his own self.

The affirmation of a person for the sake of that person's dignity is sometimes called love. This name is fully deserved, since the essential

feature of love is selflessness. What, then, is the moral obligation being the object of the judgment of one's conscience? It is love as something due from a person to a person. This is the warp, the essential content of any judgment of conscience, irrespective of what particular content is expressed by such judgment at a particular time. The moral obligation which is dictated to the subject by his conscience is always an obligation towards someone, and always an obligation for the sake of someone, irrespective of whether this someone is perceived by the subject as the dignity of his own person, or that of others.⁹ One could also say that moral obligation—due to a person by a person—represents a *sui generis* interpersonal relationship, where the obligation to affirm one's own person is its special, borderline case as an intra-personal relationship.

Thus, the “thing” that generates obligations is a person on account of that person's dignity. Applying the analogy of attribution, this dignity may be called a morally legislative authority.¹⁰ It is significant, however, and noteworthy that this legislator, person as dignity, generates dictates without issuing any positive orders. It commands in the way in which the man laying by the road, beaten unconscious, “commanded” the “merciful Samaritan” to take particular action. These dictates, then, are formed by the person-subject when making “ought” judgments. We cannot disagree with Kant here. Once again, however, the adequate reason for making them is drawn by the subject—contrary to Kant's claims—not from his spontaneous activity, but from the truth about the dignity of the person-addressee.

⁹ Wojtyła has more to say on this: “If true love awakens in me, it bids me seek the true good where the object of my love is concerned. In this way, affirmation of the worth of another person is echoed in affirmation of the worth of one's own person ...” (*Love and Responsibility*, p. 138). Cf. also: K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, op. cit.; T. Styczeń, *Problem możliwości etyki jako empirycznie uprawomocnionej i ogólnie ważnej teorii moralności* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1972), and T. Styczeń, *Zarys etyki* (Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, 1974); A. Rodziński, *U podstaw kultury moralnej* (Warszawa: Ośrodek Dokumentacji i Studiów Społecznych, 1980); A. Rodziński, “Osoba wśród wartości,” *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 23, no. 2 (1975), pp. 5–10; T. Styczeń, A. Szostek, “Uwagi o istocie moralności,” *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 22, no. 2 (1974), pp. 19–33; A. Szostek, “Pozycja osoby w strukturze moralności,” *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 24, no. 2 (1976), pp. 41–62.

¹⁰ This thought was expressed by traditional ethics in the thesis that human nature represents moral law “*in re*” in contrast to eternal law, referred to as “*lex ante rem*,” and conscience, referred to as “*lex post rem*.”

“Seeing a man,” the person-subject cannot fail to issue relevant orders. The obligatory nature of these judgments does not result, therefore, from the fact they are spontaneously made by the subject, as Kant believed, but from that which presents itself to the subject as objectively due to the person on account of his dignity.

[...] An analysis of the phenomenon of conscience has sufficiently demonstrated, I believe, that this theoretical possibility does exist. It is therefore enough here to emphasize the results of this analysis, or rather to show them from a somewhat different perspective. For as we considered the issue of the sources and reasons of the moral obligation to act, registered in the “ought” judgments of conscience, we pointed to the dignity of the person—the addressee of actions—as the obligation-generating “thing” we were looking for. From this perspective, it did not really matter whether this “thing” emitting its appeal for affirmation towards the subject was someone distinct from the subject, or whether it was his own person. At this point, this difference becomes important. For it is comparatively easy to have others agree that the subject’s activities do not create the existence or dignity of any persons other than his own. ...

In short: an analysis of the “ought” judgment in its immanent dimension (the subject by whom it is made and who is only insofar subject to the obligation) and its transcendent dimension (the truth of the judgment depending solely on the correspondence between the action of the subject ascertained in it with his existential and axiological “I,” which is not influenced by the subject) reveals to us that the source of the moral obligation is in the subject, but does not depend on the subject. The strict dichotomy introduced by the rivalling ethical views: autonomism and heteronomism, is not grounded in reality. It is a substantially false opposition. ...

By indicating the dignity of the person as the source and basis of moral obligation, and by pointing to the way in which it binds the subject who comes to know it has allowed us to easily identify it as the reason of the inherent, primary obligation, while at the same time allowing us to easily realize all of its characteristic properties, faced with which eudaimonism and deontonomism proved to be helpless. It seems to be a sufficient reason to make obligation understood this way the object of a separate theory, and to see ethics as a theory of this object. The distinctness of the object is a sufficient reason for building a separate theory for it. Indeed, it is the object of a theory

that becomes the factor defining its distinct profile in the first place. Which is why we need as many different scientific theories as there are distinct objects, non-reducible to one another, in the world around us and within ourselves. Even for this reason alone, ethics as a theory of such a distinct and non-reducible object as moral obligation becomes irreplaceable with any other theory. ...

THE EXPERIENCE OF MORAL OBLIGATION

Tadeusz Styczeń, “Etyka niezależna?,” in T. Styczeń, *Etyka niezależna (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 2)*, ed. K. Krajewski, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2012, pp. 328–330.

As is well known, in the process of arriving at a general statement by way of inductive generalization, the assertion that no contrary instance has been encountered in the field of experience so far is of crucial significance. This remains valid irrespective of the standpoint one takes with respect to the theory of experiential knowledge: that of inductionism or deductionism as understood by Karl Popper. The domain of specific “ought” judgments in the field of morality appears to be the proverbial opposite of all that could pretend to the title of a reliable base on which an empirical theory could be built. We do not need to look for any contrary instances here, as just about any instance we take seems to encounter its “counter-instance” here. Can we talk about experience, experiential judgment and empirical legitimation of general knowledge by way of inductive generalization in ethics at all? Is not acognitivism the only legitimate meta-ethical standpoint?

Indeed, in the domain of morality we often encounter moral value judgments or moral “ought” judgments as pairs of mutually exclusive statements. Let us discuss this using the example of two friends A and B, standing in front of a hospital where their friend C is laying terminally ill. Friend C is not aware of his condition, but will certainly ask A or B when they come to visit. A says that C should be told the truth, as only this will be to his benefit. B understands A’s arguments, but believes the truth about his condition should be

withheld from C at any cost, as only this will be good for him. The dispute is a difficult one. It may even appear hopeless. We must not overlook one thing, however, which is entirely indisputable in this dispute, to the extent that it is in fact the condition for its existence, continuation and justification. The disputing A and B are entirely in agreement about the fact that some affirmative action should be taken with respect to C, that C should simply be affirmed. A dispute about what does and what does not affirm C may only be held if—and because—it is indisputable that C should be affirmed. A and B are so certain of this that it does not even cross their minds to question it, for example by asking: “What’s the point of arguing about this?,” which they would certainly do if the matter was about aesthetic or culinary tastes, or fashion. This, however, is not a reason which a meta-ethicist would consider satisfactory and which could exempt him from nevertheless asking the question whether and on what conditions the dispute between A and B about C is reasonable. In short: how can A and B substantiate their conviction that something should be done for C’s sake, that C should be affirmed?

This question is not only or primarily a question about the genesis of this conviction, about how A and B have come to experience the obligation to affirm C. It is in the first place a methodological question: what does the legitimacy of the judgment expressing A’s and B’s conviction that “C should be affirmed” rest on? A clever meta-ethicist will not fail to employ a trick to learn more about this. He may for example surprise A and B with a question they do not ask themselves: Why are you arguing at all? Do you need to affirm C, act for his sake at all? What do you care about C? Has anyone told you to affirm C? Will you benefit from this in any way, will this pay off? Justify that C should be affirmed!

Perhaps not until A and B are surprised and embarrassed by this request to provide an answer which they cannot find will they clearly realize, after some reflection, that such an answer does not need to be looked for or provided at all, that no methodological problem exists here in fact. The problem which does exist is a genetic one; moreover, it applies to the person who asks such questions. Where has the asker come from? Is he in his right senses?—seems to them, and not only to them, to be the only appropriate answer. In fact, it seems that not until such “awry” questions are asked do they come to realize the reason substantiating their conviction that C should be affirmed: it

is evident explicitly, and hence its legitimacy. This is all they could give by way of an answer, if it needed to be given at all. Explicit evidence—this is what is necessary and sufficient to accept the legitimacy of the conviction that “C should be affirmed.” Even just “seen” by A and B, C “forces” them (without using any physical pressure which would prevent the opposite act) to affirm him for himself, without regard to any other reasons or causes other than himself: simply because he is and because he is C, or himself. A situation of “counter-instance” mentioned above is quite unthinkable. To see this, it is enough to tentatively entertain the thought: “One must not act to C’s benefit on any account, C must not be affirmed!” The opposite judgment on the matter then reveals itself in its full legitimacy which forces us to accept it. It legitimizes itself as a report on the state of affairs given to us with such self-evidence that the knowing subject can do nothing but give up. The act of surrender here is not primarily an act of emotions or will. It is primarily an act of knowledge. Only a subject “blind” to C could not surrender in this situation. It is therefore impossible to maintain that both alternatives: “C should be affirmed” and “C should not be affirmed” are rationally equally legitimate, in fact meaning that they are rationally undecidable, which the thesis of acognitivism amounts to. The situation described here thus seems to leave meta-ethical acognitivism with no options. Let us draw some positive conclusions, however:

(1) The judgment “C is owed affirmation from A and B” applies to a particular (individual), real, and at the same time normative state of affairs, and expresses this state of affairs in an appropriate judgment which is individual, real (descriptive) and normative at the same time. A judgment in any other form would not express that which is to be stated here.

(2) The judgment “C is owed affirmation from A and B” is legitimate as an expression of the cognitive recognition of the state of affairs concerned on the strength of direct insight into this state of affairs. It is a judgment that is directly decidable.

(3) If statements (1) and (2) are legitimate with respect to the judgment “C is owed affirmation from A and B,” then it is legitimate to say that this judgment is an experiential or empirical statement,

on the condition that the terms “experiential” or “empirical” are not interpreted in a narrowing way along the lines of sensualism. In a similar way in which the judgment “C is owed affirmation from A and B,” the judgment “I exist” is experiential or empirical as well, just like other individual judgments uttered here about me and by me, such as: “I may, but I do not have to do what I ought to do now.”

If this is the case, then ethics has its proper experiential judgments, non-reducible to any other judgments, representing its empirical basis, which alone is enough to endow it, in the aspect discussed here, with the character of an epistemologically independent discipline and a theory that is methodologically autonomous, independent from other (empirical) disciplines (philosophy, theology). In this respect, my view of ethics coincides with the theses proposed by Kotarbiński, Czeżowski and Rawls.

GENERALIZATION OF EXPERIENTIAL DATA

Tadeusz Styczeń, “Etyka niezależna?,” in T. Styczeń, *Etyka niezależna (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 2)*, ed. K. Krajewski, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2012, pp. 331–334.

Let us now ask what the methodological *modus procedendi* of obtaining general statements looks or may look like in empirical ethics understood this way. After all, ethics only becomes a scientific theory when it is able to talk about its object in a general way, in accordance with the old adage “*Scientia est autem de generalibus.*” Is ethics bound to rely in this regard only on the procedure of generalizing induction, as Kotarbiński and Czeżowski believe? I do not think this is the only applicable method. Indeed, a certain pluralism is justified in this regard. Let me try to substantiate this now. As I cannot go into a more detailed analysis here, I will go back to our sample dispute to demonstrate that C should not only be affirmed by A and B, but by anyone “in the place of” A and B in general.

To begin with, there is no doubt that A is convinced B owes to C the same as he does. Otherwise, he would not even try to persuade B about the fallacy of his view and the accuracy of his own. If A reasons with B, it is because he believes that a particular action is owed to C not only by him, but simply that it is owed to C, i.e. by himself as much as by anyone else in his place, including B. B, on the other hand, by the very fact that he enters into the dispute and tries to persuade A about the accuracy of his own view, reasonably does so on the same grounds. Moreover, it would be enough to just “present” the dispute about C between A and B to the general audience to demonstrate that irrespectively of which side “witnesses” of the dispute choose to take

as being the right course of action with respect to C, they will discover that they are “drawn into” the dispute right away, that from being witnesses to the dispute they unwittingly become its participants, that C starts to “affect” them personally, and only a circumstance as incidental as the fact that they are removed from the “matter” “reduces” their responsibility for C’s wellbeing. Let us be satisfied with this as a brief substantiation of the judgment, at least half of which has been generalized: C is owed affirmation by every person, that is, by a person as person.”

It turns out, however, that a similar procedure of “exchangeability” which we have noticed in the case of replacing A for B or “anyone in the place of A,” and B for A or “anyone else in the place of B” with respect to C, applies to C as well. C may be “replaced” in the aspect discussed here by “anyone in his place,” he may be “substituted for” by “anyone in his place”; moreover, in the result of this operation nothing is changed in the relationship between everyone else and C or anyone else in his place. The borderline in the exchangeability of C, or, in any case, a distinct threshold in this process of replacing C is encountered only when we try to replace him not with “someone” else, but with “something” else, for example his dog Buddy. In this way, it becomes clear that C and everyone else who can “take” his place represent a specific, distinct class. They belong to this class, and must belong to it, for they all constitute it on equal terms and on the same “rights.” It is a class the “elements” of which are persons. This way, the other half of the generalization of our judgment is substantiated, now taking its full form: “A person as a person, that is, every person, is owed affirmation by a person as a person.” In this judgment, we recognize a primary ethical principle.

Its substantiation is, as we can see, an experiential one, which is consistent with the methodological characteristics of the primary principle provided by Czeżowski and Kotarbiński. It does not appear, after all, that the validity of this principle needs any further confirmation in experience. Consequently, this judgment has the property of a general judgment which has been empirically validated and which is at the same time empirically irrefutable. I dare say that the above argumentation about reasons substantiating this general ethical judgment is not my own construct, but a reconstruction of procedures actually (non-reflexively) performed in the domain of morality, which, by the way, does not preclude either the possibility of or the actual

arrival at general ethical principles—including the primary ethical principle—also otherwise, for example through inductive generalization. Which of these two ways in fact occurs more often is obviously without material relevance for the issue of the empirical legitimacy of the primary ethical judgment whose empirical irrefutability I want to defend here. The procedure employed for this purpose is similar to the operation which phenomenologists refer to as substitution, or eidetic variation. We do not need to make any further comments, I believe, on how this differs from the method of inductive generalization proposed by Czeżowski and Kotarbiński, as the only method of generalization proper to ethics. This procedure also differs, however, from eidetic variation as understood by Scheler to an extent that is no less essential, for in the case discussed above the essential circumstance are the real and concrete characteristics of the object on which the operation is performed. This excludes the so-called eidetic reduction which makes us disregard the actual existence of the problem being analyzed. For what would an unreal (eideitically reduced) moral obligation be? It would certainly no longer be a moral obligation.

I also believe that it is incorrect in methodological terms to refer to the said judgment as a synthetic *a priori* judgment, as both the source and the basis for its substantiation is the experiment which has already been performed in the object. It is therefore in fact an *a posteriori* judgment, not only in the genetic, but in the methodological sense as well. It is an *a priori* judgment only in view of the “future” experiments which, indeed, seem to be superfluous.

It is also a mistake to describe this judgment as an “analytical *a priori* judgment,” i.e. one validated by analyzing the meaning of terms (the content of notions) of which it consists. In such case, any specific “ought” judgment would need to represent a logical subsumption of a previously known and recognized ethical principle. In this regard, a sufficiently instructive test seems to be this: would not A and B be astounded if someone tried to persuade them that the self-evidence of the obligation to affirm C is derived by inference from a supreme premise known to them as the self-evident ethical principle: “A person as person is owed affirmation by any person as person”? They would be no less astonished, however, if we tried to convince them that they should not affirm anyone else but C “in case” someone else but C was found in his place. Does this not provide sufficient proof that the principle is “discovered” at the time its “instance”

is experienced, just like its validity is perceived through this instance as it is actually given, which does not in the least preclude the active role of the intellect, consisting in appropriately “maneuvering” this instance? This maneuvering, in fact, consists in determining the scope which the regularity “perceived” in the experientially given concrete fits in and which it does not exceed. The ultimately conclusive instance in this respect is that which was actually experienced, and the role of the “variation” factor is clearly secondary, auxiliary, suggestive so to say.

Based on the procedure described above, the general statement we have arrived at is: “A person as person is owed affirmation from any person as a person” may thus be described, in line with the nature of its validity, as a general statement which is both experiential and necessary, or as necessary *a posteriori*. The name “synthetic a priori judgment” seems to be particularly misleading in that by emphasizing the methodological independence of the statement from future experiences, it suggests that the experiences one has had so far are not essentially relevant for its recognition, or that they are only relevant as genesis of the judgment. A somewhat less unfortunate name would be that of “analytical *a posteriori* judgment,” perhaps.

In spite of the evident difference in the methodological character of the primary ethical principle recognized by way of generalizing induction and identical in content to the principle recognized in result of the operation of an experiential variation of a particular instance, one diagnosis applies to both of them to the same extent: the primary ethical principle is legitimized based on a *sui generis* experience. As such, it is therefore independent in its validity from any other disciplines, whatever they may be. In this sense, Czeżowski and Kotarbinski’s thesis about the methodological independence of ethics, or its autonomy, remains in force.

FROM: “I MUST NOT
CONTRADICT WHAT
I HAVE ASSERTED MYSELF”
TO: “THE OTHER SHOULD BE
AFFIRMED AS ONESELF”
OR
*PRIMUM ANTHROPOLOGICUM
ET PRIMUM ETHICUM
CONVERTUNTUR.
STATUS QUAESTIONIS*

Tadeusz Styczeń, “Etyka jako antropologia normatywna,” in *Wolność w prawdzie*, ed. K. Krajewski, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2013, pp. 326–348.

The meaning of the statement expressed above verbally in the Latin subtitle will become clear, and its cognitive value will prove to be legitimate, I trust, in the course of the analysis presented below. In performing it, I will make use of a device which—I believe—will allow me to explore more fully the content of this seemingly banal statement on the one hand, and on the other—not only to identify the basis substantiating its own cognitive legitimacy, but also to justify on its basis the legitimacy of the primary ethical principle formulated on its foundations. This is the goal I expect to achieve through

a tree-stage insight into the *datum of experience*. This datum is what I see in our every *act*—and also *fact*—of knowledge; the act, and also fact, by virtue of which we give expression to the statement: *this is how it is*. I suggest that we refer to this preliminarily defined *datum* as “*self-information*.”

Further steps and the expected result of this three-stage analysis are signaled by the three titles below, corresponding to each of the stages:

- (1) Self-information as a self-imperative to affirm truth for its own sake;
- (2) Self-information as a self-imperative to affirm oneself as a custodian of truth;
- (3) Self-information as a self-imperative to affirm any other person as a custodian of truth.

I believe I will make it easier for the reader to keep track of the entire venture presented below if I reveal in advance how I see its outcome, and describe how it will be achieved.

The outcome I am aiming at is as follows: I see and identify myself as well as any other person as one through whom I am (they are) *who I am (who they are)* only (and only) when I see and identify myself and any other person as one *who must not (who ought not to)* contradict the truth which I have (they have) asserted myself (themselves). Thus, one who does not see that they must not (ought not to) contradict the truth they have asserted themselves cannot (is yet to) see and identify themselves.

As for the character of the analysis aimed at demonstrating the justifiability of the outcome signaled above, it is necessary and sufficient to reveal that self-information: “what I have asserted myself”—taken here as the starting point of the analysis—is also a self-imperative: “is what I must not contradict.” And it is this self-information that serves as an experientially self-evident starting point for the analysis ventured here, while at the same time being a foothold for demonstrating the methodological legitimacy of the results it has served to achieve.

I can anticipate a two-fold objection here which I immediately bring to my own attention: Is it necessary to demonstrate that which is self-evident by virtue of experience? And can anything be

demonstrated by virtue of experience to someone who does not see it and who contradicts it?

My answer to the first question is: yes, it is necessary. It must be done so that we can demonstrate what role such experience plays in building the methodological structure of ethics, which is exactly what we are interested in—also in view of the historical concerns referred to above. And my answer to the second question is: yes, it is possible and necessary. For it is often possible to make another person realize that they do in fact see that which they have contradicted, and sometimes they can be helped to really see that which they have not seen at all or not clearly enough so far.

Our analysis—employing a simple device—will be aimed from the very beginning at demonstrating that such empirical self-evidence is a property of every act—and also fact—of knowledge. We will treat this act here as a *datum* which already at the starting point will reveal to us—as empirical—the self-evidence of the relationship: *That which I have asserted myself (the moment of self-information) is what I must not contradict (the moment of self-imperative)*. It is this *datum* that we express in the following formula: *Primum anthropologicum et primum ethicum convertuntur*. By generalizing the meaning of this formula a little, we can say: That which is given as primary in the matter of man, and that which is given as primary in the matter of what man ought, are inseparably bound to one another in cognitive terms, and only as such are directly co-given.

If the approach proposed here proves to be substantially and formally correct, it should bring two outcomes of fundamental importance for the meta-ethical problems discussed here (against the background of the ages-long dispute about the methodological nature of its assertions):

- (1) It will demonstrate the epistemologically substantiated and methodologically correct starting point of ethics as a discipline based on its proper experience: the source and methodological basis of the legitimacy of its assertions;
- (2) It will make manifest the non-relevance for ethics of the entire controversy around its methodological nature, brought about by Hume's thesis on the impossibility of a formal and logical transition from "is" to "ought," on whose grounds attempts have been made at questioning the substantive validity of normative ethical

statements and eliminating ethics from the domain of reliable knowledge.

This is as far as presentation of the task is concerned, which I now intend to venture upon.

SELF-INFORMATION AS A SELF-IMPERATIVE TO AFFIRM TRUTH AS TRUTH

Would you please take a look now at the color of the sheet of paper from which I am reading my lecture: It is white. Isn't it?¹ By asserting that the color of this paper is white, not only do I assert a fact, but also confirm the truth of this fact by my own act of knowledge² The word "is" used in a sentence which signals an act (judgment) stating a particular fact plays the role of *satisfying that which truly is—simply because it is*. "Indeed, this is so"—we will sometimes add to confirm that which we are stating. "This is the state of affairs." We may call it the truth of fact. Consequently, also a statement which satisfies the truth of fact also deserves to be called a true statement.³ It is customary in the theory of knowledge and logics to refer to this moment—signalized in the statement by the word "is"—as an *assertion*. Assertion is an expression of the knowing subject taking a stance

¹ The same purpose could just as well be served by the following: Please provide the result of the equation: $2 + 2 = \dots$ —What is it?—Four. Isn't it?—Four, of course.—Then try to contradict it now.—Is this not a joke?—No, this is not a joke, unless someone believes that losing their life is a joke. So the request will either be satisfied or... our conversation will end without one of the collocutors.

The famous campaign poster used by the Solidarity Movement before the elections of 4 June 1989: "For Poland To Be Poland, $2 + 2$ Must Always Be Four" referred to the very essence of the problem discussed here.

² The result we are interested in here is also achieved when we begin with sentences like: "I can see white." It does not need to be a statement of the "It is white" kind. This note is not irrelevant for those who remember the dispute of logical empiricists of the Vienna Circle over the character of so-called protocol statements and their role in the verification of general statements in science.

³ Cf. A. Tarski, "Pojęcie prawdy w językach nauk dedukcyjnych," in A. Tarski, *Pisma logiczno-filozoficzne*, vol. 1: *Prawda* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1995), p. 14ff.

on the state of affairs they have recognized. This is why when communicating the result of that which we have asserted ourselves, we often use in our everyday speech the particularly expressive phrase in the form of a rhetorical question: "It is so, isn't it?"⁴ A rhetorical question, after all, is a challenge that the addressee express and confirm, together with us, their approval of the truth we have asserted together.⁵

Thus, assertion is not only a passive statement of truth made by the subject about a particular object, but also an expression of the commitment of the knowing subject to the truth about the object being known.⁶ The moment of assertion thus proves to be the first, though at this point not yet fully reflected upon, act of the commitment of one's freedom to the truth they have asserted about the object of their knowledge. "This first act of freedom is performed within theoretical recognition (judgment), even before freedom as such is realized, and cannot be taken out of this context. Subsequent acts of freedom are marked with this fundamental reference to truth."⁷ Through the act of assertion, we thus spontaneously take upon ourselves the role of witnesses to the truth we assert. Moreover, we take upon ourselves the role of its repositories, so much so that our own

⁴ It is significant that to express this we use in our everyday speech, particularly in conversation, the so-called rhetorical question. By asking it, we want to direct the cognitive attention of our interlocutor to the state of affairs we are interested in, and solicit from them a confirmation of the truth we have asserted, provoking them to do so by seemingly negating it. This evokes a symptomatic response, which everyday speech also has an appropriate expression for. There are certain typical phrases here, like the French: "N'est ce pas?," or the English: "Isn't it?," expected to be followed by: "Yes, of course it is," or their equivalents in other languages, like the German: "Nicht wahr?" or the Polish: "Nieprawdaż?"

⁵ From this point of view, I consider the analysis of the word "good" presented by Stevenson in his book *Ethics and Language* (called "the Bible of emotivism") to be particularly revealing: "It is good" is interpreted here as "I approve of it. Do it as well!"

⁶ Cf. J. Seifert, *Erkenntnis objektiver Wahrheit. Die Transzendenz des Menschen in der Erkenntnis* (Salzburg; München: Pustet, 1972), pp. 83–88; A. Szostek, *Natura – rozum – wolność. Filozoficzna analiza koncepcji twórczego rozumu we współczesnej teologii moralnej* (Rzym; Lublin: Fundacja Jana Pawła II, 1990), p. 279ff. (Germ. *Natur – Vernunft – Freiheit. Philosophische Analyse der Konzeption „schöpferische Vernunft“ in der zeitgenössischen Moraltheologie*, Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1992, p. 239ff.).

⁷ A. Szostek, "Wolność – prawda – sumienie," *Ethos* 4, no. 3–4 (1991), p. 27.

identity is threatened if we try to contradict it.⁸ Is this conclusion not too far-fetched, however?

I suggest we employ a simple device to demonstrate that such a conclusion is not an exaggeration.

Let us first imagine an undoubtedly dramatic situation in which someone pressurizes us and demands, threatening that we will lose something we value highly, that we contradict something we have asserted ourselves. I recall the picture, still vivid in our memory, of the proverbial Smith or Jones who is offered immediate release from prison by the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland on the condition that he sign a so-called declaration of loyalty. In other words, Smith or Jones is required to sign a statement which clearly means an act of calling white black. We notice, together with Smith or Jones, that we are caught, so to say, in a trap set by the truth we have asserted ourselves. Here is how it now reveals its normative power over us: "I must not say that white is non-white!" In more general terms, this could be expressed as follows: "I must not contradict a truth I have asserted myself." We have already *spontaneously* showed respect to the truth we have asserted, owing to it for what it is. When we did that, we did not clearly realize that by the power of assertion—made through the act of knowledge—we have led ourselves into the trap of the truth we have asserted. The thing is, we do not see this with sufficient clarity until afterwards. *Self-information* thus turns out—in a brilliantly self-evident way—a *self-imperative*. Indeed, that which I have asserted myself is what I must not contradict.

As we can see, this inherent relationship between self-information and self-imperative is revealed as a relationship constitutive for the two with all its clarity and insistent self-evidence only in particularly conducive circumstances. An exceptionally convenient perspective

⁸ This is most explicitly demonstrated by the fact that we are almost unaware of how easily we get from the statement: "This is white" to the assertion: "Yes, I have seen. White." Any time we make such statement, it includes an "autobiographical" moment. Statements like: "If this is not white, then I am the Queen of England," uttered in this context, only reveal that which remained hidden inside. Therefore, it is possible and necessary to distinguish between the semantic and the pragmatic dimension of a statement as a sign of judgment, while they cannot and ... must not be separated. "A sign is always a sign of something for someone." T. Czeżowski, *Logika. Podręcznik dla studiujących nauki filozoficzne* (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 1958).

for looking into this relationship is provided—as has just been revealed by the simple thought experiment we have performed—by a situation of conflict between the requirement to uphold the truth we have recognized, and the value of that which would need to be sacrificed in order to uphold it.⁹ *Per opposita cognoscitur!*

It is in the circumstances of such a collision that the truth we have conceived in an act of self-information reveals to us most clearly and most profoundly, but also most acutely, its absolutely binding power over the subject who asserts it. Moreover, it reveals its power to them through their own act in which they recognize it, by virtue of their own act of self-information, in this case sometimes referred to as a judgment or act of conscience, or simply as conscience.¹⁰ This judgment then takes the form of a self-imperative, however.

I suggest that we move the issue we are now certainly intrigued by, namely that of the relationship between the *subject* of the act of

⁹ Alan Montefiore (*A Modern Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959) points to the moment of distancing all values in the event of their collision with a moral value, describing its intrinsic property with the adjective “overriding.”

¹⁰ It is, we might say, the subject’s act of “self-knowing” the truth and “self-commitment” to it, so that it is experienced as his “own” through a personal act of expressing it and considering to be his “own.” It appears that the intuition of the Polish language focuses here on the directness of the contact between the subject of knowledge and the object being known, and the direct way in which it is experienced. A symptomatic expression of this directness is the moment of overlooking the sign as a medium going between the knowing subject and the object being known. Scholastic semiotics uses the term “*medium quo*” here in contrast to “*medium quod*,” where contemporary logic of language distinguishes between formal and substantial signs.

In his study *Osoba i czyn*, Karol Wojtyła says: “Freedom entails its own dependence on truth, which is most explicitly revealed in the conscience ... *Obligation is the experiential form of the dependence on truth* to which a person’s freedom is subject [italics by K.W.]. The proper and ultimate function of conscience is not merely cognitive, it does not only consist in showing “*x is good—x is a true good*,” “*y is bad—y is not a true good*.” The proper and ultimate function of conscience consists in making acts dependent on the truth that has been recognized. It is in this that the dependency of self-determination, or the freedom of will, on true good is expressed—or rather: its dependency on good in truth” (K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2000, p. 199ff.). Cf. the section: “Sprzęgnięcie prawdziwości z powinnością u podstaw mocy normatywnej sumienia” [The Engagement of Truth and Obligation at the Foundations of the Normative Power of Conscience], *ibidem*, pp. 204–206.

self-information and the *subject* of the act of *self-imperative*, to the next stage of our analysis. In the first stage, I suggest that we focus our attention mainly on the *object* of both these acts, particularly on the issue of the mutual *relationship* between the act of self-information and the self-imperative in view of the subjective *genesis* of this relationship and the subjective *basis* for its *validity*.¹¹ What moves to the foreground here in the field of how their mutual relationship is seen and understood (the “understanding experience”)?

Looking into this field through the window of self-imperative in the direction of that which we perceive in it due to self-information, we realize within this field:

Firstly, *what we assert* in it;

Secondly, that it is *ourselves* who *assert* it;

Thirdly that it is *ourselves who consider it true*.

They may be assertions concerning states of affairs so purely external and so indifferent to one as the color of a sheet of paper, or the number or quality of clouds which I can see in the sky or which I cannot see in the sky; it may be a matter as trivial as the sum of 2 and 2, or as important to us as a medically proven diagnosis of a terminal illness of a friend, who will soon ask us about it, which already causes profound anxiety in us for many different reasons and motives. Let us notice the following, however: that which moves to the foreground as being of primary importance for the relationship between self-information and self-imperative is—in the aspect we are analyzing here—not only (or not primarily) what the truth I have asserted is concerned with, or the importance of what it is concerned

¹¹ The reality expressed in the judgment: “I must not contradict that which I have asserted myself” may be looked upon at least from two different points of view: from the perspective of the object asserted in the judgment, and from the perspective of the subject asserting this object. It is simultaneously an idiographic and an autobiographic judgment, a judgment about the object and about myself—its particular subject. Correspondingly, the *informative* and *normative* aspect is revealed in it: by informing myself about the object, I commit myself—as its witness—to satisfy its objective truth. Premising the unity (bond) of both these aspects as co-given, we may then nevertheless distribute our cognitive attention to them in different ways. We may either focus on the *objective* side: what has been asserted in the object must not (should not) absolutely be contradicted in it; or on the *subjective* side: what I have asserted I must absolutely not (I should categorically not) contradict.

with, but simply that I am dealing with a truth and that it is I who asserted it as such. This is what moves to the foreground. Ever since I asserted this x as x by my own act of knowledge, I have introduced myself into the field of the normative power of the truth I asserted. Self-imperative is self-information in the role of a medium communicating to me as the subject of self-information the normative power of the truth I have recognized. That is why an act of refusal on my part to obey this self-dictate will necessarily be an act of betrayal not only with respect to the dictate, but also to its substantial basis: truth—given to me in self-information. After all, I have acknowledged this truth myself—asserted it by my own act—to be true.

In order to reveal the essence—and the essential reason—of the relationship between self-imperative and self-information, we have purposefully chosen utterly trivial cases from among many examples. The champions of choice will remain those, however, who choose the example most trivial of all. For it is due to its striking self-evidence that for the purposes of our analysis such example will be most useful as a diagnostic tool.

Therefore, among those seeking the “perfect example” for us I would distinguish those who, looking at the most intuitively evident statement of predicate logic: $\sim(p \wedge \sim p)$, which logicians call the law of non-contradiction, say: One must absolutely not (it is absolutely prohibited): $(p \wedge \sim p)$.

Indeed. This is absolutely prohibited.

And if someone nevertheless did ask, in all seriousness, why not? We must admit that if we were faced with an interlocutor asking such a question, we could only respond with utter helplessness. For it seems quite impossible for man—as a rationally free being—to be able and to venture to consciously contradict the objective self-evidence of the truth of such an elementarily simple and essential relationship as the one expressed in the above statement, and thus permit himself to defy his own reason, and ultimately his own self, in such an absurd and subversive way. The elementary perception of this truth and the assertion contained in it carries in itself, in a self-evident way, the normative power of the categorical prohibition of contradicting it.¹²

¹² “Freedom entails its own dependence on truth, which is most explicitly revealed in the conscience ... *Obligation is the experiential form of the dependence*

My choice of a truth as banal as the principle of non-contradiction was not without reason. I wanted to provoke our imagination a little: What would happen if someone nevertheless wished and dared to contradict this truth, so impossible not to notice and therefore so insistently self-evident; and if, to make matters worse, they tried to induce others to do the same? It appears that even the asking of this question alone is enough for an answer.

And yet, what for a rationally free being seems absolutely impossible sometimes happens as a tragic fact. This example has not been made up. We all know that the Polish logicians Tadeusz Kotarbiński and Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz indeed became the object of such repression from persons representing the circle of philosophers whom the government of the People's Republic of Poland thought well of. It was their representatives who demanded that both Professors, for the sake of the so-called dialectic logic, abandon their standpoint of categorical respect for the logical principle of non-contradiction which—by the strength of its formal truth—made them unconditionally respect its validity. Did they need or could they ask anyone in this case, or look for some further, “overriding” reasons which might “suspend” the reason telling them in an evidently imperative way how they should act: what was the only thing they could do, and what they could absolutely not do?¹³ Is it not enough to say this one thing: “I must not contradict the truth which I have asserted and recognized as true myself”?

This infamous page in the history of Polish philosophy in the times of the People's Republic of Poland also has its reverse, laudable side, however: it shows us the way to Socrates' prison cell, towards sages doomed to isolation and internal banishment in their own country.

on truth to which a person's freedom is subject ... it is this dependence ... that shapes a new reality inside the person. It is a *normative reality* [italics by K.W.], and it is expressed by the formulation of norms and their influence on man's acts” (K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, p. 199ff.). See also footnote 28.

¹³ After I delivered this lecture in Toruń during the 6th Polish Philosophical Convention, during the final general session on the last day of the Convention, I had the opportunity to witness, together with the other participants, the account of Professor Janusz Pelc, who shared some details of this sad and heroic page in the history of Polish philosophy.

Truth *as truth* is the objective reason of "It is forbidden" or "I mustn't." It prohibits this *in actu* to him who asserts it *in actu* himself.¹⁴ I must not contradict the truth I have asserted myself.¹⁵

¹⁴ Logical laws do not become valid only when someone recognizes their validity, but are valid objectively. When someone asserts their validity, however, he must absolutely not contradict it.

¹⁵ Both the meaning which is revealed (to me) in the statement: "I must not contradict what I have asserted myself," and the basis (reason) which validates (for me) the legitimacy of the claim this *datum* contains with respect to me appear *directly given* and as such *directly valid*. In this sense, they are the *primary datum* of experience, meaning that which is given in a primary way and which as such is also directly self-evident: *primum*. This *datum* thus contains something like a code which defines—on the one hand—who I am as the subject of self-information, and on the other—a code defining who I must not be while being at the same time the subject of a self-imperative. It is therefore a code which reveals and defines who I am through that who I must not be. Using the Latin formula: "*Primum anthropologicum et primum ethicum convertuntur*" I want to express in a most succinct way, or simply to summarize that which—I believe—is *the elementary ethical information*, and which at the same time contains in it the *anthropological foundation substantiating its validity*. Such *datum of experience* may thus, I think, constitute that which is on the one hand indispensably *necessary*, and on the other that which at the starting point of ethics is *enough* for us to support, as a sufficiently reliable foundation, the claim which we might call the first and the primary ethical principle: the principle of absolute commitment to truth. I understand this to mean that which can be expressed in the sentence: "Truth should be affirmed for its own sake," and—consequently—the truth which is revealed here in the reflection accompanying experience: "I must not contradict what I have asserted myself," the truth about man who is the subject of this statement, the truth about the witness and custodian of the truth he has asserted, and at the same time the truth about the subject as the custodian (guardian) of its custodian.

Based on this principle, we may now employ more detailed devices to formulate so-called moral rules of applying the primary principle, or so-called operating moral norms which are more directly determined in their content (more detailed), norms about the moral justifiability of acts. One example is the norm commanding absolute respect for human life. For if a human person, in view of the truth about them, commands affirmation for their own sake from every person, then they require respect for their existence, which in the circumstances of this world means respect for their life. It is not possible to say "yes" to a person as person without saying "yes" to their life. It is crucial in this context to distinguish between the person as a good and goods for the person, and among the latter between those essentially related to the good of the person (as their existence, life in the case analysed here) and goods not essentially related to their good, such as their hair, for example. In relation to this, cf.: T. Styczeń, "Wolność z prawdy żyje. Wokół encykliki *Veritatis splendor*," *Ethos* 7, no. 1–2 (1994), pp. 25, 28, including footnote 15.

One can easily show that the universal validity of this principle is not infringed by a case in which a person is defended against an aggressor (such defence

I believe, therefore, that I will not be expressing only my own opinion, but also act as a spokesman for any other person in my place, if—like the logicians I have mentioned—I voice the intuition that is common to all of us, elementary, and directly evident in this matter, by saying: the *reason* which is the *source and basis* for the recognition of the objective validity of the prohibition (“I ought,” “I ought not”) to reject the thesis: $\sim(p \wedge \sim p)$ in the practice of our lives is *identical* with the source and basis for the recognition of the objective validity of the following statement of the predicate calculus: $\sim(p \wedge \sim p)$. A logistician—and anyone in his place—stating that $\sim(p \wedge \sim p)$, should, for the sake of the objectively evident truth he asserts in this thesis, categorically prohibit himself: $(p \wedge \sim p)$; he himself must (“must” in the sense that he “categorically should,” or that he “absolutely must not,” so he “ought irrespectively of any other reasons or motives: any external order or prohibition, any benefits, any promises or threats accompanying any order or prohibition) prohibit himself from declaring by word or gesture (act) that $(p \wedge \sim p)$. *The reason of the validity of self-information proves to be identical with the reason of the validity of self-imperative.* It consists in the same truth asserted by him and laying at the foundations of both. The alethic functor of the “It is not true that $(p \wedge \sim p)$ ” type, and the *deontic* functor of the “ $(p \wedge \sim p)$ ” is prohibited” type both have the same *source* from which they are derived, and the same *basis for their objective validity*.¹⁶

Let us summarize the result we have now arrived at: our self-imperative as an expression of self-information about a particular object

being the duty of a witness of such aggression) in result of which the aggressor loses his life. The decision to take measures required to defend the life of a person is not—in the moral sense—an attack on the life of the aggressor. The aggressor dies not so much in result of an attack on his life, but in result of disregarding measures taken solely out of the duty to protect the life of the victim of his aggression, the life which for someone who is a person is a fundamental good. The aggressor dies in result of the act... of his own aggression. In a way, he is a suicide. In relation to this a distinction is also made between murder in defence from murder for defence. Cf. B. Chyrowicz, “Zamiar i skutki. Moralna doniosłość kategorii zamierzenia pośredniego” (doctoral thesis) (Lublin, 1994), p. 213.

¹⁶ I understand the terms “source of knowledge (assertion)” and “methodological basis of the validity of knowledge (assertion)” in the way in which their meaning is defined by Ajdukiewicz when he discusses the problem of genetic empiricism and methodological empiricism in the theory of knowledge. Cf. also K. Ajdukiewicz, *Zagadnienia i kierunki filozofii* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1983).

is simply a *cognitive expression of the normative power of truth as truth, or the duty to affirm it for its own sake*.¹⁷ We may thus—and at the same time we must, we must not do otherwise—express this result in a general formula: *Truth is owed affirmation for its own sake*.

Giving such a verbal expression of the truth asserted here has nothing to do with practicing some kind of ideology about it, or any cheap rhetoric. It is simply an expression of the attitude of integrity and honesty in giving to it that which is owing to it as truth by virtue of its being true. And the fact that the integrity of the subject's attitude to truth involves extraordinary *pathos*¹⁸ is an entirely different matter. It comes out discreetly from its hiding and is revealed in its sublimity in a startling way in situations like those whose protagonist was Socrates. The assertion of truth in an act of knowledge, confirmed by the subject through an act of freedom, his act of free choice, endows this act with the traits of *unconditionality and disinterestedness*. It is due to this disinterestedness that the act of *affirming truth* has come, through the ages-long tradition going back to Sophocles, Socrates and Plato, to be called *love*.¹⁹ Isn't it this very disinterestedness, reflected in the attitude of the acting subject, that was decisive in making the word "love," with all of its ambiguous meanings, the most precious and

¹⁷ I issue this order myself. On my own. It is a self-imperative. It is therefore my judgment, but I issue this judgment to myself solely by virtue of the truth I have asserted, that is, based on my self-information. Here is why a self-imperative does not cease to be my judgment. It is so solely and exclusively as the appeal of truth which transcends me, and which I therefore do not call it into being by my own act of knowledge, even though it "applies" to me always and only through my act of knowledge: it is given to me always and only in my own judgment (as *medium quo*—not as *medium quod*). My judgment is itself as a communicator of the requirements of transcendent truth addressed to my "self" as the subject of knowledge and subject of freedom. My freedom is summoned—in the time of trial—to confirm this truth as truth which I have already asserted on the plane of my act of knowledge (judgment)—also by an act of free choice. Cf. T. Styczeń, "Sumienie: źródło wolności czy zniewolenia?," *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 22, no. 1–3 (1979), pp. 87–97.

¹⁸ This has been expressed by Cyprian K. Norwid in the poetic line: "What have you done to Athens, Socrates, / To be given a statue of gold by its people / Having first been poisoned?"

¹⁹ Indeed, it is due to this trait of disinterestedness that the meaning of the word "love" has afforded it such a distinguished place in human language. It is enough to cite the context in which Sophocles puts into the mouth of Antigone, the heroine of his drama under the same title, the words: "I am disposed to love by nature, not to hate."

most beautiful word in the human language? It was by no accident, after all, that Plato—having witnessed his Master’s decision to give his life in order to uphold truth—experienced this act of total commitment of one’s freedom to the service of truth as an act of a hero of the love of truth par excellence, and at the same time as an act of man’s self-fulfillment, and would then greet his Academia students saying: “Love truth, all truth and truth in everyone.” So by translating the phrase: “An act of affirming truth for its own sake” into: “An act of the love of truth” we may express the content of the above formula without changing its meaning by saying: *Truth as truth is owed love*.

I do not see any reason for concealing the pathos of this formula, or fearing it. The simplicity of the expression which reveals such a weighty normative message for men of all time and place has something of poetry to it, and of the appeal which characterizes the language of rhetoricians. Indeed, the truth which reveals itself with such a simple formula—its normative power and its appeal at the same time—deserves great rhetoric. The key to this rhetoric was pointed to by Pascal, who said: “We need both what is pleasing and what is real, but that which pleases must itself be drawn from the true.”²⁰

Before we dare to treat the above result definitively as a statement in the rank of a morally normative claim which is experientially validated and claims to be universally valid, let us look—once again—for a way it could be challenged in the methodological character of a universally valid statement. What could an attempt consist in—and what would it ultimately have to boil down to—at pointing to a possible exception which might cancel its validity? It appears that such an attempt would ultimately have to consist in pointing to a reasonable possibility of contradicting the statement: $\sim(p \wedge \sim p)$, and moreover, it would have to be done by the very person who, understanding its meaning, has already *eo ipso* recognized it himself as valid.²¹

²⁰ B. Pascal, *The Thoughts of Blaise Pascal*, trans. C.K. Paul (London: George Bell and Sons, 1901), p. 301.

²¹ I think that just as I do not need to stress here that what we are interested in is a *generally valid statement*, and not a *generally recognized statement*, so what we are concerned with is doing all we can to ensure that what is a generally valid statement in ethics becomes a generally recognized statement. Cf. T. Styczeń, “Problem ogólnej ważności norm etycznych w aspekcie epistemologiczno-metodologicznym z uwzględnieniem indukcyjnych nauk o człowieku,” *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 24, no. 1 (1981), pp. 39–67.

I believe precisely such an attempt at taking this absurd step has been indirectly replied to already by Duns Scotus, who formulated the statement²² known in the register of predicate calculus under his name: $(p \wedge \sim p) \rightarrow q$.²³

In his study under the tell-tale title *Can Men Be Reasonable?* Brand Blanshard quotes John M.E. McTaggart's warning to anyone who might want to venture such a step: "No one ever tried to break logic, but logic broke him."²⁴ Blanshard provides an emphatic

²² I do not know if we can apply categories like "beautiful," "ugly," or "witty" to ethical statements. For me, this one is utterly beautiful and utterly witting in its ingenuity. It is worthwhile taking a look at examples of its practical applications in a discussion by Bertrand Russell, which we learn from Witold Marciszewski (cf. *Sztuka dyskutowania*, Warszawa: Fundacja Aleph, 1994, p. 251ff.). The author writes there in relation to the application of the Duns Scotus law in a discussion: "Indeed, the situation of one who perpetrates a contradiction—whether consciously or not—in the course of their argumentation is very advantageous in a sense: they stand a great chance (and theoretically this chance is unlimited) of proving anything they want. The ease with which anything can be demonstrated in accordance with the laws of logic (at the price of the sole, but disastrous illogicality of contradiction) is illustrated by an anecdote about B. Russell, who was historically the second, next to Frege, author of the logical theory of conjunctions (predicate calculus). Here is a conversation Russell allegedly had with a sceptic who did not believe that anything can be derived from a pair of contradictory statements:

"If anything can be demonstrated starting from a contradiction, please prove to me that you, Mr. Bertrand Russell, are the Pope.

Can we take as a proposition the following arithmetic contradiction: $2+2=5$?

Yes, please go ahead.

Let me then subtract 3 from both sides of the equation. The result is...

That one equals two.

Naturally. So if the Pope and I are two different persons, then if two equals one, we are one and the same person."

²³ In colloquial language: *Ex contradicto (falso) quodlibet*. Which means we leave the matter at this, being rational beings, and change the subject to a conversation about this and that. The matter is over, would you like a cup of coffee? Let no one be surprised, however, if the coffee proves to be tea for him. I will keep calling it coffee... or a raspberry.

²⁴ *Can Men Be Reasonable?*, in *Our Emergent Civilization*, ed. R. Nanda Anshen (New York; London: Harper & Bros., 1947), Chapter 1. Accessed on November 21, 2017: <http://www.anthoniflood.com/blanshardcanmenbereasonable.htm>. Cf. W. Marciszewski, *Sztuka dyskutowania*—the author demonstrates in a very straightforward way that playing with fire is a trifle compared with playing with the principle of non-contradiction. It is playing around with one's own self, with one's own identity, with being or not being oneself!

punch-line to this statement: “Nonconformity here is not heroism but suicide.”

Suicide? Is this not an exaggeration?²⁵

SELF-INFORMATION AS A SELF-IMPERATIVE TO AFFIRM ONESELF AS A CUSTODIAN OF TRUTH

Suicide. I suggest that we dwell on this word for a while. We are certainly surprised, perhaps even shocked, by Blanshard’s use of the word “suicide” in this context. Clearly, it is not about suicide in the sense of physical self-annihilation. In what sense, then?

The answer that comes to mind is banally simple and self-evident: precisely in the sense that one kills oneself (by decomposing their identity or freely choosing to cease being themselves) when they contradict a truth they have asserted themselves. Such a statement presumes, however, that man remains himself or ceases to be himself depending on whether he confirms the truth he has recognized with his acts of freedom, or, conversely, contradicts it with his free acts. This would mean that man is himself precisely because he is a *custodian of truth*. This statement may be considered a *definition of man*, even if not a complete one. Thus, the recognition of this truth about himself in an act of self-information would become equivalent, if not identical, to the obligation to take upon himself the role of a custodian of truth in general as its guardian and keeper, an *in particular* as the guardian and keeper of himself as a guardian and keeper of truth.

If this is the case, however, any act in which the acting subject deliberately and of his own volition contradicts the truth he has

²⁵ Through this question we shift our cognitive attention as though to the opposite pole of the datum of experience analysed here. We shift it from the objective basis of the relationship between self-imperative and self-information to the subject of both these acts. We shift the emphasis from truth that is asserted to the truth about the internal structure of the one who asserts it. Our analytic method will remain the same. We will resort to the device we have already used—that of seeing into the “thing” itself by looking at it in contrast: What does the subject do to himself when he freely chooses to contradict that which he still attests to by virtue of his own act of knowledge? I think that the road we have travelled so far will allow us to considerably shorten the next two stages that were to follow. We are now approaching the point where the result of the second stage of our analysis will be revealed.

recognized would be categorically prohibited not only by virtue of respect which the subject owes to truth as truth, but also in view of the duty of affirmation owing to himself as a subject communing with truth by recognizing it, and consequently—as its witness and custodian. Man—in other words—governs and guides himself when he is governed and guided by truth: truth in general, and in particular the truth about himself as its custodian.

Nota bene. An act of this kind is a *sui generis* act of self-constitution through self-discovery of oneself as a subject who is rationally free and responsible for truth, or a *sui generis* act of one's birth to oneself through self-introduction to responsibility for truth in general, and for truth about oneself (that is, for oneself) in particular.²⁶ At this

²⁶ Here is why—eventually—it is absolutely impossible to respect oneself without respecting the truth one has recognized. Truth, being the basis of the relationship between self-information and self-imperative, reveals itself as the basis for the constitution of the subject of self-information and self-imperative in his identity to the extent that the negation by the subject, in an act of free choice, of a truth he has previously asserted must *eo ipso* mean his commitment to something which he is himself—as the acting subject—contradicting at the same time. Once the subject explicitly discovers and realizes this structure for himself as the structure of his own subjectivity, he enters into a peculiarly intensified form of dependence on truth and responsibility for it. It is truth about himself as the custodian of truth *tout court*. For truth about what is asserted (and possibly also: how it is asserted), truth about the object, is now joined by truth about the one who asserts it, truth about himself, or truth about the subject. The subject of knowledge now becomes the object of knowledge for himself: “he recognizes himself,” he discovers truth about himself. The one who discovers this truth is now charged—out of the blue of his own self-discovery: self-discovery with its inherent binding force of self-information and self-imperative—with responsibility for himself, for saving his own identity. He will only discharge it if he simply fulfils the role of the custodian of truth. For it is the responsibility of one who has been entrusted—through self-discovery—with the custodian of truth in his own person. And from now on, woe to him if he does not take upon himself the role of the guardian of this custodian of truth, the custodian of truth in himself. As such, it is both given to him and set to him as a task through this act of self-knowledge, an act of self-information *par excellence*. It appears that it was this very intuition that St. Paul of Tarsus expressed in his poignant cry: “Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16). Let us pay attention to this: St. Paul does not say it is “not good for the Gospel,” but “it is not good for me.” Woe to me!

It is here that the standpoints of personalism and eudaimonism clearly stand in stark contrast to each other, together with the standpoints of their corresponding subjects, while at the same time we can see in what sense self-fulfilment appears to the person as the acting subject in the form of that which

point, truth about me, binding me with absolute power due to my existential and cognitive structure, becomes an appeal to myself and to the dynamics of my freedom, becomes “historic truth.”²⁷ From now on, I will be writing the history of my identity—its fulfilment or annihilation—through my acts of choice. Here also resides the essence of the so-called *basic choice*, referred to as the *fundamental option*.

With these explanations in mind, it now appears that the word “suicide” used by Blanshard reveals the meaning which in the moral context is not only not an exaggeration, but on the contrary: it is only in this context that it is endowed with its proper weight and measure. If we see here a need and a necessity to introduce a distinction between physical and moral suicide, then the recognition of this need and necessity only reveals to us once again and most explicitly this very identity which we want to stress and emphasize here: the *moral* identity of man and the identity of man *as man*, we might say: of man *as a person*. Only against this background can we understand and acknowledge the ethical self-evidence and—therefore—the experiential validity of Socrates’ dictum: “The one who killed another is more wretched than the one who is killed.”²⁸ And the entire drama of Antigone implied in her appeal to all dwellers of the polis, the citizens of Athens: you will only save yourselves as people, and your state as the legislator—if you do not commit—for the sake of the law you have established, and act of profanation on any one of you! Even if it were—“just”—their corpse.

is most desirable for him: *appetibile quo maius cogitari non potest*, but also—indeed, first of all—as something that is essentially and categorically set to him as a person—for the sake of truth about himself: *affirmabile quo maius cogitari nequit*. We may thus even talk of a “cancellation” of the opposition between “concern for one’s own happiness” and “categorical duty to uphold truth about oneself.” Cf. on this matter: R. Spaemann, *Glück und Wohlwollen. Versuch über Ethik* (Stuttgart: (Klett-Cotta, 1989); Polish edition: *Szczęście a życliwość. Esej o etyce*, trans. J. Merecki (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1997).

²⁷ Cf. T. Styczeń, *Problem człowieka problemem miłości*, 3: “Ja’ podmiotem swych dziejów: od wezwania do spełnienia,” in *Człowiek w poszukiwaniu zagubionej tożsamości*, ed. T. Styczeń (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1987), pp. 78–81. Cf. also: J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons sur les notions premières de la philosophie morale* (Paris: Tequi, 1950). Note the analysis of the moral standpoint of Antigone presented by the author in the context of the matter discussed in the previous footnote.

²⁸ Cf. Plato, *Gorgias*, Project Gutenberg. Accessed on November 21, 2017: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1672/1672-h/1672-h.htm>.

We have in fact seen in the very heart of contemporary Europe, in the recent history of the Peoples' Republic of Poland, how emphatic a commentary on this matter was provided by the people, logicians and ethicists in one person, who were required to make "just" one exception to logic: deviation from the logical rule of non-contradiction.²⁹ The victims of these shameful repressions were, as has already been mentioned, Ajdukiewicz and Kotarbiński. They abandoned their chairs of logic at universities, choosing the life of outcasts.

Why? Was it only a matter of taste, or was it the only way—I am answering this question with a rhetorical one—to protect themselves from moral suicide, that is, to confirm in their acts the inseparable *iunctim* between respect for truth and *respect for truth about oneself as self, the truth about man as the custodian of a custodian of truth?*

We do not need to ask, I believe, about who wins and who is saved as a human being, the aggressor or the victim, in such acts of repression. I think that it will be enough for an answer to recall now, at the end of these reflections, the title I gave it in the beginning: "Self-Information as Self-Imperative to Affirm Oneself As a Custodian of Truth," adding just one *post dictum*: *lest one suffers a morally suicidal shattering of one's own identity*. The conclusion to my argument may equally well be expressed with words taken from a poem by Karol Wojtyła, under the tell-tale title: *The Birth of Confessors*: "For if truth is in me, it must explode. / I cannot push it away, or I would be pushing away my own self."

SELF-INFORMATION AS SELF-IMPERATIVE TO AFFIRM ANY OTHER PERSON AS A CUSTODIAN OF TRUTH

The discovery of oneself within oneself as a custodian of truth—accompanying the discovery of truth as something which in an entirely intrinsic way obliges the one by whom it is discovered to affirm it for its own sake—is not at all my (or can I say our?) last discovery. There is one more that emerges from it. For by discovering within myself the structure of my own "self"—looking at myself "from within"—as the structure of a custodian of truth, I thus discover the

²⁹ Compare this with: A. Szostek, "Wolność – prawda – sumienie," *Ethos* 4, no. 3–4 (1991), p. 33.

structure of the “self” as “self,” or the structure of any other “self.” Simply put, I discover the “inner precept” of my “self”—its *universale in concreto*.³⁰ In other words, by discovering myself in me, or the *truth defining me as myself*, I discover in me *the truth about any other “self,”* I discover in me... *any other self*. Which makes me fall into the predicament of truth about any other person. For the other person, indeed, any other person is for me someone who—just like myself—by knowing truth the same way as I do, truth about himself, binds himself to recognize it as truth, under pain of destroying the subjective integrity of his own self should it be negated. By learning the truth, he traps himself—just like me—in its snare. It is a snare, however, pregnant with an opportunity to confirm one’s own freedom and an opportunity for self-fulfillment.

Therefore: that which I must not do—for the sake of truth—with respect to my own “self,” I must not do—for the very same reason—with respect to any other “self.” Any exception would cancel it all. By recognizing the other through the structure of my own “self,” I can see that only by affirming his internal self-binding by the truth he has recognized (“from within”), I am able to satisfy the demands of truth about myself and thus give myself the only chance for self-fulfillment. I must never induce any other person to be hypocritical in his conscience and enslave himself, just like I must not violate my own conscience by taking on hypocrisy and thus enslaving myself. Here is the uneasy road to the affirmation of myself as a custodian of truth, the road to saying “yes” to myself. Walking down this road, I must *affirm any other person for his own self!* Just like—for the sake of truth about myself—I must affirm myself. I must not exclude anyone if I want to leave myself any chance, which I (!) must not in any case (categorically) deprive myself of. In my act of affirmation, I must include everyone in myself: “My name is Million, because for millions do I love and suffer agonies...”³¹ There is no other way that Konrad may be born in Gustaw, or man in man.

³⁰ Cf. R. Buttiglione, “Kilka uwag o sposobie czytania *Osoby i czynu*,” in K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2000); R. Buttiglione, “Wprowadzenie,” in: T. Styczeń, *Solidarność wyzwala* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1993), particularly pp. 7–9.

³¹ A. Mickiewicz, *Dziady*, część III [*Forefathers’ Eve*, Part III]. In this act, Gustaw discovers in himself the truth about himself and only by choosing it gives birth to Konrad, or his own self. *Obiit Gustavus et natus est Conradus*.

So perhaps it was not a coincidence that this discovery of Konrad's birth in Gustaw should be revealed to Mickiewicz—just like to Plato: "Love truth, every truth, and in everyone"³² or to Sophocles' Antigone: "I am disposed to love by nature not to hate"—in relation to a prison cell?

This discovery reveals yet another dimension, however, and one that is surprisingly optimistic while being methodologically momentous. After all, no other person—as soon as they perform an act of self-discovery—is able to give themselves any chances other than by affirming the subjective structure of every other "self," including my own self. And they, just like me, fall into the trap of truth about every other "self," this truth discovered within their own "self." And they are thus bound by the same thing: that which I must absolutely not do with respect to my own "self," I must also not do—for the very same reason—with respect to any other "self." In other words: I am not able to find myself within myself and meet myself other than by finding and meeting on the road to myself every other self and all other selves included. There is no other road from self to self!

So, there are no shortcuts we could take! If we were to go looking for exceptions here, we would be trying to do something that is inherently self-contradictory. I am "doomed" to every other. I can only affirm myself if I affirm any other person. And any other person is "doomed" to me. He may only affirm himself by affirming any other person—including myself. We are thus, the two of us and each one of us individually, "doomed" to radical³³ solidarity, to choice of communion in truth, which is mutual love. The other person is just as close to me as I am to myself. If I do not see this, I have yet to discover the most important thing about myself. I am as close to the other person as they are to themselves. If they do not see this, they have yet to discover the most important thing about themselves. I can only choose myself when and only when I affirm any other person in making this choice as well. And the other person can only choose themselves when and only when in making this choice they affirm any

³² Cf. J. Seifert, "Diligere veritatem omnem et in omnibus: To Love All Truth and to Love It in Everything," *Ethos*, 1996, Special Edition, no. 2, pp. 53–67, particularly the master thesis of the same author: "Essere e persona. Verso una fondazione fenomenologica di una metafisica classica e personalista" (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1989), Introduction by R. Buttiglione.

³³ I.e. reaching down to the very root of the matter (from Lat. *radix*—root).

other person—including myself. This is why *any other person for any other person is a neighbor*, in the most radical meaning of this word. *Never a rival, never an enemy!*

Therefore, only in such communion—developed on the grounds of truth about ourselves communicated in our acts—can we find ourselves and confirm (affirm) our own selves in us. The truth about us—mediated through the base of self-information—becomes for all of its subjects the normative program of mutual co-existence and co-action, a categorical self-imperative for those who discover it, both now and in the future.

The essential content of this self-information and self-imperative may be verbalized in different ways. Diverse semantic layers may carry an essentially identical moral message to a universal range of subjects for whom this content is their “identity card.” It may be expressed as the commandment to love oneself as one’s neighbor (Christ), as the principle of non-violability of other man’s dignity (Seneca: “*Homo homini res sacra*”), or the principle of “mutual love” (Sophocles), the “principle of universal kindness” (Znamierowski), the principle of “reliable guardianship” (Kotarbiński), or the principle of a person’s affirmation by any person (Wojtyła). The last one may be expressed in a simple formula: *A person should be affirmed for their own sake* (*Persona est affirmanda propter se ipsam*), or the formula: *A person is owed love from any person*.

One will easily see, I believe, that in my presentation of the matter I have placed emphasis not so much on the way in which the content of this principle is worded,³⁴ but rather on the way its source and the basis of its cognitive validity is revealed. I have tried to demonstrate that the principle: *Persona est affirmanda propter se ipsam*—derives all of its content and legitimation solely from the direct insight of every one of us into the structure of our own “self,” the structure which is revealed to us most primarily, as though in its ovary, in every single act—and fact—of knowledge we make. It is revealed in particular

³⁴ It is hard not to see here, however, that the person who discovers themselves by discovering in themselves the role of a custodian with respect to themselves as a custodian of truth, makes a discovery which may both fascinate and dismay with the magnitude of the weight of responsibility for oneself. We may recall the words of Augustine here: “*Amor meus pondus meum—eo feror quocumque feror*,” which might also be translated as: “My love is a burden, but I am lifted by what I am carrying.”

when truth, binding the subject with the power of its recognition to show it due respect, faces the subject with powers colliding with its requirements, when the "normative power of truth" binding him "from within" to show absolute respect to it is challenged, in a way, by the power of various temptations. A situation of contrast allows us to see most clearly that the act in which the subject learns anything in its original form of self-information is at the same time a categorical self-imperative addressed to them.³⁵ *This way, an insight into oneself as "I," representing the subject of this act, also reveals to us, through the truth about our structure, that which we owe to ourselves in view of this very structure.* So that which defines the content of the ethical principle most directly as its source, and which is at the same time the most primary basis of the legitimacy of its cognitive value, presents itself to us in the form of this directly self-evident datum of experience: *I must not contradict (self-imperative) that which I have asserted myself (self-information), or vice versa: What I have asserted myself (self-information) is what I must not contradict (self-imperative).* The disclosure of the inherent property of this *datum*, namely the inseparable mutual *relationship* between the *informative* ("is") and the *normative* ("ought") moment also definitively determines the methodological nature of the primary ethical principle as well, and—consequently—the methodological nature of ethics itself as a normative discipline, which grounds its objective legitimacy in the *datum* of *sui generis* experience. The essence of this experience as the epistemologically legitimate source and methodologically correct starting point of ethics may be expressed in this succinct formula: *Primum anthropologicum et primum ethicum convertuntur.*

Consequently, ethics itself becomes a discipline about the subject who *prescribes* their own actions *through and due to* the fact that they *inform* themselves about them—in their proper way. By virtue of its methodological starting point, ethics is a *normative anthropology*. For all of its methodological structure is built on the foundation of experience, whose elementary description reveals in its essential content the structural unity of the informative and the normative moment.

³⁵ An excellent discussion of this matter is provided by R. Buttiglione, following in the footsteps of Plato's *Politeia*, in his article: "Suverenność narodu przez kulturę," *Ethos* 1, no. 4 (1988), 4, pp. 94–120; cf. R. Buttiglione, *Etyka w kryzysie*, trans. K. Borowczyk et al. (Lublin: Instytut Jana Pawła II, 1994).

The problem of “Hume’s guillotine,” or the problem of a formal and logical transition from “is” to “ought,” does not exist when applied to ethics. Its presentation with reference to ethics as the problem of its possibility is a misunderstanding, sourced in an error in the recognition (*ignoratio elenchi*) of its epistemological source and the methodological basis of its validity.

WHY PROTECT THE LIFE OF THE UNBORN?

Tadeusz Styczeń, “Dlaczego obrona życia nienarodzonego?,” in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 5)*, ed. C. Ritter, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2014, pp. 297–304.

*Whatever you did to one of the least of these My brethren,
you did it to Me.
(Mt 25:40)*

In what I am about to present here I intend to demonstrate the necessary connection between defending the life of the unborn and the love of our neighbors. The love of one’s neighbors, also called the affirmation of man, is the essential content of the primary ethical principle. This principle—which Karol Wojtyła referred to as the personalist norm—says that a person should be affirmed for their own sake, that—in other words—everyone has sufficient reason within themselves to be affirmed. This is what precludes the possibility of affirming any person—including oneself—at the cost of any other. This is the very foundation of ethical thought and action, the very essence of ethics and morality.

Assuming, then, that this matter is self-evident to us, we may and should consider the question: Why the affirmation of man?—to be superfluous, or rhetorical. Consequently, a demonstration of the necessary logical connection between affirming man and defending the life of unborn man should turn the question: Why defend the life of the unborn?—into a rhetorical question as well. I believe we take this question indeed to be a rhetorical one. If, however, it was not so for someone, it would be necessary to identify and remove the only

reason which—on the premises of personalism—one could think of in this context: failure to see the relationship between affirmation of man and affirmation of an unborn man. This relationship is indeed not always noticed, and is sometimes even negated. Which reveals the ethical weight and moral import of the question: Why defend the life of the unborn? Fortunately, that which makes the question “Why protect the life of the unborn” a problem also clearly shows us a way in which we can successfully overcome the difficulty it expresses, and turn the question into a rhetorical one. Which is where I see my task as an ethicist. The way to fulfil this task is simple. It has only two stages: first, show that it is impossible to affirm man without affirming his life, and second, show that an unborn man is... a man. Before I step on this road, I would first like to point out what the contemporary proclamation of human rights has to say about this.

THE PROCLAMATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AS A PROCLAMATION OF MAN’S PERSONAL DIGNITY AND CONDITIONS OF ITS AFFIRMATION

An opinion, a consensus, even unanimous agreement, is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of truth. Let us think of the day Copernicus “stopped the Sun and moved the Earth” contrary to common belief. An opinion is, nevertheless, a significant indicator of truth, one which may not be ignored, particularly in a situation when attempts are being made at obscuring a certain truth in many ways. From this point of view, the contemporary proclamation of the dignity of the human person deserves our special attention. It is expressed, most significantly, in the increasingly widespread worldwide movement in defense of human rights.

An ethicist will see in this movement first of all a sign of proper and healthy moral sensitivity of contemporary man. Indeed, it is surprising—particularly considering the overwhelming spread of technology in our lives and its impact on human consciousness—how the human conscience is resistant to the temptation of reducing the morality of action solely to its efficiency. Man is still a person, not a thing; someone *who should be affirmed for his own sake*, who must never be merely used—as an object.

Does this mean that we should not care about the efficiency of actions for the sake of their morality? By no means! It needs to be made

clear that with regard to actions, the criterion of morality is superior to the criterion of efficiency, or, in other words, that the efficiency of actions (technology) is subordinated to their morality (ethics). We simply need to see the border *beyond which* efficiency turns against the person, but also the border *up to which* the efficiency of actions is what is in fact required by the internal logic of affirming a real person.

This is precisely what we want to express by so often emphasizing in defending human rights that they are *inalienable*. For what does the inalienability of these rights express? It says: it is impossible and quite illusory to affirm a real man without effectively co-affirming that which constitutes man's good so essentially related to his "to be or not to be" that its violation strikes directly at the very essence of humanity. Here is why moral norms whose task is to protect these goods, so essential for man, and to secure what is so indispensable to him must have exactly the same binding power as the primary ethical principle—the personalist norm; that is, the power of a norm that is absolutely, unexceptionally valid. Any attempts at allowing for exceptions from the norm *protecting such good* would be a venture which—from the ethical point of view—is absurd: a negation of man in the name of his affirmation. The proclamation of inalienable human rights is thus first of all a proclamation of the inviolability of all that which his dignity is founded upon: his existential structure; it is, in other words, a proclamation of the absolute validity and inviolability of natural moral law.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the list of inalienable human rights invariably includes, and prominently so, the human right to freedom of conscience and belief, or the right to stay true to one's convictions; the right to secrecy, which entails absolute prohibition on inflicting torture; and the human right to life which we are particularly interested in here.

THE RIGHT TO LIFE AS AN INALIENABLE HUMAN RIGHT

Biological life is not the highest good of man, but it is his basic, fundamental right. Life is not the supreme value. Already Socrates reminded his contemporaries that the point is not to live, but to live well. Life is so that it may testify to values higher than life itself, values which—in the event of a tragic collision—one should be prepared

to lay down one's life for. By choice. It is this faithful service to values higher than life that makes our life worth living, that makes it a good life, a worthy life, a life that is worthy of who we are.

Man is who he is, however, as long as he is at all; and he is—at least in the dimensions of this world—if he is alive. “*Vivere viventibus est esse*”¹—St. Thomas Aquinas reminds us after Aristotle. For living beings to be is to live. Life, therefore, proves to be a basic value for man. It is this good on whose foundations all the “rest” is built. That is why an earnest “yes” to man, to all the “rest” of his goods and to man himself, is only possible through a “yes” to his life. Affirmation of life is, in other words, a necessary condition for the affirmation of man as man. Affirmation of human life simply becomes a “truth test” of man's proper moral attitude to man, or a test of earnest, authentic morality, earnest love of one's neighbor.

At this point, we must take one more step, however. A philosophical analysis of human existence reveals its contingency, and thus its radical gratuitousness. Man is: he begins to exist and exists because he is a gift. Whose gift? Not of the parents alone, if there are always some parents helplessly grieving over the death of their children. Whose, then? Of him who, being a Personal Absolute of Existence, alone has the power to endow anyone else with personal existence as well. Only through the direct creative intervention of the Personal Giver of Life does man begin to exist, and to exist as a man. Man begins to live and lives as one *whom* God creatively calls by name and as one *in whom* he is creatively called by name. It is from this creative call and meeting that man simply *is*. He lives as a theophany. He lives, participating in—and at the same time by the fact of his life revealing—the Sacrum that is present in him. Which is why it was not to Jews, his brothers in faith, but to Greeks that St. Paul could say: “For in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). So it is with God that is dealing anyone who deals with the life of man. The creator is wherever man is! Here why a “yes” to man is not possible other than through a “yes” to his Personal Creator, which in turn may not be expressed other than through a “yes” to human life as “God's gift” par excellence, a gift in which the Giver himself is made manifest *in actu et in Persona*. From now on, affirmation of life becomes a “truth test,” or a test of man's proper attitude to man and to God, a test of

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 18, a. 2.

earnest love of both God and one's neighbor. The attitude to human life becomes inseparably a measure of authentic morality and religiosity. St. John says: "and everyone that loves Him that has begotten loves also him that is begotten of Him" (1 John 5:1). One could hardly express this in a deeper or more succinct way.

We should note that the contemporary proclamation of human rights has brought to light—by the force of its internal logic—this fundamental position of the value of life with respect to any other values. One expression of this is the frequently proposed—and enacted in the legal systems of many countries—postulate that the death penalty should be abolished, invoking this very "logic of goods for man." It is not possible to consistently defend anybody's right—in particular one's own right—to anything as a human right once we question the very basis of any human right to anything at all: man's right to live.

Should we not, against this background, consider as spectacularly inconsistent the activities of those parliaments which—invoking the inalienable human right to life—rule that the death penalty should be abolished with respect to criminals (those who have been proven guilty), while at the same time legalizing the mass killing of people utterly innocent and vulnerable, the unborn? One could hardly think of a greater logical and ethical absurd! This charge could only be withdrawn on one condition: if we decided that the unborn being killed is not a man. On what basis, however? That is the question. Is it not solely on the basis of violence perpetrated by the born against the unborn, heedless of the truth? A suggestion that seems to be appalling. Do not the so-called referenda on the statutory permissibility of abortion imply, ultimately, that those who vote usurp the power to decide about who is and who is not a man?

A MAN UNBORN IS AN UNBORN MAN

This way we arrive at a question that is central to the issue of the life of the unborn: is there any essential difference between a man who is still waiting to be born and a man who has already been born? There is none. From the point of view of being this particular man, it is irrelevant whether, once being alive, he is yet to be born, or has already been born. From this point of view, the only thing that is of essence

is when man comes into existence and becomes man; in other words—when he is conceived. There is only one rational—that is, respecting the datum of experience and logic—answer: at the time of conception.

Here is an attempt at succinctly expressing that which is self-evident here.

With respect to a *homogenous process* which is *continuous* in its nature, the principle of sufficient reason explaining this process precludes the possibility of identifying this process (as such) in a non-contradictory way without recognizing that it is *the same already at the point* in which it began, and then throughout the entire process continuously *the same from the point* in which it began. Now, I do not believe anyone needs to be convinced that human life is just such a continuous process. Continuous, and at the same time identical, homogenous, due to the identity of its subject. The question about the beginning of human life should therefore be referred to—for the sake of the logic of process—to the moment of conception. From the point of biology, it occurs when the child's father's sperm cell fuses with the mother's egg cell. Any other attempts at placing the beginning of man's existence in time have against them the principle of sufficient reason together with the principle of non-contradiction and identity.

The empirical science of embryology provides us with a more detailed description of conception. It tells us about the “how” of the beginning of human life and can locate it quite precisely in time. *Nota bene*: in the legal systems of China and other countries in the Far East, on the day a man is born, one year is added to his age.

Philosophy faces an additional problem here. Starting with the assertion of man's spirituality (which is established in a separate way), in order to explain it, it must demand the direct involvement of a cause that is commensurate to the existence of the result which is man's *spiritual* existence; moreover, it must demand that it becomes involved precisely at the time when man's existence begins, i.e. the moment of conception. This may, therefore, only be a direct intervention of the Personal Absolute of Existence. Creative intervention *par excellence*. Here is why from the moment new human life is conceived, anyone who is dealing with this life is dealing with the man and his Creator.

The final conclusion of our deliberations is this: from the purely logical point of view, there are no grounds for building an ethics of unborn life separate from the ethic of life as such. For everything that applies to the affirmation—or defense—of human life as a *sine qua*

non condition of the affirmation of man and God applies to human life tout court from the moment of conception until death. The moment of birth does not play any material role here. It is in principle one and the same ethics of respect for man through respect for his life—the fundamental value of man, and ethics of respect for the sole Giver of the gift of life—the Personal Creator.

That which from the logical point of view does not need to be separated, requires this in a particular way for psychological and pedagogical reasons, due to the special threat to the unborn man posed by the born man, and also due to the special threat in this arrangement—which is less often remembered—which the born man poses to himself. Let us dwell for a moment here on a consideration of this exceptionally diagnostic test of our moral sensitivity.

WHO IS THE MAIN PERSON AT RISK?

Man in the prenatal phase is almost unnoticeable and utterly vulnerable. He cannot even defend himself resorting to the ways which a man who is already born can use to defend himself, simply by affecting our sense of sight and hearing—for example by crying. He is left entirely to the good will and imagination of those on whom he is dependent. One may not even see in him who he in fact is: someone who should be affirmed for his own sake. And he may be killed without it being realized that a man is being killed and eliminated from the human community. In the case of such—terrible—*ignorance*, he might even be killed *without guilt being incurred*, even though a man is being killed. *Innocens sed nocens!* Here, therefore, is the reason and the place where the voice of the moralist must resound with particular force on behalf of the defenseless man and the Creator who is silent in him. Ethics must do everything that is possible to expose and remove the paradox of extreme threat to human life posed by aggressors who are extremely dangerous, being “disarmed” by ignorance from the sense of guilt. Ethics must most decisively stand up in defense of those who pay with their lives for the ignorance and innocence of their killers. Otherwise, ethics would betray the cause it must serve: the affirmation of man.

When the killer knows what he is doing, however, and does it anyway, counting on privileges enjoyed by an undercover executioner,

or on the fact that what he does is not legally prosecutable, ethics must follow in Socrates' footsteps and identify the main victim in the case. Here is the thought of the great Athenian: The victim of murder is less wretched than the executioner! One cannot physically kill anyone without at the same time morally killing themselves. And without dooming other people, especially those closest to them, to daily contacts with an assassin. By quietly eliminating unborn people around us, we become a society of morally dead people. For whom does the bell toll? Does it really not toll at all and not for anyone? Indeed, no bell is tolled in mourning for those who pass away. The killers are interested in silence, and in covering up any traces which could tell the tale of their victims. Are there really no voices of fright and warning that could be heard in the dead quiet of this silence?

The ethics of unborn life is just such a voice of warning. And for this reason, it is indispensable. Faced with a threat to unborn life, the ethicist cries out: *Spare!* And adds: *Yourself, first of all!* Save the unborn to save yourself. Do not kill yourself morally! And an ethicist who is a theologian cannot fail to quote the words of Christ here, words which may be just as fascinating as they are frightening: "Whatever you did to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." It is them, the least of us, that will one day judge us on behalf of Christ himself.

A WITNESS OF TRUTH

Tadeusz Styczeń, “Świadek prawdy,” in T. Styczeń, *Świadek prawdy: o świętym Janie Pawle II – uczeń* (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 6), ed. A. Szostek, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2015, pp. 159–163.

*For it is not you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father
speaking through you.
(Mt 10:20)*

When John Paul II answers questions asked by Vittorio Messori—as is clear to and intended by both interlocutors from the very beginning!—he is not merely entering into a discussion with an outstanding Milanese writer and journalist whose fame goes way beyond the borders of Italy.¹ The difficulties and concerns involved in Messori’s standpoint as he asks his questions to the Holy Father had already been revealed in his book entitled *Jesus Hypotheses* (published in Poland in 1994), in which he discussed the twists and turns of his own journey—leading through meandering roads of the contemporary world—back to Jesus.

In Messori’s questions, the Holy Father can thus see and deeply empathize with the anxieties afflicting man today in his multifariously complex existential situation. And it is this contemporary man that he enters into a dialogue with: man after Auschwitz and Gulag, witnessing the crumbling of overt totalitarian systems and gradual emergence of their equally dangerous varieties which have so far remained

¹ *Przekroczyć próg nadziei. Jan Paweł II odpowiada na pytania Vittoria Messori* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 1994).

latent; man of the end of the 20th century—one that began and ends with Sarajevo, adding Cairo at its twilight as though a symbol of the twilight of man who comes up with the savage idea to continue—headless of the Auschwitz warning—in the name of law and in the majesty of a democratic state, the work of lawlessness and violence inflicted upon a population of the most vulnerable of all, waging a silent total war on them in gynecological clinics around the entire globe. And all of this in the name of freedom, “pro-choice,” which is supposed to entail, as its allegedly self-evident consequence, the right to “safe abortion.”

And here, today, the same man is unable to conceal his fear of himself and of others. For it is enough just to think that not far from now some people, a little younger than himself, may apply his own logic to him as well, and demonstrate uncompromising consistency when he stands at the dusk of his life and they find him to be a nuisance.

It is with this man at the end of our century that the Pope has entered into dialogue. He entered it in the place where man begins to see that he does not always have reasons to be proud of himself. On the contrary, he begins to see with more and more acuteness that there are reasons to doubt himself and to mistrust others, to slide into hopelessness—which is the consequence of the ways in which he has used the gift of freedom.

Man is unable not to defend his freedom. He defends it because he cannot stand not being himself, but the way he defends it makes him cease to be himself. He uses it in ways which imprison him. And to his surprise, he discovers in himself a person of whom he is afraid, who frightens him, and of whom not so long ago he desperately tried to warn the entire world by writing these words on the death block in Auschwitz: *Homo homini... Man to man...* Who is man to man? Himself? A man? And if not a man, but only a frightening caricature of man, then why, how and for what reasons has this become possible again?

Due to what? Should we not ask right away: due to whom, to whose choice? And is it not enough to just ask this question to see its rhetorical meaning and nature: Is it not by his own choice? Is it not myself who deletes, by my own free choice, the truth about myself, obscuring in myself—by an act of my own freedom—my human face?

Man is a strangely paradoxical creature, truly an “unknown begin,” a creature full of saddening surprises. He finds it hard to live

without truth about himself, and hard to live in truth about himself. He is afraid of the darkness of error, and fears the light of truth.

He is frantically afraid of falsehood, fears the darkness of hypocrisy, and thus he looks for truth, like a traveler who has lost his way in the dark of the night and searches for light. And as soon as he sees himself in it, he is afraid again. Indeed, he may be scared and frightened even more than before. For it is in the light of truth that the fascinating, even captivating call to greatness designed for him by his Creator is revealed to him in its full glory, and yet this greatness also reveals to him the daunting immensity of its burden: the burden which he should bear for the sake of truth about himself.

And so truth about his greatness may lift him up, but it may also pull him down. *Fascinatum and tremendum* go hand in hand. Which of them will prevail?

It depends on him, on the relationship between his freedom and truth. On his free choice. Will he win or lose in this struggle for himself? Will he choose, by an act of his free will, the freedom of living in the glory of truth about himself, or will he freely choose a life in the slavery of hypocrisy? Will he win, or will he doom himself to failure, the *failure of tearing himself apart*?

And will then only one choice remain for him: to try and run away from himself—into oblivion, so that he does not remember his failure, or to stay with himself—but in hopelessness and despair over himself?

We are talking here about man all the time, but somehow as though each of us were not one. And yet the answer now needs to be honestly asked from ourselves in the first place. We know that the answer is a confession we will not like. It will reveal to us the truth about our *personal drama*. Is it not the drama of our inner self-inflicted disruption, inner fissure, voluntary breakdown of our identity? How many failures and defeats do we need to confess here?

And do we always have enough courage to do this? Even the courage of the Roman poet Ovid, a pagan: “I see better things, and approve, but I follow worse” (“*Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor!*”)? Does not Ovid, voicing his inner despair, speak also for all of us, for each one of us? And does not St. Paul do the same when he cries out: What a wretched man I am! For what I want to do I do not do, but what I do not want to do, indeed, what I should never want to do, what I most decidedly forbid myself—is what I do (see Romans 7:19)?

Am I myself, then? And if I am not, then because of whom? Is it because of someone else, outside of me, and not myself? Who am I dealing with, then, when I am dealing with myself? Is it not with a moral suicide? With someone who has ceased to be himself, and owes it all to himself?

What a wretched man I am!—says Paul, sincerely afraid of himself, acknowledging in all humility the sad truth about his condition so that he can look for a way out: Who will release me from this deadly rope I am tying around my own neck? And so that he can find the answer for himself: the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (see Romans 7:24).

Is not this confession also a line in our contemporary autobiography? Isn't there a self-diagnosis looming behind the "spurt of conscience" during the "Solidarity breakthrough" of consciences shaking off the bondage of totalitarian slavery: "For Poland to be Poland, 2 + 2 must *always* be four!"? A self-diagnosis that is difficult to accept, made by those who not so long ago were prepared to subserviently submit truth to the arbitrariness of their dictators? Is it not ourselves, in the end, who have willingly submitted to their promises or threats? What does our self-diagnosis of that time, the "Polish radish," tell us today about ourselves? Indeed, it was not a reason to boast.

And how well do we pass the exam in interpersonal solidarity today, when the "Solidarity breakthrough" is over? How do we pass it with regard to the weakest and most vulnerable people in this house of which we are cohabitants and hosts as the citizens of a sovereign state? Do not the littlest of us need to fear us from the moment they come into existence due to laws which, instead of protecting their life, protect those who kill them? Did we fail to discover interpersonal solidarity even during the Solidarity breakthrough, or did we—having discovered it—betrayed it the very next day?

Who will then set us free from this most humiliating and most degrading form of slavery, from the slavery of living in hypocrisy and self-inflicted bondage, the "slavery of sin"?

That is the question.

And isn't that very question related to the issue of our hope for deliverance, our hope for salvation?

What do we—having asserted all of this as a discreditable truth about ourselves—do to ourselves, how do we deal with it all?

We are usually tempted here to choose one of the two roads mentioned above, both of which are ultimately a wasteland, a wasteland

of giving up on ourselves. We either try to escape from ourselves into an illusory world of forgetfulness and detachment from ourselves, into the world of entertainment, the world into which we are drawn by “free” television, the contemporary version of the antique proposal: *circenses*; or hide within ourselves, reconciled with our failure, which is hopelessness, a close kin to despair. This latter alternative has been aptly described by Françoise Sagan in her book: *Welcome, Sadness! (Bonjour, tristesse!)*. By shutting the door to our inner room, we place a sign above it—echoing that placed above the gates of Dante’s inferno: “Abandon all hope, ye who enter!” Jean-Paul Sartre presents a very similar vision of hell in his play entitled *Huis clos. No Exit*. There is no way out!

So either despair—within, or escape—from oneself. *Tertium non datur*. There is no other way out! Or is there?

A LETTER TO GENERAL
WOJCIECH JARUZELSKI,
PRIME MINISTER
OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC
OF POLAND

Tadeusz Styczeń, "List do gen. Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego, premiera PRL," in T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Życie – Rodzina – Państwo – Prawo (Dzieła Zebrane, vol. 5)*, ed. C. Ritter, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2014, pp. 443–445.

To the Prime Minister of the PRP
Head of the Military Council of National Salvation
General Wojciech Jaruzelski

Dear Mr. Prime Minister!

More and more frequently I am being addressed as a priest and teacher at the Catholic University of Lublin—both in the confessional and otherwise—by persons troubled by the profound moral conflicts in relation to their being forced by government officers representing the People's Republic of Poland to make written statements which—as they confess—they cannot make without feeling that their conscience is being violated; and the pressure that is exerted on them aims at forcing them to take decisions with which they would contribute to violating their own conscience themselves. They tell me that the statements they are being forced to make refer to discontinuation of hostile activities against government authorities of the People's Republic of Poland, and stepping out of the Independent Self-Governing Labor

Union “Solidarity,” which is sometimes treated as a *sine qua non* (unqualified) condition of remaining in their office—or being reinstated to employment at a state-owned work establishment.

In view of the above, I feel obligated in my conscience to express my human and civilian moral objection against these practices as a form of most brutal aggression against man’s internal attitude to the truth of his convictions, an act of violation of his conscience, an attack on man’s subjectivity which determines his human identity, his personal dignity. An attempt at violating the conscience of another person morally debases the one who makes the attempt in the first place, its author, and with unfailing effectiveness. Consequently, such practices employed by people who represent the government are first of all a blow directed against the moral authority of the government and of the State, causing damage beyond measure. This is the other reason why such practices should be objected to and morally condemned by any citizen.

For both of the above reasons, I wish to advise you, Mr. Prime Minister, of my objection against these practices. I refuse to even think that you, having assumed—as Head of the Military Council of National Salvation—personal responsibility for saving the most fundamental human and civilian values in our Country, and having been informed of such practices, might or wish to tolerate them any longer.

Being convinced that we are of one mind as regards our moral sense in such elementary matters, I trust that I can contribute with this letter to your putting an end to these degrading practices. There can be no room for them in the Homeland of Poles.

With regard to the content of statements people are being forced to make as mentioned above, let me make two more comments:

(1) Forced declarations on discontinuation of hostile activities against the People’s Republic of Poland implies right away that the signatory did engage in such activities in the past, thus making it impossible for them to put up an effective defense against such charges, even if they were objectively entirely groundless. Making people declare they will never engage in any criticism of the authorities peremptorily claims that people who exercise power in the People’s Republic of Poland will never use it against the vital interests of the society, the Nation and the State. Such assumption must never be

made by any administration, particularly after the sad experience of how power has been exercised in the PRP during the past decade. Where would all of us be today if we had made such written statement on behalf of the Gierek administration at the time he was taking power over from Gomułka and his cabinet during the breakthrough period—similar in many respects to the present situation?

The right to object to any abuse of power by those in authority is one of the inalienable human and civilian rights, and its exercise sometimes becomes the citizens' moral duty. It is this moral duty and obligation that motivates me to express this objection. And I do not believe that by doing this I should be judged by you, Mr. Prime Minister, to be a bad citizen of the PRP. On the contrary—I believe that it is quite the opposite, even though I am aware that such objection, motivated by the most profound concern for the well-being of our Homeland and objectively contributing to it, may prove to be inconvenient for some government officers. I am prepared to suffer all consequences of this fact.

(2) Forced stepping out of the Independent Self-Governing Labor Union "Solidarity"—of which I am formally not a member, as a side remark—implies that it is not the politics of some of the Union's extreme activists, but the Union itself that is the cause for objection, or even repression, which would mean cancelling the line of continued attempts at social agreement, most definitively declared by the Military Council of National Salvation, and by yourself, Mr. Prime Minister, in particular. Any attempts at forcing such written declarations is therefore, in fact, directed most explicitly against the very cause which the Military Council wants to serve, and is an act radically undermining the Council's reliability in the eyes of the society. An immediate end put to these attempts may therefore serve as a "truth test" for the Council in the eyes of the general public in our Country, in particular in the eyes of the ordinary members of "Solidarity." Therefore, both the fact that such declarations are being extorted and the purpose they serve must raise moral objections in terms of human and civilian rights. For it is the most elementary human good of individual people that is being threatened and violated in those who are citizens of their own Country, and thus also the common good of all Poles—and that in a situation in which concern for common good has become an urgent imperative.

I ask you, Mr. Prime Minister, to accept this as an expression of precisely such a concern on the part of an ordinary citizen.

Lublin, January 10, 1982

Rev. Tadeusz Styczeń

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