

## **ETHICAL DIMENSION OF MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN ACTIVITY AND OF HUMAN WORK RESULTS**

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The contemporary human being realizes that their activity influences the surrounding world and themselves. At the same time, the occurrences that have taken place in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century make them recognize the fact of the existence of the multidimensional cultural crisis and that they have reached the “turning point.”<sup>1</sup> These happenings inspire to reflection on the creative activity of the human being; they make us realize that it is really important, in relation to that activity, to exercise the virtue of wisdom, i.e. the constant predisposition to create the good.

What is the good? In the first philosophical conceptions of the ancient Greece the close relationship between the Good and the laws of the Cosmos was recognized and as good were perceived those phenomena, acts and things, which corresponded to the Logos of the universe. A new approach can be noticed in the thought of Heraclitus for whom the denomination “good” becomes a predicate of the relation between human activity and Logos<sup>2</sup>. There is a proposal here of such an understanding of good that could become the basic category of ethics. Democritus goes even further in joining the good with the human world - he gave up the ontological location of the theory of the Good and narrowed it down only to the human sphere<sup>3</sup>. In Democritus’ philosophy, pleasure, the state of harmony, balance and peace of mind become the criteria of the good. If we want to lead a good life, we should, in Democritus’ opinion, ensure that our passions are governed by the mind, which commands to moderation and tells that both, the lack and the excess of pleasure needlessly disrupts the peace of mind. The subjectification of the truth introduced by the Sophists had to result in the subjectification of the good. The one who pleaded in defence of the objectivity of Good was Socrates who with his ethical intellectualism pointed at a strong relationship between the good, i.e. a wise behaviour and the knowledge of the truths related to the order of the universe. These truths are a guideline how we should act. The correspondence with the laws of the Cosmos allows the human being to fully realize their own existence and obtain happiness because these laws are good for the whole universe and

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<sup>1</sup> Capra F.: *The Turning Point. Science, Society, and the Rising Culture*, Bantam, New York 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Pacewicz A.: *Między Dobrem a Jednością. Związek Dobra i Jedna w filozofii Platona, Starej Akademii i Arystotelesa*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2004, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

hence must be good for the human being, who is an element of that universe. Both, Plato and Aristotle continue such thinking about the good. The two conceptions of the good created in the ancient enlightenment - the Sophist and Socratic one - compete with each other till today. The difficulties linked to the understanding of the Good, intuitively grasped by the human being, is explained by Plato with a help of a metaphor, where the Good is compared to the Sun, the truth to the light, and the sensible beings to the noetic beings<sup>1</sup>. It follows from that metaphor that just as we do not have to know the definition of the Sun in order to see, we do not have to know the definition of the good in order to notice good deeds, good people, good things and phenomena. The good emanates the truth and illuminates the noetic beings, and “the objects of knowledge not only receive from the presence of the good their being known, but their very existence and essence is derived to them from it”.<sup>2</sup> The truth refers to the essence of beings, the good - to their existence. Evil beings are condemned for short-term existence. They are in contradiction with the laws of the Cosmos. Although Plato uses the term “evil,” he does not address its ontological status. There is no mention about the idea of evil in the dialogues. The idea being “ever-existent and neither comes to be nor perishes, neither waxes nor wanes”<sup>3</sup> is a necessary being, i.e. true, eternal, and perfect. The evil, which is of negative nature, cannot be an idea. The true being is good and beautiful. The evil as a result of the lack of the truth, good, and beauty is a certain kind of a hole in the being. Just as the truth is the source of a good being, the cause of the “puncturing” of the being is the false, which is the consequence of the lack of the truth. If we exist in the system of the punctured being, we become its element, and if our existence also becomes “punctured,” we begin to co- participate in moving towards the death of the system and, in consequence, - our own death. Already in Plato we find inspirations for such an understanding of the relation between good and evil, which later was proposed by St. Augustine, then taken up by Thomas Aquinas, and which was brought back by John Paul II in his last book *Memory and Identity*, where he strongly emphasized the existential independence of good and evil and that evil occurs only as a lack of good.

The critique of Platonic conception of the Good as idea is to be found in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle thinks about Good as realizing in

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<sup>1</sup> Plato: *Republic* 505a - 509b.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 509b 2

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Plato: *Symposium* 210e - 211a, the description of the Idea of Good.

things. He believes that beings aim at the Good, i.e. such a state, where their nature is being realized in the optimal way. Just as in Plato's system, there is a relationship between the truth and good.

The philosopher from Stagira divides the multiplicity of goods, similarly to Plato<sup>1</sup>, into three groups: material goods, external goods, and the spiritual ones. Among the latter, which are considered to be of the highest status<sup>2</sup>, he includes the acts of the soul. Aristotle proposes yet another division; he distinguishes: admirable goods, praiseworthy goods, and potential goods<sup>3</sup>. An example of the first kind is happiness desired for oneself; an example of the second ones, which we discover in relation to something else is bravery, which is important due to its results. Among the third ones we include that what when used appropriately becomes the good itself. The good can be efficiently realized by a wise person.

Possessing the virtue of wisdom allows us not to limit ourselves to looking for an answer to the question: "What can a human do?" The virtue of wisdom allows to propose a proper answers to the question "What should one do?" It is an important question in the context of the problem of managing of both, human activity and the results of their work. When proposing answers to that question we have to call for values. An ethical reflection turns out to be necessary.

At the same time, there are arguments carried on in regard to the status, goal, and methodology of ethics. What is proposed by the contemporary ethicists often goes far away from the Socratic mission and leads towards mercantilization of professional ethics. We witness the belittling of the tradition and leaving behind sapiential knowledge that is being exchanged for random populist diagnoses. In result, as it is noted by Ryszard Jadczyk<sup>4</sup>, ethicists may easily undergo demoralization and become functionaries of the current reality, justify that reality and collective interests. Ethics, by losing the relationship with the spiritual aspects of life, becomes the source of the contemporary moral crisis itself.

Various new applied ethics have come into existence (business ethics, management ethics, pedagogical ethics, medical ethics, media ethics). If we look for what is common for the considerations carried out in the area of these applied ethics, we observe<sup>5</sup> that there is a shared belief of the authors

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<sup>1</sup> Plato: *Philebus* 48e; *Lows* 697b and 743e

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* 1098b.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1101b

<sup>4</sup> Jadczyk R.: Czy zmierzch etyki? (Kilka uwag o kondycji etyki konca wieku), [in:] *Spor o etykę. Materiały X Jagiellonskiego Sympozjum Etycznego*. Krakow, June 4-5, 1998, Krakow 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. E. Podrez: Współczesne kontrowersje wokół etyki. Wprowadzenie do dyskusji, [w:] *Meandry etyki. „Episteme” 17 (2001)*, Z. Sarelo (ed.), *Wydawnictwo Wszechnicy Mazurskiej, Olecko 2001*.

that the utility of moral norms has its source in prudence and does not require any deeper explanations and justification from the side of philosophical anthropology and metaphysics. Prudence is conceived as a measure of common sense, which is fully subjected to experiences and finds in them full justification for its judgements. Norms and values that order human acts stem from social experience; they should be justified through the appeal to that experience, and to be verified by that experience. In consequence, the conclusion is being drawn that one has to give in a theoretical, Socratic-like reflection because it does not increase the efficiency of action, and to limit oneself to a rational, compliant with praxis, description how the human being should behave in certain conditions and how to preserve freedom, rationality of choice and not to harm oneself and others. In principle, ethics based on such presuppositions is no longer a philosophical discipline. It loses its depth, its timelessness; it is moved from the metalevel of theory to the level of directness that follows from the practice of experiences; it becomes a collection of practical guidelines of behaviour, which have no foundations in *sacrum*, in meta-narration, and it loses its power of freeing our thinking and acting from the conditioning of *profanum*. Ethical considerations are exchanged for praxeological deliberations. In result, the functioning of the systems of existence brought to being by the human being becomes more important than the existence and development of the humans themselves, who are perceived as an element of these systems and seem to be unable to exist outside of them. Imprisoned in *profanum*, enslaved by what they created, the human being is unable to creatively change the world and themselves. They cannot wisely use the knowledge and technology which are at their disposal because - as it was already observed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Albert Schweitzer - the human being cannot propose a culture appropriate for the technological civilization that is available to them.

The contemporary human being who feels comfortably in the order determined by the notion of efficiency appeals, more willingly, to economy, than to ethics. Moreover, they identify economy with a particular economic theory and allow to become enslaved by the ways of interpretation enforced by this theory. They forget that it is merely one of the possible models of ordering economic activity, which, just like others, is based on a specific value system and on particular beliefs regarding the human nature. In other words, it is entangled in assumptions, which were called meta-economy<sup>1</sup> by Erwin F. Schumacher. In his book, Schumacher compares the contemporary economic system, where the “level of life” is measured by the amount of

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<sup>1</sup> E.F. Schumacher: *Small is Beautiful. Economics as if People Mattered*, Blond and Briggs, London 1973.

annual consumption with the Buddhist economic system based on the notions of the “proper level of life” and “Middle Way,” where the goal is to reach the maximal degree of wellbeing of people by optimising consumption.

Albert Schweitzer introduced to his reflection the notion of a “neo-primitive man.” It refers to a human being who does not possess a culture adequate for the actual level of civilization. Such a human being is dangerous for themselves, for others, and for the world they function in. The creator of ethics of adoration for life warned against a danger stemming from the cultural development not keeping up with the development of civilization. By civilization he understood human creations that serve to maintain human life in its biological dimension. Culture consists, in his opinion, of values and human creations not directly linked to survival but related with the spiritual sphere of human activity. On account of such conceived culture the human being goes beyond strictly biological existence and may enter the unknown in the world of nature areas like ethics, religion, and art. Culture enables human beings to distance themselves from the possibilities offered by the civilization and consciously change the world.

According to Schweitzer, civilization and culture should coexist harmoniously. A distortion of this harmony for the sake of the civilization causes not only spiritual degradation of the human being but also deprives civilization of the possibility of realizing its goal. Instead of serving the biological existence of the human being it escapes the control and begins to endanger that existence. If the development of culture does not keep up with the development of civilization, then the life of the human being is reduced to the biological dimension, to an impersonal endurance. Such a human being ceases to be a creative creature who consciously and with the sense of responsibility transforms the natural environment and the system of social existence. It may be said: they are not able to be a steward taking care for the life of the natural and social ecosystems. Dominated by impersonal powers of both, nature and economy or market, the human being is reduced by them to the role of the subject. They become a “neo-primitive,” who do not ask the elementary questions about the sense of their existence. They are unable to realize the axiological dimension of their actions and answer the question what they should do. They also stop looking for the truth about the world. They are easy to manipulate but they themselves willingly manipulate others using them for their own purposes. They are neither able to develop culture, nor wisely using it. Their activities begin to destroy the systems they created; the systems, whose task was to order and support the culture. The crises are a result of it.

From the perspective of the “turning point” Fritjof Capra observes that the specificity of the crisis is well reflected by a Chinese name for it - *way-ji*. Capra writes that we live at the borderline of two epochs, that we have entered the “turning point”.<sup>1</sup> From the perspective of that “turning point” he notices that the character of the crisis is well conveyed in the language of Chinese, who “have always had a thoroughly dynamic world view and a keen sense of history.”<sup>2</sup> The word *way-ji* consists of two characters - “danger” and “opportunity”<sup>3</sup>. The word crisis, in such an understanding, implies the necessity and the possibility of carrying out a *metanoia*<sup>4</sup> and going beyond the limitations stemming from the world that is a result of the activities realized in the modern schemata of understanding and evaluation. A European notion of “creativity” by educing that aspect of change, which is linked with human freedom and responsibility, allows to understand the possibility of bringing into existence the new “presents.”

The notions “freedom” and “responsibility” may help to comprehend the ethical dimension of creativity. They imply the perception of the world and influence the actions of people who use them. As all notions they are entangled with the systems of meanings worked out in the frameworks of various narrations about the world. In result, we have various notions of freedom. Sometimes freedom is being contradicted with necessities by claiming that it would be understandable if one gave up the assumption of determinism. One forgets, in such a case, that in order to realize the will, there must exist the laws of necessity, the dependencies of the cause-effect type, which enable to anticipate the result of the action. Sometimes, it is thought, mistakenly, that freedom is waywardness, that freedom should be limited by freedom of other people. Let us notice that the contradiction of freedom is both, enslavement and waywardness. Freedom is some sort of an Aristotelian middle between enslavement and waywardness. Both, enslavement and waywardness are accompanied with the lack of feeling responsible. Enslavement is a state where the sense of responsibility for oneself and the world we live in disappears; that sense is superseded by the feeling of responsibility towards somebody or something (e.g., an institution), “who” or “what” enforces on our existence certain order and seems strong enough that we give in our own agency. Waywardness is a state

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<sup>1</sup> F. Capra, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> A philosopher Leszek Kolakowski during the inauguration of the 6<sup>th</sup> Simposium of the International Society for Universalism entitled *The Role of Philosophy, Sciences, Business, Mass Media and non Governmental Organisations in Preventing Ecological Catastrophe* noticed that in redgard to the topic of the Simposium that “a change of mentality, a *metanoia* is an urgent issue” [own transl.]; cf. L. Kolakowski: Introductory Remarks, “Dialogue and Universalism,” No. 1, 1995, p. 9.

which is accompanied by the lack of any kind of the feeling of responsibility; a state available to people who are devoid of the Socratic virtue of wisdom. Both, enslavement and waywardness are related to the lack of the feeling of agency. That feeling is necessary not only for one's awareness of one's own potential to realize their own will but also being aware of being an author of the results of one's actions, or a lack of them. Freedom is a virtue very closely related to the virtue of wisdom. They are both like the morning star - unreachable and very useful at the same time - they show the right way.

The term "free" occurs not only next to the notion of the human being. Time, and a country, as well as a choice or a place can be free. Free time is time that is not subjected to the tasks stemming from the existence in a certain order of practice. It is the time dedicated for fun and relaxation, i.e., the time which we may use while we are not restrained by coercion or necessity. A free country is a country that has maintained its agency, a country not subjected to "foreign interests." A free choice is a choice made by the human being who is neither enslaved nor wayward. A free place is a place that is to be managed; a place that belongs to nobody. What is common for free time, free country, free choice and free place is that they all gain their "freedom" on account of human action. It is the way of existence of the human being in time that decides whether the time is free. Freedom of a country translates into freedom of its inhabitants. A free choice is a free decision of the human being. A free place may be, with no obstacles, fulfilled by one's own being. A dimension of freedom is brought about into places and events by the human being.

In antiquity the human being was a frolic of the gods. Knowledge made them free in a specific way - they were able to comply with the laws, which governed the universe and the human being themselves. In Christianity the human being is a God's partner, they are free and responsible for what they actualize from the potentiality of being. In result, they are, in a certain sense, creators of themselves and of the world they live in. Responsibility gains a new sense when joined with the notion of creativity.

In the implied by the paradigm of ecosystem thinking it is easier to turn one's attention to the almost forgotten relation between "response" and "responsibility." We should realize that relationship while planning and carrying out the management processes. We begin to see it more clearly in the Aristotle's perspective of four causes and it escapes our attention if we concentrate only on the efficient cause. Let us notice that action can be perceived as a response on the expectation of the system it is a part of, or which it wants to initiate. That response may be adequate, or not. The adequacy and expectation may be understood very differently, and being

adequate can be variously evaluated. Referring to the St. Augustine's understanding of the sin, an adequate response would mean a response that is in accordance with the Divine plan; and inadequate - such that contradicts that plan, and in consequence leads to evil, i.e., certain kind of non-existence. In the context of Hegel's theory, an adequate response is such a response that goes in line with the dialectics of being. According to Stoics, a responsible behaviour tries to oppose that to what it is powerless. It is yet different in Bergson's theory. He gives up the purposefulness because it limits the creative activity, which in the conception of this philosopher cannot be limited by anything. In result, adequacy cannot be conceived as a response on expectation. Bergson introduces openness, in which our activity appears as a creative response on a situation. In that context, responsibility is associated, first of all, with the sense of agency. In the perspective of ecosystem, both a response on expectation and a creative response are important. The model of ecosystemic relation allows to understand the "agency" as an "inspiration" for the response on our actions, and by realizing the dependencies in the ecosystem, we notice the relationship between responsibility and adequacy and clearly see how strongly we are responsible for the choice of the proper, i.e., adequate goals of our actions and the proper methods for reaching those goals.

Nowadays, the claims about the necessity of changing the way of perceiving, understanding, and evaluating the world, and in consequence, acting seem more and more obvious. A radical change of thinking is supposed to lead to the change of behaviour and cause an initiation of a new way of being that would be more human-friendly. *Ethos* in the meaning reminded by Martin Heidegger is supposed to be the effect of those changes. In *Letter on Humanism* the philosopher modifies slightly distorted, in his opinion, translation of that word, which the name "ethics" rises from. He further reminds that that "word names the open region in which the human being dwells<sup>1</sup>". This reminder is important and helps to understand the specificity of ethics and also to distinguish it from morality. Jozef Tischner taking into account the etymology of the word *ethos* turns the attention to the fact that originally it meant "the place where a plant could develop without any hindrance, where it can live, bear fruits"<sup>2</sup>. The aim of the activities of the contemporary human being, who wisely takes care of themselves should

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<sup>1</sup> M. Heidegger: *Letter on Humanism* [in] Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, New York, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> J. Tischner: *Etyka wartosci i nadziei* [in:] D. von Hildebrand, J. A. Kloczowski OP, J. Pusciak OP, *Wobec wartosci*, Poznan 1982, p. 53 [own transl.].



be the creation of the appropriate *ethos*, i.e., the “environment,” “dwelling,” a life space, where a living being may, metaphorically speaking, “bear fruits”.<sup>1</sup>

In order to create such *ethos*, the human being ought to be equipped with competences and skills needed for developing technological civilization, but also for responsible creation of culture. Only harmonious coexistence of these two dimensions of the human being’s surrounding enables them to wisely use the possibilities they discover or create themselves. It should be taken into account while managing knowledge, education, and culture.

Civilization comprehended as a system of tools allowing for an efficient realizing of goals becomes dangerous in the hands of the human being who does not know and understand values. Such a person is unable to wisely choose the directions of actions - they can very efficiently destroy themselves and their surroundings. Technological civilization, which is a tool in their hand and by its nature is supposed to make the survival easier begins to hinder it.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

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