

Tadeusz Biesaga, S.D.B.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0863-4422>

Deformations of conscience

Pseudonorms in Dietrich von Hildebrand's approach

1. Pseudonorms and moral and antimoral idols

Formulation of legitimate conscience judgements is disrupted by moral substitutes, or pseudonorms, which operate in our moral consciousness. Irrespective of whether they arise through our fault or not, that is whether we acquire them consciously or as a result of our naivety, they distort our judgements of moral good.¹ Dietrich von Hildebrand divides these pseudonorms into: 1) formal substitutes and 2) material and qualitative substitutes.

The first type is called formal, because in our judgements and behaviour, instead of observing authentic moral norms, we follow

Tadeusz Biesaga S.D.B. – a professor, a doctor with a habilitation degree, an ethicist, a bioethicist, a head of the Department of Bioethics at the Faculty of Philosophy, Pontifical University of John Paul II. He develops personalist ethics, bioethics and medical ethics. He uses realistic personalism as the position from which to criticise utilitarianism, socionomism, contractualism in general ethics, bioethics and medical ethics.

¹ The issue of moral substitutes is addressed by Dietrich von Hildebrand in his works: *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, New York 1957; German edition *Substitute für wahre Sittlichkeit*, in: *Idolkult und Gotteskult*, Regensburg 1974, pp. 13–190 (Gesammelte Werke, 7); *Liturgie und Persönlichkeit*, in: *Idolkult und Gotteskult*, op. cit., pp. 191–300; selected passages: *Christian Ethics*, New York 1952; German edition *Ethik*, Regensburg 1973 (Gesammelte Werke, 2). Study of these issues: J. Gorczyca, *Dietricha von Hildebranda koncepcja poznania wartości moralnych*, „Analecta Cracoviensia” 19 (1987), pp. 427–439; T. Biesaga, *Świadomościowe i osobowe warunki odpowiedzialności*, in: *O odpowiedzialności. Moralny wymiar odpowiedzialności w życiu publicznym*, ed. J. Pawlica, Kraków 1993, pp. 67–74 and in „Studia Philosophiae Christianae” 29 (1993), no. 2, pp. 27–37; D. Wiśniewska, *Rodzaje i rola substytutów w moralności w ujęciu Dietricha von Hildebranda*, „Logos i Ethos” 2014 no. 2 (37), pp. 77–98.

extra-moral norms such as a) laws of the state, b) tradition, or c) progressivism or liberalism.

In material, or qualitative, substantive substitutes, morality is identified with a) that which is honourable and dishonourable, b) spontaneity, humaneness, warmth of heart, c) duty, or d) faithfulness, loyalty to friends, e) altruism, f) self-control, g) the attitude of avoidance of anything risky (never too much), h) accommodating oneself to the decent (decent man), or i) the ideal of the gentleman, etc.²

Moral substitutes are normative standards which operate in consciousness, and which regulate conduct as conduct in line with moral values, obligations and norms, even though in their scope and substance they do not match that which is delineated by proper moral values and norms.³ We distinguish moral substitutes from proper moral norms in that the former ones substitute for and formally, and to some extent materially, or substantively imitate moral norms, without being them. They substitute for morality based on cognition of moral values and on an appropriate response to values⁴ that which is provided by statutory law or existing tradition, or which is determined by certain extra-moral values deemed most important, or certain morally significant values that are selected and isolated from other values; examples of such substitutes include honour, faithfulness and loyalty, decency, or personal spontaneity, authenticity and self-loyalty. Pseudonorms do not cover the whole sphere of morality; they distort it by **turning into moral obligations** things which are not moral obligations, or conversely – by **excluding proper moral obligations**.

² See D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., pp. 39–51.

³ See D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴ For kinds of responses to a value, what their conformity with values is about see D. v. Hildebrand, *Christian Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 191–241; T. Biesaga, *Dietricha von Hildebranda epistemologiczno-ontologiczne podstawy etyki*, Lublin 1989, pp. 107–134; T. Biesaga, *Spór o normę moralności*, Kraków 1998, p. 81nn; T. Biesaga, *Emocjonalna odpowiedź na wartość u podstaw życia moralnego*, in: *Konteksty podmiotowej świadomości*, ed. E. Podrez, R. Moń, Olecko 2003 (Episteme, 29), pp. 91–100.

Moral substitutes need to be differentiated from another type of deformations of moral consciousness in a person. They differ from **pathological deformations of the sphere of morality**. Pathological pressure arises outside our rational consciousness and drives people to various actions. It requires establishment of the psychiatric or psychological causes of these processes or biological and mental states, as well as employment of a suitable therapy.

Pseudonorms also differ from the adopted **anti- or a-moral idols, models of conduct**.⁵ Among the **antimoral theories** that reject morality in favour of the sensations of pleasure Hildebrand reckons hedonism of Aristippus of Cyrene. His rejection of importance-in-itself, and even a person's objective good in favour of that which is subjectively pleasant or satisfying is tantamount to rejection of not only the qualitative dimension of morality, but also its formal dimension inherent in moral obligation. Aristippus finds both these dimensions illusive; they need to be removed with a view to a subjective sensation of pleasure. He considers to be wise him who does not accept any norm and is only actuated by the quest for subjective satisfaction. "To seek pleasure in a reasonable manner – according to Aristippus of Cyrene – is definitely not a norm which addresses itself to our conscience, which obliges us, and makes us feel guilty if we do not conform to it. Failure to conform is here not a matter of wickedness, but of foolishness."⁶ The same position can be found in Machiavelli, who also recommends not caring whether something is morally good or evil, but whether it is planned and advantageous. In both the theories moral obligation is dismissed, and even if it is disturbing, it should be rejected.

The theory put forward by Friedrich Nietzsche features a battle against that which expresses the formal *eidōs* of morality. "He rejects a norm above ourselves which would oblige us to obey and which would appeal to our conscience; he wants to «liberate» man, by ousting the notion of guilt. He wants to replace morality, as such, by something radically

⁵ See D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 4.

⁶ D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 7.

amoral, which even in its most formal character has nothing in common with morality.”⁷

Even if in the proposition of the overman he accepts the formal significance of value, he does not justify it, neither from the position of that which is subjectively satisfactory, nor from the position of the objective good for a person. Without any proof he presupposes that the idea of the overman is the supreme value, one might say – an extra-moral value which needs to be realised, while rejecting the existence of moral values which are the effect of resentment. He declares a war on the sphere of morality and substitutes extra-moral values for it.

Nietzsche’s theory and similar theories are not straight substitutes for morality, because a substitute is a more or less experienced and spontaneously applied moral norm or a standard of conduct, whereas a straight philosophical theory is not a norm like this. Still, one can ask in what way a **theory of someone’s devising can become a pseudonorm of conduct**.

Hildebrand uses the example of Raskolnikov in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* to analyse this issue. In this case, Raskolnikov does not reject all moral values; he holds many of these in high regard and condemns immoral attitudes, but he fails to understand the sanctity of human life. He does not evince any visible difficulties concerned with experiencing or grasping moral values. Having murdered the old lady, he is in anguish over his deed, overwhelmed by the pangs of his conscience and desperately trying to be free from this burden. What then made him commit the murder? What does he refer to as he tries to extricate himself from guilt? That which drove him to the crime was a conviction, founded on the adopted theory, whereby the old lady’s life was of no value, and her money could be used to promote his own intellectual and creative talents. Thus, the theory in which extra-moral values and intellectual values had been put on a pedestal resulted in relativisation of the quality of someone’s life. Raskolnikov did not trust his direct experience of morality, but made it conditional upon the theory he had adopted and developed. He found his experience of moral values to be a mere social construct which

⁷ D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 4.

could or even should be easily subverted in his intellectual deliberations. Because of this his intellectual argumentation was geared towards emphasising the value of his own genius which was needed and necessary for humanity, and which could be developed with the old lady's money. Thus, the erroneous theory which he devised and developed aroused in him a belief that the elimination of the unnecessary woman was the right thing to do. This can be called **theoretical, partial moral blindness** to certain moral values. Thus, the theory someone has constructed becomes a **cover** which hides some moral or morally relevant values, and which confuses our convictions by suggesting that our experience of the value of another person as a sacred value is misleading, because this value is merely conventional and cultural and does not have a categorical character of a moral obligation. Thus, an erroneous theory perverts the sphere of convictions and justifies immoral actions.

The description of blindness caused by an **erroneous theory**, which covers certain moral values and excludes them from the group of values generating a moral obligation, reveals certain mechanisms for pseudo-norms arising in our moral consciousness. Blindness caused by a theory which someone has accepted and which forms their axiological convictions may engage in interplay with the blindness resulting from the **overemphasis on extra-moral values** and from the effect of **pride and concupiscence**.⁸ Raskolnikov had a very high regard for extra-moral values embodied in intellectually outstanding and strong personalities who effectively pursue their own goals. His admiration and reverence for the effectiveness and power of great personalities undermined in him the belief about the value of this mediocre old woman's life. Next to the overemphasis on the significance of intellectual values, we can also discern his aloof and haughty ego which sees its value not in the pursuit of moral values but intellectual talents. And so various forms of partial blindness to moral values may result from the adoption of an erroneous theory, the overemphasis on extra-moral values and the effect of the haughty and concupiscent personal self.

⁸ See D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 19.

2. Pseudonorms of legalism and anarchism

In relation to amoral and anti-moral idols, which flatly reject morality, moral substitutes distinguish themselves in that in our consciousness they perform a function of moral norms, or play the role of the criterion for good and evil. Depending on the kind, these pseudonorms deform the sphere of morality differently.

For many people **statutory law** may become a substitute, a moral pseudonorm taking the place of proper moral norms. The state as such is an important and indispensable good for an individual and the community. It is a guardian of order and social justice. "State authority is a legitimate norm in its proper frame. State laws should be respected so long as they have no immoral character, or so long as they do not pass beyond the sphere of competency of the state authority."⁹ Even if someone takes the stance whereby the state law is morally binding upon us, neither the law nor the state authority can be identified with morality. Statutory law is **one among many other morally relevant goods**, and by many of them, on account of their higher standing, it can be surpassed.¹⁰ Equating or replacing the categorical moral obligation, the majesty and metaphysical profundity of the sphere of morality with the state authority is a crude and primitive mistake. This results in substituting **loyalty** to some external social structure for the most profound sphere of man's life. Such loyalty is treated as the most basic virtue representing all of the moral reality. Loyalty to the state authority and the statutory law then becomes tantamount to being a just and morally good man. The scope of morality then becomes limited to that which is prescribed by state law.

Such a mistake can be compounded by the **criminal law fact**. In this kind of law, punishments for committed evil are prescribed and enforced. Such a case reveals a clear connection between criminal law and morality. As it penalises crimes, thefts, etc., the state also does this in the name of morality. In this way it lays emphasis on the goods protected by statutory

⁹ D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 133.

¹⁰ See D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 134.

law, which as morally relevant goods are also protected by moral law. Even with such a convergence of the statutory law and morality it must be observed that the state punishment is not the same as penance for the evil done, for the sins. Even if the state forgives the criminal, once he has served his punishment, he should entreat forgiveness for the crimes committed not only of people, but above all of God. As regards crime, neither the state, nor the victim's loved ones are in a position to forgive the irreversible evil. They can only forgive their own bereavement and turn to God's mercy. This is expressed in the saying: "I forgive you, but may God forgive you." Here we probe into the depths of good and evil, the mystery of redemption and salvation.

While we do not deny the benefits of the statutory law and criminal law, we need to discern the differences between the order and legal principles on the one hand, and moral principles and norms on the other hand. Morality may contain that which is forbidden and penalised by criminal law, but in its scope, substance and profundity morality is not limited to that. The state does not penalise an absence of love or humility, envy, hatred, religious indifference, etc., but these are moral vices. Still, the law that penalises crime emphasises the import of moral norms and hence it can be easily treated as a manifestation of the essence of morality, or morality as such. Someone might view the state authority and statutory law as the real area of moral obligations, relegating to the background other obligations as vague and optional. They might equate state decrees with moral commandments. Thus, they are coming closer to the situation in which morality gets supplanted by the pseudonorm of statutory law. This is typically done by a moral bureaucrat whose sensitivity and moral sensibilities have dissipated and their place has been taken by blind adherence to the decrees of state institutions.

Statutory law becomes a fully-fledged moral substitute when someone in their experiences equates state decrees with moral obligations.¹¹ In a situation like this, moral principles do not have their origin in the experience of moral values or the experience of a person's dignity, that is

¹¹ See D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 135.

the experience of the sphere of values in their specificity and hierarchical order, on which predicated is encapsulation of the specificity, categoricity and profundity of moral values as such. The place of the direct, intuitive cognition of values is taken by the external state decree. In the face of this overemphasised authority of statutory law the proper sources of and criteria for good and evil pale or vanish, and only that which is prescribed by conventional statutory law becomes moral.

Two distortions of the sphere of morality can be distinguished in this process. The first one is about endowing all that is prescribed by statutory law with a **character of moral precepts**, whereas the second one – which is even worse – is about **limiting the whole sphere of morality** only to that which is prescribed by statutory law. In the former case, extra-moral and immoral decrees of statutory law too will be recognised as moral, while in the latter case all morality will be narrowed down to statutory law, thereby excluding from the sphere of morality that which exceeds statutory law, and treating these values and norms as irrelevant or optional. The deformation of morality in the latter case is the most extensive, because not only do **extra-moral and immoral precepts of statutory law** become recognised as moral, but a broad spectrum of moral obligations binding upon us will be **abolished** in the name and for the sake of a narrow set of morally relevant, extra-moral and immoral state precepts. The Leviathan state then arrays itself in the divine-like majesty, which dictates to us what is good and what is evil, and which decides about our humanity, and in a way about our salvation. **The state becomes the idol**, and our attitude towards it becomes **idolatry**. In this substitute, in this idolatry, morality is stripped of a true absolute character, which – to use Kierkegaard's expression – might be called a "breath of eternity;" it is secularised, flattened, devoid of its profundity and supplanted by worship of earthly idols.

Replacing morality with a pseudonorm of statutory law, that is conventional reality, strips morality of its proper nature, because it results in rejection of its universal applicability, and in relativisation of its relevance. Morality becomes a matter of taste, arrangement, changes and strong influence in legalisation by, e.g., individual or social deviation.

If formal substitutes overemphasise external sources of morality, e.g. the state, race, class, culture, custom, the ideology of progress, then **qualitative** substitutes overemphasise inner, subjective sources of morality. One might even say that the subjective distortions of morality are an extreme reaction to normativeness, external prescriptiveness and to the prescriptiveness of authentic, categorical moral obligations. In qualitative substitutes morality is identified with **personal, personality**-related, morally relevant or directly moral values, which take on the role of a criterion for good and evil, the role of the norm of morality as such. Thus, for instance, **a sense of honour, authenticity, spontaneous impulsiveness, cordiality or sensitivity**, and even **personal altruism** are personal values, but they may become substitutes for morality, distorting that which is determined by moral values. Treating independence, freedom, authenticity or unconstrained emotional spontaneity in oneself as an expression of the essence of morality as such may be a defensive reaction to morality imposed from outside, or a reaction to the overly experienced normativeness of authentic moral values. In their nature, hierarchical degree and superiority to other values, moral values are characterised by categoricity that does not yield to the pressure of someone's freedom or spontaneity, but comes across to us in the experience of guilt. An accusation, a judgement of our ego is a painful moment, or even unbearable and so the above-mentioned pseudonorms want to free us from it.

Those who follow the pseudonorm of absolute independence, spontaneity, authenticity or loyalty to only one's own impulses may find all moral norms calling for control over these spontaneous impulses to be of an enslaving and oppressive character. In Hildebrand's opinion such behaviours can be observed especially in Slavic nations. "Every rule, every precept is seen as something inhuman, cool, heartless and, moreover, conventional and artificial. (...) The morally good is identified with spontaneity, warm unconventionality, the possession of a sensitive overflowing heart. What is morally evil tends to be identified with loyalty to juridical obligations, correctness, bureaucratism, or cool reasonability."¹²

¹² D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 41.

Such people may discern a broader spectrum of moral values, but they judge themselves and others primarily by the criterion of authenticity and unhindered spontaneity. Even if they notice that someone in their impulsive behaviour has acted immorally, they judge him positively if he has acted spontaneously, effusively and sincerely.¹³ In a case like this, the moral judgement is made only as a result of establishing whether something is an effect of independence, spontaneity, freedom. Someone's spontaneous behaviour, their loyalty to spontaneity and their admission of it are used by such a judgement to justify evil. This option only requires this kind of **moral exhibitionism**, boasting of betrayal, abortion for us to find that we are dealing with an authentic, good man, and consequently with an authentic and hence good deed. Persons who embrace the substitute of spontaneity and authenticity in conduct as the criterion for good and evil treat moral conduct governed by universal norms as a distortion of morality, and hypocrisy. Adherents of absolute authenticity treat all moral effort as cynical, insincere exaltation which stands in contradiction to natural sincerity. In their opinion it is striving after the moral ideal that strips our nature of its peculiar aspirations. This nature should manifest itself in its impulsiveness, directness and by extension in its authenticity. They view striving after one's own moral perfection as pretentious pharisaism. They want to oppose that by spontaneous, controversial deeds intended to shake the existing morality, which in a way imposes on us morally illegitimate requirements.¹⁴

The pseudonorm of self-loyalty, one's independence and impulsive unconstrainedness thus construed "not only does it darken the true hierarchy of moral values, but it deform the ethos and falsifies the entire morality."¹⁵ Such a deformation primarily consists in **isolating and overemphasising** certain values. A single selected value, e.g. authenticity or spontaneity of the heart, is not assigned to other moral values and norms, but is extended to cover the whole sphere of morality, that is

¹³ See D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 47.

¹⁴ See D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 47.

¹⁵ D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 47.

viewed as expressive of the essence of moral values, that is as a criterion for good and evil. In this way the qualitative nature of moral values gets destroyed. Besides, the selected personal value, as the only proper and binding one, is **aggressively opposed to other moral values**. “Many moral values are omitted and overlooked, as in the case of naïve substitutes; and there are moral values which are even opposed as being pseudo-morality.”¹⁶ In combatting other moral values, this substitute takes on a character of **heretical apostasy**. It does not always result in, say, leaving the Church. Many Christians and Catholics who have embraced the substitute of their individual independence and unconstrained emotional impulsiveness remain part of the Church community. Still, they can be actively involved in combatting many Christian values which in their opinion restrict their personal reactions, choices, decisions. As they do this in a sense in the name of their sovereignty, the authenticity of their choices, they are out to change the moral teachings of the Church and adjust them to their own imaginings. Following only a few selected values results in cutting morality off its roots in the Christian humanism and the Christian Revelation, as well as in **secularisation and relativisation of this humanism**.

Regardless of whether the above substitute is manifested as naive or heretical, deliberate and aggressive involvement, one might say that underlying it is the illegitimate act of making one’s own selection, out of the whole spectrum of the sphere of morality, of personal values and recognising them as moral norms, as criteria for good and evil to be applied to the whole sphere of morality only because they have been personally selected.

The attitude of spontaneity and authenticity of reactive habits in action opens the door to **irrationality, subjectivity as well as passion and pride**. A man following such a pseudonorm can easily fall victim to his own passions, recognising that their unconstrained, spontaneous fulfilment is a manifestation of his authenticity and hence is something good. Despite his concupiscence, even sexual perversion or marital infidelity, he will

¹⁶ D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., pp. 57–58.

boast of his actions, because in them he feels free of hypocrisy and acts according to the dictates of his corporeal and emotional states.

3. The concupiscent self and the proud self in the formation of moral pseudonorms

A major role in the formation of pseudonorms in our behaviour is played by our relation with extra-moral goods as well as with pride and concupiscence. There are, in us, various forms of silencing the proud self or the concupiscent self by the righteous-humble-loving self, as well as various forms of weakening, silencing or eliminating of the current operation of the righteous-humble-loving self in favour of the concupiscent self or the proud self. There may be in us various blends of pride and concupiscence resulting in various forms of weakening, silencing or eliminating of the righteous-humble-loving self.¹⁷

A man **overpowered by satanic pride** views all moral precepts as imposed and hateful forms of his own enslavement. The higher moral or religious values are, the more they **jar on his pride**, and as a result not only does he disregard them, but he also undertakes to knock them off their pedestal, dethrone them and trample on them. The satanistically proud self finds its fulfilment in the destruction of the unbearable and hateful majesty of moral values so as to debase these values, thus becoming free from them. It does not focus on constructing anything, but finds its fulfilment in and derives a kind of erotic and sadistic satisfaction from dragging through the mire, deriding and degrading the highest moral and religious values.

In a similar manner, but for different reasons, moral precepts are rejected by the self overpowered by bestial concupiscence. Overpowered by concupiscence, it treats morality either as an obstacle or as a nebulous utopia that is not binding on it. Driven by the desire for extra-moral values related to its sexuality or possession of various material goods, it

¹⁷ For a description of personal centres conducive to and preventing a proper response to a value see D. v. Hildebrand, *Christian Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 408–452.

constructs its own rules of guile, exploitation of others, deceit and ruthlessness. It becomes an insidious and dangerous predator equipped not only with physical strength, but also with the weapon of instrumental reason subordinated to passion, which devises effective ways of fulfilling those passions.

People overpowered by concupiscence or pride are more **susceptible to accepting various pseudonorms**, or moral substitutes. One might say that they are by definition receptive to moral pseudonorms. The condition for providing the right response to a value is the primacy of the righteous-humble-loving self in us. *Adequatio cordis et voluntatis ad valorem* requires liberating oneself from the decisive role of the proud self and the concupiscent self. Coming into alignment with moral values requires cognitive openness, openness of the heart so that we can provide a response in line with the nature of these values, with the positiveness or negativeness of the value, with the hierarchical standing of a given value, so that our will can follow that which has been recognised and experienced as a moral obligation, with a view to realising a given value.

When the satanistically proud self or the bestially concupiscent self is dominant, the proper response to moral values is replaced with a response to extra-moral and anti-moral values. Thus, a man overpowered by pride or concupiscence is open to replacing morality with something else. As regards statutory law, he can easily accept that that which needs to be reckoned with while realising the proud ego or the concupiscent ego is **statutory law, criminal law**. He can accept this substitute for purely utilitarian reasons, that is because the costs of attaining his goals and being subject to sentences are too high, because it is better to be a loyal and respectable citizen, because as you command that respect, it is easier to lead others up the garden path, climb the social ladder and amass more goods to the satisfaction of one's concupiscence or pride. Such a man might want to be a loyal and respectable citizen, because this way he is not excluded from the community by being stigmatised with a sentence or imprisonment. In other words, he discerns the benefit of loyalty to the realisation of his ego overwhelmed by concupiscence, because on this plane he can practically achieve more egoistic

goals than if he relegated himself onto the margins of society.

A man overwhelmed by pride is all the more likely to accept the substitute of loyalty to the state, because **the state does not question pride**, while moral law does. His pride could even be helped by participation in social and political life, in a variety of circles enjoying recognition, and by holding important positions or receiving distinctions. Thus, loyalty to the state lets the proud man free himself from moral precepts, substitute statutory law for morality, and on top of that be regarded as a noble and morally honest man, that is exploit moral values to indulge his egoism.¹⁸

Also to a man overpowered by concupiscence **statutory law appears to be less demanding than morality**, and hence more attractive than moral laws. Even though it imposes on him restrictions relative to his desire, especially with regard to that which belongs to his neighbour or his fellow citizen, the proud man, while acting as a loyal citizen, will find innumerable opportunities to satisfy his desire through acts prohibited by moral law. “The condemnation of concupiscence is not only restricted to certain crimes, but the confrontation with the ultimate seriousness and majesty of the moral law is a greater scandal for concupiscence than submission the state law.”¹⁹

The substitute of **legalism** with regard to the state is damaging to the morality of not only the individual but also of the society. It gives rise to the emergence of unusually **dangerous social phenomena**. It opens the door to threatening ideologies. By intensifying pride it is easy to arouse attitudes of partisan, class or national egoism. Inspired by pride and desire, Nazism and communism arose out of trust in and idolatry as to the state and social structures. Nazism was driven by the pride of the German nation, while communism by the desire for material goods owned by the bourgeoisie. The Nazis would explain their crimes against other nations by the pride of racial superiority, while communists explained their destruction of other social classes by the desire for possession of the things possessed by others. Both ideologies reinforced their

¹⁸ See D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 138.

¹⁹ D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 139.

destructive activities by legalising their criminal acts within the state structures.

In quite a subtle manner pride can support substitutes related to the individual ego, which in its self-assessment chooses some of its own extra-moral personal values, such as independence, authenticity, spontaneity, honour, courage, etc. As they indulge someone's egoistic sense of greatness, these values reinforce them in their belief that no one else but they alone can decide what is important, valuable or binding on them. As a rule, moral values and obligations jar on pride. The higher moral values are in the hierarchy, the more jarring and intolerable they are. The proud man who boasts of his independence and courage will as a rule turn to destroying the highest moral values and norms that might threaten to limit his puffed-up ego. He can do it in the name of various extra-moral values, indulging his proud and concupiscent self. A man like this, e.g. as an artist, may in the name of aesthetic values destroy subtle moral or religious values. For this purpose, use may be made of satanist performances in which in the name of ostensible aesthetic, artistic and cultural values, moral and religious values become soiled. Therefore, the satanist, nihilistic destruction of Christian values makes use of real and ostensible extra-moral values such as someone's freedom, musical, literary or dramatic talent, etc. By indulging pride and concupiscence, those extra-moral values which are elevated to the highest place become the idol calling for the dethronement and destruction of the proper moral values.

Discovering in oneself pseudonorms and moral substitutes enables overcoming moral deformations. "There is no doubt – writes Hildebrand – that true morality imperatively calls for a cleansing from the perversions resulting from any substitute, and the more so as the substitute recedes qualitatively from true moral goodness. But the abolition of the substitute is desirable only if the substitute is replaced by true morality. If, on the contrary, it is replaced by an anti-moral idol or by a complete vacuum, the last things will be worse than the first."²⁰ This is because when compared with total moral indifference, amoral or

²⁰ D. v. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, op. cit., p. 173.

anti-moral idols, and despite the deformation of morality, substitutes are less damaging to morality than the idols. One should free oneself from them in a movement in the direction of true morality, and not against morality as such.

4. From pseudonorms to moral maturity

A phenomenological and essential characterisation of the types of pseudonorms in moral consciousness does not exhaust all the determinants and factors affecting the workings of the conscience. Biological, neurological and pathological determinants are also of importance, as they influence the way axiological and moral judgements are formed. They are analysed in neuroscience, psychiatry, psychology and sociology of morality.²¹ Both an interdisciplinary and synthetic approach to all these factors as one whole is very difficult, because each one of these disciplines has its own methodological assumptions and the narrow aspect of research determined by them. Methodological reductionism does not justify using philosophical, anthropological or axiological reductionism in the synthesis of the issue in question. Given the above, insights into a person's functioning on the plane of moral consciousness assert their own autonomy and can be presented independently of the research presented in other sciences and philosophical trends. Still, looking for hidden, presupposed determinants of axiological consciousness as well as recommending practical guidance on overcoming those determinants is common to various sciences and philosophical trends.

In this respect, the phenomenology and eidetics of moral consciousness reveal within their method hidden determinants as to the formation of moral judgements, pointing to the path to moral maturity. Those practical suggestions are particularly useful to ethics, psychology

²¹ See K. Murawski, *Jaźń i sumienie. Filozoficzne zagadnienia rozwoju duchowego człowieka w pracach Carla Gustawa Junga i Antoniego Kępińskiego*, Wrocław 1987, passim; R. Stach, *Sumienie i mózg. O wewnętrznym regulatorze zachowań moralnych*, Kraków 2012, passim; *Fenomen sumienia*, ed. D. Adamczyk, Kielce 2012, passim.

of morality, self-upbringing as well as moral and spiritual development. The above-mentioned determinants relative to the formation of pseudonorms consist in giving precedence to various extra-moral values over moral values as well as in the influence of the concupiscent self and the proud self. The deformations of the sphere of morality are also caused by neglect and errors related to the cognition of moral values and regarding the discovery of their nature and their standing in the hierarchy of values. Beside the purely cognitive sphere, a major role is played by the emotional response to a value. *Adequatio cordis ad valorem* is a subjective and personal acceptance of moral values, a discernment and acknowledgement of their special, categorical moral obligation generated by the values. It is the formation of an emotional response to a value that features the essential drama of acceptance and choice between values in themselves and the values of that which is subjectively satisfactory, as well as between moral values and extra-moral values. Moral values display their profundity, are a breath of eternity, refer us to God, enable overcoming of superficial responses to them and opposing various pseudonorms governing our conduct. This type of moral development is possible owing to living an appropriate spiritual life. In such a life we mature morally enough to better discern the transcendence of moral values in contrast to that which is temporary, relative and evanescent. We mature enough to be morally responsible in a manner exceeding personal psychological, social or cultural entanglements. We exceed pseudonorms founded on that which is only subjectively satisfactory, which indulges our concupiscence and pride, and we do it in favour of objective moral obligations. We exceed pseudonorms founded on extra-moral values propagated by society, the state, culture or ideology. We break free from inner and outer enslavement, coming closer to authentic freedom transcending short-term interest, in the name of the call of the moral and morally relevant values, in the name of the fullness of humanity, the fullness of the bond with people and God.

Cleansing oneself of pseudonorms and maturing enough to embrace the fullness of moral consciousness is close to that which is described by contemporary psychology. Hildebrand was quite critical of

psychoanalysis, in which the subject is trapped within immanent analysis of his processes and does not have transcendent criteria for moral judgements.²² This type of knowledge about neutral processes which omits other areas of human life is imperfect, incomplete and insufficient to serve as the basis for real self-knowledge, which is possible in the context of complete truth about man. Closer to Hildebrand's axiological phenomenology is humanistic psychology, in which the sphere of objective values plays a crucial role in the maturation of moral consciousness.

Different psychological, behavioural, psychoanalytical, humanistic-existential trends describe different layers or aspects of the workings of the conscience. The former ones present them within the framework of empirical, psychological and sociological processes of imitation, social mechanisms of learning, internalisation of values and norms, formation of the ought self and the ideal self. Despite the differences in the description of these processes, the comprehensive approaches come closer to developmental theories which distinguish specific stages, from the stage of conformism to the stage of being driven by one's own ideals, where autonomous morality is attained.²³ For instance, "a child submits to the principles and norms imposed by adults. [...] With age the morality of obedience grows weaker and yields ground to autonomous morality based on the mutual respect of reciprocity."²⁴ In the last stage of moral maturity, an adolescent or an adult is capable of going beyond the phase of social conformism, revising their own conventional morality shaped by the existing community, culture and the state, and constructing subjective, personal and autonomous morality with the benefit of self-reflection and self-analysis. Psychologically, this process is quite complicated, and in Kazimierz Dąbrowski's opinion it requires multi-layered positive disintegration, thanks to which we move from instinctive, herd-based life up to the level of individual life, where the moral judgements are

²² See D. von Hildebrand, *Przemienienie w Chrystusie*, trans. J. Zychowicz, Kraków 1982, p. 41.

²³ Cf. P. Kurtek, A. Lasota, *Wybrane psychologiczne aspekty struktury i rozwoju sumienia*, in: *Fenomen sumienia*, op. cit., p. 59.

²⁴ P. Kurtek, A. Lasota, *Wybrane psychologiczne aspekty struktury i rozwoju sumienia*, op. cit., p. 62.

founded on one's own ought self, who lives in the world of higher values, including moral ones.²⁵

The cognitive-developmental trend in psychology lays greater emphasis on the subject's active participation in all the formative phases of moral identity and conscience. Stress is laid on the cognitive role in the formation of moral judgements, in the experience of emotional approval or disapproval. Emphasis is even laid on the role of virtues in the integration and consolidation of our moral identity, in a way the power of our ego in the face of difficulties and conflicts.²⁶

Discernible are some similarities between the psychological and phenomenological approaches to the conscience. One might say that at the stage of conformism we follow social pseudonorms, legalism with regard to the state, social and cultural norms. We give in to subjective pleasures generated by the instinctive concupiscent and proud self. As we head towards moral, subjective, personal and autonomous maturity, we put effort into making our righteous- humble-loving self overcome the negative personal centres and become the foundation for moral judgements.

The effort aimed at letting that self has its say, to shed pseudonorms for the sake of authentic morality is associated by Hildebrand with the acquisition of proper moral attitudes. A description of these attitudes is contained in both the 1993 book entitled *Fundamental Moral Attitudes (Sittliche Grundhaltungen)*, published in Germany against the backdrop of the rising Nazi ideology, and the 1965 extended version of the same book, published in the USA under the title of *The Art of Living*.²⁷ Apart from the fundamental attitudes mentioned in the first publication, such as righteousness, loyalty, a sense of responsibility, goodness and respect for the truth, the second publication includes, among other things, an additional attitude of hope and the role of virtues. Hildebrand makes

²⁵ Cf. K. Dąbrowski, *Osobowość i jej kształtowanie poprzez dezintegrację pozytywną*, Lublin 1984, passim.

²⁶ Cf. P. Kurtek, A. Lasota, *Wybrane psychologiczne aspekty struktury i rozwoju sumienia*, op. cit., p. 64.

²⁷ D. v. Hildebrand, *Fundamentalne postawy moralne*, trans. K. Meissner OSB, in: *Wobec wartości*, Kraków 1984, pp. 11–54; D. v. Hildebrand, A. v. Hildebrand, *The Art of Living*, Chicago 1965.

spiritual maturation – connected with the personal bond with Jesus Christ, conversion and inner transformation – intrinsic to psychological or personality-related moral maturation. He describes these phenomena in the book entitled *Transformation in Christ*, where next to such attitudes as repentance, simplicity, humility, the reader can find descriptions of attitudes connected with the spiritual bond with God, such as trust in God, holy patience, holy meekness, holy mercy, holy sorrow, true surrender of self.

The works promoting mature morality were published by Hildebrand during the dramatic period witnessing the rise of the dangerous Nazi ideology, which captivated broad masses of the nation. It was already at the source of that dangerous ideology that he could expose its pseudonorms, to which he opposed Christian morality. Today his descriptions of the authentic personalistic and Christian morality can be applied to expose the currently emergent ideologies that enforce their own set of pseudonorms instead of authentic moral norms. They can be used to expose secularist ideologies that ruin the connection between morality and that which is transcendent, eternal, Divine. They can also be used to expose the pseudo-moral principles of the neo-Marxist gender ideology, which in effect imposes on society new and damaging utopias through various forms of social engineering which are – unlike in the Marxist bottom-up scheme – imposed in a top-down manner by various international, influential and powerful institutions and social organisations.

Abstract

The paper presents a description of moral pseudonorms, which displace proper moral norms from our consciousness and action as well as distort our morality. The study analyzes mainly the pseudonorms that generate the fundamentals of legalism and their opposition – the fundamentals of moral anarchism. The first groups of pseudonorms identifies morality with civil law, especially criminal law. On the other hand the other group of pseudonorms, equates morality with what is spontaneous, impulsive, authentic.

The paper analyzes not only the scope and content-related distortion of moral norms caused by the substitutes of morality, but it also reveals the reasons of creating the pseudo norms in our consciousness. These reasons are induced by the impact of the pride center and the concupiscent center on our value response and by preferring the extramoral values over the moral ones. Exposing the mechanism of functioning of the pseudonorms in our moral consciousness is useful not only for ethics but also for psychology and pedagogy as well as for selfeducation and moral development.

Keywords

Dietrich von Hildebrand; pseudonorms; legalism; anarchism; extramoral theories; extramoral ideologies; moral values; extramoral values; value response; reverent humble-loving center; concupiscent center; pride center

Bibliography

- Biesaga T., *Dietricha von Hildebranda epistemologiczno-ontologiczne podstawy etyki*, Lublin 1989.
- Biesaga T., *Emocjonalna odpowiedź na wartość u podstaw życia moralnego*, [in:] *Konteksty podmiotowej świadomości*, ed. E. Podrez, R. Moń, Olecko 2003 (Episteme, 29), pp. 91–100.
- Biesaga T., *Spór o normę moralności*, Kraków 1998.
- Biesaga T., *Świadomościowe i osobowe warunki odpowiedzialności*, [in:] *O odpowiedzialności. Moralny wymiar odpowiedzialności w życiu publicznym*, ed. J. Pawlica, Kraków 1993, pp. 67–74; and [in:] „*Studia Philosophiae Christianae*” 29 (1993) no. 2, pp. 27–37.
- Dąbrowski K., *Osobowość i jej kształtowanie poprzez dezintegrację pozytywną*, Lublin 1984.
- Fenomen sumienia*, ed. D. Adamczyk, Kielce 2012.
- Gorczyca J., *Dietricha von Hildebranda koncepcja poznania wartości moralnych*, „*Analecta Cracoviensia*” 19 (1987), pp. 427–439.
- Hildebrand D. von, *Christian Ethics*, New York 1952; German Edition *Ethik*, Regensburg 1973 (Gesammelte Werke, 2).
- Hildebrand D. von, *Fundamentalne postawy moralne*, trans. K. Meissner OSB, [in:] *Wobec wartości*, Kraków 1984, pp. 11–54.

- Hildebrand D. von, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, New York 1957; German Edition, *Substitute für wahre Sittlichkeit*, [in:] *Idolkult und Gotteskult*, Regensburg 1974, pp. 13–190 (Gesammelte Werke, 7).
- Hildebrand D. von, *Liturgie und Persönlichkeit*, [in:] *Idolkult und Gotteskult*, Regensburg 1974, pp. 191–300 (Gesammelte Werke, 7).
- Hildebrand D. von, *Przemienienie w Chrystusie*, trans. J. Zychowicz, Kraków 1982.
- Hildebrand D. von, Hildebrand A. von, *The Art of Living*, Chicago 1965.
- Kurtek P., Lasota A., *Wybrane psychologiczne aspekty struktury i rozwoju sumienia*, [in:] *Fenomen sumienia*, ed. D. Adamczyk, Kielce 2012, pp. 53–70.
- Murawski K., *Jazń i sumienie. Filozoficzne zagadnienia rozwoju duchowego człowieka w pracach Carla Gustawa Junga i Antoniego Kępińskiego*, Wrocław 1987.
- Stach R., *Sumienie i mózg. O wewnętrznym regulatorze zachowań moralnych*, Kraków 2012.
- Wiśniewska D., *Rodzaje i rola substytutów w moralności w ujęciu Dietricha von Hildebranda*, „Logos i Ethos” 2014 no. 2 (37), pp. 77–98.