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An outline of the concept of duty in the ethics of Karol Wojtyła and Max Scheler

In lecture seven of his *Neuf leçons sur les notions premières de la philosophie morale*¹ Jacques Maritain juxtaposed two concepts — obligation and duty². He first pointed to the reference of obligation to the law, which requires duty, while duty does not necessarily entail obligation by law³.

1 J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons sur les notions premières de la philosophie morale*, Les éditions Pierre Tequi, Paris 1951.

2 According to Maritain, duty is a sense of “paradoxical and mysterious” obligation “to do what conscience commands”, but which can be freely overruled. The objects of duty are morally valued facts, the reality of which is experienced in the choice of human conduct, i.e., presented and analyzed in the moral experience of doing good in accordance with duty and doing evil against it; cf. J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture five. Conscience is not part of the conceptual apparatus of moral theory, so Maritain did not define it, but he used the term when he presented duty as that which binds (obligates) the choosing and acting subject. The conception of conscience (*sumienie*) adopted by Maritain is close to the definition according to which it is “an act of practical reason, spontaneous and direct, of a normative character [...] in which the will decides to perform an act”; cf. *Mały słownik terminów i pojęć filozoficznych*, oprac. A. Podsiad, Z. Więckowski, Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, Warszawa 1983.

3 Duty (*powinność*) is „an obligation (*obowiązek*) understood as a fact originally given in the so-called moral experience, the correlate of which is the goodness of the act or *bonum honestum*”; cf. *Mały słownik terminów i pojęć filozoficznych*, p. 282. Obligation (*obowiązek*) is understood here as a consequence of a broader law, not only moral; cf. *The New Lexicon Webster’s Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language*, Lexicon Publications, New York 1991.

Duty in Jacques Maritain's personalism

Maritain distinguished between obligation towards and obligation concerning someone or something. He cited the example of the relationship of obligation towards between people. The symmetry of this relationship disappears when its elements (parts) are human and animal: the latter is not bound by an obligation relationship towards humans. At the same time, animals do not inherently⁴ have the right to fulfil any obligation regarding human: "we have an obligation towards certain beings, even though they do not have corresponding rights"⁵.

People are obligated to one other by the fundamental Christian duty of love (*caritas*), but it is not derived from any other law than the fundamental one, i.e., revealed in the commandment of love. That a person "has the right" to love means that a person "deserves" love by virtue of his innate dignity. He can be, however, denied one or other right codified in the statutory law, while the "duty of love" transcends that order towards the "Cause of being"⁶. Moral obligation is, therefore,

not first and foremost one towards having the right, but obligation *towards* the good [...] and above all an obligation to avoid that which is *evil*. I have a duty, I am obligated in conscience to do good and avoid evil⁷.

The obligation towards the good culminates in the personal "self-contained Good", and has its source in the Christian faith.

In the juxtaposition of conscious duty and faith, the reciprocal relationship of reason and will in human choices becomes apparent. In the order of reason, obligation towards the good takes precedence, while in the order

4 Maritain pointed to two ways of understanding the natural properties of human beings: (1) "*natural* with respect to instinct" and the biological provenance of beings, (2) *natural* to reason; see J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture seven.

5 J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture seven. With reference to the contemporary discussion of the so-called animal rights, it is worth quoting Maritain's words preceding the quote, which expresses the correct observation that "if animals had rights, it would then be right to say that they also have obligations, but no one claims this".

6 J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture seven.

7 J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture seven.

of will, obligation towards God takes precedence. Moreover, “my obligation towards the good is rooted in my obligation towards God — because of His primary right to my love and obedience”⁸. Ultimately, however, the relationship of reason to will is complementary in its inner dynamism, as Étienne Gilson aptly put it:

the intellect and will include and move each other. One thing can move another because it constitutes its end. In this sense, the end moves that which achieves it, since it acts with a view to achieving it. So the intellect moves the will, because the good apprehended by the intellect is the object of the will and moves it as its end. [...] [O]ne thing moves another when it acts upon it and modifies its state. Thus, what alters a thing moves that which is altered; the mover moves the movable object, and in this sense the will moves the intellect⁹.

The will is free, i.e., it is not subject to any compulsion, nor are its choices (in the act of will) subject to necessity. Set in motion by the intellect, the will is not enslaved, for with this it shows an inclination towards its object — towards the good known by reason (*bonum conveniens apprehensum*): “just as what is natural is done by the inclination of a nature, so what is voluntary is done by the inclination of the will”¹⁰. In performance of an act of the will, it “is always free to will or not to will anything whatsoever”¹¹.

Consistently, a person’s freedom of action is not subject to either internal compulsion or external coercion. The complementarity of the influences of reason and will can only indicate a certain “internal” binding, which manifests itself in a sense of duty to do good and avoid evil.

In conscience, the sense of duty binds the doer of an act (the agent) to the (*metaphysical*) good. Maritain explained the unwillingness to be evil (when doing evil) in two ways: either theoretical — practical or practical-practical — i.e., because of either “an abstract and universal vision of

8 J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture seven.

9 Cf. É. Gilson, *Thomism. The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, transl. L.K. Shook, A. Maurer, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto 2002, p. 282.

10 É. Gilson, *Thomism*, p. 283.

11 É. Gilson, *Thomism*, p. 286.

the moral good”, or “a concrete and completely individualized vision of a choice”¹². In the latter case, there may appear a dominance of emotions, which in turn can make the desire for the specific (detailed) good contained in a morally evil act outweigh the unwillingness to be evil. Then the doer of such an act correctly recognizes the duty and is aware of the danger of moral destruction in the intentional committing evil. “Hence our freedom lies between good and evil”¹³.

In its most general form, moral obligation is expressed in the form of the universal injunction: “You *should* do good, you *should* avoid evil”¹⁴. Although this formulation resembles Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperative¹⁵, it has a different origin; it is not derived from a form of law, but is based “on an objective moral value: *good* and *evil*”¹⁶. The imperative of universal moral obligation does not directly point to the ultimate goal, which, when chosen correctly, becomes the full justification of this imperative¹⁷.

Moral obligation is indeed a form of reason, but in directing human action because of the notions of good and evil contained in it¹⁸. Subsequent acts of rational cognition of the natural law in will-guided efficacy specify (concretize) this most general precept, which in Maritain’s classification is a pilot-norm, and not simply a precept-norm. The pilot-norm (i.e., the formative norm) is “simply the form, or a measure, with which an act conforms when it is good”¹⁹.

Although moral obligation does not originate socially, social coercion spreads and reinforces it. It is also reinforced by the commandments conveyed in the Revelation, but in this form they have a supernatural origin — from the Divine Reason, from which the human reason is derived.

12 J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture seven.

13 J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture seven.

14 J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture seven.

15 I. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and transl. A. W. Wood, Yale University Press, New Haven 2002, p. 37.

16 J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture seven.

17 The Catholic personalist identifies the ultimate goal with God: “Man’s *ultimate goal* is God”. It is attainable in both the natural and supernatural precept; cf. J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture five.

18 J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture seven.

19 J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture six.

Thus, they are a primary obligation for the believer. Therefore, moral obligation partly appears as an external coercion, above all when it helps turning back from the path of immoral conduct. When, on the other hand, “we are transformed by love and spontaneously want the good, which is in conformity with reason”, the internal factor, or faith, begins to play “a more important role than reason, and conformity to God’s love means more than conformity to reason”²⁰. And this definitely moves the ethics of Christian personalism away from Kant’s deontology, and in emphasizing the moment of love in it seems to bring it closer to the ethics of Max Scheler. It is for this reason, among others, that in his habilitation dissertation Karol Wojtyła dealt with the confrontation between Christian ethics and the ethics of the German phenomenologist²¹. In this article the Wojtyła’s interpretation of Scheler’s understanding of duty in his work *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik. Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus* will be discussed²².

The Kantian feature of Max Scheler’s conception of duty

Personalist Jacques Maritain undertook a critique of Immanuel Kant’s ethics with the aid of intellectual tools, and regarded the discovery of moral obligation as a cognitive effort of reason, parallel to the will to accept the moral principles conveyed in the Revelation²³. Phenomenologist Max Scheler, having denied Kant’s deductive-normative²⁴ and a-emotionalist ethics, focused on the pure experience of moral values, rejecting (in sharp contrast to Kant) any of their imperative function (from obligation, *aus*

20 J. Maritain, *Neufleçons*, lecture seven.

21 Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Ocena możliwości zbudowania etyki chrześcijańskiej przy założeniach systemu Maxa Schelera*, in: K. Wojtyła, *Dzieła filozoficzne*, t. 1, ed. J. Merecki, Instytut Dialogu Międzykulturowego im. Jana Pawła II, Kraków 2022.

22 The present work partially, i.e., as far as Wojtyła’s analysis makes it possible, exposes Scheler’s exploration of what — in his opinion — duty is. For this subject runs throughout Scheler’s extensive work in his critique of Kant’s ethics of obligation, conducted from the position of a phenomenologist.

23 J. Maritain, *Neufleçons*, lecture one.

24 In keeping with Maritain’s classification, see J. Maritain, *Neufleçons*, lecture one.

*Pflicht*²⁵)²⁶. Admittedly, the value discovered in a lived experience may occur “on the occasion of the act of volition”²⁷, but it does not automatically become its object. When it turns out to be the goal of the striving, it takes the form of an ideal duty (ideal ought, *idealen Sollen*), but in no way does it become an obligation to become realized (a real duty, a real ought, *realen Sollen*)²⁸, since it only signals that “the given object value should be realized” [518–519].

Despite the decisive departure from Kant’s deontology and the transfer of the source of values from the Kantian subject to their object, Scheler remained faithful — firstly — to that Kantian purity, in his work, of a lived value, while in Kant, of an obligation dictated by the practical reason, as well as — secondly — to the Kantian goodness of will alone²⁹. This formalization of ethics is still too strong to be compatible with Christian ethics immersed in human choices of the purpose and manner of performing an act, especially with its form in the Catholic personalism, as constructed on Thomism. Young Karol Wojtyła undertook a confrontation of the two ethics (i.e., Schelerian and Catholic) in his habilitation dissertation. And although, as expected, the result turned out to be negative for the possibility of their becoming close, the analysis of Scheler’s elaborate philosophy made it possible, among other things, to explore the process of experiencing duty.

Scheler’s understanding of moral obligation was similar — thirdly — to Kant’s, but in the face of the limitation of Kantian radicalism, he rejected it altogether. Here, duty understood as Kantian obligation generates rigidity (a kind of automatism) of choices and *a priori* elimination (negation) of their part, while Scheler’s experience of an ideal value “gives moral life an exclusively positive, creative character” [493–494]. The importance of the

25 I. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 14–16.

26 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik. Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus*, Verlag von Hans Niemeyer, Halle 1921, p. 194–196.

27 K. Wojtyła, *Ocena możliwości*, 354. Hereafter, references to the line numbers in this text by Wojtyła will be placed only in the main text of the work in square brackets, here: [354].

28 Scheler’s views are presented here as interpreted by K. Wojtyła, given in: K. Wojtyła, *Ocena możliwości*. See M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 213–214.

29 I. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 10.

moral power of the experience of values becomes paramount with regard to the quality, as well as to their realization in general.

Scheler described the process of recognizing values in experience, using the phenomenological method³⁰, and reconstructed the *a priori* hierarchy of values thus discovered³¹. Here, in the analysis of “an experience, in which a moral value becomes its object content [...] it can be experientially ascertained and investigated” [405–407]. Moreover, Scheler introduced criteria for hierarchizing sensation, to which corresponds an objectified hierarchy of object values, in an ascending material order: sensual, vital, spiritual, holy³². And with the ideal of the holy, in the Christian rite, Scheler — fourthly — recalled the Kantian ideal³³.

Scheler’s emphasis on the merely negative function of duty comes from reducing it to a rigid precept, which, in view of Scheler’s opposition to Kant, cannot be expressed by internal compulsion (not merely external coercion)³⁴, because when “under the pressure of orders we merely fulfil an obligation, then our moral life loses that style which Scheler wants to see in it, and acquires necessarily negative characteristics” [506–509]. It is the precept that causes the real duty, that sets the norm of human conduct. And Scheler ruled out this kind of precepts, because they essentially interfere with the emotional layer, in which experiences of values do not only found individual morality, but by virtue of the kind of these experiences they objectify morality.

The injunction always points to a real duty to the realization of the value it conveys in its content. Its function, therefore, according to Scheler, is negative³⁵, the injunction is morally evil [521–526]. For its very occurrence, as it were, undermines confidence in the positive role of the subject’s experience of this value as an ideal duty. But it is not only the real duty expressed by an injunction that raises a “«moral objection» in this case”.

30 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, Chapter II.A, IV.1.

31 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, Chapter II.B.3.

32 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, Chapter II.B.5.

33 I. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 57.

34 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 213.

35 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 214–215.

As such, an ideal duty always shares in the violation of the purity of ethical experience, since it is “the very experience of value and the attendant emotional «causality of attraction»” that is supposed to guide the will, in its — secondly as according to Kant — exclusively positive function³⁶. From all the perspective of Scheler’s ethics, however, a duty is an obstacle to the programmatic, radical disposal of the Kantian pure obligation³⁷.

Scheler excluded norms from ethics, but they, after all, in one form or another (e.g. as developed by Maritain³⁸) give direction to human action. The peculiar apriority — fifthly inherited from Kant — (derived solely from experience) of values, makes them indifferent to existence. Again — secondly after the Kantian fashion — the function of the will’s natural attraction to the good (reminiscent of the Hobbesian mechanism of appetite, but not parallel to aversion³⁹) all the more justifies the redundancy of the duty addressed to the doer of the act (the agent). Therefore, as Wojtyła emphasized [554–555], the primacy of ethos over ethics (as in Scheler’s conception)⁴⁰, unfortunately opens the way to sociological concepts of ethics⁴¹.

For ethos, as a set of moral ideals, to be modelled on in social life, is — in Scheler’s opinion — transmitted, as it were, from one person to another, when the experiencing of the world of ideal values (*idealen Wertwesen*) is shared between them. What remains, therefore, is either — as in Scheler’s case — the cognitive-emotional plane of value perception, or — as in

36 As Wojtyła aptly pointed out, with his rejection of duty, Scheler made static efficacy, or actually morally demobilized it: “rather let values not be realized than have them realized by injunction” [547–548]. Even when Scheler uniquely attributed to the injunction a positive role in inhibiting the subject’s tendency to perform the ideal duty expressed therein [526–527]; M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 217–218.

37 Here Wojtyła rightly noted the pointlessness of Scheler’s argument in his compulsive removal of duties since he had already in his ethics given values the status of their existence only in experience, independent of their material realization [541–548].

38 J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture six.

39 T. Hobbes, *Leviathan, or the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiastical and Civill*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1929, p. 46–48.

40 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, Chapter V.6, VI. B.5.

41 The error of sociology was addressed by Maritain in his considerations; see J. Maritain, *Neuf leçons*, lecture one.

sociologism — the reconstruction of the world of values on the basis of the analysis of social behaviour.

Scheler's experience of love vs. the commandment of love

What attracts the Christian ethicist to Max Scheler's ethics of ideal values is the love that results from the experience of values, and that is love for God, not just for the good⁴². Of course, the parallel opposition of love and hatred [564–565] must already at the outset arouse axiological vigilance in the Christian ethicist, for Christian ethics, unlike the Old Testament ethics, after all, gets rid of hatred and revenge for harm, leaving only justice. The introduction of the experience of hatred is unfortunately associated with Scheler's radical rejection of duty in connection with its content also expressed by prohibition. This is essentially a retreat from Christian ethics and a clear inconsistency with Scheler's declaration of the primacy of the ethos of Christian morality.

To what, then, is the Schelerian love reduced? The introduction to Scheler's theory of love does not raise much doubt at first. It can address the person-subject experiencing it⁴³, "making him the very object of the act of love" [633–634] and cause the experiencing of one's own ideal world of values. It is then a way to "make direct contact" with the ideal value of the experiencing subject, and at the same time leads to the world of "ideal duties insofar as these values are to be realized by the person" [641–643].

However, from the viewpoint of a Christian (especially a Catholic) — as Karol Wojtyła noted — the Schelerian function of love is incomplete, because it neglects the fact that the ideal discovered in the experience of a person's love for himself is given by God and necessary for salvation [652–657]. But the path to salvation leads through deeds (i.e., good human acts), and thus through the realization of the ideal⁴⁴. Besides — according to Scheler — it is "a person's ethical ideal that should serve as the basis for

42 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, Chapter V.6, VI.B.5.

43 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 510.

44 This was also emphasized by Maritain, as signalled by the considerations in the introduction to this article.

measuring (valuing) his deeds” [660–661], and not the norm or instance of the universal conscience, whose function Scheler limited to the negative (forbidding) one⁴⁵.

The Schelerian ideal of love is neither self-absorbed nor subjective. It is morally creative in the sense of disseminating ethos, since when experienced individually, it is imparted to the other person in the process of imitation. As a result of the intentional act of the loving person, the other, through experiencing the world of the former’s values, adopts the former’s ideal, and models himself on it⁴⁶. Again, in connection with the hierarchy of transmitted values, the pattern of the Schelerian ideal itself is hierarchical⁴⁷: a “gourmet-epicurean”, an “organizer” (leader), a “hero”, a “genius”, a “saint” [692–696].

Due to the above-mentioned individualization of experiencing the ideal of love, Scheler limited the action of the model of the divine person, despite the fact that he placed it at the top of the hierarchy of persons and that the human person makes contact with moral values which are religiously marked, but belong to the “superhuman” order. This contact, however, manifests itself in the hierarchy of forms of unity of spiritual values, especially in its highest figure of the saint. Contact with the divine person occurs in the experience of the idea of God, i.e., the value of the “infinitely holy”, but to do God’s will would be — in the light of Scheler’s ethics — to submit, however, to the imperative, while to act ethically it is necessary and sufficient to participate in the ideal of God⁴⁸. For Scheler, then, the commandment of love would not be the norm, because love is a “spontaneous act”. It would express “only the ethical regularity of love”, its supreme value and Christ’s pattern to follow [726–754].

The very act of experiencing love, as it were, according to Scheler, “makes one efficient” ethically, but this ethicality does not reach the real efficacy. No act, good or evil, can “manage to produce emotional experiences of happiness or despair of equal depth” [764–765]. Therefore, all sanctions,

45 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 330–332.

46 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 596–598.

47 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 599.

48 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 225–226.

including those dictated by remorse, offend the Schelerian “purified idea of God” [769]. After all, conscience triggers duties, and therefore has — according to Scheler⁴⁹ — a negative and forbidding, critical and warning function [2667–2668].

In his habilitation dissertation, Wojtyła defined Christian ethics as given in the Revelation (in Scripture and Tradition) and transmitted by the Church in the form of principles (norms) of moral conduct [811–817]. Thus, the Decalogue is binding and the fundamental commandment of love is an obligation for the Christian. And at the same time, in Scheler’s approach, love, which is the source of all ethical values, is in principle not to be translated into any real duty (in the form of a norm) in conduct (in deed, in an act). The Schelerian love, as an emotional-cognitive act, intention-wise orients a person towards the experience of values⁵⁰, i.e., to the person’s experience of the “ideal being of value” (*das ideale Wertwesen*) [1124]. This Schelerian ideal being of value is shaped in his own experience of self-love by the ideal world of values, thus discovered, which are the content of the ideal duties that morally shape the person. This “moment of ethical dynamization of the person with a moral task” [1161–1162] is revealed externally in the relationship of co-experiencing love with another person (the sharing of love as a result of its attractive force) in the process of the Schelerian imitation⁵¹ by the latter person of the pattern (of an ideal duty) set by the former.

Christ became, according to Scheler, the highest personal ideal, who, when imitated, opened up to humanity a new horizon of lived moral values, and above all love, creating the Schelerian ethos. The Christian ethicist, who Wojtyła was, cannot, however, make reducing the person of Christ to living out his personal pattern [1595–1670]. (Jacques Maritain also suggested that without reference to phenomenology.) Christ, in the Gospel message, was a pattern of realizing values in conduct, setting these values

49 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 333–334.

50 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, Chapter VI. B.4.

51 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 598–599.

for his disciples⁵². He even provided a new law — “a system of objectified moral values” [1656–1657], the observance of which (guided by reason and faith) is a duty, the fulfilment of which is necessary for salvation, to be united by love with God, to attain the ultimate goal.

The necessity of the connection of the experience of duty with the efficacy of the act

With its moral good or moral evil, not only does an act reveal the degree of moral perfection of the agent, but at the same time, as if in a feedback loop, perfects or destroys him morally [2156–2161]⁵³. On the other hand, the reason for Max Scheler’s rejection of the moral qualification of an act in assessing the moral perfection of a person lies in the ambiguous determination (which Karol Wojtyła rightly noted) of volition by the experience of an ideal value, so as to thereby avoid the transition to the realization of values. Wojtyła is right in claiming that the so-called Schelerian “presentation” of values by the subject to himself “only makes the subject aware of the direction of his striving” [2451–2452], and does not determine his goal. This Schelerian purely emotional experience of love does not allow it to be translated into striving for something, willing something, much less grasping the “moment of the person’s efficacy” [2503–2504], or allowing the will to actively participate in it. Moral values are only intentional in character. “They are not personal values in the real or practical sense [...]. «[T]hey appear in the person», and so they are personal in the intentional and «theoretical» sense” [2567–2571].

However, as Wojtyła further argued [2799–2810], Scheler’s tenuous grasp of the connection between value and volition, and even Scheler’s limitation of the function of conscience, are not yet decisive for the exclusion of

52 Wojtyła cited specific examples from the Gospels to illustrate the object content of the moral act, such as the Sermon on the Mount, the command to love one’s enemies, the presentation of the final judgment and others.

53 See the elaboration of the topic of the importance of duty in personal fulfillment in: K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, in: K. Wojtyła, “*Person and Act*” and *Related Essays*, transl. G. Ignatik, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D. C. 2021, Part 2, Chapter 4.

efficacy from ethics. It is, as it were, the programmatic anti-Kantian radical removal of duty and the reduction of ethics to ideal values, which is not necessarily associated with phenomenology itself.

Wojtyła’s “internal” critique of Scheler’s ethics without duty

Since on the basis of phenomenology alone it is impossible to provide a critical account of Max Scheler’s ethics (despite some of its contradictions and ambiguities pointed out by Karol Wojtyła), the comparative analysis of Christian and Schelerian ethics eventually took the form of a critique of the latter from the viewpoint of the former. Wojtyła, however, first summarized the “internal” critique of Scheler’s system. And the concept of duty became the pivotal point of the critique.

And here are the individual points of Wojtyła’s internal critique, some of which have already been foreshadowed in this article.

(1) The contradiction of the autonomy of ideal duty

The focus of ethics is both good and evil. Therefore the exclusion of duty on account of its negative function is unjustified. A person — according to Scheler — is supposed to experience values, it’s something that is exclusively positive. Scheler’s point was not only about

the duty concerned with “non-being” of the negative value itself, but also the moment when it is about the duty concerned with the “being” of the positive value. For then the sentence expressing the (ideal) duty contains a regard for the non-existence of the relevant positive value according to the principles of axiology; and the non-existence of the positive value itself (wherever it should be present) according to the principles of that axiology is already a negative value [2845–2851].

Hence, “the values expressing an ideal duty make sense only insofar as the relevant positive values do not exist, and therefore insofar as they contain a regard for the negative value” [2854–2857].

(2) Absence of volition to realize the real duty

Scheler understood the real duty as a more or general norm or an injunction. It has — in his opinion — an unambiguously negative function, since it is essentially preceded by a prohibition and therefore expresses a kind of intervention (prevention) against something negative. It is even morally evil, since it has the task — as presented earlier in this article — to force that which is intuitively good in the subjective inner experience, while suspecting that the subject is striving after a negative value, since “the «knowledge of feeling» already directly determines my volition which does not have to pass through any «I ought to»” [2883–2885]. Scheler’s focus on the emotional experience of value is disturbed by duty, since it points to the evaluation of the efficacy of an act (also negative), and this — in Scheler’s view — goes beyond his ethics and concerns submission to norms. Besides, Wojtyła, as in the previous point of the critique, claimed that

the very “non-being” of a negative value is already a positive value. Thus, according to the presuppositions of axiology, duty turns to a negative value due to the positive value, for it strives for [2908–2911].

(3) Absence of negativism of duty as the content of experience

Wojtyła went on to argue that one cannot see the negative function of duty when one treats it as the content of the experience of willing something, and thus the basis of efficacy (*a priori* ruled out by Scheler). If the subject’s experience is that he ought to want something, that something should be the object of his will, and if this thing is a good (and thus it is not a matter of obligation merely to avoid evil), then naturally “the will, guided by duty, turns to the good” [2925]. Only when — as in Scheler — one reduces the content of a person’s inner resolutions to his emotions, experiencing duty becomes associated with the feeling of certain evil, revealed by the command of a positive value in the face of the danger of the appearance of its opposite — the negative. This applies not only to real duty, but to ideal duty as well.

(4) Indifference of value to existence vs. the necessity of duty

The indifference of a Schelerian value to existence means that the appearance of a value has no significance outside of the subject's emotional-cognitive experience of the value. Since this is the case, the value cannot cause any necessity either internal or external, which is contained in duty. Otherwise, duty would force the demand for the emergence of a value as the goal of striving, the value would become the cause of real duty. And Scheler allowed only ideal duty as the content of experience, which is expressed by the "judgment of duty" in a purely emotional feeling (and not in a lived experience of the goal), with the aforementioned negative reference and without any translation into making the duty real. Given the focus on the emotional-cognitive experience of values and the exclusion of their realization, once again it becomes apparent that, as Wojtyła stressed, Scheler's ethical system is an ethos and not ethics [2997–3006].

(5) Exclusively emotional attractiveness of values

Since Scheler rejected the real duty and at the same time granted the ethical value a function of a certain "tendency to volition", it's nevertheless a certain orientation towards its realization⁵⁴, Wojtyła tried to answer the question of what this Schelerian realization would mean, if it does not lead to efficacy. Here, this tendency to volition turns out to be a phenomenon in the world of "love due to the fact that it yields to the emotional «causality of attraction» that values exert" [3034–3037]. It is the attraction of values that is the cause of the volition in experience and nothing else.

In Scheler's system, the ideal duty is burdened with the described negative experience in intentional feeling. All the more ruinous for the inner world of values is the real duty, which comes from within or from without. The latter is directly bringing pressure to bear on the subject, depriving him of free will. Scheler classified the commanding content of these external obligations and analyzed their destructive effect on morality, moral

54 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 217, 217–559.

experience⁵⁵. Wojtyła discussed these commands [3050–3074], and then confronted them with the commandments and evangelical counsels.

Absolutely suggestive command (order) i.e., without giving a direct rationale, or disregarding the agent, it orders something to be done. Thus, the doer performs the action “blindly” and submissively, i.e., he relies solely on the will of the order giver.

Pedagogical command (order) is issued in the form of a recommendation to do something for the sake of the suggested good (benefit) of the agent. He undertakes the action voluntarily, but the purpose comes from the order giver, not from his own “tendency to volition”.

Advice from a superior authority is a command to do something issued to a person who is in some kind of subordinate relationship with the adviser. Then, regardless of the good or benefit of the executor of the command, it is an imposition of someone else’s will, however institutionalized or authority-endowed will. This kind of obligation is, according to Scheler, contained, for example, in evangelical counsels.

Moral advice is to serve the person in enabling him to know what he ought to do. It does not recommend anything, possibly limiting itself to guidelines (proposals) for the technical performance of an act.

Each of the aforementioned forms of obligation communication is a violation of the cognition of values in their individual experience due to greater or lesser interference in the will of others. For Scheler otherwise rightly — as Wojtyła stressed — emphasized the subject’s cognition of values.

Wojtyła’s critique of Scheler’s system from the viewpoint of Christian ethics

Since Max Scheler actually rejected the communication of duty given in the evangelical counsels⁵⁶, Karol Wojtyła undertook a critique of Scheler’s ethics strictly from the position of Christian ethics [3089–3297], in line

55 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 206–208.

56 M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus*, p. 208.

with Jacques Maritain's reflections on duty, evoked at the beginning of this article. Wojtyła answered the questions he posed to himself: first, whether a Christian who follows the advice and precepts of the Gospel message is at risk of losing or at least limiting moral experiences; second, whether a Christian who follows the advice or precept actually acts "blindly".

First, Wojtyła analyzed the understanding of what an order is. And, like Maritain, he concluded that a command need not be an absolute enforcement of the will of the order giver⁵⁷. It needs to be understood much more broadly as, admittedly, an expression of the will of the order giver, but without preventing independent cognition of the legitimacy of the goals signalled in it in the light of values. Identification of the value of the goal allows for its experience and its possible voluntary realization. The communication of duty would thus be similar to a pedagogical order.

When a duty is given in the form of "advice from a superior authority", as in the Decalogue, the will of the adherent to such advice need not be limited at all. For he has previously, out of goodwill, placed his trust in the authority and, convinced of the authority's orientation towards the recognized (also in experience) and accepted (true) good, finds in compliance with the precept his individual participation in that good. He then feels himself to be the subject (the agent) and a responsible one for that matter, rather than a pawn or a "blind" executor.

If then a faithful Church member recognizes the authority of the Revelation and Tradition, then his conduct is subordinated to the norms (precepts, prohibitions, recommendations, counsels) given in the Revelation and interpreted in the Church teaching. In this way, he will fulfil the ultimate goal of his earthly life, he will find salvation: "the moral teaching of Jesus Christ is the true revealed legislation" [3136–3137]. It cannot be understood simply as Schelerian commands and counsels. This is because they do not limit the faithful neither in their independent (rational and emotional) cognition of values, nor in the free undertaking of an act realizing them. Besides, the divine "order giver" does not impose his will, but is

57 See St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, English Dominican Province, <https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu>, 1–2, 17, 1 (21.02.23).

the source of all moral good, [...] the highest moral standard is the perfection of the Divine Being, [...] the will of God is above all the source of moral order [3147–3151].

In quoted phrases from the Gospels in the form of imperative sentences, Wojtyła showed that they are not imperatives in Scheler's sense: they are general and addressed to the human person in general, expressing rather than which Scheler considers ideal duties, resulting from the living out of values, in the form of tendencies to be realized under various circumstances. What distinguishes them from the discovery of the Schelerian values is that their verbal message contains, as it were, clear objective values. They, in turn in individual perception (e.g. in experience) transform into real duties, that will be implemented or not, according to will of the potential agent.

“[L]inking moral values with the good of the supernatural order [as in Maritain — T. G.] acts as a motive” [3218–3219], and it only directs the attention of the possible realizer of values, and does not compel him to do so. Here, from the entire evangelical perspective of the doctrine of good and evil, an individual man is to find his own path of moral perfection, in the free realization of the, as it were, internal command, flowing from conscience, as, e.g., under the influence of Maritain's pilot-norm. On the other hand — as Wojtyła rightly emphasized — Scheler treated the oracle of conscience on a par with the external command and all its negative consequences for the Schelerian conception of morality.

In fact, duty turns to a positive value that does not yet exist, or to a negative value that does exist. But this return of duty can only be reflected as a certain “evil” in the intentional experience. In the will it will always be a return to the good. [3252–3256].

In the Christian ethics, moral man realizes the object good (object value), and not only — as in Scheler — experiences and feels it intentionally. In order to help man learn and experience values, and translate them into

moral action, the Revelation is given, also in the form of commandments and counsels.

At the end of his reflections on duties, Wojtyła noted the invincible legacy of Immanuel Kant's philosophy in Scheler's ethics, that was also pointed out in at the beginning of this article. Wojtyła writes that

[w]hile Kant tied the very morality of the human act to the experience of obligation, teaching that a given human act is moral insofar as in it duty is fulfilled out of obligation, i.e., on the basis of the one and only moral feeling: the feeling of respect for the law and obligation, Scheler ties morality to the experience of values alone. And in both systems, the morality of acts itself is linked to the particular character of experience, while the Christian ethics links the moral character of experiences to the efficacy relationship of the human person to objective moral values, to good and evil [3289–3297].

Conclusion

As Max Scheler removed duty from ethics in favour of experiencing values, he downplayed the function of conscience in moral improvement. Karol Wojtyła, as a Christian ethicist could not accept this, like Jacques Maritain though not directly in relation to Scheler. In his work *Person and Act*, Wojtyła referred to the function of conscience as creating “the normative reality within the person”⁵⁸. And so he linked it to duty. A person performs an act freely, determining himself by and in it. Freedom, in turn, is dependent on truth understood transcendently, and truth, in the form of the true good (good in truth) of the act, is contained in conscience. In turn, the goodness of an act is expressed in duty. Therefore, “[d]uty is the experiential form of dependence on truth”⁵⁹. This creates a normative reality that is of primary importance for morality and ethics, though not only for them:

58 K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, p. 258.

59 K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, p. 258.

A sort of affiliation of the normative order comes into view, on the one hand, with respect to the world of transcendentals and, on the other hand, with respect to the multidirectional action of man⁶⁰.

The coupling of truth and duty is by no means an abstraction, because — and here appears an echo of Scheler's cognitive-emotional approach to moral values — the veracity of a norm is an object of experience as well. And the depth of this experience is directly proportional to the power of the duty to fulfil the right norm, flowing from obedience to the verdicts of conscience. After all, in purely theoretical considerations, wrong norms could also be justified⁶¹.

In a reliable analysis of duty, it is necessary to determine the transition of value into (real) duty. Wojtyła was aware of this, but also of the complexity of the solution to a problem thus posed. That is why he only adumbrated it in *Person and Act*⁶². He recalled the negativism of duty, which imposes itself (as in the Decalogue), and is raised by Scheler, when the transition is expressed by prohibition. After all, that is not the only or most important form of this transition. And here, in line to some extent with Scheler, he pointed to the commandment of love as the most perfect and complete form of the transition of the value of love into duty. While for Scheler the mere experience of the value of love is morally perfecting, as if automatically attracting the good, for Wojtyła “[t]he most perfect and most complete example of evoking duty by value in the positive way is and will certainly remain the evangelical commandment «You shall love»”. So, “value evokes duty by its essential content and the force of attraction connected with that content”, but both “come up to the threshold of the person, which is the threshold of the truthfulness of the good, the truthfulness whence duty begins”⁶³. This threshold, in turn, reaches transcendence and thus allows it to have its share in the human act.

60 K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, p. 259.

61 Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, p. 266.

62 Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, p. 268–269.

63 K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, p. 269.

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Abstract

An outline of the concept of duty in the ethics of Karol Wojtyła and Max Scheler

On the basis of the analysis of the text of Karol Wojtyła's habilitation dissertation, and the concept of ethics by Max Scheler reconstructed in the text, the understanding of duty („ought”, *das Sollen*) in both authors is presented, and the need to introduce duty into the system of ethics is discussed. Scheler's phenomenological approach focuses on the feeling of moral values, which are legitimized by moral improvement and, at the same time, excluded by duty. Wojtyła's Catholic

personalism requires the realization of values in act, and hence translating them into duty. Types of duty communication in the form of commandments and evangelical counsels are discussed, which do not limit the freedom of the will. Wojtyła's arguments against the Schelerian system from the standpoint of the Christian ethics are presented, exposing the morality of human efficacy, in which the key role is played by the objectification of values and the participation of conscience.

Keywords: Kant's ethics, Maritain's personalism, cognitive-emotional experience of values, commandment of love

Abstrakt

Zarys znaczenia powinności w etyce Karola Wojtyły i etyce Maksa Schelera

Na podstawie analizy tekstu rozprawy habilitacyjnej Karola Wojtyły i zrekonstruowanej w niej koncepcji etyki Maksa Schelera przedstawia się rozumienie powinności u obu autorów oraz dyskutuje się potrzebę wprowadzenia powinności do systemu etyki. Fenomenologiczne podejście Schelera jest skupione na przeżyciu wartości moralnych, które legitymuje doskonalenie moralne i jednocześnie wyklucza powinność. Personalizm katolicki Wojtyły wymaga zaś urzeczywistnienia wartości w czynie, a więc przełożenia ich na powinność. Omawia się rodzaje przekazu powinności w postaci przykazań i rad ewangelicznych, które nie ograniczają wolności woli. Przybliża się argumenty Wojtyłowej krytyki systemu Schelera z pozycji etyki chrześcijańskiej, eksponujące moralność ludzkiego sprawstwa, w której kluczową rolę odgrywa uprzedmiotowienie wartości i udział w tym sumienia.

Słowa kluczowe: etyka Kanta, personalizm Maritaina, przeżycie poznawczo-emocjonalne wartości, przykazanie miłości