

THE PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRATIVITY AND THE ETHICAL CRISIS OF CONTEMPORARY MAN

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Abstract. The author understands by integrativeness the conjunction and agreement of spirit-matter, subjective-objective. From the integrative perspective, he defines "good" as an agreement between the satisfaction of soul and body needs, as well as between the self-realization of the individual man and the affirmation of his peers, and "evil" as a disagreement between the mentioned objectives and the excessive cultivation of one or the other of the poles to be satisfied at the expense of the other. He reveals the manifestations of the moral crisis of contemporary man as the predominance of negative moral values and briefly presents the main ethical orientations that have followed each other in the history of mankind. Finally, the author claims that the premises of the contemporary moral crisis and, implicitly, of moral recovery lie in man himself and in his socio-economic and political system.

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1 The principle of integrability: spirit-matter conjunction and agreement

In my work *Filosofia integrativității*² (*The Philosophy of Integrativeness*) I have argued that integrativeness, that is, the inseparability and harmonization of spirit and matter, of the subjective and the objective, is manifested both in the lives of individual people and at the level of human history. The two factors are inseparable: the so-called material activities also have a spiritual component, as well as reciprocally, the so-called spiritual activities cannot materialize and have no practical effect without a certain material support. The two factors are not only inseparable, but also harmonized, so that neither of them annihilates the other. In the human world, for example, there is a permanent tension between them, with moments of balance and imbalance, but any tendency of one factor to suppress the other leads to an affirmation of man and society that is not only one-sided, but also contrary to their natural manifestation, authentically human. Moreover, in the

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physical world too, a disagreement between spirit and matter, i.e. between information and its energetic support, causes imbalances in the natural course of nature.

2 Integrativeness and the ethical relationship of man to himself

In the human world, the inseparability and the need for the solidarity of the subjective and the objective manifest themselves most prominently in the realm of values, and here, with maximum eloquence in the sphere of ethical values, which are freely consented. For the full observance of integrativeness, the moral will should keep man in a state of equilibrium between the satisfaction of his bodily and spiritual needs, as well as between the fulfillment of his own demands and those of his fellows. In reality, there is a swing of the moral will between poles to be satisfied, and leaning too far to one side or the other is tantamount to going from good to bad.

In relation to himself, the human individual has the moral duty to do good by cultivating both his body, by maintaining physical health with the help of material goods, and his soul, by frequenting and receiving various types of spiritual values.

It is worth noting that, in relation to himself, as body and soul, man is moral by cultivating different types of values that do not belong to ethics, but which acquire a moral aspect by realizing that their appropriation also constitutes an ethical imperative.

In the same relation to himself, man can become immoral, substituting good for evil, by focusing either only on the body or only on the soul. Usually, most people are interested in satisfying their physical needs or pseudo-needs, but they are not concerned with their soul, spiritual elevation. On the contrary, in other cases, some of them allow themselves to be so absorbed in their spiritual activities that they neglect their most basic bodily requirements, such as the need for healthy food and sufficient rest, but also for other sex, exercise, by air, by climbing to the mountains, to the sea, etc.

There is also the category of the poor, who do not take enough care of either their body or their soul, but not because of their moral orientation, but because they do not have sufficient material conditions. In fact, their conduct is no longer properly moral, fully freely consented, being conditioned and constrained from the outside.

Anyway, from a moral point of view, by disregarding one or the other of the two dimensions of his integrativeness — physical and soul — or even both, man falls into the area of negative morality, i.e. immorality, patronized by evil.

3 Historical-ethical digression from self-reporting

In the history of philosophical thought, man's relationship with himself acquired different interpretations, which influenced practical life, by which the respective interpretations were, in turn, distorted.

The orientation of cultivating both soul and body, mental and physical health was affirmed by thinkers from the inaugural stage of philosophy in ancient Greece, being also maintained by the golden triad of Greek philosophy — Socrates, Plato, Aristotle — and even by some Hellenists (Epicurus not being in the least an adept of thoughtless bodily pleasures and unaccompanied by soulful joys), as well as some philosophers from Roman antiquity, from whom the adage *mens sana in corpore sano* has been preserved.

There were, however, also historical periods in which ideology and practice overvalued the soul at the expense of the body, as in the medieval period dominated by religion.

On the contrary, starting with the modern period and until now, the strong emphasis, theoretically and practically, has been placed on the material comfort offered by science and technology, and with regard to the spiritual ennobling of man, the role of scientific-technical knowledge has been exaggerated to the detriment of other spiritual values.

4 Integrativeness and the ethical relationship of man with his peers

The principle of integrativeness, of solidarity and harmony between the subjective and the objective, is also manifested in man's relations with his peers. The man who relates to others considers himself and is effectively a subjective factor for himself as he seeks to realize the demands, he is aware of and, therefore, to affirm his own subjectivity, while others appear to him as external, objective factors, determined by their own interests and needs.

Therefore, also in his relations with his peers, as well as in his relation to himself, man accomplishes the good through the agreement between the subjective and the objective, the subjective consisting, this time, in the orientation towards self-realization, and the objective in the concern directed towards the affirmation of others. More precisely, in his social life, man is authentically moral to the extent that he accords his own needs and interests with those of others or of the state institution, as a collective person, so that, as far as possible, he also contributes to their realization from trace, or at least, not to harm them. In other words, the good man cultivates himself without contravening the affirmation of others and contributes to the affirmation of others without neglecting himself.

On the contrary, man becomes immoral, replacing good with evil, when he either imposes himself subjectively and individualistically and damages the objective requirements of others, or, on the contrary, allows himself to be

enslaved by the interests of others and becomes their slave or the state and various state institutions.

Both the subjectivist and individualistic and the objectivist and communitarian moral orientations are one-sided and affect genuine morality, substituting good for evil and generally positive ethical values for their negative opposites.

The man who pursues only the satisfaction of his own interests, usually starting with material ones, endangering those of others or community interests or, at least, disinterested in them, shows his bad or immoral character through attitudes and manifestations individualistic and selfish, or through indifference, carelessness, lack of respect and empathy towards fellow human beings.

Immoral, however, is also the man who dedicates himself exclusively to others and the community, as domineering, external and objective powers, because he neglects himself, to the point of canceling his various spiritual or bodily abilities and needs, thus impoverishing himself spiritually, as and troops. Although his excessive employment in the service of other persons or institutions may also correspond to a personal passion, such as scientific research, yet by his unilateral exercise, in the service of a force that dominates him as an external power, he sacrifices other soul valences, which they are, in turn, required to be fulfilled. Abandoned to the outside, he no longer cultivates his own interiority in all its richness, he no longer loves and respects himself. At the limit, through excessive externalization to the detriment of internalization, one can end up completely alienating oneself and wasting one's life.

5 Historical-ethical digression regarding peer reporting

Throughout history, most of the ancient Greek and Roman thinkers, in their wisdom, advocated harmony between people and between them and the community.

Later, the philosophers and theologians of the Middle Ages subsumed the individual to the state and the religious community.

Then, modern and contemporary philosophers, in their vast majority, exacerbated individual subjectivity and freedom.

Of modern origin, the idea of the priority of the individual subject would have been initiated, as claimed by Gheorghe Dănișor in his book *Însingurare. O filosofie despre istoria eşuată a umanității* (*Loneliness. A philosophy about the failed history of humanity*), by Descartes and taken up by the other rationalists, then by the adherents of Contractarian Enlightenment. Descartes would be the initiator of modern individualism through his thesis *Cogito, ergo sum*, interpreted by the author of the work to mean that the source of truth is in the individual cogito. Transposed into life, the Cartesian principle would have generated the

failure of humanity, of the human in man, since, centered on the individual, it would have annihilated communication and solidarity between people.

Moral individualism is, indeed, also conditioned by philosophical conceptions, being, obviously, also a result of the individualism affirmed by various modern and contemporary thinkers. It is, however, worth noting that the modern philosophers who supported in this case an epistemological individualism, fixing the seat of truth in human reason, namely: Descartes - in evidence (in the clarity and distinction of knowledge), and Kant — in the *a priori* forms of to the subject, although they correlated the good with the observance of the truth, implicitly originating it in human subjectivity, they did not explicitly admit a moral individualism, a strictly individual good, but had in mind a general good, for all.

Expressis verbis, in the last (fourth) rule of his provisional morality, Descartes thought, as he would say, "to use my whole life to cultivate my reason and advance as much as I can in the knowledge of truth"³, because "it is enough to judge well in order to act well, and to judge as well as possible in order to act as well as possible, that is, to acquire all the virtues and with them all the other goods that we can obtain"⁴, therefore goods valid for all.

For his part, Kant correlated the categorical imperative of his ethics with good will and, implicitly, with human reason, giving it the following formulation (formula of the goal itself), through which he affirmed the conjunction between the individual and the community: "Act so as to use humanity both in your person and in the person of anyone else always at the same time as an end, and never only as a means". By the humanity in the person of any human being, the author of the Critique of practical reason meant the rational essence of the human being, and by the thesis according to which in the relations between people everyone should use the humanity (reason) of others not only as a means to achieve his personal goals (interests), but also as an end in itself, Kant claimed anti-individualistically that, in any activity, everyone should respect and allow the reason of others to be asserted. Indeed, if we were to apply the Kantian categorical imperative to the economic relations of the free market, in which the employer uses his employees mainly as means of maximizing his own profit, the requirement of their use and as an end, in order to respect and affirm their dignity conferred by reason, it would be reduced to the simple attitude of decency and formal politeness in relations with them.

³ René Descartes, *Discourse on the method of leading our reason well and seeking truth in the sciences*, Academy Publishing, 1990, p. 127.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 127-128.

6 The non-ethical causes of contemporary man's ethics

Indisputably, the complex crisis of current European humanity is also a moral crisis, manifested, on the one hand, by the unilateralization and impoverishment of the soul and spirit of man, and on the other hand, by the diminution or even loss of the moral bond between people, of the norms of good coexistence, of generosity and altruism, of closeness between people, in a word, of the love of man by man.

Guilty of his moral decline is man himself to the extent that he prefers casual selfishness to committed altruism and, in general, the loss of slow and viable ethical benchmarks rather than the acquisition of them through sustained self-edification. Of course, the destructuring of positive morality, centered on the value of good, is accompanied by a restructuring of morality centered on the value of evil. There is a certain autonomy of the moral life, in which the central value towards which it tends, positive or, on the contrary, negative, attracts after itself a whole constellation of similar values.

Moral feelings and attitudes appear, however, against the background of other types of human activity and, although relatively autonomous, are influenced and even determined by this background. That is why, more deeply, today's moral individualism is a consequence of contemporary economic and political life, more precisely of economic neoliberalism and the tendency of the democratic state to become undemocratic and dictatorial.

From an economic point of view, neoliberalism, through the free market economy, which generated unrestrained competition, led to the formation of multinational enterprises, which discretionary impose themselves and dictate the economic life of less developed countries, which they tend to reduce to the role of mere colonies, as sources of raw materials and outlets. Now, transposed into the sphere of relations between people, the principle of unfettered competition can only induce in the moral plane the value of evil in the form of the feeling of voracious greed or insatiable cupidity, a feeling accompanied, in the case of the extremely rich, by other complementary attitudes, such as miserliness, cruelty, the lack of respect, empathy, mercy, help, and in those with an average, modest or even precarious material situation, but who have the tycoons as their model, and other feelings, such as envy, dissatisfaction, the desire for rejection and revenge.

7 Integrativism and ways of moral recovery of contemporary man

According to integrativism, contemporary man has fallen morally through himself and through society, thus through the tension between human subjectivity and its objective, socio-economic and political support. Consequently, in the same integrative perspective, his moral recovery can be achieved by finding himself and by changing the dictatorial trend of the economic and political system in the sense

of a true economic and political democracy. Neither of the two reforming directions can succeed without being supported by the other.

The individual man can return from negative moral tendencies to positive ones all the more difficult as he has become accustomed to his state of alienation and indifference. He needs moments of shaking and enlightenment, but also education and self-education in the spirit of truth. In the last respect, to the extent that the good is solidary with the truth, it depends on each person whether or not to indulge in superficiality, whether or not to allow themselves to be manipulated, to follow not only the mainstream media, but also to seek other sources of information. It also depends on him whether to settle for cultural surrogates or, on the contrary, to appropriate only quality works from the various fields of culture. But if people are satisfied with only the rudiments of truth or questionable entertainment they are served, they will feel good, but they will lose their freedom to think independently, to be creative, and to assert themselves as authentically human and moral.

However, the moral recovery of man also needs the contribution of some beneficial changes socio-economic and political system.

Economic life can become favorable to all states and, implicitly, to all people only by achieving a balance between globalization and the development of each state, national economy, which can be achieved by moving from a free market economy to a social market economy.

Finally, the states of the world and the relations between them need, in order to revitalize themselves, but also for an authentic moral life of their members, a deepening and improvement of democratization, opposed to the current trend of democratic weakening and subordination to the trends dictatorial power poles and supra-state oligarchy. A revival of democracy requires precisely more knowledge and morality on the part of all members of society, and especially of those who enter political life and access positions and positions of leadership.