



PHEHOMENA OF THE ETHICAL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this text is to present some key concepts of Kierkegaard's ethics. Each of them expresses a different aspect of the ethical. They reflect the spirit of existentialism's thinking. On his point of view the Danish philosopher looks at the ethical as general and abstract at the same time. As main phenomena of the ethical the Danish philosopher defines the concepts duty and choice. Taking the ethical as a duty, he puts the accent on the situation that it is something that obligates us inside. Kierkegaard's understanding coincides not with the traditional analysis. He gives existential meaning to choice as emanation of the ethical and considers it as free choice of the individual. The philosopher underlines the importance not to choose between good or evil, but to choose. This absolute choice Kierkegaard qualifies as „either-or”. When the ethical person chooses, he performs his duty, understood as pursuing of its own personality. He relates choice to goodwill and despair. The Danish thinker analyzes and justifies the ethical nature of the relationship and the inter-modality between freedom, sin and fear.

Ransom for our supreme power - freedom and the ability to choose for the Danish thinker are sin and fear.

Key word: Duty, Choice, Freedom, Despair, Fear, Horror, Sin.

On the basis of his ideas Kierkegaard put the inner world of man as an ethical human being. The philosopher seeks duty, the chosen moral behavior as a major form of existence and reflection over it. The passionate interest in ethical choice itself, the problem of responsibility of the election itself, the dizziness of freedom, the various forms of veil and seclusion in which the existing man falls, the guilt and the sin are important elements of its ethical formulations.

The penetrating statement of ethical Kierkegaard is to be understood as general and obligatory for all and for everyone. In its quality of the general, the ethical is abstract at the same time. That's why it is always a prohibition in its full abstraction. In this way it plays the role of a law. When the ethical becomes concrete, it moves to the definition of customs.

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The purpose of the individual is in the general, and his ethical task is continually to express himself in it.

The philosopher defines ethical as duty and the duty in turn as a variety of different postulates. He follows the spirit of the philosophical tradition, defining duty as maxim of the will, not of reason. Reflection is not so important as the baptizing of will which makes an ethical imperative of it.

The Danish philosopher doesn't put the task of answering the question: "who is worthy" of duty origin and „where is the root" "of its noble blood, which proudly repels all kinship with the inclinations. (1) These questions are outside his field of vision, they do not excite him.

Kierkegaard does not accept the duty as an objective moral necessity, as a categorical imperative (Kant) standing outside and above the individual, but as subjective, purely personal, as duty of the individual and for the individual. The existing ethical personality does not only include the duty in itself, but it finds an expression of „its own most intimate nature in it".

Duty is also a result of moral development and self-origination of the individual.

Kierkegaard rejects abstract ethics, that puts the individual only in external relation to duty. In case that the word "duty" hints an internal respect in origin, the philosopher defines the individual to be "placed in external relation to duty" as too strange. To avoid this wrong approach the Danish existentialist insists on point out that "duty" is not something "imposed from outside, but something that "obliges"inside."(2)

It alleges the relation between duty and ethical. The philosopher sees it in the position that accepting duty as an expression of his inner being, leading to a deepening in ethical, a man loses the need "panting, trying to execute his own obligations." (2) The meaning of these reflections is that the more deeply ethical man has structured his life, the less he needs to talk about duty every moment, to fear whether he will be able to implement it. The result is peace and security of the genuine ethical individual.

In one concrete ethics, containing a definition of manners in itself the duty is not an abstract ideal of command, which rejects life any more. Giving it a positive content, he transforms it.

Kierkegaard's duty is total, what is required by man, but what he can do is single. Scepticism is an indicator of the Danish existentialist that personality itself is absolute, and duty is a particular value.

In this plan a person cannot be said to carry duty or duties, and that he executes his duty as I execute my duty, you execute yours. Manifestation of the individual as both total and single is taken by Kierkegaard as obvious. Emphasis is on the ability to distinguish between duty as „the total required of me" and my duty, that is "singular, a thing about myself", but it is "duty, and therefore the joint. (3) It gives rise to a discrepancy between duty in general and the specific duty of everyone. Man can execute a duty and still not fulfill his own duty and can fulfill his own duty and still not to execute the duty. Under the prerequisite unity of the particular and the general for it may be impossible for someone to determine someone's duty.

The Danish thinker explicates the impossibility the scepticism to be removed by duties execution in relation to something external, steady and

determined, which may be said: its duty. Doubt is contained in the internal, in the relation to the total. If a person must be both singular and general, the dialectic of the duty will be in it. Thus, the difference between good and evil is not removed, because the philosopher throws doubt on existing whose a duty is to do evil. This does not abolish the possibility of a person to do evil, trying to persuade himself and the others, that it is good. (2)

Kierkegaard is explicit that his doctrine protects ethical. If a person does not accept this formulation, he becomes abstract; her attitude towards duty is abstract. If duty is regarded as something external, the difference between good and evil is removed, because if one is not the common, he can only go in abstract relation with it. But as Kierkegaard explains in an abstract relation, the difference between good and evil is disproportionate. In conclusion of this mental gymnastics, the philosopher notes still comfortably "that the world must be deep in scepticism because the difference between good and evil always remains as between responsibility and duty". (3) Kierkegaard does not accept a radical evil, because he lays down the reality of repentance. And repentance is "an expression of reconciliation, but at the same time an irreconcilable expression too. (2)

Dilemmas, which must be solved, have constantly arisen before man all his life and herewith he must be realized as a man, morally responsible for what he is and what he does. Therefore, the highest act of man as ethical being for the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard is the choice. In Kierkegaard's philosophy the ethical man is a man synonymous to the choosing man and the unrealized choice - to a lack of individuality, of personality and ethical person.

The choice is a sign of ethical or "Where in a stricter sense it was a single or-or" the ethical is also involved." (2) As a main characteristic of Kierkegaard the ethical choice is connected only with the subject. „For the person, living ethically, there always exist a supporting point which he holds firmly and that is he himself." (2) Danish philosopher gives existential meaning to choice. He breaks with all tradition of the absolute coming from the German philosophy. For him, the only absolute is the man. When a person chooses the absolute, one selects himself in its eternal significance of man.

"Choice" is Kierkegaard's name for the struggle with the painful spasms of doubt, despair and fear, whose way out is unimportant and insignificant in comparison with the tearing responsibility of the endless "or-or", when a man is either born a personality or sinks into the tragic abyss of anonymous existence.

He has no basis in the universal and the necessary (as in Kant). As connected only to the subject it descends from the existence and according to the personalist Mounier on his own essence "choice is the privileged element of existence" for the Danish philosopher (4) The ethical individual has the right to say that he is the editor himself, in which he is fully aware, that it is the managing editor. Responsible inwardly in a personal meaning, so far as he will have a decisive influence on the choice.

Kierkegaard emphasizes the deepest relationship between subject and object of choice, between what should be chosen and that who elects him. Because when "everything is quiet around the man", „when the soul remains alone in the whole world", then the "ego" elect himself or, more accurately, accepting himself. (2)

The real choice supposes freedom from the slave attachment to direct and daily, but from the dark side of man, too. The choice made by him, shall be exempt from ironic ambiguity between seriousness and joke, from a purely negative view towards everyone and everything based on indifference. If indifference is a spiritual deadness, the decision for choice is the first start of the ethical turn and emancipation.

Nothing is so important for the Danish philosopher as much as the exact moment of election. It implies a favorable time in which to be made. In this line of thought, the philosopher states that when one choice related to life-problem is postponed, the personality changes it easily. Following comes a moment in which we don't speak about "either-or" not because one has chosen, but because he has missed making a choice. (2)

As Kierkegaard explains, when opportunities for free choice are missed, "the choice" that is made becomes compulsory. If you miss the right moment, life itself would make a "choice" and it will impose it. Not only life,

others may choose instead of people. The reason for this choice obtruded Kierkegaard sees in the fact that "he has lost himself." This is not an existential choice, because the decision is "somebody else", although this somebody else is in the man. (5)

The Danish thinker focuses on the content side of choice. Man must choose not only the appropriate time, but what must be chosen, has to be appropriate. The choice is not a restriction on the solutions. By choosing a man does not overcome not the multiplicity of opportunities given to him. By carrying out the imperative of his personal duty, which makes him a defining and leading personality himself, the moral man follows the only possibility to select an option. In this he realizes himself as a person, choosing the only option that meets his personality and which may choose. Other-or choice in the field of ethical turns the "individual in becoming a sovereign." (5)

Abstract choice is not ethical in itself. It becomes such only when each movement is accompanied by a sense of self-responsibility in the choice. "Being himself" is great for the philosopher and realizing everything that I am, I take the responsibility for it. (5) The selected person from now on has its center in itself. The choice belongs and must belong only to the inner world, a scene of joy and sorrow for man. „Choose yourself" in Kierkegaard replaced „Know yourself". The individual knows himself in the biblical sense, fertilizing himself through true penitence, which is going back to the ethical path. Human choice is "identical with remorse, which approves of choice. (2)

The choice is always jumping, unexpectedness, totally opposite to Hegel's reflection and meditation. It carries out simultaneously two dialectical movements. One relates to the fact that selection has occurred with the choice. The other movement starts from the situation that the selected has already existed. Otherwise, as noted by Kierkegaard and from a logical point of view the philosopher is right, it could not be considered as elected, but as created.

Kierkegaard compares choice to a second birth of man. It is an act of moral courage, even of moral heroism, despite the significance of the chosen. For the Danish thinker the selection process is unbreakably bound up with freedom

and it causes a state of bliss in humans. "When the passion of freedom has been awoken in him - and it awoke in the choice, as set as a prerequisite to itself in the choice - he chooses himself and fights for it as a conquest of his bliss, and it really is his bliss". (2)

Completely in the spirit of the ethics of existentialism the philosopher identifies the human with his freedom, with the opportunity to solve dilemmas alone. The heading of the main work of the Danish philosopher „Either-or” can be seen in this plan.

When, by the free choice of the soul, where the price of freedom and non-freedom is the same, a man loses his choice, preferring non-freedom (free from truth), he cannot release himself alone, because he uses the power of freedom in the service of non-freedom. Thus grows the united strength of non-freedom and makes him a slave of sin. (6)

The connection between ethical and choice means that the choice is ultimately a choice between good and evil. The choice of ethics is not just any kind of choice but an absolute choice, because only through absolute choice the ethical can be selected. This is a choice in itself, a choice where truth and existence coincide, a choice that keep away from accidental and uncertain. This choice is absolute, because it establishes the difference between good and evil. The absolute choice is self-determination of will. The will, not reason is the main factor of choice, although the ethical to relies on the clarity and distinctness of self-consciousness.

The actual movement of the ethical is revealed by the distinction between abstract and actual individual choice. Whoever chooses himself ethically, is concretely chosen as this definite individual.

One, who wants to define his ethical life task, doesn't have such a meaningful choice as the equal opportunity to choose between good and evil. This is a choice by which good and evil are excluded or chosen. The philosopher gives great importance to the act of choice. In other words, in the choice it is not so important to choose the right as are „the energy, seriousness and the pathos with which to choose.” (2) In the reflection of the philosopher, this is not about the reality of the chosen, as noted by Isaac Passy, but about the reality of the election. (5)

For Kierkegaard, it is important not to choose between good or evil, but to choose. In this way we once again have good and evil. This "either-or" which the existentialist makes is not a complete dilemma because it's only one choice. The choice is the act producing the personal, putting in motion its deep resources, because it completely fills the personality of the one who makes the choice with the chosen he gives it a complete satisfaction, he gives it a sense of its own dignity that never disappear completely. Withdrawal from choice causes a person to "pine and die", a thesis which led Sartre to the laying of the so - called unconscientiousness, in which a man, who does not elect falls.

The fact of election of choice as a vital principle is decisive even for the wrong choice: "Once brought to a crossroads where there is no other outcome than choice, man chooses the correct". (4) After such a choice the moral man knows how to evaluate his own life, but the appraisal through repentance is necessary. We go out of choice as purified. This allows to find the way by which you will find yourself and your value in eternal life once again. The existentsialist concludes that initial choice is available in each following choice.

Man does not think over the definition of good and evil. This comes only through free choice. Only with an absolute choice of itself absolutely, an expression of his freedom, man is laying absolutely an absolute differentiation between good and evil. The expression of freedom for Kierkegaard is the man's wish for the existing of good and evil. Freedom is an opportunity of the strength of spirit to draw a line between good and evil. Therefore, the distinction between good and evil is inherent exactly to the moral personality. It contains true freedom, because "the ego" is "the result of a choice and awareness of this definitely free being." (2, 232)

But freedom is a choice, so difficult and uncertain, that good and evil seems to prevail over the choice. In order not to appear that the person elects in an absolutely the same way the good and evil that they belong to him in the same way from the beginning, Kierkegaard states that ethical ideology builds its life on what generally has the right to existence. Since the evil in me is not mine originally, I would not be able to choose it exactly. I would have never chosen myself completely, and in this

case I would not be the absolute, but only a product.

These considerations lead to the Danish philosopher's view that the true ethical choice is in good will, providing not only for the distinction, but also the preference of good. The Danish philosopher regrets that the recognition of good for a supreme beginning, by which a man falls under very usual definitions, is an expression of great ethical courage. Anyone can be good, but for being bad talent is needed. Kierkegaard articulates the deep existential connection between choice and despair. The philosopher defines despair as a "choice" because "man can doubt without choosing it, but he cannot be despaired without choosing it." (2)

For an existentialist despair cannot be a simple situation. It is a reality with many levels and many dimensions. It can be the despair of unmade or badly made choice, the despair of later choice, the despair of morally unrealized and morally unborn person. Being the most unthinkable reality of absolute consciousness, love only drives formal emptiness away which allows us to overcome despair.

Provocation of despair leads to the existential decision: "You cannot fall into despair without choosing choice." (4)

Ethics experiences the despair completely. Despair is in the absolute. Choosing, therefore, absolutely, I choose despair and in desperation I choose the absolute. I myself am an absolute, lay the absolute and I am the absolute myself.

The desire to be free for yourself means to fall into one of the two forms of despair, analyzed by Kierkegaard: the desperate striving to be or not to be yourself.

For the Danish existentialist existence is nothing more than repentance for one fault, an internal struggle of the possible choices, driven by freedom. This choice is the choice of freedom in the sense that choosing himself as a product he produces himself, selects his own place in freedom.

This is freedom as the vertigo, when we look at the abyss, which is suddenly revealed at our feet. At that moment, everything changed and freedom seems to be guilty. Guilty for something that has been carried out and that hasn't occurred. Therefore, freedom in Kierkegaard's interpretation is deeply

ambiguous. It is an opportunity for guilt and it is guilt itself. This culpability reveals view and abyss, spirit and strange power simultaneously. The outcome of guilt is not repentance but freedom.

The Danish thinker analyzes and justifies the ethical nature of the relationship and the inter-modality between freedom, sin and fear. Under the structure of human existence, each value is ambivalent. Sin and fear are ransom for our supreme power - freedom and the ability to choose.

Kierkegaard not only produces concepts, but also backs them with arguments.

Translated from the Danish "angest", "fear" means "strong anxiety, provoked in the soul by the notion of the advancing evil." (3) In "Existentialism is Humanism" the word is translated as "anxiety" and „disquiet". This is the existential fear, and not "biblical fear" that is talked about in "Fear and trembling." In Kierkegaard's interpretation the existential fear is not neurasthenic weakness, but the intimate aspect of the now and again and all the time fighting of isolated living starting again. Fear manifests perfection of human nature.

Horror is completely different from fear. Fear is necessary, but horror is freedom. Fear is an intention for jumping and a choice of such a qualitative leap by which I can be found as guilty.

The emphasis on fear might leave giddiness in shadow, a feeling that often accompanies fear among existentialists. Kierkegaard connects that with fear, making "the syncope of freedom" out of fear. (3) While fear is a form of aggression, event pain, giddiness is temptation and disgust, threat and protection. It expresses the dual nature better than fear, with which the philosopher endows fear. As far as it heralds freedom, it is something more than depression. In turn, as far as freedom is expansion, fear concentrates the existing on that giddiness it is the highest point of egocentrism. (4)

Having formulated the idea that in sin man reaches and opens up its separateness from others, and through its distinction from God, Kierkegaard defines his understanding of sin. The philosopher raises it against its traditional interpretation, which underestimates and even ignores the importance of ethical attitude to sin. Kierkegaard calls sin „the state of being

the non-truth and being it is your own fault.”
(6)

Sin is accepted as a definition of the separate [individual], because man is not so different from God as in its separateness from all others as a sinner. Namely the detachment makes it possible the sin to be distinguished, which is not an incident, but it is part of the creature, which has to make out of itself a unit in order to exist. With the fact of separation as unit it becomes a sin. Thus, the Danish philosopher achieves as E. Mounier says, the value attribution of sin, considered as a seal of the spiritual authenticity without which everything is just pharisaism. (4)

Fear is not a positive definition of freedom. It is the pre-history of freedom at the stage when "it is still not freedom itself." The spirit's precedence simultaneously with the establishment of sin is for the first time reflected in fear. Freedom in the form of its non-free is the one that anticipates its own realization. The fearful in fear is that it is "without basis". In the fact that the individual is not actually guilty, but in his fear he keeps subjective attitude towards the possibility of sin, is "the deep enigma" of fear. Man seems to have lost his innocence, even before this has happened. It is penetrated by the guilt of fear, paradoxically becoming guilty, while remaining innocent.

Fear contains a concept of sin as preceding its realization: „the fear of sin creates sin". For this reason it is particularly important for Kierkegaard to distance himself from the attempts to explain the roots of sin with prior or external causes (divine prohibition, its breach, distortion etc.).

As an existentialist the Danish thinker brings out and argues the mutual validity between sin, fear and freedom. Freedom he sees in the opportunity to feel fear. (3) The conclusion that follows from these considerations is that there is a subjective attitude towards sin, prior

to the actual establishment. As a consequence of the vertigo of freedom the individual can fill inside with fear of the sin even before he yielded.

This important distinction shows that even subordinate to the consequences of original sin, until while he himself does not acquire sin by his own offence, the individual is not actually sinful.

It is absolutely uncertain that the ethical is where the Danish philosopher sees it. The ethical as consciousness for responsibility to the other. As the Emmanuel Levinas notes Kierkegaard seems doesn't know the endless finicality which invites you to an unabridged responsibility, without dissolving you in the community, demands did not that your calls to the inalienable in the singularizes you, lays you as a unique individual, as an ego, striving to prevail the ethical stage, which is, according to him, is the stage of the general. (7). At the same time the Danish philosopher made many original conceptual contributions to each of the concepts in the sphere of the ethical he employed. Kierkegaard launches a course inspired by man. His fervent attempts to analyses and revitalize the ethical, his invention of key concepts have been explored and redeployed by thinkers ever since.

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