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THE PHILOSOPHY OF MORALITY: UKRAINIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. The article deals with the problems of historiosophy, whose subject matter is human and social world view, its historical, religious, intellectual, ethical and aesthetical aspects. Hence historiographical interpretation of the concept of morality, ethical criteria, and distinction between morality and ethics. These issues are viewed from the perspective of spiritual morality. Assuming that spiritual values affect deepest human feelings, our life principles and attitude to God in a special way, morality may be defined as the system of interrelationship among people, which comprises spiritual values, life experience, ways and traditions. Such an approach helps to comprehend the degree to which spiritual values influence morality and religious views of the Ukrainian people, the specific way in which the system of ethical values was built in the time of the Messianic Christianity. The formation of world view, morality and ethics is closely related to the issues of faith and social life, as well as to the development of the national philosophy and theology, both in the past and nowadays; these processes and phenomena are a significant factor in the way Ukrainians perceive themselves, the world around them and the Universe.

Keywords: historiosophy, morality, ethics, Messianic Christianity, 'the philosophy of heart', the Ukrainian people's world view.

Every good and fair person has their own virtues, principles and rules of life. According to Aristotle, virtues (or moral goodness) are not passions or innate talents, but consciously acquired properties of one's soul that are determined by a sober mind of an individual who wants to achieve the highest goodness and personal happiness [2, p. 84]. Aristotle rightly emphasizes that only a person of high moral standards can feel such happiness.*

Now we face many questions: how can morality be defined? What are the criteria of morality? What is the difference between morality and ethics? These and other questions become particularly urgent nowadays, when the idea of living at the cost of others is getting so popular, when common people are caught in the poverty trap, tormented by hopelessness and fear for their future. Thus research into spiritual morality is a social necessity.

While spiritual element affects an individual's deepest feelings, life principles and attitude to God, morals are the fundamental principles of interrelationship between people; these principles rely on spiritual values as well as life experience, traditions and customs of people.

The term 'ethics' has several meanings. On the one hand, ethics are defined as a person's behaviour determined by their inborn sense of justice; on the other hand, as a specific field of science, its subject

* Speaking of people as moral beings, virtues are 'features of one's nature' which make us good [1, p. 461-462].

matter being philosophy of morality [2, p. 9]. In this sense, 'ethics' and 'moral philosophy' are interchangeable terms, though their meanings are not identical. For instance, medical ethics are doctors' code of behavior based on general moral principles. Apart from that, it refers to other ethical norms that are used in different social situations. While in real life moral principles may presuppose different or opposite courses of action, even breaking the letter of the law in order to preserve its spirit, ethics clearly determines rules of behavior and requires their observation.

A somewhat different view on morality and ethics was put forward by M. Berdyaev. For him, ethics is a complete part of the philosophy of spirit, a teaching about creative values and creative energy of an individual; he never perceived it as normative ethics, which he believed to be tyrannical [3, p. 45]. According to M. Berdyaev, the core issue of ethics is the criteria of good and evil, the genealogy of morality, the relation of these notions to the notions of distinction and evaluation. That is why ethics not only provides the basis for morality but also reveals its falsehood. Berdyaev points out the paradox which lies in the fact that good may be questioned, i.e. we have to decide whether what we believe to be good is 'good' or 'evil'. 'This', says M. Berdyaev, 'was brilliantly expressed in Gogol's epigraph "It is sad that there is no good in goodness" ... "Good" and "evil", "moral" and "immoral", "lofty" and "mean", "good" and "bad" do not represent the ultimate reality; they are but symbols, though not arbitrary or provisional, but natural and obligatory' [3, p. 47]. Paraphrasing F. Nietzsche, whose works were studied by M. Berdyaev, while ethics is on this side of good and evil, morality is beyond this distinction.

Obviously, moral principles are sometimes not enough to make the right decision because such decisions have to be grounded on a person's moral values, life experience and ethics of behaviour. For instance, Seneca, a well-known Roman stoic philosopher, wrote treatises on moral philosophy and the essence of public morality. Though when Emperor Nero murdered his own mother, Seneca helped him to write a letter to the Roman Senate providing a different explanation of the circumstances of Agripina's death; thus Seneca helped Nero to conceal his crime [16, p. 340]. So to rely solely on theory or on practice is not enough. What is needed is amalgam of spiritual, theoretical and practical knowledge, which was called reasonableness by ancient philosophers. According to Aristotle, it is neither possible to be good without being reasonable or to be reasonable without being moral and good, for it is the combination of these features that enables us to consciously make the right choice; being good helps us to set a goal, being reasonable, to choose the right way to achieve it [2, p. 190]. If we strive for high standards of personal morality, we have to accept moral laws with our mind, heart and soul and to comprehend the spiritual truth underlying these laws. It is not about being sentimental or about passing judgments, but about deep human feelings, inner strength and the ability to uphold one's convictions.

A challenging question in modern philosophy is the sources and nature of moral values. From theological perspective, their source is the Word of God, or Logos; in Greek philosophy this term denotes denotes the rational element governing the world. It is the basic statement of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In the Book of Genesis accepted by the three major religions, it is said that there exists the Creator of the visible and invisible world, the One Who is independent of the Universe. According to John the Apostle, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind' (John 1 : 1-4). In other words, the Creator's Word was life and light, which enabled the individual to cognize, to think, act, create, and express themselves through their creative work because 'The Word', says John, 'became flesh and made his dwelling among us [...] full of grace and truth' (John 1 : 14).

A. Schopenhauer rejects such an interpretation of morality; he states that 'For people, morals are grounded in theology as the expressed will of God. Certainly no more effective grounding for morals can be imagined than the theological, for who would be so bold as to set himself in opposition to the will of the omnipotent and the omniscient? Surely no one, if only this will were proclaimed in a wholly authentic, so to speak, official way, leaving no room for doubt' [23, p. 162]. E. Kant was the only philosopher who dared to destroy the basis of speculative theology, which had been treated as the prop

for ethics, and, conversely, to use ethics as support for speculative theology to ensure the existence of the latter, if only an ideal one. '... one now can no longer know which of the two should be the load and which the support, and to think at any time about a foundation of ethics through theology proves in the end to be a vicious circle' [23, p. 163]. The majority of philosophers tried to cast aside such substantiation and, to deviate from it, employed sophistic arguments. Here I will return to John the Apostle, who said that thanks to the Son of God and the Holy Spirit, an individual is able not only to cognize the world, but also to create their own being to the best of their ability as it is assigned by the Lord God. Hence a conclusion, morals and moral feelings follow from God's Commandments, Laws and 'the Light' given to people by their Creator. Theology, historiography and other modern fundamental sciences vouch for this conclusion.

According to modern science, all humans possess inner sense of justice but seldom think of its origin. How can one explain the fact that every person has inborn sense of beauty and the ability to verbally express this feeling? Noam Chomsky, an outstanding American linguist and philosopher says that the essence of human speech is not so much the ability to use separate sounds (and words) to name things and ideas as the ability to comprehend them and to use syntax in order to express logical connections between ideas. This ability reveals itself at an early stage of development; according to Chomsky, it is innate and does not depend on the mother tongue of a baby. Children successfully acquire their native languages, be it English, Japanese, Ukrainian, or Russian. Whatever language a child hears and starts to master, they are able to understand logical ties between phrases and utterances. Having innate linguistic ability, a person can learn any language and use it to communicate their ideas [19, p. 56-58].

Seemingly, the sense of justice, like aesthetic feelings and linguistic aptitude, is an inborn human feature, hence the ability to differentiate between moral and immoral ideas and actions. An important conclusion can be drawn from the assumption that moral virtues are part of our nature – moral laws are given to people so that they can get the sense of their life and, more importantly, can find and follow their calling; other things hamper a person's progress, kill their talent bringing them to the borderline between life and death.

This spiritual truth was echoed in 'the philosophy of heart', the core concept of theology and philosophy in Kyiv Rus and ancient Ukraine. In Ukraine, 'the philosophy of heart' originates from the literary works of the Princely Era, those by Cyril Trankvilion-Stavrovetsky (the 17th century) and Hryhorii Skovoroda (the 18th century). In the 19th century, an outstanding Ukrainian philosopher P. Yurkevych claimed the priority of heart over the sole and spirit; he believed heart to be 'the organ of the highest spiritual value' [27, p. 27-28]. According to the Ukrainian thinkers of that period, the one who lacks spiritual values, who has not realized their spiritual calling and the value of human life is devoid of high moral qualities. They believed that decisions and actions are based on faith, inborn sense of justice, consciousness, mercy and understanding of the One Who sets the moral law. As Hryhorii Skovoroda puts it, 'without God both wealth and poverty are damned' [22, p. 313].

They were convinced that spiritual and sensual mechanisms of morality and ethics are closely related to religious world view of the people. 'The process of religious world view formation (and, consequently, the formation of moral basis for life-sustaining activity – V.K.) took many centuries. It involved different outside influences, national ideas and values; dominant religions succeeded one another; finally, the Age of Ukrainian Enlightenment of the 16th-17th century saw quite a unique Ukrainian religious character with peculiar features and social and historical concerns' [14, p. 52]. The distinctive feature of Ukrainian religious world view is the absence of a go-between for an individual and the deity. The host (and the hostess, which is a significant detail) is the performer of all cult rituals; he is the one who makes sacrifices establishing a direct mystical connection with the deity, the whole world and all the cosmic forces. The second characteristic feature follows from the first one; it is a feeling of closeness to God. 'On Christmas Eve, the Lord of Heaven comes to every householder, even the poorest one.' That is why people think of the Lord as the One who is very close to them and cares for them in their misfortune [14, p. 55-58]. It is quite natural because under the system of land-use competition, home was the only source of morality, the place where people's customs and their very

lives were protected, 'the competition between Home and the World, life and life-sustaining activity, community and society is the main nerve of the cultural (I would also add, of the spiritual – V.K.) progress' [18, p. 7]. O. Spengler states that home is a source of social morality, spiritual and ethical values, emotions and monoethnic customs which affect mentality of human communities throughout millennia [24, p. 150]. Such attitude to home, to one's kin and tribe was common to all Kyiv Rus tribes and tribal unions; it was preserved after the Baptism of Kyiv Rus and it is still alive.

A special attitude to fatherland and religion (the latter absorbed pagan rituals which had been adopted by the Kyiv Rus Church and the Old Ukrainian Church) contributed to the development of a specific national feature – natural optimism based on the idea of God as people's Well-Doer, a fair and understanding Lord of the world. 'Evil which inevitably happened in human life, which the Lord himself has to tolerate, depends on some Absolute Evil, which equals God, on some indefinite Fate, personified case. Hence', states A. Richynskiyi, 'typical Ukrainian fatalism; this and our natural (afternoon) laziness resulted in our national features – notorious inertia and passivity, which led to harmful consequences for Ukrainian history' [14, p. 95].

The national character predetermined specific interpretation of morality and behaviour patterns, which is reflected in the customs and rituals practiced in peasant, chumak and Cossack communities. Honesty, dignity, generosity, compassion for others, love for one's native land became the central features of the Ukrainian national character and the basic principles of relations among people. Another factor in formation of the national character was Christian values, faith in the Holy Trinity and the glory of the Holy Christmas, which returned the Truth to people and united them with the whole world and the boundless Cosmos. It was the road to God in the image of Jesus Christ perceived by Kyiv Rus peasants, first and foremost, as a person, and only then as the Son of God. This is why Metropolitan Hilarion of Kyiv says in his 'Sermon on Law and Grace' that not the Law, but the Grace and the Truth were first. 'As the light of the moon fades at the shining of the sun, so also the Law fades at the shining forth of grace. The cold of night vanishes when the warmth of the sun heats the earth, and mankind is no longer bent over under the burden of the Law, but instead walks freely in grace' [10, p. 202-203].

This world view is reflected in the works by Petro Mohyla, Saint Theodosius (Prince Theodore of Ostrog) of the Kiev Caves, Saint Nestor the Chronicler, Yaroslav the Wise, Vladimir Monomach and their associates who incessantly sought harmony between Christian and humanistic values. Petro Mohyla was the first to pay due attention to Christian spiritual and moral values, to human personality and attitude to other people [11, p. 17-18]. This tendency is evident in the spiritual treatises of the Kyiv Rus period and in the works by the 17th-18th century Ukrainian polemicists.

Moral substantiation of the personality phenomenon and of the moral values of Ukrainians can be found in the works by Yurii Drohobych, Pavlo Rusyn, Stanislav Orikhovskiyi, Miletii Smotrytskyi, Ivan Vyshenskyi and other Rusyn thinkers of the 15th - 17th centuries; they believed that in a Christian state, an individual should be able to enjoy full rights, freedom of consciousness, freedom of speech and faith; that any problem should be solved on the basis of justice. These thinkers as proponents of humanistic ideas were well known in Europe: they were students and later taught at the universities of Krakow, Bonn, Vienna and Wittenberg.

Long before John Locke, S. Orikhovskiyi stated that people should follow the law of nature, which is the criterion for their freedom, individual rights and obligations. According to the thinker, abiding by the law does not limit a person's rights, it guarantees their freedom; Law is 'a straitjacket' for wayward individuals. He wrote, 'There exists the highest law of nature: everything happens for a reason; in my opinion, all things happen for some purpose' [13, p. 149].

The Roman Catholic Church offensive against the Orthodox Church made Ukrainian people take a more active interest in the life of Church and the matters of faith. As a result, there was a significant shift in the religious views of people: it becomes the prerogative of the clergy to perform religious rituals; it was also their duty to ensure the fulfilment of the cult prescriptions. Meanwhile, the laity concentrated on the defence of the national Church against outside pressure and on its inner ordering [5, p. 80-81].

Another problem to deal with was the growing influence of the Russian Church, which unlike the Old Ukrainian Church was subordinated to the autocratic power. Nevertheless, in spite of considerable religious/creed diversity and constant disagreements between the churches, the Ukrainian ethnos was preserved as a single whole thanks to the Ukrainian Christianity and the Churches. The confrontation between the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Uniat Church actually prevented the complete russification and polonization of Ukrainians [12, p. 14]. 'Speaking of Ukraine, this phenomenon has become the norm; its true Renaissance is evidence of the unitary phenomenon of the Ukrainian soul, its peculiarity, authentic need for God, unique psyche in the first place. It is also evidence of unexterminability of the national spirit, Ukrainian individualism, genetic detachment, rejection of the strange and of the imposed sense of being' [6, p. 14].

Obviously, external pressure on public and religious life affected the national character. The world view of the Cossacks, middle class and even peasants got changed. For instance, M. Gogol appeared to share H. Skovoroda's views; he also searched for the key to the cognition of God and the world in the human heart; for him, moral values were more important than intellect or will. After all, Gogol as well as Skovoroda saw the world through the eyes of a Ukrainian; his heart was full of gratitude and love for his people; even before his death he sang 'a hymn of Heavenly Beauty'. But Gogol was raised in the Ukrainian white-collar environment; he was concerned about a position with a government department and shared the views of the lackeys in spirit, who were interested solely in payment and career advancement. He joined the Russian community and had to adjust his writing to the tastes of the Russian society of that time [14, p. 195]. He wrote in his letter to Smirnova, 'I can tell you this, I do not really know whether I have the *khokhol** soul or the *Russian* soul. I only know that I would never give preference either to the *Little Russian*** or to the *Russian*. Both natures are generously gifted by God and, as luck would have it, each one has something the other lacks' [21].

Nevertheless we can trace major motifs of Ukrainian world view in Gogol's works: inner morality (it is not enough to do good, one has to want to do good); recognizing the absolute value of every single person (every person has to be reminded that their status is sacred); striving for personal perfection, acknowledgement of the value of human work ('the society will get better only when everyone takes themselves in hand, starts living as a Christian, works for God, each using their own tool'); importance of having a job ('a person improves and perfects themselves only at work'); understanding and tolerance towards other peoples and their views ('You have forgotten about the peculiarities of the national character; you think that different nations are affected by events in the same way. A hammer smashes glass to pieces, but it forges iron'); and last but not least, Ukrainian optimism ('work brings happiness: my whole life now is a hymn of gratitude') [21].

Gogol balanced between the two cultures, neither outweighing the other; but after him came a thinker who gave unambiguous preference to the Russian culture, his sporadic Ukrainian motifs being strange and alien to Russians. It was Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Some of his ideas in their embryonic form can be found in Gogol's works: on the one hand, it is faith in the life-saving mission of beauty in the world; on the other hand, it is showing dark sides of life, submerging the soul in the dark abyss of evil, making it shudder and cry for light again. Because 'there are times when the only way to convert the society to beauty is to show it the depth of its present abomination' (Gogol). This was the method employed by Dostoyevsky [14, p. 197].

F. Dostoyevsky said that Gogol died 'unable to create for himself an ideal at which we would not laugh'. This gives a clue as to the philosophy of Dostoyevsky himself: he 'wanted to believe in the Russian soul' and showed Russia its 'sublime messianic ideal' – the synthesis of its whole previous development. The Russian society was not ready to accept that ideal. Disappointed in the intelligentsia,

* Russians and Poles commonly use the word *khokhol* as an ethnic slur for Ukrainians, as it was a common haircut of Cossacks. The term is frequently derogatory or condescending.

** Little Russia, is a historical, political and geographical term in the Russian language referring to most of the territory of modern-day Ukraine before the 20th century. The derivative 'Little Russian' was commonly applied to the people, language and culture of the area.

he pinned his hopes on 'people'; but not feeling firm ground under his feet, Dostoyevsky tried to persuade himself and his readers that 'the Russian heart is able to recognize a great person even in the enemy of its Motherland'; that is why he said, 'You cannot judge the Russian people by the abominations they commit, but by those great and sacred things for which, even in their abominations, they constantly yearn' [8, p. 413]. Though Dostoyevsky saw that those few who were really 'high-minded' appeared shy about expressing their lofty ideas; he harboured grave doubts because 'without ideals – that is, without at least some partially defined hope for something better – our reality will never be better' [7, p. 75].

Dostoyevsky's rebellion of a thinking individual against an engulfing faceless mass sometimes reaches tragic peaks; now he idealizes this mass ('people'), now he suddenly states that the whole Russia lived only to produce a handful of great, strong people, aristocrats of the spirit [17, p. 7]. Yet a one-man rebellion against abstract 'humanity' is a Ukrainian tendency; it essentially disagrees with the Russian world view. That is why Dostoyevsky writes in his diary, 'What does it matter to me what will happen in a thousand years to your humanity... You will have barracks, communistic homes, *stricte nesessaire*, atheism, and communistic wives without children... And for all this... you take away all my personal liberty!' [9, p. 50]. F. Dostoyevsky mocks at the utopianism of the Russian revolutionaries and opposes the communistic heaven and 'Asian equality in slavery' ('All are slaves and equal in their slavery'). He highlights fallibility of the very idea of 'humanity' and says that the dream of the so called common good often involves disrespect for others and cruelty to 'one's neighbour'. 'Abstract love of humanity is nearly always love of self' [8, p. 379]. Having analyzed the Russian world view, Dostoyevsky comes to the conclusion that the collapse of the then Russia is inevitable.

Though he still had the hope that the intelligentsia or common people would retain faith and carry out their mission. The hope was destroyed by the Bolshevik revolution: common people betrayed the Orthodox faith, the intelligentsia turned away from spiritual morality. M. Berdyaev, as well as F. Dostoyevsky, could not find a way out other than to refuse from Russian messianic claims, to humble one's pride and to repent, to seek salvation through self-discipline, self-immersion and spiritual strength [4, p. 603-615]. Now it is clear why P. Chaadayev also wrote that the Russian people had no future, that neither the Byzantine Orthodoxy nor Asian traditions would save it; that the only way out is uniting with the Catholic West, i.e. with Europe [20].

Nowadays, instead of consolidation with Europe, the Russian ruling elite is trying get control over Ukraine and to isolate it from Western culture. Should it happen, neither the Russian nor the Ukrainian people will benefit by it; the latter has its own view on historical processes. Researching into the phenomenon of people's spirit, P. Yurkevych states, 'In order to comprehend the depths of phenomena, their deepest truth, one has to take into account self-conscious mind, which is the domain of spirit, not of matter; it uses its own language to analyze natural phenomena..., conscious mind corrects and interprets information perceived through the different sensory channels in accordance with the highest interests of the truth, or, as they say, in accordance with its own metaphysical assumptions about the essence of the world of phenomena' [25, p. 277].

The Ukrainians have a very clear idea of their future; if some truth 'is deep in our hearts, it becomes our blessing, our inner treasure,' writes P. Yurkevych. 'It is for this treasure, not for an abstract idea, that a person can fight against circumstances and other people; only [such] a heart is brave and self-sacrificing' [26, p. 270]. Thus speaking of the Ukrainian world view, morality and ethics of behaviour, we have to take into account the history of the people; thanks to their own perception of God and of their destiny, in spite of terrible ordeal, Ukrainian people have not lost their heart and soul, have upheld and deepened their faith.

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У запропонованій статті історіософія розглядається як наука, що вивчає світогляд людини та суспільства в усій повноті його історичних, релігійних, інтелектуальних, етичних і естетичних складників. Історіософія дає відповіді на запитання: чим визначається хід історичного процесу; що є рушійною силою загальнолюдського поступу; як людина бачить себе у навколишньому середовищі; яке її покликання та чого чекає від неї світ, в якому вона живе? Відповіді на ці питання завжди були тісно пов'язані з історичною епохою, вірою, духовними цінностями та життєвим досвідом людини і споріднених етнічних спільнот. Звідси й розуміння того, що таке мораль, які критерії моральності, яка різниця між мораллю й етикою. В статті ці важливі історіософські питання розглядаються крізь призму духовних основ моралі. Якщо виходити з того, що духовні істини мають особливий вплив на найглибші почуття людини, принципи її життєдіяльності та ставлення до Бога, то мораль – не що інше, як система взаємовідносин між людьми, в яку, крім духовних цінностей, вкраплені життєвий досвід, традиції та звичаї народу. Такий підхід дає можливість осмислити силу впливу духовних істин на мораль та релігійний світогляд українського народу, побачити особливості формування етичних цінностей в епоху Києворуського месіанського християнства та колоніальної залежності України від інших держав. Формування світогляду, моралі й етики було тісно пов'язане не тільки з проблемами віри і суспільного буття, але й з розвитком вітчизняної філософської та богословської думки як у минулому, так і в наші дні, що знайшло своє відображення в поглядах українців на себе, світ і Вселенське буття.

Ключові слова: історіософія, мораль, етика, Києворуське месіанське християнство, «філософія серця», світогляд українського народу.