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The Personalistic Norm and the Author's Code of Ethics in the Context of the Development of the Virtual Environment

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Abstract: Technological development manifesting itself mainly through the virtual environment and AI creates a fundamental challenge for the modern world. In the era of the so called industrial and technological revolution and the rapid AI development moral and ethical dilemma occur. In that context a new teaching objective appears, such as understanding the ethical implications of automation and AI; the ability to foresee the unintentional consequences of technology; making decisions that take into account diversity and inclusion or responsibility for the long-term impact of technological decisions. The paper aims to formulate a code of ethics in the context of the development of virtual environments (and particularly artificial intelligence) within the framework of theistic personalism. The article presents and explains ten detailed principles (The principle of personal dignity, The principle of freedom and self-determination, The principle of responsibility, The principle of safety, control and criticism, The principle of multidimensional being and multidirectional development, The principle of the primacy of spirituality over technology, The principle of primacy of personal relationships, The principle of truth, The principle of good, The principle of beauty). The primary research method was an analysis of sources and relevant literature (desk research). Procedurally, the analysis proceeded in three stages. The first involved formulating the fundamental ethical dilemmas related to human development in the context of the virtual environment. The second stage included an anthropological and ethical analysis of these dilemmas in light of the ethics of personalism, particularly the personalist norm. The third stage consisted of a theoretical synthesis leading to the formulation of an original code of personalist ethics in the context of the development of the virtual world, based primarily on the personalist norm.

Keywords: Personalistic norm, Code of ethics, Cyberworld ethics

Introduction

The Importance of Ethics and Social Responsibility in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Humanity, created by God in all its grandeur, is today facing a pivotal choice: either to construct a new Tower of Babel or to build the city in which God and humanity dwell together” (Magnifica humanitas,1). With these words Leon XIV begins his encyclic with the care for a human being in the AI era. As the Holy Father states “We cannot consider AI to be morally neutral. In reality, every technical tool embodies choices and priorities through what it measures, ignores and optimizes, and how it classifies people and situations. If a system is designed or used in a way that treats some lives as less worthy, or excludes them without the possibility of appeal, then it is not merely a tool “to be used well,” since it has already introduced criteria that contradict the inalienable dignity of the human person. For this reason, ethical discernment cannot be limited to asking whether we are using a system for good or bad purposes; it must also examine how that system is designed and what vision of the human person and society is embedded in the data and models that guide it” (Magnifica humanitas, 104).

Technological development manifesting itself mainly through the virtual environment and the AI creates a fundamental challenge for the modern world. That is why Leon XIV suggests “They demand that we assess

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whether the power of digital infrastructures and algorithms truly fosters participation and responsibility, protects the vulnerable, ensures fair access to opportunities and remains directed toward the good of all” (Magnifica humanitas, 96). In the era of the so called industrial and technological revolution and the rapid AI development moral and ethical dilemma occur. Those dilemmas may take the shape of questions regarding the whole human society:

- who gains from the given technology? who bears the costs?,
- what are long-term social consequences of AI ?,
- does AI deepen or reduce the inequalities?,

Or the questions that deal with bringing up and educating the young generation:

- do we deal with dehumanization of education? what is the subject of education?
- is the notion of education as a relation of master/teacher – student outdated? what about person to person contact?
- can the AI use, deceive or manipulate us (people)?

Pope Leon XIV deems that „We cannot be satisfied with merely calling for the moralization of machines — the so-called “alignment” of AI with human values — without also having the courage to insist on a further condition: the possibility of openly discussing the ethical frameworks involved and subjecting them to shared standards of social justice” (Magnifica humanitas, 107).

As well as the report of QS World Future Skills Index (2025, 56) proposes a new, multidimensional taxonomy of educational purposes adequate to the AI era. New teaching objectives appear, such as understanding the ethical implications of automation and AI; the ability to foresee the unintentional consequences of technology; making decisions that take into account diversity and inclusion or responsibility for the long-term impact of technological decisions. That is why in the justification, the report mentions a fourth and key category - "Sustainable & Ethical Workforce", emphasizing the importance of ethics and social responsibility. Ethical dilemmas requiring resolution are the fundamental justification for the development of an adequate code of ethics. This text is an attempt to formulate a code of ethics in the context of the development of virtual environments (and particularly artificial intelligence) within the framework of theistic personalism.

Method

This study is theoretical and analytical in nature and aligns with the qualitative research paradigm characteristic of the humanities and social sciences. An interdisciplinary approach was employed, integrating perspectives from philosophy (personalist ethics), pedagogy, and research on virtual environments and artificial intelligence. The primary research method was an analysis of sources and relevant literature (desk research). In particular, content analysis was used to examine papal documents, classical personalist texts, and selected empirical studies on the cyberworld. This approach enabled a multifaceted interpretation that took into account not only the anthropological and ethical dimensions but also the sociocultural ones.

The methodology employed was hermeneutic and interpretive in nature, as the aim of the study was not to test empirical hypotheses, but to reconstruct and interpret the meanings attributed to the resolution of ethical dilemmas in the contemporary world. Procedurally, the analysis proceeded in three stages. The first involved formulating the fundamental ethical dilemmas related to human development in the context of the virtual environment. The second stage included an anthropological and ethical analysis of these dilemmas in light of the ethics of personalism, particularly the personalist norm. The third stage consisted of a theoretical synthesis leading to the formulation of an original code of personalist ethics in the context of the development of the virtual world, based primarily on the personalist norm. The methodology used made it possible to comprehend the complexity of the phenomenon under study by integrating various levels of analysis: descriptive (sociological), interpretive (philosophical), and normative (pedagogical).

Results and Discussion

Personalistic Norm in the Ethics According to Karol Wojtyła

The term „ethics” may mean theories of moral obligation or moral value of conduct; theories of moral norms of conduct that are actually recognized in a given social environment (ethos), and often also practiced within it (morality); beliefs (judgments) and moral practices of a given community or even its individual representatives. Only in the first meaning the word, „ethics” is used in its proper understanding. In the second, ethics is identified with the theory of ethos (usually with history of morality, ethnology of morality, psychology or sociology of morality), in the third meaning – with the same ethos. According to the first meaning ethics is also called „normative ethics” and it is contradicted to its second meaning, which bears the name of “descriptive ethics” or (less frequently)—“ethology”.

Karol Wojtyła, as an ethicist, reminds us that ethics is a normative science, drawing on the thought of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. Characteristic features of his concept include: the empirical starting point of the experience of morality; the philosophical, normative nature of ethics; and the ethical foundations of morality in the realities of the human person, in light of which ethics becomes a normative anthropology. Wojtyła inherently connects ethics with anthropology, thus defining the supreme norm of morality as the "personalist norm." The normative force of truth is determined in his ethical conception by the truth about the value of the human person and of person in general. This value, bestowed upon humanity by God in the act of creation, must be discovered in the specific human person given to us. Combining ethics with anthropology and discovering the source of morality in human nature is specifically personal. Values are subjectified in the human person, they are inextricably linked to human nature. The elimination of the concept of man in ethics therefore means the falsification of the essence of moral values as a personal reality (Czachorowski, 2020).

One of the basic works of Wojtyła is „Osoba i czyn” (Person and Act and Related Essays). In this publication we can read that actions contain agency, and agency highlights the specific self as the self-conscious cause of action, and this is precisely the person (Wojtyła, 1969). Reflective analysis of human action (deed), the so-called understanding experience, leads to the discovery of the subject, that is, the agent of action and the one who experiences their subjectivity—and thus to the discovery of the person. Every form of human dynamism is linked to becoming the human subject. Once substantially existing, a human simultaneously becomes something, and increasingly more so. A person becomes "someone" and "something" through his actions, through his conscious action (Wojtyła, 1969). This becoming (human fieri) presupposes agency, the fruit of which is morality as the closest existential reality related to the person as its proper subject (Wojtyła, 1969). Man becomes morally good or bad through his actions.

In the personalistic thought developed by Wojtyła-John Paul II, an act is an expression of self-determination, freedom, and responsibility. Wojtyła calls what makes an action a personal act, rather than an automatic "happening," the "personalistic (personal) value of the act." This is distinct from moral value. "Personalistic value resides in the very performance of the act by the person, in the very fact that 'a person acts' in a way that is proper to him or her. The phrase 'in a way that is proper to him or her' is important. This means that there is agency, self-determination, and responsibility in it. In such an act, 'the person actualizes himself or herself.' By performing an act, a person not only turns to something external—to the object of the act—but also turns to himself or herself—chooses himself or herself. (Starnawski, 2020).

Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II) emphasizes that a person's actualization occurs through actions. Not all actions (changes) are considered deeds, but only those in which a person acts as a conscious agent. Changes in a person also occur through non-actions, that is, through what "happens" within them or with them. For an action to be fully their own and for a person to have the "power to change themselves" (to determine their own future), they must possess and control themselves. What makes an action a personal act, and not just a "happening," an automatism, an unconscious action, Wojtyła calls the "personalistic (personal) value of the act." This value lies in the very act performed by the person, in the very fact that "'man acts' in a way that is proper to him," meaning that he possesses agency, self-determination, and responsibility.

Wojtyła develops the theory of the personalistic norm in his work „Miłość i odpowiedzialność” / „Love and responsibility”, where it is attributed both a negative meaning (the obligation to treat the addressee of the action in a non-instrumental way) (Wojtyła, 1986), as well as the positive one, i.e. the duty of "love", the duty to affirm the special value of man (Wojtyła, 1986). Wojtyła treats the "personalistic norm" as a philosophical thesis. It justifies the obligation to treat the human person in a non-instrumental way (as well as the obligation to affirm the person's transcendent value, the "dignity of the person") both directly and indirectly (Wojtyła, 1986).

The essential characteristics of the human person that rule out their instrumental treatment are being a thinking subject capable of self-determination. These two properties are found in the 'interior' of the person. Therefore, every person is by nature capable of determining their own goals. When someone else treats them solely as a

means to an end, then the person is violated in what belongs to their very essence and at the same time constitutes their natural right. (Wojtyła, 1986).

The analysis contained in the work „Miłość i odpowiedzialność” / „Love and responsibility” portrays a person as a being existing in a different and higher way than any other living beings. This difference is based on the fact that a person is capable of love and it is love that defines a human being. Only a human being is capable of love, which is a selfless act of will made for the good itself. The personalistic norm that underlies Wojtyła's ethics is the norm of love, and from it flow all the specific norms that regulate everyday human life. Ethics, in the presented approach, becomes normative anthropology, meaning that the human person and their dignity become the basis for the moral evaluation of human actions, and love is the principle guiding the updates of human personal potential. (Niemiec, 2010).

Taking into consideration the entire output of the personalist Karol Wojtyła, it should be noted that in his analysis he took into account both the existential and conscious aspects of man – the human person, and by demonstrating their coherence, he always respected the priority of the horizon of being over the horizon of consciousness. He distinguished four states in the nature of human personal being: pure nature, integrated nature, fallen nature, and redeemed nature. Pure nature (*status naturae purae*) exists only hypothetically, because from the moment of creation it is raised by God to the order of supernature (*status naturae integrae*). Man existed in this state—of integrated nature, a fusion of grace and nature—until original sin. Through original sin, man found himself in a state of fallen nature (*status naturae lapsae*). But by free will, thanks to God's grace, he can transition to a state of redeemed nature (*status naturae reparatae*) (Wojtyła, 1982). The distinction between these four states of nature, or more precisely, the tension between the states of redeemed and fallen nature, defines the sphere of ethical obligation.

In his theory of good, Wojtyła refers to the Thomistic idea of participation, according to which participation in good, which comes down to participation in existence, gives every created being a resemblance to the Creator, who is a self-existent existence and good. As a self-existent being, the Creator does not need to seek perfection inherent in his nature. Man, however, as a created-contingent being (composed of act and potency) must seek the perfection proper to his nature by turning to other beings as goods. The desire to be a good person is a necessary condition for being appropriately good to others. The ability to recognize, choose, and realize decent goodness constitutes the basis for the ethical normative stance and normative process (Wojtyła, 1991). By performing a good deed, man fulfills himself.

In this concept, the experience of moral good cannot be separated from its agency. Ontology (philosophical anthropology) is intertwined here with morality and ethics. The question of being is intertwined with the question of good. Every human act, which updates, improves their rational nature (answering to its known truth about goodness), constitutes the moral perfection of being. Through an act, man becomes its perpetrator and at the same time its creator (subject) and thus the “creator” of himself. However, the removal of the being that should be within man as his perfection signifies the emergence of moral evil. Moral evil is therefore a lack of goodness, a lack of perfection, a lack of purpose, which are assigned to man and to which he was called. Moral good, on the other hand, is the good of the person himself. The fulfillment of moral goodness is the result of engaging the full dynamism inherent in the potential of man as a personal subject. This applies to reason and the intellectual-cognitive sphere, and to will and the volitional-affective sphere. Therefore, the proper moment of morality is contained in obligation (Wojtyła, 1991). The obligation inherent in agency in a given action concerns the object (the purpose of the action) and appears in two forms: positive (action) and negative (failure to act). The experience of obligation is a constitutive moment of the experience of morality. It is also accompanied by the consequences of personal and social actions. As a dynamic, developing being, man, in a sense, creates himself through conscious and voluntary acts. Analysis of human action and the experience of the person in action allows us to reveal the meaning of human reality and the ultimate reasons explaining that reality.

Using the ethical concept developed by Wojtyła, it should be noted that the personalist norm is a fundamental ethical principle that places the human person (Latin: *persona*) at the center of moral concern. Although this principle originates in the traditions of Christian philosophy and phenomenology, it currently serves as a key point of reference in social issues, bioethics, law, and human rights theory. The personalist norm can also become a point of reference in matters related to the development of the virtual environment (and artificial intelligence in particular). The personalistic norm in ethics can be formulated as the fact that a person is such a being that the only proper and fully valuable relationship to him is love.

To simply put it, this norm states that a person is a being whose only proper reference is love, and treating them as a tool for an end is excluded. In the literature on the subject, this norm is analyzed from two perspectives:

negative and positive. The negative aspect (the prohibition of objectification) refers directly to Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative. This aspect, synthetically speaking, is expressed by the statement that a person must not be treated solely as a means to an end (a tool). The positive aspect (the commandment of love/affirmation) is an extension of Karol Wojtyła's concept. According to him, simply "not using" someone is not enough. The positive aspect is conveyed by the statement that a person, because of their dignity, deserves affirmation, that is, recognition of their value for their own sake.

An Original Draft of a Code of Ethics in the Era of the Development of the Virtual Environment

The combination of the theory of personalistic ethics with educational practice in the contemporary world dominated by the development of Artificial Intelligence resulted in the creation of an original draft code of ethics.

Preamble

The human person and the human rights inherent in their nature constitute the primary good in relation to education in a virtual environment. From the "logos" of the human person, the "nomos" and "ethos" of education and teaching must be derived, also in the context of the development of the virtual world and artificial intelligence. The teleology of the transformation of human reality by the cyberworld must be shaped to protect people from any dangers or negative consequences that threaten the integrity of the human person and their multidirectional development.

Detailed Principles

The Principle of Personal Dignity

The human person is always a subject, not an object. Their efficient cause is the Trinity, and being created in the image and likeness of a personal God, they possess inalienable personal dignity and occupy a privileged place between the visible and invisible worlds. Experiments on human identity are prohibited, as is the transformation of human nature through biotechnological experiments, the replacement of humans with avatars or other creations of the digital world, or in any way diminishing their personal dignity, ignoring the inalienable personal status of every human being.

The Principle of Freedom and Self-Determination

A human being is a being endowed with freedom and can make free choices. They have the right to freedom, which is not capriciousness; it does not merely mean the absence of external or internal coercion, but is linked to self-definition, self-determination, and self-direction; it is the freedom to choose what is more true and good and to act to realize this good and achieve inner autonomy. A person may not be manipulated through false content and emotional engineering, nor may their right to decide or decide for someone else be otherwise denied. Nor may anyone be censored through technological tools or their freedom of expression be restricted.

The Principle of Responsibility

A human being is a being who bears responsibility for their own actions. The creator/programmer of online tools must have full control over their actions in the virtual environment. They must not shift responsibility for their actions onto others or onto technology, nor deny anyone the right to act responsibly and in accordance with their own conscience.

The Principle of Safety, Control and Criticism

Every person has the right to security, privacy, and their own opinions. Technology cannot be left unchecked by individuals. It is prohibited to intercept their personal data, impersonate another person's identity, deprive them of the ability to control content related to them or express their own views. It is also prohibited to generate

content containing a person's image without their consent, violate anyone's privacy using technological tools, by spying on and eavesdropping on their speech and behavior, or create mass control tools through profiling members of society.

The Principle of Multidimensional Being and Multidirectional Development

The human person is a multidimensional being (a biological-corporeal being, conscious and self-aware, rational, endowed with will, social-relational, open to transcendence) and has the right to develop in many directions. Humans cannot be reduced to a single dimension, deprived of the opportunity for development (towards truth, goodness, freedom, subjectivity in community, and beauty), or deliberately led down a path of regression.

The Principle of the Primacy of Spirituality Over Technology

The human person is a mystery (never fully unknowable), a being "between" the divine and the material; the immanent and the transcendent; the static (being "in" and "for" oneself) and the dynamic (being "for" and "with" others and God). Humans have the right to transcendence. Humans must not be confined solely within the purely material, technological world, nor must their freedom in seeking their own spiritual values and their own relationship to transcendence be limited.

The Principle of Primacy of Personal Relationships

The human person is a social being, a relational entity. As a person, they become increasingly so through encounters with others, in a personalized maieutic process, while maintaining the synergy of divine and human forces. We must not deprive humans of the ability to form personal relationships, attempt to replace personal relationships with purely virtual ones, or replace personal relationships with artificial intelligence. We must also not deceive humans as to whether they are establishing a relationship with another human or a digital entity.

The Principle of Truth

The human person is a rational being. He is naturally oriented toward truth, understood as the correspondence of the judgments of human intellect with the objective state of affairs. He has the right to seek and discover truth. He can develop the dimension of consciousness and self-awareness, the cognitive-intellectual dimension, by directing himself toward truth, seeking, and discovering. He may not be lied to, deliberately misled, or denied access to knowledge and information through technological tools of control.

The Principle of Good

The human person is a rational being. He is naturally oriented toward goodness, understood as a universal property of being, something worthy of desire, something that captivates and draws him to itself. Humans have the right to do good. The human person is capable of developing the psycho-volitional dimension by shaping their will toward goodness, which is also linked to freedom of conscience. A person may not be forced to perform immoral acts or act against their conscience.

The Principle of Beauty

The human person is by nature oriented toward beauty. They have the right to seek and live in the reality of beauty, understood as a synthesis of being, truth, and goodness; to introduce harmony and order as a characteristic of reality; to human creations (including art, as well as human behavior), expressed in the Latin tradition as harmony or perfection, which, when viewed and viewed for their own sake, evoke pleasure. Humans must not be deprived of the ability to create beauty or live surrounded by beauty, nor should beauty be replaced with ugliness.

Conclusion

Personalist ethics is called "guard" the good of the human person, ensuring that no harm is done to others. Therefore, ethical codes are formulated to protect the individual good and the common good of the human person and the human community. Hence, the attempt to introduce a code of personalist ethics into the virtual world, formulated in this publication, is based primarily on the personalist norm. The proposed code is addressed primarily to teachers, educators, pedagogues, philosophers, theologians, sociologists, and psychologists, as well as natural educators (for example, parents), because it presents solutions to the fundamental dilemmas faced by 21st-century people who care about the fate of children and young people. The precision of the personalist norm lies in the fact that it is not merely a "nice slogan," but a rigorous prohibition against reducing a person to a function, resource, or object, while simultaneously mandating the active protection of their inalienable dignity.

Recommendations

The personalistic norm reflected in the Code is primarily binding on conscience, that is, the subjectively ultimate norm of morality. Therefore, its guidelines are addressed to all people of "good will." Its observance may be legally sanctioned by appropriate authorities, but above all, it must stem from the internalization of values and the freedom to submit to norms that serve the dignity of every human being. This is a consequence of an education implemented within a personalistic perspective, which assumes freedom and responsibility for one's actions.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

* The author declares that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS Journal belongs to the author.

Conflict of Interest

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