

The Role of Joseph de Finance's Axiological Concept in Opening Youth to the World of Values

Rola koncepcji aksjologicznej Josepha de Finance w otwieraniu młodzieży na świat wartości

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Abstract: Research and common experience confirm that the value orientation of young people has changed fundamentally. Material values have come to the fore and young people do not seem to recognize higher values at all. The subject of the study is the phenomenon of blindness and deafness to higher values. The fact was pointed out by Joseph de Finance, who formulated an axiological conception that offers a solution to this problem. Every human being needs basic values, both material and spiritual, that enable his or her integral development. Each group of values corresponds to certain needs resulting from human nature. However, children or young people often remain attached to material values while they fail to open up to higher values, especially moral ones. The educator must use *kairos* and help children to take this step. The educator helps those who are blind to certain values to find other similar values that they can recognize. Teachers must help young people to tune in to the wavelength of certain values so they can hear them. The realization of the moral value is of crucial importance since it is through that value that people can develop integrally and find happiness.

Keywords: human, value, kairos, axiological blindness, axiological deafness, moral education, Joseph de Finance,

Abstrakt: Badania i powszechne doświadczenie potwierdzają, że orientacja młodych ludzi na wartości uległa zasadniczej zmianie. Na pierwszy plan wysunęły się wartości materialne, zaś wartości wyższe wydają się nie mieć dla młodych ludzi żadnego znaczenia. Przedmiotem niniejszego opracowania jest zjawisko ślepoty i głuchoty na wartości wyższe. Zwrócił na to uwagę Joseph de Finance, autor koncepcji aksjologicznej, która pomaga znaleźć rozwiązanie tego problemu. Każdy człowiek dąży do zaspokojenia podstawowych wartości, zarówno materialnych, jak i duchowych, które warunkują jego integralny rozwój. Każdy zestaw wartości odpowiada pewnym wymaganiom zdefiniowanym przez naturę ludzką. Jednak dziecko lub młoda osoba często pozostają przywiązane do wartości materialnych i nie otwierają się na wartości wyższe, zwłaszcza wartości moralne. Zadaniem wychowawcy jest wykorzystanie momentu *kairos*, aby pomóc podopiecznym zrobić krok w tym kierunku. Wychowawca pomaga osobom, które są ślepe na pewne wartości, znaleźć podobne wartości, które te są w stanie dostrzec. Mówiąc obrazowo, pomaga tym, którzy są głusi na wołanie wartości wyższych, nauczyć się dostrajać do długości fal tych wartości i w ten sposób je usłyszeć. Uświadomienie sobie istnienia wartości moralnych ma kluczowe znaczenie, ponieważ wartości te warunkują integralny rozwój człowieka, co pomaga mu odnaleźć szczęście.

Słowa kluczowe: człowiek, wartość, kairos, ślepotą aksjologiczną, głuchota aksjologiczna, wychowanie moralne, Joseph de Finance



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INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the value orientation, especially that of young people has shifted significantly, as evidenced by various studies (Koldeová 2016, 119-130; Lajčiaková and Blaščíková 2003, 292-296; Reimer 2011, 143) and common experience. Material values have become more prominent, reflecting today's consumerist lifestyle. Some individuals are unable to recognize or appreciate certain values because they do not see or hear them. It was this blindness and especially deafness to values that was highlighted by a French Jesuit, Joseph de Finance (1904-2000)¹, whose scientific research focused on ethics, particularly the ethics of values, metaphysics, and anthropology. Drawing on Thomism and engaging with contemporary philosophy, his approach remains original and still relevant.

The starting point of this investigation is the human being, a spiritual subject capable of self-awareness and self-determination. This study explores how de Finance understands the terms "human nature" and "spiritual subject," as each reflects a different aspect of the richness and dynamics of human existence. This anthropological-metaphysical basis also determines what humans need in order to develop in their lives: they need goods perceived as values.

In the next step, we will examine the basic groups of values, each essential for developing a particular dimension of human nature. Through this lens, we can then explore the role of the educator, who, in due course, has to point out other, additional values and thus broaden the mentee's horizons. Finally, we will address blindness and deafness to values, investigate the causes of their emergence, and assess their impact on the integral development of the human being.

¹ Joseph de Finance was born on January 30, 1904, in La Canourgue, France. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1921 and was ordained a priest in 1934. From 1938 to 1955, he taught metaphysics and natural theology at Vals, followed by a tenure at the Catholic Institute in Lyon. Throughout his career, he served as a visiting professor in Vietnam, India, Canada, Mexico, and Brazil. From 1955 to 1980, he taught general ethics, courses on human action and on St. Thomas Aquinas at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. His intellectual focus was on the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, which also influenced scholars such as Maritain and Gilson. Although philosophy was his lifelong vocation, literature also held a special place in his heart, and his scholarly output was deeply intertwined with theology, reflecting a profound humanistic culture. His bibliography includes over 230 works. Major works include: *Essai sur l'Agir humain*, *Existence et Liberté*, *Connaissance de l'être*, *Éthique Générale*, *Le sensible et Dieu*, *L'ouverture et la norme*, *De l'un et de l'autre*. *Essai sur l'alterité*, *Citoyen de deux mondes*. Even as Professor Emeritus, despite severe visual impairments, he continued to study and share his ideas, though he had no intention of publishing them. He expected, as he expressed it, to do so "without anguish for the light where all problems are solved." He died in Rome on January 28, 2000.

1. ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS

Joseph de Finance identifies two intertwined orders in human nature: the bodily and the spiritual (de Finance 1990, 59-60; de Finance 1992, 205-213). While many philosophers view *natura* as merely the body that binds a person to a particular place, a particular period, a culture, and a society, de Finance posits that *natura* transcends the sensual and corporeal, transcends both physiology and physics. According to him, therefore, there is a *spiritual natura* inherent in man: in addition to the bodily dimension, conditioned by the laws of nature, man has spiritual and rational inclinations, such as the capacity for knowledge and free choice (de Finance 2003, 147). This aspect is not a dualism because spirituality permeates and marks corporeality; hence he speaks of a spiritual natura.

The concept of the “spiritual subject” reflects an individual’s internal relationality: the subject is such only in relation to the object, which underlines his particularity and individuality. As man is a “spiritual subject,” his subjectivity is characterized by openness to Being and other entities. This relationality enables one not only to know another being (to come out of oneself), but also to know one’s own being – *autocoscienza* (return to oneself). In this way, the notion of “spiritual subject” coincides in meaning with the notion of “person,” which, due to reason and freedom, has absolute value.

Following the thought of Thomas Aquinas, de Finance distinguishes between the act of being and essence. The act of being makes existence possible and is the foundation of uniqueness and incommunicability, while essence defines the limit and contingency of a finite being. Essence determines it to exist in a particular way. For instance, the essence of an ant enables it to be an ant and thus to be capable of only those activities that are proper to an ant; it cannot perform the same activities as an elephant. Similarly, the essence of the spiritual subject also expresses determination: the spiritual subject knows and wills as a spiritual subject, not as an animal. The spiritual subject knows “in a certain way everything.” De Finance emphasizes this “in a certain way,” meaning in a manner determined by its essence and nature.

However, determination in the case of the spiritual subject appears radically indeterminate because, thanks to reason and will, it is open to everything, to the Absolute of being. Essences “enter” the consciousness of the subject, but consciousness also intentionally “goes out” to meet them; the subject

transcends himself. At the same time, this transcendence enables the subject to “return to himself,” and to become self-aware. Since the conscious return to the self – *autocoscientia* – is only possible through openness to the Being that attracts it, we can say that this return to the self is not the result of human effort but is a gift of Being itself, through which the subject receives itself again (Salatiello 2011). In openness to the Totality, to the Absolute, the dignity and absolute value of the spiritual subject emerge, demonstrating that the spiritual subject is inherently directed towards Being (Uram 2012, 63-67).

Openness to the Totality of being, the Absolute, allows not only to know and to will, but also to know oneself and to “will oneself,” meaning to “own oneself,” to decide for oneself, to determine oneself through action, to fill the void found in oneself (de Finance 1992, 219-220). Although determination and indetermination are inextricably linked in the spiritual subject, they are not on the same plane. Determination is associated with essence and is inherent in the horizontal plane, while indetermination is actually openness and is proper to the vertical plane, that is, it is directed to the “height,” to the Absolute (de Finance 1992, 217).

Man is, on one hand, given, but on the other hand, he must realize through freedom. The subject is thus characterized by a state of incompleteness. A metaphysical interval exists between how the subject is given to himself and how he determines his own existence through a free act (Uram 2023, 53-54), removing the indetermination inscribed in nature and moving the subject dynamically towards a greater actualization of his being. At the same time, it leads the subject to become aware of his responsibility for what he has done and how he has done it (de Finance 1992, 216).

2. HUMAN AND VALUES

Human openness to the Totality, to the Absolute, enables self-awareness and recognition of the gap between one's actual state and the Absolute, which is his horizon. This openness also enables individuals to decide how to fill this void. This is a crucial task in human life, as one's happiness depends on it, and it encapsulates the meaning of existence. Naturally, therefore, one seeks the good and wants to obtain it because it brings about perfection. This good is of value to him. Several levels can be distinguished in human nature, each oriented towards the appropriate value that brings about perfection. This makes it possible to form a hierarchy of values (de Finance 1997, 54-57; de Finance 1992, 350-359).

Among values, the lowest are the *infra-human values*. Infra-human, because they do not pertain to humans in the aspects that differentiate them from animals. These include values of the *sensory orders* (pleasant, fun, pleasure) and *biological values* (healthy, health). These values relate to what is conducive to the development of biological life, since humans are *natura*.

Higher up are the *human infra-moral values*. Human, because they are intrinsic to humans and hold meaning only for them, requiring reason and will. Infra-moral, because they do not pertain to what is most proper or personal in man. These include *economic values* and those that might be called eudaimonic, that is, aiming for the well-being of man (prosperity, success, happiness, wealth). Additionally, there are *spiritual values* in the narrower sense of the word, independent of biological requirements. This group includes subgroups: noetic values (truth, thoroughness), aesthetic and artistic values (beauty, refinement, good taste), social values (cohesion, prosperity of the group or nation, state) and will values (strength of character, constancy of action). These values are already very close to the moral value, and sometimes it is very difficult to determine their exact place in the system of values.

A special place is reserved to the *moral value*. It concerns what is most proper to humans, which is freedom. "Moral value, implying a direct relationship to the Absolute, is essentially one; whereas natural values (the two previous groups) diversify according to the natures to which they refer" (de Finance 1992, 309). Hence, it is usually referred to as the moral value, not moral values. Within it lies the value of man as a person. The preceding values are sought by individuals for themselves because they bring something to them, enriching them. On the contrary, moral and religious value is sought for its own sake.

At the highest level is *religious value* (holy, the divine), which concerns the relationship between the subject and the highest principle of value. It cannot be reduced to the moral value; they are not the same, but we can say that they are mutually conditioned. There is no perfect morality without religion, and no religion without morality.

The hierarchy of values reflects the nature of the spiritual subject. Since man is *natura*, natural values, e.g. biological values, have a place here, and since his natura is *spiritual*, moral value holds a central place.

Good as such, whether utilitarian or moral, implies a relation with a certain inclination. In the case of infra-human values, a person perceives an object as good or bad, as “perfectible,” and desires it according to whether it aligns with his natural inclination; if it does not agree, he rejects it. For instance, a dehydrated person automatically seeks salty food to retain water in the body. The organism “recognizes” the good long before the person realizes that he is thirsty and needs to drink (de Finance 1997, 49 - 51). Goods are valuable to man not only when they bring satisfaction of biological needs (water quenches his thirst), but also when they preserve his health, assuming he regards health as a value. However, this does not pertain to what defines a person as a subject. What is crucial here is the relationship between the natural physiological inclination and the good found outside the subject.

People have a spiritual inclination towards human infra-moral values. Therefore, they seek certain kinds of goods that correspond to the spiritual inclination. In this realm, too, external goods, objects, come into relation with the subject. The values that correspond to this inclination bring rational satisfaction, e.g., the joy of knowledge, aesthetic pleasure, the satisfaction of self-realization, etc. These are high values bordering on morality, however, they are not formally moral. They do pertain to the human being, but in a sense, they still remain external to him since they do not concern the core of human nature, the centre, which makes it possible to say “I”. The values in this domain are horizontally oriented, aimed at happiness. It is the relationship between spiritual inclination and the good, which is again outside the subject.

We now come to the moral value. In its realization, in moral action, ontology and axiology are combined. Ontologically speaking, action depends on the subject (*agere sequitur esse*); action reflects the subject’s spiritual faculties. From an axiological point of view, the subject derives value from his deeds – he will be that kind of person he acts (*esse sequitur agere*) (de Finance 2003, 155). Through moral action, he develops and determines his being. Now we no longer examine the values that stand before him as objects, but from within as that which constitutes his subjectivity and makes the moral value possible. “As natural values refer to the horizon of desire, that is, to happiness, so the moral value refers to the horizon called the Ideal of practical reason. Just as happiness offers desire, will-nature, a principle of

determination, so the moral value and its Ideal offer freedom, i.e., the will as rational, a way out of indeterminacy” (de Finance 1992, 276).

Absolute being is the Ideal of practical reason. It is the horizon to which human nature is open, and which is the focus of their activities.² The Ideal is inherent intrinsic perfection. If the value of the Ideal were relative, it would not be the ideal of reason. The value, based on the relation of reason open to Absolute being, is valid in itself, and is valid absolutely. It is different to say: “this chocolate is good,” and to say: “fidelity is good.” One does not seek fidelity to satisfy sensitivity. One judges, perceives intellectually, that fidelity is desirable in itself and must be desired. Acting faithfully does not merely correspond to a natural and subjective demand but is an objective demand that cannot be relativized. At this level, it is not physiological or spiritual inclination and good that enter into the relationship, as in the previous two levels, but the subject’s openness to the Absolute and the Good. Due to this openness, the spiritual subject is what it is. Therefore, attention now turns to the subject.

3. MIXED VALUES, MORAL VALUE, AND THEIR PLACE IN HUMAN LIFE

Although the moral value is paramount for the development of human existence, a person needs a wide range of values throughout life. Given the intertwined nature of bodily and spiritual orders in humans, the natural state of the spiritual subject is to exist, act, and express through the body.³ Consequently, infra-human and human infra-moral values play crucial roles in human life and proper functioning. These values serve higher ones; for instance, orderliness in things on the table fosters a certain style to a life that is already moral; it helps to dampen explosiveness, overcome laziness, etc. Hence, lower values must not be underestimated as disorder in them affects sensitivity and receptivity for them and consequently less sensitivity to the moral value. Effective education involves nurturing

² In a sense, he understands it by analogy with Plato’s idea of the Good or with A. Rosmini’s “moral being.” For de Finance, however, the ideal is not present in the spirit as an object of intuition or of some prior knowledge. This ideal is known only in reflection (de Finance 2003, 223).

³ Natural values are connected with the nature of man, with natural inclinations. These will be right if they are subject to reason, more precisely to right reason (*recta ratio*), which belongs to human nature. However, if the natural inclinations are left to themselves, or if the judgment of reason is incorrect, the natural inclinations can be reversed (de Finance 1992, 330-332).

interest in these values:⁴ “Virtue is solid and stable where the highest value is most closely associated with the other values as a whole” (de Finance 1992, 346).

However, attention must also be given to the dynamics of the subject’s growth. Education should not only prepare children for adulthood, to master the tasks that await them, but also to enable them to realize age-appropriate values. Childhood and adolescence are not mere transitional stages but have intrinsic structure and values. “Only if we allow the child, the adolescent, to truly live up to their potential and to live the values appropriate to their age, will we prepare them to become adults altogether” (de Finance 2003, 251). Sometimes, in due course, old values need to be criticised, and new ones offered. However, criticism should not consist in denying and rejecting the old value, because a lower value does not cease to be value; it must be respected at its level in recognition of its relativity, however, without dismissing it entirely (de Finance 1992, 349). Introducing new values requires *kairos* (de Finance 1992, 349; de Finance 2003, 252-254), the right moment. The right moment must not be forcibly hastened, for children cannot abandon the values for which they have lived. They will reject the new values offered to them because they do not like them, they may even develop an aversion to them; or they will accept them, but the acceptance will remain only external to them (they will do something “because it is the way to do it” without knowing the true reasons why it should be done). Another situation can also arise: the previous values have lost their relevance, but the child does not yet know or does not want to accept the new ones, so that a void is formed which can be filled by unsuitable ideas or ideals (de Finance 1992, 254). In the same way, therefore, it is wrong if *kairos* is not made use of, if the introduction to new values is delayed. Then the consequences are the same. The child may have already abandoned some values, but has nothing to open up for, may live the usual way of life, but it will be empty. The child will thus fail to grow into a real personality.

Intellectual, moral and spiritual maturity does not always align with emotional maturity, with the ability to perceive. Deep down, children may expect something, vaguely suspect something, but on the surface, where everyday life takes place, they are attending to past values. They are afraid to leave the

⁴ On the analysis of the educative act in the light of the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas (secundum rectam rationem); Vivoda 2019, 74-86.

past, which gave a calm certainty, and to open themselves to the unknown new. The past requires no effort; it is familiar to them because it has become like their second nature, but this no longer suits their real nature. Encouraging them to question their satisfaction with the status quo can help them recognize the need for new values (de Finance 2003, 258). Attachment to the previous stage can hinder or even stop the experience of the new one. *Kairos* occurs, the new stage is ready, but the old one prevents it. What follows is the feeling of inadequacy, of emptiness. This state can be used as an opportunity for educators to guide children towards a new value that brings a renewed sense of purpose. Sometimes, only after embracing new values can previous ones be properly reassessed.⁵

Transition from a value to higher values is rarely smooth. It involves leaving behind familiar comforts, which can be painful and require sacrifice. For example, an enthusiastic cyclist who has devoted years to training, competing, and centring his life around cycling, may find it difficult to step away from this sporting world. Whatever replaces it must hold significant value. The timing of such a decision is deeply personal, depending on one's inner maturity and sensitivity to higher values, as well as the new value that presents itself to the young person. This decision is a pivotal moment in one's life. It is important not to dwell on the lower values, but to progress towards the higher ones, particularly to the moral value, as it most fully expresses the subject's essence – his free action and, through action, his free being, his "I."

4. BLINDNESS AND DEAFNESS TO VALUES

A person realises himself when he implements values, especially the moral value. However, there are instances where an individual may be unable to perceive certain kinds of values (e.g., being unable to understand how it is possible to love art) or may be incapable of a certain way of realizing a particular value. De Finance speaks of a blindness to values (de Finance 2003, 261-280).⁶ This topic has also been

⁵ Global trends in values education and their connection to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are explored in Mlynarčík 2014, 155-160.

⁶ The themes of blindness and deafness, alongside the *kairos* of values, are original contributions of de Finance. He first mentioned the *kairos* of values in *Essai sur l'Agir humain*, and likely developed the idea further around 1980 in an article published in *Personne et valeur*. The theme of blindness and deafness appeared in the Argentine journal *Ethos*, Buenos Aires, 1980, pp. 51-66, and was subsequently incorporated into *Personne et valeur*, along with 11 other articles published in various journals. There is no other mention of blindness and deafness in relation to values elsewhere.

addressed by scholars such as R. Mehl or D. von Hildebrand. It is incorrect to speak of blindness to values in general because if that were the case, a person would be unable to desire at all, would have nothing to desire; one would have to be indifferent to all values – such a scenario is impossible. One can be blind to specific values, a certain level of values, or particular realizations of values. Blindness is not to be confused with ignorance of what constitutes values (de Finance 2003, 263); once ignorance of a value is removed, one can perceive it. He has not seen the value because he did not know about it, but if he knows about the value, he can already see it. The real axiological blindness is not about the basis or conditions of value, but about the value itself. A person with normal hearing can, e.g., know the laws of acoustics, the works of the great musical masters, even teach them competently, yet be unable to enjoy a composition by Mozart. He knows the value in theory but cannot truly perceive it. Blindness is related to perception. It cannot be “seen,” understood how it is possible to value, agree, honour, cherish, love, or desire a particular quality or action.

Blindness to values can stem from insensitivity to values,⁷ which may be pathological, innate, or caused by the influence of environment, upbringing, life circumstances, or social pressure, etc. This, in turn, suppresses the affects that are necessary for the perception of other values (e.g., the emphasis placed on sexuality prevents the perception of the values of purity, self-control). Although blindness seems linked to the problem of value perception, according to de Finance, perception also involves an affective element and the lack of it causes blindness. A value judgment is not merely a description or a statement, but it also involves a desire or some other emotion. For example, the judgment “this is a great car” means different things to a racer who values speed, and a family man, who values safety, space, low fuel consumption.

Blindness to values cannot be eliminated or cured, but it can only be “corrected” in two ways. First, one can point out analogical values: someone who cannot perceive the beauty of music but appreciates the beauty of colours, can be shown the beauty of a picture; it will be pointed out that what he experiences in visual art, others experience in music. The second way of correcting blindness is to

⁷ Just as intelligence – a spiritual faculty – needs the brain as an organ in order to express itself, and its capacity depends on how much intelligence it allows to permeate itself, so, by analogy, spiritual affectivity can normally develop where sensory affectivity allows it to express itself (de Finance 2003, 269).

point to more general values: for those unable to perceive aesthetics, describing the emotional impact of music – its calming effect, its conveyance of feelings, the way it makes time feel non-existent – might help. Moreover, not all errors of moral judgement imply depravity or disorder. Sometimes the issue is that one's conscience remains partly infantile and has not placed this person's entire existence under the jurisdiction of reason (de Finance 2003, 270). Reason helps in perceiving values in the correct order. Moreover, moral and spiritual progress causes some values, once considered important, to lose their significance at a certain stage of spiritual growth. A person may look back and wonder how particular values could once excite him.

De Finance's original contribution lies in the exploration of deafness to values. Deafness differs from blindness in that one does perceive a value, can even talk about it with enthusiasm, but it does not inspire him to action (de Finance 2003, 265). They recognize it as a value that is valid "in itself," since "reason dictates" that selflessness and love for God and neighbour are right, but they do not regard it as "their own" value; it does not concern their being.

Another form of deafness occurs when a value does not apply to the person in question, it does not exist for him, even though he feels its call, but he acts as if he does not, he refuses to respond to it. This is a willed, pretended deafness. It is the deafness of one who "is deaf" to the plea of an unfortunate or needy person and chooses not to help that person.

How does de Finance perceive the difference between blindness and deafness? The value judgment is influenced internally, by passions and sensory sensitivity, which also affect spiritual sensitivity, as well as externally, by upbringing, environment, mass media or social pressure. Spiritual sensitivity plays a crucial role in value judgment.⁸ Human intelligence is not like a camera that merely records a given condition, but it is dynamic and can guide a person toward greater perfection, helping him to "be more." Therefore, in addition to general values, there are values related to one's personal "I".

To "hear" a value, one must not only perceive it but perceive it as relevant to oneself *here and now*, as freely acting. This happens when a person perceives the object in question not only as a *good*, but

⁸ If the insensitivity of the masses is juxtaposed with the sensitivity of the individual, the community can no longer be enriched with values. It is not that culture is dead, but it is the souls that need to be given life (Uram 2011, 19-25).

also as *conveniens*. If it is presented to the will only as a *good*, it does not cause the movement of will (since it is *conveniens in universali*, not here and now for the subject). The object must appear to the subject as *here and now* worthy of desire (*desiderabile*) (de Finance 2003, 273). In a way, the affective element connects the value with the person's core, the "I," the site of free decision. Indeed, the perception of general values is more peripheral, because the knowledge of value, despite being supported by desire or liking, remains outside the centre of the person. In other words, they concern the "I" as an individual, and not the "I" as a person (de Finance 2003, 271). If a person judges value as *conveniens*, he finds in it that which perfects him, in what he realizes himself, his being. Value awaits precisely this free decision.

Of course, the call to value takes different forms according to the kind of value at stake. Biological values of a hungry man may seem to be the most important here and now. Sometimes the very existence, that is threatened by their lack, depends on them. However, the moral value has a unique calling that resonates in the personal self and concerns the meaning of existence itself. This value corresponds to what is incommunicable and irreplaceable in the subject, meaningful only to him and his actual situation. It concerns life in relation to open reason, that is, value in relation with the norm of all values.

The issue of deafness to values is growing. For a call to be effective, it must be conscious and perceived. However, too many interests, different prejudices or subjective opinions can limit or even completely prevent one from being able to hear the call, leading to a complete stunting of the moral sense. Then not only does he not hear the call of higher values, but he cannot even perceive them, which may result in a moral blindness of not even seeing them. According to Z. Bauman and L. Donskis, this is currently an increasingly common phenomenon (Bauman and Donskis 2023). These authors understand moral blindness even more radically: as the inability to distinguish between good and evil.

De Finance considers deafness more delicate in the area of personal values and vocation, because in addition to not perceiving a value and thus not hearing it, there can also be situations in which one hears the value, or at least suspects it to some extent, but is unable to make a choice about it. This occurs in both consecrated and secular vocations, such as a military, artistic, or political vocation. Sometimes, one has a certain inner experience which, though vaguely perceived, smoulders somewhere beneath the surface, but escapes clear consciousness. An inner experience might vaguely indicate a vocation that

gives meaning to one's existence, but anticipated difficulties can discourage action. A true calling only occurs when the value resonates with the subject. Then the value will move him to the depths and allow him to step out. It is essential to avoid anything that "tunes out" the moral value, or positively: strive to "tune in" to its wavelength to act on it and fully realize one's existence.

It is possible to know different values but not be equally sensitive to their call. Moral excellence does not preclude; rather, on the contrary, it needs the call of values to support it. However, not all are needed equally and simultaneously. Therefore, some calls of values must be considered secondary, non-essential. It is even necessary to be consciously deaf to the call of some values, that contradict his personal vocation of moral improvement. Unlike axiological blindness, which is never beneficial, a certain deafness to values, understood as selective attention to specific values, can be commendable and necessary (de Finance 2003, 208).

CONCLUSION

Openness to the Absolute is inherent to human nature, to which one remains true only if he opens himself to Totality, or more specifically, to truth and goodness. Closing oneself off in falsehood and egoism denies one's humanity. The Totality discussed here encompasses not just the physical world or the aggregate of entities, but the Totality of being according to its various ontological dimensions. It is the Totality of truth and value. It is the horizon of objectivity but also of subjectivity. It is the horizon and Ideal of our spiritual activity: speculative and practical. Finally, it is the horizon and Ideal of our freedom in its moral action: the horizon of good will, the Ideal we discover in right action. This Totality grounds all values and is the source from which man draws his own value. In religious terms, we can say that human nature bears the image of God, man is created in the image of God. This study avoids such statements, as de Finance did, to prevent the notion that only a believer in God can act morally while agnostics remain outside the moral order. For the same reason, religious value, which also corresponds to the dynamics of human living, was not the focus. It also applies to it that man, essentially open to the Absolute, best realizes his existence when he realizes his relationship with God. Just as the existence of the world is fully understood and comprehended when its author, God the Creator, is known, so the spiritual subject receives his dignity and value from God, who is the most personal subject. Man receives

this “equipment” with existence. It makes him aware of his “I” and enables him to make free and moral choices, thus developing what is most appropriate for him. The realization of the moral value gives meaning to his existence. However, it is not right for a person to become attached to moral and religious value to the point of overlooking the lower values. Even the lower values have their place and importance in human life. It is the correct use of reason, which is open to the Absolute, that will make it possible to attend to them adequately. In this way, de Finance’s attitude appears to be balanced, for no level of human existence is either overlooked or overestimated. If man develops in this way, he will find happiness, he will find the meaning of existence. At the same time, in his approach, we also find the answer to the question of why many people today are unhappy, or at least not happy. Whoever concentrates only on the search for values inherent in only one plane of his nature, a certain “deformation” occurs, man does not develop integrally. Although it is never too late to open oneself to all levels of values, in the life of the child and young person, educators who, in due course, can and should lead him or her to other values, play a crucial role.

However, it may happen that one is blind or deaf to some values. Usually, the lowest infra-human values are not a problem because natural tendencies are very strong and very quick to announce if something is wrong. When it comes to human infra-moral values, we have seen that blindness can be corrected in some way by pointing to other, similar values. However, there is a serious problem if one is blind or deaf to the moral value, as it endangers self-realization and the meaning of existence. Frustration, dissatisfaction, loss of meaning in life, emptiness follow. Blindness and deafness to values can be corrected by pointing to analogous values helping individuals tune in to the moral value and thus hear it. To hear the value is also to realize it and thus to realize oneself.

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