

The Concept of the Person as “Subject” and “Place” of Morality According to Paul Ricoeur*

Introduction

The general character of morality, at least as it is in Paul Ricoeur’s reflection, places particular emphasis on an approach that could be expressed in the notion of an *acting person*¹. What deserves special attention is, first of all, the experience of the *person as a person*, or more specifically, the reflection *on the person as an experienced person*. This leads to the need to consider the phenomenon of a person on two levels: *structure and mystery*². The latter could not be explained without emphasising the intentional character of human consciousness.

The need to describe the structure of the person, and even more so the level of his mystery, however, leads Ricoeur’s reflection to a specific “stage of humility”³ in which it is no longer so much a matter of giving exhaustive answers

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¹ It should be noted that Ricoeur does not distinguish too strongly between person and morality. For morality is not talked about in any other way than in the context of an active person, while a person considered in a phenomenological key can only remain at the level of intentionality, since any project without implementation is of little importance to Ricoeur. In this context, it is important for morality not only to desire (*je veux*) but also to be able to realise this desire (*je peux*).

² It is worth mentioning that for Ricoeur structure always means a method and never a sufficient philosophical concept. The second of the mentioned levels of reflection on the person, the level of mystery, is a manifestation of the conceptual heritage taken from G. Marcel, who undoubtedly influenced Ricoeur’s reflection. It is therefore a question of a certain identification of a person. In the first sense of the word, to identify is to define something in order to be able to communicate this “something,” “to someone.” Therefore, before an attempt is made to identify the subject itself, one should first identify “something” of the subject, and this “something” is experience – cf. P. Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris 1990, 39 (further cited as SA).

³ This “stage of humility” concerns nothing more than reflection itself but also the subjective claims of the human person. In Ricoeur this was expressed by the following way: *Cogito exalté – Cogito humilié – Cogito blessé*.

(this, especially at the level of mystery, is impossible) but rather of signalling the need to tell the story of oneself, the narrative. Such a story, however, would not be fully communicable, and what is worse, it would remain entirely subjective if it had not been inscribed in the hermeneutical circle of *explanation-understanding*. This in turn gives rise to a new way of expressing the person through his or her *de-* and *re-*composition⁴. In this system, the former is a description of what can be called experience or something experienced, while the latter means not so much a return to what is primordial as a first and fundamental admiration of the human being but rather a re-reading of experience based on negation understood as exceeding what is currently experienced.

However, such an understanding forces us to ask ourselves what makes a person remain the same person despite his or her dynamic and thus changing character? Only in this context can we speak of the personal character of morality. The aim of this article is therefore to show the person as an experienced person, and at the same time as a “place” of *par excellence* of moral experience. It is a kind of *empowerment of subject*. The subject understood in this way shows a double dynamism: an inner one expressed in the dialectic of identity that takes place around two key concepts: *idem*, as what is present, given to the subject and *ipse*, as what is to be created in a dynamic confrontation of the various phases of one’s own experience; and external, appearing in the temporal relationship that constitutes the person – exceeding the current experience based on the future rooted in the conviction of the positive character of the primordial state of human existence. Such a vision of the person is important for morality because it gives not only an opportunity to reconstruct the identity of the person in a changing spectrum of experience, but also, in a sense, to reconstitute the person.

Person as a “Subject” of Moral Life

In such a formulation, the aim is to show the person as a subject, and his/her actions as a subjective act. In other words, it is important to highlight what is indicative of the person and what is at the same time perceived by that person. The first thing that appears to a person is the experience of something, or more precisely something through oneself: the experience of *oneself in something*⁵.

⁴ Narrowing the reflection to two stages is a specific reflection of Ricoeur’s triple mimetic function: *pre-configuration – configuration – refiguration*.

⁵ The closest intimacy of a subject is its nature. It is a person who in the first place is this “something” of “someone” – cf. P. Ricoeur, *Filozofia osoby*, Kraków 1992, 34. The need for

It is the person, as the subject of moral life, who, on the one hand is able to overthrow all temptation to absolutize human autonomy, and on the other hand, it is only in this person that the process of restitution of the new subjectivity can take place⁶. However, in what exactly does the subjective character of the person manifest itself? The answer to this question will be sought first by considering the circumstances of the person and then, on the basis of the conclusions drawn, his/her new subjectivity.

Experienced Conditions of a Person: Limitation and Evil

In the initial phase of Ricoeur's work which outlined the foundations of *Philosophy of the Will* it became obvious that the ontological structure of human existence was influenced by two important factors: *guilt* and *transcendence*. What is more, it is the experience of guilt, and not the experience of the primordial affirmation of being that becomes the starting point of the morality that a being creates. It is possible because the experience of guilt is accompanied by the conviction that it does not destroy the fundamental structures of existence. What is more, the tension between guilt and constant transgression makes the first moral decision to free oneself⁷.

experience stressed by Ricoeur is confirmed by the Christian Revelation itself. For it presupposes in a believer a certain knowledge and experience. It can even be said that if experience had been one of the possible planes of interpersonal communication, then there would have been no access to the knowledge of the mystery of Jesus Christ and his incarnation – cf. L. Ladaria, *Wprowadzenie do antropologii teologicznej*, Kraków 1997, 12. In this experience, a person as a subject has a special character because it cannot be lost from the field of vision even for a certain universalisation necessary in the process of creating concepts. It is a reversal of orders from the identification of a person considered in the perspective of specification or classification in favour of their individualisation – cf. SA, 39f. Ricoeur took this inversion from P. Strawson, *Individual. An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, London 1959. In chapter III of his book he shows that the concept of a person is primordial in relation to other concepts.

⁶ Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Le conflit des interprétations. Essais sur l'herméneutique I*, Paris 1969, 222f (further cited as CI). It is in this spirit that Ricoeur will be able to express himself about man as a speaker, actor, narrator of his own history and finally as a responsible man – cf. idem, *Lectures 2. La contrée des philosophes*, Paris 1992, 204 (further cited as L 2).

⁷ Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Philosophie de la volonté, 1. Le Volontaire et l'involontaire*, Paris 1950, 1988, 7.30.180-186 (further cited as VI). Indirectly, a similar juxtaposition of "guilt – transcendence" can be seen in the presentation of the current state of the world and man as expressed by the Second Vatican Council – cf. GS 1.

The basic experience of a person is therefore the experience of evil. Regardless of the starting point of a person's social or economic status, he or she starts his or her existence from the experience of a certain limitation, the first point of which is tragically experienced and compensated dissatisfaction, failure to fulfilment. However, what makes talking about evil and limitations meaningful is the fact that man does not agree with evil⁸. Therefore, before an acceptable concept of a person is drawn up, it is necessary to reconstruct the states that he or she originally experienced and indicate the *places* where they were crossed.

Who is a man? This question of *Psalm 8* returns especially when a person experiences states of non-fulfilment with which he does not want and cannot accept. It is in this context that evil becomes a dynamic factor in the moral life of man. On the one hand, man experiences barriers, on the other hand, the mysteriousness of human nature looks for constant *relations to...* Life is thus subject to constant contestation and affirmation, originating in the imagination⁹. However, this is not the end of the problem of human experience. It is true that the possibility of moral evil is enshrined in the constitution of human existence (the idea of the Enlightenment even proposed to liberate man by Reason while remaining only on the human plane). But can evil be finally explained by reducing it only to the idea of limitations?¹⁰

What Ricoeur finds particularly difficult, if not impossible to explain on the basis of traditional theodicy, is the fact that there are three statements: *God is Almighty, God is Absolute Good, but evil still exists*¹¹. In order to explain the above contradiction, one needs a more developed thought which Ricoeur calls

⁸ What seems to be a phenomenon in the reflection on man is not so much the existence of evil, but rather the question of where the evil comes from and why me? H. Seweryniak discusses this problem in more detail – cf. idem, *Korzenie zła: Wyzwanie Paula Ricoeura*, ChS 20(1988)6, 87-101.

⁹ Tout devient. [...] Ce qui est, c'est seulement ce qui devient. *In this way, the temporal order is not the only order in which the human subject can be considered. It seems that this order is outlined by Ricoeur's eidetic order – cf. VI, 402. It is he who is the first object of imagination – "Imagination de l'innocence n'est pas autre chose que la représentation d'une vie humaine qui réaliserait ses possibilités fondamentales sans aucun écartes entre sa destination originaire et sa manifestation historique" – P. Ricoeur, Philosophie de la volonté II. Finitude et Culpabilité. I. L'Homme faillible, Paris 1960, 1988, 161 (further cited as HF).*

¹⁰ Cf. HF, 149. Reflections on something "external" to man can be found in the article by J. Marion, *Zło we własnej osobie*, in: *Zło w świecie*, Kol. ComP 7, Poznań 1992, 84-98.

¹¹ P. Ricoeur, *Le mal: un défi à la philosophie et à la théologie*, in: *Lectures 3. Aux frontières de la philosophie*, Paris 1994, 211-233, cited from p. 211 (further cited as L 3). This text was originally published in Geneva in 1986. E. Burska's Polish translation was published under the title *Zło. Wyzwanie rzucone filozofii i teologii*, Warsaw 1992.

onto-theology. The starting point for such an in-depth reflection is the distinction between evil experienced at very different levels: sin, suffering and death¹². When evil is portrayed on the symbolic plane, it can be considered either as a result of sin and the punishment due for it, or, in Augustinian terms, as a deficiency in existence. However, the problem becomes more complicated when one goes from the plane of the symbolism of evil to its specific form, such as for example suffering. Then a new relationship is born: the evil committed (*mal commis*) and the evil suffered (*mal souffert*) which in the case of the committed evil and the punishment accepted for it can focus on the same subject. Then man becomes simultaneously acting (in the committed evil) and experiencing (in the accepted punishment). It is only in this sense that evil allows us to consider it not only as a symbolic or metaphysical evil but also as a moral evil¹³.

However, experienced evil does not exhaust the problems of evil in general. In the above-mentioned planes it can be better described. On the other hand, the problem of the specific unity of the human condition which can be expressed by the term *mystery of iniquity* is still recurring. This in turn shows that evil can be experienced on an individual level, while the explanation can only be found on a wider plane which can be the plane of spirit or being. This, however, forces us to return to the analysis of the planes of expression about evil. Thus, before attempting to describe the ways of transcending the evil one experiences, one should fully reconstruct the ontological state of the human

¹² P. Ricoeur, *Le Mal*, *op. cit.*, 212. *The problem posed by Ricoeur in the Symbolism of Evil remains to be solved, namely, how is it possible to move from the evil possible to the real?* – cf. P. Ricoeur, *Philosophie de la Volonté II. Finitude et culpabilité. 2: La Symbolique du Mal*, 167 (further cited as SM). *It seems that the answer is human nature, or more precisely human imperfection. M. Philibert comments on this as follows: "A 'Imperfect man' is an attempt to rethink in the most precise way the mystery of the not-free will – the free will which is connected and discovers that it has always been connected..."* – M. Philibert, *Paul Ricoeur czyli wolność na miarę nadziei. Szkic o twórczości i wybór tekstów*, Warsaw 1976, 65. *Ricoeur himself calls frailty a "constitutive weakness." This is expressed in the following words: "Quel est [...] le dieu) humain du mal, son point d'insertion dans la réalité humaine? C'est pour répondre à cette question qu'a été écrite l'esquisse d'anthropologie philosophique placée en tête de l'ouvrage: cette étude est centrée sur le thème de la faillibilité, c'est-à-dire de la faiblesse constitutionnelle qui fait que le mal est possible"* – P. Ricoeur, *Introduction to Philosophie de la volonté II, II*.

¹³ *What makes evil moral evil is imputation, accusation and condemnation.* "Imputation is the attribution to the subject of an act that is subject to moral evaluation. Accusation is characterised by the act itself as a violation of the ethical code that applies in the community. Condemnation means a conviction under which the perpetrator of an act is found guilty and deserves punishment. At this point the moral evil is imposed on suffering, as punishment is inflicted suffering" – SM, 212-213.

condition, i.e. to specify more precisely what human imperfection¹⁴ is, without forgetting, however, that the problem of evil will always remain a scandal for speculation and a constant task for faith¹⁵.

The question can be asked: what place is occupied in Ricoeur's anthropology by the model of human imperfection? Two types of reflection can provide answers to this question: *phenomenological* and *existential*. The first one shows a wonderful, although unreal (in the sense: not experienced) eidetic description of the human will. The second one shows the enslaved and confined will. The intermediate link is an *imperfect person* who is at the same time a synthesis and mediation of what is ideal and what is experienced¹⁶.

It seems difficult to transgress evil at the philosophical level. It can only show the weakness and limited role of philosophical anthropology. He may indicate a person as the "place" of surrendering to and transgressing evil. But what is the person itself? What is the value of considering the ontological roots? It seems that such questions can be answered by first showing that the task of philosophical reflection is not to explain the experienced evil but rather to give it sense. This in turn means not so much demonstrating the rationality of evil but rather showing that giving meaning would mean not-recognising the irrationality of evil¹⁷.

In this context, it is important to recall the plan that Ricoeur drew up in order to reflect on human imperfection. It is a faithful reflection of the one

¹⁴ Cf. SM, 213f; L 2, 237f. Consideration of the problem of human imperfection is by no means the answer to the question of where evil comes from but rather a fuller presentation of the human place of evil, the possibility of its existence – cf. K. Świątek, *Ricoeurowska antropologia ułomności*, SF (1987)10, 150.

¹⁵ Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Le scandale du mal*, "Esprit" 46(1978)7-8, 57-63. The motive for Ricoeur's speech was the debate between him and B. Dupuy, E. Lévinas, E. de Fontenay and J. Halperin on the *Scandal of Evil*.

¹⁶ A good commentary on the Philosophy of the Will cycle can be found in article of E. Mukoid, Ricoeur Paul, *Philosophie de la volonté*. I: Le volontaire et l'involontaire, II: 1: L'Homme faillible, 2. La Symbolique du mal, in: *Przewodnik po literaturze filozoficznej XX wieku*, B. Skarga (ed.), vol. 5, Warsaw 1997, 352-363.

¹⁷ Ricoeur, in justifying the problem of imperfection, puts forward two hypotheses: the first is to show that the problem of imperfection can be reached not only through the analysis of myth or symbol, but also through experience. The second shows that the first point of human experience is the experience of disproportion in itself – cf. HF, 2lf. Explaining evil, however, will have the character of a scientific explanation (involving the principle of noncontradiction), but will be limited to proving that evil, although inexplicable, does not necessarily mean that it is irrational. It is rather "rational in other way" – cf. V. Melchior, *Mysterium iniquitatis*, Kol. ComP 9, Poznań 1992, 225-235.

which set the direction for the analysis of the first volume of *Filozofia woli* (*Philosophy of Will*), and expressed in the three-part perspective of *decision-making, action, and consent*¹⁸. A similar three-part diagram is also presented in the *Imperfect Man*. It concerns *cognition, action, and feeling*, accompanied by a triple synthesis: *transcendental, practical, and affective*. Each of the planes mentioned above is subject to internal logic: *infinity of meaning, finite perspective, and emerging disproportions*. However, the pathos of human misery and imperfection is overcome by the transcendental method which by directing it towards an object allows the problem of imperfection to be introduced on philosophical grounds and thus makes the reflection more objective, or, as Ricoeur wants – *objectal*, since it is not only about cognition in the objective sense but also a way of being of things¹⁹.

So how to express the idea of imperfection? Above all, by emphasising the fact that it is a demonstration of the mediation character of human existence. It is the suspension of man *between God and non-existence*¹⁰. This human imperfection makes moral evil possible by following a pattern from the occasion (concrete) to the beginning (*origine*), from the beginning to the possibility^{20,21}. It has already been said that the pathos of human misery can be overcome through triple synthesis. It is therefore necessary to show the characteristic features of each of them.

The first operates within human cognition and can be called a synthesis of transcendental imagination. It is based on something between the infinity of meaning and the finiteness of perspective. The effect of this synthesis is the objectivity of things, and the intentional unity of the object of cognition²². The

¹⁸ In the first stage, Ricoeur presents the decision, considering its intentional nature as expressed in the project (cf. VI, 41-53). The project, however, as previously signalled, acquires importance only at the moment of implementation. This requires the involvement of the subject itself, since to decide is not only the *décider*, but above all the *se décider* (cf. VI, 54-64). Finally, decision-making is nothing more than a pure description of the subject's reaction to the project but it also refers to the psychological side – the motive, and the ethical side – the value (cf. 64-81). The second stage of reflection is action. It is characterised by a tension which could be most simply expressed in a statement: *Je peux – je veux* (cf. VI, 187-318). Finally, the third stage of consent reflects the dialogue between necessity, objection and consent (cf. VI, 319f).

¹⁹ In the analysis of the *Imperfect Man* it is worth paying particular attention to the description of the pathos of poverty and an attempt to exceed it in the transcendental method. Cf. also K. Świątek, art. cit., 151-152, and E. Mukoid, op. cit., 357.

²⁰ Cf. HF, 149.

²¹ Ibid., 157.

²² "Ce qui était mélangé et remis pour la compréhension pathétique de l'homme s'appelle maintenant «synthèse» dans l'objet et le problème de l'intermédiaire devient celui du «troisième

second (practical) synthesis also takes place between infinity and finiteness. In this case, however, infinity does not concern the notion of meaning, but happiness as the horizon of human actions. At its other end is the finite perspective of human character. Everything is linked by respect for the person as a constitutive element of the person²³. Finally, the third synthesis concerns feelings. Ricoeur starts with Platonic understanding of the term “heart,” which is a place where feelings and anxiety dwells at the same time. Inscribing this plane into the perspective of the finite and infinite one can say that on one side there is real and complete happiness, and on the other side there is individual pleasure. It is this feeling that combines pleasure and happiness, and just as the reason is an openness to the cognitive whole, so the feeling will become an openness to the whole perspective of happiness. In other words, feeling reveals the identity of thinking and feeling, thus personalising reason²⁴.

The imperfection in its clear description, however, does not explain the existence of real evil. It is at most a constitutional possibility of its existence. It explains the existence of evil at the level of *opportunity*, *origin* and man’s *ability* to do evil. As an “opportunity” it is a peculiar place of the least resistance of man to evil. As “origin” it is a reminder of the constitution of human existence. It is its constitutional ability for evil to emerge that makes evil real. Finally, as an “ability” to do evil, there is an imperfection as a condition for the becoming real of what is brought about by the dynamics of evil to which man succumbs²⁵. In this way, starting from a clear description of the defect, Ricoeur leads to the

terme» que Kant a appelé «imagination transcendentale» et qui atteint réjlexivement sur l’objet” — HF, 25; cf. also *M. Philibert*, Paul Ricoeur, *op. cit.*, 67; *E. Mukoid*, *cit. art.*, 359.

²³ *The human person experiences, on the one hand, the infinite nature of the desire for happiness and, on the other hand, the finiteness of character. The mediation element between these states is respect: “Tous les aspects de finitude «pratique» que l’on peut comprendre à partir de la notion transcendentale de perspective peuvent se résumer dans la notion du caractère. Tous les aspects d’infinitude (pratique) que l’on peut comprendre à partir de la notion transcendentale de sens peuvent se résumer dans la notion de bonheur. La médiation (pratique) qui prolonge celle de l’imagination transcendentale projetée dans l’objet, c’est la constitution de la personne dans le respect. C’est à montrer la fragilité de cette médiation pratique du respect dont la personne est vis-à-vis cette nouvelle analyse” — HF, 67; see comments to the text — *M. Philibert*, Paul Ricoeur, *op. cit.*, 68; *E. Mukoid*, *op. cit.*, 359-360.*

²⁴ *The second way of mediation in order to keep one’s identity in a divided being is feeling: “D’un côté c’est la raison, en tant qu’ouverture sur la totalité qui engendre le sentiment, en tant qu’ouverture sur le bonheur. En retour c’est le sentiment qui intériorise la raison; il me révèle que la raison est ma raison, car par lui je m’approprie la raison. [...] Brevé, le sentiment révèle l’identité de l’existence et de la raison, il personnalise la raison” — HF, 118.*

²⁵ *HF*, 157-162; cf. also *E. Mukoid*, *cit. art.*, 360-361.

possibility of real evil, and thus possible evil because man becomes not only the "place" of evil but also responsible for its appearance²⁶.

Guilt as an Expression of Responsibility for Evil

It is not the mere fact of committing evil but its awareness and acceptance of responsibility for it creates a sense of guilt in a person. Not without significance is its semantic analysis²⁷. The language of confession is more objective than experience because by feeling the situation and imagination one assimilates the motivations and intentions of the confessing consciousness. This assimilation is not a "feeling," it is rather "experiencing" in a neutral way, as Ricoeur says, in a way of "as if," it means as if the researcher were in the confessing consciousness. Imagination, however, does not find better material for analysis than symbolic language²⁸. This is what led Ricoeur to adopt a kind of "way back," to primary and secondary symbols²⁹.

The way to reach the essence of guilt is therefore the language of confession. However, guilt does not exhaust the whole range of confession. For confession also includes blame and sin. Blame, on the other hand, is rather a certain subjective feeling. It presupposes personal recognition of the evil

²⁶ In this respect, the confrontation of the two texts of *Człowiek ułomny*, from p. 9, and pp. 157-162 may be interesting; cf. also P. Collin, *L'héritage de Jean Nabert*, "Esprit" 56(1988)7-8, 122.

²⁷ Ricoeur realises that the simplest model that comes to mind when reflecting on guilt is the model of sin, especially original sin. However, he believes that what is most rationalised must be used to explain the problem. I therefore propose a starting point from what is at the opposite end, much more subjective and internal, namely the analysis of the language of confession that the sinner makes – the following text by P. Ricoeur is an inspiration and the subject of direct commentary in this part of the work: *Culpabilité, éthique et religion, Le Conflit des interprétations. Essais sur l'herméneutique, I*, Paris 1969, 416-430 (further cited as *CI*). Polish text *Wina, etyka i religia*, *ConcP* (1970)6-10, 10-22.

²⁸ Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Culpabilité, éthique et religion*, art. cit., 416-417. The first feeling associated with the experience of guilt is, on the one hand, the casual character of the opportunity that made evil possible, and on the other hand, the experience of disproportion in man forces him to look for a way to reintegrate himself – cf. E. Doucy, *Culpabilité*, in: *Dictionnaire d'éthique et de théologie morale*, M. Canto-Sperber (ed.), Paris 1996, 343.

²⁹ See the part of *Symbolika zła* dedicated to the meaning of the symbol – *SM*, 167-306; cf. also E. Mukoid, art. cit., 362. Symbols and myths as ways to transcend evil deserve a broader elaboration. However, the volume of the article forces us to make certain abbreviations of thought which in this part of the reflection should not obscure the understanding of the whole problem.

committed and is readiness to accept punishment for it. It is an assumption of responsibility, in the sense of recognising not only the specific act committed but also the consequences of that act. Ricoeur reflects this subjective character of guilt by metaphorically evoking two images: *weight* and *tribunal*³⁰. This has two consequences: on the one hand, to preserve the difference between sin and guilt, and on the other hand, to distinguish clearly between guilt and meticulous awareness. Semantics, therefore, confronts the researcher with two conclusions: first, guilt is not as broad in scope as the language of confession – but it is subjunctivisation and interiorization of the experience of evil; second, guilt left only on the semantic plane leads to scrupulousness, which Ricoeur defines with a strong word – pathology³¹.

It is therefore necessary to place guilt in contexts other than semantic ones. Ricoeur proposes two: *ethical* and *religious*. These orders are particularly necessary, since a person who experiences a constant imbalance as a model of his imperfection commits a fundamental sin consisting in losing his vocation to unity and becoming entangled in multiplicity. This does not mean, however, that all the evil that exists comes from man. However, it is a warning that all evil that exists “can be” for man³².

Ethically, Ricoeur links guilt to two categories: freedom and duty. In such a context, the acceptance of freedom means at the same time recognising oneself as a source of evil. This leads to specific definitions of both evil and freedom. Evil is evil because it is the work of freedom. Freedom is freedom because it permits evil. This in turn leads to the definition of a relationship between freedom and evil. For if it is freedom that makes evil real, that is to say committed,

³⁰ Cf. SM, 256f. *The singularity of the metaphor of the internal tribunal as “internalised objectivity” Ricoeur is expressing as follows: “Le tribunal est une institution de la cité; transposé métaphoriquement dans le for intérieur il devient ce que nous appelons la “conscience morale”; la culpabilité est alors une manière de se tenir devant une sorte de tribunal invisible qui mesure l’offense, prononce la condamnation et inflige la punition; au point extrême d’intériorisation, la conscience morale est un regard qui surveille, juge et condamne; le sentiment de culpabilité est la conscience d’être inculpé et incriminé par ce tribunal intérieur; finalement elle se confond avec l’anticipation de la punition; en bref, la culpabilité, en latin culpa, est l’auto-observation, l’auto-accusation et l’auto-condamnation par une conscience dédoublée”* — CI, 419-420.

³¹ For sin is an objective state – one can talk about committing or not committing evil. Guilt, on the other hand, assumes a certain gradation. This means that a person may be fundamentally a sinner, but more or less guilty. On the other hand, meticulous consciousness is the juridical overemphasis on the state of sinfulness, which leads to legalism. The text of St. Paul (Rom. 7) is a good commentary to this – cf. CI, 420f; cf. also SM, 258f. On the subject of meticulous consciousness see also E. Mukoid, *Filozofia zła*, op. cit., 238 and E. Doucy, *Culpabilité*, art. cit., 343.

³² Cf. F. Ferreira, *Zło a odpowiedzialność moralna*, Comp 10(1990)3, 80.

then it is a proof of the existence of freedom. In this context, Ricoeur raises the important question of what makes an entity guilty and therefore responsible for a specific act? And he replies that what determines the attribution of responsibility by a subject is the fact that the subject considers itself to be an existence that "could" do otherwise³³.

This "could" is a very important emphasis as from it can be deduced the character of the obligation expressed in the statement: "You can, therefore, you must." But does this exhaust all the ethical issues of evil and guilt? It seems not. Without going into the details of Kantian analysis, it is enough to say, as Ricoeur, that the guilt in ethics is reduced to a double limitation: knowledge of the beginning and the possibility as the incapability of freedom. "You can, therefore, you must" means that evil is what on the one hand man could not have done, and on the other hand it is what appears to be a previous slavery, and it is this that makes man commit evil. What is needed, therefore, is a different perspective from the ethical one, one that would allow us to return to the beginning and, at the same time, give hope³⁴.

The religious language in which the problem of guilt can be considered is above all the language of hope and eschatology. The freedom considered at this level would also be a "desire for the possible." And it becomes possible through the Resurrection which shows concretely the things overcome by Christ. Also the problem of the consequences for evil which are an element of guilt stands in a different light. That is why, in the perspective of the Resurrection if there is still talk of punishment it is more in the sense of a remembrance and not a court act. And Paul's categories "despite" and "how much more." (cf. Rom 5) make the religious question no longer primarily a question about the source

³³ However, such a statement may be made only after the act has been committed. Then, from the perspective, a person can say about oneself "I could have acted differently." Here come out well known in morality kinds of consciences: pre- and post-action consciences. For by acknowledging himself guilty, man confirms that he is the one who will bear responsibility, and earlier, it is in the present that he takes responsibility for the act which he has committed before – cf. *CI*, 423f. At this stage, a certain deficiency can already be observed. Man makes oneself responsible "towards" the conscience as a witness, recognises the consequences of the act. On the other hand, one feels in such reasoning a certain deficiency of reference to objective truth – cf., for example, *CCC* 1777. This is the key to freedom "towards" ... truth, other freedoms, values; the combination of freedom and responsibility can be properly set – cf. A. Molinaro, *Twórczość i odpowiedzialność sumienia*, in: *Perspektywy i problemy teologii moralnej*, Warsaw 1982, 131f.

³⁴ Cf. *CI*, 425-426. About a similar perspective says I. Kant – cf. id., *Religia w obrębie samego rozumu*, Kraków 1993, 66f.

of evil but about how to incarnate it in the hope of promise. Such a reversal of order can only be undertaken by faith³⁵.

Ways of Transgressing Evil

Analysing Ricoeur's concept of evil and the plane of its explanation, it is impossible not to ask a question about Nabertian inspirations in Ricoeur's philosophy. This is particularly noticeable when it comes to the concept of evil³⁶. J. Nabert's philosophy is based on three concepts that are the key to understanding the whole thought. These are: *absolute*, *experience* and *reflection*. Already in *Eléments pour une éthique*, there is a term of the primary or absolute affirmation being, if not yet a conviction about the existence of the absolute – God, then at least a certain aspiration of the nature of man to the absolute. This aspiration to the

³⁵ A text that somehow summarises Ricoeur's concept of evil is presented in the Conflict of Interpretation. We read there: "Paraphrasing St. Paul, we dare to say: where evil 'is abundant,' hope 'is superabundant,' we must therefore have the courage to include evil in the epicentre of hope; in a way we do not know, evil itself works together to bring the Kingdom of God closer. This is how he looks at evil – faith. A look at faith is not a moralist's view; a moralist contrasts the evil predicate with the good predicate; he condemns the evil, attributes it to freedom, and finally stops at the boundary of the unfathomable; for we do not know how it could have happened that freedom became enslaved. Faith does not look in this direction, its problem is not the beginning of evil, but its end; and this end, together with the prophets, incorporates the economy of promise, together with Jesus, into the doctrine of God coming, together with St. Paul, into the law of superabundance. This explains why the perspective of faith on events and people is, above all, kind. Faith in the final analysis admits that the man of the Enlightenment is right, for whom evil plays a role in the great epic of culture because it educates man, not a Puritan because he never manages to pass from condemnation to mercy: imprisoned in the ethical dimension he is not able to look from the perspective of the kingdom that is coming" – CI, 429-430, *op. cit.* – P. Ricoeur, *Podług nadziei: odczyty, szkice, studia*, S. Cichowicz, Warsaw 1991, 275f (further cited as Pn). *On the new interpretation of punishment in the context of superabundance*, cf. id., *Interpretation du mythe de la peine*, CI, 348-369, *Polish ed.* *Interpretacja mitu kary*, Pn, 237-260. A. Houziaux, *Pour une définition du discours théologique*, *EThR* 72(1997)4, 557f, also points to the central category of "Kingdom which is coming" in theological language.

³⁶ It is worth noting that Nabert's works were close to Ricoeur's, if only because of the fact that he wrote forewords to them. This is particularly the case of three works by Nabert published during his lifetime: *L'expérience intérieure de la liberté*, Paris 1923, *Eléments pour une éthique*, Paris 1943; in the second edition can be found the foreword by P. Ricoeur, and finally *Essai sur le mal*, Paris 1955, 1970 (commented twice by Ricoeur in 1959, and re-lecture in 1992, and the posthumously published work *Le désir de Dieu*, Paris 1966, also with the foreword by Ricoeur.

absolute can be seen in experience. It can be understood through reflection³⁷. It becomes a method, which gained full maturity in the form of hermeneutics in Ricoeur's thought³⁸.

The second important point of J. Nabert's philosophy, which should be remembered when reflecting on evil in Ricoeur's thought is the term of an *unjustifiable*. In Nabert's vision of evil, whether physical or moral evil, it is always something that cannot be justified on the one hand, and something that must be justified on the other. This is all the more urgent because evil appears to be an element that hinders the development of human existence. Without going deeper into the analysis of Nabert's philosophy, it can be stated that the conceptual treatment of *unjustifiable* experience shows that a distinction must be made between the evil experienced in the plural, and the real evil, which dwells in free will itself³⁹.

After these initial assumptions, Ricoeur's proposals to justify evil should be looked at more closely. They are by no means an attempt to answer or fully justify evil. They are only levels of expression which may contribute to a greater rationality of the deliberations undertaken⁴⁰. The first stage is the level of myth. In it, Ricoeur refers to the notion of *sacrum*, understood in the spirit of R. Otto as a *tremendum fascinatum*. It is an unquestionable reference to the reflection on myths presented in *Symbolika zła*. It was there that Ricoeur, listing four types of myths, showed at the same time their "ideological" function, i.e. combining the cosmos and ethos⁴¹. Myths understood in this way have three important

³⁷ Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Préface. Eléments pour une éthique*, L 2, 225-236; cf. also E. Mukoid, *Filozofia zła*, op. cit., 27f, and F. Chirpaz, *Nabert Jean. Essai sur le mal*, in: *Przewodnik po literaturze filozoficznej XX wieku*, vol. 3, B. Skarga (ed.), Warsaw 1995, 305-310.

³⁸ Cf. P. Collin, art. cit., 119-128, in particular p. 126. Ricoeur also testifies to his understanding of reflection as hermeneutics in his article *L'acte et le signe selon Jean Nabert*, Cf pp. 211-221, where he explicitly states that he understands reflection as hermeneutics. He writes: "Parce que nous ne sommes pas immédiatement en possession de nous-même, mais toujours inégaux à nous-même, parce que, selon l'expression de l'Expérience intérieure de la liberté, nous ne produisons jamais l'acte total que nous rassemblons et projetons dans l'idéal d'un choix absolu, — il nous faut sans fin nous approprier ce que nous sommes à travers les expressions multiples de notre désir d'être. [...] Pour employer un autre langage, qui n'est pas celui de Jean Nabert, mais que son oeuvre encourage: parce que la réflexion n'est pas une intuition de soi par soi, elle peut être, elle doit être, une herméneutique" – ibid., 221.

³⁹ Cf. J. Nabert, *Essai sur le mal*, op. cit., 48; cf. also E. Mukoid, *Filozofia zła*, op. cit., 93f.

⁴⁰ Ricoeur proposes five levels of speech in speculation on evil: the level of myth, wisdom, anti-gnostic gnosis, theodicy level, and finally the level of "broken" dialectics.

⁴¹ *The role of myths Ricoeur expressed as follows*: "Myths say [...] that man is not the source of existence, that evil is the past of existence, but God is the future of existence. The consequence

functions: first of all the concentration in themselves of the whole of the human condition, that is, the positive and the negative; then, the incarnation of the individual experience of evil in a broad etiological context; and finally, the unifying function to integrate the excess of explicative patterns. What has influenced Western thought in the process of integration is the story of decline in the Bible, which Ricoeur expresses with the concept of the Adamic myth. This myth has long been at the basis of all theodicy trying to answer an eternal question: *Unde malum?*⁴²

The next level of speculation on evil is the stage of wisdom. The essence of this stage is to reduce the question about evil from the objective plane to a plane that could be expressed in questions: Why me? Why each of us? Why a particular person? This stage also reveals serious deficiencies in the idea of retribution trying to explain evil. An example of the inadequacy of existing explanations is the problem of the suffering of the righteous, or suffering of the innocent. In the example of Job, Ricoeur sees a very significant thing: Job's change lies in the fact that the evil experienced and the evil committed cannot be reduced to a common denominator. From now on, suffering means excess. As Ricoeur says: *to suffer is suffer too much*. The idea of excess mentioned above comes back here: *despite..., how much more...* Bringing it to the plane of suffering one can say that it is not the suffering person who is rooted but the complaint itself. In other words, suffering wants to show that love for God can be effective in spite of suffering, even if it is read as "unduly" suffering⁴³.

[...] only a confession of God's holiness and a confession of human sinfulness could claim the right to remove this possibility" – SM, 326, *quoted from the Polish ed. p. 169.*

⁴² Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Le Mal*, op. cit., 215f. The purpose of the Adamic myth is to clear people of their responsibility for evil, or at least to restore their proper responsibility for evil. Ricoeur's treatment of the Adamic myth is as follows: considering the ancient myths concerning the figure of the King, he transfers them to the figure of the Son of man and the Lord of the Gospel. This makes both evil and creation gain a certain "novelty." A further consequence of such an approach is the liberation of history from the ritual-cult way of interpreting evil. Finally, there is a transition from the cosmic Enemy to the historical Enemy. This makes it necessary to demythologise the cosmic evil before a proper mythologization of human evil (re-mythologization) can be carried out. The last important consequence of the Adamic myth is the distinction made between radical and primary. This is a fundamental issue for anthropology, since man appears to be the beginning of evil, but only within the creation, while his absolute beginning already lies in the creative act of God – cf. SM, 348-350.375.

⁴³ Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Le mal*, op. cit., 216-218; cf. id., *Filozofia...*, op. cit., 62f. The words of St. Paul may be a kind of summary of the problem of suffering that goes far beyond the scope presented by the Book of Job: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" – Rom 8:18f.

In the anti-gnostic gnosis phase, evil appears in a slightly different context. In order to understand it better, it is necessary to refer to the concept of St. Augustine. In his deliberations, he starts with the dualistic criticism of the concept proposed by gnosis and fights the existence of evil as a substance. For Augustine, evil is simply a lack of existence⁴⁴. In his fight against gnosis, however, Augustine himself succumbs to a different kind of gnosis, namely, by combining in the idea of original sin two heterogeneous notions: biological transmission and the individual counting of guilt⁴⁵. However, Ricoeur uses the concept of original sin to show how much it is a false rationalisation of evil, if at all, as a rationalisation of evil, on the one hand, and how much it is a real symbol, on the other⁴⁶.

The fourth phase considered by Ricoeur concerns theodicy. What can be described by this term? In his opinion, in order to use the term "theodicy," three conditions must be met. First, when the formulation of the problem of evil aims at unambiguity⁴⁷. Next, when the aim is to protect God from responsibility for evil. Finally, when the arguments used in the reasoning refer to the principles of noncontradiction and systemic integrity⁴⁸. It is precisely in this context that *onto-theology*, i.e. theological term of *God* associated with metaphysical terms such as *nothingness*, *first cause*, *purpose*, *infinity*, seems valuable. The starting point for Ricoeur's reflections is reference to the theodicy presented by

⁴⁴ Augustine expresses this as follows: "Evil [...] is not something natural, but all that is called evil is either sin or punishment for sin" – St. Augustine, Exegetic scriptures against the Manichaeans, in: PSP, vol. 25, Warsaw 1980, 83. In another place he speaks of evil as a lack of good: "After all, we do not feel it in any other way organoleptically because it would not have happened if we had not done it. Evil is not a creature either but it is called a loss of goodness" – *ibid.*, 267.

⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 320f; P. Ricoeur, *Le mal*, op. cit., 218-220.

⁴⁶ In his article devoted to the analysis of the concept and meaning of original sin, Ricoeur puts forward three conclusions: 1) We have no right to speculate about original sin. It is rather a certain addition to the Adamic myth, something similar to the consciousness and confession of guilt, be it through Israel or through the Church. 2) We have no right to speculate about the evil that already exists, taken out of the context of the evil that is done by us. This is the mystery of sin: We do it, we bring it into the world, but at the same time it is already here. We enter into it through the birth. 3) Finally, we have no right to speculate either on the evil committed or found, except in the perspective of the history of salvation. In this context, original sin is nothing more than an anti-type – it is a juxtaposition of sin and grace (Rom 5:20) – cf. P. Ricoeur, *Le «péché originel»: étude de signification*, CI, 265-282; conclusions from p. 282.

⁴⁷ The sentence which was already quoted earlier: The God is good, the God is almighty, but evil still exists.

⁴⁸ P. Ricoeur, *Le mal*, op. cit., 220f.

G.W. Leibniz. In addition to the principle of noncontradiction, it introduces the principle of sufficient reasoning. It means that if certain failures are attributed to theodicy, it is only because reason is not able to cover the entire balance sheet of good and evil. Evil, understood in this way, is combined with metaphysical optimism. This dimension makes the other dimensions of evil less important⁴⁹.

In the same plane a slightly different vision is proposed by I. Kant. For him, the most important question is not where evil comes from, but why do we commit it? Thus it transfers the problem of evil from the metaphysical plane to the moral plane, from the theoretical plane to the practical one.

Evil is no longer sought outside of man but in human imperfection itself. Imperfectness in turn calls reason to seek increasingly better understanding of evil. And although reason first of all discovers its own cognitive boundaries, the mere transfer of reflections from the metaphysical to the anthropological plane is a serious achievement. This is well expressed by statements about the “irresponsibility of God” and the “humanisation of evil.”⁵⁰

In the same phase of theodicy you can also put the thought of G. Hegel. It proposes specific dialectics between the human nature of evil and the development of the spirit, inscribed in a holistic system. It shows that what can be given up completely is only the spirit, but in the course of time it is not possible to express it in an absolute way. This, thus, makes it possible to justify evil. The timeliness of evil also causes that in comparison with the absolute spirit, it is as if reduced⁵¹.

In this way Ricoeur moves on to K. Barth’s proposal, which is a replica of the one given to Hegel and is called *dialectique brisée*⁵². In his *Church Dogmatics*⁵³ Barth proposes a theology that would give up the idea of a system. This somewhat strange term for the dialectic proposed ultimately is brought down to the fact that evil is shown as a reality irreconcilable with either the goodness of God or the goodness of creation. However, such a dialectic can only be realised if one “starts thinking differently.” This means that nothingness (*Das Nichtige*) is a reality which Christ has already been overcome on the cross. From now on it is no longer possible to speak of the power of evil. Victory over it is not a question

⁴⁹ The key to Leibniz’s reflection on evil are three elements: God’s goodness, human freedom and the origin of evil – cf. G. Leibniz, *Essai de theodicée: sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l’homme et l’origine du mal*, Paris 1969. This Christian optimism was expressed by Leibniz in his metaphysical reflections in the following formula: “uti minus malum habet radonem boni, ita minus bonum habet rationem mali” – as cited in J. Cardozo – Duarte, *Problem zła w filozofii współczesnej*, ComP 10(1990)3, 33.

⁵⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 34f; P. Ricoeur, *Le mal*, op. cit., 222f.

of the future, but it is something that has already been achieved. Evil exists only as a denial of God, as something that exists only in such a way that God does not want. It is the *opus alienum* as opposed to the *opus proprium* of God. It is probably an interesting theory, if only because it exceeds the classical view of evil as an absence of goodness or existence (St. Augustine). It seems, however, that apart from a specific “dreaming,” this theory can be abandoned and the fact that he sees in God the existence of a certain “left wing,” which can also be understood in the key of old theories about the demonic sphere of the deity⁵¹.

A summary of the problematic issues of evil in Ricoeur’s thought requires a certain synthesis between thinking, acting and feeling. As has been shown, one cannot expect a solution to the problem of evil from the plane of thinking. However, this plane can be useful on another ground, namely *action* and *feeling*. In action, evil is something that should be combated. It is therefore a matter of proclaiming such an activity that would reduce the amount of suffering in the world⁵². It also makes man more responsible for evil in the world. He does not attribute it only to God but knows that its scope depends on action in the ethical and political field⁵³. In the emotional field, Ricoeur offers a solution taken from H.S. Kushner. It is expressed in three stages: firstly, to stop blaming oneself; secondly, to stop blaming God; thirdly, to start believing in God in spite of evil because then there is a chance to see the purifying sense of suffering⁵⁴. The point is therefore, on the one hand, not to believe too easily in the necessity

⁵¹ *It seems appropriate to quote Ricoeur’s original text for a better illustration of Barth’s dialectic:* “Brisée en effet est la théologie qui reconnaît au mal une réalité inconciliable avec la bonté de Dieu et avec la bonté de la Création. [...] Tel étant le point de départ, comment penser que les théodicées classiques? En pensant autrement. Et comment penser autrement? [...] le néant, c’est que le Christ a vaincu en s’anéantissant lui-même dans la Croix. Remontant du Christ à Dieu, il faut dire qu’en Jésus-Christ Dieu a rencontré et combattu le néant, et qu’ainsi nous connaissons le néant. [...] Si nous croyons qu’en Christ Dieu a vaincu le mal, nous devons croire aussi que le mal ne peut plus nous anéantir: il n’est plus permis d’en parler comme s’il avait encore du pouvoir, comme si la victoire était seulement future. [...] Le néant aussi relève de Dieu, mais en un tout autre sens que la Création bonne, à savoir que, pour Dieu, élire, au sens de l’élection biblique, c’est rejeter un quelque chose qui, parce que rejeté, existe sur le mode du néant. [...] Le néant est ce que Dieu ne veut pas. Il n’existe que parce que Dieu ne le veut pas” — P. Ricoeur, *Le mal*, op. cit., 226f.

⁵² An example of such a reduction of evil in the world can be the fight against the pathology of power. Ricoeur writes: *Identifying myself with what I own, I become the property of my possessions* – Pn, 147. Also the rejection of any unnecessary ideology and fear can reduce the evil in the world – cf. *ibid.*, 196f.

⁵³ Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Le Mal*, op. cit., 230.

⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 231-233.

of the existence of evil, absolving oneself of all activity consisting in fighting it, and, on the other hand, not to fall into a utopia of faith in the disappearance of unbearable suffering⁵⁵.

A Person as a “Place” of Morality: Identification Process

Speaking of the person as “subject” and “place” of morality, one points to its fundamental character. Ricoeur points very clearly to this character of a person understood as a “place” of morality. For him, a person always remains a “combination” of finiteness and at the same time infinite openness. This is expressed in the statement: *ouverture finie*. The place is the person in the sense that he or she sees what is “there,” but he or she sees it “from here.”⁵⁶ On the other hand, referring to the antique understanding of the notion of a person as a mask worn by an actor, one can say that – following this image – it is no longer about a mask but about the actor himself. It can also be said that if morality would be an evaluation of “what is being played,” then the person is the source and the starting point of the play itself⁵⁷. In this sense we understand the person as the “place” of morality presented in the following deductions. It is expressed in the question: Who is the one who is the “place” of morality? In order to answer this it is necessary to examine first of all what is the manifestation of this “who” and then what are the consequences of “in what” manifests the person, for one’s new subjectivity?⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ S. Kowalczyk correctly expresses this: “There are limits to knowing the meaning of suffering, but in the light of Revelation it is certain that suffering plays an important role in the mysterious economy of God’s salvation. Suffering is the kind of evil which, through man’s inner effort, may ultimately turn out to be a good” – *id.*, *Podstawy światopoglądu chrześcijańskiego*, Warsaw 1980, 115.

⁵⁶ Ricoeur expresses this as follows: *Je vois toujours la-bas, mais d’ici* – cf. *id.*, *Histoire et Vérité*, Paris 1990, issue 3, 339 (further cited as *HV*).

⁵⁷ “This can be expressed in other words, that action is proportional to who man is. This confirms the well-known principle of moral theology *agere sequitur esse*. A similar position is presented by A. Szostek – cf. *id.*, *Wokół godności, prawdy i miłości. Rozważania etyczne*, Lublin 1995

⁵⁸ The purpose of this part of the reflection is not to refer to extensive literature on the person in general. For a better understanding of the subjective character of the person in Ricoeur’s thought, it is sufficient to recall the views of the philosopher who had a significant influence on the subjective understanding of the person, which is N. Hartmann. He understands the person as the bearer of values and non-values – cf. *id.*, *Ethik*, Berlin 1926. It also emphasises a new understanding of the “I” as something that can be known when it is contrasted with the object

In order to understand Ricoeur's concept of a person, it is firstly necessary to identify him or her, to say "this one" about him or her. For this purpose, the distinction made by P. Strawson between individualisation and identification is valuable. This makes it possible to establish the starting point of a person being considered as one of the "things" placed in a specific spatial-temporal area⁵⁹. The second important step is to give "this thing," taken out of a series of things of a certain class a name. It is thanks to this that the next stage of moving from individualisation to identification begins⁶⁰.

However, Ricoeur poses another question to broaden the understanding of the person's concept. For if in the process of individualisation certain individuals are separated from the whole class to which they belong, the question remains as to how to make the transition from the individual in a very general sense to the individual, which is each of us? Following R. Strawson, Ricoeur proposes to use the idea of fundamental properties (*particuliers de base*), which are: the fact of being a *physical body* and the fact of being a *person*. Hence, the understanding of a person as a physical body is shown as the most primary concept of a person. In building a person's concept, however, there is a certain transcendental deduction because before assigning certain empirical properties to a person, it is first necessary to establish a certain pattern of thinking, within which the person could be defined⁶¹.

of cognition. For it is only the consciousness, which opposes its objects, that becomes graspable for itself as the "I" – cf. id., *Das Problem des geistigen Seins. Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung der Geschichtsphilosophie und der Geisteswissenschaften*, Berlin 1933.

⁵⁹ The notion of a person as a "thing" requires clarification. It means not so much the instrumentalization of a person but rather a statement at the beginning that the person is considered to belong to a certain class. In this way, on the one hand, it belongs to a certain class, which can be described as "man," and on the other hand, it appears as "this one," a single one opposing the rest – cf. SA, 41.44. On the other hand, the first horizon of occurrence of a person is the spatial-temporal horizon taken over from Strawson – cf. B. Chwedeńczuk, *Strawson Peter Prederik. Individuals*, in: *Przewodnik po literaturze filozoficznej XX wieku*, vol. 4, B. Skarga (ed.), Warsaw 1996, 382. It was this horizon that determined the special role of distance and narration in Ricoeur's philosophy.

⁶⁰ Ricoeur notes, of course, that the proper name completely exhausts its meaningful potential. However, it allows you to confirm that the described thing is separated from the rest of the class – cf. SA, 42; see also P. Guenancia, *L'identité*, in: *Notions de philosophie, II*, D. Kam-bouchner (ed.), Paris 1995, 563-634.

⁶¹ It should also be stated that the person considered in the key of "fundamental properties" is not yet a subject capable of telling about oneself. It is rather "something" about which it is told – cf. SA, 43-44.

Before a further description of a person is made, it seems appropriate to outline the basis and conditions for identification outlined by Strawson, which Ricoeur refers to in the subtext of his theory. P. Strawson places his research on identification in the context of descriptive metaphysics. The term “identification” itself may mean alternatively either *referring to something* or *pointing to something*. In turn the only *effective indication* is the *identifying indication*. It is done directly, or not directly. It may take place for the “first time” (as this thing here), or “again,” or (as still the same thing). Referring to the idea of *particuliers de base* we can say that for Strawson it is material bodies that are the basic *concrètes*⁶².

Since identification is something so important, the question may arise as to what the subject of morality is, or more precisely, while remaining on the plane of earlier reflections, what is the subject of *autoidentification*. It seems that this subject is not “I” (*je*), but “being oneself” (*soya*). So what should the identification of the subject, which is *soya*, look like? It seems that it should start with the act of existence and place the subject in the whole context of its activities. Only in the subject understood in this way will it be possible to reconcile both identity (referring to the “I”) and difference (accentuating the “being oneself”)⁶³.

So what is the most basic subjective understanding of the person in the mind of P. Ricoeur? First of all, the person as an identified individual appears already at the logical level. As a logical subject, some predicates are attributed to it. The logical plane, however, is not sufficient because it does not sufficiently emphasise the characteristics of the person who identifies it as “this one.” It is, therefore, an indication not so much of a subject in the strict sense but rather of the existence of some possible subject, which is indicated by the process of *ascription*⁶¹.

⁶² Cf. a broader study of the work of P. Strawson, B. Chwedeńczuk, *Strawson Peter Prederik. Individuals*, op. cit., 378-386.

⁶³ Ricoeur so expresses it in one of the works: “Réfléchir [sur la personne – J.S.’s note] c’est recouvrer l’acte d’exister, la position du soi dans toute l’épaisseur de ses oeuvres” — cf. id., *De l’interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, Paris 1965, 52. A similar position is expressed by Ricoeur when he talks about discovering and studying the effort of existence, which is on the one hand, the dynamism of desire and, on the other hand, the effort — cf. *CI*, 324. B. Skarga’s standpoint, which does not hide Ricoeurian inspirations in her own thinking, can also testify to the perception of identity in *soi* rather than in *je*. This is particularly evident in the part of the work in which she considers the issue of the identity of the *I*. In her opinion, the work of Ricoeur [*Soi-même comme un autre* – J.S.’s note] is the “Bible of the problem” — cf. B. Skarga, *Tożsamość i różnica. Eseje metafizyczne*, Kraków 1997.

The second stage of the presented concept of identification of a person is the fact that a person who can be described as “the same thing” can be assigned two types of predicates: *physical* and *mental*. In this case physical means the fact that a person shares a certain common destiny and existence with material bodies; mental means everything that separates a person from the body. It remains to be determined whether these two types of predicates could be placed on a common plane. In relation to the body one can see a kind of ownership by a person. In this sense, one would deny the unity of body and soul accepted by Christian thought, and return to unauthorised dualisms⁶⁴.

The third element of a person’s concept points to a certain gradation that occurs between physical and mental predicates. Following P. Strawson, Ricoeur wonders if mental predicates are not the “particularity” of this person. This particularity would be all the more important because such an identification would not be so much a saying about a given thing “the same,” but rather it would concern the indication of the same sense of mental predicates attributed either to a particular person or to anyone. The difference between *soi-même* and *autre que soi* is emphasised here for the first time. This creates an assignment method that would look like the following: “someone” would mean “I,” “someone else” would mean “you.” It would point not so much to the subject of the ascription, but rather to the “common sense” which can be attributed either to “me,” “you,” “him,” and “anyone.” This introduces another important element, which is the *altérité*, i.e. what is “other than me,” what “is not me.”⁶⁵

The above analyses lead to a double finding. On the one hand, they point to a person as a logical subject, and at the same time showing the common sense of mental predicates allows us to state that a person as a subject can be *me*, *you*, *he*, *anyone*. On the other hand, there remains a certain uniqueness which

⁶⁴ Cf. SA, 50f. Attention should be drawn to a certain apparent contradiction. When one speaks of man as a spiritually bodily being, as unity, one can recall the contrast between spirit and body that is present in the writings of St. Paul. The contradiction, however, seems to be apparent, since the “body” for St. Paul means another side of sin. For man is not seen as a neutral essence, but as a man in a concrete situation towards Christ: a situation of acceptance or rejection. Therefore, it would be a methodological mistake to draw from the teachings of St. Paul about sin and weakness of too far-reaching anthropological implications – cf. L. Ladaria, *op. cit.*, 65.

⁶⁵ It should be noted, however, that if something can be attributed to another, it means that it is tantamount to admitting that the latter is also capable of attributing something to itself. This is one of the elements of the Ricoeurian understanding of “soi-même comme un autre” – cf. SA, 51-53. The interpretation of the term “assignment” was taken by Ricoeur from P. Strawson – cf. *id.*, *Individuals*, *op. cit.*, 108.

cannot be generalised. This is the *altérité*, the “otherness from me,” which does not allow the difference between *je – toi; soi – autre que soi* (between “I – you,” and what is “me” and what is “other than me”) to be blurred⁶⁶.

New Moral and Ethical Foundations of a Person’s Constitution

Previous reflections have shown the person as a subject to be talked about, to which reference is made. Now we should see the person in a new context, i.e. as the subject who is able to proclaim oneself because it is this understanding that gives rise to the moral implications of the concept of the person. In this way, the reflections are shifted to a pragmatic plane taking place in a situation of conversation that takes place between the “I” and “you,” where the specified “I” talks to the specified “you.” In order for the mentioned “I” to enter a situation of conversation and self-communication, it must have the ability to define itself beforehand⁶⁷.

The next level of subjective analyses becomes the theory of acts of discourse. Ricoeur following J.L. Austin evokes a certain class of performative acts, a good example of which is a promise. Austin expresses this with the eloquent title of his work *How to Do Things with Words*, which the French publisher translated as *Quand dire, c’est faire*⁷². The particularly important role of the promise shown in this work stems from the fact that to say “I promise” is to promise in a causative way, that is to get involved in doing something later, towards someone else, what is being done now (what is promised now). One should also say that “I promise” or even more strictly “I promise you” is not the same as saying “he promises.”⁶⁸ If, therefore, at the level of the promise “say

⁶⁶ Cf. Ibid., 54.

⁶⁷ This is expressed by Ricoeur as follows: “pour l’enquête référentielle, la personne est d’abord la troisième personne, donc celle dont on parle. Pour l’enquête réflexive, en revanche, la personne est d’abord un moi qui parle à un toi. La question sera finalement de savoir comment le “je-tu” de l’interlocution peut s’extérioriser dans un “lui” sans perdre la capacité de se désigner soi-même, et comment le “il/elle” de la référence identifiante peut s’intérioriser dans un sujet qui se dit lui-même. C’est bien cet échange entre les pronoms personnels qui paraît être essentiel à ce que je viens d’appeler une théorie intégrée du soi au plan linguistique” – SA, 56. B. Skarga points to the need to emphasize the position of the “I” as not only a logical and linguistic subject, but above all experience, *Id.*, *Tożsamość i różnica*, op. cit., 163f.

⁶⁸ Cf. SA, 57f. This is because, for example, “I” and “you” are substitutable. The “he” category looks different – see Z. Kloch, *Benveniste Emil, Problèmes de linguistique générale*, in: *Przewodnik po literaturze filozoficznej XX wieku*, vol. 3, B. Skarga (ed.), Warsaw 1995, 32-34.

something" is tantamount to "do something," it can be said that speaking should be thought of in terms of an act. As mentioned above, there is an interchangeable relationship between "you" and "I." It is a kind of "unity" to such an extent that all processes taking place in the process of announcing certain contents also cause the same process to take place in a partner to whom one announces something. This is what leads to the aforementioned category in Ricoeur's philosophy, which he calls *altérité*⁶⁹.

It should also be stressed that the "I" in the process of declaration is the first indicator of declaration; it means the one that defines itself in each declaration containing the word "I". It is the first indicator of the declaration process. The question is what the other indicators of this process are. Ricoeur points to three: "it," "here" and "now." "It" indicates an object located in the vicinity of the announcing subject. This means that the announcing person and the person indicated as different do not allow themselves to be identified⁷⁰. "Here" indicates the location of the talking subject. It opposes another location which can be expressed by the word "there." In other words, "here" is the "ground zero" for the subject; all other places are considered in terms of: near, far⁷¹. "Now" means an event that is contemporary to the speaking subject⁷². The above analysis shows that both place and time play a significant role in the process of self-determination by a subject. It also shows that it is not possible to talk about oneself differently than just about a subject speaking and having a concrete spatial and temporal existence. It is at this stage that they find the

⁶⁹ It seems justified to refer in this argument to the original text of Ricoeur: "L'énonciation qui se réfléchit dans le sens de l'énoncé est ainsi d'emblée un phénomène bipolaire: elle implique simultanément un «je» qui dit et un «tu» qui le premier s'adresse. «J»affirme que' égale «je te promets que." Brey', énonciation égale interlocution. [...] Toute avancée en direction de l'ipséité du locuteur ou de l'agent a pour contrepartie une avancée comparable dans l'altérité du partenaire" – *ibid.*, 59.

⁷⁰ Cf. SA, 61.

⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 61-70.

⁷² Ricoeur refers to the analyses presented in his earlier work, namely Volume III *Temps et récit*, where he situates "now" between the creative phenomenological experience of time and any moment of cosmic time. He states that this "now" is a way of inscribing phenomenological time, i.e. the time of description of current experience, into cosmological time, which, in his opinion, was an invention for the creation of the calendar. In this way "now" becomes "dated now." Without this, the attempt to define the present would remain on the plane of pure reflection. A second consequence can also be deduced from this. When an entity tries to determine its time position in a given event, it can always be determined in relation to "dated now" – cf. P. Ricoeur, *Temps et Récit*, vol. 3, Paris 1985, 190f; cf. also SA, 61.70.

full meaning of the questions “who?” and “who is talking?,” standing at the beginning of the process of determination – what Ricoeur calls identification.

Finally, we can point to an important element of the “I-you” relation which is the body – “*corps proper*.” In this context, the “I” has a double meaning: firstly, it means a particular person; secondly, it begins to point to a certain boundary between this subject and the “rest.” The subjectivity of the “I” is expressed not only in relation to the other, but also in relation to what can be called “mine.” In this way, the “I” and a person with a specific personal name, born in a specific place, means the same thing that is announced. A special place is occupied by the category of “own body.” It has a dual function. On the one hand the body belongs to the world, it is a specific organ, on the other hand it is “my” body, so it does not belong to typically external objects, about which the subject speaks⁷³.

Summary

The concept of the subjectivity of a person presented in this article has shown that man as a subject appears in constant references and relations in which his existence is embedded. On the one hand, it escapes the determinism of nature, on the other hand, it reveals a certain crack between its nature and action. This leads to the conclusion that even if a person is characterised by individuality, it is not a *separate* existence. It seems justified to return to the question of what makes a person, in spite of both external and internal variability; they remain the same or otherwise what builds and what destroys the subjectivity of the person? The question thus posed reveals the first threat to human subjectivity which is the fact of the existence of evil. For it is not only something external to man but also something that makes man both the “place” of the appearance of evil

⁷³ Cf. SA, 70-72. Ricoeur has already pointed to the special importance of the body in the early period of his creative work. According to him, the body is a kind of border between the “I” and the world. In this we can see the development of his original thought, which shows the body as an organ that allows the person to feel, to experience. The body is, at the same time, a border, as if the last point of a person’s going “towards” the world because when deprived of objectivity, it becomes increasingly more a revelation of subjectively lived existence – cf. VI, 83. Also the relationship between physicality and time in Ricoeur’s thoughts is one of the essential elements present in his thoughts from the very beginning of his work. This was expressed by pointing out two essential elements, and at the same time the determinants of the human condition *incarnation* and *temporalité* – *ibid.*, 83. The body, in spite of its distinctiveness, has never become the cause of dualism in the vision of man. Ricoeur himself warned against the danger of such an approach – *HV*, 201.

and responsible for evil⁷⁴. While staying in Ricoeur’s philosophy characterised by a dialectical movement one can already see in the language discussing evil a threat to certain “deposits of hope” present in his thought⁷⁵. For the religious language to which Ricoeur ultimately reduces the problem of evil is the language of hope and eschatology. Freedom also takes on a new meaning in this context. It is no longer just something that has been enslaved but above all something that is a “desire for the possible.” A possible freedom is the Resurrection. In this perspective, even evil and suffering can find their ultimate meaning, and the subjective character of morality does not threaten to fall into subjectivism. Moreover, it is in the name of such subjectivism that morality demands for the subject this “otherness,” the *hope* that comes from the Resurrection.

⁷⁴ In order for evil to become an object of moral reflection, it must be recognised not only as something that affects a person from “outside,” which makes him a sacrifice, but above all as something that, without destroying the fundamental structures of the person, could be defeated.

⁷⁵ In fact, according to Ricoeur’s concept of the double negation of evil, one can only speak of evil in the perspective of its transgression.