

The Biggest Sin

Ana Bazac*

Abstract: The paper discusses the concept of sin in its two appearances: as a characteristic of the subject's deeds and thus tantamount to its guilt, and as a social labelling, as a concept. Beyond the religious standpoint, the analysis of sin emphasises the differences between different types of mistakes, the criteria of their appraisal, the meanings of the sin and the feelings around it, the ideological difference between who control the information and value generation in society and those who are obliged to assume these information and values, and the hegemony of the point of view of the former are mentioned. In the hegemonic view, the background and meaning of the sin is disobedience, the *infringement* of the most important moral constitutive rules, thus of the moral order of things. This phenomenon emphasises the feature of the sin, the *irreversible*. However, it is possible and necessary to distinguish between different kinds of irreversible, and the criterion is, obviously, that of the *consequences* of the irreversible facts. In this line, the paper shows the determinism of the sin and of the social labelling of facts as sins, and points the dominant way to avoid the sin and its limits, as well as the alternative way to not sin. Demonstrating the constitution of moral choices (moral discourses, moral logic, moral feelings), the analysis emphasises that *the biggest sin is to use words improperly to the moral choice of the good*.

Keywords: words, mistake, sin, Kant, irreversible, choice, trust, moral distress, information, logic

IS IT INSTEAD OF *CAPTATIO*?

The sin is an *error*; a big one, of course, considered not as a *fault* – an objective impersonal feature of character or temperament – but as a *fault* as *culpability* of the person; the big error is more than a “simple” *misconception, miscalculation, delusion, or omission, negligence, aberration* (as *absurdity* or striking *deviation* from the rational or logical reasoning), *inaccuracy, inattention, inadvertence, faux-pas,*

* Ana Bazac (✉)

Division of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science, Romanian Academy,
Bucharest, Romania
e-mail: ana_bazac@hotmail.com

wandering. A *mistake* that is a sin involves the *conscious* will of the person, thus the *awareness* of the action and its stakes; and obviously, the sin is made only by people who *can choose* their goals and means, their paths and trajectories; outside the *free will* there are no imputable sins. However, the humans can always choose, Sartre pointed out in the last century. Well, the problem is that, although the human mind always examines the variants and considers the best one in that moment, people do the choice according to the *information* they have and to the *values* they assume. And thus they may fall into error, being aware or not of this slipping into an errand which paths and ends may neither be known nor good. On this line, the error is not only a mistake but also the wandering: as ignorance and inconstancy, perhaps even as quest.

All of these do appear when we consider the human person. He/she can mistake as a unique entity and thus he/she has the full responsibility of his/her choices and errors. Every human person has the consciousness to judging its choices and mistakes, as long before Plato revealed the interior *daimon* (Plato 1966a, 31d: “it is a sort of voice that comes to me, and when it comes it always holds me back from what I am thinking of doing, but never urges me forward”). And, by discerning between the ability to choose or the “consciousness that chooses” (Plato 1969, 619b-c) and the “consciousness that judges”, Plato showed the complexity of the spiritual power of man (and, inherently and implicitly, the *unity* of the consciousness or of the aspects of this spiritual power).

Nevertheless, the humans exercise this absolutely peculiar human ability of judging and choosing not only because of their ancestral sense of justice – related to the original practice of sharing of the first hunters-gatherers – but rather because of the values which are *sine qua non* landmarks of their relationships with the world or, more precisely, within society. In this regard, the values are ideas resulted from the process of abstraction from the concrete facts and which are used as *criteria of evaluation* of these concrete facts. The values are social – socially constructed and imposed – and / or, more specifically, according to the domination-submission power relations. This methodological origin of values led not only to different – and divergent – values (relating to the same aspect, of course) depending on the different social (class) position in the domination-submission relations, but also to the social dominance of the values of the ruling classes. Consequently, the scale of values, the meanings, the weight of

values and facts are given to people in a concrete space-temporal social framework from above.

The extreme, highest and intolerable form of a wrongdoing is the sin.

WHAT IS A SIN?

In a lay perspective, the concept of *sin* can be defined as *infringement* of the most important moral constitutive rules, thus of the moral order of things *and* having the *consequence* of a huge moral guilt. The most important constitutive rules are authoritative and are always related to *authority*: thus, the sin always concerns the authority, the shaking of its pedestal. This position towards authority became and is political, but the discussion about sins does not gain much from the interpretation of offences addressed to political leaders. Rather the conceptual analysis is possible and lights us when it concerns the moral realm. I add also that I cannot discuss the concept from the standpoint of theology, I have no competency, but I know that if I should have had I could have revealed many more interesting facets of the topic of this paper. However, the lay perspective – that is either the quasi universal common sense or a strong auxiliary substrate of the religious one – is still useful if we want to understand the subject matter that worries us all.

From a methodological standpoint, we have to emphasise two aspects. One is the *criterion* or *stake* that demarcates the sins from non-sins, the other is the *adverse concept* towards sin. Traditionally, one sins towards God (or before, towards gods). And the idea of God has two functions: to be the (vague, abstract) personification of absolute potency, the *all-mighty power* that may take care also of we, the humble individuals praying Him; and to be the easily understandable personification of the *other* human beings / even of *humankind*. If we want to be pedantic, God as the all-mighty father without which our existence cannot be conceived, is a metaphor; God as the witness of our presence in the world, between other fellow human beings – a metonymy. And the religious common people grasp this bivalency. God is the ultimate force explaining and justifying everything; but when they say “My God, what a nonsense Xs could say!” they resort to *both* the ultimate all-mighty judge and the *other* fellow humans: “people, have you ever heard such nonsense?” They call other people to be *witnesses*, or they call as a witness the other people who *co-participate* in the same presence in the world: they are

“relatives”, they are a community, they all are members of the same species, and they are “species beings”.

Actually, if the criterion of judgement is not only the abstract God but also the common human fellows, the sin as such is not only towards the transcendent God but also towards these fellow humans, towards humanity as such. And if so, the opposite concept to sin is *virtue*. The origin of this chiral mirroring of sins refers to the power of man: to control himself, to think and behave – so, towards the fellow men – so as he and they feel good, “at home” in society, and to be mutually considered as not only pleasant to each other, but also or rather as necessary: as mutual “conditions” for their human development. If people are virtuous, they do not sin: sometimes, they are wrong, but they do not sin.

IS IT A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MISTAKES AND SINS?

Yes, it is. Obviously, there are different – and different degrees of – mistakes. We take into account two viewpoints about this difference. One is the level of conscience that controls the human discourses and deeds. If a person gets wrong involuntarily it is advised to be more careful and it learns to be. If it or another person knowing the experience of the first repeats the same mistakes, we could question why this repetition and suspect either an (involuntary) error, misunderstanding, inaccuracy, or a conscious *intention* to wrongdoing. And we definitely realise that the *bad intention* was the origin of the resulted evil, sometimes even more than the faux pas as such. Therefore, the *bad intention* is a sin.

However, the human attitudes can be judged not only from the standpoint of the subject, of its level of awareness and conscience, of good and bad intentions, but also from the standpoint of the “object” or the result of the attitude as such. And here we resume the definition given at the beginning of this paper. One can mistake in many painful ways, but if the existing framework of logical patterns which treat the moral rules giving the moral order of things is somewhat preserved, one can be confident that the wrong can be *corrected*. It is difficult to discern between errors of gradual gravity, some ones tend to label some misdeeds as faults, as the guilt that allows the characterisation of their initiators as sinners. Theoretically, to keep the balance between the extreme temptations was considered the sign of virtues (Bazac 2017).

But the extremes as such were considered the evil, the sign of sins. Or: only some extremes. And this because these extremes seemed to transgress the framework of what was considered to be allowed.

Though, what can be allowed and what is a sin? The sin is that which *does not allow remediation*: the harm to the given authority, in the traditional political view / or more exactly to the moral value is so enormous that it cannot be forgiven. Pay attention: not the remission or forgiveness is important, not the subject who did the sin, but the *fact* as such. One can give a pardon to the subject, not only as the indulgences in the Catholic Middle Age, but also after a confession, thus a proof of awareness of the consequences and meanings of the wrong fact and, obviously, as a commitment to not anymore do the evil deed.

In the Catholic and East Christian Churches, the confession made in sacraments (rituals) where the priest gives the absolution, is a *symbol* of the difficulty of the avowal of wrongdoings in front of society. In those Churches, God in front of which the sinner confesses is the symbol of *mankind / the community of human beings*, and already the confession is a penance, and not only the self-punishment the absolved sinner practices. The result of the difficult *recognition* is the forgiveness: *if* the penitent is determined to not repeat evil-doings. Thus, the sacrament of penance signifies the *reconciliation* of the individual with: “God and the Church”, the religious documents say (Code of Canon Law), with the human society, we can interpret.

The above quote, where the document separates the transcendent authority from its temporal (thus not immaculate) representative, suggests not only the Church’s conscious warning toward the community of humans that neither the authority of the Church can be affected, but also what is important for our topic, the specific of the sin in religious understanding. Here, the “deadly sins” are not murder, cruelty and humiliation of others, but *pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony and sloth*; the “eternal, unforgivable sin” is not murder or human destructiveness, but *blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*. Only the “sins that cry to Heaven for Vengeance”, and which are more important than the first two types, are related to murder and human annihilation, but a big part of them rather in a narrow frame, that of *murder of family members*, inadmissible because of blood ties.

Therefore and although the religious forms can be considered symbols of the judgements in the real world, the secular understanding of sins points out a graver designation, also by putting the problem of their erasing.

THE REAL PROFANE MEANING OF THE SIN

Traditionally, the infringement of the established order, the transgression of the authority related to the established order: their gravity is maximal *because* the violation of rules and the offence of authority are *irreversible*, generating new rules, new order, new authority. Analysed through profane lenses, the sin or the decreeing of a fact as a sin signal the *limits* of tolerable deeds: these deeds are tolerable just because they can be annulled, i.e., the human environment can be corrected. In this regard it is clear why the murder is a sin or even the biggest one, beyond any vices of humans (considered as “deadly sins” by the Churches): it is because the death of humans cannot be reversed.

The irreversible fact is the *tipping point* in the continuity of life: and the malign, disastrous human deed leading to *irreparable* disasters deviating and depleting the course of life is the model of sin.

The irreversible given by a sin is showed by the *inexistence of degrees* of the sin: there are *middles* on the gradual continuity of virtues and vices of humans, there are “more” and “less” in the appraisal of virtues and vices, but they are exterior to sins. A murder is a murder, no less than that: but it is the *unconceivable*, the *unbearable*, the *incomparable*, thus *outside* of what human is, outside the human behaviour.

This exterior place of sins *au propre* is the transfiguration in theory of the series of human experiences of *revenge* throughout history: since *no revenge brings back the dead*, the murder as such is outside the *human possible / admissible* of problem solving. Injustice, atrocity, crime; injustice, atrocity = crime. They are sins: because, even though one can change things in order to annul the former atrocity and injustice, what was destroyed, the waste of human lives, the mortification of minds and spirits was already done. *They as such are irreversible*, with all the later betterment in the transition of time.

THE FEELING AROUND THE SIN

If so, the sensitivity towards the limits of human behaviour is decisive: namely, it is the *effective cause*¹ of the perpetuation or the reduction of sins. Actually, in front of deadly transgressing acts people convey their confusion, their perplexity, disorientation, disconcertion, their disturbance and shame. It seems as if they would retire, in order to not

¹ As one of the four types of causes in Aristotle.

be in the proximity of the sin. But they feel the whole moral disorder, the *enormity* brought about by the sin.

In order to express the feeling around the sin, people use a word: *pity*. “It’s a pity that...” What does this mean? That people *are sorry* for the event/fact, for being the witnesses of this extreme and extremely strange incident. And that they *feel sad*, they feel *pain*, *anger*, *suffering*, *mourning*. And that they feel *compassion*, they *pity* of the victims. The whole incident as well as the initiators are considered a sin. “It’s a pity that this happened”. People communicate that they *clearly see* the intolerable fact, that they do not close the eyes: neither in front of the fact nor in front of its authors. They have no connection with the sin, but they *regret* it *as if* they would be in the situation of feeling remorse.

WHAT KIND OF IRREVERSIBLE?

The above working definition of the sin – as *infringement* of the most important moral constitutive rules, thus of the moral order of things, as a *tipping point* marking the irreversible change of the old moral order, thus first and foremost the destruction of the old, including by murdering concrete humans – pointed out the *genus proximum* of our understanding. But not every violation of the old order is evil, thus a sin; even though any kind of murder is a sin.

The criterion to distinguish the irreversible malign events from the irreversible benign ones is, obviously, that of the *consequences* of the event. Here the voice of relativism warning, that the points of view about the evil or good consequences are different, seems to embarrass some ones. But it is not so difficult to understand that beyond the different cultural appearances of the assessment of facts there are common aspects issued from what was understood from old, the universal “human nature”. And because both the ordinary people and the philosophers have experienced the contradictory situation where they were convinced that a human nature exists but they professed exclusivist viewpoints (Bazac 2021a) about the evil and the good, still philosophy has been that which endeavoured to show the intertwining between values, criteria, labelling and, on the other hand, the inter-human relations, and offered the *universalistic* criterion to distinguish between malign and benign facts. The *categorical imperative* of Kant went from the visible consequences of the bad behaviours and social relations to these bad behaviours and social relations and then to the unexpected universalist methodological feature explaining them: the

appreciation of the other species fellows only as means, and not as ends in themselves.

Therefore, the sin is the climax of *wrongdoings*, from which irreversible paths issue; but everything depends on the *consequences* of the fact that is the (new) bifurcation point. If the consequences of a radical, irreversible fact are good for humans – according to the *categorical imperative* – that fact is the *opposite* of a sin, it is the sign of virtue, of courage (the original ancient meaning of virtue), of birth and development of the new.

But we can see that the definitions – here, of the sin – came *from the standpoint of those who had power over words and facts*: because *disobedience* was considered a huge sin, explaining the deadly sins and irrespective of the humbling of people considered only as means; it was thought as the universal essential sin, present in the deep down of all other sins.

WHAT DO THE MORAL DEFINITIONS MEAN?

The sin was the *extreme criterion* of admissible and impermissible behaviours. But this criterion was forged in the concrete social conditions whose interlacing structured the social fabric and gave the relations, causes, dependencies, differences, purposes and values. In the domination-submission societies, the social hierarchies imposed the tableau of permissible and impermissible behaviours and, thus, the criteria distinguishing between them. Ultimately, the extreme criterion as being the background of and insinuating within values and criteria was (and is) *disobedience*. The historical clarification of the sin as *disobedience*, as non-compliance with the imperatives of *authorities* gave the opposite desirable / accredited model of man. Just because people assumed the *dominant* models of behaviours they were accepted in the domination-submission societies. Obviously, according to the acting social classification in upper and lower strata, whose mixture and Saturnalian reverse was seen as undesirable and spiteful.

The Kantian *categorical imperative* was the radical ethical critique of this meaning of the extreme criterion of human behaviours. The human beings were no longer considered according to their place in the social hierarchy and their function in the social web, but only as *equal* human beings / humans *qua* human beings: because every one of them was and is the *unique* (end in itself) bearer of humanity, of human creativity. However, by shedding light on the contradiction between *universalism* (as imperative criterion of the moral equality of people)

and, on the other hand, the functional *submission* that generates inequality and the moral criterion of supreme sin as disobedience, Kant's theory opened up the path of deciphering this contradiction. Kant's theory was not a dry and abstract utopian representation. But just the supreme moral criterion to treating humans as ends, and not only as means, allowed a moral staunchness that *prevents* precedents of permissibility in the violation of moral which, as we witness today, are malign and dislocate the rationale of the human society.

THE CONCRETE MORAL CHOICE

It is always in order to avoid the mistakes, and especially the big ones. The choice as such and the human attitudes are labelled according to the distance between them and the moral criteria, including the sin. But the distance differs depending on the *information* and *values* known and assumed by people. In the last resort, the values differ according to the *interests* of people, so of their social place, but the information differs according to the means people have to acquire knowledge. These means reflect the social place of people and the control of information from above. Moreover, the distance can differ also because the relations between information and values can be very different: one may assume valuable values as a firm basis of the moral determination, but the information may be scarce, or deficient, defect, wrong; in this situation of contradiction between values and information, the choice is harder and painful: one wants to be benevolent, but his/her choice can be wrong.

Beyond this indefinite description, the guilt (as sin) ought to be tackled in a nuanced way. All humans choose, but, since their choice depends on the values and information they have, the fault to choosing the incorrect alternative is not the general ontological feature of humans but first it is generated by *those who control the values and information*. Methodologically, the image of the general human guilt covers just the *polarisation* of guilt in domination-submission societies.

In this paper, just because of the goal to question the normative approach of the sin the focus is only on the *social process of labelling*, on its determinants.

SOME FUNDAMENTALS AROUND THE SIN

Indeed, the origin of sin is the human choice. If so, the *words* – the signals of intentions and the results of deliberation, the means to

express, thus make intelligible the choices – are the utmost bearers of the choice. “In the beginning was the Word (and the Word was with God, and the Word was God)” (John: 1:1). Simpler, before the fact is the word transposing the idea conceived in the mind: still with words.

Without words there are almost no beliefs. We transpose our insights into words or rather we realise and clarify them through words. *Without articulating our ideas, the mental images would have remained elements of ephemeral reactions*² (although especially nowadays they are considered not only as helping the words / crystallisation of ideas but even as their “necessary” substitutes). But the images are described in words and are constituents of the human rationality only through words (Bazac 2018).

We trust in images but in fact the trust is relative: i.e., we are *judging* about them and it’s only our judgement that recognises them as trustworthy or not. As we witness in series, an origin of people’s misapprehension is just the tendency to *substitute* the logical inquiry about facts with images. Some ones believe rather what they see before them than in the appraisal of meanings, thus in the judgements around the image, and do not make effort to deploy these judgements.

If the cognisance are *grounded beliefs* – so always on the basis of articulation of judgements – then people trust in these beliefs. But, as we know, not all the ideas are grounded. Moreover, in the *hegemonic* thinking of those who control the information and values a powerful idea and practice – that the criteria of judgements assessment would have nothing to do with their rational foundation – became “the new normal”. Although in the hegemonic thinking the fake news, the bias and the lack of sound explanation are always features of the doubts, critiques and alternative theories, the general distrust of official institutions is not insignificant at all – according to officially accredited polls – so that we cannot exclude that just the hegemonic thinking is guilty of violation of rules of the rational argumentation and respect of words.

The result of the dominance of the “only thought” of the authorities, of *fake argumentation*, of *incomplete* and *hidden* information, the result of the *rejection of rational dialogue and debate*, of derision of logic, of commonsensical inferences, cannot be other – since the humans are rational beings feeling the distortion of thoughts – than a

² Neurophysiology has demonstrated the precedence of images in animals’ brain.

deep and general *cognitive dissonance*, harmful till malign outcomes, of most of social strata.

The cognitive dissonance is an *epistemological* feature. But it engages the *moral* structure of people. As individuals, they want to be correct, ultimately to not sin. But they want this in the concrete dominance of disrespect of words and *at the same time* of both the officially and the individually assumed moral principles. Within this chaotic world of contradictory moral messages and meanings, people feel to be morally injured. The *moral injury* is the result of *potentially morally injurious events* (PMIE) generating *moral distress*. This one is “(a) the psychological distress of (b) being in a situation in which one is constrained from acting (c) on what one knows to be right” (Jameton 2017), “—a common experience in complex societies—arises when individuals have clear moral judgments about societal practices, but have difficulty in finding a venue in which to express concerns” (Jameton 2013), and more related to the present pandemic, “the psychological unease generated where professionals identify an ethically correct action to take but are constrained in their ability to take that action. Even without an understanding of the morally correct action, moral distress can arise from the sense of a moral transgression. More simply, it is the feeling of unease stemming from situations where institutionally required behaviour does not align with moral principles” (British Medical Association 2021). Thus, the moral distress is more than an emotional distress that is devoid of moral meanings (Epstein and Delgado 2010). On the contrary, the moral distress “involves a threat to one’s moral integrity... *Moral integrity* is the sense of wholeness and self-worth that comes from having clearly defined values that are congruent with one’s actions and perceptions.” (Ibid.)

The moral distress remains even after the PMIE are over. It is a “reactive distress” called “moral residue”. But both the moral distress and the moral residue manifest in a (dual) “crescendo effect” (Ibid.). And, even though the phenomenon was discovered in nursing but also in clinical medicine, psychology, pharmacy – and, I add, many more domains – it is generated by the social, *power relations’* constraints over the technical exercise of professions. The moral distress has harmful consequences on the performances of professions and, by accentuating only the psychological aspects of estrangement and powerlessness, and by insisting on the financial costs of remedy of

isolated phenomena, there is no real solving of all the phenomena in their intertwining.

Actually, the power relations mediate through the complex of *values*. And just this complex is contradictory, and just this state generates the feelings of moral distress and *at the same time* hinders their resolution. No communication skills both at work and throughout society can supplant the *critique* of values and their transformation.

The values are concepts reflecting instituted relations and institutions or their challenging ones. They design and reflect ways of life and are deeply integrated in the mind. Since they are the ultimate *reasons to be* of the human actions, they are the terrain of struggle within the power relations. One way to address this struggle in favour of the dominant values is to silencing the alternative ones. Simply, these alternative values are excluded from the social debates and conscience, they do not exist. While the dominant values are only insinuated in the dominant messages, and the responsibility to choose values is dissolved. There are only “protocols” of the only right behaviour: by respecting them, no one is responsible anymore.

THE BASIC TECHNIQUE TO NOT CHOOSE THE SIN

In order to avoid the moral distress, the cognitive dissonance, the lingering pain of contradictory existence and powerlessness of the individual endeavour, there are only two divergent ways. According to the *hegemonic* thinking and its aggressive urging, the only solution to acquire serenity is the assumption of the dominant values and the rejection of doubts and questions about them: the more these decisions are internalised and thus, the more enthusiastic the alignment to the accredited values, information, theories is, the better the feelings of the individual and the more enjoyable its life are.

Just this is *dominant basic technique to avoid the sin*. Epistemologically, one dissects the problems in order to legitimising the dominant standpoints. However, as Popper has insisted, justification does not lead to a better explanation, on the contrary: by excluding the doubts, new aspects, diverging examples, one has a weak explanation and even a false one. But the scope of this both unconscious and educated technique is not the accumulation and verification of knowledge; it is only the avoidance of psychological suffering. And it is assumed because it is the easiest. Obviously, it is the result of the dominant ideological bombardment, but this *common strategy* of all the dominant institutions and strata benefiting it

strengthen in a deviated, mystified form the psychological need of belonging to the group: by assuming the allegiance, people feel better, everything is easier.

THE ALTERNATIVE WAY TO NOT SIN

It is, therefore, harder, much harder. It wants to understand: the *whys* and the *what for*. Justification of both one's own beliefs and the opposite ones can follow only after a robust scrutiny and falsification with counter examples and theories. Actually, justification is only the result of examination of proofs of and in relation with all of the competing standpoints.

By adopting this method, people *questions* not only the given theories but also the alignment to them, so its results at the level of society and of the individual (the psychological tranquillity and the intention to transgress them). Since the understanding, the *critical* approach cannot be refuted logically, to consider them *sine qua non* vectors of moral balance and stimulus, even though or even if not of psychological well-being, is the way to avoid the moral failures, including the moral irreversible of the sin.

THE DEEP TRUST, LOGIC AND WORDS

A short reminder of the phylogenetic origin of the sense of evil and good in humans is useful. The first *feeling* in newborn and infant babies is *trust*. It is explained ethically as a result of the social interdependence of humans and is the basis of the mutual care and help people give spontaneously (Løgstrup 1997, 18). If we try to explain trust physiologically, we surmise that the milk and care given by the mother (father, grandparents, etc.) signal "the good", so the "trustworthy persons".

The feeling is *inarticulate* and represents the physical and emotional security of survival as well-being. This feeling is the starting point of *logic* and, at the same time, its first criterion or pole. "Mother gives milk, it's good; mother comes, it will be good; if mother speaks or sings, it will be good"; "if I cry, mother will come, so it will be good". The inarticulate logical inference was transposed into words not only to describe it to mature humans but especially to point out that, without being transposed into words, the feelings and their logic remain simple ephemeral reactions. The words strengthen the existing feelings and expand them, revealing new meanings and sentiments in a complex temporality and spatiality. The physiological needs are the origin of the

value / criterion of the good and affects related to their satisfying, but as the experience and information of children increase so the value of the good and the feelings enrich and more and more relate to this experience and information outside the physiological. And obviously, the opposite values – Løgstrup said that only in process of time do the children learn the distrust – are understood and the feelings related to them are manifesting.

The feelings and the words intertwine as the latter do appear. But the words have a unique quality: they *express*, so *communicate* and *reveal* the many meanings of the feelings, beyond the bilateral relations and irrespective of the while. By expressing the feelings, *the words clarify the moral answers to them and their consequences*. For example, the feeling of compassion is an answer in the contemplation of misery of others and, at the same time, a result of other feelings (like altruism). But in society there are contradictory feelings relative to the mentioned situation. When a person manifests a kind of feelings he/she cannot ignore the opposite standpoints. Just the words allow the difficult task *to legitimate one's own feelings and points of view*. Just through words one arrives to be *responsible* and not simply feel this or that randomly, according to different circumstances. Only through words there are moral values and criteria. And only through words one justifies his/her standpoints about the world, developing a logic that *transgresses the immediate inferences*. Without words there are no humans *qua* humans.

THE BIGGEST SIN

The background of the human logic is the trust in words, i.e. in their truth value. For the child, a word without being a truthful representation of things is a joke or a toy when his mother uses rhymes in order to show words and their correspondence to facts. Neither his babble is devoid of truth value: because it represents what the child is focused on and intends to communicate. This truth value of words, demonstrated as resulting from the meanings they have, actually the *meanings arising from the intentions of humans*, was long before suggested by Plato (through Cratylus and Socrates) in *Cratylus*. And throughout history it was cherished in many ways; irrespective here of (the epistemological demonstration of) the external state of things and of the facets and evolution of meanings (Ghenea 2011).

Both the ordinary people and the philosophers understood the cardinal difference between the humans and the other animals given by

words and by logic based on truth value. The philosophers even stated that the moral sense as such, distinguishing between good and evil, was related to and issued from the human rationality, logic expressed in words.

If so, the use of words is the *sine qua non* means of *moral choices*; it is the vector of *moral choices* and, subsequently, of the promotion or avoiding of moral faults up to the sins. The contempt of the use of words, the violation of one's word, the false deduction and argumentation, the disdain of the information and of their truth, the rejection of the challenge of concepts, the distance between policies as public actions and, on the other hand, the data and their rigorous analysis, the superficial substitution of reasonable reflection with images, and images which are no longer important for their representation of reality but just for their evasion from it³, the devaluation of evidence, the impropriety of words (their inappropriate use with the speaker's intention and the picture of things), the promotion of short-term foresight and the ignorance of long-term and systemic, global horizon to make an informed choice, the silencing of alternative information and theories, the repudiation of questioning and of the critical spirit:

- are not only the proof of *indifference towards truth*,
- but also constitute the weaponry *to impose* in an authoritarian way, from without the individual, the *only officially accredited moral choices*. They simplify our thought processes and our analysis of reality.

But by imposing the moral values and choices from without – thus excluding the internal deliberation of the conscience – the individual *responsibility* to choose, and concretely to avoid the bad paths, is annulled. Moreover, the *moral meanings* of this type of choices, the consciousness of their consequences, and the *sustainability* of this type of choices are limited till their erasing. The sin must be avoided and is avoidable “because the conventions have decided”: by this position, the *moral assessment* of facts and criteria is empoisoned with *moral relativism* and vanishes. And this moral relativism creates the place of *moral vulnerability*, of morally vulnerable humans: the official, mainstream moral ideology “substitutes” the open discussion of social determinism with the *moral relativism that opposes the human universality in the moral values*; it obscures the social determinism, but

³ See the present “out of sight, out of mind” forms of Second Life, Metaverse, etc.

only this complex social determinism clarifies the variation of universal values.

The mainstream ideology mystifies the meanings and the moral argumentation. By giving fake meanings to their own fake social and moral reasoning, the words seem to be lies, they are lies. In Kant's time the lying was the *summum* and the prototype of falsehood; this is the reason of Kant's opposition to lying: the malign expansion of perfidy and deceit from the self-fulfilling precedent.

The mainstream way of treatment of words is the main part of the *symbolical reproduction* of structural social relations by the instrumentality of the moral approach of values and facts. The words, the statements are the basic means of moral choices. This does not mean that the actions are less important than the words. We all know that there is a big difference between the exasperate allegation "I kill you" and the concrete fact of murder. To give huge amounts of money for arms and to wage war have direct tragic consequences, but the words preparing them were the means convincing people to accept (or not take into account) these tragic consequences. Concretely: the good deed is more important than a well-intentioned declaration. But the humans deliberate to differentiate between the good and the evil, and they choose to not choose the evil, only with words. The above allegation is not a crime, but incitement to murder is: at both individual and social levels, and in both direct and indirect ways.

The biggest sin is to use words improperly to the moral choice of the good. But in what sense do we speak about "the biggest"? Perhaps we may assume that there is no single "the biggest". All the facts which are intolerable are "the biggest". From what point of view are they intolerable? The philosophers rush to say that the concepts, the logic of words, the world of principles are those which explain the intolerable and its ultimate cause, the words. From an ordinary perspective, the *victims* (Bazac 2021b), who are not able to riposte, including by deploying rational arguments skilfully, are those whose viewpoint is crucial, final in labeling some facts as intolerable. Because: they are the sufferers injured by sins.

THE PRAGMATIC CONCLUSION: THE BURDEN OF WORDS IN THE MAKING OF SINS

"In the beginning was the Word", and if the capital letter suggests its trans-mundane origin, a lowercase letter signals both the unique human *respect* of words and the feeling of *being at ease* with them.

However, when people are flooded with words without substance and they are taught these words, they miss the *baggage of words* necessary to express the complexity of things. If they do not have words, they do not have ideas, and maybe not even feelings; these ones are substituted with signs (emoticons) and standard phrases, clichés, stencils: *as if* the man becomes an imperfect form of the Artificial Intelligence, and not this one should be made similar to man. They communicate, but do not argue. They do not move within logic – logically understood world – but within superficial descriptions. They accept, even endorse, the incongruent logic that asserts the superiority of humans in the *scala naturae* by their moral sense, and at the same time justifies unimaginable cruelty and malign for survival atrocity. Indeed, “the best possible world”. And indeed, this is a “biggest sin”.

As it was mentioned, the constitution of thinking, so of logic, was related to and at the same time generated words. But once existing, the words have an *autonomous* power over mind. They create the *knowledge* of things, their *awareness* and the *recognition* of their complex meanings. And they create the *feelings* without which there is no life.

To *reduce* the meanings to the consumption of inanimate and animate things means to induce *indifference* to them and thus *ignorance*, and at the same time a *dependence* on these *reduced* inanimate and animate things. To say to someone, and not an old person, that he will die because there are no medicines for his cancer – or they are “too expensive for individuals or health-care systems” (*The ‘war on cancer’ isn’t yet won*, 2022), thus unaffordable for all – means to destroy, and *untimely*, his will to live and thus to devoid him of the psychical power to fight the illness. But we know that this psychical power, arising from and reflecting the wholeness of the integral unique being, is a main force to keep health and the integrity of the human being. To say that some people, from children to old and without being culpable of any delinquency, are the biggest enemies of the state (or the nation) means to tacitly *implicate their murdering*: in an organised, industrial way.

Dryly, this biggest sin is the result of the *use of words as means of domination-submission*: how to influence, how to convince without rational arguments; how to annihilate everything that could contradict, question, disturb, problematise, how to avoid the difficult, the challenging; actually, how *to avoid the ruled to be human* (Kojève

1947, 435), to question and to choose with their own discernment the good.

SEMANTIC CONCLUSION ABOUT THE BIGGEST SIN

The goal of this paper was to point at the cardinal importance of the words – discourses, arguments – in the inner deliberation of man when making moral distinctions between good and evil and when choosing and acting. Indeed, the words are the original means of the moral choices and actions and thus the awareness and control of humans of their words have a first and main responsibility in the deployment of actions.

The words give the *reason to be* of the intentions, choices and actions. Indeed, they are “the message”. Accordingly, the biggest sin is to *mystify the words* and to not infer all the way to the end, to all of consequences of the choices. The mystification of words has *irreversible* results. If not all the irreversible are bad, the criterion to distinguish between them is the obtrusion of the bad irreversible and, in mirror, the submission to this bad irreversible *as if* this submission would be the only order of things. However, through the medium of words, the human beings – every one of which is unique and unrepeatable – were considered only as simplified *means* for selfish use. Religion has *substituted the worldly “abuse of power” and misconduct with the power of Almighty and the natural submission to It*. The greed, etc. considered as sins by religion are reactions of those submitted to the social relations that generate sins: of both the rulers and the ruled. Ultimately, they are causes and forms of manifestation of these relations. As forms of manifestations and even as results, they must and can be stopped. But the stopping, the brakes posited by the moral education are not deep and lasting without the change of their causes.

At the ethical normative level, Kant has demonstrated that the supreme virtue is to not treat the others only as means but always as ends in themselves, and respectively, to not behave only as a means for the order of things, but always as an end in itself. Implicitly, the supreme sin is to not be able to transgress the mortifying order that imposes only the behaviour of a means. *The biggest sin is to stop the ability of humans to be ends in themselves. The biggest sin is to determine the others to justify and assume a trajectory of life that wastes them. The biggest sin is to oppose to the daring to know and to not dare to know.*

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