

EPISTEMOLOGICAL ETHICS. NEW ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

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The man's position in relation to knowledge forms and regaining his dignity in terms of its unity as a being endowed with mind and soul is the essence of the epistemological theory of ethics. The thesis from which we start the new foundation of ethical theories is that: in conditions of freedom or adaptation / surviving, within the size of which the perception, representation, intention and action may bring about, one can see the human nature endowed with mind and soul. Knowledge theories aim the man and his entire ethical value that finds itself in the manner of government and social and moral living. Between the man's „evil” and „good” we must explain the idea of solidarity, justice, truth and freedom. Within the universal value of the soul, the history of religions finds its place and the ethical values largely justify both the life here, and especially the one beyond. Or, in this new light it is required to see the ethical value of man and necessary alliances are needed that initially would require putting together those individual researches in various fields that complete harmonization of knowledge. This fact would imply a unity in diversity of ethical theories about man and society. Within the architecture of the new theory of epistemological ethics the value of human ethics and the role of ethics in theory of knowledge can be seen.

Keyword: *ethics, knowledge, society, communism, theory, epistemological ethics.*

Introduction

In *Epistemological Ethics. New Ethical Dimensions of Knowledge* we expose a series of theses and arguments which refer to the ethical approach of the three major concepts that build the universe of

discourse theory and form the basis for the new theory known as the epistemological ethics. The conceptual triad *memory-forgetting-anguish* introduces a number of ethical issues on the ground of historical and philosophical issues specific to Communism.

In Romania, Communism was the historical and moral gap during which, as Noica asserts as well, *everything contradicted the being, but nothing was contradicted by it*¹, which causes a distancing from the fundamental objective of life, be it historical or human moral². This conceptual triad memory-forgetting-anguish comes to justify some steps of knowledge and understanding in terms of ethics and epistemology, within the limits of what we call thinking as theory, as an *epistemological ethics*³. Without a complex thinking in these terms, we risk not to see the whole reality where the Romanian intellectuals lived in the communist prisons and the ethical value of experience – of life in general.

The *epistemological ethics*⁴ is unbiased in terms of action and social group analysis because it aims to link the epistemological and ethical values in terms of *similarity* (size, value, shape) and *contiguity* (part-whole, element-mass, near-far, cause and effect)⁵.

(i) the *fundamental thesis* that starts the theory of epistemological ethics is that:

– in conditions of *freedom* or *adaptation / survival*, within the size of which the perception, intention, representation and action can bring together, we can see the human nature endowed with *reason* and *soul*.

– within the length of this *continuum* we can see the entire contents of ethical theories (as *theories of action* or *theories of virtue*) and the size of researcher's thinking, of the scientist as a manifestation of moral judgment and everything that comes with the scientific view on *man's position* from particular to universal in terms of his dignity and personality.

(ii) *the method* (or methodology) that has led to the foundation of this theory is based on the degree of knowledge and understanding of the material that comes from the coverage of social life, specific to the communist period, as a reference for science and practice. So:

– *observation* was the basis of both the substance of the matter, but especially in the way of analyzing the material content that we had access through those who have experienced the communist prisons.

– *experimentation* or *lab work* is written in the decryption of what the entire content of the book describes, compares and analyzes, whether

we consider Pitecti experiment, the idea of creating *the new man* or the experience of the communist prisons as length and coverage.

– *realistic or objective interpretation*, as some would say, comes from the convergence of the knowledge of this material which is strictly linked to the experience of Romanian communist prisons in which the whole human life is expressed and the value of the idea, of what the soul manages to archive and the reason to reactivate as remembrance or simple *reminder*.

In other terms of the analysis it is necessary to say that “political detention meant sudden and brutal uprooting of the family, workplace, group affiliation, social matrix separation and deprivation of wellbeing and the cultural equivalent operation prematurely severing the umbilical cord, an operation that led to the sudden and complete change of lifestyle.”⁶ To define our world today without relating to the entire past entails a denial of all the parts in it. To relate to the past as a whole without seeing the whole and the included part supposes to reject the idea of the past at the level of memory and knowledge, truth and freedom. The right of the being to be born and to have opportunities of a *being* – namely freedom, memory, judgment and own will – elections autonomy.

Epistemological Ethics – concept, theory, method

The idea of an epistemological ethical springs out from *The Logic of Research* whose author is Karl Popper, where the research focus is on logic and where ethics comes to justify the nature of a sequential ethics of an ethics of the gap. Between this logic and what followed it, numerous researches, discoveries and social-historical events including the politically motivated communism make the evidence of a compelling justification of an epistemological ethical nature when the society or science takes as its object of study the relationship between *Society* and *Man*.

Starting from Popper’s perspective on ethics in relation to the logic, the merely stating that (...) *ethics is not a science; but although there is no rational scientific basis of ethics, there is an ethical basis of science and rationalism*, (Karl Popper) we have outlined the idea of an epistemological ethics, of theory and study of man having this ideological experimental episode expressing the nature of the *idea*, of the *context*, of the role and importance of *moral judgment* in terms of *epistemic*

and *ethical justification* as a foundation problem, this fact implying that under ethical circumstances, the *best* or the most *useful*, the most *beautiful*, the *truest* is what meets all these under epistemological circumstances too. In a brief statement of what the epistemological ethics proposes and develops throughout its coverage and theoretical and practical length, it is necessary to refer to the essence of what forms the conceptual foundation – of building the theory, i.e. the ratio and the contents of the three major concepts, memory, forgetfulness and anguish to what constitutes within *knowledge*.

(i) *memory* requires knowledge, which leads to the foundation of all knowledge and experience. **Thesis:** a knowledge of the memory as *internal memory* resource that is or is not related to the outside world as *collective memory or history of the world* is required.

(ii) *forgetting* or *recalling* in a Platonic sense means *survival and / or progress* (in Bacon's sense) *evolution* (from the perspective of genetic / evolutionary epistemology). **Thesis:** Forgetting is part of the survival of the human species and it is a characteristic of it. Forgetting is the axiom of understanding the ethical values and of what the content of knowledge reveals inside of the human thought and of moral manifestations.

(iii) *Anguish* and its opposite – *the detachment* and various forms of *perfection* are representations of man's position in relation to the world. Within the size of the third concept three major corollaries that are built in steps of human development ethically explaining the perfection as excellence and project of knowing the world coming into being.

Corollary 1. The man is practicing the forms of freedom even before he was born, but he is not aware of it. Or, the freedom of the cell, of the heredity is a fact that is forgetful, because it cannot be controlled by the mundane mind. It is a species of painful consciousness because it creates the potential liability in all forms – from the hereditary responsibility to the moral and ontological responsibility.

Corollary 2. If we reflect on the pogroms and human sacrifices of communist times we remember what they wanted, namely to punish and remove from the humanity of any nations within the Communist Bloc that went through trials and wants communism. The origins and spiritual mystery of man's relationship with the divine were also punished among others.

Corollary 3. During Communism there was gender equality, for this detention did not ignore the role of women as an opponent of the regime.

It is required to make some methodological notes, of defining the ethical position from a scientific point of view, which formed the foundation for the epistemological ethical theory – any approach that regards the man and his relationship with the environment, where we identify phenomena, causes and relationships that suppose *evolution* and *survival* (in terms of *assimilation-adaptation* which implies the presence of two basic instincts – the instinct of reproduction and nutrition) requires an argument on ethical criteria. And this starting from the very criterion that even the difference either the otherness or expression and opposition of an opinion, we were saying that the very difference may play an important role because it can be: *beneficial*, *neutral* or *dangerous*⁷ as an expression of something that sits between understanding and conflict, between two or more parts, between the part and the whole considered in a broad sense as any ethical issue would be required to be seen.

Any ethical theory can get just about life here without regard to the amount of the ontological aspect of the soul, and this precisely because here the man takes different values from a religious and customary point of view. A man's value from an ethical and religious point of view is in the size what the soul stores and reflects during the process of knowledge and action dimension – of *the facts*. The *human mind* “is by nature turned towards generalization. It starts with simple facts and quickly rose to theory. Unfortunately, most of the times these theories are false; for the fact that it started is not essential. But man believes that his theory prevails and that reality must obey. There are more than 300 years since mankind is the victim of a “theory”; that of individualism; which caused, is causing and will cause yet more disasters and deep misery in all branches of human existence”⁸, says Nae Ionescu.

The core problem from which we started in the theoretical foundations and design theory as an epistemological ethical experience is detention in Romania. Nicu Ioniȃor remains, in this sense, a scientific milestone on the content and moral consequences of the experiences during the communist prisons of the human mind and of the society in general. His

study, though small in its editorial coverage reveals the ideational coordinates of high scientific and experiential length and completes in a manner that combines the living reality with presented, ideal reality, designed to play an important role in the foundation of what we have called epistemological ethics. Nicu Ionior's perspective is one that can be integrated into the thinking of the genetic epistemology following Piaget's origin with references to Darwinian thinking way because he stresses that "time passed, the tragedy we were involved is enshrined in our cognitive influencing thinking, our emotional state and behavior – and therefore we can not forget. (...) The testimonies of political prisoners who crossed the arid desert and full of pitfalls of post-detention period (even after 1989) could be an inexhaustible source for understanding and exploring the depths of the human spirit, to the extensive coverage of the existence phenomenon, but also to the restrictive limits imposed by our structure, because we must not forget that we are dependent on our own structure and culture. An ocean of suffering, defeats and successes, a struggle between good and evil that haunts us, between temptation and abstinence, a titanic struggle for survival in the great existential infested by a destructive and dissolved ideology of the individual and collective psyche could thereby be discovered."⁹

The core problem – the phenomenon of political detention focusing on some intellectuals' experience during the communist prisons from which we started in this book allows a *scientifically methodological practice* of some of these forms of knowledge and of scientific circumscription of those forms of knowledge that are based on experience, which involve a combination of those types of thought and meaning conferred by the importance of the hemispheres, involving the intellect in its relations with the world, having the *bodily or physiological ego* as an intermediate.¹⁰

The philosophical knowledge, says Berdyaev, is "knowledge of the truth and not of the being. Or, knowing the truth is an ascent of the spirit to the truth, an ascent and a strike from the truth. But the knowledge involves a social aspect to which has not been given enough attention. Knowledge is a form of communication and relationship between people. At the same time, it is especially the position of the one who knows not to another or others, but to truth, to this primary fact which philosophers called it "being". Human knowledge and, especially, the philosophical

knowledge depend on people's spiritual step, the swing of their conscience; here the forms of the community and the relations among men play a huge role."¹¹

The difficulty of the approach is also given by the complexity of the selected research problem, connected to the availability of the scientific expertise to understand the intent of the researcher who calls for an impartial, methodological and thinking exercise, both ethical and epistemological, this implying to clarify the knowledge.¹² Or, the knowledge "can be characterized in a very general way as a capacity for discrimination of different types of information. Information: physical, physiological, and phenomenological underpinning all those elementary forms of discrimination or preceding any classification of stimuli and, generally, the ability to believe something, to have an opinion. It is the case of knowing the shapes, smells, sounds. The sensory discrimination ability prior to any classification is characteristic to man and superior animals. The ability to qualitatively distinguish different experiences, subjective feelings, as far as the body that performs these differences cannot classify and describe them, being related to this basic form of knowledge.¹³ This kind of knowledge which we refer to is a *knowledge related to time* and whose denial involves *existential* negation equally to the whole and all parties. For we subscribe to Berdyaev's view on the classification of the concept of time compared to the insight regarding the time specific to Kant's thought. As Berdyaev says "there is a cosmic, a historical and an existential time. The cosmic time is mathematically counted based on Earth's rotational movement around the sun, calendars and clocks rely on, and it is symbolized by a whirlwind. Historical time is as embedded in cosmic time and it can mathematically be considered, by decades, centuries and millennia, but any event cannot be repeated in it and it is symbolized by a line directed to future, to novelty. Existential time is not mathematically counted, it depends on the intensity of which somebody lives it, it depends on our sufferings and joys within the creative momentum are going into it and the ecstasies occur, it can be symbolized by a point, expressing movement in depth."¹⁴ In this knowledge and its corresponding *existential time* the man regains his lost dignity and his moral value that strips him from various types of government and scientific thinking. Man's autonomy sits both in knowledge, experience and

expertise – it is limited in that he sits or that emerges to the height of the *idea* or the bottom access of *living*.

Whatever the approach the relationship with this world, *knowledge* seems to browse the four types of knowledge mentioned by Jean Piaget, namely: 1. *inherited* (innate) *knowledge*; 2. *Logical-mathematical knowledge*; 3. *Knowledge gained by experience* (from learning to physical knowledge); 4. *Metaphysical and ideological knowledge*. As a subsidiary, Piaget puts in this classification the issue of *metaphysical knowledge and ideological* which includes “the forms of wisdom or coordination of values and because they are in much more a reflection of social and cultural superstructures than an extension of biological adaptation.”¹⁵ From the point of view of all that was communism, and in the light of what communist prisons have left as experience and thought, we can now include such knowledge in the fourth category, without many deductions, the *metaphysical knowledge* that does not exclude the *ideological knowledge*.

The originality of approach that gives substance to the concept of epistemological ethics (which may be the method for knowing and reasoning on ethical criteria), is what is done in connection with a number of theories, concepts and axiology attempts in terms of ethical values. And the essence of the epistemological ethics¹⁶ is linked to *the principle of virtual velocities* that Galileo Galilei recalls in *Dialogues on the New Sciences*.

In our opinion, the forms of *forgetting* go through the symmetry coordinates that “are not a number or shape, but a special kind of transformation – a way to move objects. If the object looks the same after it has been transformed, the transformation is symmetry. For example, a square shows the same as if it is rotated by a right angle. This idea more extended and embellished is fundamental to the scientific understanding of the universe and its origins we have today.”¹⁷ The *epistemological ethics* makes reference to exactly these forms of forgetfulness as a method of ethical knowledge and theory within the debates on the theory of knowledge.

New Dimensions of Knowledge – Stages of Theories Validation –

According to Popper's approach the method of testing and validating a concept or a theory is structured into four stages: "comparing logical conclusions from them, through which the internal consistency of the system is tested. The second is to investigate the theory of logical form to determine if it has the nature of an empirical or scientific theory, or if it is, for example, tautological. A third is about comparing it with other theories, especially to determine if the theory is a scientific progress. The last step is testing the theory through empirical applications of the conclusions that can be derived from it."¹⁸ During the conceptual and argumentative way implying the epistemological concept of ethics that is founded in theory and research method specific to ethical knowledge reveals for the beginning the need of a new perspective upon some fundamental philosophical orientations for what the epistemological ethics implies. For Kant says that: *intuition without concept is blind and the concept without intuition is empty*. On the other hand, to limit the act of knowing just to rational issues assumes to cancel the human experience that fills the content of the ages, of what Berdyaev recalls as being an *existential time*, as time that complements *knowledge* with other times – *historical time* and *space*.

In this sense, Wilhelm Dilthey is an argument that focuses on an epistemological foundation of the spirit of sciences that initially supposes to clarify our position on Kant's *apriorism*¹⁹ as Dilthey asserts *is dead*. As Dilthey says: "Without a world, we had no self-consciousness and without this self-consciousness, no world would have been for us."²⁰ However, this consciousness that Dilthey speaks of is within the *existential time* which is perhaps the most comprehensive and relevant for the transition into another stage of ethical knowledge, because this time creates the possibility of a link between the ethical and epistemological values that cannot ignore the existence of the three times stated by Berdyaev: *cosmic, historical and existential time*.²¹

In this collection of theories, where man's position in the world is uncertain in relation to historical, social and religious values, the concept of epistemological ethics creates conditions for knowledge beyond the so-called hierarchy of moral values, the order of the universe of scientific and social discourse. This is because the perspective of structuralism applied to the problem of knowledge architecture that can retrieve specific

array of the structuralist type of scientific knowledge shows us the complexity of the memory mechanism based on archiving and evocation criteria of a part or all of the reality that you attend alone or with others – as to a *historical fact*. In other words, this would mean that according to the mathematical structuralism there is a distinction between the three basic types of structure, namely: a) order structures (*a* precedes *b*); b) algebraic structures (relative to different possible operations between elements of a set); c) the topological structure (relative to the idea of neighborhood); topology is a kind of qualitative geometry, focusing on issues not involving distances and measures (in fact distances also lead to a topology, but to a very particular kind). What you need to remember here is that any structure, any relationship is a restriction, an arbitrary reduction²². Yet in such criteria of knowledge we cannot see the man in the specific of the species at the level of the group, where universalistic nature defining the man / person can be merged in an approach based on evolutionary order.

“But society as external and educational its modes of transmission and interaction would be as opposed to hereditary transmission and combinations, however, is not only a product of life, and the “collective representations” of Durkheim presuppose the existence of a nervous system for every member group. Therefore, it is important to weigh the merits of the issue of the individual and those of the group (analogous to the question of lineage relationships between egg and chicken); the important issue is to distinguish logic in solitary reflection as cooperation, errors or deviations from the collective opinion and individual conscience. However, despite Tarde there are not two logics, one for the group and one for the individual: there is only one way to coordinate A and B actions following the relationships of inclusion or order, etc., whether these actions are of distinct individuals, one or one for A and another or others for B, or if they are of the same individual (who has not invented himself as they participate in the whole society).²³

The new dimensions of knowledge amid the selected problem can cause the new understandings of what Charles Pierce²⁴ called criteria of significance – 1. *those which are interpreted in thoughts or other signs in the infinite series*; 2. *those which are interpreted in real experiences*; 3. *those which are interpreted as a feeling and appearance*. The ethical knowledge is based on such knowledge trying to sort between *part and*

whole, between the *item and the lot*, between *my near-far*, as well as *yours*, or *the other*, etc. The ethical argument is in convergence and similarity relations with the epistemological argument because both aim the big world of objects and relationships, where the world or *knower* order or chaos can dominate.

The *social and scientific need* in terms of knowing and determining its limits, comes from creating these theoretical niches of some theories integration and of some Romanian authors within the largest system of thinking that justifies our experiential past as length, coverage and ethical expression. In this view, ethics is the best science to capitalize the material of this knowledge and understanding. But this material to have scientific and social implicitly value created conditions for founding a theory having an ethical length and coverage largely regarding this Romanian space in terms of experience. It should be said that, in terms of ethical values and forms of manifestation, the phenomenon and theory may find value in the content of explicitness the plurality of philosophical issues throughout the whole human background – because within the coverage of the book human rights issues and of the society are spoken about.

Conclusions

How a man relates to the outside world, on the basis of what he has seen, learned and experienced is one of the fundamental criteria that make differences between people, because on this basis the man memorizes and stores realities and due to these he performs his existence *to his becoming into fully being*. “The masses have no more content than each individual. It is not about facts and their results, but about *desire* and desire itself is always only individual. Not the people’s destiny, which exists only at the level of the phenomenon, but *the* destiny of the individual is *morally* decided.²⁵ However, the moral and rational-emotional investment that accompanies the relationship with exteriority makes the self to store inexpressible vital resources, which are actually related to the triad *faith-assertion-truth*. In this sense the epistemological ethics can make important contributions within the area of *masses theories*.

The theoretical and practical experience involves the intellect at all these levels of inference and of scientific knowledge – of *epistemological ethics* without which we cannot understand and perceive any part

of reality, be it scientific or political, philosophical or historical. Within these terms it is necessary to rationalize the concept of epistemological ethics as a new dimension of knowledge.

ENDNOTES

¹ Noica, *Letters about Hermes' Logic*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1998, p. 146.

² During the Communism in Romania, Nicu Ioniță says, "Political detention exceeded the limits of repression known in history and it was a real scheduled genocide, knowingly performed who over 10% of the population fell prey to. The area of traumatic experiments was extremely extensive and varied, from the continuous psychological terror, to the most abominable and wild tortures received by all political prisoners in the same way, but differently handled, because the prisoners were extremely different from one another." Nicu, Ioniță, *Detention Psychotrauma and its Consequences – Personal and Scientific Testimony of a survivor of Pitești Experiment*, Civic Academy Foundation, Bucharest, 2008, p. 9.

³ Cornelia Margareta Găspărel, *Epistemological Ethics. Theory and Study Project of Man*, Romanian Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 2014.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 25.

⁵ Solomon Marcus, *Order and Chaos*, in *Universal Paradigms*, Parallel 45 Publishing House, Pitești, 2011, pp. 160–165.

⁶ Nicu Ioniță, *Detention Psychotrauma and its Consequences – Personal and Scientific Testimony of a survivor of Pitești Experiment*, Civic Academy Foundation, Bucharest, 2008, p. 13.

⁷ Solomon Marcus, *Universal Paradigms*, integrated edition, Parallel 45, Pitești, 2011, p. 131.

⁸ Nae Ionescu, *Prejudices (January 31, 1931, Out of the Wind Rose Volume 1926 to 1933*, collection edited by Mircea Eliade), apud *Memory of the Imprisoned Thinking Journal*, no. 2 Published by the Writers' Union of Romania, pp. 89–92.

⁹ Nicu Ioniță, *Detention Psychotrauma and its Consequences – A Survivor's Personal and Scientific Testimony of Pitești Experiment*, Civic Academy Foundation, Bucharest, 2008, pp. 127–128.

¹⁰ "The sensory-motor ability to do certain movements is performed by processing the physical and physiological information in the absence of phenomenological information. On the other hand, to distinguish before any capability of classification and description between different sensations and

other subjective feelings is to have and to differentiate phenomenological information. The whole performance that Ryle designates through the expression *knowing how* and in general, the tacit knowledge is the knowledge that consists of physical, physiological, and phenomenological information” (for a detailed explanation on tacit and explicit knowledge read Mircea Flonta’s book, *Cognitio. A Critical Introduction to Knowledge Issue*, All Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008, pp. 23–36).

¹¹ Nikolai Berdyaev, *An Attempt of Eschatological Metaphysics*, Paideia, Bucharest, 1999, p. 48.

¹² Francis Bacon made it in its draft about the reform of science and intellect a classification that divides into: *natural knowledge* (knowledge of the essence of created things) and *moral knowledge* (knowledge of good and evil) – see Francis Bacon, *Two Books about Excellence and Advancement of Knowledge of the Divine and Human*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2012.

¹³ Mircea Flonta, *Cognitio. A Critical Introduction to Knowledge Issue*, All Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008. pp. 30–31.

¹⁴ Nikolai Berdyaev, *An Attempt of Eschatological Metaphysics*, Paideia, Bucharest, 1999, p. 227.

¹⁵ Jean Piaget, *Biology and Knowledge, Essay on the Relations between Organic Adjustments and Cognitive Processes*, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj, 1971, pp. 282–283.

¹⁶ For a better understanding of the concept of ethical and epistemological theory I recommend to read my book *Epistemological Ethics. Theory and Study Project of Man*, Romanian Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 2014.

¹⁷ Ian Stewart, *Why Beauty is the Truth. A History of Symmetry*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2010, pp. 7–8.

¹⁸ Karl Popper, *Social Philosophy and Philosophy of Science*, Three Publishing, Bucharest, 1998, p. 143.

¹⁹ Fr. Nietzsche, Kant introduces a New College to Man where he was missing a Principle, in case Wagner Case, Humanitas, 2008, Bucharest, p. 27.

²⁰ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Constructing Historical World within the Sciences of the Spirit*, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 1999.

²¹ Nikolai Berdyaev, *An Attempt of Eschatological Metaphysics*, Paideia, Bucharest, 1999, p. 226.

²² Solomon Marcus, *Universal Paradigms*, integrated edition, Parallel 45, Pitești, 2011, p. 160.

²³ Jean Piaget, *Biology and Knowledge, Essay on the Relations between Organic Adjustments and Cognitive Processes*, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj, 1971, pp. 385–386.

²⁴ Charles Pierce, *Meaning and Action*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1990, p. 241.

²⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol II, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2012, p. 626.

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