

CONSCIENCE

IN RELATION TO MORAL SELF-*ORIENTATION*
AND THE FORMATION OF SELF-*IDENTITY*



CMTF UP OLOMOUC

Katedra systematické teologie

NAKAT

Bakalářská práce

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2013

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně za použití uvedené literatury.

Poděkování: Chtěla bych tímto poděkovat **vedoucímu práce ThLic. Dominiku Opatrnému, ThD.** z Katedry systematické teologie CMTF UP za podnětné připomínky, a hlavně studentu Teologické fakulty Maltské univerzity Walteru, za jeho velkou ochotu při získání potřebné literatury v anglickém jazyce.

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PREFACE

There are situations in life when you meet someone who has a significant influence on you, you seem to understand what the other person is trying to pass on.

I think I was lucky enough to meet such a person in the academic year 2010/2011, when I was studying as an ERASMUS student at Malta University.

At the time of a turbulent situation in the Czech educational system, especially at Czech universities, I met with a very good relationship not only between teachers and students, but also among lecturers themselves.

The subject taught was Moral Theology, and the lecturer - priest showed a high moral profile, together with a sound knowledge of what he was teaching, very good knowledge of English, and mostly great humility.

No wonder the lectures and seminars made me choose as the topic of my bachelor's work one part of moral theology, and that is conscience. I suppose this work will serve as the starting point for a more detailed and elaborated study in the future.

Mgr. Monika Koslová

1. INTRODUCTION

The world we live in today is presented to us by many 'experts' as the explosion of a financial/economic/environmental crisis. However, some of us (as far as my knowledge goes) rather believe (or are even convinced) that we should look at the problems the Earth faces from the moral point of view.

That is why we consider issues as the consequence of a *moral crisis*. For most people (in my opinion) who understand it this way, life is becoming very hard, for some of them even unbearable.

They seek a helpful way out of it and that way might be knowledge – the more you know, understand, the more you may be helped and at the same time help other people orient themselves.

It seems to me that nowadays the majority of people act/react in such a way as if they would not have any 'sense of conscience'. OR, rather, they are somehow the victims ('scapegoats') of the system. Many times, even though they do not want to, they behave wrongly, not being strong enough to resist what they are pushed into.

As I have been working with people for quite a long time, I hope that deeper knowledge of the topic about conscience will help me in my profession to positively influence and form future generation.

Part I

2. CONSCIENCE

2.1 Introduction

Christian moral life includes not only *our story* but also, and above all, the *story of God* as the Ultimate Reality that has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit.

Key words: *act responsibly, complex, conscience, cultivate, eschatological, freedom, God, human experience, human heart, Christian moral life, inner voice, moral judgements, new man, order of nature, patterns, practical reason, purification, self-discovery, self-realisation, St. Paul, stoic philosophy, syneidesis, the Scriptures, the unexpected, tradition, unfolding, wisdom*

People need to find the right kind of orientation on things that matter to be able to act and judge rightly. In many cases, however, there are obstacles. Decision-making is quite a complex process. Our human conscience is involved. Of course, if we are to account, we have to give reasons for the way we have acted or intend to act. Conscience is an ability which all people have as rational beings. We generally act according to the patterns of behaviour that we have acquired over the years. This is the reason why *virtuous living is so important*. As will be explained later on, conscience, as the human faculty to interpret concrete situations and respond to them in appropriate forms of action, can actually function properly with the help of prudence which is a virtue perfecting practical reason.

The context in which conscience operates is human life as a continuing experiencing of oneself in a variety of changing situations. Concretely, therefore, conscience is influenced by the experiences that we go through. It is influenced also by the character that we have formed. The self is a being who, in faith, is endowed with the possibility of knowing oneself in relation to God. In making an act of judgement, the believer would be guided by reason informed by faith. **The Scriptures** provide us with a helpful,

indeed an essential, context for understanding the meaning of conscience as judging and deciding on the basis of reason broadened and deepened by faith.

The term 'conscience' occurs only in the Book of Wisdom where we find the Greek word SYNEIDESIS. Nevertheless, throughout the OT we find reference to God as an inner voice calling man to a righteous life and placing certain requirements upon us. Moral requirements are mediated to us by listening to God's Word. The 'heart' stands for man's innermost core where God's Word, if listened to attentively, engages us at the deepest personal level, enlightening and empowering us not only to judge rightly but to follow up our decisions. The biblical notion of 'wisdom' means the moral ability to differentiate between the good and evil.

Jesus emphasises not only the external order (as the Pharisees were typically doing) but the sincerity of the human heart. Following in particular the prophetic tradition, he emphasized the constant need of conversion of the heart. In other words, Christian moral life places us not only before the law, as an external principle of moral life, but introduces us into the reality of God as the mystery of unfailing love. It is **St. Paul** who speaks of this facet of moral life in terms of 'conscience'. Up to the period (era) of St. Paul, there was the influence of stoic philosophy. Stoic ethics restricted the term SYNEIDESIS mainly to the knowledge of evil and to the feeling of remorse on yielding to evil. However, St. Paul understood the confrontation between good and evil in a more complex way. Speaking to a pagan audience, he stresses that God himself inscribes his Law into the hearts of humans. So conscience is an integral part of human nature. The point that St. Paul is making is that an encounter with the God of Jesus Christ is essentially an encounter with our innermost nature. Independently of divine revelation, we are already disposed to distinguish between good and evil and so God is not a 'foreign' reality to any human being. Indeed, St. Paul maintains that in baptism we become new men and women, the new order building on and going beyond the old order of being. Our transformation in Christ involves a transformation of our way of thinking and acting. But this process of transformation is only possible if our conscience, as our ability to judge and decide on moral and religious matters, is itself informed by faith.

Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* (par.68) stated that no one shapes his/her own conscience arbitrarily, but we all build our own 'I' on the basis of a 'self' which is given to 'us'. Indeed, I am free in that I can understand more or less what the situation I am in is and can respond in an intelligent and free way. This does not mean, however, that we re-fashion ourselves as we want and fulfil ourselves. Self-fulfilment is only possible, if we respect ourselves as the human beings that we are. This implies that we have to relate properly with other people and with our individual and collective past. In this sense, our self-identity has a social and a temporal dimension. What Pope Benedict XVI is saying is that our conscience can function in a healthy manner, if we remain open to the truth about ourselves, others, the world and God as the mystery of the world. Rather than self-creation we should speak of self-discovery. As we live our life, responding to so many different sets of circumstances, we have the opportunity to understand more ourselves (our strengths and weaknesses, our potential for good and our propensity to evil) and discover gradually the reality in which we are involved and engaged.

Living and acting in faith means opening ourselves to a reality that we can only know in an inadequate and fragmentary way. Faith in a God who is there and yet not there, present and yet still coming, places our life and actions in an eschatological perspective. It is a faith that presents to us God as the One who is inviting us to participate in His Kingdom. It is a faith that calls us to take responsibility for our individual and collective life in loyalty to God's intention for us. Yet we know that we can be in control of our life only to a certain level. The end is gradually unfolding; we have to be prepared for the unexpected, we cannot comprehend everything.

In this situation where the way is neither totally clear nor totally obscure, faith in God as a Reality that provides and nourishes a sense of hope is essential for us to find our way in life. Such faith presupposes that in acting on the basis of reason informed by faith we can find the right kind of orientation in life. Self-orientation constitutes the first dimension of our self-identity. Conscience plays a key and an indispensable part in the process whereby we find out where we stand on matters of importance and where we need to go to re-affirm and promote what is truly important and valuable in life. ¹

¹ Vlastní poznámky z přednášek a seminářů předmětu Morální teologie, prof. George Grima, Maltská univerzita.

2.2 Christian ethics

In order to bring out the fuller meaning of conscience in the context of Christian faith, it is important to distinguish between the two fundamental dimensions of morality, including Christian morality. In fact, morality, especially as understood within the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition, exhibits two facets: one focusing on the human aspiration to self-fulfilment (*teleological* dimension) and the other on the requirements that should be kept to ensure an authentic kind of self-fulfilment (*deontological* dimension).

One of the fundamental biblical texts for understanding the dynamics of the human aspiration to self-fulfilment is Mt 19:16 – which **John Paul II** takes as a theological background to the exploration of Christian life. The encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* opens with a very insightful meditation on the encounter of Jesus with the young man. As the Pope explains, the text shows the kind of reasoning that Jesus, as a Teacher, is proposing to the young man to answer the question: 'What must I do ?'

In this biblical text both the deontological as well as teleological aspects are incorporated. It is clear that we should keep certain moral norms, specifically *The Ten Commandments*, as norms which have their ultimate source in God. It is also clear that we are called to liberate ourselves from the so-called security provided by worldly possessions in order to 'be possessed' by God as the ultimate end for self-fulfilment. This text is foundational for understanding Christian morality as a call to abide by God's will (as expressed particularly in *The Ten Commandments*) and as a call to self-transcendence in the hope of achieving self-fulfilment ultimately in God's gift (as expressed in *The Beatitudes*). In responding to God's call we are introduced more deeply and intimately in the mystery of His love for each and everyone of us and sent to share this grace or friendship with our neighbour. Hence Christian faith enables us to place our legitimate desire for self-fulfilment within the mystery of God as the beginning and end of our life.

St. Augustine is a key figure in the history of Western theology. Of particular importance for moral theology is his commentary on Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount,

according to Matthew. He distinguishes between the so-called lesser precepts that articulate the divine law. These motivate us through fear (of punishment) and the greater precepts that express God's love for us. They set us free as they enable us to encounter God without having to justify ourselves, as in confessing our guilt we are opening ourselves to divine forgiveness and reconciliation. In other words, the normative dimension of Christian life is transformed into an imperative that goes beyond the obligation imposed by the purely moral norm. In fact, the imperative of love, as understood in the context of the story of God's love for us, turns into an invitation to a life of friendship with God and among ourselves.

Aquinas remains within the Augustinian tradition particularly in his treatise on law, distinguishing between the Old and New Law. The Old Law, covering the moral, juridical and cultic aspects of the life of the Jewish people, is fulfilled in Christ through whom God has not only lived with us but lived and died for us. The New law, which Christ inaugurated, is active in us through the Holy Spirit. Aquinas' explanation relies on the tradition of natural law. Man as a rational being is capable to participate in the eternal law through which God governs the entire universe. In order to participate, we go beyond our self-interest and recognize that, by means of working together and promoting our common good, we realize ourselves. Only by placing our individual good within a broader frame we can understand ourselves properly and somehow shape our own inclinations. Yet the other aspect of the human relationship to God is that of **grace** or the gift of sharing in God's reconciling love. According to Aquinas, God guides us through the law and helps us through grace.

Aquinas' treatise on law, however, explains only one of the foundational principles of moral, including Christian, life. Law, he says, is an external principle. Following Augustine, Aquinas notes that God teaches us through his law and helps us through his grace. Both law and grace (which constitute the two essential principles of Aquinas treatise on law) emanate from God and so from a source outside man. Aquinas' point of departure, however, is not man as a being under the law but man as a being desiring self-realization. Human nature implies a teleology or a finality, that is, an inner movement toward self-fulfilment. The difference between man and the other creatures

lies in that man needs to reflect upon the fundamental desire he/she has to fulfil him/herself. As an intelligent and free being, man is called to examine critically his desire for self-fulfilment, as he is prone to self-deception and is easily discouraged by the difficulties he encounters on the way. It is through what we do that we actualize our potential (for good or evil). This explains why Aquinas considers 'action' to be so important and why he devotes such a detailed analysis of both the structure and morality of 'human acts'. Conscience, he argues, stands for 'the act of judgement' or the human faculty to judge what to do in the circumstances. Conscience, however, can judge rightly, if it is supported by a continuing life of virtue. Christian living, in fact, can be authentic, if it is an expression of a basic disposition of openness to God as an enlightening and an empowering reality in our lives. Such basic disposition manifests itself in faith, hope and charity, which we can have because of God's graciousness towards each and everyone of us and which transform the moral virtues of temperance, courage, justice and prudence. Conscience can function properly (as the faculty of moral judgement) on the basis of these virtues, especially prudence, which is the key moral virtue.²

After giving this general picture of Christian moral life and explaining briefly the central role that conscience plays in living out the Christian faith, this study will follow rather closely Helmut Weber in trying to examine in more detail the Catholic view of conscience.

2.3 Definition, notion and terminology

In the introduction to the third chapter of the *General Moral Theology* by **Helmut Weber**³ I read that conscience is generally exceptionally appreciated as one of the key terms in the current era. I immediately realized that we need to bear in mind the year the

² Vlastní poznámky z přednášek a seminářů předmětu Morální teologie, prof. George Grima, Maltská univerzita.

³ He has passed away recently. Unfortunately, I have not been successful to find some relevant facts about his life and work.

book was published (almost 21 years ago) and compare society of that period, with the contemporary one.

Today, in the Czech Republic, on one side we can find people who are very cautious about conscience in the very traditional sense, whereas on the other side there are people who 'do not care' about it at all.

Nevertheless, according to Weber⁴, there is no consensus as for what conscience really is (means). There is neither commonly used terminology, nor definition. There are also differences in evaluation. He concludes that when we look at it more closely, we see **1)** a variety of aspects, and **2)** that many branches of science deal with it simultaneously, together with (among them) the modern empirical ones. That is why the above mentioned textbook proceeds with this pattern.

Weber states⁵ that the attempt to explain the notion 'conscience' was already known in **scholasticism**. The scholars differentiated between *conscientia ut actus* and *conscientia ut habitus* – a concrete statement of conscience in a particular situation, and a potential of conscience in a person, respectively. These two views need to be complemented with emotional features.

Thus three aspects can be distinguished: **a)** matter, **b)** application, **c)** experience of conscience.

They are influenced by the subjectivity of the recipient; however, each of them in a different manner. It may be clear that the strongest influence is in the third area, whereas the least strong in the first one.

As for **a)**: we mean the *whole* of moral ideas, in other words – knowledge about the good and evil, about what is allowed and what is forbidden, not to forget our feelings and their evaluation.

The fact that conscience comprises knowledge leads to the importance of '**education of conscience**'. We need to bear in mind that the most important is not only knowledge, but first of all our *identification* with it. We know and we approve.

4 WEBER, H. 1998. *Všeobecná morální teologie*.

5 Ibid. p. 172.

It may seem to someone that people are bound by these moral ideas, that their nature is thus limited, however, we are determined by the morals because of our freedom. We are protected against our wrong inclinations, ups and downs of our mood and caprice.

As for **b)**: it means the ability to apply moral ideas in **concrete situations**. It also goes hand in hand with the ability to see moral conflicts and challenges together with the evaluation of possible solutions.⁶

We need to mention that the way and extent of the application of conscience may differ substantially. The subjectivity of a concrete person has its place. That is why we need to take the whole persons into account, not only their will or intellect (reason). It depends on the personalities and their state of mind.⁷

We can also speak about conscience in a narrow sense – e.g. application using intuition.

As for **c)**: it is connected with the greatest personal intensity, at the same time overpassing the individual. This kind of experience is somehow urged (enforced) on a person, he/she is inspired.

We cannot do anything to avoid it, somehow to get rid of it, we are somehow absorbed by it.

The voice of conscience comes from the *inside*.⁸

We should not forget what is fundamental, and that is the relation to the concrete actions and/or behaviour, either in the past or in the future. *I personally agree* that a debate about concrete actions is necessary in order to 'form' conscience.

We need to distinguish between our own acting or passivity, and someone else's. We may feel angry, disappointed or happy at the behaviour of other people based on our conviction. Nevertheless, I may dissociate from them. My strong experience presupposes my own attitudes or inclinations.

6 Ibid. p. 173.

7 Ibid. p. 174.

8 Ibid. p. 174.

There are two types of conscience if we consider whether the acting has already happened or is going to happen. Thus we have: a) **conscientia consequens** (svědomí následné) and b) **conscientia antecedens** (svědomí předcházející).

We may then classify c. antecedens according to the quality of behaviour (good or bad) into challenging and warning, and c. consequens into the good or bad one.

The last mentioned one is without doubt the most commonly used association with conscience.

One of the characteristics of **bad** conscience is the experience of tormentous reproof, we blame ourselves, we feel ashamed. We also feel split, without the previous, initial integrity. We feel as if we were no longer part of the community of other people. Believers feel a huge, grave distance from God.

On the other hand, we have the experience of a **good** deed when we have the feeling of satisfaction. But there are some e.g. protestant theologians and M. Scheler who deny it. Protestant theologians on the basis of understanding and teaching that only God can justify people.⁹

Last but not least it is necessary to mention the peculiarity of conscientia antecedens, because we do not experience it unambiguously. And because of this uncertainty and possible conflict situations we need to constantly deal with, question conscience, reflect our being, and *educate* conscience.¹⁰

As it was written above, we distinguish between the good and the evil by means of conscience. The question some people may ask, and in fact they really do, is: was/is conscience given to us by God as a **gift**, is it part of our nature OR do we acquire it by means of **education**, first of all within the close or extended family, at school, other institutions, e.g. as members of clubs for free-time activities, etc.? Does it, and how much, to what extent does it depend on the norms, skills, art of our parents, teachers, friends, colleagues, other members of society we live in, the environment we were born to, we come from?

9 Ibid. p. 175.

10 Ibid. p. 176.

In the Bible, **Rom 2:14-16** (¹⁴When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.¹⁵They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when¹⁶according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.) we read that it was inscribed in our heart.¹¹ This text (verse) in the Bible is the *basis* for the terminology as in the Constitution **Gaudium et Spes**, Art. 16: the law given by God is inscribed in us, we have to choose the good and avoid the wrong, we have to obey God, love one another. By means of our obedience we express and gain our human dignity. We will also be judged.

Our conscience may make **mistakes**, it can be caused by our not knowing, however we do have to do our best in order to avoid possible mistakes by learning what is right and what is wrong. We have to pay attention to our sinful wrongdoing, habits, otherwise our conscience may 'get blind'.

From the above mentioned it is clear that conscience is not static, the opposite is true – it is **dynamic**, being formed, developed. It is dependable on certain conditions in order to function properly and well.

We may ask ourselves: 'What are the conditions? Do they have the same impact/effect on all people without exception? Are there any concrete conditions specific for certain cultures? Are there any conditions more likely to trigger the proper conscience than the others?'...

Personally I experience that in situations when people are under stress and striving to make a living these days, they are more likely to behave morally wrong.

¹¹ *The Bible (containing the Old and New Testament).*

Research in psychology shows us that conscience, and practical experience with values, is developed in **stages**. Now we will examine them:

1. **HABITS** – gained from the early childhood, children copy, **imitate** what they see, everyday regular rituals, e.g. before/after the meal, a prayer before going to bed.
2. 'ABOVE-I' conscience (according to Freud) – children gain this feeling of security, based on good, affectionate interpersonal relations, full of emotions, enough stimuli.

Parents are **models**, they influence their children very much, they give them orders, forbid, show values, norms, what their conviction is. Children are bond to them, they e.g. use the same vocabulary as their parents, gestures, style of behaviour, opinion, also bad habits, they identify with their parents.

Unfortunately, there might be cases when parents overuse their power and manipulate their offspring.

The usual time of this copying lasts for approximately 6 years. There is no real need for children to reason why something is right and why something is not. The most important is their dependency on adults whom they love or are afraid of. Their understanding is as follows: morally correct is to be obedient, disobedience, i.e. to do what is forbidden, is morally incorrect.

3. **CONCRETE** (factual) conscience – school age

When growing up, the school children are confronted with a wide range of values and their implementing, with different models of behaviour. The children's comprehension and imagination of values is rather relative. They are taught to judge, evaluate behaviour according to future possible results. They see that morally correct behaviour has to correspond with the situation and the given thing. Identification with concrete persons for the formation of their concrete opinion is inevitable.

Children of that age accept practically everything what is required from them, however they need a lot of explaining.

Sometimes there appears uncritical devotion to authority.

4. PERSONIFIED conscience – teenagers

There comes a very important factor in the development of conscience, and that is the **intention** of the person.

Teenagers have a strong sense for a subjective judgement. They can be very *critical* when judging adults. However, their subjectivity is very personalised in the way that they very often consider their judgement to be the only right. Their standard, criterion is considered by them to be the only one correct way of acting.

They are quite egocentric, and also under the influence of their peers. They are also full of *defiance* against authority.

5. 'LIFE' conscience – connected with the aim of one's life journey, his/her development.

A person has already acquired certain norms of behaviour, nevertheless, the education-formation of conscience is a **life-long learning** process. A person has certain natural pre-dispositions, however, proper conscience has to be formed. This kind of conscience can be observed by means of the person's strong 'I' in the concrete situations, his/her strong attitudes, inner conviction, firmness, faithfulness, sensitivity.

Additional notes: I have mentioned earlier that we need to cultivate the truth, cultivate people. Although I believe that many parents and educators do their best, unfortunately we experience gradual *degradation* rather than cultivation of manners.

Children are born to unmarried couples (it is considered to be normal, fashionable), parents do not have enough time to look after them, there are critical socio-economic conditions for most of them, there is a high level of divorce rate, artificial insemination, a high risk of unemployment, a huge amount of various information, aggressive

influence of massmedia and marketing, environmental problems, too many conflict situations on national as well as international level, ... all of these having negative effect on the way of living and thus on the whole personality of the particular persons.

As for the school pupils/students, apart from the possible destructive environment of schoolmates and also teachers, there are other factors too – uncritical undertaking of the school systems, methods, techniques and values from other countries, too much competition, very rapid changes. Parents are losing certainty/confidence as what to do with their children, they do not want to lag behind and thus follow the latest trends dictated by e.g. TV.

Especially teenagers are extremely influenced by life stories of omnipresent *celebrities* and *corruption*. The traditional-genuine culture is endangered, e.g. in the Czech Republic children want to become 'witches' and 'wizards' – influence of the literature from Great Britain. They 'love' horrors, pets, etc... They cannot fully appreciate plenty of high quality cultural and sport events as they cannot afford to buy the tickets. On the other hand, some of them are wasting money for unnecessary things/low quality products and services, branded goods... They read horoscopes and believe them..., they are very much occupied by their looks...

'After the Velvet Revolution' young generation is not able to fully differentiate the boundary between the good and the evil. What was considered to be wrong in the past, is not for them, they consider it to be perfectly correct. Their conscience is corrupted. We are living in a secular, pro-killing civilisation.

The question is – who will educate, bring up, form the correct conscience of *their* children?

3. CRITICAL EVALUATION OF RELEVANT LITERATURE, UNDERSTANDING OF CONSCIENCE WITHIN THE HISTORY

3.1 Statements of non-theological sciences

In this part of my Bc work knowledge/areas of **philosophy**, **psychology** (depth psychology, psychoanalysis), **sociology** and **pedagogy** will be considered.¹²

First of all psychology, as it considers conscience as a psychological factor, quantity in the highest sense.

3.1.1 Conscience in modern philosophy

- a) The roots can be traced back to the era of the Enlightenment. In France associated with the name of Rousseau, or German idealism.

For *Rousseau* conscience means part of our nature, and that is why it is on principle good. *Kant* compares it with an internal tribunal which has an absolute, unconditional authority besides being a lawmaker and an accuser at the same time.

- b) Later, however, many people consider conscience with caution, in a reserved manner. Probably due to the French Revolution and subsequent wars in which the worst possible things happened in the name of conscience.

As examples we can give e.g. A. *Schopenhauer* who is deeply sceptical about reliability and power of conscience. According to him, it is influenced largely by superstition and human fear.

Hegel also considers conscience as uncertain, which has to be ruled by objective measures given by state.

¹² H. Weber, *Všeobecná morální teologie*.

Nietzsche considers it to be at issue and a tormentous phenomenon of the human soul.

L. *Feuerbach* sees it as a divine idea free of any transcendence, for him it is purely immanent and that is why it can be fully explained by a man.

Thus there was a shift in understanding conscience as based purely on empirical and profane considering e.g. in psychology.

- c) *The 20th century* brings about the ethics of values of M. *Scheler* and a new judging of conscience. Again, there is a shift in understanding conscience, this time in a more positive way, with its function and relation towards transcendence. His opinion is that understanding conscience purely in a profane way may lead to moral anarchy bearing in mind the freedom of conscience.
- d) Another turning point in the history, and the development of understanding conscience in philosophy, was after the year 1945, when there were strong doubts about conscience. Personal experience did not help to solve uncertainties of that era. It was questionable as to take conscience as a reliable source for distinguishing between the good and the evil.

3.1.2 Conscience in psychology

Weber states¹³ that psychology sees conscience as gradually developing and whose existence depends on many fortuities. However, he adds, theology should neither be afraid of psychological theories, nor reject them beforehand.

Among the theories are: **a)** opinion of S. *Freud*, and **b)** opinion of C.G. *Jung*.

Freud's theory is overcome today, and the Jung's one is rarely accepted in its original form.

¹³ Ibid. p. 178.

a) Freud's ideas

Freud understands conscience as a psychical process, originated in the childhood, which develops in two ways:

1. In the first phase a child encounters not stable so-called *taboo* conscience. Parents are seen as authority and the child blindly (because of its weak 'I') agrees with their orders and behaviour which is often against the instinctive wish of the child. The child's motivation is twofold – fear (may be punished or may lose parents' love). This taboo conscience changes when new people - educators appear in their surrounding.
2. In the second phase (approx. 5-6 years old) there develops the so-called *Oedipus* conflict, primarily sexually determined. A child has a conflict with its parents and the conscience 'Above-I' emerges.

A child transfers, projects parents' orders and values into its inward nature. There are two aspects: ideal I, and its controlling and forbidding function - guardian.

Ideal I is the aim of someone else's orientation, nevertheless, principally it has a negative feature – a sum of all restrictions. To critically observe and compare the ideal with the real I is the function of the guardian which is for Freud the conscience.

Together with the 'Above-I' a new dimension of feelings of *guilt* emerges. The conflict in the inward nature is experienced as even more oppressive. Ideas, fantasy, as well as wishes may become the cause of the sense of guilt.

3. According to Freud, the 'Above-I' conscience is necessary to overcome in the later stages, as it may become the cause of illness.
4. Freud also mentions intellect and reason, if a person does what they tell him/her, then the person acts rightly.

Evaluation

1. On one hand Weber agrees with the Freud's invention that conscience is a developing phenomenon during childhood within inner psychological process, when a child encounters conflict situations in his/her environment and within himself/herself.
2. On the other hand, Weber's opinion is that there are at least three important **objections**:
 - The origin of conscience is very much associated with the Oedipus conflict. It should not be seen as the only cause of the inner transfer process of parents' ideas.
 - Due to very frequent looking at conscience from the pathological side – excessive feelings of guilt, it is often understood as too restrictive and distant from the person.
It is also at variance with (contrast to) the whole tradition¹⁴, according to which conscience was always the core of personality – I. Whereas Freud saw it as separated from the core.

However, as Freud fully explained conscience by means of psychoanalysis, he surpassed the borders of his science.

Weber¹⁵ states that the above mentioned shortcomings may be due to Freud's world outlook. He accepted materialism and Darwin's philosophy. He understood conscience as a means of gaining control over a man who naturally unscrupulously strives for asserting oneself. That is why the man needs to be able to live together with other people – requirement of evolution.

¹⁴ Ibid p.180.

¹⁵ Ibid. p.181.

b) C.G.Jung

According to Weber¹⁶, Jung's conscience is closer to the traditional concept. He denies exaggerated sexuality and emphasises controlling function of conscience. He does not think that psychoanalysis is able to express the whole scope of conscience.

As for **his ideas**:

1. We speak about the so-called archetypes, they are common to all people and people are born with them. They are captured in collective ignorance.
2. Conscience is part of this collective ignorance and contains archetype ideas and reactions.

When confronted with moral norms of society, conscience is here to defend deeper inclinations. For instance, it would be against killing a captured enemy. We would experience emotional protest. Therefore for Jung conscience is naturally present in people, in contrast to Freud.

3. Jung admits that natural reality is composed from contradictions and ambivalence. There are positive and at the same time negative moments, and thus conscience is also ambivalent for him.

He understands it in the way that it cannot only urge the person for the good, but it can also advise us to do something wrong. According to Jung, its intention aims first of all to the whole, so if something negative is missing, it is the function of conscience to apply it.

4. What he has in mind is some psychic force which forms the individuality of the person.

As for **evaluation**:

1. Even though Jung's explanation is better than Freud's, writes Weber on p. 183, there are some objections as well.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 181.

2. A) One of them is against the thesis of polar contradictions – in the case of conscience that is the good and the evil. Which means conscience can give impulses to something immoral and destructive.

B) The second objection is the strong individualism. Conscience is too isolated within the particular individual person. In the Jung's concept there are no traces of the dialogue structure of conscience.

c) Some new – modern ideas, notions

They are either *extension* of *Freud's* ideas or new research results within *developmental psychology*.¹⁷

Firstly, we speak of the so-called 'after Freud school' when his 'Above-I' develops in the first two years of a child. The child imitates gestures of parents and close environment, and later learns to say no together with accepting the mother's no.

Even more important seem to be the higher 'I', personal individual conscience is not composed from the ideas of other people, but means identification with him/herself.

This opinion is supported by e.g. E. *Fromm*, H.E. *Erikson*.

According to *Fromm*, the initial 'Above-I' is gradually substituted by the more personal conscience, probably from the period of puberty, however may exist even in later stages.

Secondly, in psychology, when we speak of changes in connection to gradual growing older, and thus of making conscience independent, the topic of discussion is the development of moral judgement. There are two important names: American L. Kohlberg, and Swiss J. Piaget.

Piaget examined behaviour of playing children and their attitude towards the rules of the game. At first the children see them as 'sacred', then, approximately from the age of eleven, as able to change by negotiating.

¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 184-186.

*Kohlberg*¹⁸, who continued in Piaget's studies, questioned children and young people giving them concrete examples and thus finding maturing judgement. In my Bc work I mention his three levels - preconventional, conventional and postconventional as follows:

3.1.3 The Theory of the Development of Moral Attitudes - L. Kohlberg

In every culture, under 'normal' conditions, every child goes through several (in the same order) stages of development. No phase can be skipped, a change in the development means progress.

These levels can be differentiated:

1. Pre-conventional

In the first two years of the child's development there is one very important factor to be acquired - and that is the feeling of mutual trust and intimacy between a child and the parents. Children need to feel that they are accepted by their parents.

Adults should be aware of the fact that excessive feeling of anxiety could lead to the development of *uncertainty* in children who need to 'keep one's word', 'make things go one's way' when adults. Unfortunately, later it can develop into, appear as urgent reactions of conscience.

2. Conventional

¹⁸ American psychologist Laurence Kohlberg developed Piaget's work concerning moral decision making also for the period of adolescence and adulthood (1969, 1987). In order to find out whether there are generally valid stages in the development of moral judgements, he created moral dilemmas in the form of short stories (e.g. a husband stealing medication for his dying wife after not being successful to get a cheaper price). He did experiments with children in different countries, e.g. the US, Mexico, Turkey. However, his theory was partly criticised because of being 'aimed at men' only, and partly due to the fact that people use different rules and react differently in different situations, and the sequence of the stages is not so straightforward. See Atkinson, Rita L. *Psychology*. Praha: Victoria Publishing 1995 (pp. 98-100).

This level is important – crucial for its content, it rules – controls the reactions of conscience in individual matters, cases. Children are totally dependent on authority, values, and norms of their parents. Children identify with their parents.

When the norm is trespassed, the children go through the feeling of guilt, probably for the first time in their lives. Even very young children may worry about e.g. broken things, that is why it is so important to show - give them the feeling of forgiveness.

The knowledge of what is right and what is wrong is later developed in the first years of the children's school attendance. Children learn how to apply moral norms on their everyday situations even more often.

Generally, a child considers as very important to fulfil the expectations of society and behaves in such a way as to avoid criticism of authorities and the feeling of guilt – 'good boy/girl'.

3. Post-conventional

A crucial period for conscience is at puberty and adolescence. Both phases comprise the same process in which the young person needs to obtain a certain distance from their parents and authorities. Young people realise that their life is solely in their hands, and that they have to take responsibility for it. They go through life crises, they form their identity.

However, they distance themselves from the norms of their childhood, they seek new models, patterns, standards. They create their own value system, they become more and more responsible for the formation of their own conscience. Individuals judge rightness of their behaviour based on principles which they freely accept as commonly useful. The individual person is able to protect what is generally considered to be right and is able to give priority to it over his/her personal needs.

Unfortunately, according to Kohlberg, only about **25%** of the adult population achieve this post-conventional level of moral development.

*Weber's conclusion*¹⁹ is that, taking the development over the last decades into account, there is some convergency of opinions, namely mutual conviction:

1. Conscience, of its own sense, is an instance of adults. They consider something to be either good or bad based on their own judgement.
2. We also have Freud's heteronomous conscience 'Above-I', however with its function in the initial stages, and when creating one's own mature conscience.
3. In fact, the so-called 'Above-I' is never ending, continues to fulfil its function in the later stages of life.

3.1.4 Conscience in sociology

There exists socio-cultural dependence of the content of conscience.²⁰

Our conviction is influenced by the cultural environment we live in, however it may be changeable. What is considered right in one culture, is totally unacceptable in the other one. There is tendency to see the differences as universal. Thus conscience is not formed only by the good as such, it is influenced by what is considered to be good in the particular society.

There are inevitably differences in individual cultures as far as ethical questions are concerned. We may be confronted with *theses of universal ethical pluralism*. There are differences, but at the same time there are also similarities. To be honest, I was shocked by one example given in the book²¹ about killing one's own elderly parents, acceptable in some cultures as helping them avoid helpless old age.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 186.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 187.

²¹ Ibid. pp. 187-188.

When looking at it carefully, there is a notion that in ethical norms we have something given by the conscience, and that not everything is a matter of culture. Basic ethical questions are to be developed, e.g. openness and forbidding of killing are inside of man beforehand.

However, the most important for the formation and development of conscience is the influence of environment and education.

Thus we may conclude that conscience is highly dependent, already naturally having some content, and developing into independent decision making.

4. CONSCIENCE AND THE SCRIPTURES

Keeping in mind the thoughts of theologians today – 'back to the sources', I consider important to mention relation of conscience and the Scriptures.

It is wise to first explore the environment of Israel when searching the *sources*.

Before dealing with the Old and New Testament, let me highlight (mention) traces of conscience *other* than biblical.²²

They are: in Egypt

Greece

Stoicism

As for **Egypt**, they spoke about an 'inner heart' which sometimes blamed the person for wrongdoing.

The word *syneidesis* - 'conscience' was created in the **Hellenistic** world. It gained the meaning of knowledge about moral state.

²² Ibid. pp. 189-190.

As for the *language*, thus the development was: conscientia in Latin, Ge-wissen in German, svědomí in Czech.

In the Hellenistic world they paid attention to different phenomena of conscience, e.g. guilty conscience expressed by *erinyja* – women with long dishevelled hair pursuing and tormenting the guilty person until his/her guilt was reconciled. Later, in the Greek tragedy, it became part of the concrete person and his/her guilty conscience. Similarity can be traced back to Socrates and his daimonion – an inner divine voice.

Finally, the **stoic** philosophy where conscience was identical with logos – a person's reason, intellect interconnected with the world logos.

Thus syneidesis had two features: rational-logical on one side, and divine on the other side.

4.1 Conscience in the Old Testament

Now I am going to add some more information to what I have written in my Bc work before.

For instance the *guilty* conscience is in the case of Adam and Eve, Kain or Joseph's brothers. On the other hand, the *good* conscience phenomenon is in the case of Job. Or, in the case of Solomon, *preceding* conscience. The term **heart** is used (Job 27:6, 1 King 3:9).²³

It is known that people of the Old Testament were not so much interested in conscience, partly because of the people's idea of God at that time. Firstly, they were convinced that God and man were in *direct* relationship, it was God who told what was right and what was wrong to do. God who knew the way of thinking and acting of a man. There was no word which would correspond to the Greek syneidesis. People were aware of constant listening to God's word. It was more people's perceiving than knowing. It was Jahve who brought about the genuine heart = good conscience. The idea that conscience is within the man was unknown to the Old Testament environment.

²³ Ibid. pp. 190-192.

Secondly, people at that time believed in Jahve, mercy and forgiveness. There were limits as for remorse. People could be freed from their guilt by God because Jahve was caring and loving.²⁴

The book *The Incentives of the Old Testament Literature for Education and Formation* may become a very useful source of OT texts for catechets.²⁵

For example Chapter II of this book focuses on *trust* and *hope* and their significant influence in our lives in terms of relationship to God and other people. Hope and trust in our Lord healing our fears and anxieties.²⁶

Chapter III serves as the practical example of how one OT book – *Amos* can reshape our perception, thinking, and conduct. By means of describing negative social issues it can educate the reader to become more *socially sensitive* in order to reflect upon his/her complex life.²⁷

Formation in the book *Amos* means inner motivation of people, their conviction. The social injustice in the economic sphere is highly criticised. According to the Prophet, social injustice is against human reason.

We are shown causes and each new generation is advised to learn from mistakes of the ancestors.²⁸

4.2 Conscience in the New Testament

As for **1.** the *Gospels*, the word for conscience is missing, apart from e.g. guilty conscience of Judas and Peter. There are remarks of a human heart from where something negative – dark as well as light can come out (Mk 7: 21-23, Lk 11: 34n).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ PACNER-HERCIKOVÁ-MACKERLE. *Podněty starozákonní literatury pro výchovu a formaci.*

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

As for **2. Paul's letters**, Paul is the first to use the term *syneidesis*. It can also be found in Kor and Rom.

Paul considers the value of conscience that it decides the *destiny* of a man in front of God.

It is necessary to mention that Paul considers *syneidesis* as highly *subjective*. It is to confirm the subjective rightness of an individual person. That he/she acts according to the right understanding/knowledge.²⁹

It also means that we cannot fully rely on *syneidesis*, partly because of the love for our neighbour – we cannot refer to our conscience in order to mislead, corrupt the other person.

According to St. Paul conscience (preceding or resulting, subsequent) is always dependent on God, his mercy and power.

To *sum up*, Paul's conscience is not autonomous, and is not identical with God either. It carries weakness of human beings.

As for **3. other writings**, Weber states that the word *syneidesis* appears there similarly as often as in St. Paul, also the idea that good *syneidesis* is the result of God's inclination, affection develops there. According to 1 Peter 3:21, *good syneidesis* is the *aim* of baptism – Weber considers it to be the *peak* of biblical conception of conscience.³⁰

5. CONSCIENCE IN THEOLOGY

For many centuries of Christian tradition conscience was just described, e.g. by Augustin, however, approximately since the middle of 12th century, in the period of *scholasticism*, there appeared a system.

²⁹ WEBER, H. 1998. *Všeobecná morální teologie*.

³⁰ Ibid. pp. 192-195.

5.1 Scholasticism

Weber³¹ states that even though there were traces of conscience being dealt with, not too much attention was given to it. For example Thomas Aquinas wrote about it in his *De veritate*, but in *Summa theologiae* there was no question devoted to conscience, only a few articles.

However, there are two more important passages: one of them Sth I-II, 96,4 asking whether conscience is also bound by the *human law*. According to Thomas it is, but the law has to be just.

The second passage is showing differences in conscience of individual people. Well known was the different opinion of the two important figures of that time – *Peter Lombard*'s asking to accept the attitude of the Church when individual conscience is in conflict with the Church and excommunication is inevitable, whereas *Thomas* opposed to it and argued that even in this case one has to follow one's own conscience.

Since that time there has been a stronger theological reflection concerning conscience. Weber³² argues that it could be due to the developing *individualism* when a person is no longer considered only as a member of his/her community.

Weber also states that a typical characteristic of scholasticism is to differentiate between **a) conscientia** and **b) synteresis/synderesis**.³³ Weber explains that a) means the application of the so-called b) '*prásvědomí*', great conscience (synteresis) - in other words ethical insights - into concrete cases, it is 'situational or in action' conscience.

He concludes his chapter by three various interpretations³⁴ at that time:

³¹ Ibid. p. 197.

³² Ibid. p. 198.

³³ The difference in spelling is explained by the thesis of a writing mistake when copying Jeronym's commentary to Ezechiel (e.g. E. Schockenhoff). However, other scholars (e.g. H. Reiner) argue that the word's meaning is 'conservatio', and thus it could be explained from the traditional concept of conscience - to 'conserve' God's orders/man.

³⁴ Ibid. pp. 199-200.

1. *Intellect* and syllogism is the core for both synteresis and conscientia in the *thomist* school.
2. *Franciscan* theology emphasises the role of our *will* to know what is good and right.
3. To experience *God's* presence, nearness, religious explanation of conscience is the basis of *mystical* theology. *Scintilla, spark* - the innermost part of conscience was considered to be saved from the paradise untouched.

5.2 Reformation

The question of conscience is then developed mainly under the influence of Martin *Luther*.

Weber comments³⁵ that *Luther rejected* the traditional concept of scholasticism as being both, not religious enough as well as not realistic enough. He could not accept the opinion that after the sin in people there still was the sense of *God's will* or for the good.

No wonder, in his personal life he encountered limits of conscience and problems connected with it. For example in conflict with his father and himself when realising that a person can have feelings of guilt even though following his/her conscience. It means his attitude towards conscience was quite *pessimistic* – the only help could be faith in *God's salvation* through Christ. When we free ourselves from the attempt to justify ourselves by our own acting, then our guilty and anxious conscience becomes good, courageous, freed by Christ, free even against human authorities. I personally agree with this idea. Nevertheless, Weber³⁶ states that at the Council in Worms 1521 *Luther finally* relied on *God's help and Word*, not his own conscience.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 200.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 201.

As Weber³⁷ writes: 'Luther puts conscience clearly within the context of the concrete history of salvation.' However, on the same page, two questions are asked from the *Catholic* point of view:

1. Interpretation of the starting point – is conscience absorbed by sin? Is not there something more positive?
2. Did not Luther undervalue the role and help of the Church? Is not conscience rigidly the matter of the individual?

When looking at the next development, the period *after Luther*, we trace the two following forms:

- later, in the Protestant theology, the concept of conscience becomes more *optimistic*, conscience by means of which we really can understand what is good and right. But, even later, Luther's concept is again valued by e.g. P. Tillich.³⁸
- as for the freedom of conscience, when secularisation in the period of the Enlightenment took place, it was not seen exclusively on the basis of Christ. The conscience was seen solely on the basis of a *man*, the *highest* authority. A man was responsible only to him/herself. It was the period of 'personalities' and individualism – so it is nowadays, can we see a parallel?

5.3 Contemporary Catholic Theology

The overall picture of conscience would not be complete without describing and analysing the last period in the history of development.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 202.

³⁸ Paul Johannes Tillich (*1886 +1965) was a German-American Christian existentialist philosopher and theologian. He is regarded as one of the most influential theologians of the 20th century. He is best known for his works: *The Courage to Be*, *Dynamics of Faith*, and *Systematic Theology*. Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

After Tridentine Council, up to 20th century, prevailing understanding was the thomist interpretation (ratio).

Though, Catholic theology gradually overcame it and expressed its attitude as

a) holistic (e.g. B. Häring).

Influenced by modern fenomenology (M. Scheler), 'conscience is understood as the function of the whole personality, having its place in its innermost core'.³⁹ Thus emotional part is also integrated.

b) religious interpretation - 'According to Pius XII. conscience is the most mysterious core, a sanctuary of a man where he is alone with God whose voice rings in his deepest inside.'⁴⁰

Whereas J.H. Newman spoke of the so-called 'echo' of God's voice (Weber *ibid*).

There were also tendencies to experience conscience in the 'mood of silence' only (e.g. Heidegger). Or objections to 'God's voice' where we have to differentiate various socio-cultural dimensions of the contents of conscience.

As one of the solutions of the tension is given the category of a *human mediator*. God reveals himself through human beings, their imperfect words and images.

I personally very much like the idea in one of the Weber's paragraphs, and that is the connection between God and conscience in a sense that ...'the contents of conscience is a human factor similar to words in the Bible. However, God uses these deficit images in order to focus His requirement on a man. The requirement and the material of this requirement are not identical because the first one is absolute, and the second one is limited, and thus a relative given fact, determinant of this world. On the other side, the requirement and material are not separated either. God does not call besides limited images or through them, as He did not speak in the Bible without human words either, but always only in them. That is why in the limited or even wrong conscience God's

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 204.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 204.

challenge can be seen and thus conscience is understood to be God's voice, even though always in this, here explained, limited sense only.⁴¹

c) The most typical and significant sign is the exceptionally emphasised feature that a man can justify himself based on his own conscience more, even if it does not comply with the given norms.

The freedom of conscience was accepted especially after **2nd Vatican Council**. The matter can be found in the Pastoral Constitution (Art. 16,41,43) and the Declaration of Religious Freedom (Art. 2,3,8). Nevertheless, one factor cannot be missed out and that is the idea that the decision of conscience should orientate itself according to the truth, God's law and the teaching of the Magisterium of the Church.

In some bishop statements to *Humanae Vitae* (e.g. 1968) the idea of the *right forming*, modelling was mentioned, in which the authority of the Church can help.

Though the question remained whether the Council's statements should be understood in the light of modern times - dealing more with freedom than conscience.

I fully agree with Weber's statement⁴² that there could be some danger in perceiving conscience too subjectively, when everybody could do what he/she likes taking moral decisions as a *private* matter merely.

He (ibid) states other reasons (besides biblical) for conscience being the last obligatory norm:

a) *anthropology – ethical*, man's dignity is in close relation to responsibility. People have to follow what their own conscience is telling them.

b) *theological*, God is calling everybody personally, in response to His calling, again, people have to follow their conscience, they should not, must not use someone else's responses.

c) *practical*, I would add very important, conditions and life circumstances are so changeable and many times so unpredictable that there cannot exist norms and rules for all cases.

In the end Weber concludes that *weak points* of conscience should be taken into account.⁴³ It can be dangerous to rely on one's own conscience only because of:

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 205.

⁴² Ibid. p. 207.

- the characteristics of it itself, it is very internal, that is why it cannot be sure whether someone is misusing it and cheating, or just selfishness, wishes and moods are expressed.
- someone can also make a mistake or overvalue his/her judgement, conscience is subjective, a person can be trapped in even false images.

That is why it is necessary to look forward and behind oneself, monitor own feelings, given facts. Conscience needs to constantly *communicate* with the surrounding environment and listen to God.

The overall picture would not be complete without mentioning very briefly what the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** says about my topic either.

According to it, a man is challenged to consciously and voluntarily keep and protect God's order. Thus a man can freely achieve the last goal. However, on condition that what God created and how must not be destroyed.

A man was equipped by God to realize what is good and appreciated. We speak about conscience. Only people can use their reason to know what God's will is and fulfil it.

Our freedom is not influenced by a 'certain pressure' urging us by means of knowing that we will be punished for our wrongdoing. As if there was something ahead of our acts signalling what is right and what should be avoided. Generally people feel happy and joyful when they act rightly, sad and not at ease when doing something wrong.

One of the functions of the Church is to protect the revealed truth and also ethical laws, we are taught how to act in accordance with God's will. The Church teaches us to have the right relationship with God, other people and the being. It has a significant impact on our conscience to function properly.⁴⁴

43 Ibid. p. 208.

44 KOUKL, J. *Katolický katechismus. Život z víry.*

6. EDUCATION ABOUT CONSCIENCE

First, my intention was to put the subject of conscience into the overall picture. Now I am going to concentrate on one of the most important factors – questions concerning conscience's education.

Of course, as in any other part of life, there appear problems:⁴⁵

- doubts of conscience (1)
- errors (fallacies) of conscience (2)
- failures in its education (3)

As for 1) *doubts*, first of all we have to look at the way conscience achieves its conviction. The peak of discussion about it was reached in 17th and 18th centuries in theses about various '*moral systems*' – a general rule of solving cases when in doubts whether there is or is not an ethical obligation.

Over the centuries there existed different opinions, which can be summarised as follows:

- tuciorism (rigorism), a man is to use the stricter opinion
- probabiliorism, a man is to follow the more probable opinion
- equiprobabilism, a man may follow the opinion which is equally probable as the opposing one
- probabilism, a man may be ruled by only even probable judgement if there are relevant reasons for it, even if the opposing judgement is more probable
- laxism, it should not be used by any theologian as such, it is used in cases of probabilism when pleading not responsible in strange, doubtful, suspicious reasons

Many times there existed a *dispute* over this issue, e.g. between Dominicans and Jezuits.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ WEBER, H. 1998. *Všeobecná morální teologie*. pp. 209-218.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 210.

Finally, *Magisterium* decided for the probabilistic systems in favour of human freedom. 'A man is served by freedom in order to be bold to achieve what is new and only probably good.'⁴⁷

The above mentioned solution, however, had its *weak points*, namely:

- a highly legal feature
- a tendency to minimalism (a boundary for the sin)
- a high degree of formalism (rules very absolute, less useful for practice)

That is why other ways how to achieve the right decisions need to be found. Some useful *tips* can be:

- take some time to get to the best conviction and decision
- ask what the consequences might be
- solutions need to be verified whether they also serve the others
- ideas need to be clarified in communication with the others and with the help of the Bible and the Church
- prayer is necessary to find what the Holy Spirit shows

Although we are advised to use the above rules, there always exists something 'unknown'... .

As for **2) error**, incorrectness, imperfection of consciousness, writings of some scholars (e.g. K. Rahner) mention the so-called erroneous (fallacious) conscience.

Some people, scholars argue that because of the freedom of conscience a man is allowed to be respected, and in case of differences they can speak of 'dissimilar' rather than 'erroneous' conscience.

According to *Vatican II*, if somebody has an incorrect opinion, he/she still has the right for the freedom of conscience. Thus the very old opinion that 'error has no rightness' was overcome.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the freedom of conscience cannot be taken as absolute, in today's society there still exists the category of erroneous conscience (e.g. questions of slavery, environment, mutilation).

47 Ibid. p. 211.

48 Ibid. p. 213.

In connection with the above, two questions are open for discussion:

- erroneous conscience which cannot be overcome (unconquerable)
- error in good faith

Traditionally, it was accepted that a man can have an erroneous judgement which he/she cannot overcome even though being informed about it and using good will. Somebody can see nothing wrong with one's behaviour. The question is what are the *limits, boundaries* (e.g. in cases like suicide, divorce)?

Pastoral advice that being informed, the man could continue in the incorrect behaviour and thus it becomes sinful behaviour. It is accepted that the incorrect behaviour should be *tolerated* because otherwise more harm can be caused (Mt 13:24-30).

In short, the tradition advised to be quite cautious, not everything had to be corrected.

As for an *adequate reaction* as far as erroneous opinions are concerned, there are several answers:

- it depends on the type of error
- we have to stand up against convictions which endanger basic values and rights
- sometimes it is better to remain silent and tolerate the opinion if it does not cause any harm or the strive to explain it would lead to a conflict and resistance
- there might be cases when we have to show our attitude in order to avoid someone else's false belief, we show respect, but at the same time offer our solution with the hope that the person may change his/her mind.

As for **3) failures** in the education of conscience, let me first begin with the most important role of parents, then educators – to be an example, model for the child since the very beginning, create a positive atmosphere full of love, so that the child is able to identify with the closest people in his/her environment and trust them. We have to create an atmosphere in which the child accepts and comprehends ethical norms, requirements so that it is able to give up certain things.

Conscience has to be somehow 'woken up' and developed already since the early years of the childhood. We should not wait till the child starts to think, understand, use its intellectual power. Neither should we act as if passing on the knowledge only.

I fully agree with the statement that failure to form conscience in this early period is crucial for the later stages in life. It can have negative consequences, what is neglected in this highly sensitive area, hardly can be fully manifested later on. Empirical research proves that there was a lack of warmth and security in the first years of childhood.

On the other hand, history, research of other scholars (e.g. C.G. Jung in opposition to Freud) and everyday reality, last but not least my own experience as a teacher, teaches us that, even though it is very hard work, it IS possible to change life for the better despite harmful childhood.

Theologically speaking, there comes the Mercy of God who purifies and saves our conscience.

When we look at the definition of conscience and what *Skoblík*⁴⁹, says about it, we realize again the key words – morally right acting, practical reasonable judgement, responsibility and obligation. Each person, by means of deeply rooted conscience, realizes own value. The whole personality is called and required to response, thus it is highly recommended not to suppress one's own conscience, but to constantly **educate** it.⁵⁰

Skoblík then questions the word's etymology and the connection between a disposition (basis of our soul) and a single act of conscience.

The Second Vatican Council brought about, among others, also a shift in seeing the relation between conscience and the law. This time more freedom and independence is allowed when formulating one's own judgement, with the support of given norms.

However, we must not forget about special circumstances when taking concrete situations into account, that is why *circumspection* is one of the factors which could be more developed, I think, and/or gained by life experience.⁵¹

Skoblík also mentions *conscientia antecedens* and *consequens*, the latter one having educational effect. Nevertheless, he is warning not to judge our acts by means of the

49 Doc. Jiří Skoblík (*1932), Catholic Theological Faculty Charles University.

50 SKOBLÍK, J. *Přehled křesťanské etiky*. p. 89.

51 Ibid. p. 90.

latter one. He then distinguishes between the right and erroneous one. It is evident that only the right one is desirable. That is why we need to educate our conscience by means of extending our knowledge of moral norms, first of all by making a distinction between two possibilities - whether we caused our erroneous conscience or not. When we have an immediate impact on people (in our jobs, etc.), we have to bear in mind the common good. Also, in educating our conscience we are advised to calm down, listen to our 'inner world' and keep a dialogue with our conscience in order to find the truth. We need to learn it. Learn (lifelong) to have a dialogue with God, especially before important decisions, to be sure, to solve conflicts, to heal the wrong conscience.⁵²

Many times we need to reach/make a compromise in order to live/act realistically, to achieve at least a certain amount of good. Our personalities develop, we become mature also morally. Skoblik⁵³ writes about the *gradualness* principle, which needs to be understood dynamically as gradual fulfilment of the law. He also mentions the so-called *lazy* compromise on p. 96 we should be aware of, when there is a lack of willingness to look for and find solutions which are the least wrong. Whereas the right compromise leads to more perfect fulfilment of obligation. Unfortunately, I have experience that majority of people tend to 'be lazy'.

To sum up, in order to avoid tendency towards too much subjectivism, we need to be open, build up interpersonal argumentation, and rely on the Bible as the source of answers for the questions of contemporary world.

6.1 Conscience and Truth

Within the context of what has been written above, let me now analyse the well-known paper, speech by Card. Joseph *Ratzinger*, presented at 10th Workshop of Bishops in February 1991, in Dallas, Texas.

He presented the topic of conscience in five parts. In the introduction he spoke about conscience as an essential element of moral life and places it within a network of other

⁵² Ibid. pp. 94-95.

⁵³ Ibid. p. 95.

basic moral concepts that are often presented in *opposition* to each other such as freedom and norm, autonomy and heteronomy, self-determination and external determination by authority. He focuses on the opposition which some see between 'freedom' and 'norm' and which some associate with a post-conciliar (morality of *conscience*) and a pre-conciliar (morality of *authority*) view of Christian morality.

Ratzinger opens his argument by taking a *central* point in the Catholic tradition, namely, that conscience is the highest norm which man is to follow even in opposition to authority. According to him, however, some authors explain conscience as the final arbiter and infallible guide in moral decision-making.

Then *he questions* the *infallibility* – it might mean that there is no truth in moral and religious matters – many times judgements of conscience contradict each other. That is why we may speak of the subject's own truth based on the subject's sincerity. Finally, he concludes by stating that there must be something deeper in the meaning of freedom and human existence.

The next part of his speech Ratzinger devotes to *erroneous* conscience. He is convinced that the question of conscience goes to the core of man's existence. In order to illustrate his point, he uses an example that he came across many years ago and left on him a lasting impression. In a dispute with one of his colleagues about being grateful to God for so many unbelievers in good conscience who can reach salvation by means of their erroneous conscience, Ratzinger was shocked by the notion that faith was a *burden* intended for only 'stronger' natures, as if as a sort of punishment. In this view, faith would make salvation harder, not the opposite. Erroneous conscience would be the normal way to salvation. Untruth and darkness would be better.

In the last few decades, unfortunately, we can witness the spread of this kind of thinking, meaning also a *negative effect on evangelization*.

Ratzinger then develops his argumentation by reflecting on the erroneous conscience further - it does not lead to the openness to being, rather it serves as the 'protective' shell in order to hide from the demanding reality. It can justify social conformity and

subjectivity. I fully agree with the statement that man is very superficial, and the less depth he/she has, the 'better life' seems to be for him/her.

As far as the *justifying* power of erroneous conscience is concerned, he spoke about the Nazi SS and Hitler, and the opinion of some scholars who expressed their view about subjectively speaking moral, deeply convinced acting, bringing so many atrocities.

And after so many years we can still see people with mistaken conscience who justify their unscrupulous acting... .

In the course of the conversation Ratzinger was completely certain that the concept of subjective conscience must have been false. With the help of a psychologist Albert Gorres Ratzinger articulated his perceptions. They both showed that the *feeling* of *guilt* was necessary for man and functioned as the bodily pain thus signifying something abnormal. All people need to have the capacity to recognize guilt, it goes hand in hand with the *spiritual* development.

The *Sacred Scripture*, Old Testament, Psalm 19:12-13, helps to find *objectivism* and profound human *wisdom*. The one who no longer sees one's guilt has endangered one's soul even more (e.g. not accepting that killing is a sin).

The difference between the tax collector and the Pharisee is explained. The cry of conscience makes the *tax collector justified* before *God* who can *move sinners*. The tax collector becomes capable of love and truth. Whereas the *Pharisee* (Lk 18:9-14), with his clear but silent conscience, no longer knows that he has guilt. He becomes *unable* to *change* according to God's expectations, to forgive and convert, his conscience does not accuse but justifies him.

Even nowadays, more and more people live with their erroneous conscience, mostly under the influence of masmedia. 'Hide' their acting behind it, unaware of what God expects from them, and from all of us.

Ratzinger gives another example – St. Paul (Rom 2:1-16) tells that the pagans knew what was expected from them by the Creator, even without the Law. The creaturehood

is here for man to see the truth of God. If man cannot see it (does not want, deliberately does not wish), it is guilt.

After his initial reflections, Ratzinger draws initial conclusions regarding the essence of conscience. On one hand, we can speak of the subjective certainty of the I, reflecting the social surroundings and popular opinions, on the other hand, there might be a lack of self-criticism, not knowing the depth of one's soul.

He mentions history – the enormous *spiritual devastation* and *intellectual deformation* of Eastern Europe. He speaks of the society which lost the capacity for mercy and real human feelings.

However, I am asking myself, what about today's society in Europe, our country?

Isn't it the same? Or even worse? What is the contemporary society like?

Apart from the economic damage which was/is done, we witness on one hand very fragile (physically, emotionally, spiritually), but on the other hand very 'strong, western - free, european, hypermarket, money, business, celebrities, computer, online, brutal - like' generation, in my opinion, another *lost generation*.

Nevertheless, we must not be too sceptical, we have to work against silencing of conscience leading to dehumanization. I fully agree with Ratzinger – we must lead society back to the eternal moral values, for God to be heard in human hearts.

As superficial conscience enslaves, is woven from self-righteousness, conformity and lethargy.

Later in his speech, Ratzinger could not avoid mentioning *Cardinal Newman* and the place of conscience in the whole of Newman's life and thought.

With the hope that gained insights will sharpen the view of present problems and link history.

Newman was known to interpret the *papacy* in relation to the *primacy* of *conscience*, where papacy is not in opposition, but based on and guaranteeing the primacy of conscience.

The opposition to authority is a sign of modern man. For him conscience means subjectivity and expresses the freedom of the subject. Whereas authority is a threat, constraint, negation of freedom.

Ratzinger characterizes *Newman* also this way: conscience is central for him because he *sees* a *connection* between *authority* and *subjectivity*, the middle term, and that is the *truth* which stands in the middle.

What I personally find important to mention is that Newman spent most of his life struggling against liberalism in religion.

Conscience for Newman means the demanding and perceptible presence of the voice of truth in the subject him/herself.

Ratzinger then tries to explain it more clearly: in other words truth's priority over consensus. A man of conscience is, according to Ratzinger, the one who 'never acquires tolerance, well-being, success, public standing, and approval on the part of prevailing opinion, at the expense of truth'.⁵⁴

Newman is compared, in this respect, to Thomas More – another Britain's great witness of conscience.

As for the *modern* age, the situation of our days, the concept of truth has been replaced by the concept of *progress*. Which is critical. However, Ratzinger then explains, progress somehow loses its *direction*, and if there is no direction, then everything can become progress as well as *regress*.

He compares the *Einstein's relativity* theory of the physical cosmos with the intellectual and spiritual world of our time.

According to Ratzinger the absolute truth is no longer visible as the *point of reference*. There are no directions if there are no fixed measuring points. Most people do not view the world on the basis of a standard true in itself, but on their own decisions. Thus, conscience in such a worldview is 'co-knowing' with the truth, because everybody determines his/her standards.

54 JOSEPH CARDINAL RATZINGER. Conscience and Truth. In: *Catholic information network* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2013-04-15]. Dostupné z: <http://www.cin.org/avatar/ratzcons.html>

We need to *distinguish* two *fundamental positions* – one justifying man's capacity for truth, and the other one saying that man alone sets standards for himself.

The Christian Logos means liberation through and to truth, so when we give up the man's capacity for truth, we may end up with pure formalism. The loss of content may lead to formal judgements.

For instance, many times people are not asked what they really think, nevertheless there is tendency to put them into formal categories – fundamentalist, conservative, revolutionary, etc.

The core of the matter is that the technique became the highest criterion where there was no place for content. The *power* became the most important, and imitation of an idol. **Not** genuine expression of one's being according to the image and likeness of God. Man's task is not to ask about the 'can', but the 'should'. *Martyrs* are the witnesses of conscience, perceiving the 'should'.

In the third part of his speech Pope Benedict XVI formulated a *concept of conscience*. He spoke about consequences – the two levels of conscience. He believed in the medieval tradition.

He stressed the importance of continual reference to each other, not neglecting either the difference or the connection between them.

As it was mentioned earlier in this Bc work, *mainstream scholasticism* used the concepts of synderesis and conscientia. In Ratzinger's own words the exact meaning of the term synteresis was still unclear and thus somehow prevented the development of the question of conscience. Therefore, he replaced the word by the more clearly defined Platonic concept of *anamnesis* (linguistically clearer, philosophically deeper, purer, biblically correct).

He stressed the fact that the word should mean exactly what St. Paul meant in his Letter to the Romans. Moreover, he gave other examples, too, e.g. St. Basil (one of the Church Fathers) who used the term 'spark of divine love hidden in us', knowing that love means to keep the commandments which we were given the disposition to beforehand.

When we look at it from the *ontological* point of view, we may state that we were created to the likeness of God, we aim to the divine, the good and true were implanted in us, that is why sometimes we resonate with some things, but clash with others.

And when we hear our 'inner sense', we realise what our nature seeks. We surpass ourselves in search of the contact with Him - we came from and are leading to. The more we 'fear' the Lord, the more effective the anamnesis is.

Later, when extending his thoughts, Ratzinger mentioned (not by chance in the era of the crisis of authority) the nature of the papacy. In his own words: 'The true nature of the Petrine office has become so *incomprehensible* in the modern age, no doubt because we only think of authority in terms which do not allow for *bridges* between subject and object.'⁵⁵

Ratzinger also spoke about the new 'we' in connection to the Johannine writings and our incorporation into Christ – our 'I' with Him, one Body, all the baptised were given the new anamnesis of faith. It is gradually *unfolding* together *with creation*, we are in constant dialogue between within and without.

There was another important term in Ratzinger's work – the *Christian memory*, which is, according to him, always learning and distinguishing between genuine unfolding and destructive forces.

And the primacy of the Pope lies in advocating the Christian memory with its power to discern spirits.

Finally Ratzinger turned to the second level – *conscientia*. He could not avoid mentioning Thomas who saw it as *actus*. According to Thomas, the act of conscience is divided into 3 elements:

- recognizing
- bearing witness
- judging

⁵⁵ JOSEPH CARDINAL RATZINGER. Conscience and Truth. In: *Catholic information network* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2013-04-15]. Dostupné z: <http://www.cin.org/avatar/ratzcons.html>

In his view, it also depends on the will and already formed moral character, it can either deform or be purified.

On the level of judgement, even erroneous conscience is binding for a person. However, the guilt lies much deeper – i.e. neglecting of internal urges of truth.

In his *epilogue* named Conscience and Grace Ratzinger returned to the initial question – is not the truth too difficult for man to grasp?

He suggested the following response: the journey to truth is by no means comfortable. We all certainly agree with him that it brings and opens a big challenge for us. At the same time by means of fulfilling our demanding task, we discover the beauty of God as the Redeemer when He replies to our inner expectations.

Ratzinger stated that the whole tragedy of man shows itself in the *conflict of conscience*. As an example he gave the story of Orestes.⁵⁶ 'Atonement has transformed the world.'⁵⁷ As another example he uses thoughts of Hans Urs Von Balthasar⁵⁸ - calming grace always assists in the establishing of justice.

The authority, power of grace allows guilt to vanish, thus truth becomes truly redemptive. Our being is transformed *from within* – in the Christian way.

Finally Ratzinger stressed that the Christian anamnesis has to be sufficiently expressed and appreciated, otherwise the truth becomes a too heavy burden. In this case many

56 In Greek mythology, Orestes was the son of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon. Orestes is the subject of several Ancient Greek plays and of various myths connected with his madness and purification. He murdered his mother.

57 JOSEPH CARDINAL RATZINGER. Conscience and Truth. In: *Catholic information network* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2013-04-15]. Dostupné z: <http://www.cin.org/avatar/ratzcons.html>

58 *1905 +1988, Hans Urs von Balthasar was a Swiss theologian and priest who was nominated to be a cardinal of the Catholic Church. He is considered as one of the most important theologians of the 20th century. He was very eclectic in his approach, sources and interests. He was/is known for his connection with Karl Barth. Balthasar's main points of analysis on Karl Barth's work have been disputed. Balthasar wrote *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation* (1951), a classic work, Barth himself agreed with the analysis. Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

people may seek to free themselves, nevertheless, the gained freedom leads to *emptiness*.

Part II

7. OTHER VIEWS

Let me now clarify my argument. I will take the Kohlberg's theory as the point of departure, compare the results of his research with the ones of other scientists and experts in order to see similarities/differences with respect to moral theology.

I will try to outline points where, in my opinion, the various aspects converge. The ultimate goal being our self-orientation and self-identity. In the end I will draw conclusions and propose some recommendations.

When comparing what I have written so far, I am going to use the article by *Muchová L.*⁵⁹ She uses research results of the moral judgement development and psychotherapy. In other words, *psychology* to answer the practical question of the real behaviour of people in certain situations, their feelings, experiences and justification. She comprises all age categories – childhood, young adulthood and adulthood with the stress on *Christian* aspects of moral behaviour.⁶⁰

The notion of sin and guilt (two important features of moral theology) is put into the framework of self-identity. Every person is creating one's self-concept, what his/her abilities, looks, etc. are, in what way he/she is accepted/valued by the surrounding

59 Doc. Ludmila Muchová, Jihočeská University, České Budějovice.

60 MUCHOVÁ, Ludmila. Muze-psychologicka-veda-pomoci-pri-vychove-krestanskeho-svedomi. *teologicketexty.cz* [online]. 2002, č. 2 [cit. 2013-04-15]. Dostupné z: www.-teologicketexty.cz/casopis/2002-2/Muze-psychologicka-veda-pomoci-pri-vychove--krestanskeho-svedomi.html

environment. According to Říčan⁶¹, searching one's identity means getting to know oneself.

In her article Muchová uses Jung's understanding of personalities seen in their *complexity*, where the process of getting to know oneself and self-realization is called the process of individuation, we become individual beings, our own I. Muchová also mentions Jacobiová J. in connection with Jung, and her underlying idea that we do not mean individualism in the very egocentric sense, but the process of fulfilling one's self-being. Our task is to achieve the complexity by interconnecting both parts of the whole – consciousness and unconsciousness - in an active interaction.⁶²

Weber's moral theology mentions Jung in connection to the controlling function of conscience, which is naturally present in people. I think it is right to highlight his understanding it as ambivalent – urging us not to do only the good, but also wrong. His explanation is the *whole*, thus we may speak of two poles – positive and negative, forming each individuality. At this stage Weber expresses objections, because according to moral theology it is unacceptable that conscience should urge us do immoral things. Also the dialogue function of conscience is missing.

The process of becoming an individual, meaning the scope of our whole lives, Muchová divides into two parts. The task of the first one (external reality) is a stable constitution of our I. The second half leads into our inner reality and deeper knowledge of ourselves, other people, and the *cosmic* whole, this part is the Jung's process of individuation. At this stage we may speak about the so-called archetypes whose origination and expression is different in different people. Muchová writes about three types: 'shadow', 'animus and anima', 'a wise old man or a big mother'.

Jung describes the first archetype which emerges as symbols in our dreams or everyday events. The shadow is interpreted by Jung as our negative personal qualities, our

61 Prof. Pavel Říčan (*1933) is a well-known Czech psychologist specializing in the personality, developmental and clinical psychology. Since 1991 he has been a member of the Czech Academy of Sciences. He published many textbooks for secondary and university studies, and is currently teaching at the Theological Faculty of Charles University.

62 Ibid.

guiltiness and sinfulness. This shadow is an inseparable part of our complex being. An example is given when we may be suddenly too sensitive to somebody else's negative feature not seeing our own one, it could be our own hypercriticism, or we are mean, etc. I agree with Muchová that there are so many Christians who are not aware of it. We might also agree with Jung's idea that we forget intentionally what does not fit into the ideal picture of ourselves. Nevertheless, Christians have God to be challenged to see the real picture and convert.

Muchová in her article also writes about *another aspect* of psychological research, namely the origin and development of moral judgement associated with *rational* development. Research closely related with the names of Piaget and Kohlberg.

As Kohlberg based his research on findings by Piaget and I mentioned him earlier very briefly, I am going to first concentrate on how he sees moral judgement. Piaget worked with children (6-12 years old) analysing their way of judging moral rules, applying them on different situations and understanding justice. When working with them he told stories in which the main characters broke some objective moral norms, however each time explaining it by different intentions. He came to the conclusion that the child's moral judgement develops in three interdependent stages:

1. heteronomous obligation, **2.** cooperative sense for justice, **3.** autonomous justice.

As for **1)** Muchová uses the term 'moral realism', what is important for the child, aged approximately up to 7, is breaking the external law when e.g. lying or stealing.

Obedience is important, however, in my opinion, the child needs to know since the very beginning that by wrongdoing we do some harm to other people. Also, in **1)** the rules have to be kept as something heteronomous, 'realistic', not according to the sense. At this stage the rules may not educate the child to be subjectively responsible.

The child judges deeds first of all according to the sanctions, not the good or wrong intention. The reason is the child's limited thinking and also some kind of pressure of his/her parents.

As for **2)** the child is already part of the bigger whole – a group of schoolmates, children learn how to cooperate, respect one another, a sense of equality is developed, mutual trust, sharing, the basis for autonomous sense of justice, I think this period is crucial for

the child's understanding of the other children's wishes/needs, cognitive abilities are at a qualitatively higher level, children learn moral values e.g. to be honest and tell the truth in mutual respect.

Many teachers would certainly agree with me that in this period the differences between families and their influence on the child emerge strikingly and the role of the teacher as the facilitator and mediator is inevitable.

As for **3**) social rules are justified according to their sense, subjective intentions are taken into consideration.

As it was written earlier, Kohlberg extended Piaget's work, he concentrated on *motivation* – he told stories with a moral dilemma in which obedience to laws and orders of authority was in conflict with the needs and good of other people. Moreover, there were no 'right answers'. The children were asked to give reasons for their choice according to which then Kohlberg divided their answers into three levels with two stages.

The **first** level is mainly based on external control by means of a reward or punishment (fear). This goes hand in hand with obedience. Therefore, motivation is to avoid the punishment and respect the authority.

Later, the motivation changes into primarily fulfilling 'my own' needs, exceptionally the needs of other people. Thus children need to be taught the basic aspects of decent and just behaviour (sharing) towards other children.

The **second** level is based on what the other people expect – family members, schoolmates, nation. This time motivation is to be 'a nice child', to have a good relationship with other people, to be praised. Later, social order is important, motivation is, besides accepting views and rights of other people, also expecting that the child's just acting will be awarded.

The **third** level is based on spiritual principles, personal acceptance of common moral norms, autonomous values. Here we speak about society where people generally keep social agreements based on the laws (even though sometimes unjust), but also obligations freely agreed. Later, the most mature stage appears, in which we mostly follow our own conscience. This is when we experience moral conflicts, we follow what

is universally valid, logically correct, just, with respect to the dignity of each person and his/her rights.

Now, I would like to add some comments to what I have written about Kohlberg's theory earlier in this Bc work.

Let us take his pre-conventional level, how important it is for the very young children to have *both* parents and their affection. Unfortunately, many times it is not so. In our country there is a debate going on at the moment about pros and cons of alternative solutions/families – foster parents, with all the positive and negative consequences for the child's development. Also, some 'modern' trends appeared which have been common e.g. in Great Britain for many years – nannies and/or au-pairs.

I personally think/experienced that the children *can* be very emotionally disturbed when having too many strange people looking after them and changing frequently.

There are many cases when the child was not accepted by the mother or even abandoned, therefore later their relationship was corrupted, also having a very negative effect on the child's behaviour leading even into criminal cases. Children need to 'have barriers' to feel certain and secure.

In case of the conventional level, I would highlight forgiveness, this is what our Lord gave us, so parents and educators should not forget about it and apply often and with sensitivity.

During the school attendance teachers, however, may be the reason for the child's misbehaving due to their personalities or a lack of empathy and professional competence.

When we take Kohlberg's post-conventional level into account, he considers puberty and adolescence to be crucial for conscience. Yes, I agree. The young people build up their attitudes, realize their potential, make mistakes and learn from them, continue to build up their identity which will then be expressed in their future careers and relationships. Again, I would like to highlight the importance of how the surrounding environment influences them, and I am quite critical to the educational system in the Czech Republic. Many times, e.g. at secondary schools, there are mixed-abilities students and also believers together with non-believers, the same applies to the teachers educating them. What I am trying to express is the fact that there is a constant tension

between the way how should or should not things proceed, what and how should students learn, I experienced more or less some kind of brainwashing.

No wonder, in order to fully understand what is going on in society, one needs to travel, spend some time abroad to see the changes from a different perspective. What I see as negative in our schools is (still) the inhibition, rather than the development of the full potential, of self-identities.

In my opinion a very positive factor for building up the character of a person is sport, by means of sensible activities teenagers spend their free time and avoid antisocial activities.

In her article Muchová also writes about opinions related to the *genesis* and *development* of conscience. She questions teaching of the Church with the recent results of social sciences. She argues that the first conflict is Freud's psychoanalysis which clashes with the Christian view. The 'I' of the person is between two contrapoles – instincts and 'superego'. She also argues that the norms of conscience are strongly influenced by the cultural environment a child is born into. She justifies her opinion by historical evidence. However, if we build our moral norms on Jesus/God as the supreme authority, together with the Scriptures and tradition, then we fulfil God's mission.

Muchová mentions J. Křivohlavý⁶³, who uses Frankl's⁶⁴ logotherapy and Piaget's research. Křivohlavý gave evidence of the child's autonomous moral thinking which is above the 'superego'. There were and are people who despite their cultural impact behave differently. Frankl stresses the freedom of a person's own conscience. The person has the choice – to act in favour of or against it. Frankl stated that God is working in conscience of the believers, that is why they can hear His message better than nonbelievers.

Therefore, religious pedagogy distinguishes between heteronomous and autonomous conscience. It may be common that the heteronomous (based on authority) is part of

63 Prof. Jaro Křivohlavý (*1925) is a significant Czech psychologist and writer. He specializes in the psychology of health, positive and experimental psychology, logotherapy, marriage, and forgiveness as a positive health factor.

64 Viktor Emanuel Frankl (*1905 +1997) was an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist, he was the founder of existential analysis and logotherapy.

adulthood and may mean *regress* in their lives. Even adult Christians whose faith is rather infantile may believe in God's 'right' punishment for those who 'are guilty'.

On the other hand, autonomous conscience stresses personal responsibility. The individual person's moral judgement (*supported* by parents, the Church, state) needs to be *adequate* for the particular situation with the help of the reason. We apply God's orders into concrete life situations which are many times quite complicated.

Finally Muchová questiones what the consequences for the development of Christian identity are. We can summarize them into four: dignity, God's calling and our transcendence, person's identity in its complexity with negative features, and act of redeeming – what is important – the one who is freed is able to free other people.

Thus responsible Christians in interaction with other believers and nonbelievers as well form mutually conscience in order to become autonomous, and psychological science proves helpful in this journey to ensure God's Kingdom.⁶⁵

We see that opinion expressed by Christian thinkers supports free creativity in which a person finds identity and sense. The sense of life meaning fulfilling human personality - potentiality. On this journey man is dependent on God and God's intention.⁶⁶

Frankl in his theory uses the term '*will for sense*', some other authors speak of 'need/longing'. For Frankl it is natural and elementary, but not an instinct. It urges man to be active and freely decide what to achieve.⁶⁷ The 'will for sense' is open to what may come/be.⁶⁸

Tavel⁶⁹ concludes that in psychology it is best to use the term 'need of sense'.

Later on, within the context of various theses about the life sense, he questions transcendency of the sense. According to Frankl, man is trying to fulfil his/her sense.

65 Ibid.

66 TAVEL, P. *Smysl života podle Viktora Emanuela Frankla*. p. 14.

67 Ibid. p. 18.

68 Ibid. p. 20.

69 Ibid. p. 20.

Man is orientated towards somebody/something.⁷⁰ Thus people can be divided into 'categories' showing the **depth** of their life sense: ranging from hedonistic to self-transcendence.

Frankl was influenced and also influenced other theologians, philosophers, psychoanalysts, writers, thinkers ... among them e.g. M. Habán⁷¹ who states that: 'The sense cannot be given to anybody, but it has to be found personally. On this journey man is accompanied by conscience which can be expressed as an *ability to intuitively get to know the only and unique sense present in every situation*. Man tends towards his/her own completeness (completion) – *entelechy*, having a potential germ of own sense and its attainment. By means of spiritual activity man then improves and forms, and thus approaches fulfilment of human sense. Sensible man is, in the course of his/her life, trying to obtain the best from everything he/she encounters.⁷²

As for ideas of St. T. Aquinas in relation to ethics, Frankl understands it in the same way – man does not have to act rigidly according to rules, the ultimate criterion is conscience.⁷³

Frankl defines conscience as the ability of man to uncover (disclose) own sense. He also admits erroneous conscience. Last but not least he is in favour of the influence of social environment in order to educate and form conscience. However, even though initially under the influence of psychoanalysis, he distances himself from Freud's understanding of conscience. There may be some connection with Jung's collective unconsciousness. Frankl's view corresponds to the religious one.⁷⁴

We may conclude that the aim of our life is, according to Frankl, not self-realization, but transcendence. The sense can be realised by creative/experience values and our attitude.

70 Ibid. p. 23.

71 Petr Metoděj Habán (*1899 +1984), theologian, philosopher, psychologist, Dominican.

72 Ibid. pp. 234-235.

73 Ibid. p. 233.

74 Ibid. p. 195.

Let me now mention my perception of the matter based on (coming from) reading *Heidbrink's*⁷⁵ publication.

He poses questions, for example: **How** is ethics of the young generation shaped? **What** are the factors which influence moral behaviour of humans? As for methods – what are the ways of developing the ability of moral judgement and acting?⁷⁶

Heidbrink confronts moral problems in films, literature, politics, everyday situations.

He critically evaluates the contribution of Piaget, Kohlberg and their followers. Taking moral stages into consideration, his opinion⁷⁷ is that at every stage there exists a notion (conception) of justice and decency which should not be criticized from the '*superiority*' point of view of the higher stage of moral cognitive development. Is it appropriate to say that somebody at the higher stage is 'better' than the one at the lower stage? In fact, he questions the word '*good, better*'⁷⁸, which has a very subjective meaning.

He also criticizes *behaviourism* which, according to him, 'educates' just behaviour, and not judgement/acting. In other words, not a moral person.

Later on, he gives an example of one of Kohlberg's collaborators – *C. Gilligan*⁷⁹ who, despite some criticism of her research, in (by) her theses contributed to deeper understanding and gaining insight into the 'moral world' of men and women. In her book *In a Different Voice* (1984) she comes to the conclusion that Piaget and Kohlberg created a picture of justice seen from the moral thinking of men (one *gender*) only. According to Gilligan⁸⁰, women were, due to Kohlberg's theory, more often related to stage 3, whereas men to stage 4. In relation to women, she speaks of the so-called ethics of 'care', whereas men have the ethics of 'justice'. Her ethics of 'care' is

75 Dr. Horst Heidbrink does research of social processes at Hagen University (distance education) in Germany. He also edits The Gruppendynamik journal.

76 HEIDBRINK, H. *Psychologie morálního vývoje*.

77 Ibid. p. 150.

78 Ibid. p. 151.

79 Carol Gilligan (*1936), American, Professor at New York University, Visiting Professor at Cambridge University.

80 Ibid. p. 119.

characterised as more human-like, pro-life and love, situationally sensitive and flexible. 'I' in relation to the others is orientated towards concrete mutual relations.

On the other hand, the ethics of 'justice' is considered to be situationally independent, rigid, 'I' is autonomous, independent, orientated towards abstract rights and duties.

She stresses the importance of telling the truth and sincerity towards own needs, not only the needs of the others. However, nowadays Gilligan⁸¹ changes her mind a bit, and does not think that 'care' can be found in women only/mainly. Kohlberg accepted her 'criticism', but stated that both ethics are complimentary.

In the 6th chapter of Heidbrink's publication called Education for Justice he poses a fundamental question for educators: 'Is it possible not only to learn moral judgement and acting, but also teach them?'⁸² In order to answer this question he again gives examples of the Behaviourist theory stressing the idea that the aim of moral education is not a moral person, but moral behaviour.⁸³

What has not been mentioned in my Bc work so far is the application of moral apriori through our conscience to individual cases. In this process we tend to apply our total life experience. Anzenbacher⁸⁴ uses the term *motivated horizon* which is, according to him, historical. What one considers to be forbidden, may not be the same for someone else. Anzenbacher stresses that this horizon is different in different cultures, nations, classes, people. Thus we may draw conclusion that it is impossible to judge someone else's morality – compare Mt 7:1.⁸⁵

As for the autonomy of conscience, Anzenbacher stresses the obligation of education of conscience. We should strive for the best possible knowledge (consciousness), i.e. understanding by means of the reason. We should also strive for finding solutions in

81 Ibid. p. 124.

82 Ibid. p. 132.

83 Ibid. p. 133.

84 Arno Anzenbacher (* 1940 in Austria), Professor at the Catholic Theological Faculty in Mohuč since 1981 (general and social ethics).

85 ANZENBACHER, A. *Úvod do filozofie*.

ethical argumentation – discourse (reflect with other people, use logic, linguistics to analyse ethical language), when asking ourselves what the universally valid norms are.⁸⁶

8. CONCLUSION

Are there any *interlinks* between the various forms of understanding of conscience throughout our history? How and what are we to understand by conscience? How and to what extent can education of conscience *really* influence and change man for the better? To find answers to these and similar questions is our everyday task. However, it is difficult to find an easy and a ready answer to these questions, but we can formulate at least some observations and draw some conclusions.

We associate conscience with our heart. This association is very evocative and can serve as a background to our discourse about opening ourselves to the gifts of the Holy Spirit by praying for wisdom in the way we reason as we search for the truth. (A thought inspired by one of the speeches of JPII presented in Radio Maryja.)

Christians develop their own religious identity as part of God's people. The covenant places them in a particular relation with God and with one another. The Commandments set boundaries between the self and God and between the self and others. The boundaries or limits are signs of mutual respect and keep us from infringing on the other.

We all should seek to live a truly human life. Being human means being moral. We try to fulfil our desire to be more human because we have a certain potential – capability. Being human (nature) implies a potential (for self-realization). An authentic form of morality is a morality that seeks to re-activate and re-direct our basic inclination to self-realization. The process can be ultimately understood and lived in the context of God's call to share in His life and love. It presupposes a kind of moral self-orientation that opens us to this divine call. Faith in God, in fact, requires the development of an ability on our part to live in a wise and creative way. Christian morality does not lay down a size-fits-all style of living. On the contrary, it is a highly personalized call by God to

⁸⁶ Ibid. pp. 236-239.

each and every one of us to live out our life in a unique and original way. Indeed, we can understand ourselves as part of a wider story in which so many other people are involved and in which God Himself has intervened and is intervening but all have the gift as well as the task of developing *our own story*. This is the grace that we have in being members of the Christian community.

9. SUMMARY IN CZECH

Tato bakalářská práce pojednává o svědomí a jeho vztahu (nejen) k člověku.

Lidská bytost je vnímána jako přesahující sebe sama, mající vztah ke svému Stvořiteli – Bohu. Otázka lidského svědomí je zasazena do širšího kontextu (Část I) historického vývoje s odkazem na výsledky bádání vědních disciplin – filosofie, psychologie, pedagogiky a sociologie.

Pohled teologický vychází z Písma, přes názor současné katolické teologie, až po nezbytnost neustálého vzdělávání a formování svědomí s dopadem na celek společnosti.

Jako stěžejní literatura byla vybrána 3. kapitola Všeobecné morální teologie od H. Webera, proslov Svědomí a pravda od J. Ratzingera, a článek L. Muchové týkající se otázky pomoci psychologie při výchově křesťanského svědomí a hledání vlastní identity. Jako zásadní pro vývoj morálního postoje byla použita teorie L. Kohlberga.

V Části II (jiný pohled) této bakalářské práce je vytýčená linie – svědomí ve vztahu k sebeorientaci a formování vlastní identity nahlížena i z jiných úhlů pohledu dalších významných autorů, např. P. Tavel (Frankl) a jeho otázka životního smyslu, H. Heidbrink (jak, co, nadřazenost, dobré, behaviorismus), C. Gilligan (gender, etika péče vs etika spravedlnosti), J. Skoblík (výchova svědomí, kompromis), a A. Anzenbacher se svým pojetím mravního apriori v individuálních případech spolu s nutností etické argumentace.

V závěru práce byl podtržen význam naší orientace na křesťanské principy vycházející z naší každodenní otevřenosti vůči Božímu slovu.

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Vlastní poznámky z přednášek a seminářů ze studijního pobytu ERASMUS, Maltská univerzita.