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Introduction

Virtue Based Moral and Ethical Leadership
as a Collaborative Analysis

One thing that science has in common with the arts is that experimentation and reasoning require great patience before significant results can be achieved, and perseverance in the method as a condition of all honest and serious research. The pianist knows that he/she has to go back to the piano technique even if becoming a piano virtuoso is difficult and remote, because everyone knows what it means to play the piano, and because it takes just two minutes to convince yourself that someone is ignoring it. Working on piano technique is hard, it takes energy and the result is not always assured if you plan to give an audition. One thing is sure though, without practising over and over your technique, you will never improve.

When introducing this collection of essays by Obiora Ike, *Moral and Ethical Leadership*, I realize that there are important characteristics of method, which are clear and worth presenting, reminding the reader that as for music and arts, might be essential conditions for excellence, and which are at the centre of this book. Such distinctive features of the author's method will be exposed in order to give a service to the reader and we will attempt to do so by proposing a valuable comparison.

Non scholae, sed vitae discendum est ("We must learn not for school but for life") It is following this motto that we dare the comparison of Pascal Engel's analytic method and Obiora's eclectic practice in transposing the core of a method across disciplines, because rigorous thinking and practice in ethics has only value for life. Life is not only the professional framework in which we are placed, day after day, each person in a given economic and social sector, but economic activity and the specifics of the professional framework are a central part of our human existence. Let me present the three central assumptions of our comparison.

First we shall explain the method of common, argumentative and collaborative analysis in moral and ethical thinking and practice: as underestimated but crucially important methodological aspects of applying ethics in an analytical way: i.e. focusing on the essential technical components of ethics, and leaving aside all unnecessary contexts and historical perspectives.

Second we propose truth and epistemic virtue as central ways of understanding the core of ethical thinking and practice.

Third, we present Obiora's work on *Moral and Ethical Leadership* built, as we will argue on a wide common framework of Christian virtues. The method is then deployed on the fields of various disciplines (into Economics, Politics, Religion and Moral philosophy). This project is built on the central assumption that ethics as truth should be widely understood and applied, as part of the overall definition of analytical method in ethics below.

Why is it important to build on the value of truth, or to have some precise notions on what makes the correctness of beliefs? Why is empirically observable knowledge a part of applying ethics

in life? Why are ordinary language and common understanding essential for communicating issues related to ethics (e.g. in the professional fields of human activities)?

These are the crucial questions that this book aims to answer. It is not based on a complicated speculative system that Obiora Ike proceeds to present his solution, nor on moral sentimentalism, introspection or self-consolation. The central claim—which in a strict sense justifies the comparison with the work of the analytic philosopher Pascal Engel—is that we should rather tackle bad habits, which deflate our pretention for truth and ethical values, instead of indoctrinating and seeking direct comprehension.

Let's look at Engel's proposition very briefly.

We find by P. Engel a good presentation in three points of some minimal conditions for addressing ethical issues in an analytical way. In order to fit to the comparison, we have adapted to ethics and applied ethics, what Engel is proposing about philosophical analysis. P. Engel completed with his *Vices of Knowledge* (*Les vices du savoir: essai d'éthique intellectuelle*, 2019) the ethical facets of this enquiry into philosophical knowledge, but which would need a separate attention. The three central conditions for being analytically performant are:

> (1) *Moral and ethical philosophy, theology and practice, "like science, is a common enterprise*." What moral and ethical philosophers and theologians say "has to be discussed, criticized, argued about, and no moral and ethical philosopher can expect to produce good arguments or

good theories without the help and sanction of other researchers.[1]"

(2) "*There can be progress"* in moral and ethical philosophy, as in any applied ethical discipline "(although not in the sense of scientific progress), provided *everyone tries to be clear and argumentative*. 'Truth emerges more readily out of error than from confusion'. 'Do not write so that you can be understood, but so that you cannot be misunderstood' (Quintillian)."

(3) "Not everybody is a genius, but as Peirce said, 'in order to be deep it is sometimes necessary to be dull'." *Moral and ethical philosophers can be technical discipline's "co-workers"* without being engaged in the construction of "large philosophical systems", and without encompassing the whole range of philosophical and theological problems and of the history of their discipline. There can be good professional and technical thinking: this is condition for good moral and ethical philosophy as well as applied ethical progress.

The success of moral and ethical thinking and practice can be presented as following very simple conditions, which are, in short, that of *analytic thinking and practice*. It implies that technical theoretical or intellectual ethical thinking and practical dimensions are analysed in a careful way as partly separate and condition for a

[1] Engel, Pascal (1987): "Continental Insularity: Contemporary French Analytical Philosophy", *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, March 1987, p. 1-3, DOI: 10.1017/S0957042X00003448

variety of scientific findings. It involves engaging in research and teaching, in such a way that:

> "many people can share these beliefs without agreeing on any philosophical opinion or theory". "They can even be co-workers while sustaining philosophically antagonist doctrines, provided that they share this general attitude. This attitude is just the scientific attitude, even though [moral and ethical philosophy is not one of the sciences, or, better, it is the rationalistic attitude. This is not to say that every philosopher in the analytic community adopts this attitude, but, and by large, it serves as a regulative ideal. It is also […] an institutional attitude, the academic attitude, and it is better carried out through the channels of the academic institutions than through any other institution."

A purely technical but highly demanding moral and ethical intellectual and practical perspective is a promising approach, we argue, which can be spread across professional disciplines easily, because of the methodological power of clear demonstrations and argumentations, the openness to common understanding and sharing, and the simple truth that professional collaborations is bringing ethics out of school back to life. The impact of ethical models of practice should be without complication, purified from its historical framework of unnecessary systematic or historic explanations.

But if our comparison is sound, faith and religion may have to go hand in hand, against the assumption of self-sufficient conditions given in the programme of philosophically enlightened ethics. Why is it so?

One reason might be that religion, as philosophy provides a meta-ethical entry for defining the truth and reality of our reasons to enter in any activity, or firm ground for establishing the values associated somehow with these reasons.

Obiora shows explicitly that:

> "the projects of scientific findings … challenged dogmatic stands of religion and the conservative order which belong to the scope of many religions and cultural leaders as preservers of tradition. Finding the balance remains the question. Modern inventions in medicine, automobiles, space travel, social media, informatics, engineering, architecture, automation and intercultural relations opened the debate for a world for all which was previously foreclosed to all."

In fact, the science and the technological development, indirectly correlated in various, intertwined manners to rigorous science, has gone so far that, in a sudden and curious postmodernist jolt, it shacked deeply the groundings of the whole human edifice, on a wide continental or even global level. This challenge, which has no precedent, has a good unattended consequence highlighted by Engel. In his dialogue with R. Rorty, on the very strict limitations of pragmatism and postmodern way of life, we read it in the form of an ironic but deep and central question:

> "On one hand, there has never been so much distrust of the values of rationality, scientific progress, truth, and objectivity, either in advanced intellectual circles or in the media and society generally. On the other, never has the impression that we are being deceived by the authorities (political and scientific) that are supposed to guarantee

> precisely these values, and the need for trust, been so great. Why, if we no longer believe in truth, is there such a longing for it?[2]"

Most of us, who believe this observation is correct, agree with the core value of truth for very simple but convincing reasons. The very aim of good education could be seen as directly related to a closer proximity to truth with Goodman and subsequent attempts to address the value of truth in education[3].

Great religions share the belief with moral philosophers and with most of common people of the value of truth. Anyone who stands up in the morning and goes to work, knows that the *everyday truth* such as the correctness of our bank balance, the need to keep your feet dry (in the Northern countries), or the importance of having healthy children and stable family life, etc., has something in common with truth being spoken out in Churches, at the University and that when we meet a lawyer or a dentist truth has some value (even if in this case truth might also bear some heavy costs).

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[2] Richard Rorty and Pascal Engel (2007): "Main Statement by Pascal Engel", *What is the Use of Truth*, transl. W. McCunig, New York: Columbia University Press, 1-3.

[3] Goldman, Alvin (1999): *Knowledge in a Social World*, Oxford: OUP. See also: Buckland, Luke A. "Social epistemology and the aim(s) of education" *South African Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 35, No 1. Also: Marabini, Alessia, Moretti, Luca (2020): "Goldman and Siegel on the Epistemic Aims of Education". *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. https://doi.org/ 10.1111/1467-9752.12398

The alternative to truth is indoctrination and brainwashing, as Bailey shows well, and who reminds us that the transmission of doctrines and beliefs, which could be seen as part of the very aim of education institutions, is very different from focusing on critical and well-founded beliefs[4].

There are excellent reasons for ethics and truth based education made very explicit by Obiora Ike's book, extending the question of the quality of education and ethical knowledge to disciplines such as business, human rights education, conflict resolution, social work, social teaching of the Church and wealth management in Nigeria, etc.

The broad scope of Obiora's eclectically structured approach shows how truth is challenging various social problems, which are first gathered across ordinary technical disciplines, second invited to dialogue with *a perspective from beyond* the field of professionals, convinced that scientific and ethical knowledge bring added value to professional practices. The deep analytic tendency, we argue, of Obiora's theology and philosophy of religion and education, is not to seek to oppose to problematic doctrines as disagreements about what the logical forms of those doctrines really are. Obiora Ike is not interested by ahistorical philosophical transformation of openly received religious dogmas, but much more concerned by the effectiveness of a limited number of *cardinal virtues*, great religions as Christianity has in common with philosophical ethics, and he is using philosophy as

[4] Also: Bailer, R.P. (2001): "Overcoming veriphobia – learning to love truth again", *British Journal of Educational Studies* 49(2): 159–72. doi: 10.1111/1467-8527.t01-1-00169

practical aim for better inviting for value and reason oriented actions.

Based on the *virtue of hope* he thinks the very essence of fair conditions for education as transformative education (Ch. 2). Deriving from the *virtue of justice*, we find a firm foundation for peace research and reconciliation programmes (Ch. 6). *Courage and productivity* are in a judicious manner related to the value of work (Ch. 7). *Trust, the virtue of love* and common good are matters of the management of natural and economic resources. As we discover each chapter after the other, the whole work is grounded on a hierarchy of virtues (Ch. 8, 9).

These perspectives, relate not only to a broad sense of Christian catholic and Greek or Latin classical philosophy (we find cardinal virtues by Plato, Seneca, etc.) but show that consistent work can be carried out, not in disagreement with the aims of the Enlightenment ideal of autonomy and human freedom, along lines common to the Catholic Church's body of social teaching (as for example referring to the medium of encyclical letters), but always we find at the basis of the method, the praising and applying, in clarity and precision, the consequent analytic method. Along these lines, enlightened leadership prevents us from a widespread tendency based on "non-evidential and non-critical style of belief that makes open-mindedness and autonomy unattainable".

Geneva, February 2020,

Ignace Haaz*, Managing Editor, PhD.*