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LOVE AND OTHER OPTIONS...

SOME METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF THE SITUATIONIST CONCEPT OF BENEVOLENCE

The question "Why do I love?" may seem unjustified and ironic to almost all people who really love. For lovers, love does not need any reasons or justifications but love itself. Nevertheless, even people in love often ask "How should I love?" or "Do I truly love?" People of all cultures and times have experienced illusory loves. Such experiences show that not all who think they love and not all who declare love, truly love. In order to distinguish between true and false (illusory) loves, one should look for the principles capable of justifying love as "true" and falsifying it as illusory ("false"). Even if lovers do not feel any stronger motive for their love but the sentiment of love itself, their love can have objective justifications (in relevant aspects).

Notice that love is a sort of objective relation between the lover (subject of love) and the beloved person (object of love). This relation has subjective dimensions but it is an objective relation: in "true" love, attitude and actions of the lover are adequate to the nature of the person who is the object of love. Otherwise, love does not take place. Take

an example: If somebody says "I love Juliet" and he does not know Juliet at all and does not have any idea of her, his intention does not "localize" Juliet; that is, he does not really love her even if he has some feelings or attitude resembling "true" love. For his intention is directed to some imaginary object in his mind, not to a real person.

"True" love requires at least some minimal knowledge of the object of love. For love intends the good for the beloved person. If the subject is deprived of knowledge of the object of love, the subject cannot intend good for the beloved person; in this case, the subject simply does not know what should be intended. Without this knowledge, the lover's ("good") intentions cannot be translated into actions and expressed.

Ultimately, the objective justification of love lies in the beloved person. For true love intends and does good for the beloved, false love does harm for the beloved. Love requires that our actions, attitudes, and feelings are compatible to the beloved person(s) who is (are) the object of love. By ignoring this justification, one can implicitly exclude the possibility of love. As I will try to show, it actually happens in situation ethics.

Situationism[1] (also called "situation ethics," "circumstantial ethics," "new morality," etc.) identifies love with benevolence (good will, *benevolentia*), which is "an active determination of the will" (in contrast to emotions and sentiments) to do good for others.[2] This is why in this paper, by "love" I mean "good will" - "benevolence." [3]

Situationists stress the importance and ethical rank of love.[4] They assume that there is only one moral value in the strict sense: love; [5] and that there are no universally valid moral norms and values but the norm/value of love.[6] Situationists do not want to give any objective reason or justification for the value and norm of love except the lover's decision to love.[7] Moreover, they do not allow for any universal norms that show how love should be expressed.[8] Situationists admit that the acting subject should take into account the norms of his culture.[9] Yet, situationists suggest that the acting subject

should make his own decision about what norms oblige him.[10] Ultimately, situationism does not allow for any general philosophical answer to the question "How to love?" For situationists maintain that only decisions made in concrete situations can be an "answer" to such questions. They believe that their conception defends the dignity of persons and the personal character of morality.

Antipersonal Personalism?

Situationists call their conception "personalism." For they postulate that love and morality should aim at well being of people. Situationists attempt to find an objective criterion of love in the utilitarian tradition. According to situationism, in each situation we should calculate possible good and bad effects (of an action in question) and choose the best option: Love should choose the action that brings about best effects (the greatest good to the greatest number of people). At this point, situationism faces the problem of the criterion that allows distinguishing good from bad effects. Utilitarianism often applies implicit or explicit conception of human nature that is the criterion of rightness/wrongness. Yet, such a solution is implicitly excluded by situationism: As Herbert McCabe notices, situationists assume

the dualistic view of man, which has been such a constant temptation to Western philosophy, pictures a self inside the body and using it rather as an announcer inside a radio station uses the mechanism at his command to deliver messages to the outside world.[11]

Human nature is not only the body (also such capacities, as freedom, reason, etc. belong to human nature) and not all elements of the body are ethically relevant. Yet, the body is very important factor of human nature. McCabe indicates the classical metaphysical conception of the nature. One should not interpret his statements in the naturalistic sense: bodily dynamisms do not directly issue moral norms.[12]

According to situationism, the body is the only "means" of our actions. The means do not issue any moral norms. The means can be effective or not but they are not "ends in themselves." Consequently, the body is not a value in a strict sense: the body cannot issue any criterion to distinguish rightness from wrongness. Such a dualistic standpoint has become an object manifold criticism. For example, McCabe writes:

The human body is not ... a medium but a source of significance, and this distinguishes it radically (substantially) from other things. ... As the Thomist said, human life is the substantial form of the body, that which makes it what it is; or, as Wittgenstein put it, 'The best picture of the soul is the body.' ... Without a body I am absent)) this is what happens to the dead.[13]

McCabe observes that even our secret (i.e., never expressed) thoughts "are defined by reference to some bodily activity and, secondly, they derive their moral value from the value of such bodily behaviour." He notes that love too is not comprehensible without taking in account its bodily expressions:

The human body is definitive of love ... in order to explain the meaning of 'love' you have to describe some bodily activities. ... What needs to be seen too, however, is that if 'love' is to have any meaning at all, there must be pieces of behavior which count as unloving ... If we can describe such pieces of behaviour then we can lay down absolute prohibitions, for even the New Moralists recognize that the command to love is absolute[14]

Yet, situationism does not take in account ethical relevance of the body in particular and of the human nature in general, and the question arises: If the human nature is not ethically significant - what can be the objective criterion that allows us to distinguish good from bad effects? Human convictions and intentions are subjective criteria. A terrorist can have good intentions by killing people or by sending them to concentration camps. He may be deeply convinced that it is the best for the humankind. There can be a consensus in a society that his actions are right. What a situationist can say in such a situation? Joseph Fletcher is one of the most important representatives of situation ethics. Consider his statement:

... nothing is worth anything in and of itself. It gains or acquires its value only because it happens to help persons (thus being good) or to hurt persons (thus being bad)... Persons -- God, self, neighbor -- are both the subjects and the objects of value; they determine it to be value, and they determine it to be value for some person's sake. It is a value because somebody decided it was worth something.[15]

Notice: on the one hand, the person as subject is a **source** of values: "it is a value because **somebody** decided it was worth something." On the other hand, the person is an object of values: "value [is] for some person's sake." Only one assumption can free Fletcher from contradiction, namely, that every human decision is right. This is false. For people often commit decisions that are wrong (which hurt persons). In consequence, situationists' postulate of personalism is ambiguous. They must make a choice between **objective personalism** as a normative postulate of respecting persons or a **subjective personalism** as a postulate (and/or a theory) ascribing a creative power to the human freedom to arbitrarily decide what is right and wrong.

As one can see, situationism so elevates subjective personalism as to sacrifice objective personalism. In this context, Tadeusz Styczeń asks the very fitting question: "Does not [situation ethics] ascribe to the [person as] subject, something the person [as object] is deprived of?"[16] Notice that in the real world the act of love affirms a truth about its object (i.e., about the beloved person). Goodwill wills the good of the beloved. The measure of love cannot be intention alone, but first of all - an axiological-ontological structure of the loved one. This structure determines the loved one's good and the reality, meaning and normative character of love. Now, situationism ascribes these powers to the decisions of the subject of love. This constitutes, as Styczeń stresses, "ignorance of the essence of love." As he puts it, "dubious is that 'love' which mutes the truth about the person to whom love is directed."[17] Situationist personalism has narrowed to the limits of the perverse: to a **personalism for the sake of the person as subject, at the sacrifice of the person as object of action.**

In this context, manifold abuses of love are possible: Imagine a murderer, a terrorist who kills people and justifies his actions by his "loving" intention. There can be a consensus in a society that his actions are right. How can we judge him in the context of situationism? What should we respond to him, when he recalls Fletcher, by stating that his murder "is a value because [he, they] ... decided it was worth something."?!

Conscience: intuitionism or immanentism?

Situationists retain one possible epistemological "dodge," by which they may seek to avoid antipersonal consequences of their conception,[18] namely, the possibility of concrete cognitive moral experience of the moral imperative, which reveals in concreto what is good for people. Situationists suggest that decision-makers should recognize unique ethical call of each situation. As situationists suggest, despite the role of decisions in moral judgments, concrete moral situational imperatives exist objectively and these can be perceived. Even if, as situationists notice, these imperatives often cannot be recognized by general norms, principles or laws, such moral imperatives can be perceived. That these moral imperatives are unique and radically concrete does not alter the fact that relevant and objective moral cognition is possible. This conception of cognitive moral experience may be traced to one of its classical interpretations: There is a subject who passes moral judgments, and there is an object of these judgments, that are objectively existing concrete moral imperatives. These judgments are right (correct) when they are adequate to their objects object, these judgments are wrong (not correct) when they are not adequate to their objects. Many situationists' texts would imply that they follow such an interpretation. They in fact postulate a "realist," "objective" reading of the situation, one which requires judgments adequate to the content of a given moral obligation, as well as decisions accordant to the moral call given within the situation.

In this interpretation, the above quotation of Fletcher would not mean that each decision is "automatically" good and right independently from truth about person-object of this decision, it would just rightly stress that moral values do not exist without decisions (for they are values of decisions). So, Fletcher perhaps does not mean all decisions be right and good, he just means that only decisions can be good and right in the strict sense. In order not to unjustly accuse situationism for anti-personal consequences, one should consider the situationistic conception of moral experience.

Fletcher treats the judgment of conscience as part of an objective moral obligation.[19] He does not explain how subjective judgment is introduced into the object of judgment. This renders the "objective situation" ambiguous, at best.

To clear up this ambiguity, we must distinguish the two kinds of judgement Fletcher applies here: (a) a judgment about a moral obligation (that is, about what is right and wrong in the concrete situation), and (b) a judgment co-constituting moral obligation. According to Judgment (b) assents that the judgment (a) should be followed.

This distinction is similar to the classical distinction introduced for example by John Henry Newman. He distinguishes two aspects of conscience: On the one hand, (a) the moral sense or "judgment of reason" (which is the perception of right and wrong) as an indispensable basis by which one's actions are judged; and, on the other hand, (b) the sense of duty or "magisterial dictate," the "voice" of conscience that which we typically mean by antecedent conscience or *synderesis*, a "voice" of conscience which demands that we do good and confirm in actions what we see as morally right.[20]

As Newman notices, the voice of conscience (b) is not autonomous, but depends by its very nature upon some prior moral perception. For there must be some prior

moral perception of which the voice of conscience speaks. Without it, conscience is not only distorted, it is **blind**.

In a classical approach, judgment (a) must be based on some knowledge of moral values recognized in the concrete situation of decision-making. Notice that even thinkers considered by situationist "legalists" acknowledge that false judgment (a) (the judgment based on a false convictions about the moral imperative) is nevertheless morally obligatory for the subject, for there is no higher **subjective** norm of morality than the person's own conscience. Therefore, agreement between these two judgments is the ultimate **subjective** criterion of moral value (of good intention), which is **subjective**. Yet, this agreement is not the ultimate **objective** criterion for the rightness of judgment (a).

In the classical interpretation, neither judgment (a) nor agreement between both judgements (a and b) is considered to be the **objective** or **ultimate** norm of morality. In this interpretation, judgment (a) attempts to **answer** the normative "call" of the objective norm of morality, and attempts to find the way to (ob)serve the norm of morality according to the concrete situation. In this context, the postulate of realism or objectivism refers to judgment (a); this judgment should be **adequate** to reality, it should be **true**. And this adequacy is the measure of rightness of this judgment. Judgment (b) can be realistic (i.e. it can correspond to the real call of obligation) only inasmuch as judgment (a) is true.

Fletcher seems to follow this (realistic) interpretation of judgment (a) by stressing that subjects have to be "well informed" about the situation of decision making, etc. Yet Fletcherian interpretation of this distinction is very different from the classical one. In situation ethics, "being well-informed" refers only to pre-moral knowledge about the configuration of morally irrelevant facts (their causal links, possibilities), not to the moral imperative (to the moral meaning of the situation) in question.[21] In this context, judgment (a) can only inform about **possibilities** of actions (what **can** be done, what are

probable consequences of possible actions, etc.), it cannot provide any knowledge about what is right or wrong in the moral sense, i.e. it cannot help to answer the crucial moral question about what **should** be done, what alternative of possible actions **should** be chosen. In this context, if judgment (a) does not show what is right, judgment (b) cannot confirm what is right to do. This issues the crucial epistemological problem of situation ethics. In order to clarify it, one has to explain the source of normative character of conscience.

In order to solve this problem, Fletcher assumes that judgment (a) is accompanied by a sort of decision. Fletcher, following the Humean tradition, stresses that facts possess no intrinsic moral value and one cannot derive imperatives from knowledge of facts.[22] Therefore, all moral qualifications of facts in the situation of decision-making come from a decision of a person. In this context, the moral content of judgment of conscience is issued by decision (c) to follow some possibility of actions shown as possible by judgment (a). In this conception, judgment (a) shows what is possible, while decision (c) decides what is obligatory among these possibilities. In this way, decision (c) constitutes the moral imperative. For, according to Fletcher, there is no other source of moral meaning of the situation but a decision of a person.

Notice that according to the situationistic metaphysics, there can be only one decision in the situation of decision-making, because the decision is the principle of unity of this situation.[23] Moreover, as Fletcher maintains, the imperative of the situation can be recognized only in within of this situation by the person who makes the decision and "no one can ... impugn the decision to which he comes."[24] In this interpretation, decision (c) "answers" to the so-called "objective moral imperative" which is at the same time constituted by this decision. Moreover, this moral "imperative" is constituted in such a way that decision (c) cannot deny it, because no decision can affirm and negate the same possibility in the same respect.[25] **Decision (c) says what should be done by doing it.**

Situationists admit that the acting subject should take into account the norms of his culture.[26] Yet due to their fear against legalism, situationists assume that all norms are relative, the acting subject should make his own **decision** about what norms oblige him.[27] Ultimately, situationism does not allow for any general philosophical answer to the question "How to love?" and - implicitly - they assume our normative ignorance about the object of love. I.e., according to this standpoint, we may know who the object of love is but we do not know what it means for love. No action follows from this knowledge, everything has to be decided.

In situationism, the postulate of moral realism effectively reduces to the postulate of a **coherence** between decision (c) and judgment (a), in the sense that decisions should intend what is acknowledged as possible by judgment (a). In other words, decisions should not be counter-productive (i.e. they should not intend to destroy what is intended), and decisions should not intend impossible actions.[28]

One can rightly claim that situation ethics emphasizes a "logic of willing," which can explain how decisions can be connected or contradictory. It can likewise serve as a praxeology, describing success in the attainment of ends. But these by their very essence, this "logic of willing" and this praxeology, are something other than ethics. They can say what is coherent or successful, but they cannot tell what is normative. They fail in the central function of each true ethics; they fail to ground any moral -- that is to say, normative estimations, effectively denying ethics any specific formal object.[29]

However, ultimate consequences of situationism are more radical than this. Let us again consider the structure of judgment (a). Fletcher acknowledges that "pure" facts do not exist. He suggests that in order to be intelligible, they must be interpreted and understood by the subject in the context of an ideology. Yet, what justifies such an

ideology? Situationists point to the "resistance" of reality and to the criterion of success (that is, they acknowledge that reality resists our freedom and not all decisions are successful).[30]

Notice that according to situationism, in order to understand or even acknowledge this success (or failure) which is a kind of fact (!), the situationist again needs an ideology, which would explain what the success is, what the resistance is and what is resisted. This means that ideology must explain the links between one's experience of resistance and the resisting object; and between success and the successful means. But, what justifies the ideology that purports to explain the experience of resistance and success? Situationism leaves just two possibilities open: it is another situational decision to follow an ideology or it is the decision (c), which is actually estimated by the ideology. Notice that in the former case, there is an infinite regress[31] and in the later case, there is a circular explanation.[32] Both solutions lead situationism towards immanentism (a radical epistemological subjectivism).

Consequently, decisions cannot be falsified by any objective moral criterion, because, according to this vision, decisions are ultimate criteria of any moral falsification. This conclusion is **immanentistic** and **decisionistic**. Nevertheless, situationism leaves us no alternative interpretation.[33] In this context, ideology is an expression of the subject's commitments. Ultimately, ideology is valid in a situation insofar as the subject follows it;[34] so-called "moral experience" reduces to **wanting** or **not wanting** something. The object of such experience is only the conflict or coherence among one's decisions or wishes, and the inner agreement between them and empirical possibilities revealed by judgment (a).[35]

In consequence, situation ethics offers a moral experience entirely **immanent** to the subject's own decisions and wishes. This experience supposedly constitutes "moral value," but is actually "blind" to moral values. In this way, situation ethics "imprisons" the

subject in the world of his own decisions. Even though Fletcher assumes the real existence of values (especially the dignity of persons), he denies the subject any cognition of moral values. For Fletcher, the subject's decisions are the inescapable source and object of every apparent "moral cognition" of this sort.

This view leads to epistemological immanentism and decisionism. According to this standpoint, we can immediately know only our own decisions, nothing more. Beyond this, only the **resistance** of reality can somehow be immediately experienced) yet this experience provides no normative knowledge.[36]

Such an epistemological immanentism commits situationism to its metaphysical counterpart -- to wit, that duty, the imperative, is an **illusion**. According to this theory, an imperative calls on the subject to make a decision -- any decision. Since the meaning and normative power of an imperative is created by the subject, no metaphors about so-called "pregiven" imperatives or the "voice" of duty can conceal the assumed nature of morality. In this context, the so-called "moral imperative" is the "voice" of accidental freedom, the hollow "echo" of ethical illusion, which only gives a deceptive impression of objectively existing values.

Love or Egoism?

Fletcher attempts to avoid the above subjectivistic consequences by introducing his conception of the ethical role of love. He identifies love (as benevolence, goodwill) and judgment (b) of conscience. According to him, not each decision can constitute moral imperative; but the only loving decisions can do it. In support of this idea, Fletcher quotes Augustine's *addagium*:

Augustine was right...to reduce the whole Christian ethic to the single maxim *Dilige et quod vis, fac ...* It was not by the way, *Ama et fac quod vis ...!*[37]

Yet his conception of judgment (b) is ambiguous; it has two basic meanings:

(A) In addressing his ethics to Christians who have already chosen love, Fletcher defines goodwill as love. He interprets love as "the will of the greatest possible good for the greatest possible number of people." In this sense goodwill, which is for situationists the sole norm of morality, is not entirely formal; it has some content, and is open to specification.[38]

(B) But in considering morality "in general," referring to all kinds of morality, Fletcher defines goodwill as "conscientiousness,"[39] that is, as the will to decide in coherence with conscience -- a decision according to one's current existential commitment.

One should ask whether Fletcher's "particular" Christian situation ethics (A) is coherent with his "general" situationism (B). One may ask, is the former only a "particularisation" of the latter? It seems not. The two are based on different assumptions, which may exclude each other in certain situations. In spite of his loving phraseology, Fletcher seems to support the general situationsim (B).

For Christian situationists (A), love is universal and ultimate norm of estimations and motive of actions. But in the "general" situationists (B), love becomes obligatory for a subject only once he **chooses** it. In this sense, love is neither a universal nor an absolute norm. Moreover, in this context, meaning of love has no specific meaning. In the "general" situationism the meaning of love is to be chosen by the subject. When the meaning of love, *diligere* or *ama*, is not clear, when one does not say how love should be followed, the maxim of Augustine becomes inexact and inapplicable. The norm of love without any other qualification is effectively empty. As Andrzej Szostek writes, in this

case the exhortation is abbreviated to a travesty of Augustine's intention: *Quod vis, fac!* - "Do what you wish!"[40]

In Fletcher's vision of ideology, there is no object of moral cognition common to all persons. His situationism leaves people cognitively isolated from one another; each sees only his own private aspect of reality, given through his ideology justified by his decisions. In this context, subjects do not have real access to objective values, including the value of freedom of other persons. As a consequence, subjects are thereby cognitively isolated and "imprisoned" in the domain of their private accidental decisions; in effect, they are "doing the truth" without really knowing the truth.[41]

In this context, the postulate of loving remains at best ambiguous. On the one hand, situationists elaborate their theory of hierarchy of motives, where love should be the highest motif and norm of moral estimations. In this theory, concrete decisions should be morally estimated in the light of deeper engagements of the agent. Love is the deepest engagement. In this way, love is the ultimate objective criterion to estimate actions. On the other hand, situationism does not show how motives can be hierarchized (Why should love be the highest motive?) and how love can be "translated" into the language of actions (How love can be expressed?). Moreover, the immanentistic and decisionistic background of situation ethics rather suggests the anti-loving interpretation of the love-phraseology. In this interpretation, love is only a "label" for any engagement of the agent, which is the strongest ("highest") in his decision-making. It is not excluded that even egoism can constitute such a motif.

In experiencing the other solely through our own decisions, we cannot experience other persons as "ends in themselves" (to recall Kantian formula). In the situationistic vision, by necessity we come to experience others as but either **limitations** or as **means** of our actions. The only end in itself is the self and its commitments. Such a "moral perception" would even "morally oblige" the acting subject to estimate others strictly

from the point of view of utility, that is, it would require us to submit others to our actual commitments. For our commitment is the ultimate criterion of moral estimation in situation ethics. In situationism, love is but the choice of the highest end. In respecting love, the situationist ultimately respects only his own commitment -- or, to put it bluntly, himself. In this context, even the Christian situationist must experience his neighbour as merely an opportunity to confirm his commitment to love. In Christian situation ethics, one's neighbour seems less a real end, than an opportunity to exercise love.

One can hope that the Christian agent would at least act lovingly in the sense of serving the well-being of others. I should hope so. However, notice that situationists assume that the subject does not know what is good for the other before the subject chooses it. Situationism excludes all criteria that can help to gain knowledge in this matter. Therefore, situationism suggests that the subject cannot know what serves the well-being of the other person. This consequence follows from the situationist dogma that there is no (constant) human nature, and the immanentistic conception of moral cognition. In this context, one can accomplish (real) good only by accident; one can never actually intend any objective goods, but only stumble upon them by accident.[42] **If every subject is "imprisoned" in his freedom, so called "love" is but a monologue within the subject.**

The epistemological ethical immanentism of situation ethics puts a premium on **egoism**. If metaphysical necessity dictates that the situationist affirm only himself and only his own accidental freedom, other people are reduced to means toward self-fulfillment. Therefore, according to situationistic immanentism, if any love is possible, it is self-love. The love of self is not yet egoism, but egoism is self-love, which excludes the love of others. **If the subject by necessity is blind to reality, the subject must be sentenced to egoism.**

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Critical remarks of this paper should not lead to the conviction that situationism is totally wrong or uninteresting. In fact, situation ethics contains interesting ethical and psychological observations. [43] Moreover, situation ethics is characteristic of many contemporary streams of ethics. The typicality of situation ethics calls for reflection on the "situationistic paradigm." [44] Situationism is particularly interesting in this context, because situationists express their principles more clearly than their followers. Therefore, situationism provides a very good opportunity to analyse the consequences of this style of thinking.

I hope that in light of this analysis of situation ethics, one can better see *per opposita* the connection between love and truth. The only truth (in the epistemological sense of *adequatio* as the subject's adequate cognition of reality) can build the intentional "bridge" between the subject's intention of love and the object of love. Otherwise, the best intentions of the subject are "blind" and cannot "localize" the object of love. Whatever our definitions of truth may be, love is possible only if (epistemological) truth (in the classical sense of *adequatio*) is possible.

Moreover, love can be expressed only by respecting truth (in the metaphysical sense of *transcendental verum*). As Thomas Aquinas puts it, *verum et bonum conventuntur*. True love is "true," because it intends to be faithful to, founded on, and responsive to truth. For truth is "worthy of love" and truth is revealed and witnessed by true love, to recall Paul of Tarsus' exhortation "*aletheuen en agape*" -- "Reveal truth in love!" [45]

[1] My analysis will be illustrated by the example of Joseph Fletcher, one of the most important spokesmen of situation ethics. According to R. A. McCormick, Joseph F. Fletcher, Douglas A. Rhymes, and John A. T. Robinson are "three best-known popular exponents of a 'situation ethics.'" See: R. A. McCormick (1981) *Notes on Moral Theology 1965 through 1980*, Washington, pp. 74-5). In this paper, I take in account the only situation ethics of the Sixties. For some publications of situationists, see:

J. Fletcher (1959) *The New Look in Christian Ethics*, "Harvard Divinity Bulletin," October, pp. 15-19; (1963) *Changing Sexual Mores: Toward a New Judeo- Christian Consensus*, "Current" December 44, pp. 6-14; (1966) *Situation Ethics. The New Morality*, Philadelphia; (1966a) *Love is the Only Measure*, "Commonweal" 14, pp. 427-32; (1967) *Moral Responsibility: Situation Ethics at Work*, Philadelphia; (1968) *A Theologian Comments: The Right To Die*, "Atlantic Monthly" April 221, pp. 59-64; (1971) *Responsible Decision Making*, "Theology Today" April 28, pp. 90-92; (1974) *Medicine, Morals and Religion*, "Theology Today" April 31, pp. 39-46; (1979) *Morals and Medicine: Moral Problems of the Patient's Right to Know the Truth. Contraception, Artificial Insemination, Sterilization, Euthanasia*, Princeton, New Jersey; (1988) *The Ethics of Genetic Control. Ending Reproductive Roulette. Artificial Insemination; Surrogate Pregnancy; Nonsexual Reproduction; genetic Control and Screening*, Buffalo, New York.

D. Rhymes (1965) *No New Morality*, Indianapolis; (1966) *The 'New' Morality*, "Religion in Life" 35, pp. 170-81.

J. Robinson (1963) *Honest to God*, Philadelphia; (1964) *Christian Morals Today*, London; (1967) *Exploration Into God*, Stanford-California; (1970) *Christian Freedom in a Permissive Society*, London; (1973) *The Human Face of God*, Philadelphia; (1979) *Truth is Two-Eyed*, London.

About situation ethics, see for example: A. Bardecki (1957) *Etyka sytuacyjna*, "Znak" 5, pp. 412-20; K. Bockmühl (1975) *Gott im Exil? Atheismus in der Christenheit. Zur Kritik der 'Neuen Moral,'* Wuppertal; J. Burtness (1966) *The New Morality*, "Dialogue" 5, pp. 10-7; H. McCabe (1966) *The Validity of Absolutes*, "Commonweal" 14, pp. 432-40; R. McCormick, op. cit.; C. E. Curran (1968) /editor/ *Absolutes in Moral Theology?* Washington; G. J. Dalcourt (1976) *The Pragmatist and Situationist Approach to Ethics*, "Thought" 51, pp. 135-46; D. L. Edwards, J. T. Robinson /editors/ (1963) *The Honest to God Debate*, London; J. Fuchs (1952) *Situationsethik in theologischer Sicht*, "Scholastik" 27, pp. 163-82; (1954a) *Die Liebe als Aufbauprinzip der Moral-theologie*, "Scholastik" 29, pp. 79-87; (1954b) *Morale théologique et morale de situation*, "Nouvelle Revue Théologique" 78, pp. 1073-85; (1966) *How Does Love Reign?* "Christian Century" 83, pp. 654-5; J. A. Harold J. A. (1984) *A Philosophical Investigation of the Nature of the Moral Act and the Critique of the Situation Ethics of Joseph Fletcher*, A dissertation submitted to the International Academy of Philosophy in Liechtenstein, Schaan; D. Hildebrand von (1955) *Morality and Situation Ethics*, Chicago; H. Hirschman von (1951) *'Herr was willst du, daß ich tun soll? Situationsethik und Erfüllung des Willens Gottes*, "Geist und Leben" 24, pp. 300-4; J. Kunic (1957) *'Ethicae situationis' multiplex error*, "Divus Thomas" 60, pp. 305-13; E. W. Lutzer (1972) *The Morality Gap. An Evangelical Response to Situation Ethics*, Chicago; K. Rahner (1949/50) *Situationsethik und Sündenmystik*, "Stimmen der Zeit" 145-146, pp. 330-42; P. Ramsey (1965) *Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics*, "Scottish Journal of Theology" Occasional Papers 11, Edinburgh; S. Rosik (1986) *Sytuacjonizm etyczny a chrze cija ska roztropno . Studium teologiczno-moralne*, Poznań; F. Scholz (1958) *Situationsethik und Situationsgerechtes Verhalten im Lichte der jüngsten kirchlichen Verlautbarungen*, In: "Theologisches Jahrbuch," Leipzig; T. Styczeń (1973) *Sytuacjonizm w etyce*, "Ateneum Kapłańskie" 81, pp. 204-16.

[2] See: J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., p. 105.

[3] Good will and benevolence belong to love, but love also consists of extra-

volitional phenomena, such as, emotions, habits, etc.

[4] Situationists consider love to be their main interest, they call themselves "agapists," their address their books to "lovers," etc. See for example: J. Fletcher with T. Wassmer (1970) *Hello, Lovers! An Introduction to Situation Ethics*, Washington.

[5] See: J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 43-6, 40-67.

[6] For example, see: J. Fletcher, *Love is the Only Measure*, op. cit., pp. 427-32; J. Fletcher, "Love Justifies its Means," in: *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 121-33.

[7] See: J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 46-52.

[8] See: J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 52-6.

[9] See: J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 26-39; J. Robinson, "Fixity and Freedom," in: *Christian Morals Today*, op. cit., pp. 7-19.

[10] See: J. Fletcher, "Positivism" in: *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 46-50.

[11] H. McCabe (1966) *The Validity of Absolutes*, "Commonweal" 14, p. 434.

[12] See: R. Spaemann (1987) *Das Natürliche und das Vernünftige*, München.

[13] *Ibidem*, p. 434.

[14] *Ibidem*, p. 435.

[15] J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., p. 59.

[16] See: T. Styczeń (1973) *Sytuacjonizm w etyce*, "Ateneum Kapłańskie" 81, p. 211.

My translation - JFJ.

[17] *Ibidem*, p. 214. Transl. by Jerzy Sokół and myself.

[18] Epistemological ethical subjectivism (immanentism) identifies either the criterion or (in radical cases) even the object of moral judgments with some element of the subject's consciousness. If this element is a decision, the standpoint can be called "decisionism"; if it is an emotion, we are dealing with an "ethical emotivism," etc. This immanentistic conception "imprisons" the subject in the sphere of his own estimations by negating any possibility of the subject's cognitional transcendence towards the reality of objective values, and co-ordinating (adequatio) moral judgments with the reality of real goods. According to radical subjectivistic solutions, the subject apparently estimates reality in moral terms; ultimately, such estimations can only refer to his own decisions,

emotions of thoughts "about" reality.

[19] See: J. Fletcher, *Morals and Medicine*, op. cit., pp. 59-65.

[20] See: J. Newman (1903) *A Grammar of Assent*, New York, chapter 5. The conception of the "magisterial dictate" is similar to the classical conception of the *synderesis*.

[21] In this paper, I identify the "moral imperative" and the "moral meaning" of the situation of decision-making.

[22] See: J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 46-50.

[23] According to situationism, if there are two decisions, there must be two situations of decision-making.

[24] J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., p. 37.

[25] If somebody decides to accept and to deny something at the same time, we can have to do with the two cases: (i) either there are two different decisions taking place at the same time and/or (ii) one accepts something in one aspect but one denies it in another aspect.

[26] See: J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 26-39; J. Robinson, "Fixity and Freedom," in: *Christian Morals Today*, op. cit., pp. 7-19.

[27] See: J. Fletcher, "Positivism" in: *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 46-50.

[28] A counter-productive action) in the long run) destroys that which is intended by this action. For instance, one intends happiness of the beloved person by offering her drugs but drugs will destroy her happiness in the future.

[29] This misinterpretation of ethics was profoundly criticized by the Tadeusz Styczeń and Andrzej Szostek. See: T. Styczeń (1984) *Czy etyka jest logik chcenia?*, In: *W drodze do etyki. Wybór esejów z etyki i o etyce*, Lublin, pp. 165-87; A. Szostek, *Natur-Vernunft-Freiheit*, op. cit.

[30] See: J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 40-3.

[31] In this case, in order to be explained, decision (1) needs ideology (2); in order to be justified, this ideology (2) needs another decision (3); in order to be explained, this

decision (3) needs another ideology (4), and so on.

[32] In this case, decision (c) is justified by the success of action, success of action is explained by ideology, and ideology is justified by (fiat of) decision (c), and so on. If there is not element of cognition of moral values accompanying these steps, this circle is vicious.

[33] Notice that for Fletcher, no external observer of a decision-making process can interpret the moral meaning of a concrete situation of decision-making. Only the subject of action has unique access to the situational moral imperative. In this context one can still ask: Perhaps decision, belonging at once to consciousness and to reality, is the best medium of moral knowledge? It bears objective moral value; therefore, it allows us to observe the moral value arising from within.

It is true that the subject has the unique perspective or aspect, which allows him to grasp immediately the moral imperative in the decision (only the person who is involved in the situation "hears" the specific "call" of the moral imperative); but, for Fletcher, engagement in the situation of decision-making constitutes the moral meaning of this situation. In this sense, decision is a necessary condition for moral cognition, moreover, this engagement is constitutive to moral cognition itself; as Fletcher states, and knowledge of values is "more active than receptive." See: J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 46-50.

[34] See: J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 46-50.

[35] As we can see, situationists lapse into the error of intentionalism, whereby moral estimation is limited to the intention of an action, while its rightness is ignored, or reduced to its goodness. Von Hildebrand shows that situationism "leads, through an absolute formalism, to a much more radical 'legalism' than the one [...] which is protested. It arose originally as a protest against an undue 'legalization' of morality, against a disregard of the qualitative plenitude of morality. Yet in denying the existence of general morally relevant and moral values, in effacing the difference between a moral commandment and a mere positive commandment, it leaves no other beacon for our moral life than a private revelation of God's will, referring exclusively to a unique,

concrete situation. The only norm left would be orders that we have to follow blindfolded, instead of commandments that reveal to our mind that something is evil or that something is good." D. von Hildebrand, *Morality and Situation Ethics*, op. cit., p. 149.

[36] One can speak of 'volitional cognition,' but this is only a metaphorical meaning of cognition.

[37] J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, op. cit., p. 79. J. Gustafson finds it to be a dubious historical allusion: "Can one quote Augustine's 'Love God, and do what you please' while attacking the theory of the virtues that makes the statement significant in Augustine's framework?" J. Gustafson (1966) *How Does Love Reign?* "Christian Century" 83, p. 655.

[38] See: *Situation Ethics*, pp. 63, 105.

[39] Fletcher associates conscientiousness with responsibility. J. Fletcher (1967) *Moral Responsibility: Situation Ethics at Work*, Philadelphia, p. 8.

[40] See: A. Szostek, (1992) *Natura rozum wolno*, op. cit., p. 112. Similar conclusions draw Curran and Geisler: As C. Curran writes, "If by pragmatic, one means only that the Christian must find the most creative ways of showing agape in the modern world, I agree. But Fletcher is unable to tell us the exact meaning and content of agape." C. Curran, *Absolutes in Moral Theology?* op. cit, p. 168. "Where everything may count for loving, then nothing can significantly count for loving." Paul Ramsey, *Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics*, op. cit., p. 190.

"If the absolute norm is without concrete content apart from the relative situation, then the specific meaning of love is relative and non-absolute." N. E. Geisler (1982) *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*, Grand Rapids/Michigan, p. 74. "An appeal to the situation ethics to provide content or meaning for love will not suffice ... If the meaning of love is dependent on the circumstances, then the significance of love is really relative to the situation and therefore not absolute." *Ibidem*, p. 75.

[41] Fletcher himself chooses the term "doing the truth." See: J.Fletcher (1966) p.52.

[42] A full consideration of this problem should draw our attention to the problems of intentionality and the distinction between *finis operis* and *finis operantis* which

cannot be discussed in this short presentation.

[43] This context should open the perspectives for further immanent and external critiques of situationism. For example, one can also consider the practical, epistemological, and metaphysical aspects of situationistic subjectivism, relativism, and irrationalism; the problem of value blindness and distorted conscience; the distinction between *finis operis* and *finis operantis*; the anthropological dualism of situation ethics, and many others. For more detailed analyses of situationism, see bibliography mentioned in footnote 1.

[44] Today, the 'situationist paradigm' can have many names, e.g., "teleological ethics," "new theology," "Güterabwägungsethik," etc. For a very interesting analysis of the contemporary forms of situationism, see: A. Szostek (1980) *Normy i wyj tki. Filozoficzne aspekty dyskusji wokół norm ogólnie ważnych we współczesnej teologii*, Lublin; (1990) *Natura-rozum-wolno . Filozoficzna analiza koncepcji twórczego rozumu we współczesnej teologii moralnej*, Rzym [German translation: (1992) *Natur-Vernunft-Freiheit. Philosophische Analyse der Konzeption "schöpferischer Vernunft" in der zeitgenössischen Moraltheologie*, Frankfurt am Main.]

One should take in account that usually, the spokesmen of the "situationistic paradigm" try to avoid associations with situationism. They, even often begin their ethics with their polemics with situationism. Still, there are sufficient similarities (*viz.*, in solving crucial anthropological, epistemological and ethical problems), which allow for their identification as examples of the same paradigm of thinking, which they have in common with situationism. Such cases can be called "latent" situationism.

[45] Unfortunately, English does not have an adequate equivalent of this Greek expression. Hans Urs von Balthasar translates it: "in der Liebe wahrheiten": H. U. von Balthasar (1973) *Theodramatik, Einsideln*, p. 19. One can translate verb "aletheun" by "to reveal." As for example, Martin Heidegger tries to show etymologically that "aletheia" can be translated as *Lichtung*, *Unverborgenheit* and *Erschlossenheit*. See: M. Heidegger *Sein und Zeit*, §44. In this interpretation, the above exhortation can be translated: "Reveal truth in love!" ("Objawiajcie prawd w miłó ci!").