

## Veber's Ethics

VOJKO STRAHOVNIK

Univerza v Ljubljani

Filozofska fakulteta

Aškerčeva 2

SI-1000 Ljubljana

vojko.strahovnik@guest.arnes.si

### POVZETEK

#### VEBROVA ETIKA

Članek pomudi splošen oris temeljnih značilnosti Vebrove etike oziroma moralne filozofije, kot jo je razvil v svoji knjigi *Etika* iz leta 1923. Ukvarja se s pojmi in vprašanji, ki so osrednjega pomena za to etiko: s pojmom vesti, dolžnosti, vrednostnega čustvovanja in stremjenja ter z vprašanjem formalne ter materialne pravilnosti slednjega. Etika je kot logika nagonke pameti umeščena tudi v okvir Vebrove filozofije na splošno, potegnjenih pa je tudi nekaj vzporednic z ostalimi Vetrovimi deli, v katerih se ukvarja z vprašanji moralne filozofije: *Idejni temelji slovanskega agrarizma* (1927), *Filozofija* (1930), *Sv. Avguštin* (1931) in *Nacionalizem in krščanstvo* (1938). Podrobneje so predstavljeni razmerje med subjektivnim in objektivnim v Vetrovi etiki, razlikovanje med dolžnostjo v strogem in manj strogem smislu, vprašanje vloge in spoznavnega statusa vesti, problem moralne motivacije ter vprašanje vrednot in njihove utemeljitve.

*Ključne besede:* etika, vest, dolžnost, vrednostno čustvovanje in stremjenje, France Veber

### ABSTRACT

A general outline of the basic characteristics of France Veber's ethics as developed in his book *Ethics* (1923) is offered. Concepts and problems that are central for this ethics are dealt with: the concept of moral conscience, duty, evaluative or axiological emotions, axiological strives and the question of their formal and material correctness or truth. Ethics fits into Veber's philosophy as the logic of the instinctive reason. Brief comparisons are made to his other works, where he deals with questions pertaining to moral philosophy: *Idejni temelji slovanskega agrarizma* (*The Fundamental Ideas of Slavic Agrarianism*, 1927), *Filozofija* (*Philosophy*, 1930), *Sv. Avguštin* (*St. Augustine*, 1931) and *Nacionalizem in krščanstvo* (*Nationalism and Christianity*, 1938). The article also considers the relationship between the subjective and objective in Veber's ethics, the distinction between duty in a strict and in a less strict sense, the question of the role and epistemic status of moral conscience, the problem of moral motivation, and the

*question of moral values and their ground.*

*Key words: ethics, conscience, duty, evaluative emotions and strivings, France Veber*

### Basic features of Veber's ethics

Veber's ethics as a logic of instinctive reason may be briefly characterized as ethics of moral conscience. Conscience is defined as disposition for material and formal correctness of our emotions and strives, especially evaluative or axiological emotions and strives in narrow sense. Correct axiological emotions and strivings are the final end of our moral and ethical lives. Immorality is therefore incorrectness of axiological instinctive reason. For Veber ethics is an autonomous science, i.e. an ordered and systematic system of knowledge<sup>1</sup> (where knowledge stands for genuine evident thought). (Veber, 1923: 12 – all subsequent page number references pertain to this book unless stated otherwise.) Subject matters of ethics are goodness and badness (*bonum* and *malum*). The followed method of ethics was already put forward by Aristotle. It must in the first place be common-sensical. Basic moral convictions and beliefs about morality of ordinary moral agents form building blocks of ethics. They should not to be taken as absolute or indefeasible. (12, 14) Ethics deals with correctness of our axiological emotions and strivings, just as science of logic deals with correctness of our thinking, in search for "the final and universal criteria of all experiential ethical judgments". (75) In order to understand the scope of Veber's ethics let us first look at some basics of his ethical theory as developed in his book *Ethics* (1923).<sup>2</sup>

### Axiological emotions

Veber's *Ethics* distinguishes four basic types of emotions: hedonic, aesthetic, logical and axiological (or evaluative). The first two are based on presentations, whereas last two also involve thoughts. Axiological positive or negative emotion (for example enjoyment and sorrow, or respect and disrespect) Veber also calls evaluation and non-evaluation or dis-evaluation.<sup>3</sup> Objects of axiological emotions are values and disvalues in narrow sense. Ethical or moral emotions are a sub-set of axiological emotions. Veber's basic ethical emotions that in his *Ethics* are respect and disrespect (106, 170), while other axiological emotions such as enjoyment or sorrow have no ethical significance. A moral agent may respect or disrespect a person according to his or hers beliefs about this person, involving the beliefs that this person is such and such, and that he or she did this act or fail to do some other act. Such emotive experiences ascribe ethical value or disvalue (goodness or badness) to objects of the corresponding thought founda-

---

<sup>1</sup> For Veber's characterization of science and knowledge see Veber 1923: 7–27.

<sup>2</sup> Other works where Veber deals with questions pertaining to moral philosophy are *The Fundamental Ideas of Slavic Agrarianism* (1927), *Philosophy* (1930), *St. Augustine* (1931) and *Nationalism and Christianity* (1938).

<sup>3</sup> In *Ethics* Veber uses the term evaluation for axiological emotion and sometimes even for emotion in general. In 1930 book *Philosophy* term evaluation is used to designate active or committed emotion (e.g. enjoyment and sorrow) as opposed to merely passive emotion (e.g. pleasure and displeasure). Active evaluation enables comparison of particular values and disvalues according to their (in)commensurability. See Veber 2000: 63–64, 161–162.

tions (and not to psychological fundaments themselves, as it is the case with hedonic emotions). (112) Because axiological emotion is based on thoughts, a directly appropriated object of axiological emotions may only be facts. A joyful experience of an agent in virtue of her possession of money directly aims at the fact concerning this possession of money, and only indirectly at the presentation of the money. Axiological emotion is further divided from following these criteria:

(i) relation to the directly (and indirectly) appropriated objects of emotions concerning positive, negative, presence-signifying and quality-signifying facts in respect to either physical, psychological or irreal objects<sup>4</sup>;

(ii) the division regarding analytical relatedness to other emotions, viz. valuation and co-valuation, disvaluation and co-disvaluation;<sup>5</sup>

(iii) in respect to quantity of thoughts as psychological fundaments one can distinguish between valuing and disvaluing in the strict sense on the one side and hopes and fears on the other side. (169–170)

This latter distinction aims at the difference between thoughts that are genuine beliefs or judgments and between assumptions or neutral thoughts. For example, joy or sorrow may be experienced only on the basis of genuine judgments, while on the other hand if our thought is neutral, one can experience only hope or fear. (165) As already mentioned two fundamental ethical emotions are respect and disrespect, which do not aim at physical or irreal phenomena, but at psychological phenomena, especially persons or facts about persons.

Objectual-foundations of emotions are values. The objects of axiological emotions are values in the narrower sense. While investigating the relation between the two Veber begins with a psychological conception of the value and of values. Valuable or invaluable is everything, which stands or is able to stand as an object of axiological emotion. (174, 194) Consequently, anything that is an object or may be an object of respect and disrespect is psychologically ethically valuable. The correctness of axiological emotion thus depends on factuality of those emotions. Basic constituents of psychological value are:

(i) the object of value, which may be valuable all by itself or in relation to another object (this relation could be may conditional, organic, that of resemblance, personal or objective);

(ii) the subject of value, who values or disvalues an object;

(iii) the quantity of value, dependent upon the possibility of there being a corresponding fact and upon the possibility of the existence of certain phenomena;

(iv) the quality of value, i.e. something may have positive, negative or again neutral value; something may also be valuable in itself or in relation to something else.

The insufficiencies of such a conception of value are obvious. Veber recognized them himself by claiming the following: "[W]ith the above stated psychological conception of subjective or objective value one cannot ground ethics as a branch of science, because with every psychologically correct axiological emotion there is always a further question whether this emotion is also ethically correct or incorrect." (182–183) The shift

<sup>4</sup> Or concerning complexes that are composed out of any combination of these three.

<sup>5</sup> This relation may be either conditional, organic, that of resemblance, personal or objective. (156–164).

from psychological to non-psychological or apychological value is therefore essential for Veber's plan of construing the logic of instinctive reason. Veber approaches apychological value through the analysis of the meaning proper to evaluative judgments and to moral judgments. Evaluations such as "This is a good car" or "This is a kind and good person" have a meaning different from the meaning that is attained through ascription of some non-valuable feature (such a reliability or benevolence) to the object in question or again that is different to what pertains to our experience of that object (such as experience of joy or respect). These judgments ascribe to objects in question a value that is independent from our experience. Value in the apychological sense is thus "an independent quality as the object of axiological emotion" (233) and it is not to be confused neither with the axiological emotion itself nor with possibility of such an emotion. The same applies to the apychological ethical value, where on the basis of corresponding respect and disrespect moral judgments ascribe goodness, virtue, graciousness or evilness to persons. This move allows Veber to endow his ethics with the possibility of objectivity. But a further problem remains, since apychological conception of value tells us nothing about which things are valuable. Basic constituents of apychological value are the same as constituents of the psychological value. The exception is that the subject is replaced by evaluative reasons, viz. with the features of those phenomena that make them valuable. (241–256)

### **Axiological striving**

Axiological striving fundamentally depends upon emotions. Hence one can only strive towards or reject what one values or disvalues. The appropriated objects of striving can only be the facts which were already previously determined in their value; consequently the objects of ethical or moral striving can only be those facts that are determined in their ethical or moral value. The structure of striving is very similar to the one of emotion; one can distinguish between strivings for physical, psychological and unreal phenomena, between striving for the thing itself or for the thing in relation to another thing, between hedonic, aesthetic, logical and axiological striving. (256–265) Proper objects of striving are oughts that may be positive or negative. An ought is a special quality of the phenomena, for which "everybody without the to value and to dis-value is in principle blind". That is clear from the ordinary cases of ought-beliefs such as "You ought to do this", or "You ought not to lie", or "You ought to love your nation". These are evidently based upon axiological striving presupposing (e)valuation. (268–272)

The difference between psychological and apychological conception of oughts is crucial for axiological strivings and also for axiological oughts. According to the psychological conception, an axiological ought is everything that may become an object of axiological striving. A phenomenon has an axiological ought in the psychological sense in the case as one experiences positive or negative axiological striving towards it. Similarly as in case of value Veber distinguishes four constitutive elements of psychological conception of ought:

- (i) the object of ought, the ground for psychological ought;
- (ii) the subject who undergoes the experience of striving;
- (iii) the quality of ought, which may be positive or negative, and again something may be an ought all by itself or in relation to something else;

(iv) the quantity of ought dependent upon intensity of the corresponding striving and upon the possibility of the phenomena to exist.<sup>6</sup> (273–282)

The validity of the psychological conception of oughts is limited. An ought-belief or striving for something to happen does not mean simply that somebody strives towards this. It also aims at the object itself. In the same way as the apsychological value, the apsychological ought of a certain phenomenon is an independent objectual quality, not be mistaken for positive or negative striving, it is a direct object of that striving. The basic constituents of an apsychological ought are the same as the constituents of psychological ought, with the exception that in the latter case subject is replaced by the normative reasons, i.e. the reasons that pick out a factual value of a certain phenomenon. (289–304)

### Duty and the moral status of acts

According to Veber every duty is an ought. In psychological sense it is related to the positive or to the negative ethical striving. In the apsychological sense a duty and the so-called judgments of duty aim their attention towards objects of striving. A duty to perform or to abstain from certain acts is a positive or negative apsychological ought of these acts, which presupposes their moral or ethical value. (310) For Veber the duty emerges out of the value and not the other way round. *Ceteris paribus*, the higher the value or the dis-value of an act, the more imperative duty we have to perform it or to refrain from it. Veber adopted his theory about moral status of acts from A. Meinong, and he distinguishes between:

- (i) virtuous or honorable acts;
- (ii) correct or acceptable acts;
- (iii) permissible acts;
- (iv) impermissible acts.

Beside to these we may also speak about morally neutral acts. Virtuous acts are most valuable of them all, with a value that is not limited in scope. Correct or acceptable acts are also positively morally valuable acts. Permissible acts have negative value, while the scope of dis-value in impermissible acts is without limit. (312–316) An individual has a duty to perform correct or acceptable acts and to avoid impermissible acts. In a less strict sense she also has a duty to perform virtuous or honorable acts and to avoid permissible acts.<sup>7</sup> The criteria for the value of acts are in many ways dependent on the individual. "If we look at the secondary circumstances of an act more carefully, then we can conclude without any hesitation, that when we speak of virtuous, permissible or impermissible acts, what we are really evaluating is not the act itself, but dispositions of the agent, that are necessary for the performance of that act." (319) The same act could therefore in the light of the agent's dispositions and motives be acceptable in one case and merely permissible in another.<sup>8</sup> Hence dispositions themselves may be divided into

<sup>6</sup> An ought has its highest quantity if its possibility is 0,5. It gets reduced towards impossibility or factuality, different from emotion and value, as the value continuously grows with the possibility of the phenomena to exist.

<sup>7</sup> Avoidance of virtuous acts is permissible and *vice versa*; avoidance of correct acts is impermissible and *vice versa*. (315–316)

<sup>8</sup> According to Veber one is obligated to perform only those acts that one is able perform. (332–333)

valuable dispositions, that is, dispositions for virtuous and acceptable acts, and into invaluable dispositions, that is, dispositions for permissible and impermissible acts.

**Logical correctness of axiological emotion and striving; the logic of instinctive reason**

In the third part of his Ethics Veber deals with logical correctness of emotions and strivings. A thought is correct if its object is a true fact. Emotion and striving are correct if their objects possess apsycho-logical value and/or apsycho-logical ought. Logical correctness of emotion and striving as conceived in this way is hence a real analogue of the traditional account of correctness or truth pertaining to thoughts and thinking. In respect to thoughts Veber distinguishes between merely external and internal truth. Only the latter kind of thoughts has the status of genuine knowledge, which is based upon the internal self-evidence. (356–361)<sup>9</sup> This distinction is repeated in the area of instinctive reasons. For example, considering a merely externally correct evaluation it is sufficient for an object to be apsycho-logically valuable or dis-valuable. In the case of an internally correct evaluation, the corresponding beliefs about the value have to aim at apsycho-logical value or dis-value. This value must be evident from the relevant thought foundations forthcoming in the evaluation, and those thoughts must be internally correct (or true) themselves. (361–370)

Veber also introduces distinction between the material and between the formal correctness and incorrectness of experience. Material correctness of thought, emotion and striving depends upon their object being a true fact in respect to the apsycho-logical value or to the apsycho-logical ought, while formal correctness depends upon logical relations between judgments (thoughts, emotions or strivings). The structure of the relation in question should guarantee that their material correctness or incorrectness would follow all by itself from the material correctness or incorrectness of these other judgments. Formal correctness does not include material correctness, but it is a "good guide" for attaining materially correct thoughts and instinctive experiences. (376–391) In subsequent sections of his Ethics Veber discusses in some detail various types of the material formal correctness of emotions and strivings. This eventually leads him to the basic principles of the logic proper to the instinctive reason that are also in the basis of empirical postulates pertaining to moral conscience. Here are seven basic principles of this logic:

1. The principle of objective, apsycho-logical value and dis-value of objects of evaluation and of objective, apsycho-logical positive or negative ought of objects of striving.
2. The principle of logical correctness or incorrectness of evaluation and of the corresponding axiological striving.
3. The principle of merely external and internal logical correctness or incorrectness of evaluation and of the corresponding axiological striving.
4. The principle of included particular cases.
5. The principle of the material and formal logical correctness or incorrectness of evaluation and of the corresponding axiological striving.
6. The principle of the priority of the material over the formal logical correctness or incorrectness of evaluation and corresponding axiological striving.
7. The principle of the closed formal correctness of axiological emotions and strivings. (447–483)

---

<sup>9</sup> See also Žalec 1998: 164–174 and 2004.

Veber uses these postulates in order to infer from them the axioms of instinctive logic pertaining to the particular basic constituents of axiological emotions and strivings.

In the third part of his book Veber also offers theory of value and of different values ranking. He establishes this ranking by the appeal to common sense and to theoretical reasons (regarding the lesser or greater level of subjectivity or objectivity of the value in question). Hedonic value (pleasure/ displeasure) is at the bottom of that ranking, followed by aesthetical value (beauty/ugliness), logical value (logical value/disvalue) and value in the strict sense, that is ethical and moral value (moral virtue). The latter is the maximal value, and it encompasses all other types of value. (412–421) This ranking is restricted by two kinds of constraints, the first being *ceteris paribus* clauses governing the ranking, and the second the commensurability and incommensurability of a particular value.

### **Moral conscience and empirical postulates of conscience**

After having formulated the axioms of instinctive experience, Veber turns to the one of most central concepts of his ethic, i.e. to the concept of moral conscience. He defines conscience as a disposition for correct and incorrect emotion and striving, as the instinctive reason. At the same time conscience may be delineated as a special experience, that is correct axiological emotion or evaluation and correct axiological striving, which has as its objects other evaluations, axiological strivings and their consequences. (370) Basic empirical postulates of conscience are according to Veber evident to everyone who "was not born as a criminal or is in any other way blind for the ethically 'good' and 'bad' ". (487) The insight of conscience is entirely pre-theoretical. This means that it is not evidentially linked to some special theoretical hypotheses and that it is independent of theories. Conscience is important because it leads us ethically and morally in particular cases. According to Veber, conscience "often speaks with unquestionable clarity about the moral or ethical, immoral or non-ethical status of acts, in the same way as "reason" does about beliefs and their logical correctness or incorrectness. Yes, the voice of conscience is tends to be so precise that by following it we may judge with maximal certainty the moral and ethical character of ourselves and that of frequently other persons. Not just generally speaking, but also in respect to particular acts in their dependency on several circumstances." (417) Central empirical postulate of conscience is "At all times and everywhere, follow the voice of your conscience!". (539) Conscience is always conscience of an individual and it is compatible with axioms of instinctive reason formulated by Veber. In this respect it leads to other, more specific empirical postulates.

Conscience's demand is imposed upon us in the following four respects:

- a) in relation to the acts involving ourselves;
- b) in relation to the acts involving people that are close to us;
- c) in relation to the society in which we live;
- d) in relation to the so called cultural entities, e.g. science, art, state and religion.

(538–539)

These morally binding relationships arise out of moral conscience, since these relationships are not to be found in the axioms or postulates proper to the logic of instinctive reason.<sup>10</sup> Ethical acts relate to the first items involving personal values, whereas moral acts concern the last relationship, involving cultural entities and those values that

<sup>10</sup> In this respect Veber's ethics comes close to the tradition of intuitionism. See Ross 1930, 1939 and Prichard 1949.

transcend persons. (559–560) When in conflict, normative priority is accorded to moral acts.

Here is a list of specific postulates related to ethical and moral conscience as provided by Veber.

**A. Empirical postulates of conscience regarding ourselves**

1. Material postulates

- a) Do not harm your health and well-being; improve your health.
- b) Do not undermine your happiness; improve your happiness.
- c) Do not destroy your own mental growth, neither in quantitative nor in qualitative sense; stimulate your mental growth.
- d) Try to do the best according to your abilities in affirming yourself.

2. Formal postulates

- a) Do not delimit your interests only to some particular kind of phenomena; avoid one-sidedness.
- b) Try to be in agreement with yourself; avoid incoherency.
- c) Do your work with full intensity; avoid laziness.
- d) Do not pay attention to momentary discomfort; avoid cowardice.

**B. Empirical postulates of conscience regarding relations to people that are close to us**

1. Material postulates

- a) Do not harm others' health and well-being; improve others' health.
- b) Do not undermine others' happiness; improve others' happiness.
- c) Do not destroy others' mental growth, neither in quantitative nor in qualitative sense; stimulate others' mental growth.
- d) Try to do your best to appreciate others' opinions and abilities; respect these opinions and abilities.

2. Formal postulates

- a) Judge others according to their value; avoid social injustice.
- b) If possible try to agree with others; avoid social opposition.
- c) Take interest in others; avoid social indifference.
- d) Judge others as you judge yourself; avoid social egocentrism.

**C. Empirical postulates regarding the relationship to society**

1. Material postulates

- a) Do not disrupt social well-being; improve social well-being.
- b) Do not disrupt social order; improve social order.
- c) Do not discard natural society for artificial society; put natural society above artificial.
- d) Do not discard bigger society for smaller society; put bigger society above the smaller.

## 2. Formal postulates

- a) Judge every society according to its value; avoid social<sup>11</sup> injustice.
- b) Try to agree with society if possible; avoid social opposition.
- c) Take interest in society; avoid social indifference.
- d) Judge every society as you judge yourself; avoid social egocentrism and altrocentrism.

## D. Empirical postulates regarding cultural entities

"Cultivate and improve cultural entities (science, art, religion and state)!"

The final end of our lives is according to Veber "thoroughly correct reason and instinctive life" (569) The correctness of instinctive reason has priority over ordinary reason, as it is evident from the structure of experience. The development of human culture<sup>12</sup> is consequently equivalent to the progress of correctness in the experiential life of individuals. (5+74)

## Some questions related to Veber's ethics

We begin critical assessment of Veber's ethics with his conception of moral conscience, with its role and epistemic status in our moral and ethical life. For Veber, as we have observed above, the voice of conscience bears witness of moral and ethical status proper to particular acts, persons and motives. At the same time it justifies basic ethical and moral principles that one should follow. What is the background mechanism supporting those judgments of conscience? Veber could rely on internal logical correctness or self-evidence of basic moral and ethical principles. But such an answer would be inadequate for judgments regarding particular acts. These are usually enormously complex and they consist of numerous aspects with potential moral or ethical relevance. A brief glance at the empirical postulates suffices to make one aware of this. Therefore it appears surprising for Veber to assert the "unquestionable and clear" voice of conscience in respect to particular cases involving moral situations. As far as these are concerned, conscience could only remind us about the importance of morally relevant aspects. But it is not able to tell us what is our final duty.

At the end of his *Ethics* (581) Veber also clearly states that opportunities for reliable materially correct axiological emotion and striving are very exceptional and rare indeed. In other cases we should rely on formal correctness. The theory encounters a dilemma here, since moral conscience cannot rely on the merely formal correctness. For if it would, it could not reach the certainty Veber is speaking about. On the other hand, it cannot rely on the material correctness, because in this second case it would not reach the omnipresence Veber also mentions.

I think that we should clearly distinguish between at least two notions of moral conscience such as it is present in Veber's theory. First is the notion of moral intuition pertaining to general moral and ethical truths and principles, aiming at the internal correctness or at the self-evidential status of basic postulates of conscience. Their internal correctness then also grounds their material correctness. Second is the notion of moral

<sup>11</sup> Society and sociality here pertains to the societies such as nations, while in the previous subsection these referred to the societies such as fellowships, to the informal associations of people with similar interests. See also Strahovnik 2001, Strahovnik and Žalec 2002, and Žalec 2002.

<sup>12</sup> For Veber's discussion of concepts of culture and civilization see Veber 1929.

conscience that is present in particular cases, closer to experiences such as moral sense, regret, remorse, guilt, "bad conscience" or un-restlessness. Such experience may be a reasonably good guide for a morally mature person in her judgment of particular cases. And there is also the third notion of conscience; that is conscience as a source of moral motivation. Veber claims that only two motivational forces exist in the natural state, namely self-interest and moral conscience, the latter being the only one that is able to lead an individual towards acting morally and ethically. (328–329) So Veber's concept of conscience actually has a triple role. All these three roles or notions have to be clearly before our minds if we wish to properly understand his ethics.<sup>13</sup>

The next questionable point is moral status of acts and types of duty. We saw that besides to morally and ethically neutral acts Veber distinguishes between:

- (i) virtuous or honorable acts;
- (ii) correct or acceptable acts;
- (iii) permissible acts;
- (iv) impermissible acts.

At first he attaches these types of acts to apychological value and ought, thus to the properties of act itself. But as he continues his philosophical investigation he identifies dispositions and motives of agents as essential for the moral status of an act. This duality brings certain tensions into his theory. As he himself says in *Ethics* (328–329), one can judge an act from two standpoints: (a) from the outside; i.e. regarding the features of the act in question; and (b) from the inside; i.e. according to the motive of the act. So the above-mentioned distinction between types of acts now doubles, and all action can be judged from the outside as virtuous, correct, permissible and impermissible and the same may be judged from the inside. An act may be for example viewed as correct from the outside and it may be viewed as only permissible from the inside. This tension was already present at the time when Veber tried to establish what is a duty or better what exactly does the duty require from us to do. In the strict sense it is our duty to perform correct acts and to refrain from impermissible acts, while virtuous and permissible acts are not included in the realm of the duty. But just a few lines on Veber supplements this by claiming that one also has a duty to perform virtuous act and to refrain from permissible acts.

It seems that duty in the strict sense is closely related to the features of an action; that is to the rightness and wrongness of an action, and therefore in a sense that it is independent from dispositions and motives of an agent. On the other hand the concepts of virtuous act and of the permissible act are somewhat closer to the pole of moral motivation. Only the first, stricter notion of duty is compatible with Veber's thought that a duty is an apychological ought. But at the same time Veber acknowledged the fact that ordinarily as we judge acts, we judge them from the inside; that is according to the motive of the agent. (321) A partial solution to the problem may be found in Veber's conception of value. Value depends on the basic value of an act and on the possibility of its existence. And since an ought depends on the value, a duty and moral status of acts depend on this possibility as well. The latter depends on the disposition of an agent to perform certain

---

<sup>13</sup> In his essay *The Development of Veber's Theory of Knowledge* Janez Janžekovič points to some ambiguities related to the concept of self-evidence in Veber's philosophy in general. At least in the first phase of his philosophical development, Veber rejects self-evidence, stating that an appeal to self-evidence is "the most terrible form of psychological alphabetism", yet when we read his works the appeal to self-evidence is still deeply present in many ways. See Janžekovič 1977, pp. 219–224.

act, and this solves the problem. But another problem arises since it is clear that a disposition and a motive are not one and the same thing. A motive could be perfectly well independent from the possibility of an act and from the dispositions of an agent (Veber's thesis that anyone who has a disposition for valuable acts will necessarily act in this way, or in other words the thesis that people are virtuous in their nature, elegantly solves this dilemma, but of course only if one is prepared to accept this).

Here is a statement by Bojan Žalec in respect to the first phase of Veber's philosophical development. "Veber's aesthetics, ethics and in many respects also philosophy of religion are precise analyses of aesthetical, axiological and hagiotic emotions from the generic, analytical, object-theoretical and normative perspective." (Žalec 2002: 19–20) Veber's *Ethics* then nicely fits into the first phase of his philosophical development. Nevertheless some of its presuppositions also present some important limitations. We have seen that the general frame of Veber's ethics is a theory of axiological emotion and striving, where the main concern is put upon concepts of respect and disrespect on the evaluative side and on the concept of duty on the normative side. All his ethical thought was confined within the area of the relationship between experience and its object. Such frame turned out as somewhat undersized for a full-blooded moral philosophy. In this light we should also read his swift, scarce, and in many respect inadequate criticism of traditional ethical theories and accounts (e.g. Kantianism, utilitarianism). Evidently they cannot fit into a too narrow area that Veber sets up for ethics. (11–60) This is acknowledged by Veber in his later works. In his *Philosophy*, he wrote: "In the present work I have shown that freedom and responsibility are truly legitimate considerations and considerations without which there would not be any essential difference between human being and animal. Therefore, my present book brings back into ethics its real base and fascination, which could not be there in 1923 when I wrote an extensive ethics, yet an ethics that was in principle built upon the relationship between the 'experience and its object', and not at the same time on the parallel relationship between 'experience and the subject of experience'." (Veber 2000: 216) As we take this into account, two developmental steps in Veber philosophy start to bear significant importance, namely some new distinctions in the theory of emotion and an improved theory of value.<sup>14</sup>

In *Philosophy* (1930) Veber offers a new classification and division of emotions into passive emotion (namely emotions in which one just passively experiences or undergoes values, the examples of this kind of emotion being feelings of comfort and of discomfort) and into active emotions (namely emotions in which one just actively experiences or undergoes values). These are further divided into reactive emotions (valid only for the subject) and judicious emotions (connected with genuine judgment and universally valid; examples of the former being happiness and sorrow or love and hate, and examples of the latter being appreciation, respect and disrespect). Evaluation<sup>15</sup> is differentiated into evaluations focused onto things, persons (personal emotions) and onto God (sanctitative emotions). Respectively, value is divided into objectual, personal and sanctitative value. Within the first groups Veber distinguished between qualitative value belonging to phenomena such as comfort, beauty, truth and freedom, while in the strict sense this value only belong to things possessing these features and that are valuable in virtue of these features. Personal values are goodness and evilness. Sanctitative value is sanctity. Personal and sanctitative values differ from the first kind of value in that that they are both direct and organic, because they both directly belong to persons and they

<sup>14</sup> In his *Ethics* Veber does not appeal to any special ethical value, at least not in the axioms and postulates of the logic proper to the instinctive reason outside of the correct axiological emotion and striving.

<sup>15</sup> Now pertaining to the active emotion.

belong to them via their own and not via any other features. Furthermore, sanctity grounds the whole system of values, since it is the only value that includes all the other values and that is not "relative". In Ethics central concepts were respect, disrespect, and duty. But now Veber turns to concepts of person, freedom, and responsibility. So Veber's "new" ethics is closer to his philosophical anthropology and social philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

In his later works Veber rebuilt the system of values and provided a new ground to it. At the same time as he developed the structure of emotions and strivings he opened the way for solving some of tension and problems. All this was done in a manner compatible with his moral philosophy such as it is developed in Ethics. Veber's Ethics is a precise, complex and extensive analysis of axiological emotions and strivings, which represents a systematic moral philosophy. At the same time it is upgraded with the interesting, but nonetheless not fully specified notion of moral conscience.<sup>17</sup>

## References

- Janžekovič, J. (1977) Domoljubni spisi – Vebrova filozofija (Celje: Mohorjeva družba).
- Jerman, F. (1987) Slovenska modroslovna pamet (Ljubljana: Prešernova družba).
- Potrč, M. (2004) Dinamična filozofija (Ljubljana: ZIFF).
- Potrč, M. and Strahovnik, V. (2004) Practical Contexts (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag).
- Prichard, H. A. (1949) Moral Obligation (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Ross, W. D. (1930) *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Ross, W. D. (1939) *Foundations of Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Strahovnik, V. (2001) "O Vebrovem pojmovanju dveh tipov socialnosti: cerkveno občestvo kot vrhovna oblika človeške socialnosti." V: Tretji dan, vol XXX, December 2001/11: 85–93.
- Strahovnik, V., and Žalec, B. (2002) "Socialna filozofija Franceta Vebra" in: Aktualnye problemy filosofii, sociologii i politologii, ekonomiki i psihologii. vypusk 5 : materialy meždunarodnoj nauchnoj studentčesko-aspirantskoj konferencii, april' 2002 g. Perm, 2002. Perm: Perskij universitet, 2002, pp. 66–75.)
- Veber, F. (1923) Etika – Prvi poizkus eksaktne logike nagnonske pameti (Ljubljana, Učiteljska tiskarna).
- Veber, F. (1923b) Znanost in vera (Ljubljana: Tiskovna zadruga).
- Veber, F. (1927) Idejni temelji slovanskega agrarizma. Programatična socialna študija. (Ljubljana: Kmetijska tiskovna zadruga).
- Veber, F. (1929) "Nekaj misli o kulturi in civilizaciji." in: Odmevi I, 1929, Ljubljana, pp. 78–85.
- Veber, F. (1931) Sv. Avguštin; Osnovne filoz. misli sv. Avguščina. Poskus kulturno zgodovinske apologije novega življenjskega idealizma in svetovnega optimizma (Ljubljana: Zbirka Kozmos).
- Veber, F. (1938) Nacionalizem in krščanstvo. Kulturna pisma Slovencem. Ivo Peršuh. Ljubljana.
- Veber, F. (1979) Zadruga misel. Izbor člankov in razprav. Cooperativa de Credito S.L.O.G.A. LTDA. Buenos Aires.
- Veber, F. (2000 <1930>) Filozofija; načelni nauk o človeštvu in njegovem mestu v stvarstvu (Ljubljana: Študentska založba, zbirka Claritas).
- Žalec B. (1998) Reprezentacije; od pojavov k stvarnosti (Ljubljana: Študentska založba, zbirka Claritas).
- Žalec B. (2000) "Slovenska filozofska mavrica leta 1930" in: Veber, F. (2000) str. 245–321.
- Žalec, B. (2001) "Kultura, zgodovina, družina in narod v Vebrovih Idejnih temeljih slovanskega agrarizma." in: Tretji dan, vol XXX, December 2001/11: 74–84.
- Žalec, B. (2002) Spisi o Vebrov. Študentska založba (zbirka Scripta), Ljubljana.
- Žalec, B. (2004) "Veber on Knowledge and Factuality" Acta Analytica 33: 241–263.

<sup>16</sup> See also Strahovnik 2001, Strahovnik and Žalec 2002, and Žalec 2001, 2002 for discussion of Veber's social philosophy.

<sup>17</sup> I wish to thank Matjaž Potrč, Bojan Žalec, Seppo Sajama and Johann Marek for useful comments on earlier versions of this paper.