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## Utopias in ethics : common visions, scientific conceptions, meta-scientific assumptions

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## UTOPIAS IN ETHICS COMMON VISIONS, SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTIONS, META-SCIENTIFIC ASSUMPTIONS

**Key words:** ethics, utopia, dystopia, meta-scientific assumptions

1. The ethics of *dystopia*. 2. The ethics of *utopia*.

According to reliable sources, “utopia” is a Greek-based construction that can be understood in two different ways: “The word comes from the *Greek*: *οὐ* (‘not’) and *τόπος* (‘place’) and means ‘no place’. The English homophone *eutopia*, derived from the Greek *εὖ* (‘good’ or ‘well’) and *τόπος* (‘place’), means ‘good place’. This, due to the identical pronunciation of ‘utopia’ and ‘eutopia’, gives rise to a double meaning.”<sup>1</sup>

The ambiguity of “utopia” can be avoided by using the English word “dystopia” for the negative meaning “no place”, and for the positive meaning of the word “good place” the now widely understood Utopia as “an ideal community or society possessing a perfect socio-politico-legal system”<sup>2</sup>. In the history of Western civilization, dreaming of such a perfect state and describing a political vision has often been undertaken, by Plato in his *The Republic* (about 380 BC), by St. Augustine in his *The City of God* (413-426 AD), by Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia* (1516) or by Bernard Bolzano in his booklet on the best state [Bolzano

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; the words “moral” and “ethical” will be used synonymously in this paper, yet the noun “morals” refers to rules or norms for human behavior, while “ethics” is “philosophy of morals”, i.e. thinking, justifying and criticizing of those moral rules and norms.

1975] up until now where the idea of Utopia as a realized dream has become an endless area of futuristic challenge, for example “Utopia” as an episode of the British science fiction television series *Doctor Who* (2011). In this paper, I will not focus on the political philosophy of such a dream, but rather on the role of ethics in both, the “bad place” (“no place”) and the “good place”. In order to keep these two kinds of utopias apart, I will be using the term “dystopia” for a negative version in the sense of *No Place* or *Bad Place* and “utopia” as a term for the positive version in the sense of *Good Place*.

### 1. THE ETHICS OF *DYSTOPIA*

Some time ago, one of my students answered the question “What is morality?” by stating, “Morality is in the eyes of the beholder, really”. This is an almost classical description of what most students today believe, what they have been taught and they are convinced of what they live by. It is not much different from the well-known statement of Protagoras, “Man is the measure of all things”. Protagoras, the Father of Relativism, denied the role of the (Greek) gods in determining what is morally right or wrong, but insisted that “man” – either mankind, society or a human individual – is the judge of what is to be done.<sup>3</sup> This was not only a challenge to Plato who tried to refute the manifold branches of relativism, but it also inspired other thinkers to strengthen the relativistic view in ethics<sup>4</sup>, later on also in meta-ethics.<sup>5</sup> Today, among such different suggestions to defend ethical or moral relativism in what appears to many an “acceptable form” [cf. the overview in Frick 2010], I simply assume one widely accepted version of ethical relativism that has been formulated – among many scientific authors – by the anthropologist and ethnologist Ruth Benedict: “The concept of the normal is properly a variant of the concept of good. It is that which society has approved. A normal action is one which falls well within the limits of expected behavior for a particular society” [Benedict 1993, 166]. This

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<sup>3</sup> [Zecha 2000] where several dozens of various relativistic theories are listed.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Popper’s thesis “Ethics is not a science” and my discussion [Zecha 2002].

<sup>5</sup> For an overview about the present discussion see Ernst 2009; a comprehensive list of publications on moral relativism offers [Schroth 2009].

is usually called “cultural relativism” or also “moderate relativism”.<sup>6</sup> The above mentioned variety of moral relativism, “Morality is in the eyes of the beholder, really” expresses a more extreme version that can be called “ethical individualism or ethical egotism”. In this case, an act  $x$  is considered morally good if  $x$  is approved by a single person. So, the term “moral or ethical relativism” covers a wide range of viewpoints and formulations that all have in common that the ethical quality of an act is determined by concepts, rules or standards of one human person or of a group of people (society, culture). I would like to assert that nowadays in so-called Western or “advanced” societies, a kind of ethical thinking is accepted that is clearly relativistic in this sense, it establishes the morality of *Dystopia*.

Of course, philosophers and scientists who advocate one or the other kind of ethical relativism do not just assert it, but also offer arguments that support relativistic ethics. I want to list now eight different arguments that are supposed to strengthen this point of view or are at least used to defend it.

### 1. *The argument from historical development*

Historians and many social scientists argue: cultural phenomena like traditions, techniques, values, beliefs and convictions emerge in the course of history. History itself is to be seen as a process that determines inherently every aspect of human existence and reality, including – especially – its values. The basic principle of this view is continuity: Our world is dynamic and therefore continually changing. Moral values are *relative* because they fluctuate with the rise and fall of cultures. Thus, values, norms and standards can be judged as valid only relative to a certain historical context that implies the denial of universally valid criteria for human behavior.

### 2. *The argument from the diversity of cultures*

Since different societies approve of different moral practices, life styles, views and legal systems, it is *de facto* impossible ever to have or to aim at a universally valid morality. For example, in one society, abortion is legalized, in another society it is prohibited as immo-

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<sup>6</sup> Another, perhaps more accurate, formulation could be: “An act  $x$  is morally right if and only if  $x$  is approved by a certain society  $S$  at a given time period  $t$  in a specific place  $P$ .”

ral. Here polygamy is officially practiced, there it is strictly forbidden, etc. With such a gross diversity at hand, universal moral values cannot be found.

### 3. *The argument from majority*

In the political area, everyone has the same right and every vote counts as equal. Therefore, many people think the majority also determines what is morally right and what is morally wrong. This political opinion-forming principle has been transferred into the moral realm and everyone seems to accept it without difficulty. Thus, there is no alternative to democratic decision making in moral matters. “The Ten Commandments would be okay”, one student of mine declared recently, “if we could establish a world consensus about them”. And he continued: “We all know such a global agreement doesn’t seem to be possible at the moment. That’s too bad for the Commandments: they are true for people who believe in them, but not for people who don’t share that belief. This clearly shows how relative moral rules are.”

### 4. *The argument from the fact-value dichotomy*

From grade school age onwards, every pupil has been taught that science deals with facts that cannot be altered because they exist independently from human influence and development. Scientific facts can be described by natural laws, and natural laws cannot be changed, being beyond human reach. However, values are a matter of personal opinion, at the disposal of everyone – they are subjective, emerging from personal opinions. Value judgments and moral directives don’t have any basis in reality, whereas statements about facts are inter-subjectively testable, they reflect objective reality that is the object of science. Thus, you cannot justify moral norms scientifically; or in other words: from factual statements, moral rules cannot be derived.

### 5. *The argument from meta-ethical non-cognitivism*

Skeptical thinkers claim that moral values cannot be observed, thus they are not real objects. Others turn the argument around and assert, “Just because values are no real objects, they cannot be observed.” But the result is the same: All objects that we can sensually perceive possess a number of characteristics but none of these can be called ‘the value of the object’. What, then, makes things valuable or a value? The skeptic answers, “An object is valuable only with respect to

a value standard. This standard is not part of valued things, but rather is applied to them according to the choice of humans. Hence, values are not objectively given, they cannot be scientifically known but are dependent on the wishes and desires of people.”

6. *The argument from the impossibility of a highest value*

Traditionally, human life has been declared “sacred” or “holy” but actually it cannot be considered an undisputed moral value. Even if people accept the Fifth Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”, there are many exceptions to this imperative that justify killing, sometimes even in large numbers. Take, for example, argues the relativist, (i) self-defense, (ii) capital punishment, (iii) killing as calculated and, hence, as an accepted side-effect of technological progress, e.g. traffic, (iv) killing by order, e.g. soldiers in times of war, (v) killing by ‘social organization’ or rather ‘social disorganization’, e.g. every day thousands of people die from starvation caused by inadequate political and economical conditions. Thus, even human life is not *the* ultimate moral value – it changes from situation to situation. So does the value of life.

7. *The argument from the impossibility of moral virtues*

“Even the moral virtues are relative and can be used to do evil,” argues the moral relativist. It is a fact often proven in the history of mankind that radical evil in this world could not become a reality or effective without a host of virtues like obedience, faithfulness, punctuality, discipline, attentiveness, diligence, a strong sense of order and duty. All of these attitudes or virtues can be misused and are being misused, which means, they can be used for any goal, including criminal intentions. This clearly proves they are relative.

8. *The argument from the private character of moral values*

“In the modern world, morality is private”, the relativist insists. Since each citizen is responsible for his or her actions, people think this responsibility enables them to determine their own moral directions and values. “Morality is each person’s own business” is the motto. Supported by the belief there can be no universal moral law, every person has the right and the duty to make up their own morality. As long as this attitude does not infringe upon the rights of fellow citizens, morality remains a private affair. Such a view clearly strengthens the relativistic view of moral values.

To sum up: All these arguments are in one way or other accepted and defended today. Since they are problematic and misleading, as will be shown shortly, it is correct to state: “We live in an ethical dystopia”.

This list of arguments in favour of ethical relativism is not complete, but it offers some of the most frequently used ideas to defend this point of view. Yet I think it is not necessary to know all of them. More challenging is the question: What have these arguments in common? The answer lies in a scientifically grounded concept of man, of the human being.

Everybody knows that the question “What is man?” is one of the most complex, diversified and difficult questions – not only in philosophy but also in the sciences of biology, psychology, sociology, anthropology, theology and the like. Just to give some typical examples, I will point to the following issues:

- (a) “Human nature” in scientific research
- (b) “Human nature” in ethical teaching
- (c) “Human nature” in practical philosophy and moral norms

ad (a): According to *existential humanism*, it is impossible to know anything about man’s essence, only about his existence. Man’s “true existence” implies the realization of his self in a given situation: “Consequently there can be no universally valid standards of value” [Messner 1965, 11].

*Dialectic materialism* emphasized the belief that man’s nature consists in being highly developed “organic matter”.

Then, *psychoanalysis* teaches anthropology with the Ego, Superego, and Id. Instinctively works the Libido as the sexual driving force of motivation. The moral law is imposed upon children by parents and social surroundings.

The *biological-evolutionist view* asserts the existence of blind forces. It is the human being who reads purposes into evolution. This is probably the most widely accepted view in scientific circles today. To illustrate this scientific view, I refer to two authors, the late Harvard professor Ernst Mayr and Dr. Jane Goodall.

Ernst Mayr expresses his evolutionist insights clearly in the following passages: “In 1871 Darwin himself demonstrated conclusively that humans must have evolved from an ape-like ancestor, thus put-

ting him right into the phylogenetic tree of the animal kingdom. This was the end of the traditional anthropocentrism of the Bible and of the philosophers” [Mayr 1988, 176]. Consequently, Ernst Mayr refutes the following concepts: Creation (the diversity of organisms is not creation but a result of natural selection), the Newness of the Earth (organic life is several million years old – now universally accepted), Cosmic teleology (previously all phenomena have been connected to some sort of design which can now be explained in terms of natural selection), Anthropocentrism (Man is not a separate creation but – conclusively shown by Darwin and his followers – the product of common descent) [Mayr 1988, 193-194]. “Ever since Darwin this concept [of man as a static being] has increasingly been replaced by a new image, an image of an evolved and still evolving man, part of the evolutionary stream of the entire world” [Mayr 1988, 293].

Basically, Jane Goodall who is famous for her long-term studies of chimpanzees in Tanzania and today regarded as one of the leading primatologists and anthropologists emphasizes the same results. She was able to challenge several traditional conceptions of the human being like “Man as the Thinking Animal”, “Man as the Tool Maker”, “Man as the Laughing Animal” etc. She lived with individual chimpanzees more than thirty years, gave them individual names and described them in their specific characteristics: chimpanzees can think she states with astonishing examples, they can make and use tools, they are even able to laugh at funny situations. Therefore, Goodall concludes, chimps are animals “who have personality, who are capable of rational thought [and] emotions like joy and sorrow”<sup>7</sup>. Thus, Jane Goodall, like Ernst Mayr, explains the role of the human being as the highest but still evolving part of the evolutionary development.

Again, such a picture of the human being, supported by scientific work, is typical of dystopia. There is no basic difference between the human being and animals – both belong to the “Animal Kingdom”. Humans set their own ethical values that are – like the human being herself – continuously evolving.

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<sup>7</sup> “These findings suggest similarities between humans and chimpanzees exist in more than genes alone, but can be seen in emotion, intelligence, and family and social relationships.” (Essay on Jane Goodall in Wikipedia)

ad (b): It is a common place that all ethical teaching and moral education must be based on a clear concept of the human being. Yet many of the influential ethical textbooks today say very little, sometimes even nothing, about human nature and its corresponding values, needs and aspirations.

Examples: P. Singer: *Practical ethics*; J. Mackie: *Inventing right and wrong*; John Hospers: *Human Conduct*; W. K. Frankena: *Ethics*; R. Purtill: *Thinking about Ethics*; A. Gewirth: *Human Rights*, etc., etc.<sup>8</sup>

I think it is safe to say that most ethicists try to construct ethical concepts, systems and principles without a clear picture of human nature. What does science say in general and brain research in particular about “human nature”? The idea of man at birth as a *tabula rasa*, an empty table, has been developed, is accepted and is still defended in our time: Every influence comes from the parents and the social surroundings. Yet critically, brain research and anthropological investigation offer a very different picture as described by Steven Pinker in his book *The blank slate. The modern denial of human nature*<sup>9</sup>.

ad (c): Finally, I want to point to some facts that are strikingly characteristic for our modern social life and clearly indicate another major feature of dystopia. I don’t want to assert that the mentioned methodology of the ethical relativist and its ensuing lifestyle cause directly those facts. But it is obvious that in the so-called “modern societies” we can observe among many other typical features:

- the breakdown of human relations and the reduction of families;
- the declining birth rate; at present the fertility rate of 1.3 births per woman in Germany and Austria is among the lowest in Europe; Italy has 1.41 per woman<sup>10</sup>, but for a stabilized society 2.1 babies per woman are needed;

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<sup>8</sup> For more information see the chapter on the history of relativistic thinking from the Sophists to contemporary philosophers in [Frick 2010, 35-95].

<sup>9</sup> [Pinker 2002]. Steven Pinker is the Director of the Center of Cognitive Neuroscience at MIT, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA, cf. also [Brown 1991].

<sup>10</sup> Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, Archbishop of Milan and Chairman of the Bishop Conference in Italy, recently spoke of a “creeping demographical suicide” (*Il Messaggero*, Oct. 2011).

- the reduction of the overall population in European countries, caused, among other reasons, by a huge number of abortions<sup>11</sup>;
- the loss of the concept of “human dignity” and of human life. This point becomes particular obvious in the new ISO 26000:2010 code of concepts, terms and definitions related to social responsibility<sup>12</sup>. It is a set of norms for societal behavior in institutions, which may be useful in many ways but fails to establish the human dignity of people involved in all types of economic, cultural, legal, political and organizational institutions;
- the underlying moral norm is either a way of selfish thinking and acting, actually an ethics without rules, or the propagation of an unspecified *Love Principle*<sup>13</sup> that invites people to do what they want and what they *love*.

All these shortcomings and defects of programs, principles, views and theories from an ethical and anthropological point of view typically establish conditions of modern societies that deserve one name: *ethical dystopia*.

## 2. THE ETHICS OF UTOPIA

Members of Utopia believe in the existence of a “nature or essence of the human being” that allows us to recognize a set of unchanging moral rules, well known as “natural rights”. The citizens of Utopia are not only aware of those natural rights, they also practice them in their lives. This notion of a morality common to all human beings – described and justified by an ethics of universalism – goes back to ancient Greek philosophy, to Chinese thinking and to moral directives of many other cultures. Let me outline the following discussion from this conviction and show that

- typical arguments used in ethical dystopia can be refuted;
- the image of the human being can be formulated in a more creative and realistic way;

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<sup>11</sup> See *Abortion in Europe* (2005).

<sup>12</sup> ISO 26000:2010. *Guidance on Social Responsibility*. Geneva 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Often this principle is backed up by the quote from the Bible, “God is love” (1 John 4:8).

- principles of universal ethical validity for the members in such a Utopian community would guarantee a clear concept of human dignity and therefore a peaceful and prosperous human life both in the communal and the individual sense.

Discussing the arguments of the ethical relativist listed above, I will refer to scientific results, to tacit assumptions of the common sense and to meta-scientific principles including religious insights.

ad 1. Against the *Argument from historical development*

It is true that learned rules help us regulating and directing our actions according to will and responsibility. Yet independent of historical contexts and development, human nature should be the source of our value decisions. A prosperous and harmonious life in Utopia requests the conception of an unchanging system of moral standards and value decisions.

ad 2. Against the *Argument from the diversity of cultures*

It is true that we can find different traditions and legal norms in various cultures. Nevertheless it is also true that certain *basic values* can be discovered in every culture. They are basic because they are the substance of every society. If rejected or disregarded then culture comes to an end. Oxford philosopher John Finnis has collected through surveying the literature. His findings can be summarized: If such substantial values – human life, stabilized and limited sexual relations, truth and learning, cooperation, the common good, mutual obligations and justice, friendship, property, play, respect for the elderly people, and rituals for the relationship with a supra-human being – are *not taught* and *not followed by word and action*, no culture can survive [cf. Finnis 1993, 83-84]. These normative elements are the basic values for the moral life in Utopia. Today, scientific research compiled several hundreds of human universals that reveal an astonishing variety of typically human traits.<sup>14</sup>

ad 3. Against the *Argument from majority*

Against this form of *democratic relativism*, I want to point to the fact that in the world of learning and science, the voice of the majority has little weight. Scientific problems cannot be solved by taking polls or by asking the majority of people for their opinions. Sophisticated

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<sup>14</sup> See *Human Universals* in [Brown 1991].

methodology and repeatable factual evidence guarantee new solutions, new answers and new results in the progress of scientific findings. I dare say that even more important than scientific research is the way people live and work together. Thus, moral directives for the survival of the human race can be discovered in human nature [Messner 1965]. Once recognized, these norms have to be accepted and followed in individual lives as well as in the society as a whole. In this sense, the agreement of the majority is *not* the source of moral rules, but the willingness and consensus on natural rights of all people is necessary for a peaceful life in Utopia.

ad 4. Against the *Argument from the fact-value dichotomy*

Is-statements do not imply Ought-sentences. This well known formula of meta-ethics, which is applied in social sciences and in ethics, seems plausible but it is not correct. It is true that logically, from a statement of fact that is true or false a normative sentence or rule that is correct or incorrect cannot be derived. Many authors assert that rational and justifiable thinking would not be possible in moral, political and religious contexts. This is, however, not right. If we distinguish not only two categories of statements – descriptive and normative, but more appropriately three kinds of sentences: descriptive, normative and mixed sentences that are both descriptive and normative compound sentences, we can bridge the so-called Is-Ought gap. “You should not smoke” can be justified with the scientifically grounded statement, “Heavy smoking causes lung cancer”. In such a case we are tacitly assuming two additional premises. It is *first* a value-statement that lung cancer is evil because it destroys life that is assumed as supreme value and *second* a formal principle that is value invariant and the fundamental principle of all normative reasoning, “What is good should be done, what is bad or evil should be avoided”<sup>15</sup>. This so-called bridge-principle is – according to St. Thomas – a self-evident truth. It allows

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<sup>15</sup> This was discovered and clearly stated by St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae I, II, 94, 2*. St. Thomas doesn't seem to be aware that this First Principle of Moral Reasoning is already known in the *Book of Psalms*: “Depart from evil, and do good“ (Bible: Psalm 34:14 and Psalm 37:27).

justifying moral norms with empirical statements.<sup>16</sup> The fact-value dichotomy is therefore not an irrational gap. Rather, moral and scientific reasoning follow the same logical and methodological rules in Utopia.

ad 5. Against the *Argument from meta-ethical non-cognitivism*

When “cognitivism” means “has truth value” and “non-cognitivism” means “has no truth value” then it can be shown that ethical sentences do have truth value as value statements. The fundamental standard in ethics is life itself, and whatever promotes life is a value, expressed in a value statement. “Life in a democracy is desirable” or “dishonesty is bad” are value statements because they are statements that *essentially* contain a value predicate such as “desirable” or “bad”. Such statements can be empirically tested as can any other moral statement: “diligence is better than laziness”, “reliability is better than unreliability” and “truthfulness is better than telling lies”. In this context, “better” means “is more helpful and more life supporting for the community as well as for the individual who lives in this community”. Therefore such value statements are clearly cognitive. Similarly, mixed or compound sentences, “If you want to stay healthy, you should eat natural food” or “If you want to get reliable information in science, you should double-check every thesis and its offered justification”. Such sentences are valid or invalid. They can be controlled in relation to the causal connection they imply. Finally, moral norms, rules and directives are right or wrong according to the *preconceived notion* of all ethics: the overall value of life. With respect to this supreme value, ethical sentences and value statements are cognitive in Utopia.

ad 6. Against the *Argument from the impossibility of a highest value*

In many places today, human life is no longer considered sacred or holy. We know that this value has been doubted and even denied by many thinkers. It is in fact neglected or rejected in many dystopian societies. Yet it should be *the* overall value in Utopia. The examples of

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<sup>16</sup> [Thomas Aquinas 1966, 81]: “... every agent acts on account of an end, and *to be an end* carries the meaning of *to be good*. Consequently the first principle for the practical reason is based on the meaning of *good*, namely that it is *what all things seek after*. And so this is the first command of [natural] law, ‘that good is to be sought and done, evil to be avoided’; all other commands of natural law are based on this.” [emphasis by GZ]

the ethical relativist that seem to present evidence for the exchangeable value of life show actually the opposite. Self-defense, capital punishment and military action are all thought to preserve the life of the community. Whether they are the best life-supporting instruments may be disputable, but they cannot be used to question life as the highest good. If both the life of the individual and the survival of the society are no longer considered the end-goal of our decisions and actions, ethics is no longer a guiding force. In Utopia, however, life is the supreme value in ethics. In this respect, a *meta-scientific assumption* can help: God Himself is life<sup>17</sup>, thus *God is the only and supreme value*. This theological truth helps to establish life as the overall moral criterion that in turn is the basis of all ethical statements be they descriptive, compound or normative.

ad 7. Against the *Argument from the impossibility of moral virtues*

It is well known that virtues, even the so-called Cardinal virtues prudence, justice, courage and temperance can be used for immoral goals. But in the perfect Utopian society, the original meaning of *Cardinal virtues* must be remembered. The Latin word *cardo* means “door hinge”, i.e., these virtues are hinges for a good and happy life. This, again, is the presupposed concept of life in Utopia.

ad 8. Against the *Argument from the private character of moral values*

Every value decision and every moral action is “private”, i.e., made by a particular person. That person is, therefore, also responsible for them. But this does not imply the validity and truth of the chosen norms or value statements. For a Utopian society, the rights and duties, the values and norms have universal character and validity that means, they are a necessary component of the moral, social, political order of a society. Such an order should be the guiding life program for all members of the Utopian society. A perfect political system is not possible without a general system of moral values that serves as binding force for the community in Utopia.

To sum up: Utopia is a place for an ideal community with a harmonious socio-moral system. In this system, argument types of the discussed dystopia-kind are rejected and recognized as wrong. Moral

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<sup>17</sup> Jesus himself clearly states, “I am the way, the truth, and the life”, Bible: John 14:6.

communication among the citizens of Utopia acknowledges the supreme value of life along natural – right thinking, accepts relevant scientific findings and relates them to meta-scientific grounds of the Christian faith in God.

From this point of view, man is a being that is made in the “image of God”<sup>18</sup> with a physical body and a spiritual, immortal soul. Johannes Messner describes this metaphysical conception of “man”: “Metaphysical anthropology of the natural law school holds that, in contradistinction to the animal soul, the human soul is a *spiritual*, self-contained, immortal substance, the seat of the mind. Hence, from this follows the essential dualism of body and spirit: the body is material in substance, the soul spiritual; neither can be derived from the other. Together they constitute human nature as an essential unity, the spiritual soul being the principle of specifically human acts. Because he is compounded of body and spirit man is of a *social* nature. Because individual natures are complementary to one another both in need and in capacity the full development of man’s nature is wholly dependent upon the social nexus” [Messner 1965, 6].

Because of this nature, man is not a *tabula rasa* but has the capacity of creating moral values, among them a loving relationship to the objects of his knowledge, i.e., to fellow men. Yet the construction of “God is love” and therefore “man, made in the image of God, should love” can be misunderstood. Rather, in communicating and acting with other humans and the whole creation we should take into consideration, “This is love of God that we keep his commandments” (Bible: 1 John 5:3). These commandments are summed up in two rules: “Love God” and “Love thy neighbor as yourself”<sup>19</sup>. They can even be reduced to one ethical principle well known as the Golden Rule, “Treat others as you want to be treated” or, in the words of Jesus, “So whatever you

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<sup>18</sup> The quality of “being made in the image of God” is explained by Pope John Paul II in the following way: “[Man] is a person. With his intellect and his will, he is capable for forming a relationship of communion, solidarity and self-giving with his peers. St. Thomas observes that man’s likeness to God resides especially in his speculative intellect, for his relationship with the object of his knowledge resembles God’s relationship with what he has created (*Summa Theologica* I-II:3:5, ad 1)”, [John Paul II 1996].

<sup>19</sup> Bible: Matth 22, 37-40 or Luk 10:27.

wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets“.<sup>20</sup>

Conclusion: The Golden Rule is not only a moral injunction of *common sense* worldwide and independent of time, place and culture, it can also be supported by *scientific conceptions* of justice and equality. Together with the theorem suggested by Psalm 36 that God is life and the source of life<sup>21</sup>, we obtain a *methodological paradigm* for ethical reasoning: “In this light [= God is life], we see the light”. This allows us to discover and understand reality in a way that preserves, supports and fosters life at all levels and in all human instances. This “light” lies beyond dystopian theories and arguments, it is deeper and unchanging as it constitutes the ethics of Utopia. The very same “light” also helps to be aware of the limits of human cognition. For even with the most fabulous, paradise-like, perfect and harmonious state of Utopia, we have to remember the words of Jesus Christ, “God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.”<sup>22</sup> So, humility and modesty are required, especially in an ethical Utopia.

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<sup>20</sup> Bible: Matth 7:12; for a more extensive discussion of the Golden Rule and what it does *not* mean see [Zecha 2011].

<sup>21</sup> Bible: Psalm 36:9, “You are the fountain of life; in your light we see light”; see also: Jesus says, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life” (John 8:12).

<sup>22</sup> Bible: Luk 16:15.

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## UTOPIE W ETYCE. OPINIE POTOCZNE, KONCEPCJE NAUKOWE, ZAŁOŻENIA META-NAUKOWE

### Streszczenie

Można wyróżnić dwa rodzaje utopii: negatywną i pozytywną.

Pierwsza jest nazywana „dystopią” jako bezład zarówno w ramach myślenia etycznego jak i rzeczywistości moralnej. „Moralne jest naprawdę to, co ktoś uważa za moralne” mówi dzisiaj młody student i wyraża w ten sposób etyczny relatywizm, znany już w starożytnej filozofii greckiej. Współczesne potoczne spojrzenia a nawet koncepcje naukowe wspierają tę teorię wieloma argumentami, takimi jak: historyzm, dychotomia fakt – wartość, wnioski płynące z antropologii kulturowej, sceptyczna wizja ludzkiego życia, niemożność obiektywnego poznania etycznego, opinia większości i trendy, moralna prywatność, cnoty moralne. W artykule zostaną opisane i ocenione wszystkie wymienione argumenty.

Druga jest nazywana „utopią”, jako idealna wspólnota, z doskonałym systemem społeczno-moralnym. Aby ustalić, czym jest utopia w etyce, proponuje się nowe spojrzenie na niektóre założenia metanaukowe. To pozwala wymienić konieczne antropologiczne wyjaśnienia, łącznie z komentarzem dotyczącym ludzkiej godności. Wartości moralne powinny być wówczas rozumiane jako część rzeczywistości (nie fikcji), która może być opisywana i racjonalnie dyskutowana. Z tej koncepcji wynikają konsekwencje etyczne zarówno dla myślenia politycznego i edukacyjnego, jak i dla praktykowania moralności we współczesnych społeczeństwach.

**Słowa kluczowe:** etyka, utopia, dystopia, założenia metanaukowe