

# “Ethics of Three Persons” and Transcendence

Received September 17, 2019

Revised September 30, 2019

Accepted October 1, 2019

**Key words**

Ethics, moral education,  
transcendence,  
ethics of dialogue,  
virtue ethics

The author of the paper points out the reducing manner of Kantian division of morality to *heteronomous morality* and *autonomous morality*, which is projected also to the advanced reduced dichotomous division of psychological and pedagogical theories of moral education to individual-progressivist and normative-cognitivist ones. Insufficiency of “two ethics” is criticized using three-fold argumentation: a philosophical, a psychological and a pedagogical one. Instead of “two ethics”, a perspective of the “first person”, “third person” and “second person” is suggested, which enables the author to highlight a *dialogical model* of the “second-person ethics” against the *monological models* of the first two types. At the same time, necessity of the transcendental dimension for conceiving morality based on respect to the Other in the midst of a community is justified. The thought-line followed by the author in the submitted study is based mainly on the field of ethics, however, it continually refers to psychological and pedagogical aspects of the researched topic. A conclusion is reached that not the binary approach, but the integral approach to man and their education enables maintaining respect to transcendence and vice versa, openness to transcendence secures conditions for a holistic formation of man.

## 1 Introduction

In spite of the fact that the submitted study unfolds mainly in the field of ethics as a philosophical discipline, its basic research question was born “three steps further”, in the area of theory of moral education. A several years long effort of my team to analyze moral-educational concepts that linger in contemporary pedagogical practice and current scientific discourse (Podmanický and Rajský 2014; Rajský and Podmanický 2016; Rajský and Wiesenganger 2018; Brestovanský 2019) make me state that they divide on *two mutually competing models*: a model of ethics as an effort toward personal profit with the smallest possible impacts on social and natural environment (a progressive-optimistic position emphasizing development of one’s own competences, technical sustainability and well-being) and a model of ethics understood as a socializing and enculturating imperative (a socio-normative position accentuating collective values, equality and principles of political inclusion). Analyzing theoretical (psychological and philosophical) background of these two models we reached an understanding that their mutually dichotomic position may be grasped using Kantian terms such as *a model of autonomous morality* and *a model of heteronomous morality*. Kant’s distinction of ethical worlds to “kingdom of goods” and “kingdom of unconditioned law” (Kant 1788, 28) occurred in the background of the enlightenment competition between *empiricism* and *rationalism* and it maintained fundamental features of these two approaches, including both their strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, however, all forms of ethics that assumed the movement of transcendence as relevant for realization and reflection of human *praxis* were excluded from the game of the concept of morality. Resignation to thematizing of transcendence in ethical thinking caused that morality was stuck in immanence of calculable handling and thus, it hit the question of its own *rai-*



### About the author

**Doc. PhDr. Andrej Rajský, PhD.**, specializes in philosophical-ethical and anthropological areas of research and education. He is a founding member of the *Central European Philosophy of Education Society* (CEUPES), as well as a member of editorial boards of several Slovak, Czech, Polish and Italian scientific journals on philosophy of education. Professor Rajský serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Scientia et Eruditio* and a scientific guarantor of annual doctoral conferences on educational science *Juvenilia Paedagogica* held at Trnava University. He authored and co-authored multiple scholarly books, research studies and articles. His email is [andrej.rajsky@truni.sk](mailto:andrej.rajsky@truni.sk).

## 2 Insufficiency of “Two Ethics”

*son d'être* – may we still speak of morality if aims transcending the manipulatable objectified world were excluded from the reflection of action? This ethical question, hiding a kind of skepsis, resulted from the original pedagogical question: *May we speak of moral education at all if we have limited it only to the ability of social negotiation for the most comfortable individual life without evident negative social and environmental consequences, possibly, if we have narrowed it only to the development of a competence to verbalize rational arguments?*

Educational and moral practice as well as analysis of theoretical discourses suggest that *the dichotomy of heteronomy and autonomy of morality (and moral education) does not provide sufficient explanation of the phenomenon of morality of man in its entire integrity and with regard to realization of life good in its whole in particular*. Both above-indicated models lack openness to transcendental sources of morality. In this study, however, it is not my intention to reproduce classical metaphysical or religious theses that directly refer to theonomous reasoning of morality. *The aim of this research study is to disturb the thesis on binarity of ethical conceptions by including the “third type” of ethics that phenomenologically uncovers transcendence of the Other as a source and necessary condition of morality*. The Other (the other person, Thou) seems to be the path of “return” of transcendence to ethical reflection, but mainly to moral practice [1]. At the level of pedagogical thought, cultivation of virtuous relationality (benevolence, beneficence, help to the other, responsibility for the other, solidarity, prosociality) appears to be the key criterion of the processual and, predominantly, content side of moral education oriented at so-called flourishing life (Aristotle).

Without attempting to grasp the entire spectrum of ethical theories, I have methodically narrowed them to three groups bearing distinctive labels “the first-person ethics”, “the third-person ethics” and “the second-person ethics”. This symbolic grammatical reduction has its philosophical background that is clarified below. Even though this auxiliary terminology is mine, its philosophical inspirations may be found already in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (particularly where it conceives three forms of life: *a life of pleasure, a life of political activity and a philosophical life* [Aristotle 1934, 1095b], where it differentiates between *the perfect and imperfect friendship* [Aristotle 1934, 1155a–1156b]). These philosophical inspirations are also to be found in *philosophers of dialogue* who deal with the “problem of the third” in ethics (e.g. Lévinas 1997c, 189 and the following).

Immanuel Kant, in his groundwork of *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) placed autonomy in a radical contrast to heteronomy. He considered such *morality heteronomous* that is governed by external or affective motivations (e.g. lust or sympathy), or social expectations. The *autonomous morality*, on the contrary, is governed by reason and has to be forced by obedience to general law. Kant’s distinction of morality and ethics to these two kinds reduced the criterion of morality to rationality and obedience to general rules, while each conditioned (heteronomous) morality is, according to this key, beneath man. I suggest that ethical dichotomy, outlined in the introduction, cannot grasp and explain richness of human moral action, and it even dehumanizes it in the end. I offer three kinds of arguments to support this assertion – a philosophical, psychological and pedagogical one. In the following part, I would not like to offer a broad outline of argumentations, my intention is to suggest their layeredness and interdisciplinarity.

*Philosophical argumentation* against the disunity of ethics by Kant may be led in several lines, I state only some. The notion of autonomy has several meanings; in Kant’s writings, too, shifts in meaning can be found, and he admits himself that the notion is full of paradoxes: autonomy (sovereignty, independence) of an acting subject is in perfect accordance with the will of Nature (Providence) only in enlightened individuals who, at the same time, have a great power of realization. The French revolution, however, showed Kant that abuse of power may easily occur with justification of a higher moral order: the autonomy of the powerful slips to despotism, the autonomy of the weak ends in blood. This condition may be transferred to everyday life “in peace and freedom”, where the moralizing superiority of some uses moral arguments on the expense of the others in political or common interpersonal communication. In general, it may be stated that narrowing of morality to the question of mandatory power appears to be particularly problematic, which has also been expressed by the author of the paper in a semantic manner through differentiation between the so-called hypothetical and categorical *imperative*. Acting in accordance with the law needs to be therefore forced internally (but also externally), which means that the morally good identifies with the obedient, based on duty. Other limits and problematic points are pointed out further, in the part 4 *The Third-Person Ethics*.

*Psychological argumentation*, weakening the division to heteronomous and autonomous ethics, is directed mainly at the cognitivist paradigm that can be found in the background of founders of the so-called moral psychology (e.g. Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Elliot Turiel and others). The cognitivists directly followed Kant's normative ethics (*ethics of rules*) and held the relationship of a subject to rules for the key distinguishing criterion. Based on the development of a relationship to rules, Piaget, for example, created a theory of moral development of children and differentiated *two stages of moral judgement – heteronomous and autonomous*. A child keeping the rules not because of a reward or punishment, but because of their own acceptance of the implicit justice in them is the aim. A more differentiated conception of *six developmental stages* in three levels by Kohlberg is also well-known, nevertheless, the relationship to norms, measured predominantly as an ability of moral judgement, is also definitely set. Criticism by psychologists is oriented mainly against the thesis of universal validity and consecutiveness of stages, against intellectualization of morality (what went through the process of cognition and justification in a subject is morally good) and against crowding out of the affective and social motivational structure from the moral decision-making process (Vacek 2013, 42–45).

An important critical place is also the separation of cognitive powerfulness from the very action, known in psychology as “knowledge–behavior gap”, or “attitude–behavior gap”. Kohlberg's thesis “*he who knows the good chooses the good*” (Kohlberg 1981, 189) does not hold. Augusto Blasi (1980, 1983) reported that moral reasoning only accounts for 10 % of the variance in moral behavior (Walker 2004). Eventually, several theoreticians (Carol Gilligan, Sam A. Hardy, Gustavo Carlo) blame cognitivists for *monocratic ethics* based solely on the value of justice (or, accordance with the norm), which ignores a *pluralist model of ethics* integrating several sources of morality (besides rational consistency, for example, care for others, sensitivity to interpersonal relationships, etc.). Moreover, concepts based on the autonomous-heteronomous duality of morality do not notice contextual and situational factors, automatism and hidden impacts of man's action.

*Pedagogical argumentation* partially holds on to the criticism of cognitivism, but at the same time, it transcends it. An educator and teacher have the entire student's person in front of them, including emotional capabilities, inner desires, social context and real action, to which creation of their identity is related. With respect to the importance of rational faculty in moral processes, it is not possible to reduce moral education

to moral schooling (incitation of cognitive competences). It may even easily happen that “*the worse notorious liar in the class will write a great treatise on the destructive power of a lie*” (Buber 2016, 65). After all, even a man who cannot denote individual principles or values, is capable of moral action; they might not be able to justify their decisions, however, they may be sensitive to good contained in the act and they may carry it out. Moreover, in the contemporary post-duty world of the Western man, the sense of universal validity of truths and values is absent. “*A man for whom no unconditionally valid values exist in the universal sense is impossible to be educated to an approach that prioritizes unconditionally valid values over all other values*” (Buber 2016, 76). Effective moral education does not lay duties, it points out the attractive beauty of good, fundamentally engaging all the involved in the educational relationship.

The division of ethical systems and the associated educational conceptions to heteronomous and autonomous ones is not sufficient for understanding morality of man in its entire complexity and, above all, it disposes the acting subject of the challenge to transcend, which is a deep inner motive, guaranteeing human dignity to man. Therefore, *instead of the binary conception of two ethics, I propose a conception of “three ethics”, from which “the second-person ethics” includes the dimension of transcendence as constituting meaningfulness of the very morality and moral education.*

### 3 The First-Person Ethics

The “first-person ethics” (I–ethics), as understood by the author, means *every ethical theory and moral practice included in it that explicitly and in a program manner, or implicitly and in a sophisticated manner assumes that the final aim and main criterion of person's decision-making is their own individual interest.*

A set of ethical theories that includes this type of thinking oriented toward the profit of “I” is contained in many currents and schools dating back to the beginnings of the European philosophy up to present. It embraces explicit *philosophical egoism* (e.g. Thomas Hobbes, Max Stirner), *hedonism* focused on one's own indulgence (Epikuros, Michel Onfray, David Pearce), classical (Jeremy Bentham, John S. Mill) and contemporary *utilitarianism* (Peter Singer), but also post-modern *individualism* and post-duty *narcissism* (Gilles Lipovetsky 2008, 2011). At the beginning of the modern times, an opinion was spread that human nature is naturally egoistic and as such

should serve organization of the society and state (e.g. Nicoló Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 1513). Similarly, Thomas Hobbes claimed that man is fundamentally an egoist, “a man is a wolf to another man” and every expression of self-sacrifice and care for the other is only a hidden behavior following one’s own profit (*Leviathan*, 1651). Empiricists and naturalists assert that morality is not a spiritual or rational matter, but it emerges from empirical necessity, mediated by affects and feelings. The task of ethics is to describe these procedures and explain self-keeping and hedonistic mechanisms of human action. Perhaps, the best-known confessor of egoistic ethics was the anarcho-individualist Max Stirner, who attacks all general spiritual norms in a polemic manner in his fundamental work *The Ego and Its Own* (1844). State, morality and religion and all forms of sociality, according to him, restrain an individual from their own development. The only criterion of action should be the justification, “because I like it”. Stirner states that his philosophical stream is egoism. “The Unique” (*Der Einzige*), however, is not a man as such, but an individual, an unrepeatable and irreplaceable being that must not be enslaved by purposes and aims that are not desired by the Unique and that would mean loss of domination over themselves. The Unique is not good, nor bad; they are freed from every evaluation and every structure, they are the center of the world and existence of the other, accept rules of the other only if they consider the rules beneficial for themselves, otherwise they create their own rules. The Unique is really themselves only when they freely limit their own freedom for their own aims, for instance, entering an interaction with the other, which means undergoing certain sacrifice, however, it is focused on a greater own profit that cannot be otherwise reached.

According to utilitarianists, every thinking and acting subject calculates advantages and disadvantages of their own actions and acts in order to maximize their own benefit or delight. Already the ancient philosophers of Athens rejected *hedonism* (morality of searching for delight and avoiding stress) and *utilitarianism* (morality of increasing one’s own and social benefit) as imperfect forms of life, which do not fulfil human yearning for good. Plato’s Socrates, in the work *Republic*, describes that part of soul he called “lust”, despite its manifoldness, according to “*the biggest and strongest in it. For we called it the desiring part on account of the intensity of the desires concerned with eating, drinking, sex, and all their followers; and so, we also called it the money-loving part, because such desires are most fulfilled by means of money*” (Plato 1991, 580e). People focused on themselves and their profits will never rise themselves really “above”, “*but like cattle, always looking downward with their heads bent toward the ground and the banquet tables, they feed, fatten, and fornicate. In order*

*to increase their possessions they kick and butt with horns and hoofs of steel and kill each other, insatiable as they are.*” (Plato 1991, 586a).

Plato, in *The Laws*, rejects extreme self-love as follows, “*but of all faults of soul the gravest is one which is inborn in most men, one which all excuse in themselves and none therefore attempts to avoid that conveyed in the maxim that ‘everyone is naturally his own friend’, and that it is only right and proper that he should be so, whereas, in truth, this same violent attachment to self is the constant source of all manner of misdeeds in every one of us*” (Plato 1961, 731e).

Rejection of selfishness in favor of generosity can be found at several places in texts where Plato and Aristotle declare the value of friendship. Aristotle highlights unselfish love that “*has nothing to do with the example of relationship of debtors and creditors*” (that is, reciprocal advantage), because “*benefactors love those they have benefited, even if they are of no present or future use to them*” (Aristotle 1934, 1168a–b).

The contemporary French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky believes that we are citizens of a contradictory culture, where the principles of modernism and democracy, hedonism and the growing consumption, radical individualism and narcissism are being molded together. Art records changes in the moral code of a society spontaneously. The ethical sovereignty gets into conflict with the absolute duty, while sexual liberalism leads to promiscuity, or put in other words – to Eros with a changeable geometry. “*The demand for ethics doesn’t remain limited only by the areas that call for responsibility. It crystallizes in the same manner also in the sphere which embodies the ephemeral and spectacular present time the best – in the media. Just as the demand for ethics of future followed from the new possibilities of techno-science; similarly, the polymerous power of media and extravagances of printing press enlivened the need for the ethics of current affairs.*” (Lipovetsky 2011, 309). Lipovetsky sees behind the so-called “honesty” of the postmodern man an acute *hedonism* (the ideology of sensual lust), which has become, under the influence of mass consumption, the central value of our culture. *Postmodernism* began at a time, when new forms of unrestrained behavior no longer evoked outrage and any form of the search for sensual stimulation was publicly approved. Postmodernism manifests itself in democratization of hedonism, in general sanctification of novelties, in ending the conflict between the values highly regarded and the values experienced. The process of individualization, which he calls “personalization”, “*has fronted personal actualization and the respect to subjective particularity and a unique individuality as a fundamental value... The right to be absolutely yourself and to enjoy as much*

*as possible... is just the backmost manifestation of the individualistic theory.*" (Lipovetsky 2008, 11). The hedonist of today is closed up in their individualism and without any transcendental support they remain alone, vulnerable and resigning. Hedonism and utilitarianism in education are manifested by adjustment to an individual fight for "survival", to which emotive, affective and social relationships are subordinated. In this process, the only valued thing is the one that contributes to fixation of one's own material and social position, the so-called "high aims" of the classical humanistic education (general development of personality, cultivation of the culture of spirit, keeping the received heritage, humanization of the world, transcending one's own boundaries, knowing for knowing...) have become almost outdated. Increasing the possibilities of one's own protection against attacks of the calculating society is what is wanted. Moral education is in this sense reduced to so-called healthy lifestyle and pursuit of profit with the least harmful impacts on social and natural environment possible.

## 4 The Third-Person Ethics

The "third-person ethics" (It/They-ethics) may be understood as *all ethical conceptions that due to the fear of egoism of the more powerful defend the rule of meta-individual rules, external (political, social) or internal (moral) law*. This set of ethics include all *deontological* (Immanuel Kant) and *social-normative* or *contractualistic* (Jean Jacques Rousseau, Auguste Comte, Émile Durkheim, John Rawls and others) theories of justice and morality.

In a "liquid" society amidst the "liquid" rationality and morality (Zygmunt Bauman), among narcissists and individualists in us and around us (Gilles Lipovetsky) it seems that the only way to "survive" is to reach a state where all would follow the same rules. To succumb to laws and norms set by an external lawgiver – may it be a collective mass and its conventions and trends – means to commit the individual decision-making rights to an external authority, let them lead, obey and require obedience. It all secures mutual protection of lives, properties and rights. At the cost of limitation of one's own maneuvering space, freedom and self-will of individuals. In the name of security and order, we wistfully accept normalized schemes of behavior in order not to remain in an anomic space of the "jungle", where the more powerful and careless steal the most for themselves at the expense of the weaker and the more caring ones. Education to good morals would then mean a guidance to norm-forming and socially acceptable behavior.

According to Kant, he who follows moral rules because of pure awe to the law and not because of his own benefit, acts morally right. Kant reacts with his rationalistic conception to skepticism of empiricists (John Locke, David Hume and others), according to whom, morality is identified with the necessity of natural laws and thus, follows principally irrational emotions. Kant strives to "free" morality and at the same time, freedom of man from the world of natural determinism. Moral imperative does not describe human motivations and circumstances of action, it is not a description of a state, but it commands to act with respect to higher, meta-individual aims. Thus, ethics becomes a rational science and an individual may bring in moral judgements based not on their individual experience and conscience, but based on an objective rule, valid for everyone. The highest sovereign who dictates how man should behave is their own reason, deducing instructions from the universal law. The ethics of rules reflects the enthusiastic enlightenment belief that man is capable of governing their civilization fairly, without a reference to transcendental matters.

On the other hand, this enthusiasm is not followed by moral practice. Kantian tradition separates ethics from morality in the sense that it sets what is right and obligatory, but it does not ask about what is good for life. Good and good life "dropped out" of the perspective of the ethics of duty. Abstract ethical thinking is, therefore, separated from real moral action. The second problem of the ethics of rules is exclusion of "moral feelings" from the horizon of ethical practice. Any emotional motivation or intuition of good or evil does not have a place in the "pure" deontological ethics. Passions and affects are bearers of immorality. Critics of the period such as Moses Mendelssohn, or later Friedrich Nietzsche blame this ethics for stiffness, abstractness and destruction of traditional moral patterns. Max Weber, in a reaction to Kant's "ethics of thinking", proposed "ethics of responsibility", while its task is to take the context of action into consideration, too (Sokol 2014, 107). The lack of regard to situation and context is another weakness of the ethics of rules. A decision of man based on rational consideration regardless the circumstances, outcome and consequences, leads to cynicism and unreal titanism. After all, the exclusion of the pursuit of happiness from the morally right action is also problematic, as if the desire for happiness (in the *eudaimonic tradition*) was an expression of selfishness. Perhaps, the best-known reservation against the ethics of impersonal law is the reduction of good action to action according to duty, which resulted in historical depravedness, as pointed out by Hannah Arendt in the work *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (orig. 1963). The Nazi criminal, the architect of the "Final Solution", Adolf Eichmann defended himself during the investigation of the consistent slaugh-

ter directed by him that “*his whole life was lived in accordance with Kant’s moral precepts and particularly in accordance with Kant’s understanding of the concept of duty*” (Arendt 2016, 185). He read Kant’s *The Critique of Practical Reason*, he followed it and even though Kant did not directly identify moral principle of will with the principle of state lawgiver, “common people and households” interpreted deontological ethics in this manner. “*Whatever was Kant’s role in formation of mentality of a ‘common man’ in Germany, there is no doubt that in one sense Eichmann really acted in the spirit of Kant’s principles: A law is a law, there can be no exceptions*” (Arendt 2016, 186). Eichmann is a symbol of blind obedience and consistent discipline of all who govern their actions in their everyday life following the norms of superior organization, or a state. David Rybák points out that in Eichmann’s case it is not a fatal fail of an individual, but an expression of “*being inbuilt in a machinery in which it is much easier to go with the process than to oppose it*” (Rybák 2019, 169), which is a typical example of a contemporary technocratic man. The abstract deontological ethics in transformed in common practice to a simple ethics of obedience to rules that were posed by a “third person”. Thus, the ethics of social contract and state-guaranteed social justice (equality) belong to the category of the “third person”.

Paul Ricoeur criticizes the ethics of obedience for absolutization of normativeness, that is, conditioning an action by the means of accordance with the norm regardless of possible good that could or could not have been reached by the action. Ricoeur asserts that teleological ethics, ethics aimed at “good life” should have primacy, while morality of rules is its mediating part. He expresses his integral theory of morality in a well-known thesis, “*focus on ‘good life’ with the others and for the others in just institutions*” (Ricoeur 2016, 190). I will return to this thesis of Ricoeur in the following subchapter. At this place, I would like to note his brilliant critical observation of Kant’s deontology, which contests its own coherence in the second formulation of the moral law. Kant’s reference to “final purpose”, or “self-purpose” of the second person [2] poses the theme of difference, discontinuity, plurality and singularity (otherness of the other), in contrast to own conception of moral autonomy and universality of rules (Ricoeur 2016, 246).

*Cognitivist psychologists* such as Lawrence Kohlberg, James Rest or Theodor Lind, following Kant’s deontology, consider universalistic, duty morality relevant. Justification of our deeds within conventionally accepted morality is referred to the authority of the external rule. Identification of moral-

ity with an unconditioned action according to the general categorical imperative, however, hits often everyday experience, which is not “black and white” and includes variety of aspects, perspectives and accents that influence the decision-making process. They cannot be rejected with simple reasoning that they are ungeneralizable and often do not fall within the category of rational justifications. The philosopher John Rawls, who follows Kant’s morality, points out that some dilemmas are unsolvable through the duty ethics, or on the contrary, they may have several acceptable solutions (Rawls in Krámský 2015, 104).

The same objection may be made against psychological research tools that evaluate maturity of moral development of respondents based on their responses to given moral dilemmas. Monologicality of deontological ethics is particularly problematic – to respond to ethical dilemmas, an isolated conscience of an individual without communication with the others is sufficient in order to make the “right” decision. This approach may be critically denoted as “transcendental solipsism” (Krámský 2015, 106, 110), which ends in the loss of interpersonal trust and possible ideologization of morality, moreover, it may even lead to dehumanized ethics (Krámský 2015, 134–142). The absence of “the other” in the horizon of clarification of ethical criteria closes the cogitative reason to immanentism of uncommunicating monads. In spite of the fact that Kant wanted to save the relationship of man to the noumenal through “practical reason”, he deprived it of the most natural source of transcendence – “the other opposite me”.

In contemporary scientific discourse on moral education, a cognitivist paradigm according to which the focus should be particularly on ethical education, development of cogitative and reasoning competences, however, at the expense of integral guidance of students to good, prevails. Education to keeping rules and to cultivation of moral-cognitive abilities is at risk of stopping at the level of verbalism, perhaps with a developed ability to denote moral phenomena and reason appropriate solutions, but without the ability to interiorize one’s own theses and integrate one’s own belief to moral action. The risk of incongruent moral education was noted, for example, by Martin Buber, when he criticized Kerschensteiner’s thesis on character education according to deontological ethics: “*This understanding of character as an organization of self-control by means of accumulation of maxims... enables understanding powerlessness of modern education in regard to sickness of man... This understanding cannot provide a sufficient base for building of true character education*” (Buber 2016, 78).

## 5 The Second-Person Ethics

The “second-person ethics” (Thou–ethics) is *an ethical conception and a theory of ethical education based on it, which considers the relationship to the Other for the crucial momentum of moral action*. The Other – “Thou”, standing face to face “I”, is a permanent source of my disturbance and appeal to my moral responsibility. Being of the Other precedes my own action and it is a challenge so that “I” “care for them”. The set of ethics of the “second person” includes philosophies of dialogue, communication and social bonds (Emmanuel Lévinas, Martin Buber, Jürgen Habermas, Karl Otto Apel, Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricoeur and others), which consider the moral perspective crucial for communicative action, but also ethics of “good life” (Aristotle, representatives of contemporary *virtue ethics* and *ethics of care*), for which holds that moral virtue is constituted in a relation to the others. These conceptions are followed by programs of *prosocial moral education* or *moral character education* (Brestovanský 2019). For my study, the moment of transcendence of the Other (Thou), which penetrates moral attitude of the acting subject, is ultimate. Particularly, the ethical conception of Emanuel Lévinas is focused on.

A quotation by Hannah Arendt aptly illustrates Aristotle’s understanding of friendship: “*Love in the broader sphere of human affairs corresponds to a personal relationship that may be best described as ‘respect’. Respect is like the Aristotelian ‘philia politiké’, a sort of ‘political friendship’ that does not require proximity and intimacy. This relationship is an expression of respect for a person*” (Arendt, 2007, 316). Civic friendship is a virtue of broader co-existence, in which respect for the other person is a cultural condition for the pursuit of a good life. However, this quality of co-existence with others in a community has its origins in an elementary relation to the Other, the close one, a specific “Thou”, with whom “I” develop a deep and unique story of friendship. The basic *relationship* between “I and Thou” is an operative symbol, an effective sign and a starting point for all positive social relationships, marked by the nature of unity, generosity, respect and mutual responsibility.

Who is a friend, a neighbor, the Other, to whom “I” turn my goodwill? Who is the Other? The Other is above all different than “I” and at the same time, different to everything else. Lévinas understood that in identification of the Other, their existence needs to be differentiated from “the same”, the entire, anonymous, total and general being (there is, Fr., *il y a*) that covers everything with its non-differentiatedness and impersonality. When we turn to the Other, we turn to an “alien”, to something and someone that does not belong

to the familiar, obvious, own country dominated by me. An active movement to the Other suggests a movement “elsewhere”, outside one’s Self, into *terra incognita* in the strongest meaning of the word. “*The Other we metaphysically crave for, is not ‘other’ like the bread I eat, place I live in, country I dwell in, like sometimes I am for myself... Metaphysical desire heads toward something completely different, absolutely different*” (Lévinas 1997a, 19). The desire for the Other is not based on a need, since a need is a state in which a human person lacks something, i.e. they are incomplete, thus, they are existentially nostalgic for something they at least partially know in advance (the other as an alter ego). However, the metaphysical desire does not crave for a return, but for something completely different, something we have never contained. If we talk about love as of saturation of some noble hunger, then it is not real love. Real love longs for something that transcends every fulfilment and deepens the desire itself further. It is a desire for the radically heterogeneous. Realization of this existential desire paradoxically increases the distance between us, since it reveals authentic exteriority, difference, unicity of each Thou. The difference of the Other is the difference of the noble, the highest, the infinite, the invisible. The metaphysical desire for the absolutely Other “*presupposes unselfishness of goodness*” (Lévinas 1997a, 21).

Does it mean that radical separateness of the Other can cast us into solitary confinement? That non-transferability of the Other to “the same” condemns our existence to eternal isolation, slavery of the “teeming” totality of being (there is)? Lévinas shows that such a fatal fate would impend man if that being was a primal state, a gift of the vicious world in which we as subjects would suddenly find ourselves. According to him, on the contrary, the shapeless teeming, the anonymous depth of a night (Lévinas 1997b, 47 and further on) are not primal, but a unique relationship is, not the being (Ger. *Sein*) of the existent (Ger. *Seiende*), but the relationship to someone who is the existent. Ontology is not primal, ethics is. Ethics means questioning spontaneous egoism of “the same” by the presence of the Other. “*The strangeness of the Other – their irreducibility to Me, my ideas and my possession – occurs as questioning of my spontaneity, as ethics*” (Lévinas 1997c, 28). Transfer of the Other to “the same” is then the essence of immorality. By neutralization of the Other, I catch the existent (*Seiende*) in what they are not existent – alien here, what betrays them in the horizon of “being at all” (*Sein*), in the horizon of things where they are lost and shown, caught, becoming a notion. Conceptualization means suppression and appropriation of the Other, power transformation of the Other to “the same”. *Cogito* (En. “I think”) finally means “I can”



(meaning “I have the power to state”), that is, depredatory appropriation of what is. Ontology is actually philosophy of power, it is “egoistic”, impersonal, inhuman, without respect to dignity and eventually, it is unjust because it violently transforms the Other to “the same”. The opposite of neutralization is transcendence, confirmation of “to be different” in the person of the Other. Relationship to the Other, by definition, is not reversible. Its mutual changeability would connect “I and Thou” to one system – “We” – that would destroy the radical difference of the Other. Transcendence to the infinite is the only possible ethical relationship to the Other. The very radical difference of the Other, however, is possible only when Thou is the Other in the relationship with an element whose essence remains a starting point, it serves as an entrance to the relationship. This element that remains in the starting point of the relationship is “I”.

What does it mean to be “I”? In particular, “I” means to have an identity, or rather, to be in a process of constant finding of one’s own identity across everything that happens to it. “I” is the original self-creation of identification. It is identical in its transformations, it has a structure of a subject, the first person. “I” blends with “itself”, it is the same against all difference, it cannot abandon “itself”, it is not someone else. Identification of “the same” in “I” does not occur as clear tautology “I am I” (as  $A = A$ ), but as a result that it exists in the world in the way of dwelling, that is, like at one’s home (Lévinas 1997c, 23). I am at home in the world, because the world offers (things) or resists (persons) my ownership. Ultimately, the encounter of “I” and the irreducible diversity of “Thou” creates own subjectivity of “I”.

How does the ethical relationship, the relationship of transcendence to the Other take place if its aim is not adjustment, establishment of collectivity “We”? Is such a relationship to “Thou” possible in which its radical exteriority against “I” would be kept at the same time? If an authentic relationship cannot be a representation, since the Other would dissolve in “the same”, the Other needs to be accepted as different, that is, the distance suggesting difference of the Other needs to be kept. Their difference precedes every initiative, every imperialism of “the same”. “I” and the Other do not create a number, the collectivity “I–Thou” is not the plural of “I”. “*To accept the Other means to accept their hunger. To accept the Other means to give. But to give to a sovereign lord, the one we address ‘You’ in the dimension of Majesty*” (Lévinas 1997c, 59–60). If the Other is to be preserved in their inviolability, “I” cannot exercise my power, which “I” exercise over the world, over them. What is the possible nature of the relationship

to the Other? Lévinas replies that it has the nature of a dialogue. The dialogue, however, cannot be explorative, revealing, but purely relational, it should be immediate revelation, manifestation of sense, presence that cannot be reduced to intellectual opinion. In a dialogue, “I” comes out of its ipseity, beyond every totality, like face to face. This movement, however, is by definition irreversible. “I” performs it as a breaking movement of transcendence, not as thinking of the Other but as one’s own acting walk. When “I” finds itself in a dialogue with “Thou”, it assigns the Other a right over my egoistic being and apologizes for it. Egoistic thinking resides in speaking, ethical attitude to the Other in responding to their calling, or revelation. The Other manifests themselves to the first one, reveal their face, their presence. “*Face speaks. Manifestation of face is already a dialogue. The one who manifests themselves... decomposes the form they offer in every moment*” (Lévinas 1997c, 50). The Other, through their naked presence, calls, begs, requires. It is a look of a stranger, widow and orphan. Encounter with the Other is a shock, their silent face causes upheaval and challenge. It evokes in “I” consciousness of unique responsibility, it is a permanent and unfulfillable challenge for the unstoppable “I” so that it attempts to cross the abyss to the separated “Thou”. Subjectivity of “I” is fully created only after acceptance of this challenge, taking the position of responsibility to the Other.

The philosophy of metaphysical desire for fulfillment (which never takes place) and its realization through responding to the call of the Other resembles rather Kantian deontology, except that this desire is not determined by the autonomy of will but by heteronomy of face of the Other. Instead of the imperative of a universal moral law that commits, commands and forces, in the ethics of encounter with the Other morality is determined by the appeal of responsibility, which unconditionally binds by the heteronomous law “Thou shalt not kill!”.

If Kant’s ethical concept deals the term “virtue” as a disposition of a moral subject to act in accordance with an objective coercive principle, Lévinas’s ethics would, for such disposition, call openness to the Other, willingness to acknowledge own commitment to them, readiness to accept responsibility for them. The acts of recognition of the Other (reverence), respect for their uniqueness, responsibility (non-indifference), care for their lack, unconditional giving (high-mindedness and generosity), acceptance of the Other in their exteriority (patience), love (non-violence), justice (non-abuse of power) would be then included in the register of “acts of virtue”.

Moral character education respecting dignity and unobjectification of a pupil is principally dialogical. It is highly demanding on character and pedagogical approach of the teacher. According to Martin Buber, “the mission of an educator” contains three presuppositions of education: 1. *humility* – awareness of the fact that the teacher is only one of several elements that influence formation of a pupil’s character; 2. *responsibility* – the will to impact the entire personality of a pupil, particularly by the example of being that the teacher represents themselves; 3. *trust* – the only authentic path to a pupil that enables to educate their character to complexity (Buber 2016, 67). A pupil needs to accept the educator as a person whom they can trust, who does not handle with them and teaches them to ask questions. Martin Buber believes that an effective teacher does not dictate answers but creates a space for an “educational encounter”. *“His look encounters a face that captures his attention. It is not pretty, nor particularly intelligent, however, it is a real face, or rather a chaos that gives rise to cosmos of the real face and he reads a question from it: Who are you? Do you know something that relates to me? Do you bring something? What do you bring?”* (Buber 2016, 80).

The task of an educator is not limited to the system of maxims, nor the system of habits that they teach pupils, but it resides in the ability to react “wisely” to a unique situation among unique persons. This “wisdom” was called *fronesis* by the Greeks. Pedagogical *fronesis* may not be closed to a system of principles, rules or transcendental deductions, it cannot be narrowed to “brightness” of a calculating reason. Practical wisdom of a teacher, in an “encounter with the Other” (*erzieherische Begegnung*) touches the sacred, the ungraspable, the transcendental.

## 6 Conclusion

The submitted study is aimed at analysis of basic ethical and moral-educational discourses indicated in Kantian philosophical and psychological-pedagogical terminology as heteronomous and autonomous, while the criterion of examination of the relationship between morality and transcendence was applied. The grammatical structure of “three persons” was used as a methodological aid, which, as I discovered while studying texts, responds to Ricoeur’s triad of key words: *describe, prescribe* and *narrate* (Ricoeur 2016, 346). *My original thesis on inappropriate reduction of moral models to the dichotomy of the “first-person ethics” and the “third-person ethics” was proved.* If we stuck to these two models, we would be imprisoned in moral immanentism, and also, we would deprive the complex moral praxis of man of its funding dimension, which is the relationship to the appealing transcendence of the other Thou. *The model of moral education the core of which is cultivation of the relationship to the Other in the context of a community appears to respond the best to the requirement of a holistic and multidimensional formation of character. Counter to monological ethics of the “first person” and the “third person”, dialogical ethics of the “second person” emerges and integrates and includes both previous ones, however, in an appropriate functional structure* (cf. Maritain 1943, 88; Ricoeur 2016, 321–322; Krámský 2015, 148-149; Brestovanský 2019, 206 and others). The integral approach to man and their education enables to maintain respect to transcendence and vice versa, openness to transcendence secures conditions for a holistic formation of man.

## Acknowledgement

The paper originated as an outcome of the project VEGA No. 1/0056/19.

## Notes

- [1] A genetical connection between the movement of self-transcendence and prosocial morality (focused on a dialogical relationship to Thou) was described and heuristically backed up by Martin Dojčár in his publication *Self-Transcendence and Prosociality* (2017).
- [2] *“Handle so, daß du die Menschheit sowohl in deiner Person, als in der Person eines jeden andern jederzeit zugleich als Zweck, niemals bloß als Mittel brauchst.”* (Kant 1785, 429). Translation: *“Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your person or in the person of any other, never simply as a mean but at the same time as an end.”*

## References

- Arendtová, Hannah. 2016. *Eichmann v Jeruzaleme: správa o banalite zla*. Bratislava: Premedia.
- Arendtová, Hannah. 2007. *Vita activa neboli O činném životě*. Praha: Oikoymenh.
- Aristotle. 1934. "Nicomachean Ethics." In *Aristotle in 23 Volumes, Vol. 19*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Accessed May 9, 2019. [www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu).
- Brestovanský, Martin. 2019. *Hodnoty, vztahy a škola*. Trnava: Typi Universitatis Tyrnaviensis.
- Buber, Martin. 2016. *Řeči o výchově*. Praha: Vyšehrad.
- Dojčár, Martin. 2017. *Self-Transcendence and Prosociality*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1785. *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Akademie-Ausgabe der Gesammelten Schriften, Band IV. Accessed May 9, 2019. [korpora.zim.uni-duisburg-essen.de](http://korpora.zim.uni-duisburg-essen.de).
- Kant, Immanuel. 1788. *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*. Akademie-Ausgabe der Gesammelten Schriften, Band V. Accessed May 9, 2019. [korpora.zim.uni-duisburg-essen.de](http://korpora.zim.uni-duisburg-essen.de).
- Kohlberg, Lawrence. 1981. *Essays on Moral Development: Vol. 1. The Philosophy of Moral Development*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.
- Krámský, David. 2015. *Filosofické základy psychologie morálky*. Liberec: Nakladatelství Bor.
- Lévinas, Emmanuel. 1997a. *Být pro druhého*. Praha: Zvon.
- Lévinas, Emmanuel. 1997b. *Existence a ten, kdo existuje*. Praha: Oikoymenh.
- Lévinas, Emmanuel. 1997c. *Totalita a nekonečno*. Praha: Oikoymenh.
- Lipovetsky, Gilles. 2008. *Éra prázdnoty: úvahy o současném individualismu*. Praha: Prostor.
- Lipovetsky, Gilles. 2011. *Soumrak povinnosti: bezbolestná etika nových demokratických časů*. Praha: Prostor.
- Maritain, Jacques. 1943. *Education at the Crossroads*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Plato. 1991. *The Republic of Plato*. Translated with Notes and an Interpretive Essay by Allan Bloom. Basic Books. Accessed May 9, 2019. [www.khamkoo.com](http://www.khamkoo.com).
- Plato. 1961. *Laws*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Accessed May 9, 2019. [ryanfb.github.io](http://ryanfb.github.io).
- Podmanický, Ivan, Andrej Rajský et al. 2014. *Prosociálnosť a etická výchova: skúsenosti a perspektívy*. Trnava: Typi Universitatis Tyrnaviensis.
- Rajský, Andrej, Ivan Podmanický et al. 2016. *Človek človeku: k prameňom etickej výchovy*. Trnava: Typi Universitatis Tyrnaviensis.
- Rajský, Andrej, Marek Wiesenganger et al. 2018. *Pomoc druhému na ceste cnosti: k filozoficko-etickým aspektom prosociálnosti*. Trnava: Typi Universitatis Tyrnaviensis.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 2016. *O sobě samém jako o jiném*. Praha: Oikoymenh.
- Rybák, David. 2019. *Étos a světy dějin*. Praha: Karolinum.
- Sokol, Jan. 2014. *Etika, život, instituce: pokus o praktickou filosofii*. Praha: Vyšehrad.
- Vacek, Pavel. 2013. *Psychologie morálky a výchova charakteru žáků*. Hradec Králové: Gaudeamus.
- Walker, Lawrence J. 2004. "Gus in the GAP: Bridging the Judgment-action Gap in Moral Functioning." In *Moral Development, Self and Identity*, edited by D. K. Lapsley and D. Narvaez, 1–20. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.