

Our Sacred Dimension

Our Sacred Dimension:

The Sanctity of the Common Man

By

Halina Romanowska-Łakomy

Edited and Translated by Chris O'Neill

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To my loving parents, who furnished me with an ember of the sacred and my dear grandchildren, who will take this spark forward. To my husband, my daughter Lena and her husband Pontus.

—Halina Romanowska-Łakomy

I would like to thank Chris O'Neill, who came up with the title of this book and who understood the essence of the sacred dimension it discusses – an understanding that I often found lacking in our academic community – and for supporting me in choosing and articulating the values that this book stands for. His honest, professional and, above all, creative but accurate translation gave genuine form to the complexities of my original Polish language text.

—Halina Romanowska -Łakomy

Everything that is, is holy
—Thomas Merton

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FOREWORD

CHRIS O'NEILL

What is sacrum? The history of man is the history of his discovery of the sacrum, his attempts to express the sacrum and to show deference to it. This was not discovery as in the discovery of the wheel, but a long and unending process of detecting, unearthing, explaining and justifying. The need to make sense of his world was, for man, overwhelming. He could not but engage in this process of discovery. It was as if it were encoded in his DNA. This is evident not only in the histories of the religions of the world but in – closely related to religion – the mythologies of peoples. It was, I suspect, something greater than a simple need to explain, to rationalize man and his place in the world. Man's search to uncover the sacrum was based on his intuition that there is more to the world than that what we see, feel and sense physically; that the intangible is just as real as the tangible.

Man's efforts at discovery inevitably lead to expression – whether it be a golden calf or Yahweh in the Tabernaculum – of the source of this intangible. Man refined this expression to encompass regimes and guidelines governing this interaction between the 'seen and unseen' and his place in this confusing correlation. If one accepts the existence of the intangible, one cannot discount the possibility that man was not alone in this process of discovery and in his attempts to express his relation to the sacrum. An imperfect but sure process that wound through the centuries was the source of both acute suffering and immense happiness and which man cannot seem to do without. The author writes about the twentieth century as a serious set-back to this process since it contained within itself the ingredients that created and justified a

lifestyle in which respect for the intangible, for the sacrum, become not just unnecessary, but unrecognised. The departure from this process, from the recognition of the potentiality of the sacrum in our lives, has led to an emptiness that – despite our efforts, our preoccupation with unending amounts of secondary aims: money, health, sex, material goods, professional achievements, societal recognition – cannot be filled, cannot be satiated, and with this emptiness comes attendant depression, alienation and unhappiness.

Our Sacred Dimension calls us out on this emptiness. It tells us that without, at the least, our recognition that the *Sacrum* can possibly play a fundamental role in our lives, we are not only reneging on a process that our ancestors laboured at for millennia, but are cutting ourselves out of the possibility of developing in a way that we can hardly imagine. This book is about that journey of self-discovery.

INTRODUCTION

For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world,
and lose himself, and cast away himself?

—Luke 9, 25 [Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible]

The reality of the sacred dimension of man

In the opinion of the distinguished phenomenologist of religion, Mircea Eliade (1965, 1993), *sacrum* is religion set in the psychological sphere and that is why – according to this author – there is not an aspect of life, nor any significant phenomenon, that is not participant in the *sacrum* (Eliade 1966, p. 17). Leaving the phenomenology of religion – which is not the subject of this book – to the specialists, let us try to look upon this thought from another perspective, from its result.

Since *sacrum*¹ encompasses the psychological sphere and is utilized in the framework of important events, one should allow that the sacred can enter man in every moment of his life and be present in each psychological manifestation of reality.

This book assumes that the *sacrum* can be the **antidote for suffering and for the ethical and spiritual demise of man**. We are not aware, however, that we are potentially predisposed to participate in the sacred dimension of the universe. A good part of this book is devoted to the causes that hinder our perception of this dimension. I concentrate on how the destruction of modern man obscures his ability to perceive his sacral possibilities.

¹ The concept of *sacrum* is not understood in a manner inconsistent with its religious significance. It does not contain any new connotations other than those which result from its theological-religious meaning. See Rahner, Vorgrimler 1987, 402.

I write about human transgressions, small and cruel, about appalling banality, fundamental human stupidity and spiritual blindness. I try to illustrate man's reification, his animal-centrism, frightening indolence, robotic behaviour, and his tendency towards imitation and blind love for the profane. I mention the phenomena of contemporary puritanism, hypocrisy, pathological egocentrism and anthropocentrism – which I call man's 'adductive nature'. I also write about the universal entropy of values, with which we are already somewhat familiar, and about many other ways in which XXI century man is desensitized to sacred values.

In the third part of the book, I show how man can overcome this terrible human impasse with the help of the internal – and rational – spiritual force that is his sacral dimension.

Showing the 'highpoint' of our downfall² is necessary and done purposely so that the reader can understand that this cataclysmic low point did not arise on its own, but rather from the negation of all that is sacred. The fact that the contemporary model of behaviour and ethics negates the sacrum should provoke awareness that the antidote and remedy for man's demise is a return towards the sacred. The person who is conscious of this is the person that the world needs now, right at this moment. This is not a person striving for **sainthood**, but someone who undertakes and realizes **sacred acts**. This is not holiness but rather the action of **protecting and preserving the sacral dimension of the world**. This is a person through which the sacrum becomes reality.

The phenomenon of contemporary puritanism, originating from the mid-20th century, eclipsed the sacrum by causing us to think that we are moving toward full freedom and becoming exceptionally tolerant. We fool ourselves in thinking that nothing is amiss when we restrain ourselves

² By this, I mean the downfall of Personhood and thus the spiritual side of man.

from emotions and virtuous feelings in love and friendship; we pretend that we do not see contagious sexual destruction, modern attitudes of indifference, the ever-present sadness of the rejected and weak and the inhuman behaviour of the strong – behaviour that is often rewarded by society.

Today's puritans, who are diametrically different from the puritans of the Victorian age, not only accept sex as a value in itself but also promulgate a technological and quantitative approach of insatiability towards sex. A grasping aspect towards sex, similar to the grasping desire for things and money, has become the norm.

Just as the puritans of a former age were afraid of sensuality and the sexual drive, today's puritans are afraid of spiritual sublimity and the spiritual beauty of the sensual side of man. The puritans of the past hypocritically turned away from sexuality and everything related to it, while today's puritans turn away from God, godliness and the sacred. In the framework of tolerance existing at the end of the 20th century, unfortunately, there has also appeared a tolerance for that which destroys man's link with his sacred dimension. The *sacred* has been pushed aside and limited to such an extent that we have ceased to perceive the sacredness of life. The once common virtues of decency, honesty, unconditional love, faithfulness and one's inner dignity are in retreat. Respect for life itself has receded – life has become a relative value.

The 'new ethics' calls for the ridiculing of sentimentalism, idealism, tenderness and sensitivity and for an end to be put to inquiry, 'silly' religiosity and the bond of church tradition.

In the atmosphere of tolerance of the last years of the 20th century, the mores of man have taken on a new countenance. A particular tolerance towards destructive divergence has appeared. Most of us have not even noticed that we have become indifferent and cold in the face of the good that has been destroyed; we have become unresponsive witnesses to the spreading and increasingly dominant evil that surrounds us.

Evil has even begun to appeal to us and become more attractive than good. The *sacrum* has disappeared, as has moral indignation towards those that destroy it (see Ch. 1). The sad sigh that we once had the courage to utter in the presence of others is also gone. Today nothing outrages us, makes us sad, or perplexes or worries us – besides the loss of our own gains, the acquisition of which has become our primary value.

Twentieth-century man has made the sacred relative and has instead placed money, riches, success and fame upon the altar of sanctity. He is eternally preoccupied with the pursuit of gain, even when he gives the impression that he is acting on behalf of others.

The preceding century has wounded almost all of us, for it removed something, which no previous civilization had ever succeeded in taking away. Our internal God was taken away from us, and thus everything that is the best and most splendid within us. We are proud of what we possess and not of who or what we are.

The sacral antidote to the ethical and spiritual demise of man

Although God is still presented to us, our real god is (not *becoming*, but *is*, since the transformation has already taken place) money, material gain and all other gains. We no longer know that sacral values exist and that they had been part of the human substance. There is the fear that as a result of desacralization, man will begin to treat the **destruction of Personhood as a norm**.

The departure from the profanum is modern man's only remedy for the painful manifestations of the sick soul.³ One of

³ By the 'manifestations of the sick soul', one should understand the lack or disruption of a healthy psyche. The 'sickness of the soul' is more of an allegorical description, since the author – in keeping with the view of many philosophers – assumes that the soul of a

the fundamental sources of today's model of the ethos of man is his departure from the *sacrum* and the negation of his sacral potential.

Since many people who we regard as holy have appeared in history, we should realize that the power to discover and utilize our sacral potential is within each of us. We are both endowed with this potential and tasked with its development. Its utilization is a responsibility that we have an obligation to fulfil. We must ask ourselves, what are we doing with this potential? Are we putting any effort at all in its realization? We know that the beatified worked to achieve their sacred potential. If we perceive the sacredness of a holy person as something possible and real, then why do we not work on the realization of our own sacral potential? Why do we not examine it with our minds, instead of just reacting emotionally and blindly, as if out of fear, rejecting it?

Although we believe that we are people of a rational age and we see ourselves as thinking beings, we are not able to respond in a rational way – using our minds – to manifestations of the *sacrum*. We do not try to check the possibilities of our sacral nature; we do not believe in it, and our relation to it is irrational and vague. We do not examine the possibilities of the sacred actually entering into our lives via rational elements.

A realistic approach toward sacredness can lead us from the potentiality to the reality of our sacred dimension – only a realistic approach enables us to express our perception of the *sacrum*. By a realistic approach, I understand a wise and just realism and not an excessively narrow approach that is dependent on physicality and the material, intertwined with the narrow rationalism that is the fruit of a calculating mind bent on profit – in whatever form. A **judicious realism** develops wise and rational attitudes since it results from a neutral and honest mind.

person cannot be sick, it is person's psyche that is unwell. See the work of V.E. Frankl.

The just mind can cause us to accept mystical reality and the existence of miracles, for example, since such events do occur and are recorded. Accepting them is not the same as belief in them. Not the rejection but the acceptance of sacral reality is a prerequisite for its study. The lack of acceptance removes that possibility since one cannot examine that which does not exist.

We need to dare to look at the laws governing the universe, discovered by physicists and molecular biologists, which do not discount miraculous events that go beyond the laws of evolution and cause and effect.⁴ They add credence to what seems to be irrational sacredness.

We cannot satisfy ourselves with a mechanical and narrowly evolutionary worldview and certainly not with a purely materialistic worldview. The recognition and appreciation of the **nonmaterial source** of our reality, about which the prominent physicist and astronomer Arthur Eddington so beautifully wrote at the beginning of the XX century, can put us onto the road of first perceiving the sacrum as actual reality and then of bringing our actions into the realm of the sacred.

An era that is redirected towards sacredness, which will undertake the cleansing of the terrible errors that we have committed as humankind, can already be observed. The beginning of the current century was marked by wars, attacks and terrorism, but at the same time manifests characteristics of a century of enlightenment.

We are beginning to react more courageously and decidedly against man's cruel behaviours and acts as well as uncovering and looking in a critical light at our own failings or sins.⁵

⁴ They fit into what is known as formative, morphotonic and syntropic tendencies and, in the theory of open systems, constitute what is known as the 'law of final equivalency'.

⁵ From every point of view, and thus also from a lay point of view, one cannot qualify such behaviour as mild transgressions, misdemeanours, errors or routine customs. It is necessary to clearly designate them as harmful acts (human sins). Otherwise we will

And despite the fact that we still yield to a fascination with cyberculture and a certain secularization of everyday life, internally we crave human and Godly love. We no longer accept the attitude of indifference, sarcasm, irony – and often derision – towards sacredness.

There are people who have experienced enlightenment, since, more so than others, they feel the painfulness of the world's experiences and feel co-responsible for having the world become a better place. It is the hope they have within that is enabling them to create the New Person.

Inside, we are all searching for good and sacredness in others, less often in ourselves. We want others to be impartial, good and even holy; we do not realize that they expect the same from us. We are at such a point that we should be conscious of the need to do something in this century to keep “the world from falling apart”. This is what our enlightenment is about.

Although we continue to love money and material things, and we gain things and accomplishments for ourselves, we are capable, at least for a moment, of putting this voracious race of aggrandizement on hold in order to devote our attention and heart to the world – a world that surrounds us but which is often so distant from our hearts. A certain positive transformation, *in statu nascendi*, is taking place within us. The turn of the century shocked us and made some of us aware that our race for gain is transitory and relative,

forget what is good and what is bad, what is an ethical act and what is a culpably unethical act in the context of major ethics (axiology). It seems that we have misapprehended the far-reaching tolerance concerning social mores, which had justifiably moved in the direction of eradicating the ostracism that destroys human dignity and security. Instead of defending timeless and sacred phenomena, which were lost in the sea of the prohibitions and diktats of puritan morality, this tolerance began to cultivate a new type of social behaviour that defends societal and particular interests while creating the outward impression of a new and independent ethical model.

and that which we have been pushing away from ourselves is eternal and absolute.

In place of our continual focus on ourselves and the satisfaction of our egoistic nature, defined in this book as our adductive nature,⁶ we need to humbly accede to our silent hunger that wants to lead us to the unknown *sacrum* and to discover its manifestations within ourselves.

Let us not be afraid of our own sacredness – we are not threatened with sainthood; that is not our goal. We will not lose our human qualities that we love and to which we are attached. We are not threatened with the loss of sensual experiences and bodily pleasure, or with boredom and life's ugliness, when we take into ourselves something from the world of the *sacrum*.

On the contrary, we will build within ourselves the beauty and good of the sacral space. Hedonistic experiences and adductive weaknesses will take on a fuller dimension and we will receive an immediate payback in that we will cease to excessively suffer from the loss of the world of things, since we will uncover a world of sacral values.

We benefit by forgetting ourselves, just as we benefit by ceasing to strive for gains exclusively for ourselves. We do not gain anything, either for ourselves or for the world, when we continually think of ourselves – he who wants everything, gains nothing. “For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, and cast away himself?” (Luke 9, 25.) When we attain our sacred dimension, we attain our whole selves, both our humanhood and our personhood, both sinful and faultless, and united with the entire world.

⁶ The adductive approach is a position characterized by egoism, egocentricism and biological stimulus. Its main source constitutes the physical drives and the sublimated and masked biology of man that manifests itself in the form of psychological, societal and cultural strivings.

The sacral dimension of the mind

As long as we are not able to really understand our minds –
we remain strangers to ourselves.

—Tarthang Tulku

The sacral dimension of the universe penetrates our mind in its primordial state. That is why many philosophers state that in its primal state, the mind is of a pure nature.⁷ The sacred dimension can remain dormant or it can become activated. I will try to acquaint the reader with the process of becoming a full human being that occurs via the enlightenment of his or her mind.

The main objective of this book is to mobilize the reader to undertake a transformation of his ordinary **human mind** towards the **mind of personhood**. The ‘human’ functioning of the mind, although it can aim at perfection, represents the **median** capability level of our species. At this level, our mind acts in a reactive manner, conditioned by biological stimuli and external factors, even when it creates superb achievements in the fields of technology, cybernetics, medicine, science, art, etc. It is only the ‘personhood’ aspect of the functioning of the mind that brings forth the full picture of human potential, since it reveals its sacred dimension.

The dimension of the personhood mind naturally transforms the ‘human’ into the ‘person’ and establishes the primacy of sacral values.⁸ This dimension does not make man

⁷ I understand the pure nature of mind, as does Buddhist philosophy, which states that the original state of man’s mind is pure. Here, it is assumed that at the moment in which the sacrum is permeated by rational aspects of the human mind, the mind becomes pure. It is accepted that the human mind is pure in its foundation state and even assumes that man is born with pure intent, but that under the influence of biology, his life becomes self-interested.

⁸ The ethics of sacral values can be readily framed within axiology, since they constitute the ethics of universal values. These are the

a saint, nor does it make him perfect, but it influences his acts since it subjects the lower, mechanical, levels of his mind to a higher plane.

Personhood in its primal nature is pure and does not generate deficiencies of the mind and their consequent contra-societal and unworthy outcomes. The ‘personhood’ threshold of the mind possesses a sacral beginning and end point. The beginning point is a selfless aim and the end point is universal meaning or truth, and not egoistic purpose and direction.

The mind’s human threshold does not develop its full potential, it serves as a defensive instrument, protecting that which is relative; it strengthens the wall shielding man’s self-interested nature, it encourages avaricious tendencies and excites destructive directions.

The sacral dimension of the mind allows **that which is human – and thus at the same time sinful – to be raised to the eminence of personhood**. At this point, human weaknesses are transformed in the mind before they can be rendered into reality.

The mind itself is in a certain sense a manifestation of sacredness, since in its primal source it is pure and in harmony with a higher consciousness (see J. G. Fichte), which physicists today call the higher internal order of the universe or universal consciousness.⁹ The primal mission of the human mind is the expression of higher consciousness but, unfortunately, man generally is only capable of employing his mind on an instrumental level. He reduces it to a utilitarian function. When the mind loses its mission, it becomes a thing to be utilized, given over to the service of instinct¹⁰ and does not provide access to sacral values.

ethics called *open morality* by H. Bergson and *creative ethics* by Fr. Tischner. See Tischner, 2000, 94.

⁹ See such thinkers as: W. Heisenberg, D. Bohm, W. Pauli, W. Sadowski, E. D. Mitchell, F. Capra and A. Szyszko-Bohusz.

¹⁰ The world-renowned psychiatrist and philosopher, Professor K. Dąbrowski – the creator of the theory of positive disintegration – expressed apprehension that man was giving his mind over to his

The power of our mind

The end of the XX century and the beginning of the XXI century have brought us manifestations of the tremendous potential of the human mind in both its negative and positive aspects. It can lead to the pinnacle of human destruction and degeneration while, at the same time, it can tremendously enrich and facilitate life. We have learned that which Eastern thinkers, shamans and poets already knew:¹¹ that the mind can lead human existence to the apogee of good or bad. We live in times in which we are witness to the power of our minds and the potency of its influence, even in extreme health-related situations.¹² We are learning about the dynamics and laws that govern the mind, revealing its amazing capabilities (Barasch, 1993).

Despite this growing awareness, our mind becomes powerless when faced with tragedies occurring in the world, tragedies that can lead to an impasse and consequently facilitate our subjection to evil.¹³ It is that contrary and ambivalent position of our mind that in particular calls us to undertake a radical turn towards its sacred dimension. Having uncovered the power of the mind, both its positive and negative natures, we can cause our mind to leave the destructive road on which it has found itself.

instinctive side (1975, 51-54). B. Russell and many neo-psychoanalysts saw the genesis of the human mind in instincts, see: Russell (n.d.), 206; Anzieu, 1978, 167.

¹¹ The great Polish poets A. Mickiewicz and J. Słowacki felt that ideas and thoughts could move mountains and that through one's internal attitude one could call forth the energy needed for their realization.

¹² Government scientific institutions have arisen in the United States that examine how the mind influences the material and psychological worlds. See M. Barasch, 1993.

¹³ Let us not be afraid to use the word evil, since otherwise, we will cease to differentiate it from good. We know what this concept means without even defining it and that is why we have the responsibility to **bravely** prevent that which we internally feel to be evil.

We live at such a moment in time in which we have no choice but to undertake this transformation as soon as possible. We must cease to treat the mind as simply a tool but instead begin to discern its sacral dimension. It is necessary to return to the perception of the mind as the greatest of our human capabilities and to put an end to the idea of using it solely as a means to perfect our lives. The concerns, expressed by H. Bergson (1963), S. Freud, C.G. Jung, E. Fromm, P. Tillich and many other thinkers, deal with the fear that the mind is not only losing the enthusiasm that spawns faith but also its irrational creativity (May, 1995, 105-106). It is precisely this ecstatic and irrational dimension of the mind, which was emphasized in the Enlightenment and in earlier ancient history that contains what I propose to call the **sacral dimension of the mind** (ibid. 105-106).

The sacral dimension of the mind is present in Buddhist thought (Tarthang Tulku, 1986, 7, 11), which describes it as a brilliant and radiant sun-like light. If we continue in this direction and with this Buddhist symbolism and we compare the mind to a multifaceted crystal, which displays various colours depending on the light that falls upon it, we can assume that depending on the conditions that we create for it, the mind is capable of revealing its perfect and sacred nature.

The human mind, as with the crystal, possesses limitless possibilities and is “unimaginably vast” (ibid. 13) and only when man ceases to ‘exploit’ it, does he uncover within universal values and unbounded space. Man possesses both self-interested and universal (selfless) tendencies. The mind, however, has today become dominated by self-interest. Thus it is difficult for us to reach its pure form, called during the Enlightenment the ‘virtues of the mind’. Everything that is sacred in the human mind is at the same time highly ethical and associated with high-quality personhood.

In this book, I want to present the broader aspects of human sacredness, mainly in the dimension of our mind. Just as the smallest particles of the atom have not been seen, although their existence is known since they leave traces in accelerators, the sacral potential of man can be compared to a

‘probability wave’ (Chopra, 1988, 55-60), which exists and which has always existed in every consciousness (Romanowska-Łakomy, 2001, 156-168).

That which perplexes modern man, who feels increasingly alienated and fearful, is the inability to make contact with this sacredness. The objective of this book is to bring our attention to that side of today’s man that hinders his ability to perceive the sacrum, since it clouds and darkens his mind and destroys his ability to undertake selfless sacred acts. The purpose of exposing the evil in which man has today entangled himself is to lay bare the negative dimension of the human mind; that is, its stupidity and meanness. My task is also to portray what is inhuman in man and what pulls him down below his kind, which indeed causes him to be unworthy of the designation: Man.

The sacral dimension of the mind can activate a mind without a self-interested attitude, directing all of its energy not so much onto itself as towards the entire world.

The American psychiatrist Jan Ehrehwald asserts that we must rid ourselves of the idea of a localized, egocentric, uni-cerebral consciousness and acknowledge the theory of the latent multi-cerebral and dispersed localization of mental processes (see Beynam, 1983). Let us try, when reading this book, to rid our thinking of egocentric and uni-cerebral forms, and to accept a multi-cerebral approach of the mind, which, as physicists contend, can bring together our mind with all of creation, with the universe. In this dispersed, limitless state, our mind has a chance of joining with the sacred.

My hope is that this book will help unlock your inner wisdom.

CHAPTER ONE

PERSONHOOD LOST

Let us dare to face the situation. Man has become superman. He ... commands, thanks to scientific and technological advances, the latent forces of nature, which he can now put to his own use. ... However, the superman suffers from a fatal flaw. He has failed to rise to the level of superhuman reason, which should match that of his superhuman strength. ... [T]he more the superman gains in strength, the poorer he becomes ... the essential fact which we should acknowledge in our conscience, and which we should have acknowledged a long time ago, is that we are becoming inhuman to the extent that we become supermen.

—Extract from *The Problem of Peace*, Albert Schweitzer's Nobel Lecture given upon receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize (Oslo, 4 XI, 1954)

1. Transgressions against society and against personhood

The reality in which we are living, and in which our children, our grandchildren and further generations are living and will be living, is exclusively a product created by us and not by aliens or beings from a good or bad fairy tale. It is not a television cyberman, a hero or an antihero from a film or computer game, but it is living and breathing man, people like us, who decide how much evil will take place, how much good will take place and what the balance of both in the world will be.

Our past, present and future unethical behaviour is made up of consciously or unconsciously committed acts that determine our lives and the fate of the world. Every day we commit many errors, which are described in a religious

context as transgressions or sins. Our negative acts vary to a great degree and have various degrees of significance – from very mild through to very serious up to brutal and perfidious acts. They construct the unethical dimension of our lives; they create the world of evil, the world of sadness and depression.

It is not possible to call our transgressions exclusively errors, particularly when they possess aspects of negative thinking and negative actions. An error is understood as a neutral act that is beyond ethics, usually committed without awareness. A transgression should be called an ethical error. The lack of awareness of the existence of the difference between an error and an ethical error can dull an unethical error, lessen its negative dimension and lead to the acceptance of what is an evident evil (John Paul II, 1991). That is why an error should be clearly separated from an ethical error.

Amoral or ‘a-ethical’ behaviour¹ results from the fact that we do not know what constitutes good and what constitutes evil – our awareness in the ethical sphere is stunted and does not possess an ethical compass. ‘Unmoral’ and unethical behaviour is conscious behaviour and can be recognized as ethical transgressions.

The conscious exposure of another living being to suffering constitutes sinful behaviour, even when we look at it from a nonreligious point of view.² There is no reason to avoid calling this type of behaviour sinful. The concepts of sin and guilt bring out what is most important in negative behaviour, together with all the consequences of such behaviour that turn up in our consciences. That is why I am going to use the terms sin, transgression and ethical error. I differentiate behaviour that negatively affects universal and sacred values

¹ Amoral or ‘a-ethical’ behaviour violates the societal ethics and morality of a given group and thus violates the interests and norms of that group; unmoral and unethical behaviour violates ethics in an axiological sense and thus violates transcendental values.

² Lay ethics often neglect this aspect of terminology – that is calling evil a sin, which should be a term used not only in a religious context.

– thus destroying the system of highest values – from behaviour that impinges upon relative values.

I define sin as not only brutal acts, physical destruction and annihilation (murder, violence, terror, molestation, sadism), but also as acts that destroy and profane the sacred. I recognize such sins as the murder of the human spirit, and thus, that which constitutes the essence of personhood. Such acts kill the real Person in the human and leave behind a human being deprived of his personhood. I regard them as fundamental sins in the lay sense and call them **acts against personhood** (transgressions against personhood) that are much more weighty than what I call **contra-societal acts** (societal transgressions against relative values).

Thus, to sum up:

1. Moral and amoral behaviour are a function of societal mores and lower ethics;
2. Ethical and unethical behaviour are related to higher ethics; that is, to axiology.

I thus describe an amoral act as a contra-societal act and an unethical act as a contra-personhood act – which in religious terms could be defined as a mortal sin.

Generally, we all think that it is not us but others who perpetrate evil and behave unethically. When, however, we are aware that we are committing something bad, we look for justifications, explanations and rationalizations that permit us not only to justify ourselves, but also to continue this behaviour. We more eagerly forgive ourselves than others and our sins do not seem to us to be as serious and dangerous as those of others.

The cruelty that we perform does not always manifest itself in external behaviour and obvious acts but also appears in indifferent, cold, unfeeling, underhanded, revengeful and hostile behaviours that trample upon others and that trample upon symbols of sacredness. We do not see such behaviour and acts in the same way as those on the receiving side of

such behaviour. We are not able, and in fact, we do not want to recognize the hurt we cause.

Most often, we register the fact that something bad, and even very bad, is happening, but we do not regard this fact as an occurrence spawned by us. We see the original source of this in the negative approach of others, in their bad intentions, in their dislike for us. During the committing of unethical acts, our thought does not enter into the sphere of higher understanding, but falls to its lowest level. This mind is not inclined to encompass either the logic of thought or the ethics of perceiving the entire spectrum of the situation and it does not comprehend that which has happened. It shields itself from the awareness that we are the cause of this negative occurrence. The mind limits our field of perception and our sphere of feeling for this experience to a narrow, self-interested reality in which the law of gain reigns.

Focused on our own narrow goals, we see, hear and feel in a manner deficient to the actual state of affairs in which our negative acts are born and take place. This insufficiency is reinforced when we are not informed of how others receive our negative behaviour. Others generally are indifferent to our negative behaviour when it does not affect them directly. We are thus not able to recognize the significance of the evil that we have committed.

Each person commits unethical acts, no one is without fault. But if we do not get feedback that contains righteous anger or fearless indignation that originates from deep within, we believe that we are behaving appropriately, that our position does not constitute anything negative. Since we were able to perpetrate evil without any noticeable consequences, we feel that we can do it again and then again and thus we can commit evil continually until we begin to believe that such behaviour is normal.

There is a danger that people that are excessively concrete and pragmatic, who feel themselves to be 'no-nonsense' individuals, can be more readily susceptible to allowing their spectrum of reality to be narrowed and thus not be able to recognize unethical behaviour in themselves and in others.

The recognition of unethical behaviour in ourselves, its avoidance, and the opportunity to work upon one's own negative behaviour, can only occur when we have feedback. Thanks to feedback, not only can we see ourselves from a wider angle, but also in a wider ethical perspective.

Behaviour resulting from a perspective that goes beyond narrow practicalities takes into account the axiological perspective.³ We then become true realists since we take into account all of reality and not just a reality narrowed to our own needs. We are then able to perceive higher values.

1.1 Narrow and primitive realism

An excessive pragmatism and a narrow realism, responding to man's impulses and desires, have taken the upper hand in the human species. They have taken on the attire of civilization and culture and have prevented the full development of the spiritual side of our kind. Today's form of realism has effectively sundered man from his spiritual centre, from the source of his personhood. It works through science, technology, cybernetics and culture, and even art, to effectively mask the egoistic intentions of man. It has done away with transcendental values. It has become a primitive form of realism focused on rewards – rewards that man has come to unequivocally expect.

The disinterested life characterized by impartiality and justice has today become unrealistic. The reality of the world of sacred things has been eliminated and man would have to undertake a task of great exertion and strength to free himself from the self-interested⁴ life model that shapes his life and worldview exclusively from an anthropocentric point of view.

³ This is a point of view that takes into account the highest values.

⁴ Self-interested in this sense means human anthropocentrism limited to egoistic and self-serving endeavours. The self-interested life model denotes the realization of egocentric and egoistic behaviour of excessive self-centeredness, focusing on one's own needs to satisfy the desire for gratification. It doesn't possess a concern for, nor interest in, a different and broader reality.

Although the ability to live one's life multidimensionally in its material, biological and transcendental realities (beyond time and the senses)⁵ is given to man *a priori*, the fusion of these realities into one whole has now become unattainable. Man has narrowed his perspective to his societal and individual space and does not want to transcend it mentally or physically – even though he could do so.

Only occasionally do we discover the fact that our purpose is to develop that which has been given to us. In reality, we do not want to undertake our life's task of developing our personhood and instead, like we had no will or direction of our own, we strengthen and prolong our biological nature, though subtly masked by the flutter of civilization. We do not want to make the effort to live an existence that is closer to God, or, if one prefers, to the Highest Good, and thus an existence that raises itself above the level of biological impulse. We continually act, with great perseverance and effort, on behalf of our biological nature, which is not our true nature. We don't see how we are generating and multiplying our own suffering.

We don't attempt to trust the personhood aspect of our nature since we have become ensnared in the self-interested laws governing the biological world. We carefully conceal this captivity. We have become reliant on laws of nature that have been more subtly interpreted and adopted by our minds than that of the rest of the organic world. Now these laws control us. We no longer strive to achieve a supra-natural existence, a spiritual existence that goes beyond our senses, since such a world does not offer us sensual, material or quantitative rewards.

We have lost our sacral perspective on life and **we have ceased to care for and develop our transcendental abilities** that enable us to move beyond the world of the senses. Indeed, we do not even know the true countenance and meaning of biological and material reality; we are not in a

⁵ Transcendental reality is also a sacral sphere. It is a reality that that transcends both time and our senses.