

# AFFECTIVITY, KNOWLEDGE, HUMAN SOUL

## EIFI 2020 Seminar Series

### Second Seminar: **Affectivity and knowledge. Contributions from the Ignatian tradition.**

Saturday, 3 October 2020

#### Summary of the lectures:

##### **Ethics and affectivity from an Ignatian perspective**

*Ignacio Sepúlveda del Río*

The context in which we are reflecting is the search for an ethics that has the capacity, in one way or another, to escape from pure rationality and is capable of integrating the affections. In other words, to borrow a concept from the Spanish philosopher Adela Cortina, a cordial ethics. We believe that this "cordial ethics" could learn a lot from spirituality, specifically Ignatian spirituality.

Reflection on ethics and affectivity from an Ignatian perspective starts from two fundamental questions: is it possible to formulate an ethic from the perspective of Ignatian spirituality? And if so, what role should affectivity play in this ethical formulation? But before addressing both questions, it is necessary to answer two previous questions: what do we understand by ethics and spirituality?

How can we approach a first understanding of ethics and spirituality? In a first approach, we can define ethics as a knowledge that stems from practical philosophy and that helps us to act justly in society. Ethics would be a reasonable practical knowledge that helps us to live in society. From other complementary perspectives, ethics can be understood as a certain *ethos* (Heidegger, Zubiri and Aranguren); *ethos* being understood as man's abode or dwelling place. *Ethos* is a firm ground from which we live. Spirituality, on the other hand, is an essential element of the human being, which investigates the meaning of life and connects him/her with transcendence and with the reality that surrounds him/her. A spirituality of liberation, on the other hand, is open to the liberation of the oppressed, the despoiled, the despised and the dominated.

Using the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola as a hermeneutic and orientative key, specifically with regard to the *telos*, the dynamics of pain, evil and injustice, freedom, transformation and hope, it is possible to build a bridge between spirituality and ethics that considers, as a fundamental key, the affections of the subject. This hermeneutic can help to discern and historicise, taking into account the affections of the subject, the ethical choices that are made.

## **Affectivity-care of praxis-historical world**

*Juan Antonio Senent de Frutos*

Our seminar invites us to bet on the "humanity" of the human being in the face of its "post-humanist" subsumption or annulment. And it points to the "human soul" as the core of the resistance and counter-cultural reconstruction of displaced and harassed humanity. Facing this challenge requires, in my view, recovering the subjectivity and interiority of human beings as subjects of historical making. The larger context of such a recovery is that of a historical world of increasing technological domination and reification of human beings and of the physical world and other beings, as Pope Francis reminds us in the encyclical *Laudato si'*.

The solution to this anthropological, cosmological and historical challenge does not *simply* involve changing the structures of the world and objectively reconfiguring the historical possibilities that define the playing field that governs the destiny and self-giving of human beings and living beings in the current planetary civilisation process.

Therefore, the key mediation is not politics, law, economics or ecology.

In line with the knowledge of the Jesuit/Ignatian tradition, concrete affectivity sustains and energises human praxis, and this shapes the course of the historical world for better or for worse. Taking charge of the civilising process and aligning it in a way that enables the continuity of the human implies taking charge of the type of subjectivity projected in this world. Caring for the world involves caring for humanity, and caring for the human involves caring for interiority; and caring for interiority involves "becoming a subject", a growth in freedom and responsibility, and therefore in the capacity for biographical and social reflexivity.

There is a structural connection between the march of history and the possibility of a full human life, or simply the possibility of a human life. An oppressive world is a world that dominates, reifies and alienates human subjectivities. But this oppressive world is an objectification of what is projected by personal or social subjectivities that seek to dominate other subjectivities or that in fact configure a world with poor possibilities of humanisation for the subjects.

Therefore, it is not only a question of achieving materially and ecologically universalisable ways of life, but that behind the realisation lies a way of *realising oneself*, and therefore, these ways must achieve human quality insofar as they do not hinder or prevent the subjects who participate in or are affected by the respective way of life from making themselves subjects of their own biographical and social course. In other words, there are specific human models that are configured in one way or another according to the dominant values or affects incorporated into social activities, in whose systematic and interdependent character a specific civilising dynamic is expressed. A *historical discernment* of the models of humanisation is necessary. That is, a critical understanding of their self-giving. Thus, this self-giving can be discerned in terms of its integral sustainability, understood in terms of the model's contribution to the realisation of a way of being human that is personally fulfilling, that makes the life of the people socially possible without promoting or legitimising exclusions, that does not impede the good life of other peoples, and that is materially viable and respectful of the life of the whole of nature in which human beings develop materially and spiritually.

Therefore, these radically considered ways of humanisation constitute a spiritual and political problem (not one of mere ideological or religious beliefs). This is why I understand that the care of interiority is an essential socio-political condition for effectively shaping social relations, both internally and in its

interactions (local, territorial, state, regional or global) as well as human responsibility for the transformation of the world's oppressive structures. An a-critical abandonment of what is projected inwardly in the world configuration is an adequate way to maintain the historical march towards collective failure. Attention must be paid to the various "spiritual positions", which is not an evanescent but a concrete question and which is materialised and objectified in the lives that are made possible or denied. In this sense, an ethical and spiritual care of the interiority of personal, collective, or public-political subjectivities is critical for a political-transformative commitment, which in their way of situating and projecting themselves in the production of the historical world, that is, in the generation and/or reproduction of social structures, are determining the opening or closing of the possibilities of human and non-human life in the global society as a whole.

It is in their interactions with other real instances, objectifiable by the levels of common good or evil (of reproducibility of shareable life, or of closure and exhaustion of present and future life) that the various "spiritual positions" are historically verified.

But it is in the reflective and sapiential care of the inner processes of the various subjectivities mentioned above that new or recovered forms of more humanising institutional mediations can be released, which move within the horizon of the common good of humanity or of a world that is not soulless, i.e. with a soul and a good spirit.

### **Mysticism and affectivity**

María del Pilar Pena Búa

Our reflection on *mysticism and affectivity* takes place at a very complex time that we cannot ignore; in the current, particularly critical context, the echoes of Rahner or Malraux can be heard affirming the possibility of a 21st century open to the spiritual event, oriented towards the mystical and human, as essential presuppositions for achieving progress in accordance with the ontic-axiological nature of the human being, antidotes capable of immunising us against the imminent danger of dehumanisation. The groundswell that drags us along and generates a problem of *humanity* is the development of scientific knowledge which, based on abstract reason and its progressive control, leads human behaviour towards the loss of the meaning of existence, towards the absence of an objective core of value, both for life and for religion, art and philosophy itself.

Therefore, from a Christian perspective open to *pagan mysticism*, we situate ourselves in the present situation of the crisis of the human, which is evident in the crisis of the subject, of society and of religion, but, at the same time, a situation which, because of its own difficulty, experiences the urgency of a revival of the mystical-spiritual, placing the accent on the recognition of experience as its centre. As Rahner stated: "the Christian of the future will either be a mystic, a person who has experienced something, or he will not be". To start from experience, to experience something, that is, to remain anchored to the concreteness of life, is to be guided by affectivity, that is, by the capacity to love and also by our way of loving as men and women, people with emotions, feelings, passions, bodies.... Uniting mysticism and affectivity implies combining interiority and immediacy; that which is *known* (the *religious datum*), the experience of the presence of the Other who invites us to unity and communion with Him, can only be lived by making affectivity effective through human and humanising experiences, because they are always experiences of grace.