Renewal as a problem of individual ethics[[1]](#footnote-0)

Life-forms of self-regulation, as preliminary forms of the ethical life. Introduction into the topic

Renewal of man – of the single man and of some communalized humanity – is the uppermost topic of all ethics. According to its essence, ethical life is a life that is consciously subject to the idea of renewal, by volition guided and shaped through it. Pure ethics are the science of the essence and the possible forms of such a life in pure (apriori) universality. Empirically human ethics then wish to adapt the norms of pure ethics to the empirical, they wish to become [21] the earthly man’s guide in the given (individual, historical, national, and other) circumstances. We should not think of mere moral under the title ethics, regulating the practically “good”, “rational” behavior of man in relation to his fellow men under ideas of brotherly love. Moral philosophy is only a quite non-selfsufficient part of ethics, which must necessarily be apprehended as science of some rational subjectivity’s whole acting life, under the aspect of reason unitarily regulating this whole life. And which special spheres of possible acting ever we may consider under this aspect – whether it be the acting called cognizing in a thinking way for example -, there ethics as well have their thematic ground. The title reason thus has also to be taken in a completely general way, so that ethics and science of the practical reason become equal concepts.

But furthermore ethics are not mere individual ethics, but also social ethics. The latter is not simply given by the practical behavior of the single man towards his “fellow men”, that is, his comrades in the unity of community, becoming subject to individual ethical research. Necessarily there is also some ethics of the communities as communities. And specifically also of those universal communities, which we call “humanities” – total humanity encompassing a nation or multiple nations. Here belongs for example the “European” or “occidental” humanity. Humanity reaches as far as the unity of some culture; on top of some independently self-contained universal culture that may encompass many national particular cultures. A unity of the active life simply is objectivized in a culture, the total subject of which is the respective humanity. By culture we understand nothing else than the sum of those performances, which come about in the continuous activities of communalized men, and which may have their lasting mental existence in the unity of the community’s consciousness and its preserving tradition. They are experienceable in their mental sense for everyone able to follow in understanding on the basis of their physical embodiment, their expression, with which they are relinquished from their original creator. In the following they may ever again become the radiating points of mental effects on [22] ever new generations in the frame of historical continuity. Everything included in the title culture has its essentially own kind of objective existence simply in that, and functions as a constant source of communalization on the other hand.

Community is a personal, so to say many-headed and still combined subjectivity. Its single persons are its “members”, functionally linked to each other by “social acts” of many shapes (acts between you and I; orders, appointments, love acts, etc.), mentally unifying person with person. Temporarily a community functions in a many-headed and in a higher sense still “headless” way: namely without its concentrating to become the unity of some volitional subjectivity and analogously acting as a single subject. It is able though to take over this higher form of living and to become a “personality of a higher order” as well, and to conduct performances of the community as such, which are not mere combinations of single personal performances, but in the true sense personal performances of the community as such, realized ones in its striving and willing. Accordingly the acting life of a community, of a whole humanity – may it not have happened in any historical actuality – is able to take over the unity-structure of practical reason, that of an “ethical” life. But this understood by actual analogy with the ethical single life. Like this it would thus be a life of “renewal”, born from the proper will to shape itself to become some true humanity in the sense of practical reason, that is, [to shape] its culture to become some “truly human” culture. Humanity may actually and must be regarded as “man in the large”, and must be considered in a common ethical way then as possibly defining itself, thereby as supposed to ethically determine itself. But this thought needs to be clarified in its fundamental option, be made inescapably obvious and become practically determining after the exploration of its included essential options and normative necessities – this of course for the community as a community, that is, for the community’s members, insofar as they are carriers and functionaries of the community’s will.

Thereby the final objective of the following general studies – renewal as socioethical basic problem – has been described in its main characteristics.

[23] Meanwhile, the essential relation between the social ethical renewal and the individual ethical one demands a previous thorough treatment of this basic problem of individual ethics: The present essay shall be dedicated to it. Our method shall, following the explications of my prior article “Problem and method of renewal”, be the “apriori” one, that of the “essential research”. For its more precise characteristics I refer to my essay “The Method of the inquiry into essences” (compare this journal <*The Kaizo*, 1924, magazine 4, pages 107-117; view above, pages 13-20>).

1. Man as personal and free being

According to our special object we will have to direct our view to certain traits of man as such. We will namely try to construct, *a priori,* certain differentiating particularities of human forms of being and of living within this idea that are accomplished in the idea of the ethical man. The self renewal’s peculiar form of becoming, of self-shaping towards the “new man” shall become clear in its essential motivation.

We take the ability for self-consciousness, belonging to man’s essence as the starting-point in the pregnant sense of the personal self-consideration (*inspectio sui*) and the ability, based on it, for statements, or rather, personal acts that are reflectively related back to oneself and one’s life: Of the self-cognition, the self-valuing and the practical self-determination (self-willing and self-shaping). The man judges himself as good and bad, as worthy and unworthy within self-valuing. He thereby values his acts, his motives, his means and purposes, up to his final goals. And he does not only value his actual, but also overlooking his possible acts, motives, goals, the whole realm of his practical options: Eventually he also values his own practical “character” and its special characteristic features, any kind of characteristic, abilities, proficiencies, insofar as they determine way and direction of his possible practice, whether they by the way lie ahead as original mental habitus of all activity or have grown through exertion or possible [24] practice of acts.

Let us also consider the peculiarity of specifically personal acts. Man has the essential peculiarity to not be exposed to his drives (desires, affects) in a passively unfree way and to thus be moved in the widest sense affectively, to rather “act” in a freely doing way on his own accord, from his Ego-center, to experience (e.g. by watching) in truly “personal” or “free” activity, to think, to value and to act into the experienced surrounding world. Thereby I say that he has the ability to “inhibit” his passive doing (being consciously driven) and the presuppositions passively motivating it (desires, opinions) in their impact, to question them, to perform corresponding considerations and to only make a decision of the will on the basis of the resulting cognition of the existent situation, of the options that are realizable within it as such and of their relative values. The subject is in the pregnant sense a subject of the will in it, it does not any more follow the affective drive (the “desire”) “submissively”, but of his own accord, “freely”, it makes his decisions, and it is, if the realization is a volatile one in such a true willing, an “acting” subject, personal doer of its deed. Man can let reign exactly this freedom in regard of his free acts as well, that is, on a higher step, he can inhibit anew (thus also these free statements), question critically anew, ponder and decide; he can acknowledge decisions of the will that have already been made in verifications of the will or deny in negations of the will; and likewise with regard to already realized actions. The realizing happening though can certainly not be reversed. But the Ego can afterwards subdue the will to act, which of course is still valid for its further life to the critique of the will, as the case may be, verify it or deny this practical validity in the will’s no. In consequence it judges itself as a willing subject thereby as a subject willing or acting in a justified or unjustified way.

The critical considerations may be singular or general ones. For it is a part of man’s essence to not be able to practice some singular imagination, thinking, valuing and willing, but to perform all such acts also in the shapes of the as such, in those of the “particular” or “universal” generality. The “mere animal” may under certain circumstances for example always [25] act ever again in the same way, but it does not have the will in the shape of generality. It does not know what man utters with the words: “I want to act as such, and wherever I find such conditions, because that kind of objects as such is worthy to me.”

Of course I do not talk of empirical peculiarities of men and animals here, but of essential differentiations, of differences of *a priori* possible forms of acts and abilities, of *a priori* possible “men” and “animals”.

Furthermore it is part of the essence of men’s life that it continuously happens in the form of striving; and eventually it thereby takes on the form of positive striving and is thus directed towards the reaching of positive values. For all negative striving, namely the striving away from something unworthy (e.g. “sensuous” pain), is only the transition towards positive striving. The painlessness, in which the striving away relaxes – as the slackness in the case of final relaxation of the lustful striving through savoring the enjoyed values “to the dregs” -, soon motivates new positive strivings, directed to fill the emptiness that has emerged with something worthy.

The positive striving constantly motivated anew variably leads to satisfactions, to disappointments, to the forcing of something painful or mediately unworthy (for example missing of new values that are to be striven at, increasing the general level of values: boredom). On top of that new actual and practically possible values enter our view, struggle with the values that had just been existent and possibly devaluate them for the striving one by their demanding their practical preference as being of higher value. In brief, the subject lives within the struggle for a “worthy” life that is secured against following devaluations, declines of the value, emptiness of value, disappointments, increasing in the contents of its values, for a life that could guarantee a continuously univocal and secure complete satisfaction. The subject though is on the highest step, that of free spontaneity, not a mere passive setting of motivational forces wrestling with each other. It has an overview over its life, and as a free one it consciously strives and in different possible forms, to make its life a satisfying, “blissful” one.

To put out of the game the original motive, the game of its respective affectivity [26] and to go over to free reckoning, is the embarrassing mental process of negation and doubt; thus the mental process of the actual or threatening destruction of the judging, valuing and practical “opinions”, and possibly of the reckonings and decisions as well that have already been freely made – insofar as they can also become dubious and subject to new critique. On the other hand, the seeing clarity, the “evidence”, the “insight” as consciousness of the direct self-apprehending of the meant (in the realizing acting that of the reaching the goal’s value itself) distinguishes from the mere anticipating meaning. It now becomes a specially valued and strived for source of verifying normalizations. Thus the peculiar of the rational striving understands itself as that of a striving to give the form of insight to the personal life, with regard to its respective judging, valuing and practical statements, or rather, in appropriate relation to it, that of rightfulness or rationality. We need to emphasize, correlatively expressed, the striving, that, which is “true” in the respective regards – true being, true judgment contents, true or “genuine” values and goods – in the insightful self- apprehending, by which the mere opinions have the normalizing meter of rightfulness and wrongfulness. But it belongs to human eidetic possibilities to have insight in this itself and to let oneself be motivated by it. Furthermore the option then that man judges himself according to rational norms and to shape [himself] practically.

1. Specific human forms of life and pre-ethical forms of self-regulation

We draw on that: *A priori* different, specifically human life forms, or rather, personal types of men, guiding us up towards the highest form of value of the ethical man, and culminating in it, are based on the latter cognized option of free self-formation.

Man can unitarily overlook his whole life and universally judge it according to actualities and options, even if with differing determination and clarity. He can accordingly set a general goal for his life, surrender himself [27] and his whole life in its open future infinity to a demand for regulations that has sprung from his own free will. It gives a completely new kind of form to personal life by acting as a motive that determines everything indeed. But in the generality of this description a general life type is drawn, still leaving open different special types.

Such a regulation, consciously extending over the limitless infinity of life, is for example present, if someone wants to devote some universal, well-planned care to sensuous self-maintenance and the goods serving this purpose, and therefore turns towards one of the jobs for earning money; he may by the way do this only because family tradition gets him into this job, and he is rooted in it, or because he cognizes the presupposition for all other goods [to lie] within the economic goods or even because he prefers them before all others.

We emphasize one distinct type among the manifold shapes of such life forms, distinct by the special way a personal value decision becomes determining for a self-regulation of one’s whole personal life. Somebody may be certain in overlooking and valuing his future possible life that values of a certain kind, he can any time choose as goals of his actions, have the character of unconditionally desired ones, without the continued actualization of which he could not find any satisfaction. (In this sense the goods of power can be accepted by one as the unconditionally most preferable, by the other one those of fame, of brotherly love etc.; but the question here is not, whether these are true and genuine goods or just alleged ones.) Accordingly he now decides to devote himself and his life as far as possible to the realization of such values. This does not exclude that he may relinquish such values in certain circumstances, that he sacrifices them, acknowledging that in these circumstances other goods were to be preferred by him. It may very well be the case that these are higher goods as such, contrary to which his own, as he sees himself, take second place: as for example for the power-hungry the goods of brotherly love. They may on top of that lie any time within his practical realm so that he could thus devote his life to them as well. And yet he only at times does prefer them, [28] when they simply do not “cost” him much. Thus the objective appreciation does not need to become practical preference, insofar as he lives in the constant certainty that those – in his eyes relatively low goods – were the most preferable for him, which he will and can absolutely not relinquish, and cannot, because he wants them desperately. That which stands out for us here at first is the general, that a mood of unconditional devotion to valued goals, sprung from the absoluteness of its desiring, becomes the principle of a life regulation; may this devotion, as in the example, be a completely irrational one, like that of blind love, or not.

The decision for some professional life in a pregnant and higher sense thus is a special case. We consider it related to a genre of values that are beloved ones for the respective man in “pure” love, giving him “pure” satisfaction thus when reaching them. And he should be conscious of this with insight. These are in advance true values, cognized in their truthfulness, and on top of that belonging to one single, exclusively preferred region of values. The assignment to it, the devotion of life solely to the actualization of values belonging to it, consists in the respective subject being exclusively devoted in its personal love to exactly this region of values – e.g. that of science or of art or of genuine values of the community. An essential difference is shown by the fact that I may completely respect and appreciate many kinds of values, but still cannot love them from the most inner center of personality – “with all of my soul”: as mine, as those, to which I, as the one I am, belong inseparably. Thus art is the “profession” for the true artist, science for the true scientist (the “philosopher”); it is the realm of mental actions and performances, towards which he knows himself to be “called” for and in such a way that only the creation of such goods can cause him “most inner” and “purest” satisfaction, gives him the consciousness of “felicity” with every complete success.

We have thereby got to know some forms of universal self-regulation, which may obviously now become subject to some possible critique, that is, also from the side of those who have decided upon them respectively. They are cognizable partly as worthy, partly as unworthy, also relatively as being forms of a higher value, or rather low value. [29] The ethical form of living, the delineation of which shall be our next task, is congenial with them.[[2]](#footnote-1)

II The individual life form of true humanity

The life form of the ethical man is in contrast to other ones, e.g. the life forms of the professional life I delineated in the previous paragraph, not only that of the relative highest value, but the only one which is absolutely worthy. All life forms that are to be valued as positive can only remain worthy to the man, lifted onto the step of the ethical [man], by being classified into the ethical life form and not only gaining another shaping by that, but also the norm and limit of their final right. The true artist as such for example is not the true man in the highest sense yet. But the true man can be a true artist, and he can only be this if the ethical self-regulation demands this of him.

It is now our task to make such theses as eidetic necessities understandable. Let us try first to develop the ethical life form as some (apriori) shaping of the essence of possible human life in a genetic way, that is, from the motivation leading to it from essential reasons.

1. Genesis of the renewal as absolute and universal self-regulation. Reason, felicity, satisfaction, ethical conscience

Let us first consider the following. Life forms on the basis of universal self-regulation, as we have described them up till now, for example as the life form of the professional man, encompass the whole life indeed, but still not in such a way that they regulate every action in a determining way, not attribute to everyone a normative shape, which had its original source in the general will, determining the rule. Thus the decision determining life’s profession wants to regulate only professional actions; only these therefore have the shape of those that are demanded and [30] that are to be performed as well as possible. Furthermore: All such life forms rest on man’s leaving the rank of animal naivety. That is, life is no longer exclusively performed in the Ego’s naïve devotion to the affections coming from the respectively conscious surrounding life. The Ego does not merely live according to original or acquired drives, habitual desires and the like, but it turns reflectively, as I have described above (in paragraph I *sub* A) towards itself and its doing, it becomes the one determining and choosing itself, and, as in the professional life, the Ego subjecting its whole life to the reflective and general will. But such a free will generally again leads to a certain naivety. The habitual intention to criticize the goals and the performing ways is missing, with regard to its attainability, the appropriateness of its goal and the practicability as well as its axiological validity, its worthy truth. Such a critique is supposed to assure the action against disappointments from objective and value failure in advance, but also afterwards give its steadfast and always verified force to the joy of reaching, secure it from following devaluations – with the abandonment of its objective or axiological solidity. In the last regard such devaluations come from the embarrassing cognition that the reached “good” is only some alleged good; the work devoted to it thus was a useless one, the joy of it senseless, and afterwards one that furthermore may not count among the sum of the former life’s felicity.

It is the motivation coming from such embarrassing devaluations and disappointments that, as I hinted at recently, motivates the need for such a critique and thereby the specific striving for truth, or rather, the striving for verification, for “final” justification through a reasoning with insight. Such a striving may at first come to light and have an impact only in single cases or classes of cases. Yet there are essential options for a motivation here, which lead to a general striving for a perfect life as such, namely as a life that were to be justified in all its actions and guaranteed a pure, steadfast satisfaction.

We need some closer explanations here. It is man’s specific peculiarity [31] to be able to overlook his whole life (as a unity objectively constituted for him) at any time. This includes, as can be derived from the previously said, the option as well, to take into free consideration the infinity of the proper possible doing, and in one with that the infinity of the surrounding world’s events with regard to the enclosed practical options. But exactly thereby not only the manifoldness and entanglement of the practical designs, plans, executing actions is enlarged in the process of individual development (and more so the higher the step); but man’s inner insecurity grows increasingly, the pressing concern for true, lasting goods, for satisfactions that are secured from all devaluating critique and abandonment.

We need to especially emphasize here the reciprocally functional dependency of practical values, based on the essence of possible practice of reason as constantly exacerbating human mood and practice, and the corresponding general form of the practical devaluation’s essence, presented in the law of absorption: Where multiple values, each of which could be realized by the same subject at the same time point, whereas their collective realization (in pairs and thereby altogether) is impossible, there the good value of the highest of these values absorbs the good values of all lesser values. This means, to choose each of these “absorbed” values is wrong; they are not practically good, but bad, everywhere a higher practical good is their rival.

This law of the “formal practice” is linked to other essential laws. Thus for example the law of summation: The collective realization of practical goods that do not experience any devaluation in such a realization, results in a “summary good” of a higher value than any of the included partial sums or single members. Such laws initiate some reciprocal relation between all possible goods or, as we can also say, purposes of one and the same subject; they initiate the impossibility, to respect single values on their own within the pondering, planning, acting, as if their single actualization and the satisfaction resulting from it could create some lasting contentment. Contentment does not arise from single satisfactions (whether they be [32] pure, related to true values), but it is based on the certainty of the biggest possible steadfast satisfaction in the whole life as such. A rationally established satisfaction thus would lie within the insightful certainty to be able to lead one’s whole life to the biggest possible degree with succeeding actions that were secure from devaluations with regard to their presuppositions and goals.

The more a man now lives in infinity and consciously overviews the options of future life and acting, the more the open infinity of possible disappointments becomes distinct and generates dissatisfaction, which eventually – in cognition of one’s own freedom of choice and freedom of reason – becomes dissatisfaction with oneself and one’s doing.

The consciousness of responsibility or the ethical conscience leads to the cognition of the option of insightful justifications becoming conscious in single cases, as well as that of the option to prepare one’s acting and to shape it in such a way that it is not only justified afterwards and as by mere chance, but, as being justified by rational considerations with insight, [that it] has the guarantee of its right in advance.

The man already living in the consciousness of his reason’s ability accordingly knows to be responsible for the rights and wrongs in all his actions, whether they are actions of cognition or actions of valuing or actions aiming at real effecting. He reproaches himself, is dissatisfied with himself where they fail with regard to their rightfulness or reason.

A wish and a will to rational self-regulation derive from that in a possible and understandable motivation, leaving far behind even those self-regulations of the true professional life, which encompass lives and are still not actually universal. Namely the wish and the will to create anew one’s own whole life with regard to all one’s personal actions in the sense of reason: as a life from a completely good conscience or a life that the subject could any time and completely justify to itself. Again this means: as a life leading towards pure and lasting satisfaction.

[33]

B. The life form of true humanity

It may be doubtful at first how far the practical option reaches to “renew” one’s whole life in this way and to thereby create oneself as a “new” man who is truly rational. But a general, although in its content incompletely determined option, to be able to act “according to one’s best knowledge and conscience” is clear in advance, and clear for the one universally valuing himself and his life, that is, to be able to give to one’s active life, according to the respectively best ability truthfulness, reason, rightfulness (or rather, that, which can be understood as true, genuine, right). Such a best possible life is characterized for the subject itself as the absolutely obligatory.

In this way the life form of “true humanity” grows and the necessary idea of the “genuine and true man” or the rational man for the man judging himself, his life, his possible acting. It is the man who is not only called *animal rationale*, because he has the ability of reason and then regulates and justifies his action only now and then according to rational insights, but who proceeds thus always and everywhere, in his whole active life, insofar as he strives for the practically rational as such and purely because of its absolute practical value due to some fundamentally general self-determination, and is therefore keen on knowing with insight and to afterwards actualize consequently the practically true or good as the best of his respective practical sphere to the best of his ability.

If we approach the ideal boundary here, the “limit”, mathematically speaking, then an absolute ideal of perfection stands out against a relative one. It is nothing else but the ideal of absolute personal perfection – absolute theoretical, axiotic and in any sense practical reason; or rather, it is the ideal of a person as a subject of all abilities increased in the sense of absolute reason – of a person, which had godlike attributes if we considered it as an allround or “omnipotential” one. Anyway, we may say, except for this (extraterrestrial) difference: The absolute limit, the pole lying above all finiteness, all genuine human striving is [34] directed to, is the idea of God. It is itself the “genuine and true Ego”, which, as we still have to show, is implied in every ethical man, which he desires infinitely and loves and which he always knows himself to be infinitely distant from. The relative ideal of perfection is contrary to this absolute one, the ideal of the perfectly human man, of the man of “best” ability, of life in “best possible” conscience for him respectively – an ideal still carrying the stamp of infinity.

1. Explanations and supplements

Let us use the life form of the paradisiac man in order to consider more closely these ideals of reason and the practical idea of the ethical man related to that, that is, that of the “paradisiac innocence”. This delineates (if we wanted to relate it to all kinds of actions) a life form, which is almost not to be brought to complete clarity, that is, according to its option almost not to be proved. In the best case this were an ideal marginal case from an infinity of other such options and in any case one, which we could never view as the ideal of perfection, let alone as the practical ideal. “Man errs as long as he strives”, that is, as long as he is a man. We would thus regard the erring of any kind not only as an open essential option, but also – already by man’s essential relation to a natural surrounding world – as a de facto inevitable option in any conceivable human life. The paradisiac man thus would be unerring so to say. But this was not some godlike unerring, that from absolute reason, but some blind, contingent unerring, since such a man would know nothing of reason, of critical evidence and justification. He was simply just an animal ideally adapted to contingently stabile circumstances through blind instincts. Man is not a mere animal though, even if a perfect and constantly satisfied one in its kind. He has, as I explained more closely in <paragraph> I, “self-consciousness”. He does not merely naively live along in his reflexive relatedness to himself, and into his external surrounding world. But by considering himself and the options of aiming and missing (belonging to his essence), of being content and discontent, of becoming blessed and unblessed, he performs [35], as has been shown, judging self-evaluation and practical self-determination. Obviously here the genuine, essential degree of humanity’s perfection as such has its origin, all rightful construction of ideals has to draw upon. The more freely and clearly man can overlook his life, judges it and considers it according to practical options, the more critical he draws life’s sum and chooses the starting-point considering his whole future life; the more determined he takes life’s cognized form of reason into his will and makes it the steadfast law of his life: the more is he imperfect – as a man. Here lies the only conceivable practical ideal of the man and at the same time the absolutely necessary form for all other distinguishable positive value levels of the man, according to action, performance and habitual character. Man as a man has ideals. But it is his essence to be forced to create an ideal for himself as this personal Ego and for his whole life, nay, a double one, an absolute and relative one, and to strive for its actualization as far as possible: to be forced if he shall be able to accept himself and in his own reason as a rational, a true and genuine man. He thus draws this ideal, *a priori* resting within himself, in most original shape from himself, as his “true” and “better Ego”. It is in the absolute version the ideal of his own Ego, absolutely justified before himself, only living in absolutely to be justified acts. If he has once guessed and seen this ideal – then he needs to accept with insight that the life form, which is appropriate to him, the ethical one, was not only the relatively best possible, as if apart from it others could be called good as such – but that it was the only good par excellence, the “categorically” demanded one. That, which could have been good for the Ego before it has grasped the rational ideal of its true Ego, stops being good as such and every pure bliss it was prior to that able to gain, stops being accepted unconditionally and being true bliss for itself. Only that, which is absolutely justified, that is, not justified in its singularization, but in the universe of practical options and from the universal will to live from practical reason, from the best of one’s knowledge and belief, only that is something good now. Where that, which had formerly been called good is verified though, there only this verification makes it something truly good.

[36] Accordingly the basic character of a man’s life of conceivably highest shape of value is an absolutely imperative one. Every man, as is to be said according to Kant’s word, is subject to the “categorical imperative”. He can only be a “true man”, simply to be valued as good, insofar as he subjects himself voluntarily to the categorical imperative – to this imperative, which for its part says nothing else but: Be a true man; lead a life, which you can continuously justify with insight, a life of practical reason.

But essentially the value demand implies to be thus, the practical demand to become thus and, developing into the direction of the pole guiding from an unattainable distance (towards the idea of absolute perfection from absolute reason), to do the currently best possible, and to thus become better according to temporal option. The human ideal of becoming in the form of human development corresponds in this kind to the absolute ideal of the perfectly personal being in the absolute becoming reason. The absolute ideal is the subject, which is absolutely rational with regard to its whole rational ability and insofar absolutely perfect. It is its essence to create itself as an absolutely rational one from a universal and absolutely firm will, that is, as we said, in an “absolute becoming reason”; this though insofar as the life, which is some necessary becoming as such, streams from the originally instituting will of reason here as some absolutely rational doing in every pulse. The absolutely rational person is thus *causa sui* with regard to its rationality.[[3]](#footnote-2)

Let us regard the ideal and the type of human development in contrast to that. It is a development sharply contrasting the type of merely organic and thereby a merely animal development as well. Objectively speaking it is part of an organic development that it really leads to a typical shape of maturity within a stream of typical becoming. Man as well, as the animal, has his organic development in bodily and in the same way mental regard, with corresponding steps of development. But the man as a rational being also has the option and the free ability for this totally different development in [37] the form of free self-guidance and self-education against an absolute self-cognized (freely shaped in proper rational cognizing), self-evaluated idea of purpose that has been put in advance within the will. It is a development towards free “ethical” personality, that is, in personal acts, any of which wishes to be rational doing at the same time and rational deed, namely striving towards some true good, and as such on the other hand strives at and freely effects striving *a priori* itself.

We may obviously say exactly the same of the striving man: He is subject and at the same time object of his striving, the work developing into infinity, the master of which he is himself. Simply by that the life form of the ethical man has its peculiar character. His life has lost all naivety and thereby the original beauty of some naturally organic growth – in order to thereby gain the higher beauty full of soul of the ethical struggling for clarity, truth, right, and deriving from that the beauty of genuine human goodness that has become “second nature”. Every single act of the Ego, matured towards ethical formation, through self-formation towards well formation, has, also were it takes place without its own justification, still its phenomenological shape of habitual rightfulness from former justifications. It has its ethical form, which (whether noticed or unnoticed) distinguishes it from all other naïve acts, in this habitually rooted consciousness of right, as that presenting itself respectively as being phenomenological. The way the scientist is conscious of formerly proved sentences in the cases of their new use or creates new sentences within the habitual consciousness of their right within the skilled arithmetical thinking, is a clear example for that. The habitual form, phenomenologically transferring itself to every doing without any new reflection, of the obligation or of the mood wishing to, or rather, acting “conscientiously”, “as good as possible”, serves here within self-education.

We considered the specifically human form of development as an ideal, insofar as we considered it as the ideal maximum of the currently possible effort for the respective man, to give that shape to his life he has in view as the absolute ideal of genuine humanity. The man may very well though have put in advance to his whole active life this ideal as the practical apriori, have given to it the force of a purposeful idea, reigning through the whole habituality of his per-[38]sonal striving; he may thus be and remain habitually directed towards it as an ethically centered Ego – while he still lets himself be carried along by “external affections”, whether momentarily or in longer time stretches, and “digresses to the world”. The beginning of every self-development is imperfection. Perfection is the consequently guiding idea of purpose in the development indeed; but the mere will to become perfect does not result in perfection all of a sudden, the realization of which is bound to the necessary form of an endless struggle, but also strengthening within the struggle. The essential option always exists thereby that the man gets into some “sinful” world life, a life, which again is not naïve though, since the ethical decision, continuing to have its effect, constantly asserts its demand to life (and consciously in the given sense); but life has in the “sinfulness” instead of the habitual form of norm conformity that of norm adversity, instead of the form of fulfilling the absolute demand of the should be that of its unethical abandonment, of the ethical fall and decline. The conscious character of the ethical badness adheres to the deed itself thereby and as such, and without any reflection on the personal Ego and its doing, with its correlative characters of sinful straying off. Apart from that this character as well as the corresponding emotion of conscience (possibly penetrating as “reminder of the conscience”) may remain completely unnoticed, also practically disregarded. Its effecting force of motivation has to eventually wither in continued practical ignorance and continued omission of new investigations of sense and actualizing resumptions of the original ethical life will (of the will to the new man). The life takes on the form of the hardened sinfulness, of the conscious ignorance of the ethical demand, of the “lack of conscience”. The subject, that is lost to certain goals or has given itself in to them in free decision, and is inseparably linked to them, denies to accept the cognized norm in the will, or it denies itself to any critique of these goals already and to any practical acknowledging of norms, which could speak against them.

The truly human life, the life in never ending self-education, is so to say a life of “method”, of the method to ideal humanity. However high is the relative step of perfection [39] of the ethical life, all the time it is a life within self-education, or rather, of self-governing under constant self-surveillance. It is the task of some implemented individual ethics to systematically explain how it essentially shall more closely proceed, which are its specific dangers, its possible types of self-deception, its self-gaffes, its lasting degenerations, its forms of habitual self-factitiousness, of the unremarkable ethical provisos.

The ideal structure of the genuine human life proves itself in a peculiar way to be “pan-methodic” in our formal-general considerations of the essence. It is the necessary result of the general type of man’s essence to be a being, which rises above the animal in a free and rational act. As a rational one, and according to one’s own insight it may only arrive at pure satisfaction through self-governing and self-culture, according to the centralizing idea of practical reason, and it needs to then categorically demand a corresponding life on its own accord. A consequent life of this human form of development is such a continued self-aggrandizement but always only through a free-acting transition of imperfection towards lesser imperfection, that is, from demerit towards lesser demerit. Because only the absolute ideal of perfection, the purpose idea of human development would give full and self-verified merit.

We call any life (also that, which is not completely consequent) of self-governing, according to the categorical demand of the ethical purpose idea, generally and in the widest sense an ethical life; its subject, as determining itself towards the ethical self-education, an – again in the widest sense – ethical personality.

The idea of the ethical life, would accordingly contain, as the necessary general form for a human life of highest value, essential options of positive and negative value; An ethical life in our sense can be a more or less perfect ethical life, and thereby a good or bad – an “unethical” – life. The latter expression points to the pregnant concept of an ethical life (likewise of an ethical personality). This exclusively includes the row of steps of the life forms with a positive value, among them the ideal optimal form of a consequent life [40] to the “best”, namely for the respective ethical subject respectively best possible, “knowledge and belief”.

The generality already emphasized in the introduction needs well to be heeded, in which here, and from essential reasons, the concepts of reason and ethical personality are used. The concept of reason suffices, as far as we can speak anyhow of right and wrong in personal acts (or rather, right and unright), of reasonable and unreasonable, and this happens in a manifold sense, determining an obvious community of essence though. We thus speak correlatively of something true, genuine, good, etc. with regard to the goals of personal acts. All kinds of acts come into consideration here, all and accordingly all kinds of reason are inseparably linked with each other through eidetic laws: Only a doctrine of reason encompassing the complete universality of reason and in the direction towards the essential options of a practical life of reason corresponding universal “ethics” can deliver complete fundamental insights and accordingly an ethical life of the highest step of value, that from the most complete fundamental clarity.

The normative idea of reason relates to the so-called acting (having its effect into the surrounding world) in the common sense as well as to the logical and valuing (e.g. aesthetical) acts. The complete ethics encompass logic (logical doctrine of the art) in all usual limitations, likewise axiology (doctrine of values, especially the aesthetical one) as every practice however to be delimited. All scientific cognition as well is an “acting” for example, and the scientist’s life, professionally devoted to the truth, is an “epistemologico-ethical” one – if it is a rightful or rational one in the full sense at all. It is the essential character of the ethical in our current individual-ethical sense that it demands a regulation of the whole individual life according to the “categorical imperative” of reason – namely demands to be the best possible prior to reason and according to all possible personal acts. Only following that it is to be determined in how far the form of the professional life as such is to be justified at all within the formal frame of such an imperative life, then especially for example that of a scientific or artistic, political life and in which forms of situations and in which delimiting [41] provisos it is possible and then demanded as an ethical one.

The „categorical imperative“, although it is itself an imperative, is still an important but empty form as to its content for all possibly valid individual imperatives of a determined content. It is first of all the task of some implemented ethics to inscribe the categorically demanded specialties with relation to the forms of possible personality and possible situations through a systematic search for and critique of the possible ways of life *a priori* included in man’s essence and to describe in this way the ethical forms of a possible professional life as well in all *a priori* to be performed differentiations of ethical dignity as of course to also create the type of essence of the negative-ethical forms.

Every man thus has his individual ethical idea and method as [he has] his individuality, his individual categorical imperative respectively determined in a concrete way. Only the ethical man’s general form of essence and that of a life under the formally identical categorical imperative is common to all men as such; similarly of course all that, which scientific and fundamental (that is formal) ethics may derive as apriori norms from man’s “essence”.

Let us finally add a word on an individually ethical concept of culture. All specifically personal life is active life, and as such is subject to reason’s essential norms. The field of action of the personal Ego is the endless realm, at first to be taken in its totality, of that, which is cognizable for the man as object of a possible free doing. Understood in an appropriate delimitation, every man’s practical surrounding world encompasses the whole surrounding world becoming conscious to him, nature, animal and human world, the respective culture, but eventually himself as well, his body, his own mental life, his acts, active abilities and the “mental nature” (association, memory, etc.), functioning as a constant passive underground. All this is subject to the will and the treatment, which is conscious of the purpose, to an individually changing degree. The totality of the subjective goods (in the special case of the genuine goods), obtained in personal activities (and especially in reasonable actions), could be called the realm of his individual culture and especially of his genuine culture. He himself then is [42] cultural subject and cultural object at the same time; and again he is cultural object and principle of all cultural objects at the same time. Because all genuine culture is only possible with the help of true self-culture and in its ethical frame giving the norm. A complete arts object for example is a merely hypothetical value as well, taken by itself, however it may give in a pure sense bliss to the producing one and the one following in understanding. Every imperative so to say directing itself in an isolated way towards that is a mere “hypothetical imperative”. A universal evaluation and thereby an absolute evaluation happens only in the frame of an ethical life, and this corresponds to that, which has been explained above for all acts. Thus the complete art object as well – a value “in itself” as the target object of purely fulfilling aesthetical intentions – has, with this objectivity of values for “everyone” just one valid, positive, but hypothetical option of value for everyone – for every reasonably judging subject. It receives true value only in relation to actual individuality (here of a single personal one) and within the universality of its whole reason and its ethical life. The bliss of devotion to the same receives only thereby its final, but also delimiting norm of right: thus for all genres of “values in themselves”. Only ethical law is final law. That which is otherwise called valid or good in itself, is only called that way, because it fulfills certain essential conditions, demanding it to consider *a priori* in the frame of an ethical life as a positive factor of value in the calculation of value, instead of excluding it *a limine*.

Closing remarks

It is clear, following these analyzes, that the ethical life is indeed a life from “renewal” according to its essence, from an original will to renew and then ever again to be reactivated. A life, in true sense to be called ethical, cannot become and grow “on its own accord”, in the way of organic passivity, neither can it be trained and suggested, how much ever original dispositions for reason capable of development may be presupposed, and the model and the right guidance by others be of help. A man can come to reason only from his own freedom [43] and reasonably shape himself as well as his surrounding world; find the biggest possible “blissfulness”, the only to be wished for in a reasonable way. Everyone has to perform for himself and in himself that universal self-sense investigation once in his life and take that decision, decisive for his whole life, with which he becomes an ethically mature man, originally establishes his life as an ethical one. By this free original institution and original creation, which stages the methodical self-development against the absolute ethical idea, man defines himself (or rather becomes) as a new and genuine man, who denies his old man and predelineates the shape of his new humanity to himself. Insofar as the ethical life is a struggle with the “desires drawing down” according to its essence, it may also be described as a continuous renewal. Man having declined into “ethical servitude” renews himself in a special sense through radically investigating sense and activating the original ethical will of life that has become weak, or rather, through a new performance of the primal institution that has become insignificant meanwhile.

All our explanations, all reasoning of certain normative laws, especially of those relating to the ethical individual as a member of community, as a subject of social duties, belong to the build up of individual ethics themselves and not to the design of their de facto guidelines any more. But only those were aimed at in this study.

1. The third Kaizo article. First published (only in Japanese) in: *The Kaizo*, 1924, magazine 2, pages 2-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Compare on that as well appendix II, page 96 [German edition]. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Compare appendix III on that, page 97 [German edition]. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)