Radicalising the *Letzbegründung*: From Sense-Postulate to Necessity of (an Extended Concept of) Morality

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N THIS PAPER I INTEND to illustrate my purpose of a 'radicalisation' of Apel's 'ultimate foundation', which is in my opinion necessary to complete the author's attempt of justifying the 'moral point of view'. Such attempt seems to be unfinished, because it does not tackle the problem of the sense/value of human existence, which has instead to be faced, in order to give a justification of basic moral principles. I will argue that in the *first part* of this paper, where I will also retrace the different stages of Apel's argument, in order to show that it tacitly presupposes the idea that the integrity of the person is worth to be preserved (*i.e.* that human existence has a value in itself). This presupposition can however be questioned, as the nihilists do: I will argue that Apel hasn't confronted himself enough with nihilistic issues and that this represents a limit of his philosophical position. I will then try to overcome this limit, showing that argumentative rationality presupposes a *sense postulate* that checkmates the nihilistic hypothesis. In the *second section* I will articulate what such value consists in, in the context of a conception of the good that Apel hasn't developed enough, but that could be derived from some of his affirmations. I will follow in this way Charles Taylor's suggestion, who believes that discourse ethics could reach its aim of a foundations of ethics only on the condition that one makes explicit the conception of the good or the idea of value that it necessary presupposes, renouncing to understand it as a procedural ethics.[1] As a conclusion, in the *third part*, I will argue that

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[1]　Cf. Charles Taylor, «The Motivation behind a Procedural Ethics», in *Kant and Political Philosophy: The Contemporary Legacy*, eds. Ronald Beiner and William J. Booth, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 337-60 and Charles Taylor, «Language and Society», in *Communicative Action. Essays on J.*

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such an attempt of articulating a conception of the good presupposed by discourse ethics, which has its core in a specific idea of 'authenticity', can lay the groundwork for a reformulation of Kant's idea of a 'highest good', a task that contemporary Kantian ethics, such as discourse ethics, should assume in convergence with Neo-Aristotelian ethics. For this aim the concept of a sense-postulate, introduced in the first part, will play a basic role, substituting Kant's postulate of God's existence, which is untenable from the post-metaphysical point of view I would like to defend in accordance with Apel and Habermas.

§ 1. For a radicalisation of the ultimate foundations: the sense-postulate.

To begin with, I believe it is necessary to retrace schematically the argument that Apel uses to justify the basic moral principles of discourse ethics. The foundation strategy, introduced in the 1973 in *Das Apriori der Kommunikationsgemeinschaft*, which has remained almost identical in its structure for years, is divided into two stages: the first, as known, consists in showing that one or more basic moral norms can be deduced from the presuppositions of argumentation; the second consists instead in bringing out that such norms don't aim at ruling a specific activity, in which one can take part or not, because every human action that pretends to make sense is virtually connected with argumentative rationality that assumes then a transcendental character. Therefore it is not possible to face the question 'why be moral?' without trying to give an answer to the question 'why be rational?' (Assuming that argumentative discourse is the primal *modus* of rationality). I would like hence to focus on the way Apel faces this latter question: the first strategy adopted by Apel consists in showing that everyone who puts the question 'why be rational?' has 'always already' recognised the choice for rationality and its presuppositions. [2] It is nonetheless still possible to reply to this answer, as Habermas did,[3] through the objection of the refusal of discourse, according to which one can always renounce to take part in discourses in order to show with his own action that rationality is not really 'uncircumventable' (*unhintergehbar*). Apel thinks however that the refusal of discourse represents an empty exhibition that

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Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action, eds. Axel Honneth and Hans Joas, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 23-35.

[2]   Cf. for example Karl-Otto Apel, *Auseinandersetzungen in Erprobung des transzendentalpragmatischen Ansatzes* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), p. 179.

[3]   Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Moralbewußtsein und kommunikatives Handeln* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp. 108-9.

cannot for sure be understood as an argument against the *Letztbegründung*:[4] the author's debate with Popper shows indeed that argumentative discourse cannot be understood as a language game among others from that, when one wishes, can eventually step out, because right every action that pretends to make sense is virtually connected with argumentative discourse; if one renounces to take part in discourses at all, one renounces at the same time his own identity of human being and therefore condemns himself to his self-destruction as an individual.[5]

In this way Apel believes to have shown the 'uncircumventability' of rational argumentation and at the same time to have offered an adequate foundation of the moral principles obtainable from the presuppositions of discourse. It seems to me however that there is still something presupposed in this argument that has been neither recognised nor questioned: it's not yet clear, namely, why one has to reject self-destructive consequences; to acknowledge that self-destructive consequences have to be rejected corresponds indeed already to admit that human existence has a *value* as such and that our personal integrity is *worth* to be protected. This presupposition could however for sure be questioned: the sceptic, who at this point becomes nihilist, could ask for example: why do I have to give value to the human being and, more in general, to the world he lives in? Couldn't the claim to make sense of his acting and existing be ultimately groundless? In this case every attempt of grounding morality would appear unsuccessful: if human existence doesn't make sense, there is no reason to protect it through moral principles. In order to answer this and similar questions, my purpose is to radicalise the *Letztbegründung*, showing to the sceptic/nihilist that such questions would be meaningless if his perspective of an absolute lack of sense were true. The sceptic/nihilist should be conducted to reflect upon the conditions of his questioning, so that he can realise that he cannot avoid advancing, together with other validity claims, an 'understandability claim',[6] which

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[4]   Cf. for example Apel, *Auseinandersetzungen in Erprobung des transzendentalpragmatischen Ansatzes*, p. 692

[5]   For Apel's confrontation with Popper's decisionism cf. Karl-Otto. Apel, «Sprache als Thema und Medium der transzendentalen Reflexion», in *Transformation der Philosophie* vol. 2, Karl-Otto Apel, (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1973), pp. 310-29, here pp. 326ff. and Karl-Otto Apel, «Das Problem des philosophischen Letztbegründung im Lichte einer transzendentalen Sprachpragmatik. Versuch einer Metakritik des "kritischen Rationalismus"», in *Auseinandersetzungen in Erprobung des transzendentalpragmatischen Ansatzes*, Apel, pp. 39-79, here pp. 76-8.

[6]   I interpret here the 'understandability claim' in Apel's but not in Habermas' sense, *i.e.* as a claim to say something that is not simply grammatically comprehensible, but also pragmatically consistent. Such difference is clarified in Apel, *Auseinandersetzungen in Erprobung des transzendentalpragmatischen*

couldn't be redeemed at all, if what he says was true. This argument is an application of Apel's usual way of reflection, based on the concept of 'performative self-contradiction', to the 'understandability claim'. To the 'performative self-contradiction', committed by the one who says something like 'nothing makes sense', corresponds furthermore an «existential self-contradiction», [7] committed by the one who, taking the nihilistic hypothesis of the absolute lack of sense seriously, goes so far as to 'say no' to his own existence through suicide or abandoning himself to madness. Apel must be considering philosophical positions such as the one of Nietzsche or the way of being incarnated in some characters of Dostoevskij, who express a sort of pathology of reason or, with Apel's proper terms, an 'adolescence crisis', that, according to Kohlberg's model of the development of moral consciousness, is typical of the stage 4 ½, which represents the passage from the conventional to the post-conventional stage. [8] The fact that such positions represent a 'pathology of reason', which has to be bridged over in the process of moral development of individual and society, does not mean however that the questions we raised before, which could have been raised by Nietzsche or by a Dostoevskij's character, have to be considered simply reasonless, because they express an authentic 'need of sense' of human being. Philosophy can rationally face such questions by means of transcendental reflection, showing that the 'uncircumventability' of our 'understandability claim' requires a *sense-postulate*,[9] according to which it is impossible to deny *a priori* the possibility that existence (of the human being and of the world he lives in) can make sense, because it would mean to deprive the very sense of the words that one uses to deny the possibility of sense. This doesn't mean actually that the possibility of a meaningful existence is guaranteed: it depends on each of us whether such possibility is really given. To acknowledge a sense-postulate implies nevertheless – as a minimal condition – to recognise the *value* of human existence: checkmating the nihilistic hypothesis means namely already recognising that one has to give a certain value to human existence. If this is true, it is clear that everything that makes it possible to preserve and promote such a value represents in turn a good that has to be protected by means of moral norms.

Ansatzes, pp. 689-90, note 55.

[7]   Cf. Karl-Otto Apel, *Estudios éticos* (Barcelona: Alfa, 1986), p. 135.

[8]   Cf. for example Karl-Otto Apel and Marcel Niquet (eds.), *Diskursethik und Diskursanthropologie. Aachener Vorlesungen* (München: Verlag Karl Alber Freiburg, 2002), pp. 33-4.

[9]   This term is used for example in Bernhard Welte, *Religionsphilosophie* (Freiburg in Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1978), pp. 58ff.

§ 2. Which conception of the good is presupposed by discourse ethics?

We have now to understand what such value consists in and to bring out the idea of human dignity that is presupposed by discourse ethics: in particular, we have to articulate the conception of the good that is implied in it. This way we will follow Charles Taylor's suggestions: in his critical remarks to discourse ethics, he emphasizes that if the latter would be consistent with its aim of justifying and articulating the 'moral point of view', it cannot be understood as a procedural ethics, but as a substantial ethics, that has not the only aim of justifying a rational procedure for the justification of moral norms, but also the one of developing a conception of the good that such procedure presupposes. Only in this way it is possible for Taylor to explain «what it makes it mandatory to follow the privileged procedures»[10] (in this case: the procedure of rational argumentation) and then, ultimately, to justify their validity. This critical remark fits Habermas' argument more than Apel's: the first insisted particularly on the procedural character of discourse ethics, radicalising in an untenable way Rawls' thesis of the 'priority of right over the good'. [11] Apel too hasn't however articulated the conception of the good presupposed by discourse ethics enough, therefore Taylor's reflection can represent a useful incentive to try to develop it better, taking the cue from the indications of Apel himself.

In a famous passage of *Das Apriori der Kommunikationsgemeinschaft*, Apel maintains that the recognition of all beings capable of linguistic communication – that is of all human beings – as *persons* depends on the fact that all these beings are virtual *partners* of argumentation (that has to be understood as the core of human rationality).[12] In such perspective, human *dignity* is classically traced back to the fact that humans are rational beings, who use language as the *medium* of rationality. This doesn't mean however that what has to do with the dimension of rationality has to be understood, to use Taylor's words, as a *hypergood* in an exclusive sense,[13] *i.e.* like a

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[10]   Cf. Taylor, «The Motivation behind a procedural Ethics», p. 349.

[11]   For a critical analysis of the use of Rawls' slogan by Habermas see Seyla Benhabib, «Autonomy, Modernity, Community. Communitarianism and Critical Social Theory in Dialogue», in *Zwischenbetrachtungen - Im Prozeß der Aufklärung. Jürgen Habermas zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds. Axel Honneth, Thomas McCarthy, Claus Offe, Albrecht Wellmer (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1989), pp. 373-94.

[12]   Cf. Apel, *Transformation der Philosophie*, vol. 2, p. 400.

[13]   For the concept of *hypergood*, cf. first of all Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 63.

good to which in every situation one has to give the priority in respect to other dimensions of the human person. For Apel, every discourse-partner has indeed a double citizenship in both the *real* and the *ideal* communication community: in this perspective what attains a value is also what constitutes the human being in its peculiarity and concreteness. If it is true that the possibility of the realization of the 'ideal communication community' gives sense to the existence of the 'real communication community', the latter represents a condition of possibility of the former and has therefore to be protected in its integrity. The physical and psychological safety of the members of the communication community, as well as their well being and prosperity, can therefore be considered like goods/values, that are implicitly presupposed by discourse ethics, that have to be safeguarded and promoted. If one doesn't admit it, one cannot even understand how basic moral norms like 'do not kill' or 'do not damage your neighbor' can be justified from the point of view of discourse ethics. Apel didn't develop any theory about the constitutive aspects of the 'good life' for the human person: his worry was that, by doing this, he could fall in a sort of philosophical paternalism, incompatible with the presuppositions of the 'post-metaphysical thinking'. [14] He gave us nonetheless some indications about that in two essays of the '90, *Anderssein, ein Menschenrecht?* and *Plurality of the good?*, where he distinguished, with reference to Kant, two concepts of the good: the «deontologically absolute good» [15], which corresponds substantially to the Kantian concept of moral duty, in a formula, the good of justice, and the «relative good», which constitutes the good for a single person, but not necessary for another, *i.e.* which cannot be judged through universally valid criteria, because it is expression of a conception of the good that is related to the single context and the particular situation. Thus far Apel hasn't done anything more than defending the thesis of the complementarity between the universal good of justice and the particular visions of the good 'for me' and 'for us'. The reference to a universally valid duty to the authentic self-realisation in *Anderssein,*

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[14]   This worry characterizes especially Habermas' position, that for this reason defends the untenable thesis of values' particularism, in contraposition to norms' universalism. The most significant remarks against this thesis can be found in Hillary Putnam, «Values and Norms», in Hillary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 111-34 and Thomas McCarthy, «Practical Discourse: On the Relation of Morality to Politics», in Thomas McCarthy, *Ideals and Illusions: on Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 181-99.

[15]   Karl-Otto Apel, «Plurality of the Good? The Problem of Affirmative Tolerance in a Multicultural Society from an Ethical Point of View», in *Ratio Juris* 2(10) (1997), pp. 199-212, here p. 203.

ein Menschenrecht?,[16] as well as to a «universally valid yardstick even for ones' striving for happiness» – mentioned in *Plurality of the good?* in relation to the Kantian «"duties toward oneself" which correspond to one's natural gifts»–[17] breaks in part this scheme. When introducing this concept, Apel recognizes indeed that there are, with Habermas' words, some «structural aspects of the good life» that correspond to the Kantian «duties towards oneself»: even if the author doesn't develop this idea in detail, it's in any case relevant that he considers the fact that there are goods that have a universal validity beyond the good of justice. Only in this way it is after all possible to account for the possibility of discussing rationally – in the context of the so called «ethical discourses» –[18] whether a way of life or a choice is 'good' or not. For sure, among the goods that Apel appreciates more, there is the good of rational argumentation, which has the task of examining our choices and life experiences. A 'good life' is not however a life that sacrifices other basic goods on the altar of rationality, but a life in which (argumentative) reason plays a role of orientation and discernment, in order to lead an existence that is as much as possible successful and fulfilling.[19] Even if such an idea is not incompatible with Apel's perspective, one cannot say that Apel's mention of the «duties toward oneself», in particular of the duty of self-realisation through the development of «one's natural gifts» is enough in order to develop an adequate

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[16] Karl-Otto Apel, «Anderssein, ein Menschenrecht?», in *Anderssein, ein Menschenrecht. Über die Vereinbarkeit universaler Normen mit kultureller und ethnischer Besonderheit*, eds. Hilmar Hoffman and Dieter Kramer (Weinheim: Beltz-Athenäum, 1994), pp. 9-20, here p. 14.

[17] Karl-Otto Apel, «Plurality of the Good? The Problem of Affirmative Tolerance in a Multicultural Society from an Ethical Point of View», p. 203.

[18] Cf. in particular Jürgen Habermas, *Erläuterungen zur Diskursethik* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1991), pp. 111ff.

[19] One may here recall the Aristotelian concept of *phrònesis*, widely used by Neo-Aristotelian philosophers, but in my opinion not properly understood by Apel and Habermas, who reduced it to a sort of capability of acting prudently according to the common ethical customs, that has nothing to do with critical rationality. Even if such a reductive interpretation can be partially justified in relation to the use of this term made by some German neo-Aristotelian authors in the context of Hermeneutic, the same doesn't apply to all the uses of the term made in the neo-Aristotelian environment, especially in the contemporary debate on *virtue ethics*. It would be worth to deepen this aspect, in order to understand the relationship between *phrònesis* and critical argumentation, when it's not about to choose publicly valid norms through moral discourses, but to reason about how is it better to act in the context of life of a single person. In these cases Apel considers that one has to do a sort of internalised discourse, under the guidance of principle (Uh), that is the principle (U) applied to actions instead of norms. I'm not actually sure that what Apel has in mind when he speaks of internalised discourse is really different from what most neo-Aristotelian philosophers mean with *phrònesis*.

concept of the 'good life': for this aim it would be rather needed a reformulation of Kant's doctrine of the 'highest good'. The lack of interest in this issue represents in my opinion a fault of contemporary Kantian moral theories, starting from discourse ethics, that limits itself to 'transform' the contents of the *Analytic* of the *Critique of the practical reason*, without considering the *Dialectic*, where the notion of the 'highest good', in connection with the theory of postulates, was developed.

§ 3. Towards a conception of the 'highest good': the role of authenticity.

The one of a reformulation of the problem of the 'highest good' is instead, in my view, the direction that Kantian ethics, in cooperation, rather than in contrast, with Aristotelian ethics, has to follow. Our attempt of articulating the conception of the good presupposed by discourse ethics could represent a first step to transform, first of all, the idea of *virtue*, contained in Kantian concept of 'highest good'. In Kant's terms, virtue can be seen as an attitude of corresponding to moral duty: our previous reflections make it possible however to redefine this concept as an attitude of orienting one's own life in the direction of a 'good life', which includes a reference to the moral duty, but it doesn't limit itself to the obedience to moral norms. A 'good life' is indeed a life where a 'reflective equilibrium' exists between the attention to the *moral* sphere, in the narrow sense meant by Habermas, and to one's personal authentic needs and desires, which belong themselves to the sphere of the *ethical* in a wide sense. [20] In this sense, *happiness*, which is the second constitutive element of the 'highest good' in Kant's perspective, cannot be understood, as it was in Kant, as completely extrinsic to virtue. This doesn't mean however that happiness could be easily seen as a direct consequence of virtue: my aim is not here to deny that happiness is something that doesn't depend completely on us. Such 'unavailability' of happiness led Kant to postulate God and the immortality of soul: if happiness doesn't depend completely on us, even if it's 'practically necessary' to presuppose a convergence between virtue and happiness *in the long run*, it's necessary to postulate the existence of an entity, *i.e.* God, that guarantees such a convergence, if not in this life, where a complete convergence cannot occur, in the afterlife, whose possibility is in turn guaranteed by the postulate of the immortality of soul. I believe it is not necessary to discuss this famous Kantian point within the scope of this work: it should suffice to say

[20]   For a clear explanation of Habermas' distinction between the *moral* and the *ethical* see in particular Jürgen Habermas, «Vom pragmatischen, ethischen und moralischen Gebrauch der praktischen Vernunft», in *Erläuterungen zur Diskursethik*, Habermas, pp. 100-18.

that Kant, despite its critical approach, feels himself compelled to introduce again some metaphysical entities to guarantee the concrete possibility of the practical idea of a 'highest good'. This is however not admissible from the point of view of a 'post-metaphysical thinking' that means to radicalise Kant's ideas about the necessity of a transcendental transformation of metaphysics: the absolute contingency of what doesn't depend completely on us is not something that could be 'domesticated' in metaphysical terms, as if such contingency could be theoretically overtaken. The only postulate that we have available is the sense-postulate, that we introduced in the first part, since it can be directly derived from the presuppositions of argumentation. Its function cannot be the one of guaranteeing the 'factual possibility' of the realisation of something like a 'highest good': what it has to guarantee is rather the 'structural possibility' of the latter, *i.e.* that the reality where human beings live is not ontologically incompatible with our deepest authentic needs; nothing guarantees however that in the single cases the convergence of virtue and happiness can actually happen. The introduction of a sense-postulate makes it possible however to do a step beyond the classical position of the discourse ethics, by justifying the idea of a 'human value', which in turn underlies the necessity of morality and at the same time justifies the enlargement of the concept of morality itself beyond the boundaries given from Habermas' strict distinction between the moral and the ethical, (particular) values and (universal) norms. Such enlargement of the concept of the moral can finally lay the foundation for a reformulation of Kant's idea of a highest good, that here I am trying to sketch.

Following the suggestions of the '90s writings by Apel I mentioned above, I would give *authenticity* a central role in the construction of such an idea: however I maintain that the concept of authenticity that can be derived by discourse ethics has to be extended. I have in mind first of all the concept of authenticity to which Habermas refers in his *Theory of communicative action*, where he treats the claim to authenticity as synonym of the claim to sincerity, *i.e.* the claim to say something correspondent to one's own internal world, which is advanced in particular by expressive utterances.[21] Apel's use of the adjective 'authentic' in the formula «authentic self-realisation» recalls this meaning of 'authenticity' to the extent that the formula implies that the individual can realise himself inasmuch as he lives a life corresponding to his own individual gifts. I am convinced that this meaning of authenticity is fundamental, but it is not the only one: if one understands authenticity as 'correspondence to oneself', 'oneself' can be understood in two different ways, namely not only as the strictly individual and unique

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[21]   Cf. for example Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1981), pp. 40-1.

self, which corresponds to the Kantian idea of an 'empirical Self', but also as a 'transcendental Self', namely the part of one's own individuality that is structural for every human being, *i.e.* one's own rational capacity. Living authentically means then in this view living 'according to reason'. I intend this as an effort to find a balance among all the different declinations of the 'rational' identified by Habermas in his *Theory of communicative action*, corresponding to the different validity claims: the cognitive-instrumental, the moral-practical, the evaluative and the expressive, this one corresponding to the dimension of authenticity in a narrow sense. Such effort is the one of the above-mentioned virtue of *phrònesis*, which can be intended as the core of rationality, since it makes possible to relate and confront one another the different aspects of rationalty itself, in order to make existentially relevant choices. I argue that this use of reason represents the essential condition of a 'good life', *i.e.* an authentic life in the wide sense: what is at stake is not only to correspond to one's own needs, desires and «natural gifts», but also to be able to find a balance *e.g.* between such dimension of authenticity and moral duties, between what is good 'for me' and what is good 'for the other'. The latter cannot indeed be sacrificed in order to reach one's own aims, even if one cannot say that it has the absolute priority in the sphere of the ethical life. Such conception of an authentic life or good life cannot be identified with the 'highest good' *tout court*, which in Kant's sense includes also something that doesn't depend completely on us. Nonetheless, if one intends virtue in the correct manner, namely in a more Aristotelian way, it cannot be seen as completely extrinsic to happiness, since living 'according to reason' means already taking into account one's one needs and desires that have of course to be balanced with the moral duty. As far as what doesn't depend completely on us is concerned, philosophy, in order to be coherent with the presuppositions of the post-metaphysical thinking, can only argue for a sense-postulate, without searching ways of assuring the perfect coincidence of virtue and happiness.

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Radicalising the *Letzbegründung*: From Sense-Postulate to Necessity of (an Extended Concept of) Morality

In this paper I intend to illustrate a 'radicalisation' of Apel's 'ultimate foundation', which is in my opinion necessary to complete the author's attempt to justify the 'moral point of view'. The latter appears indeed to be unfinished, because it does not face the problem of the sense/value of human existence that – I maintain – is prior to the one of the justification of basic moral principles.

I am however convinced that the method of transcendental reflexion defended by Apel can offer the necessary sources to take the missing step and show that the one who questions the sense of human existence cannot avoid presupposing a sense-postulate. I will therefore argue that one cannot avoid recognising the value of human existence, namely that there is 'something' in human existence that is worth to be protected and promoted.

Such value, as suggested by Charles Taylor in his critical confrontation with discourse ethics, should be articulated in a conception of the good, or even of the 'highest good', that in my view has its core in a specific idea of authenticity and ultimately justifies the validity of the moral principles of discourse ethics.

Keywords: Authenticity · Basic Moral Principles · Highest Good · Sense-postulate · Ultimate Foundations.

Radicalizando la *Letzbegründung*: del postulado del sentido a la necesidad de (una concepción ampliada de) la moralidad

El objetivo de este trabajo es ilustrar la 'radicalización' de la 'fundamentación última' de Apel que considero necesaria para completar el intento del autor de justificar el 'punto de vista moral'. En efecto, este último se presenta como inconcluso porque no hace frente al problema del sentido o del valor de la existencia humana, anterior al de la justificación de los principios morales básicos.

Sin embargo, el método de la reflexión trascendental que el propio Apel defiende puede ofrecer los recursos necesarios para dar el paso que falta y mostrar que alguien que pone en cuestión el sentido de la existencia humana está obligado presuponer el postulado del sentido. De ello se sigue que uno no puede evitar reconocer el valor de la existencia humana, es decir, que hay 'algo' en el ser humano que merece ser protegido y promovido.

Este valor, tal y como C. Taylor ha sugerido en su confrontación crítica con la ética del discurso, debe ser articulado en una concepción del bien, o incluso del 'bien supremo', que tiene su núcleo en una idea específica de la autenticidad y que justifica en última instancia la validez de los principios morales de la ética del discurso.

Palabras Clave: Autenticidad · Bien supremo · Fundamentación última · Postulado de sentido · Principios morales básicos.

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