

Tracce per esercitarsi: ambito etico

(a cura di Anna Bianchi – Commissione Didattica SFI)

«I think that, speaking philosophically, all acts ought to be judged by their effects; but as this is difficult and uncertain and takes time, it is desirable, in practice, that some kinds of acts should be condemned and others praised without waiting to investigate consequences. I should say, therefore, with the utilitarians, that the right act, in any given circumstances, is that which, on the data, will probably produce the greatest balance of good over evil of all the acts that are possible; but that the performance of such acts may be promoted by the existence of a moral code» (Bertrand Russell (1995), *Power: A New Social Analysis* (1938), Routledge, London, 168).

«Let us say that the moral choice is comparable to the construction of a work of art. [...] As everyone knows, there are no aesthetic values a priori, but there are values which will appear in due course in the coherence of the picture, in the relation between the will to create and the finished work. No one can tell what the painting of tomorrow will be like; one cannot judge a painting until it is done. What has that to do with morality? [...] It is the same upon the plane of morality. There is this in common between art and morality, that in both we have to do with creation and invention. We cannot decide a priori what it is that should be done. [...] Man makes himself; he is not found ready-made; he makes himself by the choice of his morality, and he cannot but choose a morality, such is the pressure of circumstances upon him» (Jean-Paul Sartre (1960), *Existentialism and Humanism* (1946), Methuen & Co. Ltd, London, 48-50).

«One man – a philosopher – may say that since justice is a virtue, and injustice a vice, and virtues and vices are built up by the performances of the action in which they are instanced, an act of injustice will tend to make a man bad; and essentially the flourishing of a man *qua* man consists in his being good (e.g. in virtues) [...]. That is roughly how Plato and Aristotle talk; but it can be seen that philosophically there is a huge gap, at present unfillable as far as we are concerned, which needs to be filled by an account of human nature, human action, the type of characteristic a virtue is, and, above all of human 'flourishing'. And it is the last concept that appears the most doubtful» (Gertrud E. M. Anscombe (1981), *Modern Moral Philosophy* (1958), in Id., *Ethics, Religion and Politics*, Blackwell, Oxford, 26–42).