

# Ethics and humanities education in the era of global processes

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**Abstract.** The article shows the importance of teaching ethics for the development of humanitarian education, as well as reveals the problematic issues of contemporary ethical knowledge. The authors consider the issue of the influence of digital technologies on remote communication of people, analyzing in this regard the network communications. It is shown that they correspond to morality, in which the communication of people is supposed to be unlimited by formal institutions, and is characterized by a broad discourse. The used methodology is based on the ethics of discourse, works on virtue ethics, modern brain research, neurophilosophy, and evolutionary ethics. Besides, the authors show the importance of virtue ethics and demonstrate that neurophilosophy and evolutionary ethics are unable to explain the entire variety of human behavior, in particular, to explain why a person is able to set himself supertasks. The article analyzes the development specifics of global processes that often cause the transformation of moral behavior motives. The novelty of the research consists in demonstrating the combination of ethical (humanitarian) and natural science knowledge, which corresponds to the development stage of contemporary science, which is characterized as post-nonclassical.

**Keywords:** morality, humanitarian knowledge, globalism, virtue, conflicts.

## 1 Introduction

Contemporary post-nonclassical science is characterized by the convergence of humanitarian and natural science knowledge. In ethics, this manifests itself in many ways, and primarily through neurophilosophy.

Today, there are many publications concerning the brain, the role of hormones in the regulation of moral behavior. Several works note that differences in moral behavior are determined by the structure of the very brain [1]. Other works emphasize the similarity in the behavior of primates and humans, arguing that the ability to cooperative behavior of humans is inherited from the evolutionarily developed abilities of animals [2]. The role of emotions in moral behavior has also been thoroughly investigated. In particular, R. Sapolsky, in his

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book “Behave. The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst” notes that people with disorders of the prefrontal cortex (vmPFC), which is responsible for emotions, not only have difficulties in making decisions, but the decisions made are not optimal [3]. D. Goleman in his book “Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ” shows that when the emotional sphere is disturbed, people are unable to classify events into important and unimportant [4].

However, while recognizing the importance of studying the works dealing with the brain and the achievements of evolutionary ethics, it should also be noted that it is possible to draw parallels between the behavior of animals and humans only within certain limitations.

The objective tendency of the convergence of the humanities and natural science knowledge is due to the method of obtaining scientific knowledge. It’s been a long time since Ch. Peirce [5] coined the term “fallibilism” (principle possibility of mistake, or impossibility of absolute certainty concerning questions of fact), and began to view scientific knowledge as a gradual selection of plausible hypotheses. This implies an inclusive moral attitude, as one must listen carefully to their opponents.

This gave further rise to one of the leading areas of contemporary ethics, namely, the ethics of discourse. It involves the preference of communicative actions for strategic ones and manipulations with people that the subjects of planned management would fundamentally agree to. For this direction, the combination of humanitarian knowledge with natural science is also obvious, since ethical decisions must take into account all the circumstances, and all the significant factors should be involved (this is part of the argumentation system).

## **2 Methods**

Considering the methodological aspect, the authors concern neurophilosophy. This approach is quite interesting, but it has several profound vulnerabilities, primarily because it considers humans exclusively as cooperative animals. One can agree with F. de Waal that many forms of cooperation are peculiar in animals, especially in primates [2]. But animals never set themselves supertasks, and are not ready for super intensive activities. These types of activities come from cultural invariants, and, as de Waal believes, they are imposed on a person from above rather than develop spontaneously, as a legacy of the natural world.

Much is now being said about virtue ethics. This approach is seen as a necessary complement to duty ethics and sometimes contrasted with it. The advantages of virtue ethics are seen in the fact that the individual assumes responsibility, individualizes moral requirements, while the duty ethics presents only universal requirements, often having the form of fundamental prohibitions. But prohibitions alone are not enough for the moral life of contemporary society. The individual is required to develop his social abilities and moral qualities that focus not only on mercy, respect for another person, and not harm him, but on applying the will to conscientiously perform his work commitments.

Another group of problems is related, according to the authors, to the fact that the rationalist trend which is connected with science moves in parallel with irrationalism, which, unfortunately, is no less popular in the modern mass consciousness than science and rationalism. This is due to many reasons, such as disillusionment with the ideals of the enlightenment, dissatisfaction with the achievements of science, and the inability of science to answer the ultimate metaphysical questions of human existence. As A. Badiou writes, it is argued that “every effort to unite people around a positive idea of the Good, let alone to identify Man with projects of this kind, becomes in fact the real source of evil itself. <...>Every will to inscribe an idea of justice or equality turns bad. Every collective will to the Good creates Evil” [6: 13].

The antinormative turn in ethics is another problem. The idea of autonomy, which is opposed to normativity, is not so unambiguous. On May 15, 2003, the Sorbonne hosted a public discussion between the contemporary French philosophers, Ch. Larmore and A. Renaut [7, 8], devoted to the problems of the foundation of ethics, including the problem of normativity.

Renaut defended the attitude of individual autonomy. He believed that man himself approved the law rather than received it from God or nature. Larmore argued that the highest standards appeared due to tradition, but they contained liberal principles. The authors of the present article believe that normativity cannot be completely eliminated in ethics. Normativity gets an objectively fixed expression when individual assessments and proposed patterns of behavior are supported first by some local groups, and then by large historical communities of people. Without this, sustainable forms of communication are impossible.

And finally, the role of global problems. They are related to the understanding of the very trends of globalization as they occur in the modern world. The question arises whether there is any ethics in international relations at all. Strict ethical restrictions are applied mainly within the framework of national states and are expressed in the operation of state and public institutions. But do they exist in international relations, unless, certainly, not considering the UN, the International Court of Justice, the International Court of Arbitration, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Everyone knows that the effectiveness of these organizations is falling; however, at the same time, the role of the ruling world elite increases, which is essentially international in the pursuit of narrow personal interests, whose goal is to ensure the preservation and reproduction of existing social inequality in a new round of the international division of labor.

Due to the growth of the bureaucratic administrative staff machinery, the system of state organizations is becoming more complex, and the opportunities for democratizing public and political life are narrowing. Subjective, personal relations between powerful economic and political actors become the defining determinant of the new historical reality. The vital values of the supranational elite system gradually and purposefully acquire an exclusively sensual-consumer attitude towards the surrounding world and its highest cultural achievements. Familiarity with a different culture ceases to be a mean of spiritual self-enrichment and development as a result of the influence of the whole set of these values, which are perceived exclusively as material values. The satisfaction of physiological needs remains the main goal.

### **3 Discussion**

Considering the life attitudes of the modern and postmodern personality, Z. Bauman compares the former with a pilgrim while the latter with a tourist. A pilgrim has a certain purpose for his journey, while for a tourist, trips to different continents are nothing more than a simple curiosity [9].

It should be noted that the globalization processes have largely led to the separation of the concepts of politics and authority. So Bauman notes: “The authority in our times is global and extraterritorial; the politics are territorial and local. The authority moves freely at the speed of electronic signals, regardless of any spatial obstacles (P. Virilio believes that, although obituaries about history are still premature, nations are certainly present at the demise of geography: distances lose any significance). Politics, however, has no other representative than the state whose sovereignty, as before, is determined (and limited) by the spatial framework” [10].

Following the above logic, the current contemporary authority with its global supranational characteristics is entirely in the hands of transnational corporations, global oligarchic business structures, acting solely in their peculiar financial interests. Achieving and continuing these interests requires weakening and then destructing national statehood.

The fact of the existence and operation of the world's financial structures cannot be ignored by any political system; otherwise, it is threatened with the final loss of sovereignty and its place in the historical space.

Great challenges arise concerning the application of ethical knowledge in the public realm. Just because no one can speak in the name of morality, certainly, does not mean that one should not study ethics. On the contrary, it is studying ethics, and comparing several ethical theories, that can show their applicability to the public realm, or the limitations that they must have when solving tangled, sometimes conflicting situations in people's lives, especially when applied to issues that are related to the fate of large masses of people. R. Goodin, who wrote the book "Utilitarianism as a Public Philosophy", believes that this theory is quite sufficient for the public area, and there is nothing better that can be offered [11]. G. Harman takes a different attitude believing that absolute restrictions also exist in the public realm [12].

## 4 Conclusion

Thus, in conclusion, it should be emphasized that entire new areas are now opening up for ethics. This concerns public morality and applied ethics (primarily business ethics, biomedical ethics, judicial ethics, and political ethics). Ethics also includes general issues, such as cross-cultural interactions, the fate of peoples in a multipolar world, and attitudes towards future generations. All this makes ethics an essential part of the humanities knowledge.

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