

REMARKS ON AN OPERATIONAL SYSTEM OF ETHICS ACADEMIC APPLICATIONS*

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Abstract. *The article poses a kind of metaethical proposal; it suggests a certain way of dealing with moral issues and applying academic ethics to practice. The three relatively simple rules of moral behaviour, namely: Notice others around you! Be open to criticism! Act in a communicative way! have been discussed in relation to situations typical for academic environment. The author presents the problem in the form of an analytic model defined by him as an operational system of ethics. It enables, among other things, to expose the moral importance of the microscale of social experience, which is significant for the functioning of complex organisations such as modern universities. In the author's view, the complexity of social life in today's world should be accompanied by a relatively simple and practically useful ethical thought, which could be helpful in everyday activities of a particular individual.*

Keywords: *humanistic coefficient, critical rationalism, communication activity, microscale of social experience, acting individual, operational situation, a situation of moral dilemma, axiological decision, critical communication activity.*

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Introduction

Normative ethics should be simple, useful, close to the acting individual and, therefore, sapiential. The same should apply to academic ethics. Treating it as a highly specialized knowledge may be scientifically effective and attractive, but it still remains philosophically empty. I will try to dwell on this point in subsequent paragraphs.

„A simply-built organism cannot be large” – this heard somewhere statement, referring to biology, might be applied to metaethics. Is simplicity a hallmark of modern ethics? Is it a desirable goal of ethics? From the sociological point of view, no! There is a constant need for detailed ethical answers to issues arising in particular sciences dealing with various aspects of life (not only human) in contemporary world. Therefore, today’s world requires a larger-scale, more comprehensive and detailed ethics, which would be precise in its statements. The question is, does a modern individual also needs such ethics?

This question only seems to be a paradox. If we view a contemporary individual in microsocial terms, in other words, if we perceive him as a kind of abstract moral subject trying to gain an insight into cultural and civilisational intricacies of the 20th century, then we are doomed to repeat the above mentioned expectations: more! more detailed! more and more precisely! While this abstract individual is only a formal subject, philosophers’ impractical invention, the subject of their own imagination and a guarantor legitimizing philosophical speculations, it is always a concrete, acting individual, who is the real subject, experiencing moral dilemmas in his particular place and time. Such a real individual need not, or even cannot know everything about the surrounding world; yet he probably can and wants to know how to live in this world, so that his life is morally good. On the level of moral concrete, the desire to know more and more precisely, gives in to a permanent need to get a simple, yet not easy, answer to the question: how should one live?! This question, repeatedly asked in everyday life, may act as a ‘pang of conscience’ for ethics, which, fed up with the banality of everyday life, recurrence of moral problems and its own permanent inefficiency, chooses to deal with itself, its own analytical constructions and its own scientific environment, which, in contrast to laymen, is able to appreciate the importance of its highly specialized problems.

The conviction that the world may be morally cured and ordered, on the condition that we apply normative systems to it, systems, which are adequate to the complexity of the subject in question, seems to be naïve¹. “Ethics starts with me!” that is a statement from an individual moral subject and, probably, does not go far beyond this. Ethical resources, both included in literature on the subject and accumulated in the experience of subsequent generations, form material which is morally inactive; that is, as long as an active acting individual will not call it to life. If, however, it is called to life, then its importance is measured not so much by the objective significance of the issues in

1 The quantity and the quality are not the same, also in this respect. Hałas, E. *Wychowanie do demokracji w ujęciu Floriana Znanieckiego. Socjologia polityczna Floriana Znanieckiego a współczesna polityka*. Gdańsk: Gdańskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1996, p. 153.

question, as by its correlation to the operational situation of the moral subject. Therefore, adequacy, pertinence and usefulness of the moral indication mean more than the potential of the system it originates from².

Ethics is a practical science and so it must undertake the risk to base on sapiential thought, and thus to expose itself to an objection that it formulates banal truths or repeats ancient philosophers' suggestions; that it does not follow new developments and does not even try to create appropriate novelties. Ethics, which wants to be practical, must accompany an individual in his cognitive efforts and be interested in his moral experience. It must accompany him both in his intellectual competence and moral order, as well as in his naivety and moral meanness. If it does not do so, it remains one of numerous disciplines, cultivated somewhere and for some undefined reason.

An acting individual, a particular moral subject, requires simple ethics, which would be universal. Academic environment also needs such ethics. The university is only a specific form of organized social space; on the basic level its moral tissue does not differ from that of other places in our social life. Both at university as well as outside it, people who meet are from different walks of life; they vary in age, life experience, intellectual and material resources, position in the society. They also differ in their morality; their intentions, goals and means vary. Ethics is of fundamental character, as long as it recognizes and organizes basic elements of social life in a normative way. Appropriate fundamental norms may be applied on the level of general ethics as well as in its specified branches.

The following paragraphs of this article comprise a suggestion how to connect three indicators of moral acting. The proposed combination may serve as a systemic ethical tool, applicable in describing, analyzing or finding normative solutions to problematic situations that can be found, among others, in academic environment. In fact, they already play such a role, bringing positive effects in suitable situations. The remarks below are based on the author's own experience of scientific, educational and organisational work and form a part of his own proposal for an operational system of ethics, included in his forthcoming habilitation paper, inspired by Florian Znaniecki's (1882-1958) and other authors' works.

1. Notice Others around You!

A successful completion of this postulate is feasible on the condition that we limit our action and thought to the level of microscale of social experience. It seems only logical, that it is the level of basic social interactions, a place where acting people really meet; a Socratic sphere of moral relations. The use of microscale of social experience in the ethical operational system enables us to notice the perspective of a particular

2 Florian Znaniecki underlined that social microstructures play a more important role in forming new personalities than any macroscale structures. Kurczewska, J. Florian Znaniecki i jego lekcje dla Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej. *Teoria socjologiczna Floriana Znanieckiego a wyzwania XXI wieku*. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1999, p. 300.

experience of an acting individual³; the experience that takes place and is gained from a close plane of moral relations.

Modern university (and I am writing about something which comes from my own direct or indirect experience) is, among other things, a scene of various battles. Inefficiently controlled bureaucracy is spreading; the demand for reporting on scientific, educational and organisational activity is reaching a level of absurdity. And all this in the name of raising the level of efficiency, higher quality of educational offer and the public image. Within the academic environment, marked with internal discord, there is a lot of competition pertaining to power, political representation and philosophical outlook, scientific grants and monthly pay, surviving at the time of economic crisis and decrease in the birth rate. The university opens its doors widely to future students and equally freely lets graduates out. Its social space is becoming more and more superficial and formalized; the focus on rigorous procedures encourages claims and complaints. It follows that the least attention is put to moral quality of everyday life. Everybody seems to mean well, but because they give in to the above mentioned influences, they live and work in increasing haste and mutual dislike, stress, frustration and a sense of pointlessness as far as their activities are concerned.

The above mentioned phenomena, if they live not only in my imagination, will not be easy to eliminate and probably will not be reduced in the near future. We may try to include them in a macroscale ethical thought, but this will only be useful for research purposes. Neither collective nor institutional subjects, neither human features nor social phenomena may be forced to alter their system of values; it is only self-conscious beings, i.e. concrete acting humans, individual moral subjects that can do that. Yet there are great discrepancies among them; they also vary in their axiological systems. They treat their freedom of thought as an asset and, therefore, cannot undergo a process of externally controlled moral pressure; the same rule applies to academic environment. Fortunately, their resources and functioning may be humanized! What is needed is moral activity of creative individuals in a social space, both in a general sense and also limited to the academic surrounding⁴. If we apply the level of microscale of social experience to ethics, we reveal the influences that creative individuals exert on moral practice. On this level ideals of an individual trigger the process of transformation of social norms⁵.

The question arises: what or who is the object or subject making me act in a way defined in terms of quality? Legal regulations? The statute of the university? Its tradition? Various interest groups that I meet in my professional life? My own wallet and my feeling of well-being? Or something else? All these factors are probably somehow relevant and the preferences revealed by attitudes of some representatives of the academic environment vary; yet from the moral point of view it is all of minor

3 Znaniecki, F. *Rzeczywistość kulturowa. „Humanizm i poznanie” i inne pisma filozoficzne*. Warszawa: PWN, 1991, p. 697.

4 Znaniecki, F. *Wstęp do socjologii*. Warszawa: PWN, 1988, p. 285–286.

5 Znaniecki, F. *Elementy rzeczywistości praktycznej. „Myśl i rzeczywistość” i inne pisma filozoficzne*. Warszawa: PWN, 1987, p. 108–112.

importance. It is a concrete individual that I meet on my way in a specific situation that is, or should be, of key importance. And all this regardless of his social status and his position in the academic hierarchy, regardless of the fact whether he is the rector, the lowest grade student or the receptionist having keys to classrooms at his disposal

Yes, this postulate seems banal and bombastic. But, is suggesting the application of a microscale perspective of thought to the normative academic ethics equally banal and bombastic? The above mentioned factors of frustration, namely academic bureaucracy, lack of funds, formality and mass education, as well as some others, lose their importance in view of straightforward moral relations. A concrete individual I see around me is not only a part of the educated ‘mass’; he is not only a formal object. Even if he plays a certain role in magnifying the amount of bureaucracy and, therefore, makes my work harder, he is probably not entirely responsible for my increased efforts. I cannot be absolutely sure about that, but there are some grounds to think in this way as I realize that in a totally opposite situation, i.e. when I am suspected of lack of goodwill, accused of being a formalist, informed about the inconvenience others have suffered on my account, I feel I must and I want to justify my actions and explain their reasons; I must and want to show what my responsibilities are and my share in the organisation’s aims. We are all – both me and my enemy in a situation of conflict – forced to act within an institutionalised system of values, which is not entirely our own doing⁶. The perspective of a microscale of social experience helps to notice a particular individual, who acts in a specific situation within a system. And, what is more important, it enables to restore the culture-forming quality to ethics, both on a general scale as well as in a more specific, for example, academic environment: If you want to increase moral value of systemic conditions of human activities, recognize these conditions on a microscale social level and then allow and help those you meet to eliminate the evil they suffer from! Although the results will not be global or immediate, they will surely turn out to be significant in due course. They will also become permanent as they will be appreciated and aimed at by partial, but factual authors of the change. I am basing my conviction on the fact that (a) an acting individual, even if wise and good to a limited extent, and even if he does not belong to the social elite⁷ (whatever that means today), is able to change things for the better in his surrounding⁸, and (b) it is vital that the knowledge about it does not escape practical ethics.

2. Be Open to Criticism!

Karl Raimund Popper (1902-1994) created a simple rule of behaviour, which he called a moral creed: I may be wrong and you may be right, and by an effort, together we

6 Hayek, F.A. *Konstytucja wolności*. Warszawa: PWN, 2006, p. 73–74.

7 Szacki, J. *Znaniecki*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1986, p. 177.

8 Wocial, J. Wstęp: Znanieckiego filozofia wartości. „*Myśl i rzeczywistość*” i inne pisma filozoficzne. Warszawa: PWN, 1987, p. LV.

may get nearer to the truth⁹. It is a tribute paid to (a) regulating role of the idea of the truth in human actions (b) the rule of approaching the truth through communication. Within contemporary social sciences a great importance is paid to communicative aspects of social life, to the ethics of discussion etc. What causes problems is understanding, acknowledging and acceptance of the discovered truth. It may be that the greatest difficulties lie in something which is apparently theoretically simplest, namely in what has already been mentioned, i.e. in the intellectual modesty and the readiness to admit the errors of our own ways, our incompetence and the lack of certainty.

The postulate of being open to criticism, which is vital for the ethics of critical rationalism, seems to be extremely difficult for application in academic environment. This difficulty lies not so much in specified fields of scientific cognition (although even here we can encounter difficulties) as in moral mundaneness of social relations among people working in an academic environment. The people there occupy different positions in the hierarchy. A postulate of openness to criticism, when applied to a freshman seems to be quite obvious but when it refers to an academic authority or 'guru', or an otherwise important person, may turn out to be quite inappropriate. Numerous scientific conferences and the typical order in which speakers take the floor may serve as a source of interesting sociological observations and ethical reflection on the subject; while the important and well-known people speak first, the beginners are the last to take part. I myself have been fortunate enough to listen through all the speeches at several conferences, thanks to which I have been a witness of many interesting, well prepared and well presented speeches. Sometimes those last ones were made in the presence of a handful of people.

I mention it in order to underline the nature of obligation. The postulate to be open to criticism is ethical as long as it is absolute, without consideration for the person. Otherwise it remains fictitious or a test paper of academic hypocrisy. Academic ethics, at least the one that is described in this article, demands absolute openness to criticism from any member of academic environment. It is almost certain that if viewed from the macroscale, it remains futile and hence may be treated as useless. The microscale of social experience seems to be only applicable perspective. On the microsocial level the attitude of openness or its lack are both verified in a specific situation and with concrete people participating in action. Although each of them belongs to structures external to the given operational situation and occupies a specific position in the hierarchy, his moral attitude refers directly to another person in a horizontal dimension of a situation.

Popper thinks that critical rationalism requires to free people from custody of a recognized authority constantly¹⁰; it demands permanent breaking from thoughtless habit of respecting people for the sake of promoting respect for the argument. And all this because the power of argument is of greater cognitive and moral significance than the social position of the arguing person¹¹. The normative equality of arguments presented

9 Popper, K. R. *Mit schematu pojęciowego: W obronie nauki i racjonalności*. Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1997, p. 10.

10 Popper, K. R. *Spółczesność otwarte i jego wrogowie: Urok Platona*. Warszawa: PWN, 2006, p. XVIII.

11 *Ibid.*, p. XIV.

in a discussion, assumed by critical rationalism, allows us to reject any hierarchical superiority of an individual as the basis for moral privileges in an operational situation. Those who, in a specific situation, are in a higher position on the social ladder (even if this high position is their own opinion) should take the main responsibility for their actions¹². It should be repeated that such postulates cannot be fulfilled on a macrosocial scale, yet when applied to the social microscale they are long-lasting. This permanence is typical for basic requirements of a simple normative ethics.

The above statements can be illustrated with an example taken from academic practice. A student questions the results of his exam, but at the same time he expresses some objections to the way he was treated by the academic lecturer. He feels that his doubts regarding his grade have been ignored. He asks the person in charge of the didactic processes for intervention. The following attempt at clarifying the situation is not successful; the examiner's standpoint differs considerably from that of the student; as a result, a decision is made to solve the controversial issue during a meeting of both parties. However, the lecturer refuses to take part in it, regarding the very proposition as entirely improper and undermining his authority. The problem, initially viewed as quite trivial, becomes more and more complicated and a relatively satisfying solution is only found after a long time.

There are various possible ways of analysing the situation. From the formal and legal point of view, we may have doubts concerning the applied procedures. Apparently: (a) the requirements for the examination were not precisely defined, (b) the university regulations were not precise, (c) the university representatives proved incompetent because they were not able to solve the problem at the start. Yet rules and regulations are not the only relevant factor in this situation; from the ethical point of view the moral component is of greater importance. While initial moral doubts of the student referring to the lecturer's attitude may arouse doubts concerning the clarity of his intentions – we cannot deny a possibility that the student tried to defend himself against the bad mark using vile means – at the central stage of the dispute, i.e. at the point when the lecturer refuses to participate in a confrontational meeting, moral doubts become clearly asymmetrical; the student still maintains they are the reason for his claims, the arbiter's doubts have become more grounded but the examiner has denied them, demonstrating that his authority has been disregarded. He lacks a simple openness to criticism and doubts concerning the quality of his work.

Summing up, I would like to emphasize that the operational system of ethics which is presented in this article exposes the microscale of moral problems, which allows to notice concrete people in specific situations in which they are acting and enables to examine moral aspects of those situations while using arguments devoid of non-factual components of its assessment. I am fully aware how difficult to accept it is for those individuals and circles which are interested first of all in maintaining and proving the moral value of their own status quo. However, Socratic heritage is still demanding!

12 Popper, K. R., *supra* note 10, p. 65–66.

3. Act in a Communicative Way!

Noticing an individual around you and maintaining attitude of openness to possible criticism enables us to shape the moral tissue of social life and introduce the desired symmetry into moral relations. This symmetry seems to be the structural condition of all the undertakings leading to upgrading moral value of collective and organized activities. No ethical requirements delivered to specified academic subjects such as individual moral subjects, social groups or institutions will be successfully fulfilled if there are no morally adequate actions on the part of those who introduced the requirements in the first place. For instance, it is quite obvious that subjects such as students preparing their diplomas or academic workers preparing publications for their next degree are required to do so in an honest and reliable way. If the thesis supervisor has no time to read and correct his students' theses because he also works at another high school, then there is a greater risk that the job will be done in an inaccurate and unreliable way. If an academic employer requires his workers to proceed with their scientific degrees on time, perform their educational job well and be active in their organizational work but he does not support them in return, not to mention offering adequate pay, then there is a greater risk that the job will be of poor quality. The risk will increase dramatically if the only guarantee of employment is formally performed promotion while the way it was achieved and all the other responsibilities turn out to be of secondary importance. A feeling of moral decay overwhelming the whole academic environment is a factor that leads to a further crisis.

There is a possibility, however, of a certain illusion. A crisis within a certain environment is one thing but my share in it is not obviously the same. I may suffer inconveniences for the reasons beyond my power, but I do need to blame them on others. Only symmetry in exchange of goods is morally required. Evil, injustice, impoliteness and others, if they happen, should remain non-symmetrical. I realize that such remarks (like some of those expressed earlier) sound banal and lofty, but only if they are formed in general, not referring to a definite situation. They turn out to be valid when applied to the microscale of social experience, when they are addressed at particular people actively participating in a specific situation. They become organizational guidelines in addition to their character of being general ethical recommendations. When combining what is philosophically general with what is sociologically specific ethics become a practical science. An operational system of ethics, which enables to analytically formalize such links, becomes useful in metaethics.

The postulate of communicative acting, formulated within normative ethics and underlined in this part of the article combines philosophical and sociological perspectives. Let us now try to relate it to an imaginary problem situation: you act in a particular place at a particular time, in a defined social situation; you are facing a concrete individual, whose view of the situation probably differs from your evaluation of it; you represent a group, institution or structure and your opponent is probably a representative of some parallel structures; you are full of your own ideas, values and emotions and you guess that the person you are facing has got his parallel ideas. Therefore, regardless of what

rules, instructions, procedures, etiquette and good manners manuals say, be morally daring and, remaining ready to take responsibility for your actions, do not limit yourself to formal rules governing a situation. Go beyond all those standards and procedures, in a good way. Make your own moral standards and humanize your own actions. Do not wait for others to provide you with convenient moral rules of behaviour; they may never come on time.

This postulate is a radical one as it is based on a conviction that ethics needs specific radicalism. Ethics which wants to have practical consequences must free itself from its today's role of being an aesthetic addition to science and from its various qualifiers (ethics of this or that); it must go back to the original perspective of questions and fundamental imperatives. To make it feasible, it must be freed from its role of an academic discipline which is governed by an unbearable manner of fragmenting moral experience and avoiding general statements. For obvious reasons, the idea of ethics returning to its roots and its factual chances in this respect are not contradictory.

The postulate of communicative acting or, more precisely, acting in a communicative way, which would be critical and open to criticism is of universal character. It may be applied to any given problem situation, which is registered and analysed on the level of microscale of social experience and the individual level of any real or potential participant of such a situation, both in academic surrounding and outside it. It does not show any consideration for the fact who the people involved are or what structures they represent. For example, regardless of the role played in the university structure, I may and should patiently explain the reasons of my behaviour, my evaluations, my doings to a given person, going beyond (if necessary) what is formally required and repeating (when necessary) even the most trivial things. Regardless of however 'unimportant' role my opponent plays, I may and should listen carefully to how the problem in discussion appears to him¹³. I may be wrong and he may be right, and, therefore, we may approach the truth together. No matter how problematic the question of truth in contemporary philosophy and science is, and regardless of the differences between contemporary university and the university of a few centuries or decades ago, the culture-forming potential of moral relations within the microscale of social experience remains the key factor in systemic activities, organizational work and milieu ethos. The university may still maintain its role of a creator and medium of high moral culture provided the members of the academic environment, enchanted with modern advances in communication technologies, will nourish their concern for moral value of direct contacts.

Conclusions

One of my students wrote: „In my view, the aim of contemporary ethics is to caution people against defining themselves entirely through their social position. On the other hand, the surrounding world favours such simplified definition of man.” I share

13 I must be able to suspend my own greatness in order to notice others' smallness. I must be ready to admit that the proportion is inverse.

the opinion about the importance of this task. In my article I have endeavoured to show possible ways to solve the problem. They refer to academic surrounding, whose position in the society is of no small importance.

If we assume that moral practice is a process or, rather, a range of various processes, and that creative powers of individual moral subjects¹⁴, play a major role in it, then it becomes only natural that the focus is on (a) exposing the microscale of social experience, (b) the role that concrete acting people play in it and (c) the significance of simple imperatives, addressed at their behaviour. Modern universities are socially complex structures, yet, when viewed in detail, still show the presence of some basic moral tissue. It is produced and reproduced during immediate interpersonal contacts, which bind individuals in an academic environment. This moral tissue, if it is to be used creatively, has to be accessed not only in an indirect, cognitive way, but also through a practical philosophical approach. If we want to improve moral quality of functioning or managing at universities, we have to use potentially simplest ethics.

An operational system of ethics suggested in this article allows to maintain relative simplicity of a normative proposal addressed at academic environment. The three above mentioned and explained rules of behaviour are not a novelty; yet placing them within a specific analytical system and a pattern of objective relations permits us to nurture a hope that this very simple ethics may be applied to the very complex and demanding academic environment. It is not enough to discuss academic ethics; moral issues, how to behave in an honest way in a given situation etc. are more important things to be argued about. To believe in a possibility of arguing about ethical issues without being exposed to the discomfort of moral evaluation would be naïve. The rule of critical communication activity, promoted in this article, is a principle of open morality; a principle of excluding any fight, moderating antagonisms, aiming at peace and compromise¹⁵. This principle belongs to ethical heritage; it was Socrates who called on people to respect each other; he also believed that others are our greatest treasure¹⁶. The rule of critical communication activity, if applied in an academic environment, may encourage and help respect the need of a moral activity of an individual functioning in his own social surrounding¹⁷; when placed in an operational system of ethics it helps to verify whether normative solutions are justified in relation to their factual relevance to the object of the planned action.

14 Znaniecki, F. *Upadek cywilizacji zachodniej. „Humanizm i poznanie” i inne pisma filozoficzne*. Warszawa: PWN, 1991, p. 933.

15 Znaniecki, F. *Ludzie terażniejsi a cywilizacja przyszłości*. Warszawa: PWN, 2001, p. 306.

16 Popper, K. R., *supra* note 10, p. 241 *et seq.*

17 Wojnar, I. *Floriana Znanieckiego utopia humanistyczna. Florian Znaniecki: Myśl społeczna a wychowanie. Inspiracje dla współczesności*. Warszawa: Żak, 2001, p. 45.

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PASTABOS APIE OPERACINĘ ETIKOS SISTEMAŲ:
AKADEMINIS TAIKYMAS

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Santrauka. Straipsnyje pristatomi pasirinkti operacinės etikos sistemos projekto elementai, kurie, be kita ko, gali būti pritaikyti įvairių moralinių šiuolaikinio universiteto veiklos ir kasdieninio gyvenimo aspektų analizei. Universitetas vis dar gali atlikti savo kaip kūrėjo ir aukštos moralinės kultūros skleidėjo vaidmenį, jei akademinės aplinkos atstovai, naudodamiesi komunikacinių technologijų privalumais, puoselės moralinę tiesioginio bendravimo vertę.

Tokios sąvokos ir raktažodžiai kaip „socialinės patirties mikroskalė“, „veikiantis žmogus“, „operacinė situacija“, „moralinės dilemos situacija“, „aksiologinis sprendimas“ ir kt., gali funkcionuoti drauge sisteminiame moralinės patirties aprašyme metodologinio individualizmo pagrindu. Tinkamas akademinės tikrovės aprašymas yra išeitinis praktinės etikos taškas, t. y. etikos, kuri gali būti priimtina ir pritaikyta akademinės aplinkos atstovų jų kasdieninėje veikloje.

„Etika prasideda nuo manęs...“ Tai sena moralės tiesa, tačiau šiandien mums reikalingi šiuolaikiniai, tačiau subtilūs instrumentai, kurie galėtų padėti tai įgyvendinti, ypač universitete, kuris yra moraliniu požiūriu ypatinga vieta. Įvairių mokslinių disciplinų atstovai, kurie yra specialistai, vargiai priima net ir palyginti paprastą moralų patarimą.

Straipsnio autorius siūlo tris santykinai paprastas moralaus elgesio taisykles: „Pastebėk aplinkinius!“, „Būk atviras kritikai!“, „Elkis komunikabiliai!“. Šios taisyklės svarstomos įvairiose tipiškos akademinės aplinkos situacijose. Autorius pristato problemą analitinio modelio forma, jo apibrėžiama kaip „operacinė etikos sistema“. Be kita ko, tai leidžia išryškinti socialinės patirties mikroskalę, kuri yra svarbi tokių sudėtingų organizacijų kaip šiuolaikiniai universitetai funkcionavimui.

Autoriaus požiūriu, socialinio gyvenimo šiuolaikiniame pasaulyje sudėtingumas turėtų būti lydimas gana paprasto ir praktiškai naudingo etinio mąstymo, kuris galėtų praversti konkretaus žmogaus kasdieninėje veikloje. Autorius siūlo idėją, kad normatyvinė etika turėtų būti paprasta, naudinga, artima veikiančiam žmogui, taigi išmintinga. Tas pats turėtų galioti akademinėi etikai. Jos vertinimas kaip itin specializuotų žinių visumos moksliniu požiūriu gali būti efektyvus ir patrauklus, tačiau filosofiniu požiūriu vis tiek lieka tuščias.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: humanistinis koeficientas, kritinis racionalizmas, komunikacinė veikla, socialinės patirties mikroskalė, veikiantis žmogus, operacinė situacija, moralinės dilemos situacija, aksiologinis sprendimas, kritinė komunikacinė veikla.

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