

## PROFESSIONAL ETHICS: PROBLEMS OF THEORY AND ETHICAL ASPECTS OF PROFESSIONALISM

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### Abstract:

Every professional is firstly a member of society and a citizen of the state in which they live. For this reason, they must know the rules of civil etiquette in addition to the rules of professional etiquette. This article analyses contemporary notions of the concept, essence and structure of professional ethics, considers its main categories and issues, and establishes its relationship with the general theory of morality.

**Keywords:** professional ethics, professional morality, professionalism, moral prestige.

### Introduction

Ethics as a philosophical science arises in the middle of the 1st millennium BC. Due to the need to formalize moral norms that resulted from the separation of spiritual and theoretical activity from material and practical.

One of the types of material and practical human activity was professional activity. Therefore, even in the era of antiquity, as an integral part of the general ethical theory, professional ethics arises. Its emergence was due to the emergence of professional morality.

The presence in society of a special, professional morality is a direct consequence of the historically established professional division of labour: professional specialists who can do what others cannot do were endowed with certain duties about those who use their services, this required the development of special codes, charters capable of maintaining the moral prestige of professional groups in society, inspiring confidence in them and providing favourable moral prerequisites for their own development.

A good example of this thesis is the famous Hippocratic oath, the prototype of which was the oath of the ancient Greek Asclepiad doctors.

### Methodology

In addition to the norms governing the relationship of the profession with society, requirements addressed to each other were also formed within professional groups. As an example, we can cite the statutes that determined the life of workshops in the cities of Western Europe in the 13th-14th centuries. They included a set of rules that put members of the community on an equal footing in terms of purchasing raw materials, training apprentices, distributing orders, and so on.

In addition to the economic content of intra-shop regulation, which seeks to prevent the accumulation of capital and the development of free competition, it also contained, to a certain extent, a moral aspect. So, the master did not have the right to over-advertise his product, opposing its qualities to other similar products available for sale, it was impossible to invite buyers only to himself, to lure them away, to decorate his product in shop windows too brightly and invitingly,



etc.

With the development and complication of social relations, with the allocation of an increasing number of individual specialities and professions, the need for professional ethics grew as a special field of ethical knowledge, designed to regulate the relations of people of any particular profession. Despite the universal nature of moral requirements and the existence of a single labour morality, specific norms of behaviour were also identified for an increasing number of types of professional activity. The emergence and development of such norms, the corresponding motivation for professional behaviour and assessments, is one of the directions of the moral development of mankind.

Professional moral norms reflected the increase in the value of the individual and set humane criteria for professional activity. Due to the development of civilization and the deepening of professional differentiation, the role of professional ethics is increasing at present. Being an integral part of the modern theory of morality, professional ethics specifically and historically examines the problems of professional morality in modern society, takes into account its social determinism and differentiation, the nature of deepening under the influence of scientific and technological revolution and other factors of the social division of labour, changes in the social functions of various professions. The need for specific moral requirements, and, consequently, a special professional morality, is manifested primarily in social and humanitarian professions, in professions of the "man-to-man" type, the main content of which is the upbringing and satisfaction of the needs of the individual. Professional ethical codes are also formed in those activities that are associated with the performance of important, socially necessary functions - in the organization of military service, in the service sector, business, etc.

### Results and discussion

Professional morality is also formed in other professions, they also develop moral relations between professionals and society, managers and subordinates, and other employees. These relationships are governed by work ethics. With the development of a modern management structure and organization of work, more and more importance is given to the development of codes of administrative ethics, and management ethics. As rightly noted by A.S. Kapto, a specific feature of professional ethics is its applied nature [2].

Being one of the directions of ethical theory, professional ethics, due to the historical path of its development, until recently developed mostly as a special direction within the framework of various types of professional activity. Therefore, in the research literature, until recently, professional ethics was understood not so much as a theoretical discipline, but as a general collective concept that reflects the specifics of ethical views characteristic of different types of professional activity. The concepts of "medical ethics", "judicial ethics", "engineering ethics", and "ethics of science", thus, were much more common than the concept of "professional ethics", considered without regard to a specific profession, in general, theoretical terms. Many authors believe that the expression "professional ethics" is to a certain extent conditional because stands for nothing more than professional moral codes.

Normative ethics based on studies of descriptive ethics tries to present and substantiate a harmonious system of morality, to identify fundamental moral principles, and to substantiate the basic principle of morality.



Metaethics is analytical ethics, it is engaged in a categorical analysis of ethical concepts, and it explores the logic of moral thinking.

In general, the theory of general ethics provides a thorough and systematic approach to the definition of morality and develops and analyzes vital and practical moral arguments [2].

Special ethics apply the principles of general ethics, first, to the solution of specific problems and; secondly, for the study of the principles of morality in specialized areas of human activity.

Obviously, within the framework of this understanding of the structure of ethical theory, professional ethics refers to special ethics, more precisely, to its second direction. The application of the principles of general ethics in specialized areas brings to life various professional ethical theories - medical, business, technical and other types of special ethics.

At the same time, in connection with the development of professionalism in society, with the growing role of professional morality, there is a need for a general theoretical understanding of the problems of professional ethics and professionalism.

In modern ethics, a system of theoretical understanding of the problems of professional ethics as a whole is being formed. In the research literature of recent years, it is customary to define professional ethics as "firstly, professional codes of conduct that prescribe a certain type of moral relationship between people that seem optimal from the point of view of their professional activities; secondly, the ways of substantiating these codes, the socio-philosophical interpretation of the cultural and humanistic purpose of this profession..." [1].

The second meaning of the expression "professional ethics" is also justified, since it emphasizes the importance of especially careful development of professional norms and principles.

Modern researcher of problems of professional ethics D.S. Avraamov proposes to distinguish between professional ethics in the broad and narrow sense of the word.

In his opinion, this difference is determined by the presence of two different grounds.

Professional ethics in the broad sense of the word studies how moral requirements are applied in the specific conditions of a particular profession. At the same time, the range of professions is not limited by anything - all types of professional human activity are considered since any specialized work can leave an imprint on the moral world of the people who are engaged in it.

Professional ethics in the narrow sense focuses its attention only on those types of activity in which the object of labor is not the substance of nature, but man. "For thanks to a special object of labour relations, only in these professional groups, depending on the content of labour activity, the structure of moral consciousness can be rebuilt and special norms arise that cannot be reduced to general requirements" [2].

As a matter of fact, under professional ethics in the narrow sense of the word, the researcher understands the totality of ethical codes of professions related to the study of personality. The encyclopedic dictionary "Ethics" also notes that "... as a rule, professional ethics are distinguished for those types of specialized activities in which the object of labour is directly a person" [3].

Without questioning the legitimacy of such a distinction (indeed, as we have already noted, the importance of professional and moral regulation in this area of professional activity is especially high), we note at the same time that special professional norms arise not only in the so-called. social and humanitarian sphere of human activity. The formation of professional and moral consciousness among representatives of specific professions is characteristic of all types of professional human activity. Therefore, in our opinion, it is advisable to focus on the study of



professional ethics in the broad sense of the word.

The duality of the definition of professional ethics, the allocation of two interrelated aspects in its structure is associated with the allocation of the theoretical and normative levels of professional ethics as a science.

On the one hand, professional ethics is a set of norms and rules of professional morality, i.e. professional codes of conduct. Moreover, it is in this sense that the term "professional ethics" is used not only in everyday perception but also in specialized literature. There are certain grounds for such common usage. In contrast to the general requirements of morality, which initially developed spontaneously, the norms of professional morality were created and are being created under the strong influence of practitioners and theoreticians themselves. That is why the norms of professional morality contain a larger component of rational substantiation of their truth and necessity in comparison with general moral requirements, which determines the normative nature of professional codes.

On the other hand, strictly speaking, professional ethics is the science of the professional characteristics of a particular work activity, and in this sense, the subject field of the concept of "professional ethics" is expanding significantly. In addition to the professional codes themselves, it also includes the problems of the specifics of a particular type of professional activity, as well as the whole range of problems related to determining the place of professional ethics as a science in the system of modern social and humanitarian knowledge. An integral component of modern professional ethical theory is also the study of professionalism as a social and cultural phenomenon.

Thus, the theoretical level of professional ethics involves the solution of general theoretical problems related to the peculiarities of professional morality in general, while the normative level determines the rational understanding of professional codes of conduct for specialists in various areas of human labour activity.

In a professional moral norm, the specific meaning or purpose of the prescribed action may not be expressed explicitly but only implied. Therefore, the rules are subject to interpretation and clarification.

Interpretation and clarification of the meaning of professional moral norms is one of the tasks of professional ethics.

At the same time, the normativity of professional ethics does not mean a decrease in the semantic and ideological significance of the norms of professional morality. Many researchers talk about such a possibility are not the norms of professional ethics just a semblance of morality, but in fact - organizational and technical rules?

However, this position stems from an unduly narrow understanding of professional ethics as just a simple set of norms set by a certain behavioural standard. As V.I. Bakshtanovsky and Yu.V. Sogomonov, "such normative reductionism prevents an adequate interpretation of these norms themselves as proper moral regulators. To overcome reductionism, it is important to keep in mind that along with the normative level of professional ethics, there is also a "super normative", ideological, existential level, the task of which is to substantiate and justify the composition of norms and their certain hierarchy" [4].

It is the ideas of the worldview tier of moral consciousness that "clarify" the position of a professional in the system of social relations in an industrial and, especially, in a post-industrial



society. These representations allow professionals to reveal a personal attitude to practised prescriptions and assessments, to establish the leitmotifs of moral adherence to them, to determine in the course of reflection for the sake of which these prescriptions should be followed, to apply precisely these, and not other evaluation criteria.

At the normative level of professional ethics, it is also appropriate to highlight the essential and proper aspects.

In other words, one should distinguish between proper professional morality, i.e. codes of conduct for professional professionals adopted and approved by the relevant labour and trade unions and organizations and are valid documents, and real professional morals that develop spontaneously in the course of work (the so-called "unwritten rules").

So, professional ethics is a philosophical science, which is a part of the general theory of ethics, which has professional morality as the object of its study.

Professional ethics is the science of professional morality as a set of ideals and values, ideas about what is due, ethical principles and norms of behaviour that reflect the essence of the profession and ensure relationships between people that develop in the process of work and stem from the content of their professional activities. At the same time, in the research literature, there is also a subjective interpretation of professional ethics as the moral self-awareness of a professional group, its psychology and ideology [5].

Professional ethics as a philosophical science includes the following structural blocks:

- general theory of professional ethics - a range of problems related to the concept of the subject, structure, and methods of professional ethics as a science, the general theory of professional ethics also includes an analysis of the main categories of professional ethics, the definition of its relationship with ethics and other humanitarian disciplines;
- the history of professional ethics - examines the range of problems associated with the genesis of professional morality in society, as well as the reflection on the problems of professional ethics and the formation of professionalism in the history of ethical thought;
- special professional ethical theories - within their framework, specific moral codes in a particular profession are analyzed, such structural divisions of professional ethics include the ethics of science, medical ethics, judicial (lawyer, prosecutorial) ethics, ethics of a sociologist, ethics of a journalist, ethics of an entrepreneur, law enforcement ethics, engineering ethics, etc.

Being an integral part of the general ethical theory, professional ethics has an applied, specific character. Professional codes of ethics are historically and socially associated with a particular era and a particular type of society. Professional norms are a reflection of real-life social relations and social ties; they are generated by social necessity, the level of development of labour morality, and the specifics of a person's professional functions.

An important feature of professional ethics is its normativity. Professional ethics builds its requirements on the assessment of the role of a particular type of activity in the life of society. The relationship between people employed in a particular area of professional activity is associated with specific ethical standards. Professional ethical standards are certain, socially necessary moral requirements, reflected in the moral consciousness in the form of appropriate rules and commandments. People tend to evaluate professional activity through the prism of the moral norms that have developed in society that regulate professional relations. The main property of moral norms is their imperativeness (commandability).



The interests of professional communities, on the one hand, and public expectations of productive professional activity, on the other hand, are clothed in professional norms in a specific moral requirement.

In professional norms, in the form of a command, the social and professional experience of many generations of people is accumulated.

The professional ethical code is a conscious set of norms and principles of a particular professional group.

Ethical requirements as elements of professional and moral consciousness are formed in it into a certain system of interconnection and subordination. The hierarchy of moral commands in professional ethical codes, as a rule, has the following structure:

- universal moral requirements (associated with the humanistic attitude of people to each other - goodness, justice, duty, conscience, responsibility, etc.);
- norms of labour morality, prescribing the need for a moral attitude to labour activity in general, without highlighting professional characteristics;
- ethical standards that serve to protect specific values characteristic of a certain kind of professional activity;
- moral rules concerning the relationship of a particular profession with society.

Voluntary and rigorous implementation of all types of the above ethical standards can serve as an indicator of the development and prosperity of the profession. Professional ethics, as a rule, give preference to humanistic requirements and norms.

The peculiarity of professional ethics is that in it normativity acquires the most specific meaning. Considered by normative ethics, the problems of the meaning of life, the purpose of a person, the essence of good and evil, the content of moral duty, the certain moral principles and norms justified by it, are concretized in professional ethics about one or another type of labour activity.

So, professional ethics describes moral norms and clarifies their regulatory nature, specifics, structure and content. She also explores the relationship between norms and the principles of the formation of normative judgments and inferences, the laws of normative thinking. Professional ethics considers the professional behaviour of an employee as normatively given, prescribed by certain moral standards.

In this perspective, it is important to emphasize the heuristic role of professional ethics in the course of its concretization to certain types of professional activity. In the process of their emergence and further development, there is not only a simple and inevitable specification of norms and assessments due to the specifics of professional activity but also a genuine development of the content of moral commands, prohibitions and permissions, the development of a form of morality, its peculiar “code”, types of moral responsibility and all structures of ethical knowledge. The development of the content and form of morality in the process of concretization about different professions means, firstly, a certain transformation, in some cases, a rethinking of moral ideas, norms, value judgments, and their morphologies. Secondly, the emergence of new accents in the ways of “linking” moral values, and behavioural rules with each other and with all other (legal, administrative, organizational, praxeological and other) requirements and maxims, with power custom. Thirdly, concretization is a change in the place of the corresponding values and norms in the complex configuration of the value universe.

Finally, the development of morality through concretization provides for the possibility of the



emergence of new attitudes, permissions and prohibitions that have no application anywhere except for a certain area of professional activity, which maximize its effectiveness, and strengthens the humanistic orientations of activity in these areas and professions.

The norms and rules of professional ethics act as a theoretical development and addition to the moral consciousness of society as a whole. One of the tasks of professional ethics as a science is that the simplest moral norms become the internal need of people in the corresponding area of labour activity, take the form of human inclinations, and habits and are carried out without external and internal coercion.

It is the voluntary and conscious adherence to moral norms and moral requirements in a professional activity that is a necessary condition for true professionalism.

The categorical apparatus of professional ethics is sufficiently developed. Its structure includes a wide range of philosophical, general scientific, and ethical categories, allowing for the comprehension and analysis of professional and moral problems at a high theoretical level.

Possessing relative independence, professional ethics does not just borrow general and particular categories and methods from philosophy, ethics and other sciences, but takes into account the specifics of its own subject, develops and applies its own conceptual apparatus, which is constantly refined by including new and modifying old categories, rules, etc. .d.

E.G. Fedorenko distinguishes the following groups of categories in the structure of professional ethical theory:

- categories covering the entire area of the moral - good, evil, justice, good, etc.;
- categories that do not cover the entire sphere of the moral, but only a certain part of it, for example, a person's duties to society - duty, conscience, dignity;
- categories that reflect specific professional questions in morality - professional duty, professional conscience, professional responsibility, etc.

In addition, the author distinguishes the so-called. polar (binary) categories - good and evil, honour and dishonour, justice and injustice, etc.; and conditional (mutually conditioned) — duty, dignity, and conscience [6].

Most of the specific categories of professional ethics are a specification of general ethical categories about the professional activity of an individual: duty - professional duty, conscience - professional conscience, responsibility - professional responsibility, pride - professional pride, etc. At the same time, the category of "professionalism" should rightfully occupy a special place in the structure of professional ethics. Professional activity associated with certain working conditions leaves its mark on the moral qualities and psychology of people. Therefore, not being essentially an ethical category, the concept of "professionalism" includes broad social and moral content.

The requirement of professionalism is becoming one of the main regulations in many professional and ethical codes of modern society.

The professional values declared and approved in the professional code of ethics orient the specialist to the fulfilment and observance of certain duties, and professional responsibility for their activities. A specialist who is aware of the degree of this responsibility and strives for maximum compliance with the professional ideal created by the code can be characterized as a professional.

Thus, professionalism in any field of professional activity involves the fulfilment of the



requirements of professional ethics. An integral characteristic of the personality of a professional is a developed professional and moral consciousness.

The system of professional ethics is based on two principles. The subject of her study is:

– on the one hand, the totality of professional skills, abilities and knowledge of a person, their implementation in the daily practice of professional work, the specifics of this profession, professional relations, in a word, the professional itself;

– on the other hand, the formation and development of the employee's moral consciousness, moral values and moral attitudes, moral behaviour, and moral character in general, i.e. ethical.

Professional and ethical are equally system-forming factors of modern professional ethics. Their ratio depends on the specifics of a particular type of professional activity.

The degree of convergence of the professional and the ethical is higher in professions of the "man-to-man" type, in those areas of professional activity that are directly related to the satisfaction of the needs of the individual. In such professions, the professional often acts as moral, and vice versa: moral relations are woven into the content of professional work, and it almost completely appears as a moral activity. Professional suitability and professionalism in these professions imply not only a set of certain skills and abilities but also a set of moral qualities of an employee, which are no less important here than qualifications. The relationship between professional and ethical is multifaceted and has deep historical roots. This relationship is most clearly manifested in the unique professional achievements of people. The professional development of the individual, the highest form of which is the ability for professional creativity, innovation and courage of ideas, combined with reliance on the best professional traditions, strengthens the moral traits of the individual and allows you to harmonize various aspects of the life of the individual. The most important form of harmonization of professional and ethical is folk art and traditional folk crafts. It is a folk art that embodies the organic unity of the professional and moral aspects. This is largely due to its vitality [7,8].

Traditional forms of folk art are the most important source of formation and development of professionalism.

Firstly, the formation of new professions often occurs through their initial origin and formation in folk art. Secondly, various labour methods and technological processes are developed and consolidated in folk art. Thirdly, folk art plays a huge role in the professional and moral education of the individual. The participation of young people in traditional folk crafts contributes to the identification of individual abilities of the individual and the subsequent choice of a profession in accordance with them. The right choice of profession, in turn, contributes to the moral development of a person and strengthens the integrity of his personality.

Summing up the foregoing, it should be noted that the philosophical nature of ethics makes it possible for it to apply moral assessments to various social phenomena and processes, primarily to labour and professional activities.

The emergence of professional ethics is associated with the understanding of the problems of professional morality, which in turn was the result of the social division of labour and the accompanying specialization and professional differentiation. One of the most important criteria for the moral assessment of the quality of professional activity and the personality of an employee is professionalism, which implies not only the totality of certain professional knowledge, skills and abilities but also the moral character of a specialist, his fulfilment of the requirements of





professional ethics, the ability to be guided in his professional activity by both universal and professional moral standards. Today, professional ethics is of particular importance. By studying the specific conditions for the implementation of general moral requirements, depending on the uniqueness of the social role of a representative of a particular profession, professional ethics seeks in professional practice such ways of behaviour that enhance the effect of general moral requirements and, fixing them as a norm, helps the professional group to fit into the general moral system.

Professional ethics can and should become the theoretical basis for the development of modern human moral culture. The concept of professionalism is included in the system of modern professional ethics as one of the most important concepts. It is the fusion of professionalism and moral values that forms professional ethics.

### Conclusions

In our opinion, the significance of the category "professionalism" in the system of professional ethics lies in the fact that the subject field of this category includes both professional and ethical. The professionalism of a person presupposes a certain level of his moral development; therefore, ethics is not something external in relation to professionalism, but, on the contrary, is organically included in its structure.

The prospect of developing professional ethics as a philosophical science is to harmonize the professional and ethical in its structure, which is possible within the framework of the scientific and practical study of professionalism in the unity of all its aspects.

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