

Problems of Professional Ethics In Western Philosophy

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Abstract: This article reflects on the emergence, development and stages of development of professional ethics. In the article, the author examined the analysis of problems of professional ethics in Western philosophy and put forward his own approaches to the problems of professional ethics.

Key words: professional ethics, philosophical theory, norms of medical ethics, universal norms, duty and responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

Professional ethics today, as numerous studies show, is perhaps the most actively discussed and popular section of ethics. This is due, first of all, to the rapid development and institutionalization of a number of professions, where ethical issues constitute the very essence of professional activity, determine its nature and the corresponding prospects for the future of the professionals themselves working in a particular field.

Although, as an analysis of the literature shows, in different historical eras the peoples of the world had different ideas about professional ethics, about the problems associated with it, which were associated with the way of life determined by national, religious, cultural and other characteristics.

In addition, according to Z.N. Sherov, professional ethics was formed spontaneously, on the basis of ideas about the ethics of the professionals themselves, which were very far from the philosophical theory of morality, as well as on the basis of their own, more or less generalized experience.¹

Research methodology

The first works devoted to issues of ethics, including professional ethics, are the works of the ancient philosophers Aristotle and Hippocrates, who formulated the first standards of medical ethics. In subsequent times, many European philosophers dealt with the problems of professional ethics: Bentham, Mandeville, Montesquieu, O. Comte, E. Durkheim and others.

During the writing of this work, the following research methods were used:

- study and theoretical analysis of both scientific and historical literature;

¹ Шерова, З. Н. Развитие этики и деонтологии / З. Н. Шерова, Д. М. Маматова, А. С. Каттабеков, Г. Х. Ахатова. — Текст : непосредственный // Молодой ученый. — 2015. — № 22 (102). — С. 312-316. — URL: <https://moluch.ru/archive/102/23012/> (дата обращения: 16.08.2023).

- a descriptive method, which is based on the structuring of this work.

The novelty of the proposed research lies not only in the choice of the object of research and its systematic theoretical description, but at the same time in the opportunity to independently study this issue, relying on the research done by scientists in resolving this issue.

Professional ethics and its features

Ethics is the doctrine of morality, a set of principles and norms of behavior of people in relation to each other and to society. The emergence and development of morality is based on the need to unite people for joint work, which accordingly determines the allocation of professional ethics to a special category.

Professional ethics is a term that is used to refer to several concepts:

- the first concept is a system of professional moral standards;
- the second concept is the direction of ethical research regarding the foundations of professional activity.²

Professional ethics is a system of moral principles, norms and rules of conduct for a specialist in a certain branch of production, taking into account the established characteristics of his professional activity and even a specific professional situation. Professional ethics is an integral part of the behavior of every specialist, although compliance with ethical standards is voluntary, i.e. it depends on the level of education of the person and the level of his morality.

The content of any professional ethics always consists of two components - the general and the specific. General principles of professional ethics, which are based on universal human moral standards, presuppose:

- firstly, professional solidarity (sometimes degenerating into corporatism);
- secondly, a special understanding of duty and honor;
- thirdly, a special form of responsibility, which is determined by the subject and type of professional activity.

Particular principles always follow from any specific conditions, as well as from the content and specifics of a particular profession and are expressed mainly in moral codes - requirements in relation to specialists.

Professional ethics considers different types of relationships and characteristics:

- relations between work collectives and each specialist in this collective individually;
- moral qualities of the personality of each specialist individually, which necessarily ensure the best performance of professional duty;
- relationships within professional teams, and those specific moral norms characteristic of a given profession;
- features of professional education.

Professionalism and attitude to work are important characteristics of a person's moral character, and therefore an expression of their ethical norms and rules.

Professional ethics is designed to regulate human relations in the sphere of production. Each profession has its own specifics of the accepted and current value system. Everyday experience and the need to regulate relationships between people of a particular profession

² Балашов Л.Е. Этика. Учебное пособие – М., 2003, с. 17

contributed to the creation and formalization of certain requirements of professional ethics.

Having originally emerged as a manifestation of everyday moral consciousness, professional ethics subsequently developed on the basis of a generalization of the practice of behavior of representatives of each profession. These generalizations were summarized both in the form of various codes of conduct and in the form of theoretical conclusions, which indicated a transition from ordinary to theoretical consciousness in the field of professional morality.

This explains the fact that it is in the regulation of human relations in the sphere of production that there are a number of problems that many thinkers have paid attention to at different times, from ancient Greek to modern philosophers.

The first ethical requirements for the actions of a specialist are reflected in the ancient Egyptian manuscript “Instructions of the city commander and vizier Ptah-hetep,” dating back to the 3rd millennium BC. There is evidence in early written sources that more than 4,000 years ago people realized the need to impose moral requirements on a number of professions. Ancient treatises noted that belonging to a certain profession can form both positive and negative moral qualities in people.

Professional ethics appeared already in antiquity as an integral part of the general ethical theory. During this period, edifying poems appear whose purpose is to show guidelines for a correct life. Such edifying poems include Hesiod's Works and Days. It is historical evidence of the development of work morality during the period of early antiquity.

In addition to the development of general norms of labor morality, the appearance of the first professional codes-oaths dates back to the era of antiquity.

For example, the ancient philosophers Aristotle and Hippocrates formulated the first standards of medical ethics. It was in the works of ancient thinkers and, above all, in works devoted to medical ethics that ideas about the incompatibility with healing of abusing a patient's trust, manipulating his will, and the need to take care not to cause pain or involuntary harm arose for the first time. Already in Ancient Greece, teachers were required to have love for children, deep knowledge of their subject, restraint, and fairness in punishments and rewards. Which was also a manifestation of professional ethics.

The works of other ancient philosophers pointed out the relationship between the division of social labor and the moral principles of society. Thinkers noted that society can function and develop normally only as a result of the continuous process of production of material and valuables. Although this understanding of professional ethics was not accepted by everyone. The period of Antiquity is considered the period of labor morality, when the requirement of conscientious work was clearly formulated as the norm of human moral life.

Outstanding thinkers of the Eastern Renaissance of the 7th-12th centuries expressed their understanding of professional ethics. Al-Ruhawi, Ar-Razi, Ibn Sina, Maimonides. The great educator, ideologist and promoter of general and sanitary culture, Abu Ali Ibn Sino, in his treatise “The Canon of Medical Science” outlined the humane principles of medical ethics, which for

many centuries served as the basis for the moral education of doctors.³

In the Middle Ages, professional ethics is a unification of the ideas of ancient philosophy and religion with the dominant influence of religious provisions. Prominent representatives of medieval ethics were Augustine the Blessed and Thomas Aquinas.

Professionalism in the Middle Ages received a new impetus due to the spread of Christianity. The construction of temples and their arrangement required architects and blacksmiths, glassmakers and painters, silversmiths, weavers and goldsmiths. This need to “work for God” (and not for oneself) is both the root of the high quality of manufactured products and the reason for the spread of professional technologies in the cultural space.

The ethics of Protestantism played a significant role in the development of professional consciousness, which established the concept of a person’s professional calling as a means of his salvation. For example, M. Luther even translated the corresponding words of Jesus son of Sirach from the Bible as “stay in your profession” and “stay in your profession” instead of “stay in your work,” as was the case in early Catholic translations.

The medieval traditions of a sublime attitude towards work as service were further developed in the ethical quests of the Italian humanists of the Renaissance. In their writings, they glorified man’s ability to understand nature with the help of natural knowledge. They called on a person to be active, they believed that a person himself was able to understand vices and virtues, without waiting for the Last Judgment.

Professional ethics developed especially rapidly in the 20th century. The rapid development of science, the formation of a unified world economic system and world communication systems, the highest level of cooperation in the production process, etc. contributed to the fact that there are practically no professions left that do not have special moral requirements as part of their activities. All people, one way or another, find themselves dependent on the results of everyone’s work. This was reflected in the creation of numerous codes of professional morality. American expert on business ethics R.I. De George, in his textbook “Business Ethics”⁴ notes that professional ethics is one of the elements of applied ethics, the features of which determine the conditions for the development and complexity of professional activity in modern society.

CONCLUSION

A profession is a type of work activity that is necessarily characterized by a certain amount of professional requirements placed on a person. All these requirements are necessarily defined in professional ethics, which regulates the basic ethical principles and norms of behavior of people within the framework of a specific type of work activity. It is professional ethics that reflects the peculiarities of the moral consciousness of members of the work collective, their relationships and behavior, which are determined by the specifics of professional activity.

Society has always considered the moral qualities of an employee as the leading elements of his professional suitability.

³ Шерова, З. Н. Развитие этики и деонтологии / З. Н. Шерова, Д. М. Маматова, А. С. Каттабеков, Г. Х. Ахатова. — Текст : непосредственный // Молодой ученый. — 2015. — № 22 (102). — С. 312-316. — URL: <https://moluch.ru/archive/102/23012/> (дата обращения: 16.08.2023).

⁴ Де Джордж Р.Т. Деловая этика / пер.с англ. – М.: ИГ «Прогресс», 2003.

As an analysis of the literature has shown, issues of professional ethics and problems associated with it became the subject of attention already in the works of ancient thinkers, including Aristotle and Hippocrates. In subsequent times, issues of professional ethics became the subject of attention in the Middle Ages and in subsequent stages of social development.

Professional ethics, having emerged as a manifestation of everyday moral consciousness, then developed on the basis of the generalized practice of behavior of representatives of each professional group. It is modern society that has determined the features of professional ethics: on the one hand, it serves to institutionalize the profession, systematizes and normalizes its relationships with society and other professions, and on the other hand, it isolates the profession, justifies its exclusivity, legitimizes professional norms that do not correspond (do not quite correspond) generally accepted.

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