

Reflections on the Inadvertence between the Ethical Axioms – Integrity and Corruption

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ABSTRACT: Starting from the principle according to which ethics itself is a somewhat paradoxical “science”, an unusual mixture of contingency and universality, aiming at wisdom (phronesis) rather than science itself (Pleșu 1994, 10), the present approach represents an action nyptic to signal, like axiology, the relations of mutual hostility between the ethical-integrity axiom and the phenomenon of corruption. We believe that it is inescapably necessary to draw attention to the facts of general inadvertence of immoral conduct towards ethical attitudes and professional integrity related to all fields of activity, but especially to the fields of education and justice.

KEYWORDS: Ethics, morals, professional integrity, corruption, education, justice

1. Ethics-Professional Integrity Axiom

We note with regret, that the ability to distinguish between good and bad, between vice and virtue, justice and injustice seems to be within everyone’s reach. *“In terms of ethics, we constantly operate through an indestructible self-complacency. We live in a baroque inflation of moral competence, in a world whose main disorder risks being the fact that all its members feel morally in order, or that all feel their own disorder as negligible”* (Plesu 1994, 9).

As an abstract thought, in ethics there are no categorical laws and there is no order, there are only actions congruent with an ethical current and incongruent attitudes, but there are cases where ethics has moral value and morality has ethical value. In Kantian ethics, some actions can be labelled as bad regardless of the consequences, and the categorical imperative (inexorability) has similar connotations to commandments in Christianity.

It has been observed that any form of human behavior contains moral problems focused on value judgments regarding the different degrees of “goodness” and “evil”, of “correctness” and “incorrectness”, of “justice” and “injustice” in human conduct (Pivniceru and Luca 2008, 3). As a human valence, ethics does not urge us to close our eyes and pass over such situations, but, on the contrary, it teaches us *to reflect on our* (or others’) posture as amoralists, so that we know how to better establish morality. In such a way, it is possible to discover that morality is a prerogative of man, because he is a rational being and, equally, because *“rationality always involves affectivity, sympathetic relationships both with oneself, with one’s peers, and with everything that exists or can exist in the world.”* (Sârbu 2005, 83-85). However, when we talk about moral judgment, this represents a point of view related to personal facts or the facts of others, assessments based on the valorization of the requirements of personal and community good.

The difficulties facing moral judgment should not lead to the conclusion that it is difficult to formulate or almost impossible. *The act of moral judgment* requires discipline and responsibility towards obligations and rights, towards permissions and prohibitions. There is also a need for the coherent articulation of the hierarchy of moral values, a fact that allows the rejection of relativism.

Professional ethics are actually based on a set of principles that are meant to help us govern our decision-making process and distinguish right from wrong. These are established through a code of ethics, these principles present the mission and values of an organization, the way in which the professionals within the organization must approach the problems and the standards to which they are engaged (Gașițoi 2021) members of a society.

Integrity is the foundation of a successful relationship by promoting a professional culture where individuals can depend on each other and treat each other with respect. As a result, people are usually more productive and motivated at work.

Integrity is acting in an honorable manner, even when no one is watching. People with integrity follow moral and ethical principles in all aspects of life, not just at work. When the person has integrity they are better equipped to provide high quality service and maintain a positive reputation. When the person you work with has integrity, you can trust that they will work diligently in people's interests (Gașițoi 2021).

In the judicial field, it is important to emphasize that the understanding of the role of the judiciary in democratic states, especially the awareness that the judge's responsibility is to apply the law in a fair and impartial way, without taking into account possible social or political pressures, varies considerably in different states, and the level of confidence in the system's activity is consequently diverse. Proper information about the functions of the judiciary and its role can effectively contribute to increasing the degree of understanding of courts and prosecutors' offices as the basis of democratic constitutional systems, as well as the limits of their activities. These principles are intended to support the representatives of the other powers of the state, the participants in the process and the public, in understanding the nature and specifics of the judicial power, the high standards of conduct that judges must maintain both within the courts and outside them, such as and constraints in the exercise of judicial functions, in social and private life (Scrigroup.com n.d).

2. Corruption - Ethics Antagonism

Ethics and integrity are attributes of fairness and justice. The components of integrity are honesty and professional morality. Both the teacher and the magistrate must always act honorably, not only in the performance of professional duties and in a manner suitable for the didactic or judicial function, not to be involved in acts of corruption. It is considered that there are no degrees of integrity by definition; it is absolute or absent. In academia and the judiciary, integrity is more than a virtue, it is a necessity.

Society and the members of each profession enter into an unwritten social contract, whereby the members of the profession agree to renounce some narrow interests, promote the ideals of public service, and adhere to high standards of activity, while society allows the profession substantial autonomy to self-regulation. The ethics of a profession describes the specific duties assumed by its members through social contact (Hamilton 2002, 3).

Both in the university and in the judicial environment there are "temptations" that can divert the magistrate or teacher from normal professional conduct. That is why the choice and exercise of these professions must be made from intrinsic convictions and passion and not from desired materials. For academia, the professor must be more than a teacher, he must also be an example of morality and behavior for students. Interests of a pecuniary nature have no place in this professional environment. The interests of the academic environment must be those related to the guidance and professional training of students, of methodology focused on the interests of formation and modeling of outstanding characters that can trigger feelings of admiration and respect in the future. In this sense, the academic environment must never tolerate exam cheating by students. If a teacher allows students to copy on an exam, he is accepting fraud. Copying is cheating on an exam, and cheating can lead to corruption. Professional ethics and integrity stand in a relationship of mutual hostility to corruption.

Endemic corruption is corruption that is an integral and essential part of the economic, social and political system. Practically, most institutions and activities are used and dominated by individuals and groups of corrupt individuals, there being no other alternative for citizens than to accept and get involved in these acts of corruption. Relative to a single institution, systemic corruption occurs when the entire organization, its culture or leadership allows

corrupt practices, turns a blind eye to these acts and even encourages such inappropriate behaviors (Caiden 2003, 38).

The activity of each member of the academic community must relate to the highest standards of competence and professionalism. The university environment initiates academic programs able to contribute significantly to the evolution of knowledge, to the overall development and training of competitive specialists. Each member of the academic community must take responsibility for the quality of the teaching and research activity and for his contribution to the education process.

Academic integrity is built through the ethical behavior of members of the community of each university, which generates a culture based on academic honesty and intellectual rigor, in which the educational act strives for excellence and is supported by fair and objective assessment, and all members contribute to the prevention, identifying and reporting actions that endanger this target, so that the university can intervene and sanction reprehensible acts. (Practical guide to the Code of Ethics and Professional Deontology in UPB, 5)

In the judicial environment, the magistrate is required to ensure that judicial procedures are carried out in an orderly and efficient manner and that no abuses occur in the process. Thus, an appropriate level of firmness is required. The judge is obliged to establish a delicate balance, the expectations being that he conducts the process with care and speed and at the same time prevents the creation, in the mind of the reasonable observer, of any sense of lack of impartiality. Any action that would create well-founded suspicions about the lack of impartiality in the performance of judicial functions must be avoided (Scrigroup.com n.d).

There may be situations in which a bribe can be given by the person sent to court in order to benefit from a lighter sanction. The failure of the judge to justify the solutions in this sense or the insufficient reasoning make the discretionary way of dosing a punishment or establishing the way of its execution favor acts of corruption or at least the existence and amplification of suspicions regarding it (Danilet 2009, 29).

The magistrate must be a model of integrity as a moral value, a value which in turn is built on independence and springs from integrity.

Integrity is an inner trait that involves acting in a manner consistent with principles and values, without compromises, both in the exercise of work duties and in private life. It signifies the exercise of the function honestly, correctly and conscientiously, in good faith. In practice, integrity manifests itself in the performance of judicial acts with objectivity, in full equality, respecting the terms provided by law, in order to ensure the full legality of the performed act. In justice, integrity is more than a virtue, it is a necessity (Danilet 2009, 2).

3. Conclusions

Ethics and professional integrity are not laws that you obey, they represent inner laws that you communicate with and that know how to listen to you. These inner laws are willing to be allowed to be questioned and possibly bent. We can affirm that: “we do not brutally (agrios) impose our decisions on anyone, but only propose them, leaving them the freedom to choose between persuading us and obeying us” (Plato). Only the law you choose knowingly is legitimate; and in order to be “eligible”, it must, on the one hand, be given to you, and on the other hand, leave you the right to another choice (Pleșu 1994, 21).

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