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Morality and Science: The Nature of Their Connection

1. The prevailing view of science and morality, recognized by specialists and established by philosophical dictionaries, is that these are different forms of a person's attitude to the world. The emphasis is on the fact that these are different things. Science objectifies the world, turns everything it deals with into an external object; it is interested in what objects in themselves are, is aimed at obtaining adequate knowledge about objects and about the world as an object. Morality, on the other hand, subjectifies the world; it looks at the world through the prism of what the subject does with it. Thus, within the framework of the specification of science and morality prevailing today in the subject field of philosophy, they are not just different from each other, they are opposites.

• Science objectifies the world in the sense that it considers it exclusively in the form of an object, cleansing it of everything that is introduced into it by a living individual, as if the process of cognition proceeded without a subject, or, in another version, if all its subjectivity consisted in getting objective knowledge. As the Russian specialist in the field of philosophy of science, **Professor V.S. Stepin (1934-2018)**, used to say: science in this respect is similar to King Midas from the ancient myth: just as everything that King Midas touched turned into gold, so everything that science touches turns into an object. Morality subjectifies the world - this means that it considers a living individual as if they were a self-sufficient entity, and not a part of the world, as if they did not depend on the world, but the world depended on them, as if they themselves were the world, giving them the foundation of their existence.



- **2. Science constructs its subject, which allows it to consider the world in the form of an object, and morality constructs its object, which allows it to consider the world in the form of a subject. Each of them, both science and morality, creates its own model of the relationship between the subject and the object and, thanks to this, is constituted into independent systemic wholes. And as such, they no longer depend on each other; each develops according to its own logic. Science as a form of knowledge about the world is beyond good and evil. Morality as an ideal image of the world is beyond the truth and delusion.**

- **3. Within the framework of this understanding, the relations between them acquire an external character, acting towards each other as additional and incidental factors: services, obstacles, barriers, dangers, conditions, difficulties, friendship, enmity, uncertainty, situationality etc. The overwhelming majority of the established, constantly discussed in the literature and public discussions, lines of mutual influences of science (knowledge) and ethics (morality) fit into such external influences. This can include almost everything that is covered by such familiar general headings as “ethics of science”, “humanism and science”, "ethical expertise of scientific projects", "the problem of the truth of moral judgments ", "scientific status of ethics ", "moral limitations of science", etc. The question arises: are there any links between science and morality, which are of a deeper, systematic and necessary character, have not only an external, but internal nature and which represent parts of a general philosophical worldview?**

- **4. In fact, in our natural language and humanitarian experience, we use concepts of science and morality which are more organically linked to each other than is enshrined in their binding formal definitions. No one has any doubts: science is aimed at finding the truth. "WHY NOT RATHER untruth? And uncertainty? Even ignorance? The problem of the value of truth presented itself before us—or was it we who presented ourselves before the problem? Which of us is the Oedipus here? Which the Sphinx??" - asked Nietzsche, emphasizing that the very separation of truth and untruth, on which science rests, is a value choice. Philosophy, aiming knowledge at the truth, recognizes it as the very good, the good precisely as truth, that is, objective knowledge about the world. In the same way, within the cacophony of voices in approaches to morality, everyone in one way or another agrees that it is a force directed towards ideals that are considered correct, true. Thus, science turns out to be grounded on the moral good, and morality turns out to be grounded on the truth.**

- **If we proceed from these statements, which we are really guided by in our social experience, then it turns out that science and morality mutually make reference to each other: we derive science from morality, having previously elevated truth over delusion according to the value criterion, and we derive morality from knowledge by weighing life ideals on the scales of truth.**

- **5. The philosophical tradition views knowledge as the highest product of theoretical reason, and morality as the same highest point of practical reason. Fixing mainly attention on their differences, it has left aside the fundamental fact that they both grow from the same trunk of the human reason.**
- **Kant formulated the famous questions: "What can I know?" and "What should I do?" These questions, for all their clarity, raise one big question: Who is this "I" asking these questions? Is this I the same in both cases or not? The answer seems to be unquestionable. The subject (agent) of both sentences is the same: the one who can ask questions at all, man as a rational being who affirms himself in his own rationality, that is, reason. However, upon closer analysis, the subjects are different. In the first case, the I acts as a cognizing reason that seeks to realize its outwardly delineated objective boundaries. In the second case, it acts as a practical reason, as a will based on those grounds that reason, now no longer limited by anything, sets itself to itself, acting autonomously.**

- **One and the same I (human reason) appears sometimes as limited (objective) knowledge, and then as unlimited (free) will. If there are two reasons, how do they fit in one head? In other words, what does reason mean before it splits into diverging theoretical and practical aspects? The question of the connection between science and morality in its fundamental philosophical grounds is the question of how theoretical reason and practical reason relate to each other.**



- **Kant offers his solution by the very order of the famous questions: practical reason begins where the possibilities of theoretical reason end, where the theoretical reason stumbles upon its boundaries, loses cognitive power. Thus, morality as a subjective (personal, goal-oriented) aspect of reason was separated and opposed to cognition as its objective aspect. The connection between practical reason and theoretical reason turns out to be purely negative: it consists in realizing and thereby fixing the limits of theoretical reason's claim to go beyond its objective boundaries. This, in fact, is the essence of the categorical imperative, which obliges to limit any deliberately given foundations of human will by the condition of their universality.**

II.

- **1. Modern ideas about the process of cognition proceed from the fact that the immediately given in sensation is not assembled into a whole image, does not give a person the completeness of the object. For this, the sensation should be supplemented with what is not given directly in the experience, but is brought in from another – a-priori, rational - part of the consciousness. Generally speaking, we are talking about concepts that are introduced by the reason as ideally corresponding to the direct data of sensation and, combining with these data, bring the experience itself to the completeness of the object of human sensory perception. Thus, the concepts introduced by reason themselves enter sensory experience as a necessary part of it. Let's think about this initial epistemological situation: the sensation, that develops in the course of the interaction of the external world with our bodily organs of perception, contains rational elements as a constant and necessary part, that which is brought in from the reason. The question is: where do these rational elements come from if they were not given directly in the sensation itself and at the same time are a necessary part of it, without which this experience cannot receive the integrity of the object? There can be only one answer: they are produced by reason itself, they are the result of its activity. And only the combination of what is given to the individual from the outside and is perceived as a response, imprinting this given in one's body, with what is produced by the person himself, is generated by one's reason. Only the combination of these two things gives the fullness of reality which human being deals with in their conscious activity.**

- **2. Concepts, coming from reason, thus also get involved into sensation, but they can enter it only after they themselves have acquired a sensible form, fixing themselves in a language or other perceptible sign. This is perhaps the most essential moment in getting to the origins of our thinking: concepts are the only object that a person must produce before they can become the property of experience and thus an object of knowledge. They are part of human sensation, but such a part that is not given to it from outside, but is generated by man. Concepts, having joined experience, having materialized in it, testify to the existence of reason as a second source of this experience, alongside and in contrast to the external world.**

- **Concepts are free products of the activity of human reason, they are forms of person's thinking. Man does not borrow them from anywhere, they are not given from the external world, in the external world we deal with separate sensory objects, we do not encounter concepts. They are also not related to what might be called personal psychological consciousness. Thinking is directed at the observed object, and not at the thinking person. Moreover, it presumes that a person should forget about himself, his bodily state, worries, experiences, so that he completely frees himself for immersion in the object of thought. When we are immersed in thought, we do not feel the time or what is happening around us. It is as if we ourselves were immersed in the universal nature of thinking. And at the same time, thinking is the only thing in the world that a person must create himself before he can observe it and deal with it. And in this sense, it is fundamentally individual, - thinking is the only place in which we are at our own place.**

- Behind concepts as a conceivable part of experience there is nothing but reason itself, they are its manifestation, its primary facts. **Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925)** highlighted this feature of thinking and (as far as I can judge), for the first time emphasized its paramount philosophical significance and wrote, thinking is the only object that we ourselves must create in order to be able to observe it. **"The presence of all other objects is taken care of without any activity on our part. ... in thinking we have got hold of one corner of the whole world process which requires our presence if anything is to happen."** In this sense, thinking is identical with the free activity of the human individual. If freedom is the activity containing its foundations in itself, then we must admit that thinking (the activity of reason, or even better: the life of reason!) and freedom are one and the same.



- **There is an obvious and fundamental fact indicating that the sensory experience of a living individual is formed as a result of summing up the influences of the external world on his sense organs and his internal mental activity accompanying these influences. It consists in the following: sensory experience is formed and shaped in the process of how the individual masters language (speech). The question of when and how the mental development of children occurs, how thoughts are generally captured in the matter of language, remains a problem for research and discussion among specialists, but nevertheless it is quite clear that the mastering of speech, including the use of concepts as designations of things, learning the basics of grammar occurs at the age of 1.5-2 years. It happens to a large extent by itself, spontaneously, and occurs as a practical act in the process of affective and volitional activity. Thus, the mental activity of children in the form of speech is included in their sensory experience before they begin to comprehend this experience in the form of an object.**

- **Thought itself in that primary appearance, in which it is included in sensory experience, thought as a fact outside the subject and object, in the form of concepts, must still be generated and objectified in the form of experience so that it could become an object of observation, cognition. It is not a subject who thinks, but a living individual who becomes a subject due to the fact that he thinks. From this moment, from the separation of the subject from the object, cognition begins, the essence of which is to work with concepts that are given as facts within the framework of a directly given sensory experience. The essence of cognition is to investigate concepts, cleanse them of distorting sensory layers, reveal their internal regular connections and present them as true knowledge, so that a person can include them as ideal motives for his activities.**

- **In this sense, cognition is a human deed, a human decision. The objective world itself does not need us to know it. Man needs it, we need it. The very subjectness of cognition as a free activity consists in its exclusively objective nature, which we denote today by the concept of scientific character and see this scientific character in unconditional adherence to truth. The point is to understand the truth itself as a human activity, as what we will, as our decision, as the adequate content of an individual human act.**

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- **3. We have a good tradition of naming laws after the scientists who discovered them. Namely: they opened them! Of course, the law of universal gravitation or the law of the dependence of the properties of chemical elements on the value of their atomic masses are objective laws of nature and existed before Newton and Mendeleev, but they became truths only thanks to Newton and Mendeleev, and only after that, did they enter the area of free human activity. This difference between the law of nature and the same law as the law of science is precisely the same difference where human activity, practice is located: here lies the source of human freedom, the source of morality, which is the free activity of man.**
- **This is - if you modify the famous image of Spinoza - the difference between a stone that falls down, moved by the force of gravity, and a person who knows that he is moved by the force of gravity, and therefore learned to fly in airplanes and jump with a parachute.**

- **Freedom and the life of nature, as is commonly believed, do not agree well with each other, even exclude each other. This is so if they are considered by themselves, as independent abstractions. But, considered as aspects (moments, stages) of a specific human activity, they line up in a strict unity.**
- **The real connection of man with nature is mediated by his attitude to it. In his activity, a person deals not with nature itself, but with his ideas and knowledge about it. Having become the content of human actions, natural forces do not lose their inevitability, but the very natural inevitability rises to the level of knowledge and takes the form of a conscious human decision.**

- **So, the reason of the human individual begins its life as a practical reason, namely, as an activity for the production of concepts as a necessary ideal part of sensory experience, without which this experience could not acquire stability and integrity, could not become the objective world of the person's existence. At the next stage, this reason of the human individual acts in the form of theoretical reason, aimed at cognition of the ideal basis of the world of objects, in order to separate truth from error in it and include it in the content of the person's activity. To understand the real unity of reason in its practical and theoretical aspects, it is necessary to consider these aspects as moments of the same internally united human activity.**

III.

- **1.The specificity of human activity is that it is conscious. Its fundamental unit is an act. For human activity an act is the same as what a sensation is for a person's sensory perception and what a concept is for rational thinking. The conscious nature of human activity means that for a person, to be is to act. The fundamental and paramount philosophical meaning of the concept of an act, in my opinion, was studied by the Russian thinker **Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975).****

- **For Bakhtin, an act is not one of the themes, but the beginning and the main subject of philosophy. An act for him is the same as a number for Pythagoras or an idea for Plato. He says that with the emergence of consciousness, and perhaps even with the emergence of biological life on earth, being was divided into being-in-itself and for-itself and being for another.**



- **Something similar happened to Being as happens to a conscious person at the stage of the emergence of self-consciousness, namely, “something absolutely new has appeared, an over (above, super) being has appeared”. With a person, a center appears that organizes the eventful structure of being.**
- **A person does not just get attached to the world in some niche suitable for his existence, along with other forms of life. He, in principle, from the beginning, according to his natural organization, cannot settle in one point or another in the world without having to relate to the world as a whole, not to become its center, not to transform being itself into an event of one’s own individual and unique life. Being is not given to him, it is prescribed to him. Man (and this is his basic characteristic) is in the ought-relation to the world: as Bakhtin puts it, he "must have his ought". The existential status of a person is determined by the fact that his attitude to the world is the attitude of oughtness, that, speaking in another way, a person has no alibi in being. Non-alibi in Being is one of the key concepts of the philosophy of an act.**

- **Non-alibi in being is realized in a participating attitude to the world, in an active relation to it, as to one's own. “... for to be in life, to be actually, is to act” says Bakhtin.**
- **The concept of an act can be considered a positive expression of what in negative form is expressed in the concept of non-alibi in Being. “Conscious life at every moment is an act: I act in deed, word, thought, feeling: I live, I become an act”. An act is committed by a living individual - not a subject, not a rational creature, not a representative of the species, etc. (all these definitions are secondary), one cannot even say that the individual is the author of the act, the individual does not stand behind the act - he is actualized in the act as a completely concrete, each time the only-one living being. We can say: an act is a human way of life.**

- **2. An act represents the unity of the individual (life) and the world (culture). Like the ancient god of inputs and outputs, Janus, it looks in two opposite directions - in the acting individual and in the world. In an act, one should separate, first, the very fact of its genesis, its relevance to the existence of a given quite definite individual; and, secondly, its objective content, which is set by the matter of the act. These two parts (sides) of the act are fundamentally different, they have different modality. The fact of an act is precisely a fact, like any other fact with which we are dealing in sensory experience, it is unique and does not testify to anything, except that it is. The fact of an act can be perceived, experienced, but cannot be rationally dissected, its difference from other facts (from, for example, how the concept of a fact is used in the philosophy of science) is that it carries a personal, purely personal freeze-mark, as its own identifying feature. One cannot say about an act that it is being performed, produced; it cannot be described or dissected. The fact of an act happens; it can only be named. As for the content of an act, it is determined by its inclusion in the causal connection of the world and is the subject of the corresponding forms of cognition, theoretical generalization (theoritisms, as Bakhtin says): science, ethics, art, etc. In this aspect, in terms of content, meaning, the act belongs to the objectifying analysis, which is completely abstracted from the individual - personal stamp lying on it.**

- **Either the fact of an act, or its objective content in and of itself – considered separately – does not constitute an act. It is the unity of both. The key question is how, in what sequence, these aspects are interconnected. To answer it, one should bear in mind the following fundamental point: starting from the meaning, from the substantive content of an act, we will never come to the fact of its embodiment in the life of this particular individual, as Bakhtin puts it, to the need for his only-one being or non-being. The meaning of any case, considered by itself, always remains in the realm of the possible, is fraught with doubts, admits of improvement, includes many options, etc., in principle, it cannot explain its factual uniqueness: the train schedule will not tell me where to go, the theory of love will not explain why Desdemona fell in love with Othello, no sociology will tell why, in the civil war, two brothers went to different armies.**

"Any kind of practical orientation of my life within the theoretical world is impossible: it is impossible to live in it, impossible to perform answerable deeds. In that world I am unnecessary; I am essentially and fundamentally non-existent in it."

- **But if you move in the opposite direction, start from the fact of the act, then you will inevitably come to the content of the latter: the content of the act is an attached moment of the act, filling it with real actual meaning, rooting in being. A decision about an act is always at the same time a decision about its meaning, its substantive content.**

"All of theoretical reason in its entirety is only a moment of practical reason, i.e., the reason of the unique subjectum's moral orientation within the event of once-occurrent Being."

- **3.The unity of an act is realized in its specific responsibility; an act is a moment of life itself: just as by eating, we support ourselves physiologically, so, by acting, we live a human life. As Bakhtin says, an act in its integrity is more than rational, it is responsible. Here we are talking not about the secondary responsibility that the world presents in various analytically prepared forms (before the law, before conscience, before parents, before science, before the homeland, etc.), but about the primary quality of the life of the individual, which is made up of his own actions, like a building under construction is made of bricks.**
- **Responsibility as the life basis of an act is also twofold, like the act itself: it is divided into moral responsibility for the fact of the act and special responsibility for the content of the act. Actually, resolving upon acting, an individual only specializes his responsibility, assumes responsibility for its content as well. Moral responsibility expresses the obligative (ought-to-be) uniqueness of an act, and special responsibility expresses its objective significance; only their combination gives an adequate philosophy of life: "It is possible, after all, to pass around meaning and it is also possible to lead meaning irresponsibly past Being."**

• Thus, Bakhtin's morally oriented ontology proceeds from the fact that objective, including scientific, knowledge reveals its objective truthfulness only in direct correlation and as a direct continuation of the moral responsibility of those precise people who produce this knowledge. The very being of a person, due to his individually expressed uniqueness, is responsible in all moments of life, including in scientific activity.

CONCLUSION

- In conclusion, one example which shows that scientific judgment is a human act, and as such it is always concrete. This example also shows that scientific judgment, along with impersonal objective content, which is weighed on the scales of objective truth, is also a subjective, strictly personal responsible position of the individual who stands behind this judgment. During the Second World War, the department of Nazi Germany responsible for the so-called final solution of the Jewish question faced difficulties in defining the "racial classification" of the ethnolinguistic group of the Lithuanian-Crimean Karaites. The Nazi authorities had to decide whether this small nation fell under the anti-Jewish laws of the Third Reich. They twice discussed the issue of its racial identity and for the second time in 1941 they turned to three authoritative Jewish scholars who were at that time in different Jewish ghettos - **Zelig Kalmanovich, Meir Balaban, Ignatsi Shapir.**



• **All three were known to hold the view that the Karaites are of Jewish origin. But, answering the request of the German authorities, without making an arrangement, all three separately gave an opinion that the Karaites were of non-Jewish origin. They, of course, spoke so in order to save the Karaites. This decision became an important page in the biography of these three scientists, who ended their lives in Nazi ghettos and camps. All agree: they acted morally impeccably. But had they not deviated from the requirement of scientific honesty?**



- **In my opinion, no, they did not deviate from it. On the contrary, they demonstrated a genuine adherence to the truth. Since the time of Aristotle, we have known that truth is located not in things, but in the process of reason. This means that it is generated by the need of people to know what are the objective characteristics of things that are involved in their life.**

- **With regard to our case, the Jewish professors, firstly, could not ignore where the need to know their scientific opinion came from and why it was requested. By their judgments, they were included in the event context aimed at the destruction of the Jews, and if they had given a positive answer, they would have become accomplices in this atrocity. They could not help but consider for what purpose it was intended.**

Secondly, they understood that their answer, whatever it might have been according to objective criteria, would nevertheless be their own statement, which would be signed by their own names, and for which each of them took personal responsibility. So, answering the request, expressing their opinion, each of them performed a personal act, acted not on behalf of science, but on behalf of science, personified in each of them.

Thirdly, their view on the ethnicity of the Karaites concerned the history of ethnos, but not the personal ethnic characteristics of those individuals who were parts of that community.

Finally, changing their earlier opinion on the issue under consideration, they also did not deviate from scientific honesty. The question of the origin of the Karaites, as well as most of the general issues with which science deals, including the very question of what truth is, is one of the disputable ones. The opinion held by our three scientists that the Karaites were Jews was formulated within the framework of academic disputes and had its value only within this framework. And it was shared by the majority of serious specialists, but not by all.

• Of course, as is usual in academia, they believed their point of view was true. But it is one thing to consider a certain statement to be true, and it is another thing to consider it objective in the absolute sense. And the ethics of the scientist, along with the fact that it requires fidelity to the truth, also requires staying open in relation to the truth. Therefore, Kalmanovich, Balaban and Shapir, without deceiving anyone and, most importantly, not deceiving themselves, and following the norms of scientific honesty, could, and even had to, give the conclusion about the Jewishness of the Karaites which they gave.

• This example shows that scientific truth can be considered ethically neutral only if it is considered each time by itself, abstractly, if it is torn out of the chain of life ties as something self-sufficient and impersonal. But scientific truth is by no means ethically neutral if we consider it in the context of a specific human activity, taking into account the goals and consequences of the latter, as a manifestation and continuation of a morally responsible act.

