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## Practical consequences – ethical values as the basis for a system of public health management

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**Abstract** The place of the first and last meeting between the citizen and the system is the hospital. The organisation of its management is basically a condition of human life, later of health and finally, of a dignified death. We could say that the system of managing public health is a basis for the dignity of the nation, a basis for humanity. The hospital is a place of mutual learning between system and citizen, of studying its possibilities. The relationship between individual and public health is virtually unbreakable. We could claim that for the newborn infant, the hospital is the place where statehood first manifests itself. It is a preliminary element, the riser on the steps to the system, an introduction to life. But later, this same system observes the young citizen in his development. The system requires healthy individuals, identifying with it and its division into specific roles. It therefore educates, then indicates the places within its organism which need filling, so that its main functions are maintained. In order to minimise the risks of any potential error, the system defines the possibilities of the citizen. To this end, the means of evaluation in the hospital, later clinic and school, are those most employed.

**Key words:** public health, ethical dilemme, mind-body problem

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The second important pillar for evaluation is the verification of civic attitudes, in particular in relation to peers. Interpersonal relations are a meeting place. Various interests, attitudes, natures and views of reality meet here. All possible points of view, goals and deeply hidden secrets, complexes and memories meet here. By forming suitable attitudes, school teaches not only how to be a citizen but, equally difficult, how to be oneself. It is only by

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<sup>1</sup> Diamond S. A., *Anger, madness, and the daimonic*. University of New York Press, New York 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Zimbardo P., *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*, Random House Trade Paperbacks, New York: 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Plantinga A., *The Nature of Necessity*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1974.

<sup>4</sup> Zimbardo P., *The Lucifer Effect...* op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Young-Bruehl E., *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut 1982.

synchronising these two elements that a truly responsible citizen, desired by the system, is created<sup>6</sup>.

Let us remember that the first encounters take place and the first relationships are forged at home, on the playground, in nursery school, but in those places, the child is under constant supervision, and its social relationships are nearly entirely the result of recommendations provided by adults. It is often the parents who decide who the child will play with on the playground. At school, this changes. The child must define its position within the school hierarchy by itself, similarly to the way adult citizens define their position within the hierarchy of the system. Within the family, the child has a particular, exceptional place. While in school the unit is the class. In this way, the child slowly learns to be part of the system, a part of a greater whole<sup>7</sup>.

The social development of man is therefore a constant choice between personal aspirations, the aspirations of parents, and through evaluation, that indicated by the system. In the early stages of school, the evaluations of the system are nearly decisive. Since children are not yet ready for choosing their own paths in life<sup>8</sup>. Leaving them to their own choices would lead to consolidating relationships based on the law of the strongest. We should add that among children, who mostly employ intuition, behaviours and social relationships tend more towards unambiguously defined situations (everything is either “black” or “white”). In turn, this means that children must, one way or another, learn to control their emotions, so as to limit the influence of impulses on evaluating reality, and thereby the formation of their social relationships. The key is the teacher skilfully taking over the initiative, in a more far-reaching way than results from the way a child and adult meet. It is the teacher, led by practice and skills gained, who should skilfully direct children, so that they can discover the space for their self-realisation.

The essence of any system of management is therefore its canon of values. This canon is created by norms, principles and moral judgements, which are the goal of educational activities. The main task of a public health system is keeping citizens healthy, with the goal being to allow them to bear the burden of education, the duties of social life, preparation for the responsible use of the benefits of civilisation and making conscious decisions, and finally – to work. It also allows to understand the basic rules for creating and verifying scientific

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<sup>6</sup> Fletcher G.P., Ohlin J.D., *Defending Humanity: When Force Is Justified and Why*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Hare R.D., *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*, The Guilford Press New York 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Plantinga A., *The Nature of Necessity...*, op. cit.

knowledge. Finally, it introduces man into current systems of knowledge, morality and society.

Since the public health system does not develop in a mental vacuum, therefore any activity from within its domain is ultimately in relation to the dominant paradigm of the time. The question is this: are moral norms subject to progress, understood in the same sense as the progress of scientific thought, for instance? If we consider that changes in the system of values are solely changes in the perception of morality and are not subject to progress (where subsequent levels are in some way better than the preceding ones), then promoting a specific system of values loses its sense<sup>9</sup>.

So to understand the basis for the educational system, we should consider the principles for building any type of system, including systems of management. Their construction is extremely codified. This has certain advantages, it makes the system understandable<sup>10</sup>.

The building of a system commences with a phase in which key concepts are identified<sup>11</sup>. All definitions should be as precise as possible and raise no doubts. Their unambiguity is a substantive strength and the content of the whole system<sup>12</sup>.

In the case of ethical concepts, this is not sufficient however. Ethics is somewhat specific. What differentiates it from other sciences is that it not only describes reality, states how it is, but also judges it. In fact, this judgement of reality is the basic task of ethics. And so ethics not only states the way things are, but also how they should be<sup>13</sup>.

Ethics and aesthetics are the only domains of science which step beyond the strict description and modelling of reality. For the exact sciences however, ethical judgements are something unacceptable (it is difficult to require that mathematics determine that multiplication is more valuable than division, or that geography consider phenomena studied by sedimentology as of more value than those studied by climatologists). Here, the principle is rationality, pragmatism. Good is not that which seems as such to us, but that which is more rational<sup>14</sup>.

Which is why for the exact sciences, the system of values proposed by ethics, allows itself too much. Yet truth cannot be something merely agreed upon, neither on the level of the individual, nor society. Why would therefore ethics – as the sole science – have the right to

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<sup>9</sup> See more: Milo R.D., *Immorality*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1984.

<sup>10</sup> Fletcher G.P., Ohlin J.D., *Defending Humanity...* op.cit.

<sup>11</sup> Kagan S., *Normative Ethics*, Boulder, Westview Press, Colorado 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Milo R.D., *Immorality...*, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Zimbardo P., *The Lucifer Effect...* op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Milo R.D., *Immorality...*, op. cit.

judge reality? Why do we, in general, attribute a scientific dimension to an assessment of anything?

Well, ethics – even though it bases itself on individual assessments of reality – simply aids in the organisation of social life. What is more, despite what many advance, it is precisely that which we call the voice of society. Norms and moral valuations flow from the heart of society. Ethical behaviours are those which always attempt to improve the organisation of social life. In this context, ethics has the right to not only describe reality, but also to indicate that which – in its view – is desirable, right and best. Indicating and judging our way of perceiving reality, the perception of our life.

Let us return to the manner of building a system. Primary concepts are key here, in the case of ethics – a basic norm. This norm directs the system of management in question, which forms and educates according to its principles. Contemporary ethics, based on the research methods of the exact sciences, professes the principle of rationality. This is the basic law of all contemporary science. Rationality has therefore become the highest value, around which the contents of the entire system are created. However, the problem resides in the fact that rationality is not a principle in itself, a defined property. It is not something instantiated enough to be deemed a basic, fundamental ethical norm. Finally, it is no norm, rather the value of some norm and a value only sought from a certain point of view. In itself, it neither expresses nor defines anything. Rationality is merely a way for ethical norms to express themselves. In different situations, various norms can be deemed rational, or not. In fact, this is the basis of all ethical dilemmas.

Contemporary attitudes can therefore be described as: materialistic hedonism, subjective individualism, deontonomism and scepticism. They are all characterised by a certain extremism. So in place of moderation, lack of feeling appears. Man should not be distanced but – as contemporary ethics would say – he should be minimally distanced. Expressing emotions is seen as a sign of evil intentions and an attitude unworthy of scientific discourse. Emotions are very nearly banned, since they are allegedly something which clutters the mind<sup>15</sup>.

Prudence is also redefined. Rationality appears in its place. School does not therefore teach prudent behaviours, which are something akin to rationalism, but on a spiritual basis. In this manner, man becomes a hostage of his own rationality. That which is most rational becomes the only thing possible.

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<sup>15</sup> Duff A., *Psychopathy and Moral Understanding*, in: “American Philosophical Quarterly”, vol. 14 (3), University of Illinois Press, Champaign 1977, pp. 189–200.

In turn, the virtue of bravery is entirely suspended. Since bravery relates to actions in relation another person. In the case of concentrating only on ourselves, bravery is jettisoned beyond the bounds of reality<sup>16</sup>.

Finally, the concept of justice which – similarly to bravery – finds no use in contemporary reality. If what is most important is that which is effective, then justice has no right to exist.

In this manner, modern systems of management, adapting to the needs of reality, bypass ethical virtues. Among many ethical outlooks they have chosen those of *Homo someti*us (carnal man) and *Homo ludens* (playful man, entertaining man; man whose goal in life is constant play). This leads to the total isolation of man from society and the construction of atomised nations.

Solitude, meanwhile, is a source of shame. It closes off and removes inspiration. It blocks. While the history of the development of thought is that of mutual suggestions, borrowings and continuation. The solitary man does not develop, he fills his thoughts with himself<sup>17</sup>.

It is evident that a society of loners dies away. Solitude is socially unacceptable. It is a differentiator, which the gregarious character of man deems a warning that the given individual is in some way impaired. This harmful conviction flows from said global intuition, defining solitude as something which endangers the social structure and the nature of society itself<sup>18</sup>.

As a rule, solitary people are therefore discriminated against. This problem, due to the overbearing number of people living in unions, is usually overlooked. The discrimination against solitary people has a subtle character. In our relationships with others, when we consider consequences and appraise potential reactions, we take into account the person and his relatives. Since human nature demonises that which is not directly knowable, and since we cannot usually fully discern the capabilities of someone's family, this family becomes a sort of mythical opponent. A potential conflict with it inspires fear. In the case of a solitary person, this problem does not exist. That person is understandable and defined. We know what that person is capable of. Which is why in crisis situations, we often concentrate on solitary people, such as in the case of an employer who must decide to fire an employee<sup>19</sup>.

The consequences of life decisions are also more serious for loners. Loners do not have this defensive family fortification, which is why they spend their lives fighting for everything. Their failure touches an environment which is composed only of the loner. Furthermore, those

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<sup>16</sup> Hare R.D., *Without Conscience...* op.cit.

<sup>17</sup> Fletcher G.P., Ohlin J.D., *Defending Humanity...* op.cit.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, pp.

<sup>19</sup> Kagan S., *Normative Ethics...* op. cit.

living in unions have the possibility of sharing their unease, while solitary people are left with their problems, and cannot ask for advice. They devise complex plans, losing touch with reality in an ocean of fantasy. They do not possess the tools to confront problems with the external world, leading them to expand them to incredible proportions, lowering themselves into the depths of obsession. Instead of devising strategies for action, they introduce ever more fantastic themes, trampling consciousness under a wealth of mythical problems. They fight within fantasy – and lose in reality. The life of a loner is hard.

Who could therefore have supposed that solitude would become a fashion? That the consequences it brings would seem appealing to anyone and that the beginning of the 21st century would see the birth of a generation of loners for whom alienation would become a way of life. That solitude would come to be associated with freedom and independence. And finally, that submitting to this mirage would become so widespread<sup>20</sup>.

Common opinions of solitude are often usually mistaken. This results mostly from a misunderstanding of the attitudes of solitary people. It is certain that anchorites or religious eremites, living in strict enclosure, far from the benefits of society, do not lay claim to this title. They have chosen this fate to experience communion with their deity. They therefore do not feel alone, since they do not seek the company of men. They even renounce these relationships, according to the conviction that in doing so, they make room for God. Eremites would surely say: “God is with me! Truly lonely is only he who does not commune with God”<sup>21</sup>.

This is similar – in short – for those dealing with the problems of nature, understood broadly<sup>22</sup>. They too alienate themselves from social relationships, replacing human contact with communion with nature<sup>23</sup>. Here also we cannot speak of solitude, due to their internal conviction of being connected to the world of nature.

After all, a necessary condition for solitude is being aware of being alone. Which is why the key to understanding the concept of solitude and the situation of solitary people is the possibility of experiencing (or not) the presence of another being. Until now, it would have seemed that experiencing this kind of presence is limited to physical closeness, or religious

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<sup>20</sup> Fletcher G.P., Ohlin J.D., *Defending Humanity...* op.cit.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem,

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem,

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem,

rapture. Meanwhile, the development of means of social communication permits the successful illusion of direct human contact<sup>24</sup>.

Thanks to the tools of information and communications technology we can therefore, in a fraction of a second, experience the effects of the actions of others. Computer screens and telephones dazzle with content, produced by people who may be very far away from their viewers. Due to them, the solitary person experiences the impression of the presence of others. This belief is illustrated by the abbreviations used by language, where a “direct conversation” no longer means face to face, but also over the phone or via computer tools.

Among the latter, the ability to reflect real social processes is of utmost significance. It is thanks to them that an immediate exchange of information occurs. They provide the impression of participating in social life, allowing to shed solitude. The user becomes a part of a given community. Living people reply, he can almost feel their presence, their emotions. However, we should remember that this a world which mechanises social contact, limiting it to the boundaries set by the programme’s creators.

But by providing their users the impression of fusing with the external world, these places fulfil an essential function, they provide the illusion of escaping from solitude. This feeling of fusion, with which each person is born and which he loses at the moment of becoming aware of his distinctness, is the evocation of ecstasy and bliss. A feeling which man desires to return to and which he finds only in love. Since an objective unification with the external world is impossible, we search for this feeling through another person. We free ourselves from solitude, by experiencing the presence of others. By loving them – we return to primordial integration.

But by finding himself within virtual communities, man satisfies himself with an echo and an imitation. It is hard to discount the impression that computers have already passed the boundary of thought, seen as pure function deprived of self-awareness. This idea first came to me when playing chess, as the computer – to win the game against me – sacrificed a pawn<sup>25</sup>. Let us consider, that the crossing of any evolutionary boundary is not spectacular most of the time, and is an *ex post* statement. And so I can imagine perfectly well, that in the future, computer programmes could perform the role of a psychotherapist, or even – at the request of a customer – imitate the thoughts and words of the dead (e.g. mother, father, friends), strengthened by already existing technologies for simulating human speech, spatial presence

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<sup>24</sup> Singer P., *Famine, Affluence, and Morality*, in: “Philosophy and Public Affairs”, vol. 1 (3), John Wiley & Sons, 1972, pp. 229–243, website: [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1088-4963](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1088-4963)

<sup>25</sup> Zimbardo P., *The Lucifer Effect...* op. cit.



or touch. In fact, such a programme could not only imitate, but also create a “person” on demand, e.g. the ideal friend<sup>26</sup>.

Death would then no longer be a barrier to “contacting” our friends or loved ones. Such bonds would never expire, and thanks to the mobile nature of telecommunication devices, would always be at hand. Programming could shape personality in such a way so that the virtual family would never scold, but only provide warmth and kindness<sup>27</sup>.

The current trend for alienation seems to be the vestibule to this world. Loners staring at their computer screens, seeking virtual communities, begging for contact with virtual friends through eccentric attempts to draw attention to themselves, are the harbingers of future societies, in which death will be the loss of virtual connectivity.

In this way, man flees creative behaviours and remains in the grip of usefulness. In general, we are living in the time of primacy of usefulness above knowledge.

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