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THE CONCEPT OF UNIVERSAL ETHICS AS A NEW GENERAL MORAL REALITY AND THE BASIS FOR A PEOPLE'S CULTURE¹

Abstract: The new life of mankind is filled with a variety of new phenomena and new ethical values, the most authentic of which is the idea of the creation of Universal ethics.

Universal ethics is composed of two things: a unique system of ethical values and norms, and the sharing of different experiences, such as mankind's ethical heritage

The construction of Universal ethics actually means bringing together those ethical ideas that are most valuable to most nations. As such, it can be seen as a medium for the meeting of different cultures.

Thus, Universal ethics becomes a new general moral reality of people and a new history of mankind, which will inspire a new rise of human civilization.

Key words: ethics, universal, human life, culture, new general morality.

The reasons for the emergence of the concept of Universal Ethics

The new, modern way of life is filled with a variety of new phenomena and new ethical values.

„Some of them are old, but constantly active values, like honesty, love and friendship. Some are old, but reaffirmed values that people today find necessary to highlight and follow, more than in past periods, such as respect for one's fellow humans, compassion, and understanding of others. Some are very new values.” (Донеv 2008: 108)

It is hard for something to show up as completely new in the world, something that the human mind has never imagined, but it is possible to bring up something that was, until now, not particularly important for humanity, but it is now a necessary leading element of spiritual living and behavior.²

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2 Further see Алесдер Мекинтаир, *По доблеста*, Табернакул, Скопје, 1998.

Among all the new ethical phenomena and values, the most authentic idea is the creation of Universal Ethics. Universal ethics is really a new phenomenon in humanity. (Bexell & Andersson 2002: 3)

„Three hundred years ago, when empiricist ethics was born, one of the arguments for the role of the experience in building ethical attitudes was the fact that people had different ethical values, which world travelers and anthropologists then began to describe

Nowadays it is precisely this empiricist ethical concept that represents a basis for the foundation of a unique worldwide human ethics based on different ethical views, which depend on different life experiences, moral practices and ethical visions.” (Темков 2009: 157)

Universal ethics is thus a new phenomenon. Its manifestations are similar to those of other new activities of modern humanity: information society and politics (in which citizens are asked for every important question); cvartar activity as an activity without direct material goal and benefits; the opening of the cosmos and cosmism, the idea that all the phenomena in the universe are united; bioethics and environmental ethics, as a reflection of concerns about the damage done to nature and the environmental pollution; the global political community in the form of the United Nations (Минчева-Коцевска 2009: 31). In other words, Universal ethics is a phenomenon of the same global importance as the globalization of economy, general communications in the social sphere, and the associated political policy.³

„All these phenomena were preparing the Universal ethics, especially the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the most ethical and political document of the new humanity influenced its occurrence in particular”. (Bexell & Andersson 2002: 10)

Many activities of UNESCO contributed to this, such as the first unified world history of civilization. The vision of Universal ethics naturally arose out of the idea that all human beings are equal, with different lives, work and ethics, but identical intentions and equally valuable achievements. „The need for its constitution was emphasized, and humanity was called to create it, and it is still trying to do so” (Минчева-Коцевска 2009: 21).

3 Two projects dealing with global problems and global shared values are presented in Elisabeth Gerle, *In Search of a Global Ethics*, Lund University Press, Lund, 1995. Two declarations are presented in Hans Kung and Helmut Schmidt (eds.), *A Global Ethic and Global Responsibilities. Two declarations*, SCM Press, London, 1998.

Building the System of Universal Ethics as a new general moral reality

Universal ethics itself is an ethical value, „because its construction is one of the most important ethical duties today” (Темков 2003). It is a particularly ethical activity, which emphasizes the value of ethics for human life, and which establishes a uniformed system of ethical views, which would and should be accepted and followed by all the people in this world”. (Bok 1995: 13)

Universal ethics consists of two things (Донев 2008: 119-120). The first one is the ethical system of values and norms itself. It is so, because

„[...] moral values and norms lead to a better understanding of the purpose of human activity and the ways through which active morality is achieved. Moral values are defined as a specific type of value, related to man’s actions, both general and particular ones.” (Kaluderović 2011: 46)

This ethical system includes norms and values that are most important for all humanity, respected by all people (Gorman 2002: 24). The second is that in the Universal ethics, there is an expression of ethical thinking and determination of all people, which is why different goals and attitudes penetrate it, i.e. different ethical experiences, such as the heritage of mankind, are being shared in it (Kim 1998: 27).

As such, it is an ethical construction. By good will, people hope that it will be a successful piece of work, that it will be accepted and loved by everyone. However, its idea is not only idealistic, but quite realistic (Bexell & Andersson 2002: 12). At the core of its concept, it is the vision of a unique world, which is not yet reality, but it is being built and is closer to reality day by day (Свидлер & Мојзес 2005: 292).

Universal ethics is a construction of existing ethical values. „It is made up of ideas and ethical norms that are already created in mankind” (Минчева-Коцевска 2009: 32).

„It contains the most valuable ethical values and norms of all ages, from all the nations and the best thinkers of humanity. It contains actual values and norms. Its visionaries think that people will accept the best values and norms of other nations, as they have accepted and built their own good ethical values”. (Донев 2008: 120)

In other words, the construction of Universal ethics actually means bringing together and unifying valuable ethical ideas of all people.

„Universal ethics is not virtual, but an acting ethics, and that is why it represents a value of construction. The values in it are not arranged one beside the other, as a display of ethical desires and opportunities, but placed on a hierarchical scale, as a call for implementation”. (Донев 2008: 120)

Values can not be arranged, but the most valuable ones point out themselves, and then place themselves on top of the ethical scale, further followed by others and so on until the completion of the ethical whole of the new humanity as a living and real world. The Golden Rule is one example (Wattles 1996).

A feature of the Universal ethics is that it advocates a positive attitude towards life, defends life, and the right of good living for all. Thus, „it is an optimistic ethics that believes that it is possible to find a solution for the difficult problems in life, as well as the human relationships” (Темков 2009: 159). According to it, people should hope for goodness, make goodness and strive for goodness to become present in the entire human existence, to become a general symbol for it.

At the pinnacle of the Universal ethics, there is the value of Peace. With it comes the value of Tolerance, Solidarity and Cooperation. „They are the most important new values of the whole humankind, which allow it to survive, to exist as a whole and to develop in a positive direction.” (Донев 2008: 109)

These values do not have a negative, but on the contrary, a positive form. Namely, very often peace is defined as a state of non-war, as a condition in which hostility does not dominate. But Universal ethics considers peace to be a result of good will and good intentions, as an expression of friendship and of the desire for peaceful living and creation (Минчева-Коцевска 2009: 103). The aspiration of Universal Ethics is for life to be a deed of benevolent behavior which naturally results in a state of peace (Койрс 2009: 262).

The same applies to the values of Tolerance, Solidarity and Cooperation. They do not mean non-attacking, non-retraction of assistance or help or non-rejection of relations and affairs. They are a creative and active contribution to the value of Peace, i.e. „a manner in which people who desire peace treat each other, tolerate and accept different ideas and different life forms, being always ready to help each other” (Кропоткин 1990: 9) and act together at work, in the economy, in politics and all other important social areas.

This logic of positive value form can be best understood if one is to analyze the value of Ahimsa, which is an integral part of the idea of Peace as the highest value.

„The Indian value Ahimsa means non-violence, patience, tolerance of others and not offending others. It stands for good positive behavior, for the love and respect for each other, for the building of good relationships, for helping”. (Донев 2008: 111)

One of its expressions is the famous modern ethical saying: *Help Ever, Hurt Never!* As such, the value Ahimsa is a structural part of the value Peace as a supreme universal value with an active dimension. The basis lies in the restraint from violence. So, in this vision,

„[...] the value Peace is conceived as activist behavior which is to build Peace by and with all means, which include psychological stability and pure intentions of everyone. For these reasons, the bases are not the classical values of Self-control, Moderation, Reasonableness, which are the standard important human values, but the human appeal or shift towards the values of Giving and Love for the loved one, as more substantial for the new understanding of ethics and for the new united world”. (Темков 2009: 160)

From the supreme value of Peace follow the remaining values of the universal ethical scale.

„Intoned by the values of Peace, Tolerance, Solidarity and Cooperation, they are expressing the logic of one world that is aware of the joint existence and of the necessity of peaceful human behavior for the further survival of humankind and life itself on Earth. For these reasons, high up on the scale are the values of Self-respect and Dignity, the values of working and of providing assistance or help, of understanding oneself and others as well as of the problems and causes of conflicts, for which a resolution would be found using peaceful means and agreement”. (Донев 2008: 116)

Universal ethics indicates that our best interests will be achieved by having a good relationship with everyone and through forgiveness, in a new cultural manner and matrix!

Different (cultural) understandings of the concept of Universal Ethics

Anyone can contribute towards the building or the establishment of the values of Universal ethics, because of the fact that „all the nations of the world have good ethics and understand the issues of peace and cooperation, of working and building or creating, of suffering and helping”. (Минчева-Коцевска 2009: 33) Universal Ethics outlines these dimensions of living and of ethical awareness, and neglects those supporting the misunderstanding and conflict among people. That is why it incorporates all ethical ideas of all eras and of all nations that led to peace and goodwill among people, as well as the ideas and messages of all ethical philosophers who taught people to guide their personal interests in correlation with good wishes for others and to achieve success on the basis of the cooperation between people and not through confrontation, thus avoiding violence or banditry.

We in Macedonia also contribute to the building of Universal ethics, „not only by supporting the idea of such ethical system, but also with good ethical ideas of our current living and our past”. (Минчева-Коцевска 2009: 34) We are a particular community of Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Serbs, Bulgarians, Roma, Jews, Armenians, Greeks and other nations. In our shared life, the main idea was never confrontation among

people, but the vision of common existence and cooperation, tolerance and help. Our community has never endured pogroms, large internal conflicts, and there is no massive hatred and collective envy. Our peaceful world is at the same time a community of peaceful, hardworking, modest people, focused on the struggle for survival, in which people earn a living not through fighting, conflict and looting, but through an honest day of work in an environment of mutual tolerance and respect.

We understand the idea of universal ethics and we consider that

„[...] such ethics is useful when there are large differences among people and nations. On a small scale, we also have our own general ethics, which includes various moral experiences of the nations in our country, who express not only their different historical destiny but also their identical joint past and present.” (Темков 2009: 161)

In such ethics, the core values are those that pertain to united and joint living, in which everyone is respected in accordance with his behaviour. Those values also include greater closeness with one's neighbors than with one's distant relatives (Todorov 1994: 369).

Besides these life values, we also offer ethical insights and acknowledgements by our great ancestors to the concept of Universal ethics. The most famous moral philosopher of our past is Saint Kliment Ohridski (830-916), the first Macedonian Bishop, a student of the Slavic educators and saints Cyril and Methodius, the founder of the first Slavic University in Ohrid. This universal individual is our first and most famous moral philosopher. In his papers and sermons, he emphasizes the role of ethics in the quality of living,

„[...] insists on good ethical behavior and teaches people to live in peace and harmony, to reconcile and to have respect for themselves and others. He recommended a very interesting ethical objective – people should compete among themselves in doing good, thus outperforming themselves as limited and morally deficient beings”. (Минчева-Коцевска 2009: 34)

Among the many ethical messages of Saint Clement, the most famous and most notable is the following message: **Stay away from evil and do good!** With this message, Saint Clement advises people that their goal should be to do no evil and to distance themselves from it, and also to actively do good as a source of the desired ethics.

„We propose to include this ethical message in the general basis of the finest values and norms of Universal Ethics. In this context, this message is the basis of the ethical education of young people in our country, as a new form of their elevation and their preparation for life as autonomous moral persons, in order for them to face the big challenges of the future and successfully deal with them along with other people from the region and the entire world”. (Донев 2009: 389-402)

Such are the persons whose ideas should be incorporated in the Universal Ethics. They are qualified due to their personal virtue and ethical self-awareness, thus devoting themselves to the construction of the proper moral standards for people (Frankfurt 2008: 184). Searching our more recent history, we can single out the ethical idea of the leader of the Macedonian uprising movement, Goce Delchev, who was killed a hundred and ten years ago, in 1903. The declaration of the uprising in 1903 was dedicated to all the nations living in this country.

„The ethical message of Goce Delchev contained the most modern idea of the epoch indicating that the competition among the nations should be in the field of culture – in creation and building, not in hatred, enmity and feral competition”. (Темков 2009: 163)

Instead of a conclusion

These ethical ideas of ours should take a humble spot on the universal hierarchical scale. However, they belong to Universal ethics and there they will be found according to their importance and according to the serious and sympathetic ethical approach of their advocates.

As such, Universal ethics began to find its way into our hearts and lives, just as „with the basic positive thoughts and norms of living of all the nations of the world, it began to implant in their life ethics” (Минчева-Коцевска 2009: 54), in the entirety of the new moral practice of all the people that can be found in cultural models of behavior.

Therefore, Universal ethics becomes a new general moral reality, being the basis for the culture of people, and of the recent history of mankind, which will encourage a new rise of the human civilization (Свидлер & Мојзес 2005: 304). That is why the encounter of cultures is so important nowadays!

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UNIVERZALNA ETIKA KAO NOVA OPŠTA MORALNOST I KAO OSNOVA LJUDSKE KULTURE

Rezime

Život čovečanstva je ispunjen različitim pojavama kao i novim etičkim vrednostima od kojih je najnovija stvaranje univerzalne etike. Univerzalna etika ističe uspostavljanje zajedničkog sistema etičkih stavova koje bi svi usvojili i kojima bi se svi rukovodili.

Univerzalnu etiku bi činio jedinstveni sistem etičkih vrednosti i normi koje bi čovečanstvu bile najvažnije i koje bi čovečanstvo moglo da poštuje, a koji se pojavljuje kao refleksija na zajedničko u raznovrsnom etičkom nasleđu celog čovečanstva.

Stvaranje univerzalne etike zapravo znači povezivanje etičkih ideja koje su najvrednije u svim nacijama sveta. Univerzalna etika predstavlja medijum za susretanje različitih kultura koje svoje interese najbolje mogu ostvariti kroz dobre odnose sa drugima i uz praštanje.

Otuda, univerzalna etika postaje nova moralna realnost i nova istorija čovečanstva, koja će omogućiti ponovni uspon ljudske civilizacije.