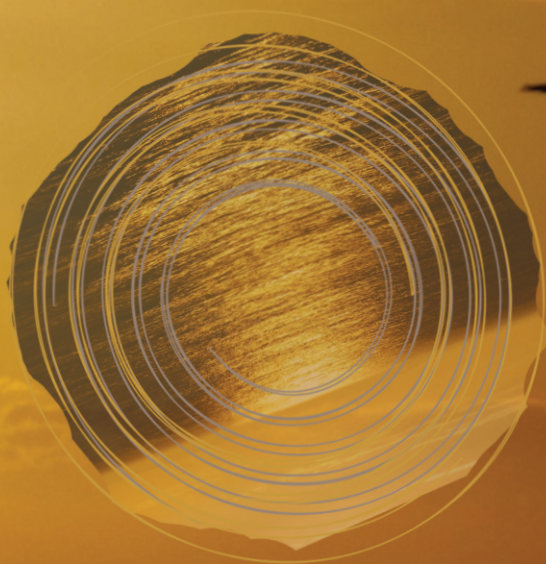


Antonio SANDU

Appreciative Ethics



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Iași

ANTONIO SANDU
APPRECIATIVE ETHICS

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CHAPTER I.

ETHIC RECONSTRUCTIONS IN POSTMODERNITY

Ethical implications of transmodernity are based on a number of new dimensions of transmodern pragmatics ethics discussed in this chapter: globalism and borderless society, expansion of communication media and new communication technologies, professionalisation and technique communication, deprivatization of personal life and social corporate responsibility. Using behavioral techniques to change attitudes and motivation, the ethical dimensions of transmodernity are connected to this unifying trend specific to transmodernity versus atomization trend specific to postmodernity.

A first dimension of transmodern ethics is the protection of human dignity. Legal principle of human dignity derives from the axiological character belief on the centrality of the human person and indissoluble link between the person and his right to dignity.

Dignity is thus a positive attribute to be protected and asserted. The affirmation of human dignity of the individual on the one hand, and of the species on the other hand, represents a subtle shift from the specific individual rights of modernity and postmodernity to their universalization in the words of human dignity. In our vision, dignity and protection of human dignity involves much more than protecting individual rights through the passage from passiveness right to be protected from active and affirmative protection of human dignity.

All communication technologies developed in post-modernity have as a central element the positive of human nature and affirmative as methodological dimension. Social or personal change produced by these techniques can definitely be subsumed under the idea of affirmative nature of human condition. Focusing on the positive of this technology requires giving up to prohibition ethics and situation, in an affirmative context based on the intention technique. Of course that in affirmative ethics, one can not give up categorization. Positive, affirmative always require an additional. But negative is not bad in itself but an ethical alterity. The negative experience is a challenge of affirmative that extends throughout behaviors, attitudes etc. New communicational techniques have redefined soteriology in accordance with the secular dominant vision of society.

The rise of environmental, feminist, ethnic movements bring to debate fundamental issues of human and society within the twentieth century, which can be called the century of extremes (Hobsbawm, 1994). The sphere of transmodern ethics, deriving from the postmodern one, does not lack any of these traits of contemporary era. Individualism of these times is displayed without inhibition, often ostentatiously. At the same time, the presence of thousands of associations, alliances, foundations, organizations clearly shows that people are aware of the need to establish rules, even if minimum, of living, of survival like defeatists would say, of effective management of the legacy left by previous generation (Lipovetsky, 2007).

Gilles Lipovetsky argues that postmodern society can be associated with the phrase “era of minimalism” rather than “generalized permissiveness society”. Lipovetsky believes that postmodern society is a post-moralist one, located *in the twilight of debt*.

Transmodern ethics established moral norms based on pragmatic, liberal and pluralist principles. There is a recurrence of negation, but not centered on ontological, as in the paradigm of the God who prefers or of a jealous God and not even from a contractual perspective, like in the modern period. There is a preference on focusing on the value of positivism, on cooperation as a source of efficiency, personal enrichment, either cultural, spiritual, moral, or of access to otherness. Tolerance as an ethical value is justified by a new humanism, utilitarian.

The social contract is rather the *need for together* which goes beyond spiritual space within the social cohabitation. Another value which generates coherent systems in postmodern ethics is happiness. Hedonism and consumerism lead to moral sterility and to an ethics which defines itself as being beyond the moral, neither moral nor immoral but amoral (Lipovetsky, 2007). We are talking about secularization of morals and at the same time about the superficial guilt. Lack of centering into ontology and the value of absolute freedom and happiness as an *axiological primate* generates an ethics of admitted difference and in the same time the minimizing of ethical negation.

The imperative “need” is displaced by the unlimited action but with consequences. But the consequences are limited to pragmatic. Not doing harm to the extent that evil is punished, does not necessarily mean doing well. Voluntarism, constructionism centers action into personal and social fulfillment as a form of maintaining happiness. Therefore postmodern ethics finds axiology centering in happiness. But happiness can be induced by drugs, alcohol, and consumerism in general, all these being justified by achieving happiness, which is actually pleasure. Central failure in hedonist happiness through pleasure proposes a new ethical version that is centered on being, on self and self-actualization.

Transmodernism proposes a new synthesis of ethics, with the value of cooperation. Cooperation as ethical value is subsumed to the central value of integrality. Recovery and integral development of human potential is for the *new communication strategies*, able to generate adequate discursive *realities*.

We are facing a sectorialization and migration of ethics towards deontology dimension. Deontology often subsumes to ethics precisely because of society's tendency to deprivatization and corporatisation of personal life. Holistic thinking tributary to transmodern paradigm tends to subsume earlier paradigm as a model to the limit, particularly of the new vision essentially expanded. The model of transdisciplinary in science analysis appears also as a paradigm of social practice, as transculturalism.

Deprivatization of domestic life and professionalization of parenting (Cojocaru, D., 2008) are models of late postmodernity and transmodernity social practices aimed at imposing *social associative* and institutionalized *control* of the individual seen as a component unit of a holarchic system. Traditional society is highly associative in the sense that, for example, the traditional church is a community of believers, creating an individual identity through membership of the religious, family and ethnicity community. Postmodern de-structuring of the family and nation requires a response of *transpersonal* type to the construction of identity maintaining social membership as an institution of control through dynamics between membership group and reference group. The new ideological trends from transmodernity propose another solidarity, an inorganic one, based on *initiatory elitism*, such as *corporate social solidarity*.

Christian approach of affirmative ethics

Ethical approach as a logical construction is based on an axiological focus. A congruent philosophical system, from an axiological point of view, may, in principle, generate an ethical system. Christian ethics has, or should have as a fundamental value love, value which seems to be the center of the axiological doctrine of Jesus Christ. "Love your neighbor as yourself" generates an ethical construction based on altruism and oriented towards alterity, as a mean of ethical expression. A Christian pragmatic could be seen as serving ones neighbor. The dimensions of Christian love aims at a first level for forgiveness, acceptance and commitment.

The ethical-axiological vetero-Testamentary system as we perceive it today has as a fundamental value reciprocity or retribution. The system appears to be expressed by the phrase "eye for eye and tooth for tooth". The moral principles: *do not steal, do not lie, do not commit adultery*, are applicable since there is a *retribution-punishment* for their violation. The logic of retribution has as an onto-axiological substrate the principle of autocracy. God does not allow *competition* and thus His will acts retributive. "I am your God; you shall not have other gods besides me". Affirming the uniqueness of God is opposed to prohibition of alterity, "you shall not have other gods besides me". The prohibition of alterity, in fact the ban of accepting alterity or reporting to alterity is seen as a denial of the multiple possible.

The phrase "I am your God, you shall not have other gods besides me" does not absolutely deny the existence of other gods but the human being is prohibited to report to them. A jealous and possessive God prohibits idolatry by law as a form of spiritual adultery. Ethical postulates are negative, being based on a categorical "*shall not*". Operating in a

limiting sense, they generate a pragmatic as: “*what if*”, an exacerbation of temptation, as a form of ownership of a non-negative freedom. Adam’s prohibition was violated because of an attitudinal assumption of freedom. It is interesting that the *evil* serpents’ reply was that in fact there is no retribution, that there are no consequences to actions. And yet, according to the biblical myth there was a *fall*. In the logic of prohibition, any assumption of freedom proposes fall as an alternative.

Are the two systems vetero and New Testament compatible from an axiological and ethical point of view? Christian Ethics proposes a positive pragmatic type: “Love and do what you want”. Love is the guarantee of positivism. Love transcends the prohibition, because *retribution* is no longer negative as a punishment but positive as salvation. Salvation is not retribution of good deeds as you might believe in the logic of a prohibition, but the affirmation of God’s will as a saving intention. Salvation comes in the redemption of sins, which God Himself through the sacrifice of His own Son unites logic of retribution with logic of freedom.

Retribution continues to exist, but is absorbed by the grace of God. Fall is canceled by descent. Adam man fell from heaven, and Christ, the new Adam, went down first on earth then in hell. God assumes retribution thus generating redemption. Such an ethics is possible only in a theological affirmative system. God is love and does not require anything other than to show such love for Him thus He can be the one that works through you. Love is not therefore an onto-axiological utopia to generate an impossible pragmatic but is seen as an affirmation of God in the world. The two ethical and axiological systems are thus disjoint from an ontic perception point of view but are praxiological complementary.

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Antonio SANDU has a Ph.D. in Philosophy. Author's contributions in the field aim to develop an appreciative ethic of care, derived from the appreciative constructionist perspective and a new semiotic methodology, called fractal constructionism. The author also develops a model of applied philosophy, called Appreciative Philosophical Counseling.



The volume brings together a series of theoretical analysis and field studies in applied ethics. The philosophical perspectives concerned are the social constructionist and the appreciative one (derived from appreciative inquiry). Are addressed themes of ethics, as autonomy and its social construction, contractualist ethics, and feminist ethics of care. The volume also examines some contemporary challenges that rise in front of ethics: transumanism and artificial improvement of species, protection of dignity of the human species, etc. Are also addressed both ethical counseling and supervision of ethics, presenting an unique approach. In the volume we propose a model of ethics as appreciative ethics of care, which proposes a synthesis between feminist ethics of care and appreciative inquiry, as a priority of the author.



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