



Tomasz Stępień*

Complementarity and Divergences. Formation of professional ethics towards technological development

Introduction

Professional ethics – one of the central issues which fringes upon the widely understood humanities as well as engineering and technical sciences – within the framework of philosophical and social sciences constitutes the topic which is discussed reluctantly and it is even marginalized. This results first of all from the dispute concerning ethics itself, which has been carried out for the recent decades and from the fact of the dynamic and explosive development of technology which is unprecedented in the general history. This development led to the establishment of new categories of science and new professions. A methodological postulate of including in the research and professional work a trans-disciplinary paradigm and a comparative studies paradigm with reference to particular professional ethics appears to be an alternative and an opportunity to break this specific deadlock at the same time. Moreover, this orientation makes it possible to emphasise a practical aspect, i.e. a professional reality in a specific field of modern science. The above mentioned diagnosis shows the most significant issues in the analysis of professional ethics on the example of architecture and modern architect's work which is focused on the major principle of professional ethics and professionalism, namely on responsibility.

Codes of professional ethics, which are connected with practising a specific profession, are established on the basis of a general system of values and result from this system at the same time. This system defines the whole of morality existing in a given culture and civilisation. Values of a given culture

determine the ethical system, i.e. a particular set of obligations, duties, orders and bans¹. Morality and a general ethical system are somehow reflected and realized in detailed ethics, among other things, in individual professional ethics/codes. Finally, these ethics present specific characteristics because they result from the social life itself, diversity of relations, communities and innumerable social practices².

In this aspect, trust is the foundation of the social life, particularly in the process of setting up professional groups and their ethics, determining their social roles and significance. Therefore, trust appears to be a reservoir of professional ethics and as a principle of the professional life at the same time, which in turn gives feedback to another principle of ethics and the social life, i.e. responsibility. Trust and responsibility constitute those two elements without which functioning of an individual, group, community or society is impossible [13].

¹ A comparative analysis of particular organisational cultures and the ethical systems existing in them, including professional ethics determined by culture and civilisation may serve as an example of a variety and peculiarity of interpretations, cf. Hofstede G., Hofstede G.J. [8].

² In particular, this situation refers to the modern, mobile and network society whose structure contains innumerable networks and flows, their carriers, network nodes, centres and peripheries, cf. Castells M. [2]; Urry J. [14]. 'Mobility' can be regarded as a major phenomenon of the modern society, cf. one of the first interpretations of this phenomenon in: Sorokin P.A., *Social Mobility*, Harper and Brothers, NY 1927 [Polish edition: *Ruchliwość społeczna*, IFiS PAN, Warsaw 2009].

Trust as the foundation of the social life and professional ethics

The second half of the 20th century was the period of dynamic development of technology and techniques which

resulted in creating new categories of science and completely new professions connected with, for example, lines of business in computing and telecommunication technologies, which, as a consequence, started to generate a demand for new competencies. All these changes bring about the neces-

* Department of Humanistic Sciences of Wrocław University of Technology

sity to create a new form of learning to practise a profession as well as new criteria which express and define professionalism. Therefore, a technological turn in the second half of the 20th century means radical changes in the world of work, perception of work itself and professional ethics³. One of the fundamental issues in this context is the analysis of possibilities of permanent formulating and complying with codes of professional ethics adequately to the development of technology. This aims at defining an extent to which technological development determines the process of formulation as well as application (validity) of professional ethics. The basic issue is concerned with the primacy – ethics or technology – in the aspect of the dispute over ethics as such.

The analysis itself and determination of the development and changes of professional ethics are inextricably linked with the concept of society. Trust is the element which on the one hand combines functioning of the society as a specific organic entirety with specificity of professional ethics in the aspect of functioning of the whole world of work on the other hand. Therefore, trust as the foundation of the social life constitutes a starting point for considerations concerning the role, characteristics and significance of professional ethics based on the development of technology and techniques.

P. Sztompka in his theory and typology of trust gives the following definition: *Trust – a ‘bet’ (conviction and activity based on it) that unreliable future activities of other people or functioning of devices or institutions – will be beneficial for us* [13, p. 99]. On the one hand trust is a form of social capital (F. Fukuyama) which is burdened by some risk, but on the other hand – a minimum of this capital and risk constitutes the foundation of all activities in the social aspect (A. Seligman)⁴. The

³ The world of work transformation analysis at the turn of the 21st century, cf. Castells M., pp. 203–333 [2].

⁴ A. Seligman emphasises: *Risk as the aspect of social relations [...], became the constitutive aspect of life in the modern society and therefore, trust as the answer to this form of risk became a defining component of our ‘World of life’ to the same extent*, cf. Seligman A., *The Problem of Trust*, Princeton University Press 1997, [quoted from:] Sztompka P., p. 99 [13]; cf. Fukuyama F., *Zaufanie: kapitał społeczny a droga do dobrobytu*, PWN, Warsaw-Wrocław 1997.

so called instrumental trust is particularly significant in the context of professionalism and professional ethics, i.e. *expectations of competencies, efficiency, rationality of the partner* as well as technological trust as the expectation of efficiency, reliability and effectiveness of devices and technical systems [13, p. 148].

The issue of development and progress is connected with the problem of professional ethics. While the development and progress in the field of technology can be unquestionably confirmed, in the context of ethics this question remains unceasingly open. Development and progress in the ethical aspect appear to be more a desire for a permanent and progressive improvement of man. In the aspect of professional ethics, it is the formulation and compliance of professional ethics adequately to the level of technological development. Thus, the acquisition of skills/competencies by man in order to meet challenges posed by technologies in the moral and ethical aspect of his life and profession constitutes the purpose of professional ethics modification. In this context, one of the indispensable conditions for sustainable development, which is postulated nowadays, is the adaptation of professional ethics norms to the criteria of professionalism.

Consequently, the issue of mutual conditions between morality (professional ethics) and professionalism must be dealt with; it is also necessary to determine whether their complementarity is possible and in which situations there might appear discrepancies between a duty to meet moral requirements and professionalism. It is also significant to determine a degree to which professionalism leads to marginalisation of ethical principles in the professional life, i.e. generating the state of double morality and double standards in the professional as well as moral and ethical life of man. The entire issue determines the axis of the dispute over the meaning and position of professional ethics [4].

Trans-disciplinarity as a paradigm of science, technology and profession

The fact that there is a multitude of changeable paradigms of culture, science and technology constitutes the background of the dispute over professional ethics and attempts to understand mutual conditions of morality and professionalism⁵. Changeability and multitude are confronted with the postulated invariability, permanence and universality of moral and ethical principles. Being on the horns of a dilemma between morality and professionalism of the human existence in individual and social aspects concurrently determines a dispute over ethics as such. It

refers to the very essence of morality and ethics which is focused on a desire for formulating (and coding) moral good and evil in the context of inventions and technological innovations.

Is it possible to reconcile these two separate worlds and avoid discrepancies in them? Is their complementarity as a form of mutual creative complement possible at all? Or should we accept a mutual negation and antagonism of the relations of morality and science, ethics and technology? To what extent can ethics contribute to the development of technology, i.e. become a guarantee of progress in the aspect of material culture as well? The modern dynamic development of technology leads to a dangerous separation of these two worlds and shows their autonomy in relation to each other. Dramatic events of the 20th century resulted from, among other things, ‘libera-

⁵ Multitudes of paradigms of culture, cf. Hilckman A. [7], pp. 1–17, 23–36, 52–76. Changeability and multitude of scientific and technological paradigms with regard to criteria of economy, market and organisational cultures, cf. Christensen C.M. [3], pp. 13–154.

tion' of technology from moral and ethical limitations. Nowadays, the development of mobile telecommunication technologies emphasizes the fact of technologies being relational, their trans-disciplinarity and at the same time their attractiveness against static and absolute (without compromises) moral and ethical postulates.

In this situation, can and should ethics take part in a sort of peculiar competitiveness for modernity with technologies themselves, for instance, in form of moral and ethical relativism? These issues refer to an individual as well as social life and they constitute a decision making space and the reason for doubts and dilemmas in a private and professional life. The state of a given society is conditioned by settling these issues. The aforementioned ethical and social principles – trust and responsibility – explicitly show 'complementarity' as one of the major paradigms of modern transdisciplinary science and technology. At the same time, this complementarity seems to be the only possibility of conditioning and mutual permeation of ethics and technology as well as the harmonious development and improvement of morality and professionalism. However, this moral and ethical postulate of complementarity is distorted when confronted with the professional reality that is dominated to a large extent by discrepancies, i.e. an almost permanent conflict between moral and ethical norms and requirements of professionalism when practising the profession.

An attempt to understand and analyse this conflict is, *inter alia*, a postulated distinction of professional ethics in relation to the general ethics. The dispute over the position of professional ethics refers to the situation where 'on the one hand, a representative of a certain profession obeys moral rules of his profession, but on the other hand, he breaks moral rules which are valid for people at large'. In the context of professional ethics, this constitutes the basic question about their distinction: *is it possible that professional morality does not tally with general morality* [4, p. 9]? Thus, the problem of professional ethics distinction deals with the following aspects: 1) the question about a possibility of coexistence and acceptability of two moral and ethical systems – general and professional – and their mutual relations and conditions; 2) understanding this distinction in form of two varieties of 'professional moral particularism' and their justifications – 'professional particularism of deeds' and 'professional particularism of judgments'. It is decisive to define the cases in which this distinction and particularism of professional ethics are justified and acceptable and these cases in which distinction and particularism contradict and question general moral and ethical principles as well as professional codes of ethics. It is in the provisions of codes of ethics – general and professional ethics – that the differences and discrepancies between those systems become especially manifested. The codes themselves are collections of *particular norms through which both*

moralties refer to specific ways of behaviour or deeds and include them in a given deontological category [4, p. 10]. Against this background, three important questions arise which somehow regulate the distinction of professional ethics: 1) Which deontological categories order deeds regulated by norms? 2) What kinds of discrepancies in the normative classification of these deeds occur? 3) Finally, what are the reasons of differences between a general code of ethics and codes of particular professional ethics?

Therefore, tensions between morality and professionalism may lead to inconsistencies of ethical systems and professional codes resulting from them: 'Two moral systems are different if the same individual deeds [...] are defined in another way', i.e. they ascribe totally different deontic qualifications to the same deeds (norm and moral status)⁶. On the other hand, the starting point in discussing the problem of inconsistency of moral and ethical systems is the assumption that there exists an objective moral space within which the particular deeds are located. On the basis of this assumption, we can distinguish basic moral qualifications of deeds. These are the deeds which are morally: 1) prescribed, 2) prohibited, 3) allowable, 4) neutral, 5) facultative, i.e. they are morally 'praiseworthy' as they are not required. Here, we can also distinguish alternative deeds as authorized instead of facultative deeds and deeds which are performed within the limits of moral tolerance. The last kind of the moral qualification of deeds refers to skepticism and relativism in two forms: 1) partial immoralism, i.e. deeds which are not defined morally in an objective way and, 2) total immoralism, i.e. ethical nihilism which negates any possibility of the existence of the moral and ethical order.

The dispute over professional ethics concerns differences in codes between the professional sphere and general morality, which is reflected in qualification shifts of particular deeds between their deontic positions; for example, an allowable deed in general morality is a prescribed deed in professional ethics, for instance, the rule of discretion in medicine. This means that *in fact professional ethics does not introduce other obligations, but in a different way it establishes the hierarchy among the same obligations which are also accepted in general ethics* [4, p. 24]. If it comes to professional ethics, the orientation in moral qualification of deeds consists in determining principal objective values on the one hand and in establishing rules of their hierarchy on the other hand. In this context, we can talk about axiological particularism of professional ethics.

6| [...] *In the compared moral systems it may be assumed that there is the same system of deontological categories, but different deeds can be included in them. However, a different list of deontic qualifications can be assumed by them, therefore, they differ from each other as regards their category structure [...]*, Galewicz W. [4], p. 11.

Spaces and mobility in the context of practice as well as professional ethics of the architect and urban planner

Ethics in the architect's and urban planner's professional work constitutes a set of complementarities, discrepancies and multiple tensions in the professional practice. In a

sense, we can talk about the analogy of the ethical issue in business or more euphemistically – culture of behaviours in business. Thus, how can we possibly reconcile in the archi-

tectural design or urban construction the norms imposed by decision-makers, for instance, local governments with the investor's requirements and expectations and with principles of professional art on the one hand and with the issues of functionalism as well as harmony with the urban and natural environment on the other hand?⁷

Architecture/urban planning as a field of science and profession is a typical example of transdisciplinarity in research work as well as in the profession itself. Architecture reveals in an exemplary way the complexity of the general issue of engineering ethics against the background of multidisciplinary engineering and technology of the 21st century. Architecture also enables to understand major problems which occur in the process of modifying professional ethics. Similarly to other domains, we can talk about specificity of engineering and technical education as well as professional work in the scope of architecture, urban planning and land development. Simultaneously, faculties of architecture and the architect's profession itself are characterised by certain exclusivity which results from the very nature of this domain, its transdisciplinarity when compared to other engineering and technical sciences or the humanities. In this context, we can describe architecture as duplicitous. To the same extent, it constitutes a domain of production as well as creation in the classic understanding of Aristotelian *ποίησις* (*poiesis*), i.e. architecture as art-technique⁸.

Thus, what are the relevant elements of the architect's/urban planner's professional work as regards ethics? Certainly, one of such elements a big problem of irreversibility of decisions, their disposability and unidirectionality in the analogy to, e.g. medicine and surgery. Architecture and urban planning 'work' as if on a living organism of the social and cultural space of life; they accompany the creation, shaping and modification of this space. In this context, one of the main problems is the issue of the degree of autonomy and sovereignty of decisions in relation to the requirements posed by administrative and political decision-makers as well as autonomy of designs and their realisations which depend on investors. The problem of autonomy is connected with the issue of responsibility for the design, its implementation, functioning and usage. Therefore, we can make the following general assumptions: 1) the architect/urban planner is totally responsible for the design; 2) the designer, decision-maker and investor are partially responsible for the realisation of the design; 3) in the case of functioning and usage, responsibility is shared in a similar way. In both cases there is a problem of possible controls, the range of permissible modifications and changes and finally, verifi-

cation in order to avoid possible future errors. These actions provide possibilities of innovative solutions also in form of competitions as a method of verification and development of professional competencies⁹.

Another issue constitutes the problem of function which is determined by pragmatism and utilitarianism as a manifestation of specified technological possibilities. Concurrently, there is a desire for the form individualisation, i.e. designing and planning as a creative act which exceeds a technical dimension of production. In this sense, architecture is a domain as well as space of clash between these two aspirations and expectations, sometimes divergent, which are centred around the form; as long as this form results only from the function, it cannot be named as creation yet (F.L. Wright). Functionality and form are complemented by a third component – tradition of form. Thus, the following questions arise: To what extent architecture/urban planning takes into account the tradition of form that exists in a given place/region? Is the tradition preserved as part of the obligatory standard regulating these issues? To what extent it is permissible to reject or deconstruct the tradition? During the last decades, the issue of form and tradition in architecture has been the subject of a serious dispute between modernism and postmodernism.

Functionality, form, tradition as elements of architecture and urban planning and their constructing and deconstructing processes remain always connected with a particular place and space, thus, they are supposed to serve the particular place and space. Therefore, they can be an expression of or a challenge to the reality that exists in a given place/space. In the relation to culture or nature, we can emphasise another motif in the professional activity of an architect/urban planner, namely, the relation to local communities and their awareness and readiness to co-create the social life space [9]. At this point, we embark upon the sphere of relations existing between architecture/urban planning and politics. One of the issues that deals with moral and ethical aspects is the question of mastering and formation of space in the context of wielding power and forming political systems. The level of awareness, i.e. a passive or active attitude is fully conditioned by culture. The attitude of a community towards place and space in a democratic society is bound to be completely different from that which is characteristic for an authoritarian or totalitarian system¹⁰.

In the contemporary discourse on architecture and urban planning, place and space occupy a special position along with the process of locating and spacing in the scope of multiple social impingements and the social process of production and formation of space [10]. This discourse takes place against the background of concepts of the soci-

⁷There are numerous examples of real life conflicts, for instance, Rospudy Valley, 'zagiel' ['sail'] by Libeskind in Warsaw or the design by the of design studio JSK (not completed) of the highest building in Europe of the 1990s 'Campanilla' in Frankfurt am Main.

⁸This exclusivity of architecture results, inter alia, from its history and position in the system of sciences, including engineer, technical and natural sciences connected with the tradition of the so called *artes liberales* as well as implications and mutual connections of architecture and social sciences; cf. Schäfers B. [11], pp. 13–165.

⁹Detailed legal regulations and ethical dimension of architect's/urban planner's professional activity are included in Act on self-management of architects, civil engineers and urban planners which was adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Poland on 15.12.2000 (Diary Acts of 2001, No 5, item 42).

¹⁰The issue of relations between architecture and politics complements the dispute between modernism and postmodernism against the background of architecture; cf. Habermas J. [5] and Welsch, W. [15].

ety which, through introducing new dynamic paradigms of social life, determined the perception of space; these concepts, inter alia, are: structuration (A. Giddens), process of social becoming (P. Sztompka) and mobility, flows and networks (J. Urry)¹¹. Space is interpreted in a dualis-

¹¹The major works here are, inter alia: Giddens A., *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (1984, *Stanowienie społeczeństwa*, 2003); Sztompka P., *Society in Action: The Theory of Social Becoming*, Cambridge 1991; idem [12] and Urry J. [14].

tic way, i.e. as created and creating as well as ambiguous and multi-disciplinary. Space understood in this way is characterised by the desire for locating and spacing on the one hand, while, on the other hand, this space dynamics and social mobility lead to multiplication of suspended spaces in their social and cultural dimensions which were defined by M. Augé as ‘non-places’ [1]. Thus, we can see that the social science discourse was dominated by metaphors of mobility and space which somehow determine new directions of progress in architecture and urban planning [2].

Responsibility as a professional ethics postulate

In architecture and urban planning, the topic of ‘ethics confronted with challenges of new technologies’ and the issue of moral and ethical implications are connected first of all with the modern concepts of the society, which are manifested in architectural forms and urban developments. At the same time, despite the technological and social changes, one of the basic principles in professional ethics remains responsibility.

This assumption results from the very phenomenon of technique and technology. In the philosophical aspect, we come back here to the Aristotelian art-technique (τεχνη, *techné*) as a domain of production (ποίησις, *poiesis*). This come-back is necessary when we attempt to explain the modern phenomenon of development, the fact of determining human life by technique and technologies as well as understanding the specifics of professional ethics. The whole approach suggests the possibility of reaching the roots of the modern understanding of culture, science and technology, their mutual relations, conditions and permeation.

Using the notional duplication of the German language and their distinction between culture and civilisation (*Kultur* and *Zivilisation*), it is justifiable to ask the following question: to what extent the so called *homo faber*, as a producer of (technical, material) ‘civilisation’, influences ‘culture’ or is it the case that he creates ‘culture’ in its moral-intellectual dimension (as in e.g. L.H. Morgan)? This question comprises the entire issue of technical and technological progress which implies the problem of new intellectual and ethical challenges for contemporary man. At this place, we can refer to the universal historical theory of civilisation by A.J. Toynbee with the development paradigm of *challenge and response*, according to which a real challenge for man is not so much ‘nature’ itself as man’s own technological creations. An open question remains what is our response to this challenge. In this context, A. Hilckman (1900–1970), a German theoretician of culture, postulates a conscious integration of technological advances in the development of modern cultures and

civilisations and connecting technical and technological progress as indispensable elements of each culture-civilisation with an ethical category of responsibility [6].

This modern dynamic development of technology can be interpreted as a peculiar accumulation of two different interpretations of science and scientific research which result from cognitive desires that are characteristic for every human being. On the one hand, we deal with the paradigm of *scire propter ipsum scire*, i.e. cognition for the sake of cognition, while on the other hand, there is paradigm of *scire propter uti*, i.e. learning/researching in order to apply or use. Cognition for the sake of cognition – this philosophical contemplation of truth – can, but does not have to, lead to technological innovations. On the other hand, this innovation is the essence of the purpose of production and consequently, it constitutes the utility of cognition. The category of responsibility as one of the components of the moral and ethical system ought to integrate these two different human aspirations into one consistent existential entirety which comprises private, professional as well as social life of man.

What kind of attitude should be assumed by man towards the new world of technologies? Technologies – a human creation – are also becoming a major challenge for a human being of the 21st century. The fact of accepting a given concept of science leads to further results which are big with consequences. The professional ethics based on the principle of disinterested cognition of truth for its own sake shall take on a different form than the professional ethics based on the principles of utility, application and usage of the effects of cognition. As a consequence, various sets of complementarity and divergence appear along with totally different conflicts in professional practice between the norms of the general system of ethics and the particular codes of professional ethics. It is the principle of responsibility – as the main postulate of professional ethics – that can be seen as a remedy for this division.

Summary

Professional ethics as one of the central issues which fringes upon the widely understood humanities as well as engineering and technical sciences constitutes the topic which is discussed reluctantly and it is even marginalized.

This results from the dispute concerning ethics itself, which has been carried out recently and from the fact of creating new professions in the process of technological development. Codes of professional ethics result from the

specific nature of a given profession and at the same time they are shaped by the system of values of the particular culture and the society concept. Their nature is burdened with a conflict between morality and professionalism, between the ethical code and the professional code. Trust is a reservoir of professional ethics as a principle of social life and responsibility as the category of ethics. An example of complementarity and divergence in the context of professional ethics is the professional practice of an architect and urban planner which is based on transdis-

ciplinarity. It is formed against the background of technological and spatial turn as well as a dispute between modernism and postmodernism which took place at the turn of the centuries. At the same time, it is suggested that various concepts of science are a possible source of conflicts. According to the quoted authors, technologies constitute a challenge for the contemporary man and the appropriate attitude to them ought to be based on responsibility which is a principle postulated by professional ethics.

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Komplementarność i rozbieżności. Kwestia kształtowania etyk zawodowych wobec rozwoju technologii

Etyka zawodowa, jedno z centralnych zagadnień z pogranicza humanistyki oraz nauk inżynieryjno-technicznych, stanowi niechętnie podejmowany i marginalizowany temat. Wynika to z toczącego obecnie sporu wokół samej etyki oraz z faktu kształtowania nowych zawodów w procesie rozwoju technologii. Etyki zawodowe wynikają ze specyfiki danej profesji, a jednocześnie są kształtowane przez system wartości danej kultury oraz koncepcję społeczeństwa. W ich charakterystykę jest wpisany konflikt między moralnością a profesjonalizmem, między kodeksem etycznym a kodeksem zawodowym. Rezerwuarem etyk zawodowych jest zaufanie jako zasada życia społecznego oraz

odpowiedzialność jako kategoria etyki. Przykładem komplementarności i rozbieżności w kontekście etyk zawodowych jest oparta na transdyscyplinarności praktyka zawodowa architekta i urbanisty. Tęm jej kształtowania jest zwrot technologiczny i przestrzenny oraz prowadzony na przełomie wieków spór między modernizmem a postmodernizmem. Jednocześnie jako źródło konfliktów zostały zdiagnozowane odmienne koncepcje nauki. W przytoczonej literaturze wyzwaniem dla współczesnego człowieka są technologie, wobec których adekwatną postawą jest odpowiedzialność będąca postulowaną zasadą etyk zawodowych.

Key words: professional ethics, conflict between morality and professionalism, trust, responsibility, architect's and urban designer's praxis

Słowa kluczowe: etyka zawodowa, konflikt między moralnością a profesjonalizmem, zaufanie, odpowiedzialność, praktyka zawodowa architekta i urbanisty