Counterfactuality of the Ethical Norms of Higher Education

Natalia Boychenko — Doctor of Philosophy, Associate Professor

Shupyk National Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education

(Kyiv, Ukraine)

E-mail: n_boychenko@ukr.net

Usage of the counterfactuality as a term for marking the modality to some event becomes a new trend in social sciences. Recently this term was popular almost exclusively in psychology — especially in study of cognitive processes, but now it receive wide spectrum of interpretations: from economic to philosophical one. Most of such interpretations is concentrated near the problem of somebody's attitude to situation that he or she was involved in. Meanwhile the term "counterfactuality" marks the real influence of the person on the course of events rather than his or her pure mental states. The person could change the future events due to his or her activity about these events: these changes rarely could be exactly the same that were calculated, desirable or even acceptable for this person, but these changes are for sure the consequence of his or her decision — direct or indirect, substantial or accidental, necessary or extraneous, evidently relevant or seemingly unrelated. For the philosophy the situation with ethical optation and its consequences is significant. Typical for analytic philosophy is the reconstruction of positivist logic of counterfactuality as possibility. According to this positivist point of view, we should not accept any human discovery, any creation because of their improbability — the sentences about them were simply the consequences of false sentences. More important is the fact that the consequents of the counterfactual conditional judgments are always true. Nobody can take the antecedent of the counterfactual conditional judgments as false from the point of view of human will, i.e. from the point of view of our intention and results of its implementation in our activity and our creations. These consequences are real because men act according to their definition of situation: their belief motivates them and push them to make real things that were unreal before. Reality of mind becomes real materially due to human activity. This is the way of design of future human nature on the basis of future human image.

Key Words: counterfactuality, counterfactual conditional judgment, ethical norms, higher education, means and goals, future, pluperfect

Usage of the counterfactuality as a term for marking the modality to some event becomes a new trend in social sciences. Recently this term was popular almost exclusively in psychology — especially in study of cognitive processes, but now it receive wide spectrum of interpretations: from economic to philosophical one. Most of such interpretations is concentrated near the problem of somebody's attitude to situation that he or she was involved in. Meanwhile the term "counterfactuality" marks the real influence of the person on the course of events rather than his or her pure mental states. The person could change the future events due to his or her activity about these events: these changes rarely could be exactly the same that were calculated, desirable or even acceptable for this person, but these changes are for sure the consequence

of his or her decision — direct or indirect, substantial or accidental, necessary or extraneous, evidently relevant or seemingly unrelated. Sometimes these changes occur opposite to the person's wish, but nevertheless it is the regular result of this wish too. The classic example of such determination is a game with futures on the stock exchange. However, for the philosophy much more significant is the situation with ethical optation and its consequences. What should be our activity as human beings and therefore what could be future human image?

As Oleg Bazaluk suggested: "The philosophy of education should not just investigate the process of education — it should be a process, action, questioning aimed at full implementation of internal creative potential as individual human psychic, so the potential of certain micro- and macro- group as a whole" [Bazaluk, 2015: 14]. Here we can see the example of counterfactual judgment with imperative mode. Also Galina Beregova underlined the methodological role of the philosophy of education: "The philosophy of education in the modern world is able to perform and performs the methodological function: it defines the principles of values and worldview of a human of the future, giving for him a true understanding of the meaning of life and therefore it is a research branch of pedagogy, proposing new guidelines for the progressive reorganization of the education system" [Beregova, 2016]. Mykhailo Boychenko investigated the interconnection between values and functions in modern university education [Boychenko, 2017], and we researched counterfactual goals of university education [Boychenko, 2016]. All these studies help us to represent the ethical norms of higher education in their counterfactuality.

First of all, we should distinguish philological and philosophical meanings of counterfactuality. In linguistics the counterfactuality is associated primarily with Pluperfect (Plusquamperfekt) [Okhrimenko, 2013; Plungian, 2004], or so-called long-past time [Andriiv, 2015; Popovych, 2012]. According to the researcher Lyudmila Popovych: "In the Ukrainian linguistics Pluperfect is mainly seen as a relative time, i.e., a form which expresses an action that relates not to the moment of speech, but to another action that precedes the moment of speech" [Popovych, 2012: 653]. Could this philological description of the situation of time shift correlate with moral choice — when we are talking about remorse, when we had to do in other way in the past in order to have not a moral dissatisfaction later?

However, the language Pluperfect is also used increasingly to describe unreality of the situation and actions in the present and future time. According to local researcher Olga Andriiv, who summarizing preliminary philological studies: "Julia Panova in her interpreting Ö. Dahl's provisions says that the beginning of the application of long-past time forms to study this function is associated with forms of Perfect, used for marking of pseudo-real situations that can relate not only to the past but to the present and even future time. Thus, the same linguistic construction can mean unrealized effects as in the past or present, but even in the future, about the implementation of which we know nothing. To avoid ambiguous interpretation of modal constructions designated by such forms, language uses a form of long-past time" [Andriiv, 2015: 31]. So, Andriiv discovers in Lina Kostenko's novel "Notes of a Ukrainian Lunatic" that "Pluperfect performs functions related to modeling of the situation parallel to the reality" [Andriiv, 2015: 31]. Russian linguist Vladimir Plungian determines the function of unreality as counterfactual, i.e. one that indicates the idea that a particular situation (according to the speaker's evidence) has no place in the real world, but could occurs in some "alternative" one; so counterfactuality means the probability that contradicts the facts [Plungian, 2004: 274].

Thus, for ethics there is a much wider field of application Pluperfect time to indicate certain parallel moral realities: one thing — common practices that do not cause any issues and can be taken as evident moral norms (norm of Emil Durkheim's type [Durkheim, 1991] i.e. "positive"),

and quite another thing — the rules that are not in common practice, the achievement of which requires the willpower of the individual (as in Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative [Kant, 1965]) or community (as in the perception of positivity Christianity as such that overcomes the moral autonomy of the individual according to Georg Hegel [Hegel, 1972]). In the latter case, the pseudo-reality of the moral norms is relative — they are unreal only to the extent that they cannot be implemented without any special effort. This effort makes them even more real and powerful than "realistic", positive norms. Here the temporal aspect recedes into the background, and at the frontline, there are opposing acts of traditionalism on one hand and modernist desire to change, to improve the world, ourselves, on the other. If Kant understood moral norms as unreal, but useful for establishing of direction of changes to desired for us future image, so Hegel rather strived to legitimate a positive compliance with the behavior sample inherited from the past (first of all — as playback according to the model that Jesus gave us two thousands of years ago).

Anatoliy Yermolenko also sees the connection between counterfactual and unreal as an important part of philosophical counterfactuality for understanding of which one should appeal to Kant's notion of a priori. Yermolenko notes the Karl-Otto Apel's ideal communication concept [Apel, 2009] rooted in Kantian theory of judgment: "The term "counterfactual" marks out not only a priori, non-empirical nature of the community, but also a type of the complex sentence, used in justification — namely sentence of subjunctive mood in which two sentences linked by the conjunction "as if" (als ob). In this case, it refers to the supposedly existence of the perfect communication" [Yermolenko, 1999: 54]. Unfortunately, this brief Yermolenko's note actually exhausts his analysis of counterfactuality as a special topic. It remains unclear why counterfactual as unreal might be just interesting for the person, or even pretend to replace the real. Why, for example, people sacrifice their health, material wealth, even life itself for the sake of certain ideals that cannot be seen or felt by touch?

This Apel's approach and therefore all transcendental pragmatics seems to be wrong in their efforts to reduce the whole palette of possible consolidation on certain subjective reality/ unreality to just one mode, while every language provides much more opportunities to express the extent of unreality that we perceive. Local philologist Valery Okhrimenko indicates as possible modality the gap between the real and the surreal, analyzing verbal means of expression of a reality in Italian: "The main FSV (functional-semantic variants — NB) in realtà with an integrated feature of "objectification of subjective mode (in terms of negation)" are: 1) the inadequacy of interpreting of a sensory information by the subject of perception; 2) understanding by the subject of false interpretations of emotional response; 3) contradictory between the subject intent and its implementation; 4) estimated asymmetry between subject / object and feature implicated to it with a shift towards the negative" [Okhrimenko, 2013: 130]. Angelika Popovych notes that counterfactuality was initially associated with the effect and function of digression that is splitting of time of telling the stories and the story time. Thus, counterfactuality in language emphasizes simulations using language means: "This model, which conventionally might call mental digression seems very logical to us. According to it, counterfactuality manipulates the modeling of situation that contrasted with reality and this aspect of semantic structure of Pluperfect causes the appropriate function" [Popovych, 2012: 671]. Spanish researcher from the University of Potsdam Luis Vicente, who analyzes "the past counterfactuality in the imperatives of Spanish" found similar linguistic schemes [Vicente, 2015].

Thus, by Pluperfect it can be detected different models of counterfactuality. The above

quotation from Okhrimenko gives models of subjective distancing from a flow of events through distancing from: inadequate (partially adequate) senses; inadequate (excessive, reduced or even false) emotional perception; inadequacy of action results to the intentions; value discrepancy of the object of perception.

If we turn to Kant's categorical imperative, his classic interpretation involves discrepancy between intent and result, that is, to receive a guaranteed outcome Kant's ethics recommends to define clearly own intention. That is, philosophers inclined to interpret Kant's imperative formally — as the maximum dependence of the result from linearity and persistency in following certain prescribed at the very beginning rules ("maxima"). Then there come links to the categorical imperative when trying to justify Nazi crimes like Eichmann situation, including Hannah Arendt's opus [Arendt, 2008] and its theoretical development by Marc Halfon [Halfon, 1989]. Only the deeper researchers point out that Kant is not so formalistic, and it is also important to account the intention, that denotes the ultimate goal, which determines the strategy of ethical behavior and its means. This intention should be at least subjectively recognized as a positive value, and hence in moral behavior it is also important its valuable content. For Kant, as for the any believer, the objective ethics could not be contradictory neither with God, nor with good.

However, Kant deliberately rejects any emotional or sensitive side of moral behavior: it could base only on cold reflection. For this he was criticized by Søren Kierkegaard, who proposed transition from reason moralism to higher, namely religious forms of moral sense [Kierkegaard, 1993], as well as more recent authors, including Max Scheler [Scheler, 1994].

In any case, Kant emphasized that for ethical position required distance, he saw it was possible to win by virtue of a priori position, that distancing judgment from a variety of contexts. However, as we see in the case of ethics nobody can break free of values context that, in principle, recognized Kant himself.

Then the question should be put differently. Moral person should distance himself/herself from the contexts, but obviously not all — that is the most surreal thing would be to seek a completely formal, meaningless position. The very Kant's imperative include values, as we see, it implies certain ethical values, among which, perhaps, according to Max Scheler, decisive place occupied by Christian values, namely Protestant [Scheler, 1994], but may still be other connotations and contexts of imperative — political, legal and others. Thus, in an effort to achieve moral distance from mindless adherence to a flow of events, we should oppose to this flow models of certain behavior that proved supposedly like "a priori". "Like", but not really! As noted Nicklas Luhmann, value opportunism is appropriate only if we protect the selected value against all other values [Luhmann, 2011] — because, really, there could not be non-valuable position in opposing some values: values are always opposed to the counter-value or irrelevant value. Then and there lays, in our opinion, actually a philosophical interest to the concept of counterfactuality that can be called a priori-like selected context. This kind of interpretation of a priori is close to the term "historic a priori", constructed by Michel Foucault [Foucault, 1994]. Thus, taking a counterfactual position, we choose a semantic context of our behavior — sensual, emotional, instrumentally rational, value, etc. — and give to it absolute value relatively to all other possible contexts — within our strategy to keep the line of certain conduct.

For example, in addition to the mentioned above methods of modeling alternatives it is proper in linguistics to distinguish by analysis of long-past time a counterfactuality of the condition (if, instead of real R happened P...) and a counterfactuality of the consequences (then

it might happen Q) [Plungian, 2004: 275]. Kant's categorical imperative based, as everybody tends to see and as he declares himself, on counterfactuality of the condition — that is, if human could not act as being caused only by limited natural factors, so he/she should be endowed with unlimited freedom by God. That is, Kant himself suggests conditions in the name of his imperative — an absolute categorical imperative as unconditional (independent from natural circumstances) he opposes the hypothetical imperative as conditional (provided by circumstances). In fact, for Kant it is also extremely important to fix counterfactuality result (consequence) — strictly ethical adjusted and consistent moral behavior of man as a free being. However, counterfactuality, i.e. in some sense pseudo-reality of this behavior, for Kant is sheer truth that reveals itself not only in the recognition of rather regulatory, than strategic nature of the moral ideal, but in the same regulatory nature of other ideals such as perpetual peace [Kant, 1989].

This case of Kant's latent value legitimating of moral norm is very important in modern discussion with interpretation of counterfactual judgments in analytic philosophy. Here we meet the classic positivist understanding of norms as existing facts. Typical for analytic philosophy is the reconstruction of positivist logic of counterfactuality as possibility. Such reconstruction we met in the article wrote by local philosopher Anna Lactionova [Laktionova, 2016]. Here the judgments about the future events are formulated from disposition of present knowledge about any possible event. So according to this positivist point of view we should not accept any human discovery, any creation because of their improbability — the sentences about them were simply the consequences of false sentences: "Some conditional judgments are counterfactual, their antecedent is put as false: "If one thing has occurred, some other thing would happen"… We should explain the meaning of counterfactual conditional judgments. These judgments are the statements about events occur in invalid, unreal situations… Counterfactual conditional judgments fix the situation when antecedent (condition) is always false, and meaning of the whole judgment is true" [Laktionova, 2016: 10]. We suppose than more important is the fact that the consequents of the counterfactual conditional judgments are always true: from the false antecedent it could be also the false consequence — and the whole judgment would be true too. That means: the specific of the counterfactual conditional judgment does not lay in its false antecedent.

In what sense could we tell about false of antecedent and further deduction of truth of the whole judgment? From the logic point of view, this deduction is true, but we insist that nobody can take the antecedent of the counterfactual conditional judgments as false from the point of view of human will, i.e. from the point of view of our intention and results of its implementation in our activity and our creations. We should take in consideration Arthur Schopenhauer's PhD Dissertation "On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason" [Schopenhauer, 1993], where he differed "four kinds of necessary connection that arise within the context of seeking explanations, and he correspondingly identifies four independent kinds of objects in reference to which explanations can be given: 1) Material things; 2) Abstract concepts; 3) Mathematical and Geometrical constructions; 4) Psychologically-Motivating forces" [Wicks, 2011]. In typical for analytic philosophy vision of reality it has geometrical character that should be explained with logical constructions. All other types of determination — material causation, conceptual connections, and motivation patterns — seems to reduce to logical formulas. For us it is crucial to differ the motivating forces from logical constructions: logic cannot explain and predict the results of impact from motivating forces.

Some issues from this problem could be illustrated by famous William Isaac Thomas

theorem: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" [Thomas, 1928]. These consequences are real because men act according to their definition of situation: their belief motivates them and push them to make real things that were unreal before. Reality of mind becomes real materially due to human activity. This is the way of design of future human nature on the basis of future human image.

In analytic philosophy, we also can find theoretical field where the creative force of human activity is conceptualized — the performative acts. John Austin [Austin, 2006] and John R. Searle [Searle, 2010] worked out this concept, but performative acts allows to explain a significance of language in its factual state — not its evolution. Therefore, in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy we can find the judgment: "John Austin is considered by many to be the creator of the school of analytical jurisprudence, as well as, more specifically, the approach to law known as "legal positivism"" [Bix, 2014]. Searle investigated the phenomenon of intentionality [Searle, 1983], but his understanding of construction of social reality with help of language [Searle, 1995] was more the elaboration of language as reality of mind, than methodology of real changes as result of changes in mind. At least in one point the theory of performative acts is useful: in its accent on imperative mode of counterfactual judgment. The significance of the counterfactual conditional judgments does not lay in their explanatory potential, but in their participation in creative activity. Such creative activity has a crucial role in ethical judgments and in moral evolution.

What conclusion should be done to study the ethical aspects of university education? First of all, it should be noted that in addition to recognition of academic values counterfactuality it should be considered also other values of university education according to the model of counterfactuality. Academic values should be deprived of a significant part of their idealization — in a real education; these values acquire regulatory, not absolute sense. If we consider the academic values as a complete and self-sufficient ideal, we will find some of their characteristics as a kind of symbolic system that has some value aspect too. If you turn to academic values in the structure of value orientations of several university communities — they become variability. Professors and students, administration and other university communities interpret academic values differently. Moreover, this variability has a character that looks deviant only in a version of absolute status of these values and academic norms. If the version of each academic values considered as self-sufficient in its counterfactuality subsystem of values, then we will get a pluralistic vision of academic values in which different versions of their interpretation are partially complementary, but may partially contradict one another. So, counterfactual academic values may be supplemented by other counterfactual university values, such as institutional. Thus, for each university the honoring of its Alma mater is counterfactual value that can be differently interpreted by professors and students, but they all have to recognize it as Alma mater anyway — while representatives of other universities have no such obligation to value outlying for them university.

Counterfactuality, as noted above, can have different directions and different levels of modalities — both for different communities within the university and for different universities. We have doubt that one can speak about counterfactuality of the position of those individuals who are involved in the functioning of universities. It is quite another thing to individualize values already recognized as factual. Just this kind of values, in our opinion, is always individual. However, this individualization of factual values is only possible within framework specified by counterfactual values. This does not mean that factual values could not go beyond this framework, but it clearly indicates that these values do not significant for

university — yet or already, or it is unlikely that they could acquire this status.

In this case, the university ethical values appear as counterfactual set of counterfactual and factual ethical values of various university communities. It is possible that such a set emerged largely spontaneous — on the condition of subordination of factual values to counterfactual one. However, the better is the functioning of the university as a social institution, the more clearly it defines its own symbolic system, the more perfectly it is adjusted its organizational structure — the more likely that in this university counterfactual values of different communities will be characterized by convergence, which in particular can become normative expression — from codes of ethics to the original charters of rights.

These documents should not only outline a common vision of certain range of ethical values but should also provide value-ethical means to achieve the educational goals. At a high stages of its evolution the counterfactual character of university ethical values becomes obvious even despite its usual latent functioning — not only as counterfactual goals, but also as correlated with them counterfactual means to achieve them. In the field of university education, as in any other area one should to avoid mistakenly understanding of Niccolo Machiavelli's doctrine [Machiavelli, 1996]. According to this misunderstanding only goals have the counterfactual nature and means are always only actual, that is — arbitrary. Classical ethical axiom is that one cannot achieve ethical goals with help of unethical means — therefore means (as goals) should be defined counterfactually, and for successful application of this means should share the counterfactuality of goals. Then actually used goals and means would not fall out of the system of ethical conduct too, so such counterfactually legitimated factual goals and means would provide higher education system and would contribute each particular university to achieve the overall efficiency of its goals.

References

Andriiv, Olga. Semantic-Stylistic Features of Pluperfect (Based On The Novel by Lina Kostenko "Notes by the Ukrainian Lunatic"). In *Naukovì zapiski Nacìonal'nogo unìversitetu «Ostroz'ka akademìâ». Serìâ Fìlologìčna*. Ostrog: Publisher National University "Ostroh Academy", Volume 52, 2015: 30-32.

Apel, Karl-Otto. *Discourse and Responsibility: the Problem of Transit to Post-Conventional Morality*. Kyiv: Duh I Litera, 2009.

Arendt, Hanna. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Moscow: Europa, 2008.

Austin, John. *Three Ways of Spilling Ink*. Moscow: Aletheia, 2006.

Bazaluk, Oleg. Postmodernism: Philosophy of Education. In *Future Human Image*. Volume 5, 2016: 9-22.

Beregova, Galyna. Philosophy of Education: Pragmatism-Instrumentalism Concept of Forming the Future Human in Higher Education. In *Future Human Image*. Volume 6, 2016: 9-22.

Bix, Brian John. *Austin*. First published Sat Feb 24, 2001; substantive revision Fri Feb 21, 2014 [Electronic Data]. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/austin-john/

Boychenko, Mykhailo. Values and Functional Tasks of Educational Communication in the Modern University: Philosophical Understanding. In *Hileya*. Vypusk 116, 2017: 233-240.

Boychenko, Natalia. Counterfactual Objectives of University Education. In *Philosophy of Education*. № 1 (18), 2016: 136-149.

Durkheim, Emil. *On the division of social labor. Method of sociology*. Moscow: Nauka, 1991: 5-380.

Foucault, Michel. *Words and things: Archeology of the Humanities*. St. Petersburg: Acad, 1994.

Halfon, Mark S. *Integrity: A Philosophical Inquiry*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.

Hegel, Georg. Positivity of the Christian religion. 1800. In *Hegel, Georg. Works of different years. In two volumes. Volume1*. Moscow: Mysl, 1972: 88–208.

Kant, Immanuel. *Towards Perpetual Peace*. Moscow: Moscovskiy rabochiy, 1989.

Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Practical Reason. In *Kant, Immanuel. Works: in 6 v*. Moscow: Mysl, 1965. — V. 4 (1): 120-195.

Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling*. Moscow: Respublica, 1993.

Laktionova, Anna. Counterfactual Generalizations. In *Religion and Socium*. Chernivtsi National University, № 1-2 (21-22), 2016: 9-15.

Luhmann, Nicklas. *The Concept of Aim and Systemic Rationality: Function of the Goals in Social Systems*. Kyiv: Duh I Litera, 2011.

Machiavelli, Niccolo. The Prince. In *Machiavelli, Niccolo. The Prince. Discourses on the first decade of Titus Livius. Art of War*. Moscow: Mysl, 1996: 37-108.

Okhrimenko, Valery. Semantic Structure Of The Modal Operator in realtà (On The Material Of Italian). In *Language and conceptual world view*. Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Vypusk 46. Part 3, 2013: 123–133.

Plungian, Vladimir. On The Counterfactual Meanings Of Pluperfect. In *Irrealis and Irreality*. Edited by Y.A. Lander, V. A. Plungian, and A.Y. Urmanchieva. Moscow: Gnosis, 2004: 273–291.

Popovych, Ludmyla. Grammatical and Semantic Features of Pluperfect in Modern Ukrainian. In *Accentology. Etymology. Sematyka*. To Vitaly Sklyarenko 75th anniversary. Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 2012: 653-672.

Searle, John R. *Intentionality: an Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Searle, John R. *Making the Social World: the Structure of Human Civilization*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Searle, John R. *The Construction of Social Reality*. New York: The Free Press, 1995.

Thomas, William I. and Dorothy Swaine Thomas. *The Child in America: Behavior Problems and Programs*. New York: Knopf, 1928.

Scheler, Max. Formalism in Ethics and the Material Ethics of Values. In *Scheler, Max. Selected Works*. Moscow: Gnosis, 1994: 218-279.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: A Philosophical Study. In *Schopenhauer, Arthur. On The Fourfold Root... The World As Will And Representation. T.1. Criticism of Kantian Philosophy*. Moscow: Nauka, 1993: 5-124.

Vicente, Luis. *Past Counterfactuality in Spanish Imperatives* (talk formerly advertised as "Revisiting Spanish retrospective imperatives") [Electronic resource] http://www.luisvicente.net/linguistics/cgg20.pdf

Wicks, Robert. Arthur Schopenhauer. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2003. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schopenhauer/

Yermolenko, Anatoliy. *Communicative Practical Philosophy*. Kyiv: Libra, 1999.