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Universal and Complementary Values[*]

Abstract

We hold the view that in today's world there is a place for values – a place for a system of common, shared values, based on the demonstrated likeness among the values of the peoples of the world and on the realization that many of the seemingly conflicting values are but complementary.

There is a universal heritage of immutable values, which constitutes the foundation of our intellectual and moral tradition and the standards by which we judge the significance of life, and which is principally embedded in human cultures, national civilizations and religions: *respect for human life, liberty and justice; commitment to peace, freedom, truthfulness, human-dignity and human rights; safeguarding of cultural heritage, historic facts and objective knowledge*. These values are mutually embedded, mutually indebted, and their value is implicit.

Universal values are thus common values based on the proven similarity among the micro- cultural/national/religious value-judgment systems. They are values the world can agree upon because they remain practically unchanged by cultural, national, religious and other differences, and they are freely adopted by people.

While universal values are capable of accommodating cultural and national diversity, there remain differentiated and autonomous the majority of the micro-cultural/national values. We believe that many of these values are in essence complementary, other sides of the universal values and alternative ways of perceiving their richness and can, thus, coexist.

There is, furthermore, a need to look at the traditional human values of society and those of science as complementary. Firstly, because the

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immutable values – though neither generated nor negated by science – are the values which qualify the functions of science and the conduct, freedom and responsibility of the scientist ***in*** science. Secondly, because there are (instrumental) values ***of*** science, which qualify its operation: *rationality, verification of knowledge, discovery and correction of error, respect and acceptance of the proven fact, unification and coherence of scientific knowledge, universal participation in science, cooperation, humanism.*

Recognition and appreciation of the complementarity between the values of science and the traditional human values is crucial, in order to moderate the image of science as antagonistic to accepted beliefs, norms, and human values. Such accommodation is also needed to (1) enhance the beneficial impact of science on human values and the new roles of scientific knowledge in ethics, and (2) to moderate/mediate the negative impact of science on traditional human values foremost by what science says about man himself, which *clashes with the traditional view that man is a unique creation and the supreme value par excellence.*

There are, thus, universal and complementary values, but there is as well a deep challenge to both types of values by the emerging powers of science.

And there may still be new complementary values emerging, which are connected with human want, the environment, and energy, further linking the values of society and those of science.

Unavoidably, the ultimate benefits of scientific knowledge rest on the successful dialogue between science and society and their value systems.

Introduction

We hold the view that in today's world there is a place for values – a place for a system of common, shared values, based on the demonstrated likeness among the values of the peoples of the world, and on the realization that many of the seemingly conflicting values of national and local cultures are but complementary. We also hold the view that the values of science and the traditional human values of society are complementary, and that recognition and appreciation of this complementarity is needed to (1) moderate the image of science as antagonistic to accepted beliefs, norms, and traditional human values, (2) enhance the beneficial impact of science on values and the new roles of scientific knowledge in ethics, and (3) optimize the benefits of scientific knowledge to society.

1. Traditional human values

Traditional human values are embedded in man's cultures and religions.

History teaches that no culture is possible without agreement on a foundation of common values; civilization has no boundaries, but every nation has its own. Thus, culture-specific values reign supremely. In their springs are rooted the micro-cultural value-judgment systems of the peoples of the world. At the *International Symposium on Universal Values* [1] which was organized by the Academy of Athens in connection with the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Professor Despotopoulos [2] nicely described the philosophical foundation of the values rooted in the cultural heritage of classical Greece. There, man is the supreme value, the measure of all things; his attributes are wisdom, virtue, moderation, balance, civility, responsibility, duty, patience, heroism, and greatness; he respects life, nature and the law, and knows himself and the limits of his freedom. At the very foundation of Greek values lies Protagoras' dictum that *Man is the measure of all things* and Aristotle's thesis that *Man is the supreme value par excellence*. In such a philosophical perspective, values transcend history and are in their essence universal. Other cultures had different outlooks. There has been, however, an underlying unity, not identity, in the micro-cultural value-judgment systems.

Similarly, throughout history and in all civilizations we encounter the transcendental values of religion. The main religions are anthropocentric. Christianity especially, maintains that God has drawn out of the evolving cosmos a world of persons, made *in His own image*; the essence of man thus being identified by the image of God in man (see, for instance, Lossky [3]). In the depths of religious faith lay the values of reciprocity, respect for life, human dignity, love, and the commitment and dedication to great principles which may vary from religion to religion but point, just the same and in a somewhat complementary manner, to the truth common to every religion. Fundamental, then, is the belief in many religions that God is the supreme source of values and that values are revelations of God to Man and are thus transcendental.

2. Universal values

There is thus a heritage of values embedded in human cultures, national civilizations, and religions, which constitutes the foundation of our intellectual and moral tradition and the standards by which we judge the significance of life, and in the light of which justice and injustice, freedom and slavery, and good and evil are in sharp contrast. These values determine our virtue and honesty, our friendship and honor, our tenderness and goodness, our dignity, our love for each other and they draw us together. They are not generated by

science, but they are not negated by it. They have changed in color and emphasis through time and place, but remained in their essence timeless, universal.

The substratum of universal values includes: [1,4] *respect for human life, liberty and justice; commitment to peace, freedom, truthfulness, and human-dignity; safeguarding of cultural heritage, historic facts and objective knowledge*. These values are mutually embedded and mutually indebted. Their value is thus implicit: values owe their value to the existence of other values. The embeddedness of values demonstrates the existence of an underlined unity amongst them.

We can characterize as universal those values, which remain practically unchanged by cultural differences, are freely adopted by people, and are capable of accommodating cultural diversity. Universal values are thus common values based on the proven similarity among the micro-cultural/national value-judgment systems and the world can agree upon. They are prerequisites for universal ethics.

3. Complementary values

A common universal value-judgment system transcends traditional cultural values, but it does not replace them. Many of the micro-cultural / national values may appear on the surface to be contradictory, but are in essence complementary, other expressions of the universal values and alternative ways of perceiving their richness and can, thus, coexist. Looking at values from different perspectives allows for a better understanding and a richer appreciation of our common heritage of values and makes it valuable. From such vantage point-of-view, the universal values themselves are complementary in that they complement each others' value.

I believe that there also exists a fundamental complementarity between the traditional human values of society and the values of science. And that, just as there is implicitness among the traditional human values of society themselves and implicitness among the values of science themselves, so, too, there is implicitness between the traditional human values of society and the values of science. Our actions as citizens and as scientists cannot be kept apart for they are mutually embedded, and so must be our traditional human values and the values of science.

4. The values *of* science and *in* science, and the impact of science on traditional human values[5]

Science deals with the physical world and with questions that can be defined scientifically, can be studied scientifically, and have a chance to be answered

scientifically. Science unravels the beauty of the physical world like no other human activity, but it is not the only way to the truth. Beyond science, beyond the physical and the biological, beyond that which can be proved by the method of science and can be measured by the scientific instruments, lay the spiritual, the cultural and the intellectual traditions, the values of man, and the teleological concepts of philosophy and religion of which science does not speak. Science deals with neither ethical judgments, nor with the ultimate meaning of life. I know of no physical law which demands respect for human rights, or the love of my neighbor. These lay outside the province of science.

While science *per se* does not deal with human values, science is not free of values in the execution of scientific research and in the application of scientific knowledge, and science and technology influence values and serve as a means to values. There are values ***in*** science and there are values ***of*** science.

Values ***in*** science

It has been correctly stated that one can only work in science if he/she values the value of truth. The search for truth in science imposes on the researcher a moral conduct, which is not unlike the moral conduct of a person in the broader society. Science confronts the work of a scientist with the work of his colleagues and cannot survive without justice, honour, and respect among them. Science, furthermore, is based on free communication among the scientists and on mutual trust. Freedom of thought and speech, justice, self-respect, integrity, generosity, and tolerance of differing views, are all values recognized in the past – long before modern science – as necessary for the survival of society. On these very values science relies for its functioning because scientific research is conducted by and for people and because on them rests the freedom and the responsibility of the scientist. Thus, while the scientific picture of the natural world is constantly changing, the values on which science and scientific behaviour depend remain in essence the same, timeless, universal values.

Values ***of*** science

While science does not deal with values, there are values *of* science, which characterize its functioning: *rationality, verification of knowledge, discovery and correction of error, respect and acceptance of the proven fact, unification and coherence of scientific knowledge, universal participation in science, cooperation, humanism.* Humanism is a multi-dimensional value of science for, as

I have stated earlier, [5,6] „if deep in the essence of civilization lies the emancipation of humanity, society cannot be truly civilized without science". These values of science need to be broadly appreciated and to be recognized as complementary to the traditional human values, and as part of our lives just as those of traditional cultures and religions.

The values of science are not substitutes for traditional human values, as has been advocated by some. I believe, that science should neither be regarded as the only way to the truth, nor should it be phased into scientism and be transformed into a myth. Those who advocate such a shift, commit a tragic mistake for they strip science of its ethical neutrality and epistemology with unforeseen consequences for both science and society. Traditional and scientific values must be accepted as and remain complementary.

The broader acceptance by society of this complementarity between traditional human values and the values of science is seriously affected by the positive and the negative impact of science on traditional human values. On the positive side, science has added new roles for knowledge in ethics. Modern science, for instance, has imposed on us the moral obligation to secure man's dignity everywhere on earth. Our „neighbor" is everywhere and includes future generations and all nature. On the negative side, modern science is feared for its adverse impact. For example, today, many fear that the autonomy of the human being is threatened by science and consider the scientific view of man, as advocated by many scientists, as diminishing him; [7] many in society fear that science is making the traditional, Western-Civilization-view, of man as the unique creation and the supreme value *par excellence* obsolete. There is thus a need for an in-depth discussion of the impact of science and scientific technology on traditional human values.

In such a discussion, thorny questions such as those regarding the possible effects on man of the recent scientific developments in biomedical sciences need to be debated, especially the ethics of human genetic engineering, the possibility of inheritable genetic modifications in humans and thus the possible threat to humanity as a value, and the genetic heritage of value and a gene-based reductionism abdicating responsibility of one's actions. Such issues constitute the central difficulty in the accommodation of traditional human values and the values of science. Their discussion calls for humility on the part of the scientists, acceptance of the known facts of science on the part of society, and mutual trust.

5. The being and the becoming of values

Recent scientific advances are seriously impacting traditional human values, whether universal or micro-cultural. In fact, many argue that there has been devaluation of the traditional human values and wide-spread relativism of values as a result of the influence of science. Thus, while at the foundation of values lies a deep faith largely beyond reason, progressively science pushes values into the sphere of reason for, unavoidably, what we believe about the nature of man is likely to be affected by science and this, in turn, influences the way in which we behave toward each other.

Indeed, the scientific challenge to values will never cease; and there may actually be still new complementary values emerging, for instance, relating to the environment and the climatic change, human population, and human want, which further link the values of society and those of science.

There is thus universality and complementarity of values, but there is as well a deep challenge to both sets of values by the emerging powers of science.

Unavoidably, the ultimate benefits of scientific knowledge rest on the successful dialogue between science and society and their value systems.

6. Conclusions

(i) There are universal values embedded in human cultures, civilizations and religions, which need to converge onto a common frame of reference for value judgment.

(ii) There are, also, complementary values – such as many of the values of human micro-cultural civilizations and the values of science – which, while not universally accepted, constitute other ways of viewing reality and enrich and complete the universal values themselves.

(iii) Traditional human values, both universal and complementary, need to be accommodated with the values of science, and for this, a continuous dialogue between science and society is necessary.

(iv) A successful dialogue between science and society and their value systems will enhance the beneficial impact of science on human values and the new roles of scientific knowledge in ethics, and will guide science and tame scientific technology.

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