

REVIEW

RETURNING TO PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION OF BIOETHICS

(Review of the monograph by B.A.
Navrotsky and M. V. Reymer
“Philosophical anthropology as the
methodology of “culturological turn” in
bioethics”)

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*At the end of 2016 year the monograph “Philosophical
anthropology as the methodology of “culturological turn” in
bioethics” by Volgograd scientists Boris Alexandrovich Navrotsky
and Maria Vladimirovna Reymer was published [1].*

*The authors have collected the comprehensive material
for bioethical discussions in the modern western intellectual
community which is compared to the domestic bioethical tradition,
though they do not apply the scale ‘good-bad’. The main
advantage of the book is the freedom of thought which the authors
give to readers. There are not any absolute judgments and definite
conclusions in the monograph. The authors are likely to suggest
that the readers could reflect on the fate of modern bioethics. In
fact, there were many difficulties in the development of that field of
science.*

Key words: bioethics, cultural turn, postmodernism, philosophical
anthropology, communitarianism, individualism.

ВОЗВРАЩЕНИЕ К ФИЛОСОФСКИМ ОСНОВАМ БИОЭТИКИ

(Рецензия на монографию
Б.А.Навроцкого и М.В.Реймер «Философская
антропология как методология
«культурологического поворота» в биоэтике»)

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волгоградских ученых Бориса Александровича Навроцкого и
Марии Владимировны Реймер «Философская антропология
как методология «культурологического поворота» в
биоэтике» [1]. В книге собран обширный материал дискуссий
о биоэтике в современном западном интеллектуальном
сообществе, который сравнивается с отечественной
биоэтической традицией, хотя оценки по шкале «хорошо –
плохо» авторами не применяются. Вообще достоинством
рассматриваемой книги является свобода мысли, которую
они предоставляют читателям. Здесь нет абсолютных
суждений и категоричных выводов. Скорее, авторы
предлагают подумать вместе с ними о судьбе современной
биоэтики. А судьба эта складывается не просто.*

Ключевые слова: биоэтика, культурологический
поворот, постмодернизм, философская антропология,
коммунитаризм, индивидуализм.

Originally bioethics was the attempt of normative
regulations for scientific researches in medicine involving
human subjects [2]. Then its research field began to expand
rapidly. The natural scientific paradigm remained, but there
was the necessity of a) ethical reflection on practical
medicine which was associated with professional medical
ethics before and b) formulation of bioethical principles as
personal maxims for every person, not only for health care
professionals as the subject of bioethics according to V.R.
Potter is the moral attitude of man toward live objects [3].
The founder of bioethics himself considered the science as
the unity of scientific and human values. Consequently, it
would be reasonable to pursue such unity in philosophy [4].
As ‘the youth’ of bioethics was at the time of post-modern
expansion into philosophical world, it is easy to understand
what methodological basis of bioethics was actively
discussed by scientists [5]. But this discussion lead to the
considerable disappointment, and new searches for
methodology of bioethics were not so active as before.
Increasingly, bioethics played the role of the normative
regulation to the detriment of theoretical search for
meaning of life. Only the social expansion of new
biotechnologies, in particular “human enhancement
technologies”, revived the interest in philosophical
fundamentals of bioethics [6]. And in this sense, the
presented monograph is unique as it proposes the new –
culturological – paradigm which differs from modern
western “culturological turn”.

Such approach has been already presented in the
first chapter – “Russia and the West: the peculiarities of
“culturological turn”. Here the authors review the history of
bioethics in Russia in natural science, normative and
culturological variants and prove the actualization of the
transition to culturological interpretation in Western
philosophy. They tried to find positive aspects in the post-
modern impact on the development of bioethics and they
found them: “Modern medical philosophy ceases to be the
branch of philosophy of science and become the branch of
philosophy of culture. We think that such intellectual trend
occurred due to post-modernism and the critical analysis of
its experience. This analysis has shown that medicine is
fundamentally embedded into culture and cannot be
considered beyond culture” [1, 39]. The authors believe,
therefore, that bioethics ceases to be the description of the
formation of cultural identity in compliance with various

kinds of cultural patterns, but effectively prevents the cultural destruction of man and society.

In the second Chapter – “Necessary and sufficient conditions of “culturological turn” (deliberative approach to bioethics)” the authors prove the central idea of the monograph – philosophical anthropology constitutes the methodology of “culturological turn”. M.V. Reymer has already floated this idea in one of her papers [7] but without extensive grounding. This grounding is presented in the monograph. Also the axiology of communitarianism and individualism has been considered in details. The authors come to the conclusion that “the interpretation of man in philosophical anthropology allows to explicate the culturological sense of bioethics avoiding, on one hand, the technicist model of medicine and post-modern model of uncertainty of individual existing, on the other hand” [1,72]. Criticizing the communitarian approach for the lack of attention to person, rejection of the creativity of personal ethical judgments, they admit that the mechanism of integration of person into culture has been developed in this approach. The individualistic approach emphasizes the value of personal ethical judgments, though largely ignores the cultural impact on person. Consequently, the optimal variant is the integration of these two approaches, but only in the context of intersubjective model of deliberative bioethics. It calls for much speculation as the variants of integration can be various and readers should make the choice themselves.

The title of the third chapter is symbolic: “Culturological turn’ in bioethics has occurred: what is next?”. Perhaps nobody has the unambiguous answer to this question. That is why the position of the authors, who propose to reflect on the most significant features of new status of bioethics, seems true. This section of the book is especially pleasant to read because issues for discussion have deep personal sense for every of us. The comparison between literary bioethics and narrative bioethics draws to the conclusion which is indisputable for Russian scientists because it is understood for them. “Narrative approach is not typical for national bioethics, literary approach has been represented very well but it is not systematic. The modern understanding of moral problems in Russia is impossible without the interpretation of the moral foundation which was laid at the turn of the last century. Moreover, the birth of bioethics in literary works initiated the program of its development for the next period until

enshrined values and developed norms became required for the science” [1,134]. “Culturological turn” in bioethics can’t be definitely connected with the narrative pattern though it is extremely common in the West. The unique literary tradition in Russia and the invaluable experience of classic literature prove the advantages of literary bioethics over narrative bioethics. And we fully agree with this statement [8]. It is literary bioethics, not narrative one, is able to overcome the crisis of post-modernism. However, the authors consider that the real way out is phronesis. Phronesis underlies bioethical choice and unites cultural and moral values of an individual and a society.

In conclusion, the authors contribute the idea of good as the backbone factor of “culturological turn” in bioethics with the full description of its benefit. This idea is not original and the authors admit it. The idea of good was suggested by E. Pellegrino [9], and the authors invite to use it precisely in Pellegrino’s interpretation. However, the proposed idea is related to the questioning of its application: “Modern utilitarianism of clinical bioethics related with medical commercialization will avoid realization of this concept” [1,135]. That is why the task of culture experts is the active support and promotion of this concept. It is true, but this task is not only for culture experts, but for every specialist in the field of bioethics and philosophy. We hope very much that this interesting and original monograph will contribute to increasing the number of supporters of the idea of good as the fundamental one in modern bioethics, and create the impetus for developing philosophical problems in bioethics.

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