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**VOLUNTEERISM AS INDICATOR OF SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND  
EMOTIONAL WELLBEING**

Maria S. Gorbuleva (a)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) Tomsk State Pedagogical University, 60 Kievskaya Street, Tomsk 634061, Russia E-mail: [black\\_silver@bk.ru](mailto:black_silver@bk.ru)

*Abstract*

Some types and directions of charity and volunteerism as donations, volunteerism, direct aid to beneficiaries are examined in the given work. The activity of animal welfare organizations and some organizations, as well as manifestations of ethical and legal problems in the animal welfare area, are analyzed. The primary principles and rules of bioethics correspond to the primary values of volunteerism. Bioethics, while forcing to change one's attitude to another, represents a change of human's attitude to himself and his life. Such behavior algorithms as compensation and adaptation are discussed from the bioethical point of view, having in mind the model of the information-synergetic approach. The phenomenon of degustation as an opportunity to implement different social algorithms is described. Degustation is also working in the volunteerism area. Owing to this phenomenon, volunteers have a chance to test themselves in different roles. Social, economic and emotional levels of volunteerism and charity, as well as the way these characteristics represent the status of one or another sphere, are discussed. A phenomenon of a "creative class" in modern culture is marked as one of conditions of the preliminary motivation of the volunteer. Social egoism is manifested in denial of cultural traditions, and social altruism is manifested in creations of the science's future.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years in Russia and worldwide, there is a growth of charity funds, organizations, volunteers' associations and aiding societies working in different areas (healthcare, ecology, law, sport, culture etc.). When comparing quantitative characteristics and activity in this sphere as early as ten years ago, it is possible to observe a positive dynamics. Donations, direct aid to beneficiaries and the work of volunteers indicate the state of society.

There are different charity traditions caused by history, religion and manners in different countries and cultures. Worldwide index of charity WorldGivingIndex is a complex index measuring and reflecting the dynamics of the attitude and participation of citizens of different countries in charity. The given research is conducted by British organization "The Charities Aid Foundation" (CAF). On the Russian website of the organisation, one can find statistical reports (Compassion and spontaneity: private donations in Russia, 2016) which show that charity in Russia is growing by all the indexes (donations, volunteerism, direct aid). Also the number of people that participated in volunteerism is growing. WGI is growing both quantitatively and qualitatively (World giving index, 2016).

In the modern world, many opportunities to participate in charity, to donate, to volunteer emerge, removing the conditional character of language, cultural and state boundaries. Indeed, technological progress, development of communications, the society and legal system play a considerable role. But decidedly, charity and volunteerism become more and more popular and even come into a fashion. In the modern world, the human being often muses about one's place in the world and society, about what one can and must do for oneself and people around, about the fact that each person is the creator of oneself, one's life and environment, and there are no limits or they are just conventional. Intentions and strategies of life-creating are important for planning activity producing significant results (Pervushina, 2009).

## 2. Problem Statement

As a rule, it is considered that a volunteer on the basis of conscious free choice is committed to do work and provide services, applying one's experience, knowledge and skills to carry out some kind of activity on a royalty-free basis. A volunteer is committed to be aware and share regulations, values and principles of the volunteer community in which one participates, obey the rules established by the organizers or the fund. A volunteer carries out one's activities voluntarily, in good faith, honestly, respecting and honoring legislation, and respecting the dignity, characteristics and culture of all people – other volunteers, employees, beneficiaries, regardless of their gender, age, sexual orientation, nationality or religious beliefs. A volunteer has the right to obtain information necessary for implementation of activities, as well as material resources to solve the tasks assigned to one. A volunteer can choose and change the kind and direction of volunteer activity that meets one's needs and aspirations, competence, and stop one's activities at any moment. If necessary, volunteers should receive psychological and moral support, and, if possible, attend trainings and workshops that will help and support the current activity. Volunteers can initiate the changes in workflow of activities, as well as offer their own projects and receive assistance for their implementation.

### **3. Research Questions**

As studies and surveys show, there are three types of charity available to individuals: donations, volunteerism and direct aid to beneficiaries. If donations are a characteristic of mature members of society, and direct aid is available to virtually everyone, regardless of age and status, then volunteerism is a youth sphere. Often volunteers are people who have free time and aspiration which are enough to spend it for other people. Taking this feature in consideration, almost all universities have volunteer centers, volunteer teams and organizations today. Researchers and sociologists consider volunteering a powerful tool for involving young people in social activities, helping to gain experience, socialization, acquisition of various useful skills, self-determination and exteriorization of inner potentials and so on (Lukov, 2012).

Who are donors and volunteers and what is the reason of increasing their number? This is a question, the answer to which will undoubtedly provide an opportunity of understanding many peculiarities of the current state of society. Royalty-free work of volunteers is used in various fields: elimination of natural disasters' consequences, running sporting events, searching for missing persons, aiding socially unprotected layers of population, etc. These are the areas, where the government is unable to support the citizens' needs at some point. Hence, both the government and the society as a whole are interested in volunteerism. Volunteering is the foundation of civil society. It brings to the world the need for freedom, security, justice; it contributes to preservation and strengthening of human values.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Volunteering is able to self-organize spontaneously under a certain confluence of circumstances. Which conditions contribute to this self-organization and what can strengthen or weaken the dynamics of volunteerism development?

### **5. Research Methods**

The information-synergetic approach is the extension of the system approach (Melik-Gaykazyan, 2010). The modern extension of the system research is manifested in bioethics while building models of relationship (Mescheryakova, 2009) and volunteerism (Evdokimov, Kuznetsov, Melik-Gaykazyan, & Melik-Gaykazyan, 2016a; Melik-Gaykazyan, Melik-Gaykazyan, Mescheryakova & Sokolova, 2016; Evdokimov, Kuznetsov, Melik-Gaykazyan, & Melik-Gaykazyan, 2016b; Ardashkin, Martyushev, Bezborodov & Valeriy, 2015). The model, built within the framework of the information-synergetic approach, uncovers correspondence between the forms of culture and its systemic functions (Rogotneva, Melik-Haikazyan & Goncharenko, 2015; Ardashkin, 2015). In the schematism of the model, the semiotic forms of culture emerge in the following sequence: ideology (block 1); “newspeak” (block 2), encoding novelty of ideology proposed; social scenarios (block 3), opened in environment of ideology being created; “overturn in symbolism” (block 4), manifesting changes in hierarchy of social scenarios and new operators of reality; models of behavior (block 5), the formation of which was the initial goal of ideology.

It is worth mentioning that there is a branch in this sequence. Namely, “newspeak” (block 2) may offer the variants of social activity as well as predetermine the form of social myths (block 6) that become

replacement of non-hereditary memory of culture. Listed forms in their semiotic manifestation are the fragments of socio-cultural reality perceived by a human being (block 7).

Visually presented trajectories of this perception coincide with trajectories of impacts on human being or the systemic functions of culture: regulatory, verbal, prognostic, critical, adaptive and compensatory. It is noteworthy that these coinciding trajectories have different directions. It explains ambivalence of symbolism because designation of each semiotic form transmits a single meaning, but in the context of the entire multi-dimensionality, symbolism is perceived as a mean for recreation of social myth that constructs a real wanted space of life in the present reality. Besides, the model of behavior embodies those or other ideologies, social scenarios, interpretations of symbols that are implemented in a definite way of adaptation to reality. Simultaneous existence of different regulatory systems and branching of life scenarios in principle make it hard for a human being to choose a way of adaptation, which initiates the effect of degustation of the different models of behavior as a testing of the whole load of values for each modus operandi in personal experience under conditions of differentiation of social role. Tasting does not imply saturation of the whole life with definite values, but in its temporary joining to these values, it requires immersion into a certain axiological and behavioral environment. A human being does not see “one’s own” social scenarios in actual reality as one does not see the ways of compensation in existing tradition, which forces one to find a way to adjust “ideological” sources of the wanted world.

Thus, adaptation opposes compensation; social myths – models of behavior and social scenarios, but effects of degustation and effects of imitation become opposed to anthropological strategies in the multiplicity of cultures. It is necessary to emphasize that epatage of the outward expression accompanies the ideology of artificial cultural worlds and embodies the effect of imitation. Degustation is characterised by hiding its fulfillment and becomes a mean of familiarization with intellectual traditions, tested by time.

## **6. Findings**

The undoubted merit of bioethics became implementation of procedures of ethical review while using laboratory animals in biomedical research. It has discovered the fact that the ideology of the attitude to animals becomes outdated at the present moment. Protection of laboratory animals and corresponding regulations of researching technology have resulted in development and adoption of regulatory acts – currently only in foreign countries (European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals Used for Experimentation and other Scientific Purposes; Universal Declaration of Animal Rights; The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness (Low, Panksepp, Reiss, Edelman, Van Swinderen, Low & Koch, 2012). Today, thanks to bioethical charters and rules, the results of research, obtained via cruel experiments on animals, are rejected internationally; there are “black” and “white” lists of cosmetics and household chemicals, which leads to boycotting companies, producing “black” goods. There are animal rights movements, such as Animal Liberation Front (ALF), international, clandestine leaderless resistance, which engage vegetarians and vegans, practicing “the direct actions” to set captivated animals free. In other words, an animal is treated as a passive legal entity and a creature having its own wishes, feelings and needs. Also there are animal right organizations, tracking animal welfare and trying to control it. Cruel treatment of animals (including improper keeping) may lead to confiscation of the

animals while its proprietor can be sentenced to fine or even deprivation of liberty. In a domestic practice, an animal is treated as a property, which excludes solution of problems related to improper keeping, cruelty, inhumane regulation of animals' number and other types of human-animal relationship. This explains the fact that animal protection in Russia takes place as an imitation of such activity in foreign countries or via establishing animal rights organizations, acting according to their own ideas on animal protection. In these spontaneously created organizations, the effects of degustation and imitation of marginal communities are manifested to the full because these very communities are unfortunately treated as marginals.

Ways of imitation of animal protection cause regret too. As an example of such behavior, it is necessary to mention only two cases. The first case concerns a story of a retired woman who kept 117 cats in her small flat. The second – formation of cityhunting movements (a generic concept, denoting groups of people regulating the number of animals in cities by their own initiative via shooting, poisoning and other inhumane methods. These groups are subdivided into doghunting, crowhunting, varminthunting). Effect of compensation is manifested in the fact that such people in similar actions are unable to resist the growing violence in society. In particular, it is confirmed by analysis of the vocabulary used by these people on the web.

At the same time, the foreign experience of animal protection is adopted in domestic practice. It takes place as the testing of corresponding behavior models by initiative groups (Gorbuleva, 2012). It is embodied in legal initiatives, in propaganda of ideas of the following “green” movements:

- World Wildlife Fund (WWF – an international non-governmental organization founded in 1961, working in the field of the wilderness preservation, and the reduction of humanity's footprint on the environment);

- People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA – animal rights organization);

- World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA – an international non-profit animal welfare organization, acting in more than 150 countries and unifying more than 900 organizations);

- Animal Rights Center «VITA» (Russian non-profit animal protection organization aiming at the prevention of cruelty towards animals) etc.

There is also organization of shelters for abandoned animals and temporary shelters for animals that suffered from cruel treatment and accidents.

These very scenarios of actions in fact confirm the absence (or total loss) of a cultural tradition of humane attitude to animals, as well as protection by a human being of animals and those who seem weaker than one in domestic practice (Levchenko, 2015; Gorbuleva, Melik-Gaykazyan & Melik-Gaykazyan, 2016; Kozhevnikova, 2013; Sokolovsky, 2015).

Thereby the positive examples of adopting the foreign experience of animal protection become establishing various non-profit organizations, charity funds, social movements aimed at children, left without care; disabled and elderly people; those suffering from serious diseases and their relatives; people suffered in natural disasters and wars; animal and environment protection.

One should note that such perception of bioethical problems is primarily stimulated by TV programs, social networks and specialized forums. So the symbolism of bioethics enters life, spreads

across all fields of knowledge, forming new grounds for social altruism (Ardashkin, Bykov & Kirsanova, 2016).

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, summing up, one can say that volunteers, while following the path of changing reality according to their outlook, making the world better, indicate about social, economic, emotional wellbeing or ill-being.

Ill-being of social sphere, shortage or lack of social support are compensated by establishing funds and volunteer movements, aimed at people, animals, disaster recovery etc. For example, there are volunteers–firefighters for extinguishing forest fires (<http://pomogat-prosto.ru/projects/1235/>), the Charity fund for elderly and disabled people «Joyful Oldness» (<https://starikam.org/>), the Organization for helping homeless people «Flophouse» (<https://homeless.ru/>), the Volunteer Search Squad «Liza Alert» (<http://lizaalert.org/>), multiple charity funds for children, animal rights protection organizations. Volunteers are aimed to participate in solving problems that are important to society. As a result, these funds and organizations compensate the lack of appropriate specialists and activities that should be done by the government.

Currently, the social entrepreneurship grows pretty fast. That is, it is not enough if a business generates profit; it should solve some social tasks. There maybe some local actions like giving a bread to needy ones; companies engaged in separate gathering and recycling of garbage; special actions for certain social groups of population in shops, companies, clinics; organization of meals for the homeless; events aimed at raising funds for those who in need; solutions of social problems.

The emotional side of the story is related to satisfaction of a person oneself as a part of society. Volunteering movements are based on the work of ordinary people who are employed, but possibly are not quite happy with their work. The majority of volunteers are young people that see the problems in society and, most probably, are looking for self-realization in volunteerism. Volunteers are satisfied with the air of volunteerism and communication with like-minded people and beneficiaries. Working for the good deed with like-minded people, seeing how one's life changing, one feels inspiration, deep engagement, emotional connection with activity and other participants, gets positive emotions and support, feels joy and a sense of the fulfilled life. After all, it is good to help others. People are aimed to satisfy themselves with charity and volunteerism. For someone, volunteerism is a way to spare time, to communicate, to make the world a better place. When someone participates in something similar, one feels motivation to become more confident, more self-assured and happy with one's life. The research conducted by London School of Economics showed that those who spent at least 3-4 days a month for volunteerism feel happier by 16%. The Organization “Hospital Clowns” helps in social-cultural rehabilitation of children, being cured in hospitals, by means of art-therapy and game-therapy – not with medicines, but with positive emotions. Hospital harlequins are trained young people (<http://www.medclown.ru/about/whoweare/>).

Turning back to the phenomenon of degustation, one can say that volunteering does give such opportunity. People, becoming volunteers, are not professionals in many spheres of activity they choose. It is especially true for medicine, animal rights, laws. One without professional education may obtain

some experience of working in a professional sphere, although not complete experience, but, to some extent, one will immerse oneself in this sphere, which is valuable by itself, which gives experience and emotional involvement. Thus, the very “degustation” concept is used in a literal sense. The phenomenon of degustation of values gives an opportunity to test benefits and disadvantages of each role while there are many possibilities and types of behavior models. One accepts the values of one or another algorithm of anthropological models of behavior for some period of time.

The growing number of well-doers is related to arrival of the new time, conceiving the new culture that partly coincides with the moment when the primary concepts of bioethics form (Meshcheryakova, 2011). By now, bioethics has become a social institute, an independent scientific discipline, applied ethics and a form of protection of individuality (Meshcheryakova, Melik-Gaykazyan & Melik-Gaykazyan, 2016). This interdisciplinary science uncovered the unorthodox proportionality of social egoism and social altruism that is inherent in a creative class. Social egoism is manifested in denial of cultural traditions, and social altruism is manifested in creations of the science's future. These characteristics of the bioethics phenomenon reflects self-consciousness of the new culture that is manifested in a special understanding of responsibility to the past, the present and the future (Melik-Gaykazyan, 2014).

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