To better understand the main point and the perspectives of the development of our specialty, I will compare the community of plastic surgeons with such definitions as “the people” or “the nation” because all pertain to social groups. When we say “the nation” we mean people whose common identity creates a psychological bond and an economical community. Their political identity usually comprises such characteristics as a common territory, language, culture, and history.

Our famous historian V.O. Kluchevskii wrote in his “Russian history” book: “The people or nation includes a lot of aspects but the easiest one to understand is its territory.” On the whole, the sphere of activities (the territory) of plastic surgeons is quite accurately defined. The most difficult issues appear when we estimate the identity of economic approaches in our work with patients and compare moral principles and a psychological personality of those who call themselves “plastic surgeons.” The main point here is the impetuous growth of cosmetic services in a new branch of activity called aesthetic medicine. It’s exactly in this context there arises the following questions:

- Is aesthetic surgery medicine or business?
- Is it a subunit of plastic surgery or a part of aesthetic medicine?
- Do traditional mutual relations between a doctor and a patient work there or do we need to learn other rules of work (a provider and a consumer or a user, or a buyer)?
- Is it possible to combine traditional principles of medicine with a free market?

Nowadays new business communities are created like “trade unions” of specialists of aesthetic medicine. They aim mostly to increase the quantity of sales in the world of the “beauty industry.” Being a very profitable business project, this trend of modern medicine carries along both young and experienced specialists.

At first glance, it seems that the idea of simplified “hot” cosmetic procedures was generated by people who are not familiar with the basic principles of plastic surgery (“no implants without shells,” “plastic surgery is a surgery of flaps”). However, the authors of such ideas and innovations are frequently invited as lecturers to different international conferences on plastic surgery. These ideas are also promoted by some publications with no comments and peer reviews as in some respected plastic surgery journals. The eternal necessity of “something new” and the need of a sponsor’s support make the editors of some journals publish advertisements of fairly dubious innovations and novelties like “the wire scalpel” or “the golden threads.” Thus, methods that were interesting only to dermatologists and ENTs in the past today have begun to penetrate into the system of education of plastic surgery. More than that, fillers and Botox injections now can be made by family practitioners, gynecologists, and even by nurses. That is why now American and European plastic surgeons have to cooperate with their former competitors in order to protect their patients. This process can be compared with the serious problems of immigrants to the United States and Europe which affects the status of local people and threatens to bring changes into the political and economical systems of these countries.

“To reject these new trends of the market means to lose the majority of customers and to suffer damage.” These words belong to representatives of companies dealing with plastic surgery. Marketologists also say that a common
modern customer requests a service and product itself but does not think about the quality characteristics of the provider (a surgeon or a hospital) and they suggest accepting these new realities. So if we accept aesthetic medicine as a business and want to save face, it may be reasonable not to make surgeons into cosmetologists but to organize the work in our offices and clinics so that a patient could get professional help from a surgeon and a cosmetologist in one and the same place.

“The ideal result of historic education of the people is in the full and coordinated development of all elements living together, when everybody is developing according to his corresponding meaning in a society, without humiliating himself or other.” V. O. Kluchevskii

I suppose that the capitalization of plastic surgery is a very profitable process but actually it is absolutely immoral. The personality of a surgeon needs freedom to be realized in full. “Freedom” in this context means that there should be no middle-men between a surgeon and a patient and the surgeon himself should not enslave anybody. Freedom of choice is always a personal responsibility. Obviously, only free cooperation of plastic surgeons with strong personalities can create a true professional group of specialists. In an ideal way a community of plastic surgeons should look like a brotherhood of highly spiritual people.

I would like to summarize everything said above with a perspective note. First of all, let’s think what the future is. The future is something that we are dreaming about and the future is our goal. It belongs not only to our lives but to the lives of our ancestors, the lives of our children, and the lives of children of their children. It is quite possible that in a long-range historic outlook we can have a common posterity with our recent opponents and even our enemies. So, should we really separate from each other over not very important questions and problems? Details create variety but our principles unite us.

We should also remember that a human being is the only species on the Earth that can plan his future and create it by himself. This statement is absolutely true about both plastic surgeons and their patients.

We often say: “This is a patient who should define the future of the specialty.” Nowadays, the need of aesthetic operations is increasing rapidly and new reconstructive methods are changing the practice of plastic surgery (tissue engineering, hand and face allotransplantation, etc.). All this will encourage development of plastic surgery in general in the near future. Evidently, the future of plastic surgery is not just the future of aesthetic surgery. Even if aesthetic surgery becomes an independent branch of medicine, it will be a different specialty but not the result of the evolution of plastic surgery.

Russian philosopher Nikolay Berdjaev wrote in his book About Slavery and a Free Man that it is a human being who has the greatest value, not any society or institution like the state and the nation, because a human being belongs to the objective world and societies belong to the subjective one. It is a fact that any society in all its forms is always violent to a personality. Obviously, we can say the same about professional communities.

But after all, according to Berdjaev every unanimity of taste and judgment can become an individuality; that is why we can say a professional community of plastic surgeons can be a personality. This is how I see the community or even the brotherhood of plastic surgeons in the future. Such communities must share the eternal values of humanity and possess professional knowledge and skills. It is not a secret that a personality (and a personality of a plastic surgeon in particular) can realize himself only in the institutions of the community.

There is no doubt that each personality among plastic surgeons and their patients is unique and subjective. A personality must be unchangeable, even if changes happen. If changes cause betrayal of oneself and one’s principles, the personality will be destroyed. In this context it makes sense to be reminded one more time that plastic surgery is a surgery of principles. We cannot give up the principles and mislead our patients by using “marketing techniques,” because all these facts and other negative trends can destroy the personality of a plastic surgeon and deprive him of personal character and responsibility. In this case a surgeon can lose his inspiration and creativity as well and start working like a businessman or (what is worse) like a slave thinking only about his benefits and profits.

We often associate the profession of a doctor with the word “mission.” The “mission” is an opportunity given to you by God to use your abilities in your individual way following only your “inner voice” and only in the interests of the patient. It is possible that someone will not find a direct analogy in the following statement, but for me in this context, aesthetic medicine is an objective reality of a modern market of a “beauty industry” but not a profession in the usual meaning. On the other hand, above all plastic surgery is a spiritual community of surgeons’ personalities internationally sharing the same mission. Today the community is becoming the one personality that strives to realize the ideal of the functional beauty of every human being. I believe that beauty is a freedom of a person, a way to fight the ugliness of the surrounding world. Beauty as well as Truth is always subjective. These beliefs make our spirit strong and our profession important.

I would like to appeal to my colleagues once again. Let us follow our professional principles and trust each other. All together, we will be able to create a beautiful and free professional, spiritual, and perspective future.