



Ethics from Theory to Practice

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Abstract

This article discusses ethics in its evolution from the theoretical aspect to the practical aspect, considering the importance of the transformation that occurred in the history of both science and philosophy. This being due to the strained relationship between them in modern times, leading to conflicts. As a result, science attempted to distance itself from its philosophical connections. However, what later transpired was entirely unexpected. Science returned to its traditional relationship with its mother (philosophy) after finding that the results it achieved hindered its service to humanity, turning it into a tool in the hands of those who pay money, away from the humanity of the human being. There were attempts to establish new ethics that takes into consideration the new developments while preserving the achievements of science. Although the initial call came from medicine and the emergence of bioethics, it was followed by the call of environmental philosophy, with all sciences later joining in, aiming to create new ethics to govern and regulate contemporary science.

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1. Introduction

The topic of ethics falls within the discussions of philosophy of values, considering it as a fundamental component of this philosophy, in addition to logic and aesthetics, according to the modern perspective of philosophical discussions¹. As From the traditional viewpoint, it is classified within the discussions of practical philosophy, in addition to the philosophy of economics and political philosophy, and it was usually known as the management of morals².

If we desire to distinguish between ethics as a normative science, ancient in origin, and applied ethics as an emerging behavioral science, we can say that the science of ethics is linked to metaphysical, philosophical, religious, and social standards. These standards do not examine what the being is in human behavior, but what this behavior should be. This has made this science distant from people's lives, close to their perceptions, even though its purpose is to define the nature of human behavior and reveal the nature of good and evil. The ethical problem is independent of humanity, yet, at the same time, it reflects their perceptions.

This is contrary to the old-new perspective concerning what is now called applied ethics. especially with the advancement of sciences and knowledge, and the new problems it has left that were not

contemplated in the minds of humans in ancient times, and if they did occur, they were in a modest manner.

Practical Ethics: Definition and Concepts

Regarding the emergence of the concept of applied ethics, according to relevant studies, "the concept of applied ethics initially appeared primarily as medical ethics or bioethics. Later, the concept expanded to include ethics in work, environment, politics, media, and other fields"³. If we wish to present an idea about the meaning of these ethics and their topics, we find that the modernity of the term has made those interested in it not define its meaning precisely. The reason for this might be that its topics have not been definitively defined yet. They continue to expand every day, encompassing more areas. The time has passed when applied ethics was solely associated with bioethics; now it extends to other fields, including environment, media, scientific research, information, and more. This continuous expansion and evolution characterize applied ethics, allowing it to remain broad in scope.

Nevertheless, we can return to some definitions, including one found in the book by Mustafa Al-Nashar: "In the last three decades of the twentieth century, numerous writings emerged around the term 'Applied Ethics.' It meant the principles, values, foundations, and

practical guidelines without which professional performance cannot be valid. Its primary aim is to refine human behavior in light of economic, social, political, and environmental changes while preserving the specificity of the general standards governing human behavior and rights. Simultaneously, it seeks to apply all the necessary standards and general codes of conduct for the profession, regardless of the practitioner's nationality or type."⁴

Al-Nashar adds that what applied ethics does in this context is without preaching, guidance, or religious intervention. Instead, it "derives its value from the needs of the profession or work, making it an integral part of the tool. Ethics does not refer back to religions, the purity of secrets, moral instincts, or conscience. Rather, it becomes an essential aspect of work and practice, not subject to social views, ideological perspectives, or individual inclinations. Its moral obligation is derived from its practical structure."⁵

On this basis, human will becomes meaningless as individuals submit to the standards of applied ethics and its requirements as long as they practice the profession or associated work. Thus, applied ethics seeks to transform professional duties into a path of obligation and intentional commitment.

However, it is essential to distinguish between professional ethics and applied ethics. Some individuals seek to

differentiate between them, as is the case with Mohammad Rahim Al-Shiaa in his book "Introduction to Applied Ethics."⁶

Comparison between Professional Ethics and Applied Ethics.

Professional Ethics	Applied Ethics
Partial, it is specific to a profession among professions.	General, comprehensive for human behavior.
Closer to practical behavior	Closer to theory and philosophy.
It raises questions related to reality	Poses theoretical questions and seeks answers from reality.
current	current

With reference to the researcher in the history of ethics in general, and applied ethics in particular, there are a few observations that can be summarized as follows:

- The term applied ethics is relatively recent compared to the broader topic of ethics.
- Many important issues that have become central to the concerns of applied ethics were addressed in various ancient civilizations, including Babylonian, Greek, Islamic, Christian, and others.

Fields of Applied Ethics:

After discussing the concept of applied ethics, its origin, and development, we want to inquire about the fields that have become central to its topics and what each field means. If we want to find an answer to this question, it can be said that almost every science, including the humanities, social sciences, and, naturally, various fields of the natural sciences or what can be termed material sciences, has applied ethics behind it. These fields include:

- Medical and Biological Ethics; bioethics.
- Environmental Ethics.
- Information Ethics and Technological Ethics or Electronic Ethics.
- Media Ethics and Communication Ethics.
- Ethics of Scientific Research.

1- Bioethics: Its Concept and Subject:

The relationship between applied ethics and bioethics has been a complementary and equal relationship for some time. Bioethics is applied ethics, and applied ethics is bioethics. This is especially true since the term "bioethics," compared to other terms and topics that emerged in the 1970s, was not coined by a philosopher. Although many philosophers had previously worked on topics that are defined by the emergence of this term, it

was introduced by the American biochemist Van Rensselaer Potter in his article "Bioethics: The Science of Survival." He further developed it in his book "Bioethics: Bridge to the Future" in 1971. According to Gilbert Hottois in his book " Qu'est-ce que la bioéthique? " the initial use of the term refers to a positive outlook on scientific and technological progress, emphasizing the necessity for ethical considerations to accompany this development, taking into account various values in addition to society and nature⁷. This book represents an attempt to guide humanity back to the wisdom inherent in ethics as it strives for survival, utilizing various forms of knowledge. This is understood from the author's statement: "The science of survival must be more than just a science by itself. In this regard, I propose the term 'bioethical,' in order to achieve a new wisdom—the wisdom that is always in demand and can be realized by combining two vital fields: biological knowledge and human values."⁸

It is undoubtedly a serious attempt aimed at bridging new connections between science and philosophy, especially after the significant estrangement that occurred between them during the Renaissance and its aftermath. This period witnessed the scientific revolution challenging everything old, including religion and philosophy, ultimately resulting in the triumph of science and its independence from philosophy. This independence was

accompanied by attempts to create a deep divide between them.

Founder Van Rensselaer Potter further adds in his aforementioned book that, in his conception, bioethics is an attempt to create wisdom and a balanced mind that reflects how knowledge is used for the common good. It relies on the true, realistic knowledge of the biological nature of humans and the biological world in general.⁹

The topics of bioethics have evolved and expanded, addressing numerous issues related to medical ethics and other relevant ethical matters, such as:

- The ethics of the medical profession define the boundaries and responsibilities of the physician. Despite the long-standing tradition of physicians inheriting the teachings of the Hippocratic Oath, the post-faith era introduced new individualism, encouraging utilitarianism in its worst forms. In many instances, doctors have become mere money collectors, forgetting the nobility of their profession.
- Private clinics and hospitals, focused on profit, have emerged without consideration for the humanity of individuals and the desperate need for treatment. Patients' organs are sometimes sold,

and their dignity violated, necessitating the establishment of laws to protect the medical profession and regulate it in line with the spirit of the times and human needs.

- The issue of abortion, involving the right to life and a woman's freedom to act on her body, has been raised. In our time, questions about the relationship between humans and their bodies, especially women and their bodies, have led to dangerous practices, challenging established norms.
- Concerning the birth and care of children, the idea of the right not to procreate has emerged, coupled with the right to engage in sexual activity outside the family framework as a biological need. This has prompted many nations to address the issue of abortion and the necessity of establishing ethical laws to handle it.
- Organ transplantation and transplantation have become significant due to medical advancements and the increasing need for artificial organs. However, the rise in demand for human organs, driven by wars and contemporary diseases, has led to a new phenomenon: the theft of

organs from individuals and communities, sold to those who can afford them for a substantial fee. This has turned medicine into a lucrative trade controlled by dangerous mafias, prompting a return to bioethical principles to establish rules governing this issue.

- In vitro fertilization, surrogacy, and the evolution of medicine have given an opportunity to those deprived of parenthood to have children through assisted reproductive technologies. However, these technologies have also become problematic, especially with the emergence of sperm banks, leading to lineage mixing and various issues, creating a need for human values.
- Suicide, or assistance in it, has become a topic of discussion, known as "merciful death." While suicide is an ancient phenomenon, it has gained prominence in contemporary life, with some doctors turning it into a profitable business. This has prompted thinkers, ethicists, and policymakers to address and humanize this issue.
- Genetic engineering, with the emergence of cloning and attempts to modify human genes, has shocked religious and moral authorities. Due to these reasons, the

need for applied ethics in medicine and biology cannot be underestimated.

- The concept of prolonging life and achieving immortality has been a pursuit throughout human history. While ancient civilizations sought the elixir of life, modern science has explored possibilities such as freezing humans in the hope that medicine may find a solution to death in the future. This, along with other issues, merits a deeper discussion.

2- Environmental Ethics: Its Concept and Topics

The field of bioethics is not limited to one subject; rather, its goal expanded to include other ethical topics related to various sciences. One of the most important of these topics is environmental ethics, which expresses the relationship between humans and the natural and social environment in which they live.

Undoubtedly, the relationship between humans and the environment is an ancient topic, as Arabs say, "A person is a product of their environment." Regarding the emergence of this philosophy or environmental ethics, Imam Abdel Fattah al-Khedrawi mentions in an article titled "Environmental Ethics in Philosophical Thought": "Therefore, we are facing a new color among the prevailing colors of

philosophy, which is added to the colors of dominant philosophy. It studies how humans should deal with the natural environment, and environmental philosophy is one of the most important branches of applied philosophy, dealing with the study of the environment and its problems."¹⁰

Speaking about ecology, he mentions that it is "the home or living environment," and there is a strong connection, agreement, and relationship between wisdom and the environment. Philosophy is sustainable development, if we may express it, by looking at life in all its aspects. It connects the universe and human life because its goal is to reveal the nature of the universe and our relationship with it, and what awaits us in it. This is for a dual purpose: to satisfy our minds in their quest for exploration."¹¹

Considering the importance of the environmental problem and its direct impact on human life, as well as the destruction caused by humans to its components and the resulting changes, philosophy has deemed it necessary to focus on the topic of environmental ethics to provide solutions to various dilemmas.

That is because, in general, human greed in depleting natural resources and exhausting the earth and its resources, especially with the greed of multinational corporations, whose concern was only to seek more profits, even at the expense of everything.

Abdelghani Boualsaq, in an article titled "Environmental Philosophy and Its Ethics," justifies the necessity of the emergence of philosophical thinking about the environment by stating that the human mind should not be far from addressing environmental discourse, which should be defensive and rational.¹²

Environmental ethics is part of environmental philosophy, which also includes radical ecology and anthropocentric reform¹³. Regarding the emergence of this philosophical field, J. Baird Callicott states: "In 1973, with the publication of three groundbreaking articles, environmental ethics announced its first appearance on the stage of conservative and serious professional philosophy. In the spring of that year, the young Australian philosopher Peter Singer published an article titled 'Animal Liberation' in The New York Review Of Books. In the summer of that year, Arne Naess, the distinguished Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer, presented an article 'Shallow and Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary' in the international philosophical journal Inquiry. In the fall, another philosopher, Richard Sylvan (then Routley), addressed his colleagues at the fifteenth World Philosophy Conference in Varna, Bulgaria, asking: 'Is there a need for new environmental ethics?'¹⁴

Ethics of the environment attempt to address several questions, including:

- The relationship between humans and the environment: Humans live within a geographic natural environment, taking from it their necessities and needs. However, their increasing greed and avarice have led them to deplete the resources of the environment. Instead of contributing to its conservation, we find humans working vigorously to destroy it.
- Examining the values that define this relationship is an important topic addressed by environmental philosophy to clarify and establish mechanisms.
- How can the environment be an ethical inspiration for humans? This crucial question makes the environment an ethical partner for humans, not just biologically.
- The issue of environmental preservation: The destruction of the environmental life does not serve humans but harms them. Attempts by some greedy individuals to do so for short-term gains lead only to the elimination of life on Earth. This necessitates addressing the issue from both an ethical and legal standpoint as quickly as possible.

- The issue of animal preservation: Animals are the primary partners of humans in existence, and preserving their existence is tantamount to preserving human life itself. Therefore, human responsibility towards the environment, whether ethical or legal, remains significant.

3- Information Ethics: Its concept and problems

There is no doubt that the contemporary scientific revolution, unique in the history of humanity, with the wealth of information and new knowledge it provides, leaves humans perplexed. However, this perplexity increases day by day due to the tremendous informational wealth produced by this revolution. It imposes on humans the need to confront it, deal with it, and guide it to serve their needs while ensuring its development and dissemination.¹⁵

As a result, there has been a growing need for a philosophical movement emphasizing the necessity of connecting this wealth with ethical principles governed by values and regulations contributing to establishing "ethical controls from values and regulations that govern informational activities in information institutions and reflect the commitment and distinction of its individuals."

Due to the contribution of information technology and its subsequent developments, it surpasses international

boundaries, creating contradictions in dealing with it due to differences in the ethical standards of peoples and nations.

In this context, many studies of relevance have raised various questions, including: "To understand the relationship between information technology and ethics, it is necessary to comprehend the relationship between technology and humans. It is not enough to understand everything related to applied sciences for the sake of achieving gains in work; rather, attention must be given to the individual himself and his fate as a human. Technical efforts should always be concerned with personal concerns."¹⁶

Regarding the most important problems raised by information ethics, they are numerous, including:

- Do we use technology in a way that ensures justice among nations, or are information and technology reserved for a specific class of people and nations? The significance of this question in philosophy lies in the significant disparity in development among nations. While some nations south of the Mediterranean lack advanced technology and are restricted from using it in various fields, only allowed to scratch the surface, the opposite is observed in northern countries, enjoying tremendous technological advancements,

monopolizing its use for their benefit and the benefit of their people. This enables them to do anything, including inciting wars; hence comes the importance of questioning the ethics of the behaviors exhibited by these countries towards other nations.

- Does the progress of science and technology contribute to human happiness or is it the other way around? The frightening results of scientific and technological progress have raised legitimate and ethical questions about the relationship between technological and scientific development and the happiness of nations, providing a better life for people.

In contrast to this trend, there are those who argue the opposite, believing that science has contributed to human misery.

- Electronic theft: Electronic advancement has given rise to new crimes previously unknown, notably electronic theft. Whether financial, stealing institutional secrets and confidential documents, or even designs for weapons or medicines. This necessitates the establishment of laws regulating human use of the electronic progress achieved.

- Electronic espionage: With the technological advancement reached, traditional espionage has become outdated, even a form of backwardness compared to the highly sophisticated spying operations using the latest in digital technology. This demands a reassessment of its ethical use to preserve people's secrets.
- Defamation and slander: The emergence of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter has significantly impacted people's lives, creating virtual communities. However, it has also created new problems, as anyone seeking to settle scores can anonymously use these platforms for defamation and slander, whether what they say is true or not. This requires both legal mechanisms and ethical considerations for the use of these media.
- Privacy concerns: Private lives have become a thing of the past, with everything now visible on social media platforms, even dining tables. There are no longer secrets to preserve, leading to a dangerous chaos, necessitating a discussion of this problem that was not previously known in this way.

The issue of using accessed information: In our practical lives, we come across

information of utmost importance related to the work we perform. However, the question here concerns the right of those who access this information to benefit from it, even using it in a way that allows them to achieve material or other benefits.

4- The Ethics of Media and Communication: Concept and Issues.

Media and communication have become revolutionary in our era, attracting significant attention from specialists due to their profound impact on human life, a fact no longer subject to debate. This has necessitated the establishment of mechanisms and tools to guide them, ensuring the protection of the rights of both recipients and senders.

Ethics of media can be defined as "a document containing a set of principles, values, behaviors, and orientations agreed upon by a group of journalists to govern their conduct while practicing the profession in all its written, visual, and auditory specialties, in addition to new media."¹⁷

Regarding the importance of this topic, Jafar Mohammed notes that the study of media ethics is among the modern directions in media and communication research. It addresses cultural, social, and ethical issues currently raised in discussions about media practices and professional ethics, especially in the

context of digital evolution and the vast spread of traditional and new media¹⁸.

The ethics of media and communication have undergone several stages to reach their current state. Nevertheless, ongoing discussions persist because the major impacts of this profession directly affect the lives of individuals, groups, and societies.¹⁹

These ethics aim to address a range of issues, including:

- The problem of directing public opinion: Media outlets seek to provide news coverage of various events occurring around the world. However, interpretations of these events and their impact on public opinion vary from one media outlet to another. There are numerous examples of this, and the reason lies in how the news and events are presented. They undoubtedly originate from a specific background with the intention of influencing and directing public opinion. This necessitates the establishment of ethical standards binding news disseminators to greater credibility and minimizing, as much as possible, any unethical manipulation of the direction of public opinion.
- Media Independence: Media outlets, both owned by individuals

and even by state, have become commercial and political investments. This has rendered their presumed independence mere slogans, as they have become invasive upon the privacy of individuals. Therefore, human beings have become the subject of scrutiny even in their privacy.

Publishing Crimes: The rapid acquisition of information and sometimes its dissemination without verification, along with the race to publish, significantly contributes to intruding upon the rights of others. This necessitates the establishment of legal and ethical mechanisms to criminalize publications that harm the lives of individuals.

5- Ethics of Scientific Research:

Scientific research is no longer conducted through traditional methods, given the importance scientific research has attained in our era. The objectives of scientific research have evolved, and it is no longer solely about achieving theoretical knowledge. The use of scientific research itself has undergone transformation, leading to new problems such as:

- Misuse of scientific research results, threatening human existence.

- Theft and appropriation of scientific research by individuals, institutions, and even countries.
- Unprecedented spread of scientific plagiarism, prompting UNESCO and related organizations to issue legislation and laws protecting researchers' rights.

Algeria, for instance, has issued several laws to protect authors' rights, including the Global Agreement amended in Paris in 1972, specifically addressing copyright.

6. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, we can say that the field of applied ethics is vast and expanding. We can also point out the developments in artificial intelligence, which are raising new issues related to the future of humanity and its privacy. This time, the human mind itself is at stake. Will artificial intelligence replace the human mind and surpass it, especially considering that it has already surpassed it in many sports competitions, which have long been the domain of the human mind, as is the case with chess?

Applied ethics remains the refuge and hope of humanity. Through it, a consensus can be achieved between science and technology in various fields and the values and ethics of the human mind.

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