On ethics and applied ethics: ethics that leaves the classroom and takes to the streets

De ética y ética aplicada: la ética que sale del aula e invade las calles

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Abstract.
In this manuscript, it is argued that ethics, or moral philosophy, has an inherent practical component, because the ethical problems that people face on a daily basis are practical problems and arise from encounters with other human beings, other non-human living beings, and the environment. This is known as *ethica utens*, which comes before theoretical ethics or *ethica docens*. Reflection is indispensable, although it must be placed in its proper and specific place, which is to guide us like a beacon, because the attempt to construct a moral theory that offers a fundamental justification for all our moral judgements is a much more ambitious project than the attempt to answer particular questions.

Keywords: Ethics. Applied ethics. Moral philosophy. Deliberation.

Resumen.
En este manuscrito, se argumenta que la ética, o filosofía moral, tiene un componente práctico que le es inherente, porque los problemas éticos a los que se enfrentan las personas en el día a día son problemas prácticos y surgen del encuentro con otros seres humanos, con otros seres vivos no humanos y con el medio ambiente. Esta es la denominada *ethica utens*, que es primero que la ética teórica o *ethica docens*. La reflexión es indispensable, aunque se la debe situar en su lugar propio y específico, que es el de guiar como faro, porque el intento de construir una teoría moral que ofrezca una justificación fundamental para todos nuestros juicios morales es un proyecto mucho más ambicioso que el intento de responder a preguntas particulares.

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Introduction

This manuscript argues that, since the second half of the 20th century, ethics, understood as theoretical philosophical discourse, has become a discipline that has moved beyond university campuses and specialised bookshelves to address the different spheres in which the inhabitants of this planet, both human and non-human, live, coexist and survive. Moral philosophy, faced with the horror caused by human beings, does not hesitate to proclaim theoretical principles that seek to outlaw it. However, on the historical horizon of the first quarter of the 21st century, in which the rapid advances in biotechnology affect and endanger life in general, these theoretical principles have proved to be insufficient, even though they claim to be universal and unconditional. The reason is that ethics is like life, *i.e.,* it is fraught with imponderability, perplexity, uncertainty, and probability. Life must face a wide range of circumstances; so must ethics. Therefore, when faced with the question of what is good, what should I do, the answer is that, as in almost everything, it depends on the good that one wants to do and the evils that could be caused or that one wants to avoid.

The question of ethics in everyday life

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A group of five friends, aged between 19 and 22, disappeared on the night of 11 August 2023, in the town of Lagos de Moreno, Mexico. Their captivity and probable murder was broadcast through videos and cruel images that circulated on social media. In one of the recordings, the victims were seen kneeling and bound, while another video captured the dramatic moment when one of the kidnapped victims was forced to beat and murder one of his friends. In one of these videos, one of the boys was forced to hit another victim on the head with a stone until he was dead, and then they forced him to decapitate him with a knife. The same recording shows three bound bodies lying on the floor, apparently lifeless (Perfil 2023).

In 2004, when she was 14 years old, Natalia was raped by a Catholic priest. The victim was an altar girl at her parish in Medellín. She recounts how the ordained minister made her feel special, which made it easier for him to take her to a motel and abuse her. The abuse was repeated once more in the rectory; on another occasion, he masturbated in front of her and forced her to watch.

The abuse stopped when she stopped menstruating and told her abuser, who forced her to have an abortion using pills. In her own words, she confesses:

> I am trying to move on, but I feel angry because I believe that justice in my country is virtually non-existent. I do not understand how a priest can continue to practise after committing such a huge crime.
>
> I have not received any response from the Archdiocese either.
>
> I imagine nothing will happen. Priests cover for each other. When there are complaints, at most they are transferred to retirement homes where they supposedly serve their sentences. Or they are sent to small towns where no one knows them and they continue to practise (BBC 2023).

Faced with this type of news, which is *ad nauseam* in the media*,* a firm conviction emerges that the authors of these lines wish to share: not all human behaviour has the same value; there are types of behaviour that can and should be respected, while there are other types of behaviour that do not deserve respect, appreciation or consideration. In other words, there are behaviours that, based on sound reasoning, are preferred over others (Savater 2005, 10), so that, based on reasons, arguments and reasoning, absolute and exacerbated relativism disappears. On the other hand, without this conviction, what human beings face is a destructive indifference between happiness and unhappiness, between survival and horror.

The above is a way of addressing the fact that, in daily life, people, living together in society, face the inescapable question of what is good, right, desirable, defensible, and what is bad, wrong; what is a vice; what is a virtue. From a theoretical perspective, some people may feel perplexed when asked to give an answer, but when faced with specific situations, with traumatic events, probably experienced first-hand, the answer may be crystal clear. However, it cannot be ignored that happiness and unhappiness, survival and horror often fight fiercely in the hearts and minds of human beings, and perplexity remains, especially because, in everyday life, each person is faced with the dilemma of choosing not between clear good and repulsive evil, but between desirable goods or lesser evils, without forgetting that, sometimes, there is a r conflict of values, since the problem has several possible solutions that conflict with each other.

Examples of the above: should a promise X made to a person N be kept, even though keeping it, here and now, will cause some harm? Should a person be allowed and encouraged to decide to

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end their life when, where and with whom they want? Is it always obligatory to tell the truth, or are there times when it is permissible to lie? Should a person who financially helps a needy person who asks for help, but who, as the owner of a factory, ruthlessly exploits the workers and employees of his company, be classified as good? Is it acceptable to torture a person to extract information that could save the lives of 43 kidnapped students?

The purpose of beginning this part of the manuscript with two examples of situations that are obviously horrific and heartbreaking, and then proposing questions that challenge the way in which some moral judgements can be justified, is to focus the topic of ethics on an appropriate level, namely that human beings first behave in a practical-moral manner and then reflect on that behaviour (Sánchez 2018, 20-21), *i.e.,* we move from lived morality to thought morality, from *ethica docens* to *ethica utens* (Aranguren 1981, 10). The former is an existential reflection on life as a whole, while the latter refers to a reflection on everyday life.

By raising the question of ethics and then continuing with the practicality of this discipline, the aim is to answer a twofold question that moral philosophers have attempted to answer. The first part revolves around whether there are actions that can be considered intrinsically good or valuable, bad or despicable, and the second part revolves around what kind of actions should be carried out. One part deals with theory; the other with practice (Moore 2018, 71-72).

Ethica utens refers, then, to the ethical problems that people face on a daily basis as practical problems that arise from encounters with other human beings, with other non-human living beings, and with the environment. The solution to these problems, when feasible, will affect not only those seeking it, but all those involved in the problem. For example, should Mrs Castaño, whose leg is gangrenous, opt for amputation of the limb or face a high probability of death? Should her children have a say in the situation to the extent of forcing their mother to accept surgery? If Mrs. is unable to make a decision, could her eldest daughter, in agreement with the attending physician, request the amputation and most likely save her mother's life? (Hall 2022, 38).

Another similar case is the following:

> After a massive heart attack, 85-year-old Mr X was left unconscious in the intensive care unit. It was quickly determined that he would not survive and that there was no other treatment that offered any hope. He was given life support with the help of a ventilator and other equipment. The doctor told the family that it would be best to remove the treatment

and let Mr X die in peace. The youngest of the patient's six children, who lived with him and cared for him, said that her father had often told her that if he were found unconscious and with no chance of recovery, he would not want to live hooked up to machines in the hospital: "Just let me go," he had said expressly on several occasions. However, when the eldest son arrived from Chicago, he said that they should not disconnect the ventilator and insisted that he was the one who made the decisions (Farías and Hall 2020, 123).

In this case, the issues are related to disputes that arise among family members in the midst of a stressful situation and where the law has gaps and loopholes about who should decide in such moments. Should the younger daughter who has cared for her father decide?

Situations in which one has to reflect in order to decide between good and bad, between right and wrong, between what is desirable and what should be rejected, are situations that require reflection, study, discernment, deliberation, and dialogue. Both the justification of moral judgements and decision-making are related to various paths or methods which, although not explicitly known, can be discovered, analysed, explained and weighed up. For example, one of the methodologies frequently used by people in their daily lives has to do with the norms, mandates, precepts, and provisions established within the community to which they belong. "Normativity dominates our lives... We assume that what someone believes or does can be judged as reasonable or unreasonable, right or wrong, good or bad, and that this *depends*[1] on rules or norms" (Korsgaard, 2022, 7). It is assumed, in this perspective, that the justification of moral judgements is intrinsically and intimately linked to patterns and models of behaviour, because "Goodness and virtue also imply norms (O'Neil, 1995, xii).

This type of methodology has a raison d'être, because in the conscience, in the mind, in the heart of human beings, when an action is judged to be good, correct, desirable, especially when it is an action that seeks to minimise unnecessary suffering as much as possible, the consideration arises that it should be done, promoted and extended, which has enormous repercussions, so much so that there have been people capable of dying to defend what they considered right or to reject what they

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[1] The English text reads: "Normativity pervades our lives.... We assume that what somebody believes or does may be judged reasonable or unreasonable, right or wrong, good or bad, that it is answerable to standards or norms." (Onora O'Neil (1995), Introduction, p. xi. In Korsgaard, C. M. (1996). *The sources of morality,* Cambridge University Press, U.K.) We have decided to translate "that depends" rather than "that responds".

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considered wrong. As mentioned above, life comes first, and then reflection on it. Someone, for example, thinks, judges, deliberates that living with an amputated leg is not worth it. In that person's specific circumstances, the amputation of a limb may entail serious inconveniences due to age, the means of obtaining resources to live, the presence or absence of significant others, etc. This gives rise to the heteronomous temptation, *i.e.,* the search for the establishment of external rules that tell people what to do in circumstances such as those described above. However, if we look at this case from the point of view of the doctor or the daughter, the perspectives change. A doctor may argue that, due to the Hippocratic oath, a life must be saved above any other specific consideration: "The health and life of the patient shall be my first concern" (Declaration of Geneva 1948).

However, in contrast to an attitude that strives to apply rules, mandates and so-called principles to situations that require moral responses and solutions, there are other types of methodologies, such as casuistry, consequentialism, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, deontology, personalism, and so on. These are paths through which, even without being fully aware of doing so, human beings justify their moral judgements.

The purpose of these paragraphs has been to clarify the assertion that *ethica utens, i.e.,* lived, experienced ethics, which human beings face daily and constantly, comes first, and *ethica docens, i.e.,* thought-out, reflected ethics, that of classrooms and universities, that which, for some, corresponds to the eternal contemplation of ideas, in the Habermasian sense that warned that jurists orient their reflections towards practical application, while philosophers "conceive of themselves, in a carefree manner, as participants in an eternal conversation" (Habermas 1999, 215). This temporal sequence should only be a scholastic issue, insofar as moral decisions are not made without a foundation of moral theory, *i.e.,* authentic and full moral behaviour is not exhausted in the contemplation and acceptance of a certain set of norms, principles or mandates, but requires the justification, firmly grounded in reason, of those codes of conduct.

In other words, the justification of moral judgements takes place within a human group, as it involves dialogue between individuals who probably have different perspectives derived from their moral convictions, historical experiences and existential development. Therefore, this justification lies at the heart of an intersubjective praxis defined by a code of moral norms. When faced with opposing moral conceptions, this code requires an explanation of the reasons that lead to a particular justification.

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In this regard, the justification of moral judgements has traditionally been oriented towards responding to an ancestral but entirely contemporary concern: what should be done? What should not be done? What is good? What is evil? etc. These questions have a basic and fundamental answer, which serves as a touchstone for a reasoned and rational morality:

Confucius: "What you yourself do not want, do not do to other men" (Dialogues, 15,23).

Rabbi Hillel (60 BC-10 CE) "Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you" (Sabbat, 31a).

Jesus of Nazareth: "Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them" (Mt 7:12; Lk 6:31).

Islam: "None of you will be a believer until you wish for your brother what you wish for yourself" (40 Hadithe of an-Nawawi 13).

Jainism: "Man should behave indifferently towards all things and treat all creatures in the world as he himself would like to be treated" (Sutrakritanga, I, 11.33).

Buddhism: "A situation that is not pleasant or convenient for me will not be so for him either. How can I demand it of another?" (Samyutta, pp. 353.35-354.2).

Hinduism: "One should not behave towards others in a way that is unpleasant to oneself; that is the essence of morality" (Mahabharata, XIII, 114.8)" (Küng, 1999, 111).

However, while it is true that the so-called Golden Rule is a principle that generally helps, it is clear that human beings live amid conflict and strife, for:

The only morality that survives lucidity is one where there is conflict or incompatibility of its demands, that is, a morality that is always unfinished, imperfect like human beings, and a morality with problems, in combat, in motion like human beings themselves (Morin, 2006, 65).

Based on this, it is clear that lived morality faces decision-making in a wide range of circumstances, ranging from simple situations, because it is what the community to which one belongs accepts and demands, to those that cause great perplexity, doubt and dissatisfaction. For example, in a homogeneous society, respect for norms that favour the life, coexistence and survival of its members is easily judged as good and the opposite as bad; *i.e.,* norms are not conceived as imposed by *'others'* but created by *'us',* so they are a source of personal moral identity (Tomasello 2019, 168-171). In modern, heterogeneous and pluralistic societies, there is a crisis of the above because there is

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growing mistrust that there is a moral system that is universal and absolute; Secondly, the link between the sacred and ethical reflection, which had been maintained for centuries, is being abandoned. Thirdly, morality is increasingly understood as a social and historical construct. Finally, morality centred on the individual is gaining ground, whereas in previous centuries, the community was the main focus.

So, as the available evidence shows, within the sphere of human morality there is great complexity and countless, and probably inevitable, contradictions, due to the multiple sources (Kosgaard 2022) and layers that comprise it. Morality is like human life, that is, imponderable, unpredictable, subject to disorder, emotions, feelings, and the satisfaction of needs. Moral judgements must be justified, even though theories about that justification cannot be applied consistently in all circumstances of human life, which is related to and confronted by other human lives, other non-human lives and the environment of planet Earth, the common home of all living beings.

Ethics is the search for solutions to problems that affect life (Marina 2005, 41) in its entirety. It seeks answers and feasible solutions, when possible, to situations that cause horror, terror, suffering, despair, and death. This search is carried out from different perspectives, which is why there are normative and descriptive ethics, ethics of motives and ends, material and formal ethics, deontological and teleological ethics, procedural and substantialist ethics, ethics of conviction and responsibility, religious and secular ethics. These will be discussed in the following pages.

Ethics in the classroom

In the preceding lines, it has been shown that life comes first, that the way people behave, act and react comes first, and then reflection on those behaviours, actions and reactions. First comes *ethica utens* and then *ethica docens* is implemented. In relation to this, one may ask what relationship, if any, exists between moral judgement and actual behaviour. While it is true that a close correlation between moral criteria and behaviour cannot be defended, because it is not easy to statistically verify such a relationship, given that even if an individual knows what they should do, their actual actions depend greatly on motivation, the real situation, habits and even mood.

Nevertheless, there is a close relationship between lived ethics and thought ethics, because moral knowledge and understanding are prerequisites for moral action. One cannot act according to

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a moral principle or norm without first being aware of it. For example, a person has learned something about personal relationships and respect for others in order to understand that they must respect the rest of their neighbours and resist the temptation to play loud music when they want to celebrate an important event at home; or that they should avoid lying, stealing or assaulting others when it would be advantageous to do so. "No one can practise the golden rule of reciprocity if they are not aware of it and, above all, if they do not understand its application to specific situations" (Bull, 1976, 24).

For centuries, ethics or moral philosophy was *broadly* considered a philosophical discipline whose purpose was to criticise, understand and reflect on morality, understood as the set of norms and principles, or models of behaviour, that had been historically constructed within each particular society or community. In other words, moral philosophy or l ethics had been understood as "a discipline whose scope of reflection was the justification of moral concepts and theories, but which remained distant from the intention of resolving particular cases" (Arellano, 2013, 47).

Throughout history, there has been a fierce struggle between the theoretical and the practical; between the universal and the particular; between the individual and humanity; between the abstract and the concrete, perhaps with a result in favour of the former to the detriment of the latter, although it should not be forgotten that people philosophise to give meaning to their lives, to who they are and what they do. In the human heart there is an infinite longing for freedom. For many people, the lack of meaning is a "certain kind of slavery" (Cortina and Martínez, 2019, 9), because, in any case, "Forgetting the subject leads to a forgetting of humanity" (Marina, 2005, 35).

When we bring to mind concepts such as genocide, torture, harassment, discrimination, rape, and theft, a feeling of moral disgust, rejection, reproach, and disapproval arises. Theoretically, hypothetically, and speculatively, it is established that these actions should be considered bad, wrong, undesirable, and dehumanising, at any time and in any place. Thus far, ethics, as moral philosophy, has a claim to universality (Camps, 2005, 56-57). What has been called applied ethics takes into account different assessments and judgements on specific issues, because it refers not so much to the analysis of the concept or its meaning as to the procedural way of settling, analysing, understanding, discussing, solving or responding to moral problems in specific cases.

As a result of the above, different theories have emerged that attempt to explain why some behaviours and actions are universally considered bad from the point of view of moral philosophy.

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One of the advantages that can be glimpsed from this perspective is that, apparently, there is the security of being able to demand, always and everywhere, the rejection of such behaviours and the fulfilment of the opposite ones. The aim is to establish an absolute moral law, with the danger, already glimpsed thousands of years ago, that human beings are made for the law and not the law for human beings.

Hence, from Plato onwards – although there are already traces of this in Homer – to the present day, various ethical theories have been proposed that deal with different aspects of morality. Three dimensions of ethics are usually distinguished: a) so-called 'descriptive ethics', which describes the values, norms and customs of a given community; b) metaethics, which focuses on the moral meanings of terms such as 'good', 'just', 'right', 'duty', etc., and the particularities of moral reasoning; and c) normative ethics, whose purpose is to provide a foundation for the normative judgements of any given community. This means that an ethical theory helps to describe moral phenomena, elucidate the meaning of moral vocabulary, or provide a foundation for moral norms.

So, can ethical theories be classified? There are two opposing ways of justifying, or grounding, individual acts and particular norms: a) by adhering to certain principles, or b) by considering the consequences. Therefore, theoretical ethical systems are predominantly principlist or consequentialist. In general, these two paths of justification for moral judgements lead to the pursuit of a) the realisation of what is 'good' in itself, whether it be obeying divine commandments, fulfilling duties, applying principles, or respecting traditions and community consensus. Examples of this theory are the ethics developed by the following philosophers: Kant, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Habermas, among others. The second option is b) achieving a good or desirable life, whether it be attaining "eudaimonia"——which is equivalent to living fully——, or achieving what satisfies preferences and interests, or what leads to self-realisation, mainly by acquiring and developing virtues. Examples of this type of theory are eudemonism, hedonism, stoicism, cynicism, Christian ethics based on Natural Law, and utilitarianism.

In general, these two branches of classification have the following elements in common: (a) they consider human beings to be free moral agents; (b) whose decisions are influenced by the intentions and purposes of the human will; (c) their actions can be classified as good or bad; (d) thanks to the existence of moral rules that ordinarily classify those actions; (e) without forgetting the

repercussions of the consequences or effects of those actions on the community to which the agents belong.

In short, ethical theories have sought, for centuries, to provide arguments for what makes an action ethically good, beyond the prevailing morality in a given social group. Their common assumption is that there is a gap between 'being' - closely linked to the reasoning that the goodness of human actions is determined according to the assumptions and considerations of a morality determined by tradition - and 'ought to be' or the way in which goodness should be determined and classified by practical reason, not only with n a particular moral community, but in the entire community of rational beings. Thus, an action is ethically good if it is performed in accordance with the autonomous rational mandate that determines duty.

Between doing what is 'good' and having a 'good life' there can be unfathomable chasms, as in the case of Marcial Raya, who had been bedridden for five years, unable to communicate, unable to express himself, unable to express what he was experiencing inside. Marcial suffered from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a disease that his mother had also suffered from, who had died 10 years earlier after refusing mechanical ventilation that served as life support. In the last two years, the disease had progressed rapidly, to the point of leaving him quadriplegic and connected to a mechanical ventilator. Nevertheless, he managed to communicate with his family and carers, telling them that he did not want to continue living in that way and that he would prefer them to help him disconnect from life support (Beca and Razmilic, 2012, 17-20).

Faced with a situation like this, a struggle between absolute opposites, from a theoretical analysis perspective, one opposite would affirm a) that the good and correct thing for Marcial is to endure the pain he is experiencing; that he cannot ask for the removal of mechanical ventilation, which is a form of limitation of therapeutic effort, because death can occur very quickly. Family members, carers and medical professionals should not allow the patient to die. From a *life-affirming* perspective, the second opposing view would assert that b) Marcial's decision cannot be accepted as correct either, because without life there is no possibility of happiness, personal fulfilment or growth in virtues, and therefore life should be preserved and pain should not be avoided.

When we move from absolute opposites to issues involving specific situations, perspectives often change. If, instead of emphasising theoretical ethics, whether that of duty or that of the good life, we focus on the patient, their needs, their worldview, their phenomenological knowledge of the

disease and the havoc it wreaks, the perspectives underpinning their moral judgements and the decisions they make are greatly broadened. This is also what applied ethics is about.

Applied ethics here and now

The sphere of theory or speculation very often runs parallel to that of praxis or real, concrete life, so that, as in Marcial's case, it is not a question of solving a problem without taking into account the individual at the centre of the issue. In what is called applied ethics, individuals become aware of their rights and demand that institutions respect them, that they be seen and treated as equal partners in situations that affect them. Ethical theories are insufficient, hence the need for ethics applied to the here and now, to the concrete and real, to the subject as the protagonist in decision-making that affects their life, to become a new way of responding and, if possible, solving the problems that arise in the various spheres of social life.

Currently, and since the 20th century, these problems have to do with the involvement of non-human beings in moral issues, the emergence of new problems due to the rapid advance of biotechnology, and the extremely serious effects on the environment, without forgetting the need for an ethical perspective that provides answers and solutions to these issues (Buedo, Odziemczyk, Perek-Białas, & Waligora 2024). Human relationships with other living beings, with biotechnology, and with our common home, planet Earth, demand solutions that allow us to live, coexist, and survive. This demand is therefore oriented towards a new moral reflection that is inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary, embracing diverse contemporary specialised knowledge. The life of the planet depends on each and every one of us.

The following lines will attempt to address the urgency of having a method for understanding ethics from an applied perspective, for relating ethical theory to applied ethics, for reflecting morally on the challenges posed by the rapid and often unbridled advance of science and technology, especially in the field of life.

Ethics and applied ethics: from theory to real life

As has been shown, applied ethics emerged in the 20th century as a social necessity, mainly because societies, which were once more or less homogeneous, are now essentially pluralistic. Therefore, when faced with problems in everyday life, they seek, create and offer answers not from a single code, but from perspectives that integrate multiple worldviews and diverse disciplines (Chaddha and Agrawal, 2023).

In the practical case of Marcial Raya (Beca and Razmilic, 2012, 17-20), justifying his moral judgements in order to make the decision to refuse life support requires distancing himself from any voice that feels authorised to declare what is morally right or wrong, and invokes the presence and sanction of the contributions of various ethical theories— that offer indispensable knowledge— . At first, "A healthy person with a minimum of ethical competence is best qualified to define and decide the dignity of their own life and death" (Bello, 2008, 121); However, when someone does not possess optimal ethical competence or does not have relevant information, other valuable and representative people must collaborate— family members, friends, and various experts, such as lawyers, theologians, doctors, etc.— , who contribute useful elements for discerning and understanding the problem and for developing and supporting personal decisions.

Both Marcial and his other representative beings realise that they distrust theoretical ethics to solve the problem that affects him; they do not accept any voice that feels authorised to declare what is morally right or wrong; therefore, in response to the loss of trust and given that, in addition, techno-scientific advances are involved, they must resort to applied ethics, which is bioethics. Therefore, decision-making includes patient autonomy, their willingness, the absence of depression or any temporary mental state; the condition and prognosis of their illness, *i.e.,* information and understanding; the opinions and points of view of their family members, friends, carers and medical professionals, as well as the comprehension, understanding and acceptance of the patient's decision; the integration of the aims of medicine and Marcial's best interests.

Ethics as experience

Ethics in practice means facing the growing complexity of problems caused by human beings with other human beings; with other non-human living beings; and with nature. The problems that arise in real life, and which demand some response and solution, are related to questions such as: what do we call nature? What is the relationship between nature and technology? What is life? When does

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human life begin? What defines 'humanity'? What is the anthropological status of the human embryo? What should our attitude be towards birth and death? What do we mean by dying with dignity? What anthropologies do scientists use when working with ? Is the idea of being human changing? What is the value of human life? What are the foundations of respect for human life? Should there be limits to intervention in human nature? Who should make decisions on bioethical issues? What type of justice is best suited to health policies, relations between rich and poor countries, and our treatment of nature?

These and other similar questions are the ones that currently require answers that will lead, where feasible, to solutions to the problems affecting humanity. Phenomena such as excessive consumption (Bauman 2021); the development and use of life-prolonging biotechnologies (Braidotti, 2015); experimentation on human beings (White, 2020); scientific research for military purposes (Gaddas, Masmoudi, Jedidi, & Ben Saad 2022); as well as climate change (Abbass, Qasim, Song, Murshed, Mahmood, & Younis 2022) urge us to rethink our own moral codes and beliefs (Cahn & Markie 2020) and, consequently, to rethink the purpose of theoretical ethics.

In these scenarios, during the second half of the 20th century, the so-called applied turn in ethics emerged, because what is expected of this discipline are practical and immediate strategies to provide an adequate response and solution to the problems of contemporary society, This is why sub-disciplines have been developed such as: a) professional deontology, with sub-disciplines such as medical ethics, military ethics, business ethics, computational ethics, and engineering ethics; b) environmental ethics; c) research ethics; d) economic ethics; e) organisational ethics; f) sexual ethics; g) scientific integrity; and many more.

In the case of Marcial analysed *above,* and so many millions of similar cases, is there a place for philosophy? Or is it true, as some people argue, that philosophy has little or nothing to do with this phenomenon of moral pluralities and divergences? In our opinion, these types of problems, which denote the moral intersubjectivity in which we live (Kokkinaki, Delafield-Butt, Nagy, and Trevarthen, 2023), require the presence of philosophy in general and moral philosophy in particular. Under these conditions, applied ethics has its full place and its indispensable purpose: not to make people happy, but to define a scenario in which they are likely to be happy (Blackburn 2002, 150); this scenario is one in which it is feasible to criticise, argue, discuss, understand, analyse problems and clarify problems. A scenario in which the enemies of reflection and bioethics are set aside, *i.e.,*

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religion as ideology, dogma- , biological determinism, metaphysics, and scientism as ideology. This is the defined scenario; to build it, moral philosophy is required, because it is the realm of reason that seeks happiness, above all, deliberating with practical wisdom with other human beings, in balance with other living beings and the environment.

The crossroads: from the classroom to the street

The world of the first quarter of the 21st century must face a large number of cases, problems and moral crossroads that require deliberation that brings together different disciplines and different perspectives or points of view. This is in order to avoid a fundamentalist stance, which is avoided when one is able to offer arguments and reflect in order to base one's decisions on a philosophical stance, and with the aim of avoiding relativist positions, which is achieved when one is able to know, understand and value the multifaceted contexts in which these phenomena emerge.

Marcial's case is a clear example of these considerations. In 2025, it will be entirely feasible to keep a patient with ALS 'alive'. This raises a question that can be answered from various worldviews and disciplines: what is life? Marcial's life can be preserved, but he does not want to live as a vegetable. This condition causes him moral suffering; so what is the value of suffering? That is why he asks for help to "leave this world"; but is it ethically correct for a person, in certain circumstances, to decide when, where, how and with whom to end their life? If biotechnological advances can sustain the life of a patient with an illness almost indefinitely, and if those advances can painlessly end that same life, what is the right thing to do? The answer, as in almost everything, is that it depends; it depends on the good one wants to do and the evil one wants to avoid. An ethical approach to Marcial's case would probably yield an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary response along these or similar lines: responsibly and dignifiedly hastening an inevitable end, but in a legal and medically controlled manner, under conditions that guarantee the avoidance of any manipulation or discrimination, as well as any covert violation of the defence of life, is ethically correct. From an eminently theoretical problem, we move on to an eminently practical area, *i.e.,* ethics leaves the classroom and goes out onto the streets, into hospitals, onto motorways, to borders, to shops, to laboratories, in a word, to the real world.

It is therefore clear that the historical horizon in which we find ourselves is characterised by the fact that we live in a globalised world with plural societies, in which decisions must be made not

with absolute certainty, but with uncertainty and varying degrees of probability; above all, because moral problems are extremely complex, which requires, in addition to combining and reconciling theory and practice, providing solutions and answers that make life, coexistence and the survival of all life on this planet viable.

Conclusion

Every day, people are likely to hear, especially on the news, that some human beings have committed acts that provoke horror, whether it be genocide, rape, murder, kidnapping, executions, etc. In the face of such behaviour, in the face of horror, there can be no exceptions, no justifications. A theoretical ethic, which must work with universals of time and space, feels comfortable when pronouncing on this type of phenomenon, which does not cause shock or require too much deliberation or argumentation, because horror does not allow for concessions. However, given that human beings want to be happy and that this is a colossal, inexorable, necessary, but vague project that controls all our creations, there are no certain or universal answers, nor unique or exception-free answers to questions related to the circumstances that lead to the achievement of that aspiration. This gives rise to what is known as applied ethics, whose purpose is not to make people happy, but to determine and explain the context in which they can be happy, especially in the context of major advances in biotechnology that affect life in general.

> Being happy is a personal desire, but one that can only be achieved collectively. That is why:
>
> > Our only, but no less valuable, tool for reaching agreement on how best to live, how to be autonomous, how to be fair, among other questions, is the ability to give and accept arguments. This is moral philosophy. (Arellano, 2013, 61).

Ethica docens, understood as theoretical reflection, becomes *ethica utens,* understood as applied ethics, whose effectiveness depends on whether it achieves an inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary perspective.

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