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# 3rd International Congress on Ethics of Cuenca

*Edited by Katina-Vanessa Bermeo-Pazmino,  
María Del Cisne Aguirre-Ullauri  
and Marco Avila-Calle*





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# Meet the editors



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# Preface

As part of the work of the University and Citizen Network of Ethics and Bioethics, which is currently organizing spaces for debate on ethics, with the aim of contributing to academic processes related to teaching, research, service to society, and university management from an ethical approach, the 3rd International Congress: Ethics in Cuenca: University City, whose proceedings are collected in this volume, was held.

The University, faced with the challenge of a complex contemporaneity, must open spaces for a discussion on ethics, which overcomes the traditional idea of imposition and modeling of bodies and behaviors.

This reflection is fundamental in our academic work because it involves the training of professionals, so it is essential to understand our own context, which means looking closely at our culture and our human nature, which we know requires certain conditions for its existence, development and welfare.

From a bibliographic compilation, ethics, from its very conception, is closely related to the search for a “good way of being” or having wisdom in actions. Ethics, also identified as a synonym for morality or doing things well, must be constantly observed, analyzed, and addressed.

As a result of this analysis, it will be easy to accept that the practices of some affect others, that the actions of some affect others, and that solidarity, understood as the exercise of putting ourselves in the place of others, will allow us to recover our sensitivity and re-humanize ourselves in the light of what is good for all. Therefore, the construction of these ethics, beyond a legal system that obliges or forbids us to do, will be the compass that guides our actions in freedom because we will have decided, individually and consciously, that we will all be well within this agitated and dynamic world.

Under these premises, the Catholic University of Cuenca, as host, has taken care of all the details to receive those who have taken on the challenge of rethinking ethics from different coordinates. The main thematic axes of the Congress were defined from ancestral ethics, ethics in education and art sciences, health sciences, social sciences and administration, engineering, industry, and construction, information and communication technologies, and finally ethics in agricultural and veterinary sciences; ethics is included in all areas of knowledge as a transversal axis.

Thus, the proceedings of the Congress are presented, which have been successfully compiled in this volume thanks to the contribution and work of different strategic actors ranging from the participants through their papers received, members of the Organizing and Scientific Committee, Editorial Edúnica and its technical team, representatives of the University and Citizen Network of Ethics and Bioethics, academic

authorities, teachers, administrative and service staff of the Catholic University of Cuenca, who collaborated actively, and which aims to influence reflection and consideration of ethics from the different titles that are detailed in the volume, after having passed a rigorous review process and other aspects of the process.

The aim is to influence reflection and the consideration of ethics from the different titles detailed in the volume, after having passed a rigorous revision process and other standards required for the publication of this type of work.

It will always be opportune to take stock of what has been reflected upon, compiled, and learned in this philosophical celebration on the motif that has questioned all thinkers throughout the ages: What is the way of living that allows human beings to achieve ethics?

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## Chapter 1

# The University as a Scenario for the Continuity of Ethics Education

*Enrique-Eugenio Pozo-Cabrera and Silvio-José Castellanos-Herrera*

### Abstract

This work addresses three fundamental issues: First, the rescue of the ethical reflection for which civilization unknowingly cries out, starting from conceptions that, having been disdained in favor of extremely liberal approaches, left basic anchors of society without foundation. Secondly, a new conception of ethical formation—which must impact all manifestations of civil existence, with particular emphasis on the family, including the entire framework of pre-university education at its different levels—is posed as a must. Thirdly, the role played by the university in a community in which the fear of the reversal of values or the presence of anti-ethics could threaten the existence of the State. In this last aspect, and taking as an underlying theme “The New Latin American Constitutionalism,” we will show a proposal that goes beyond the simple assumption of students’ and teachers’ training in professional ethics since the problem goes far beyond a merely deontological view, becoming the impact or social transformation in the true desideratum of university education.

**Keywords:** education, ethics, constitutionalism, society, state

### 1. Introduction

It is evident that university students have acquired an ethic synergistically from the family and the environment that we call civil society, the latter made up of all the institutions contemplated in our legal system. We ask ourselves: Is there a line of ethics teaching in the formal pre-university educational process? If it exists, how much has it influenced the student? Is there a reinforcement of ethics other than professional ethics in undergraduate education? Can the students integrate these ethics into their academic development? To what extent can they develop, in their university career, an ethical basis beyond the deontological one, which allows them to influence the strengthening or reconstruction of the State from the ethical point of view and of a new conception of a popular culture contrary to corruption?

All these questions lead us to affirm that our most urgent problem is not to underpin the oil industry or the national electric system but to rethink the State in its educational role with emphasis on the university system, especially when we speculate that we are facing a structure of social thinking, where individualistic behavior is exalted. It brings, consequently, the destruction of the ethical culture, which had been gradually built since the post-war independence in the last third of the nineteenth century and especially in the twentieth century.

As a result of the devastation, it would seem that this is our Latin American problem, an ostensible lack of civil and civic values, with ominous indignance regarding the observance of any principle of public or private justice, where even the most desperate thing is not the violation of the norms of any kind, but that those who are victims and victimizers do not even realize that they are, because they simply ignore what could constitute a decent behavior adjusted to a civic and ethical principle.

By way of reference, says Sime-Rendón [1], it is unacceptable how, in one of our Latin American countries, for example, the slogan “*He steals but does work*” enabled a particular character to ascend to essential spheres of power, taking advantage of the level of axiological orphan hood of certain social strata. With the same perverted framework, León [2] analogically reminds us that some members of an important political group of another country popularized the saying: *you have to vote for..., because they steal, but let them steal, while those of the party..., steal on their own*. The party that promoted the nefarious electoral budget won the elections. Not to mention the popular thought when someone states: *look, (such a person) served as a minister and left office with nothing in his pockets*, alluding to his honesty as a foolish behavior. At the same time, some famous Latin American sayings that praise corruption are mentioned by Tapia [3]:

- How do we deal with it?
- I can do more than you, said Money to Justice
- Money opens all doors
- For money, the dog dances
- Money doesn't stink
- Every man has his price, what is needed is to know what it is
- Money makes the bad good
- Money is power
- Money does not matter in life, but money is not trash
- How much is there for that?
- Let them put me where there is money

Therefore, this work aims to motivate a reflection on the field of education as a whole and in the various manifestations of civil society. This, with emphasis on citizen participation as an ethical control of the rulers, so that the university professional, together with the new Latin American constitutionalism, can better link with the community to eventually reverse the damage that radical economic liberalism has done to us with its premise of let it be done, let it pass. Moreover, with the pseudo-ethics of having, expressed in the aphorism, so much you have, so much you are worth, you have nothing, you are worth nothing. Along this path, we will verify the conditions in our legal system to achieve the proposed objective, given that there are

ideal scenarios for this purpose. For example, we will compare citizen participation between Venezuela and Ecuador to confirm the equality of interests associated with incorporating the constituent power in the constituted power.

From the methodological point of view, we will anchor our considerations on some classical and modern thinkers who have always placed ethics as a necessary condition for any social progress about citizen development. Along this line, we will propose some solutions that could imply, in university teaching, some ontological and axiological variations.

## **2. Development**

In our opinion, it is essential to highlight that if we move toward new conceptions of the educational system, according to Arendt [4], we would be closer to the social justice advocated by Socrates, who saw as the purpose of politics and government, that the soul of the citizens would become sublime, which would induce an educating role both in politics and in governance, anticipating the sage, Plato's idea of the Educating State. In this process, it was natural for virtue to emerge, inducing in each person self-government by the cosmogony and with oneself. Plato [5], in agreement with Socrates, would say that this can only be achieved if the State promotes education as the only and indispensable means to achieving it. Thus, according to Jaeger [6], Plato shows himself to be an educator rather than a legislator in *The Republic*. It is clear then that the Platonic State was a gigantic pedagogical abstraction, in such a way that he conceived it as the ideal framework for the education of the just man, who is the true man. He saw that if in the ancient form of the Greek polis, the law was the educator of the citizens, in *The Republic*, the education of true men replaces the law.

As can be seen, in his turn toward teaching, he tried to crystallize a political philosophy containing the true desideratum of justice. Contrary to past generations regarding the written law as a panacea for all social ills, he endeavored to demonstrate that only through an optimal education could true justice be verified in the individual soul, from where it had to diffuse into all facets of community life. Hence his sentence: The ideal state can only emerge from the state in us if it can ever be achieved on earth. Hence, the first step toward its advent is an education, constructive of the human personality.

Given the above, both Greek thinkers are relevant since they aimed to modify the current legal system and possible constitutional reforms impacting the educational system. At this time, this perspective would imply the creation of legislation that would enable the reinforcement or redesign of a system of education, not only in the formal structure but at the level of all its social development, tending to the citizen to approach its relationship with the regional or state government differently in the understanding that, this new pedagogical approach without religious influence, must adequately include, in the manner of Plato and Socrates, a solid philosophical, ethical, and political content, so that it is verified that the social order, is nothing more than a triad component: harmony with nature, inner harmony, and social harmony. In the words of Puig [7], the above is stated without disdaining personal growth as a genuine effort of individual construction guided by an ethic that integrates historically established principles and values.

Now, as a corollary to this brief sketch and without wishing to go through the millenary path of the term "ethics," we cannot avoid the fact that ethics, as part of human nature, has always existed. However, according to Ferrater [8], Aristotle gives life to

the term when he defines it as the philosophical discipline whose object of study is morality, establishing an infinite field of study. As the father of ethics, Aristotle [9] left a whole treatise of obligatory reading for humanity with his splendid and transcendent illustration, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

As a manifestation of his thinking, the Stagirite, as Aristotle was called, never ceased his long search for a corrective and stabilizing force, which he embodied in his great work *Politics* [10], such as the figure of control, thus consecrating the Stagirite as the precursor of accountability at the end of the mandate, a meaningful way to monitor organizational behavior. For him, a good democratic system had as its natural substance the strict monitoring of the magistrates by the citizens, that is, popular intervention, insisting that its abandonment would promote the destruction of the democratic system. He emphasized that the sovereignty of citizens came from their quality of *euthynoi* (auditors), in other words, from controllers to form a shared power that he called Ephorate. It can be deduced that, in ancient Greece, the people's experience of corruption in progressive governments led to the constant vigilance of the rulers as the most effective method to prevent it.

Aristotle then alluded, as a great visionary, to the attitude of *being alert*, which the people should exercise over all the acts performed by the government to achieve increasingly intense political participation that limits or avoids the ravings of power due to inefficiency, abuse, or lack of ethics. In addition, the administration was thus obliged to design public policies with an order of priorities signed by the people, which would regulate governmental activity. The vision of a civil society looking out for its interests went beyond the simple image of the voting citizen. A similar figure, comments Dèmeunier [11], would be instituted in Roman antiquity with the *tribunes of the people* as the magistrates charged with protecting the people against the oppression of the grandees, as well as defending their rights and their freedom against the initiatives of the consuls and the Senate.

The Liberator Simón Bolívar nourished from this with three of his allusive phrases to the subject that concerns us, the first one: "Morals and lights are our first necessities;" from our point of view, here the great man established a sequence of priorities as follows, the first thing is morals and then education; that is why, as a wise continuation of this phrase, he also coined: "Talent without probity is a scourge." His visionary clarity also advocated something that corrodes us and that we are called to remedy: "An ignorant people is the blind instrument of its own destruction."

In this magnificent succession, it is the Liberator who, as a pioneer in Latin America, lays the foundations of control as an organizational principle through the creation of *moral power*, following in the footsteps of Aristotle in terms of the citizen's observation of the due performance of the rulers, in order to consolidate democracy. On this point, Rosanvallon [12] and Fernández [13] consider that this practice is called upon to guarantee the ethical behavior of administrators in the service of the State. About the latter, being consistent with his line and in the face of the administrative disaster of the Republic, in Lima on January 12, 1824, he decreed the "death penalty" for the corrupt. Decrees of the Liberator. Bolivarian Society of Venezuela [14].

It is conclusive, therefore, that the ethical issue must be addressed in the entire social framework; however, we consider it fundamental that the required reinforcement should start from the beacon of light called the *Educational System*. This enlightenment must be such that it moves civil society to decisively assume the paths provided by the new Latin American constitutionalism embodied in our legal system, a democracy of control where the supervisory power over the management of public finances is in the people's hands.

Now, it is surprising to note that the provisions of the guidelines of the new Latin American constitutionalism are constitutionally foreseen in Ecuador [15] as follows:

**Art. 85** (Provisions governing policies and services), numeral 3.

**Art. 95** (Citizen Participation), headed.

**Art. 100** (Objectives of the participation exercise), heading and numbers 1 and 3.

**Art. 101** (Participation in sessions of the autonomous governments).

**Art. 207** (Purpose of the Council for Citizen Participation and Social Control).

**Art. 279** (National Planning Council. Attributions) second part.

**Art. 398** (Community consultation on environmental impacts).

At the time, the Organic Law of Citizen Participation [16] provides for a clear assurance of the presence of the people in their affairs, essentially through the constant precepts in articles 68, 69, 70, and 71. This is without detriment to the fact that both the Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy, and Decentralization [17] in its articles 5, 6, 186, and 192, and the Organic Code of Planning and Public Finance [18] in its articles 8, 10, 12, 106, 108 and 111, establish provisions that reaffirm the complete autonomy of each level of government to implement the procedures and mechanisms that guarantee citizen participation.

Equivalently, in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela [19], the protagonist participation of the citizenry is ensured as follows:

**Art. 62.** (Free participation of citizens and their organizations in the formation, execution, and control of public administration).

**Art. 66.** (Right of the electorate to demand accountability).

**Art. 166.** (Obligation to create a Public Policy Planning and Coordination Council, chaired by the Governor and composed of mayors).

**Art. 182.** (Mandatory creation of the Local Public Planning Council, chaired by the Mayor and composed of councilmen and councilwomen, the Presidents of the Parish Councils, and representatives of neighborhood organizations and other organizations of the organized society).

From the legal point of view, in the case of Venezuela, three normative instruments contemplate forceful protagonist participation of the people in their affairs through the following:

**Law of the Local Planning Councils** [20], when it assigns to the plenary of the organism the power to guarantee the protagonist participation in all its manifestations, not only in the Municipal Development Plan but also in its permanent follow-up.

**Law Against Corruption** [21], which binds the different agencies of the Public Administration in the following terms:

- To publish the assets, they manage quarterly with a description and justification of their use and expenditure. (Article 9)
- To inform at the request of any citizen about the administration and custody of the patrimony. (Article 10)
- To submit the preliminary draft of the Budget Law to public consultation prior to approval by the National Assembly. (Article 11)
- To incorporate individuals and organizations of society in the formulation, evaluation, and execution of the budget following the corresponding territorial public level. (Article 12)

**Organic Law of Social Comptrollership** [22], development of popular power to prevent and correct behaviors, attitudes, and actions contrary to social interests and ethics in the performance of public functions. (Articles 1, 3, and 5).

It can be observed that both countries contemplate the same approach to citizen participation, in the sense that the one who controls should be the one who grants the power. Moreover, the normative devices of these countries incorporate mechanisms and procedures to monitor management and join the principal and the mandatary, as far as the management is concerned. In other words, Castellanos-Herrera [23] points out that, as a people, they not only grant power but also merge with the government to manage public money. It is more than evident, therefore, a clear concretization of the protagonist and participative democracy when this right and guarantee is foreseen in the budget, the planning, and execution of all matters associated with the community's interests. Under this scheme, it is clear that the people have power over the president and can force him to behave ethically and administratively as the community wants. Then, the most popular concept of power is perfectly materialized, with the novelty that now establishes the will to be followed, who initially was the addressee of the coercive action; additionally, the people have the power and the faculty to verify with the periodicity they wish, that the instructions assigned to the mandataries constitutionally and legally are being fully accomplished.

Without wishing to develop the process of citizen formation, it will only be said, with the same conception of Habermas [24], that the upturn of social constitutionalism is directed to the fact that there cannot be an actual democratic model without a valid agreement of redistribution of wealth between the dominant and dominated classes in which, for Viciano and Martinez [25] if constitutionalism is the mechanism by which the citizenry determines and limits public power, the first problem of constitutionalism must be to guarantee the faithful translation of the will of the constituent power (of the people) and certify that only popular sovereignty, directly exercised, can determine the generation or alteration of constitutional norms.

In light of the above, once the bases of the triad of education, ethics, and society have been established from the point of view that interests us, what should be the university's role in its consolidation? Above all, to promote in students—at the different levels of their student life—an ethical model that includes principles and values such as human dignity, freedom, equality, fraternity, justice, solidarity, respect, and tolerance, constantly bearing in mind the integration of constituent power in constituted power. This will imply stimulating a personal and collective lifestyle to achieve individual, family, and social happiness as a desideratum of existence. In this new university environment, it will be necessary to take into account the fact that both students and teaching staff come from a society that may suffer from certain moral shortcomings in the sense of what we have discussed; it is vital, therefore, to design some indicators that will allow the authorities to monitor the conceptual development of all those involved in the process.

Consequently, it will be necessary to revolutionize the syllabi of the subjects so that they naturally include the topics mentioned above; ethics, then conceived, will include the deontological issue as just one more item. The proposed model must automatically include the student's involvement in the environment to transform it through problem-solving linkage programs, but with the necessary condition of high moral content. These projects must be susceptible to monitoring by the faculty to verify that the ethical approach adopted by the university and induced in the student is indeed being verified in the relationship with the community. As a way of control, the university should be dedicated to designing a battery of impact indicators that

make it possible to visualize the resolution of problems and the evolution of the moral vision of the environment in which it operates. Only in this way will it be possible, from the academy, to open a door that will allow us to straighten out the possible deviations that could be brewing in society regarding its stability.

### **3. Conclusions**

It is our opinion that there will be no recovery of the country, no matter how much oil is produced, no matter how much electricity is generated, if we do not build again a cultural system based on norms of respect for shared values; if we do not rebuild our subjectivity with a civic and moral foundation of mutual respect, with solid principles of justice, which makes us reject and condemn any practice contrary to the principles of political, civil, and moral coexistence based on the easy way out, the evasion of our civic and political duties. This is our most demanding task because it depends on ourselves and the educational system we are willing to rebuild soon. A task that, if we decide to start it, will take decades and is fraught with enormous complexities because it is a matter of doing it from preschool to university.

Reaching an agreement and achieving solid consensus across all sectors is inexorable. Specifically, the introduction of ethics in the entire formal educational program, from elementary school through high school and ending at the university level, can no longer be postponed. On this path, the redefinition of ethical training in the university in such a way that it transcends the deontological is an urgent need to satisfy if we want professionals with an outstanding role in modifying society.

Therefore, it is crucial to rethink education and turn our gaze toward “The Educating State,” increasing without contemplation the budget allocated to this social pillar, even well above other areas that, as a priority, do not compete with a country’s education. The expression “Morals and lights are our first necessities” must become the banner of this crusade.

Consequently, it is an arduous task because it involves high social and technical complexities, with immense challenges since it must address problems that were not considered in our country for a long time, leaving aside critical intermediate subsystems, such as education for work, to give the most emblematic example. Along this path, we are discussing redesigning an education characterized by virtue ethics, which allows us to understand differences; exercise critical thinking; and stimulate complex thinking to generate criteria that allow the development of scientific, socio-economic, cultural, ethical, ethical, and humanistic issues in general. It is concomitantly promoting a behavior prone to otherness and a life characterized by justice, compassion, friendship, and solidarity as qualities that can neutralize the negative personal development for the market under the premise that the essential thing in life in society is to produce and earn money. We believe this last criterion is the malignant origin that stands as the main impediment to the ethical welfare of society.

In another vein, it is a fact that although we have both constitutionally and legally a solid framework for implementing the unshakable figure of controlling civil society, with the capacity to attack any attempt at administrative corruption, in reality, we are very far from that scenario. This is since the ignorance, apathy, or indifference of the people about the benefits of our legal system to achieve this state of affairs is crass and supine, presumably stimulated by obscure interests that do not allow this information to permeate to the strata that have the power without knowing it, that is to say, the people. In an almost unmodifiable way, our population considers that

political participation is exhausted in the vote, leaving all the freedom of action to the constituted authorities without the necessary control. In short, it is a matter of breaking with the apathy and indifference of civil society and consolidating the irruption of the masses in public life as a popular desideratum, through the educational system, with the university as the mainstay.

If we do not act in the terms referred to, the corruption indexes will remain without significant variations even though we can reduce them. The promotion of popular power is practically nil. It is therefore urgent, as a direct way to minimize corruption, the cultural elevation of the masses based on the provisions of our Magna Carta and the laws derived from there, to crystallize the amalgamation of the Constituent Power with the Constituted Power. This work is our main priority in order to be a country that can become the support for the future we all desire.

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## Chapter 2

# Academic Actions for Developing Ethics in Higher Education

*Mónica-Priscila Avila-Larriva and Andrea-Cristina Vallejo-Sancho*

### Abstract

Higher education is fundamental for the development of honest professionals and citizens; each educational action is indeed ethical. From a philosophical and conceptual analysis of the relationship between ethics and education, this research aimed to define academic actions for developing ethics in higher education, identifying possible obstacles and proposing concrete actions for their implementation in praxis. This research is qualitative, documentary-descriptive, inductive, non-experimental, and cross-sectional through a bibliographic review based on scientific data. It is argued that academic management organised around an educational model oriented towards ethics, will guide teacher training programs for this purpose. For its effective implementation, it proposes mainstreaming ethics in the curriculum and the development of an Ethics Lecture or Chair, keeping in mind that teachers and institutional behaviour and actions, directly impact students' ability to be citizens guided by ethics.

**Keywords:** ethics, higher education, academic management, teacher training, mainstreaming

### 1. Introduction

The origins of Greek philosophy mark the end of the mythological imaginary and the triumph of the *logos*, which devotes all scientific efforts to understanding the reality from a rational point of view. Its etymological origin, from the Greek *ethos* (character or way of doing or acquiring things) [1], reminds us that ethics is not a convenience issue but a matter of good practices in all spheres of life; a reasonable discrimination between *good* and *evil* and the responsibility behind this; therefore, freedom plays a fundamental role in ethics.

Let us recall that Sartre states that humans have the freedom to act in the different orders of human behaviour [2] and that Hume maintains a moral theory based not only on reason but also on sentiment and benevolence, the foundation of the human righteous disposition. Hence, moral attitudes make it possible to build a just society [3]. In addition, ethics studies what is related to human dignity, embodied in human rights and reciprocal duties, from whose adequate protection derives peaceful coexistence [4].

To be ethical means to act with common sense in favour of collective construction, a condition that occurs in contact with agents of socialisation such as the family and educational spaces. However, as explained in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's

superman does not accept supra terrestrial teachings but dictates his own will; that is, he decides his own moral code. Therefore, from his experiences, the human being questioned the norms, values, and principles—which constitute the transition to ethics: the ethics of a free man has nothing to do with punishments or rewards dictated by any authority, human, or divine [5].

The study associating ethics and education dates back several centuries. For Aristotle, *phronesis* was the wisdom based on the deliberative, social, and emotional skills we acquire when learning [6]. Therefore, the teaching-learning process of indisputable validity, becomes fundamental for its development. Higher education institutions, whose purpose lies in forming upright citizens with specific skills of their professional profile, must rethink the importance of ethics in its philosophical dimension and its implications in the academic sphere. In this sense, we must ask ourselves, what are the educational actions for developing ethics in higher education?

This research aimed to identify the academic actions that would allow the development of ethics in higher education, starting from a philosophical reflection on it and analysing its links with education. Our working hypothesis proposed that ethics should be considered transversal to the university's academic actions, making teacher training and updating indispensable due to the centrality of their role and the institution's actions when facing the difficulties of their implementation in practice.

For identifying these actions, the problem was addressed through an analytical review of documentary sources from a qualitative approach<sup>1</sup>, descriptive-inductive in scope, with a non-experimental, cross-sectional design. The information was in books, journals, scientific publications, digital databases, and reports for 12 years (2010–2022). A total of 80 texts were reviewed, of which 34 were taken as references.

## **2. Academic actions for the development of ethics**

### **2.1 Ethics in higher education**

Education is the sum of life experiences at the formal, informal, and non-formal levels; therefore, it is an ethical action since all actors involved can reflect permanently on it. In the educational context, the student is the centre of the teaching-learning process; all planning, curriculum, and management efforts will be directed towards him/her. Students should investigate, inquire, observe, and generate knowledge, and make the values and norms of the institution their own to demonstrate them in their personal and professional actions. Since ethics and academics are two human spheres that cannot be separated [9], students' professional training should not only include intellectual aspects but also values. Therefore, ethics is inherent to educational institutions and these, in each of their actions, should make their practice visible.

Despite the importance of implementing ethics in education, the practical difficulties of its implementation in the educational context have to be studied. Cliffe & Solvason [10] argue that talking about ethics in education is very complex due to the grayscale that can exist between ethics defined as “good” versus “bad,” potentially resulting from power relations, which do not reflect what is ethical for the “other”.

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<sup>1</sup> Qualitative research is based more on an inductive logic and process [7]. Qualitative research tries to identify the deep nature of realities, their dynamic structure, the one that gives a full reason for their behaviour and manifestations [8].

All educators should therefore consider the complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty of relating to “others”; thus, one can genuinely understand ethics rather than what one believes it should be [10]. It is argued that there are infinite ways of being and living ethically, so ethics can hardly be a list of actions or regulations. For this, teachers must be able to self-evaluate their actions critically and reflect on their practice, their relationships, and the impacts of their actions.

## **2.2 Academic management for teacher training in ethics**

Having students at the center of the teaching-learning process implies establishing academic management strategies that make it possible to respond to the need to develop ethical, social, and citizenship skills [11]. A fundamental strategy is planned ongoing teacher training. The philosophy, principles, and values of an educational institution are expressed in its educational model. Implementation of ethics should therefore be visualised in this instrument, allowing teachers to integrate it into their planning within the framework of their academic freedom, and guiding teachers’ training priorities.

The purpose of training lies in the deontological dimension within this knowledge society [12] and should allow the individual development of professional and ethical integrity and reflection on educational practice [10]. Therefore, it requires constant work and must be adapted to the context of a diverse, intercultural, and pluricultural world, which makes ethical dilemmas more complex. Continuous teacher training will enable their permanent reflection, their sensitivity closer to their immediate reality, and their adequate solvency to specific problems [13]. On the contrary, training and guidelines that fail to influence teachers’ ethical attitudes [10] could further deprive them of tools for the complex dilemmas of ethics in education. Academic management should consider this and, taking into account the characteristics of Availability and Adaptability [14], generate mechanisms that allow constant collective reflection to ensure the defence and progressiveness of the right to education.

## **2.3 Mainstreaming ethics in the curriculum**

Currently, there may be several obstacles to implementing ethics effectively in higher education [15]. The competitive model that demands compliance with metrics from universities detracts from the importance of comprehensive education, in which ethics is fundamental. In the Ecuadorian context, the modifications of the Academic Regulations in the Organic Law of Higher Education (LOES, by its Spanish acronym) in 2019 determined a minimum duration of eight academic terms, which caused many universities to prioritise professionalising subjects over general ones, including the study of ethics.

Implementing ethics as a specific subject is not an easily achievable action; however, a strong current suggests that this is the most suitable mechanism [16]. The transversal teaching of ethics in the different disciplines would seem distant or recent in some sciences. Even in professions with direct contact with other human beings, such as educators [17] or those in health areas, training in ethics has been relegated. For example, in 1993, Lawrence saw that for the Accounting career, introducing a specific subject on ethics for the profession did not impact students’ ethical behaviour [18]. Therefore, creating ethics certifications for accountants is proposed as a solution, as it would make it possible to exert pressure for the curricular inclusion of ethics. However, this solution is given outside the student’s standard process.

Moreover, there is a need for ethics to permeate all sciences since professionals must permanently face ethical dilemmas in their daily work. Even very technical sciences, such as Quantum Information Sciences, propose the transversal incorporation of critical discussions on the ethical problems linked to this field to resolve society's issues [19]. Then, mainstreaming ethics constitutes an alternative that allows each teacher to work his/her subject from ethical principles towards moral application in the student's professional life. Consequently, we propose implementing an Ethics Lecture or Chair through which policies and actions focused on ethical practice can be developed by students and faculty. This also implies having a new point of dialogue with the community for a more just and balanced society.

## **2.4 The teaching role for the practice of ethics**

Although academic efforts in teacher training and mainstreaming of ethics are fundamental, teachers still resist its implementation [15] due to the lack of knowledge on the subject, the misperception of ethics as a subjective and religious discipline, the concern of its transversal implementation given the necessary expertise of teachers on the subject, the possible discussion strategies, and the effects on their interlocutors and on class time [19]. However, with no genuine teacher involvement and institutional commitment, implementing ethics in practice will not be effective. Therefore, teachers with an open mind, good attitude, and motivation are necessary [19]. These teachers should implement methodologies that respond to the approaches of the educational model, foster the development of critical thinking, and fundamentally guarantee academic freedom, which is a fundamental right for debate in a democratic context [20].

The teachers' ethical attitudes in other spheres should be added to fulfil these conditions [3, 21]. The teacher must be a leader in effectively handling educational and pedagogical management, be an example as a professional of integrity, and reflect on values and virtues with academic honesty. A qualified teacher takes responsibility for his or her conduct, shows solidarity and cordiality with colleagues, avoids unfair and indirect criticism, and promotes open communication [22].

Finally, the importance of evaluation as a practical tool that reflects the teacher's ethical attitude towards his/her students should not be forgotten. This should be seen as a systematic, reflective, permanent, and comprehensive process of formative and quality characteristics. It contemplates rigour in knowledge for detecting skills, difficulties, and strategies for their application [23].

## **2.5 The institutional role and ethical practice from the student's perspective**

Just as the exercise of ethics requires the active involvement of teachers, it is essential to understand the students' vision to define actions that serve in practice [15]. It has been identified that when specific ethics subjects are proposed, many consider them useless, with ideal visions of problems that are solved in other ways in practice. In a world where corruption scandals are so common, it can be challenging to understand the need to act ethically. Ecuador, for example, has a Corruption Perceptions Index score of 36/100 [24]. Because of this, we consider it even more critical to mainstream ethics in the curriculum, identifying ethical dilemmas of the profession with real cases of decision-making.

Likewise, most students conceive higher education as an instrument to increase their employability rather than a space for comprehensive training [15]. For this, it

should be considered that students assimilate the institution that welcomes them as a microcosm of their later professional life. Therefore, it is not only important that the ethical attitudes of teachers prevail but also that the institution as a whole can be seen as an example of ethical action [22]. Prioritising institutional interests over personal or group interests should characterise educational management. The university thus becomes the means of higher education for the development of ethical citizens.

Academic planning, teacher training, ethical mainstreaming, and its practice by teachers and higher education institutions make it possible to return to the basis of the teaching-learning process: the student [25]. All these actions encourage students and graduates to handle themselves with academic honesty, recognise the intellectual property of others, and learn to value the importance of ethics in research [21]. A methodological renovation is necessary to allow students to take an active position in learning (discovery pedagogy), with flexibility, through a didactic that will enable dialogue between society and academia. This renewal would be the appropriate scenario to consolidate philosophical, ethical, and moral formation.

### **3. Conclusions**

In this research, actions for implementing ethical practices in higher education have been proposed. Teacher training—planned by academic management that prioritises ethics in its educational model—will allow teachers to develop ethical attitudes and update knowledge with tools that facilitate the curricular inclusion of ethics. In conclusion, the effective implementation of ethics in higher education depends on mainstreaming it in the curricula and the creation of a figure for its permanent analysis, such as the Ethics Lecture or Chair. Likewise, this implementation in practice will occur thanks to ethical teaching and institutional actions. The ultimate goal is the formation of professionals and honest citizens ready to face the complex dilemmas of the present and future world. There is an intrinsic relationship between teachers, students, and the institution that hosts them. The links of ethics that develop within this relationship reflect a series of characteristics in the role and profile of each one of them, given that each educational activity is an ethical action. With this, we hope to contribute to the development of new research with case studies that put into practice the actions proposed and provide feedback for the continuous development of the subject.

In the last two decades at the international level, it is evident that the most crucial challenge is to maintain quality in education systems. Hence, the challenge is to train citizens to prepare for the dynamics of contemporary society and the era of information and uncertainty [13]. In addition, unrestricted respect for human dignity is the vertex within the particularities of an ethical teacher, through the action of his autonomy and academic freedom, as principles that govern the educational dynamics.

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## Chapter 3

# Ethics as the Basis of the Degree Process Analysis in the Nursing Programs at the Catholic University of Cuenca

*Mayra-Alexandra Rengel*

### Abstract

Ethics is understood as the set of moral norms that govern a person's behavior in any area of life. It directly influences the processes of university education from admission to graduation. From this idea, the present work aims to demonstrate the direct influence of ethics on the results of the degree processes. The method used is deductive, and the research is descriptive, which makes it possible to explain through statistical indicators how ethical actions and the practice of institutional values by students, teachers, and administrative staff enable achieving satisfactory results in self-assessment—Academy Criterion—and its direct impact on the number of students graduating at the end of each academic term. These indicators are evidenced in the degree process developed in the Nursing careers (main campus, Azogues and Cañar campuses) of the Catholic University of Cuenca.

**Keywords:** self-assessment, ethics, values, graduation process, graduation rates

### 1. Introduction

Ethics is the science of duty that provides the guidelines to act honestly. In other words, ethics is a normative science [1]. In this sense, the degree processes, as a human and academic activity, are based on an ethical practice that conditions its behavior within the boundaries of an honest act [1]. Thus, this work shows that the satisfactory results in the degree indicator corresponding to the self-evaluation processes of the Catholic University of Cuenca (CU) nursing program are the product of an ethical academic-administrative process, whose protagonists are the student and the tutor. With this purpose, we propose to review a concept of ethics that exposes the study of human behavior and its application in the educational process at the higher level, which starts from the admission phase and concludes with the degree; to describe the degree process, highlighting the administrative and ethical responsibility of its actors. It is finally, based on this ethical condition, establishing the relationship of the degree results with those of the self-evaluation process in this program, in its different campuses and extensions.

## **2. Ethics as the basis of the degree process**

The first step is to recall that ethics is a human value that promotes respectful behavior among members of society; thus, ethics is the basis of our human relationship with ourselves and the world around us [1]. Therefore, in higher education, ethics constitutes a transversal axis since academic and administrative processes are directed by and for people. In this sense, professionals are trained from the moment they enter the university until they graduate. However, it is necessary to think that the student's preparation does not correspond only to tasks, classes, and research, among other purely academic actions, since these result from human acts in which values are manifested in each activity [2]. This is what Caramelo says:

Professional ethics in university education promotes the acquisition of professional values and reflexive and critical adaptation so that students acquire ethical values in general and of the profession they will perform in particular as their commitment to society [2].

The values referred to by Caramelo must be established by higher education institutions and internalized by the educational community members [2].

The CU establishes institutional values: honesty, a culture of peace and justice, freedom, responsibility, and tolerance, which require ethical and committed action by teachers, students, and administrative personnel to provide society with human professionals capable of contributing to the solution of its most urgent problems. Also, the contribution to ethical training is an institutional commitment based on what is indicated in the Organic Law of Higher Education (LOES, for its Spanish acronym) (2010), in its Art. 8, Aims of higher education, paragraph d: To train responsible academics and professionals, in all fields of knowledge, with ethical and solidarity awareness, able to contribute to the development of the institutions of the Republic, to the validity of the democratic order, and to stimulate social participation [3]. It can be verified that national and institutional regulations coincide in the need to incorporate values and ethical norms in higher education processes.

As already indicated, applying values and ethical norms must be a constant during the student's training process. Within the CU, in the terms April–September 2021 and October 2021–March 2022, the degree processes were developed in a hybrid manner; that is, students, faculty, and administrative staff carried out the activities face-to-face and virtually. With this background, the steps students had to follow to complete the degree process are described—in its different options—as degree project or complex examination, which were related to institutional values in the following way [4]:

1. Choice of degree option associated with honesty and freedom. This occurs when the students choose the degree option responsibly and according to their abilities and interests [4].
2. Tutoring and development of the chosen degree option. It is based on responsibility. The student and the teacher must respect deadlines determined in the planning with a conscious work of direction by the tutor and compliance by the student. This applies to preparing for the complex exam and developing the degree project [4].
3. Verification of the scientific content. In the case of the degree project, the document with the validation of the tutor must be reviewed in the plagiarism prevention system, as indicated in the degree regulations. Honesty comes into play again when the ideas of others are duly respected and quoted [4].

4. Documentary review for suitability declaration. An administrative process that verifies compliance with the requirements before submitting the degree project or presenting the complex examination. This review is reflected in the value of justice and culture of peace since it ensures that the process is equally rigorous for all [4].
5. Defend a degree project or a complex examination. It is the final part of the academic process of the degree, which puts into play the student's preparation and the teacher's objective disposition for the reception of the presentation or development of the practical case. The five institutional values are activated: honesty, on the part of the student, when performing a trustworthy project or examination; justice and a culture of peace, inherent to teachers when grading the presentation or case study; students' freedom to choose the best strategies for the culmination of their degree process; students and teachers' responsibility concerning the process, which includes fulfillment of the defined deadlines; and, lastly, perhaps, the value that, although not mentioned above, should be in every performance. This corresponds to tolerance, understanding that each person, student or teacher, must be respected for their individuality and biopsychosocial characteristics [4].

Based on the institutional values, the CU degree regulations, in addition to explaining how the degree process should be carried out, also refer to ethical aspects, which are clearly described below:

Possessing any input or instrument that shows similarity with the evaluations before or during the application of such assessment is considered academic dishonesty on the student's part. If this occurs, the exam will be denied or annulled and it will be considered failed [5].

The student will present the plagiarism prevention system certificate with a similarity of up to 10%, granted by the professor responsible for the degree or collaborators of the research area. When the student's project exceeds this percentage, whoever oversees the process will immediately notify the student and the director, who must work on the matter to reach the required percentage [6].

This regulation seeks to ensure that the different actors involved in activities related to the degree program comply with the process ethically, making it possible to achieve the results established in the planning.

Another university process subject to ethical action corresponds to Institutional Evaluation, a requirement that must be fulfilled to operate a higher education institution in Ecuador. Raúl Comas R. et al. indicate that to evaluate (...) means to judge the relevance of its objectives, their fulfillment and how they are achieved, and the resources involved in the process. An institutional evaluation is participatory and collaborative and involves internal and external actors [7]. Thus, the institutional evaluation gives external information about the university's activities and is subject to a continuous evaluation—in-house—called self-evaluation, which makes it possible to achieve the quality standards defined in the evaluation model [7]. This self-evaluation can be of the entire university, by campus or extension, or by career. Per Flores and Hoyos, institutional self-evaluation is understood as a regulatory strategy through which the State recognizes the capacity for autonomy and self-regulation of university institutions to improve the development of university functions [8]. Therefore, self-evaluation is based on ethics since regulation and autonomy are based on the values field.

It can be observed that the degree and the self-evaluation process—developed in higher education institutions—are carried out with a solid basis in moral and ethical principles. Therefore, this study shows the direct relationship between the results of the

degree processes of the CU Nursing programs, in its different campuses and extensions, with those of the institutional self-evaluation process [4–6]. The Nursing program has been taken as a reference since it is currently (2022) undergoing accreditation processes. The model applied through the qualitative indicator: Self-evaluation process determines as a standard that, as part of the quality assurance processes, the degree program carries out its self-evaluation based on institutional regulations. Thus, it contemplates the participation of the actors involved in university activities and provides results that are used to continuously improve the quality of the education offered [9].

In this sense, the CU periodically complies with the self-evaluation processes either at a macro or micro. Concerning Nursing programs, the results were obtained at the beginning of the second semester of 2022.

In the self-evaluation model applied by the University, in the indicator Monitoring the Graduation Process, the standard measures that: The program plans and monitors the graduation process of its students, based on current regulations, ensuring compliance with the academic requirements of the graduation project [5, 10]. This requirement has been satisfactorily fulfilled, with the following results:

Terms	Career Program	Results
2021–2021/2021–2022	Nursing Main Campus	Satisfactory
2021–2021/2021–2022	Nursing Campus-Azogues	Satisfactory
2021–2021/2021–2022	Nursing Extension-Cañar	Satisfactory

*Note. Data were taken from the self-evaluation reports of the Nursing program, corresponding to the periods 2020–2020/2020–2021.*

**Table 1.**  
Results of the indicator monitoring the graduation process.

As seen in the table, the results of monitoring the graduation process are satisfactory in the three programs. Each one of them has complied with the presentation of the general and specific regulations—for both face-to-face and virtual processes—the planning for the development of the degree options, the list of tutors with their assigned students, the adequate use of means of communication with the actors in the process, and the improvement actions based on the recommendations of the semesterly degree reports.

Academic efficiency is also assessed in the self-evaluation model through the retention and graduation rate. The latter indicator shows 16% as the expected result. It is calculated with a statistical formula in which 100% corresponds to the number of students who entered the cohort, and the variable corresponds to the number of students who graduated. The results are shown in the following table:

Location	Expected result	Obtained result
Main Campus	16%	41.51%
Azogues	16%	32%
Cañar	16%	42.86%

*Note. Data were taken from the self-evaluation reports of the Nursing program, corresponding to the 2020–2020/2020–2021 terms.*

**Table 2.**  
Graduation rates results of nursing programs at the Catholic University of Cuenca, 2021–2021/2021–2022 terms.

It is evident that the expected result is duplicated in the nursing program at the Azogues campus, while in the main campus and the Cañar extension, these percentages are almost triplicated. The foregoing allows us to understand that the degree process was carried out in the best way and exceeded expectations. These results allow us to conclude that adequate monitoring of the degree process generates graduation rates that exceed the model expectations.

However, if adequate monitoring of the graduation process results in graduation rates above the expected percentages in the self-evaluation process, the same should be observed inside the classrooms. The process is designed for all students enrolled in a degree program in the same term, regardless of the date of entry into their degree program. The results of this task are recorded in the Semiannual Report, which includes information on the degree program, reference to the regulations, data extraction documents, a list of students and degree options chosen, results of the degree process completed and approved (at the end of each study term), and a list of faculty tutors with the number of students assigned and the hourly load for their respective accompaniment. The results are shown in **Table 3**:

Location	Enrolled students	Students who chose the Degree Project	Students who chose Complex Examination	Students graduating at the end of the senior year
Term 2021–2021				
Main Campus	55	55	9	31 = 56.36%
Azogues	37	37	0	30 = 81.08%
Cañar	21	21	0	21 = 100%
Term 2021–2022				
Main Campus	41	41	0	33 = 80.48%
Azogues	37	31	0	31 = 100%
Cañar	30	30	0	28 = 93.33%

*Note. Data were taken from the self-evaluation reports of the Nursing program, corresponding to the 2020–2020/2020–2021 terms.*

**Table 3.**  
*Results of students graduating at the end of the senior year of the nursing program.*

This table shows the results of the graduation process at the end of the last study term. These percentages demonstrate the effectiveness of the graduation process since more than 80% of the students graduated in most of the periods. This results from an ethical process based on the perseverance and responsibility of the students, permanent tutoring, and the availability of the academic and administrative actors. It should be noted that those students who did not graduate at the end of the senior year have two additional semesters for graduation. This corresponds to the first and second deferrals. Although the results of the self-evaluation process are indeed measured at different times and terms than the semester graduation results, it can be inferred that the process effectively carried out positively affects both the graduation rate and the percentage of students graduating at the end of the senior year of the degree program. Thus, from the data shown in **Tables 1–3**, the relationship between the indicators of the self-evaluation model of the nursing program and the degree processes developed can be inferred. The results are presented below in a single table:

Process		Self-evaluation	Classroom process	
Location	Process monitoring	Graduation rate (16% expected)	% of Degree 2021–2021	% of Degree 2021–2022
Main Campus	Satisfactory	41.51%	56.36%	80.48%
Azogues	Satisfactory	32%	81.08%	100.00%
Cañar	Satisfactory	42.86%	100%	93.33%

*Note. Data were taken from the Nursing program's self-evaluation reports for the 2020–2020/2020–2021 terms and from the biannual reports of degree results for the 2021–2021/2021–2022 periods.*

**Table 4.** Relationship between self-evaluation results and degree processes for the terms 2021–2021 and 2021–2022 in the nursing program.

**Table 4** indicates that if the graduation process monitoring is satisfactory, the graduation rate will be as expected in the accreditation process. Consequently, the graduating students' percentage at the end of the program will be significant. It is important to remember that the degree process is based on institutional values and, therefore, is associated with the ethical actions of each of its actors and their consequent results. These are not the product of an isolated ethical action that responds only to the degree department; they are the consequence of an ethical and professional process developed during university education, which according to Caramelo-Pérez, promotes the acquisition of professional values, their reflexive and critical adaptation so that students acquire ethical values in general and of the profession they are going to perform in particular, as well as their commitment to society [2]; and this is conceived from the career project to the culmination of studies through the degree.

### 3. Conclusions

From this analysis, it can be concluded that, in the first place, ethics as a normative science constitutes a set of socially accepted guidelines that regulate the honest behavior of people and that, since higher education is a process directed by and for people, its actions must be governed by ethics. In this sense, the CU promotes within its community the practice of five values declared as institutional: honesty, the culture of peace and justice, freedom, responsibility, and tolerance.

Second, the degree process development at the CU is based on ethics; that is, students, professors, and administrators perform their functions based on institutional values, which allow them to obtain excellent results in the different evaluation processes. Thus, the self-evaluation report of the Nursing program shows a satisfactory evaluation criterion for the graduation process monitoring and that this, in turn, positively affects the graduation rate with a percentage three times higher than expected, which responds to the internal evaluation processes and the percentages obtained in each term, mostly higher than 80% of students graduating at the end of the senior year.

Third, at the CU, the degree process has two aspects relevant to ethical performance in its regulations. One corresponds to the mandatory use of the plagiarism prevention system, whose maximum similarity percentage is 10%. The second one corresponds to the sanction that should be applied to the student who acts with

academic dishonesty in the complex examination development or the completion and submission of the degree project.

All these aspects show a strong institutional attitude toward the ethical actions of its community, which is expressed in the empowerment of the values of the CU in the planning of each of its processes and particularly in the respect for intellectual property that ensures the future of the graduate in their professional performance.

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## Chapter 4

# Ethics and Preprofessional Practices in Early Childhood Education

*Hilda Trelles-Astudillo and Claudia Santacruz-Correa*

### Abstract

This article results from the experience obtained in the preprofessional practices: labor practices and community service in the Early Childhood Education Career. This article is a theoretical essay on the need to incorporate ethics in the educational processes of future teachers and the importance of ethical learning in university classrooms. The objectives are: to identify the importance of ethics in education and to propose strategies for the ethical learning of Early Childhood Education students. For the development of this essay, a bibliographic review of articles published in impact journals, such as Redalyc, SciELO, Ibero-American Education, and Codes and Regulations on early childhood care, was carried out. Early childhood is the essential stage of the human life cycle; in this phase, psychomotor, cognition, language and communication, and socioemotional skills development occurs. Ethical values must be present in every educational process. Therefore, training competent teachers with solid knowledge in early education and ethical and moral values that contribute to the children's development and well-being is necessary. Students must master the contents of the profession and must have an ethical formation to act coherently in their personal and professional life.

**Keywords:** active learning, learning process, ethic values, early childhood education, moral values

### 1. Introduction

The twenty-first-century society enjoys significant benefits from advances in science, research, and communication technologies, which have improved lifestyles. Humanity has an instantaneous transmission network of information, ideas, and value judgments in all areas. These changes should facilitate mutual understanding and collaboration among all people; cultural barriers should no longer exist, much less geographical ones. However, the gap of misunderstanding, injustice, and the desire to expand power is present in all their cruelty. On the other hand, education has been commercialized; human beings are not trained with ethical and moral values, and knowledge acquisition is promoted for profit. This is reflected in the choice of university careers since the youngest people choose courses that allow them to have

economic gains and social status in the very near future. In contrast, humanistic careers such as education are undervalued, with minimal demand.

This reality leads to a critical reflection on the role of education in the society of the twenty-first century. It is impossible to stop violence, the destruction of man by man, if we continue with the same perspective, we have had up to now. In this sense, Álvarez [1] states that it is necessary to carry out an ethical screening that addresses the values that today, more than ever, are in crisis; a process that must involve reflection and diagnosis of the situation necessary to steer a new course.

The ethical and moral values crisis in today's society is evident. It is a problem that should concern everyone, especially education professionals, who transmit skills, knowledge, and values required for coexistence and social cohesion in academic practice and the classroom context. In this same sense, Ovelar [2] says that ethics unfolds in the way of life that is felt in the family, community, school, and society of which one is a part. Ethical and moral values are related to the belief system and the forms of organization of the community or social group. Hence each society has its values and norms system that guide people in their civic and personal lives.

From an ethical point of view, educators can only ask themselves about the purpose of their actions when putting them in front of the student. It is a matter of considering the child as the subject, not the object of education. Ronda [3] maintains that in teaching practice, there is a direct and constant relationship between educators and students; so that this relationship does not violate human dignity and the participants' rights, codes of conduct, principles, and values that favor the development of teaching and learning processes oriented to the integral formation of students and the harmonious exercise of the profession are needed.

This article emphasizes the ethical performance that early childhood education career's students must have in the development of the pre-professional internships, as a prerequisite for obtaining a bachelor's degree. In this context, the questions guiding this research are: Should the behavior and attitude of students be permeated by ethical values? Should moral and ethical issues be taught in teacher training?

Considering that university students are adults or are finishing the stage of adolescence, the ethical issue is relevant, being necessary to include in the professionals' training some ethical and moral postulates. This work aims to identify the importance of ethics in developing preprofessional practices in the Early Education career and propose strategies to promote the ethical learning of university students. It is necessary to guarantee a space for ethical learning based on each person's individuality through the analysis of principles and counter-values and that they assume and elaborate their own matrix of values. In this context, it is necessary to reflect on the lack or deficit of ethical principles in the educational field, specifically in developing preprofessional practices.

This paper is a reflective essay focusing on the author's ideas and reflections on the importance of formal education for children from 0 to 6 years old and the need for ethics and moral values in the preprofessional practice's development. It is necessary to clarify that these ideas and reflections are based on UNICEF research, the Political Constitution of Ecuador, the Organic Law of Education, and the Code of Childhood and Adolescence, among other contributions of significant research on this topic. For this reason, a bibliographic review was conducted in scientific databases such as Redalyc, SciELO, Google Scholar, Scopus, ResearchGate, and the Catholic University of Cuenca library, in which scientific articles, and others, were located. Considering the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the former included relevance, scientific novelty, pertinence, and time of publication. Information that did not help answer the

scientific question, research questions, exhaustive analysis of the variables under study, and fulfillment of the objectives were excluded.

## **2. Relevant concepts**

In the body or core of the essay, the deductive method was applied to follow a common thread in the writing of this essay. Starting with the approach to ethics and education as a general topic, then describing the importance of initial education, the legal foundations and public policies of preschool education, and the meaning and importance of the preprofessional practices of the early education career.

### **2.1 Ethics and education**

From an ethical perspective, the teacher's work is very responsible in any culture. According to [4] Hernández, education generally refers to the transmission and learning of cultural techniques, their use, production, and behavior, through which individuals live in society and can give reason to others and themselves. In this study, education is considered a process of human formation in the intellectual, motor, socio-affective, and linguistic areas, which is reflected in the configuration of the individuals as a free entity capable of making their own decisions and developing competencies that allow them to influence and contribute to the collective social development of a people, of a country.

The relationship between ethics and education is direct; hence values are present in every educational process. Ovelar [2] affirms that ethics is present educational praxis and imbues it with meanings, values, actions, and even contradictions, questions, and uncertainties that beset this educational practice and move it according to the historical moment. Considering that values influence every educational process, teachers must receive ethical training, not as a subject in the curriculum but as a transversal axis that permeates all profession-related behaviors; there should be a teacher's code of ethics. The teachers' role is complex and of enormous responsibility because their professional performance positively or negatively influences the children's and adolescents' education. The teachers are in direct and permanent contact with their students at school; in that space, they have to be a reference for their appropriation of values. Values are not taught through speeches, slogans, or sanctions; they are acquired through life experience by modeling people in their environment: parents, teachers, peers, friends, and authorities.

Today's society is violent, corrupt, oppressive, and dehumanized; most individuals have lost the value of life and the sense of transcendence. In this scenario, discourse and the generation of punitive laws will not solve the problem. Education permeated by ethics and morality can recover the sense of the human being and contribute to the cessation of the barbaric actions of men and women who, from an early age, are already involved in hired killings, drug trafficking, delinquency, and other vices that degrade the dignity of the human being.

### **2.2 Early childhood education**

The Incheon Declaration [5] states that it must be ensured that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood care, development services, and preschool education so that they are prepared for primary education. UNICEF [6] Quality

preschool education is one of the best investments available to promote future success and those who will follow in their footsteps. Early education is essential because it benefits children, their families, and society. Children develop skills and acquire competencies to function in their environment at this educational level. Likewise, quality early education ensures the development of critical thinking, creativity, and resilience—skills demanded by today’s job market.

UNICEF [7] maintains that all girls and boys must receive opportunities to exercise their rights and develop to their full potential. Investing in early childhood is vital to reducing inequality, breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty, and promoting more significant gender equity. The Information System on Education Trends in Latin America [8] states that early education has a clear pedagogical intentionality. It provides holistic or comprehensive training, covering social, affective-emotional, cognitive, motor, and expressive aspects. Complementarily and intertwined, it includes a purpose linked to constructing the necessary bases for the continuity of learning and school trajectories in basic or primary education.

### **2.3 Legal foundations for early education**

The Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador 2008. Art. 46. Section 1. Care for children under 6 years of age that guarantees their nutrition, health, education, and daily care in a framework of integral protection of their rights. Code of Childhood and [9] Adolescence. Children and adolescents have the right to quality education. This right includes adequate access to early education from 0 to 5 years of age. Therefore, flexible and open programs and projects will be developed appropriately for learners’ cultural needs.

### **2.4 Preprofessional internships**

The preprofessional practice objective in the curricular organization departments of the Early Childhood Education Career is to apply theoretical knowledge to practice as a methodological axis that will make it possible to know the socio-educational reality of their family and community environment to intervene in it, whose learning will influence the knowledge of future early childhood education professionals. Its applicability will be achieved through direct approaches to the community to diagnose the problems and difficulties to be addressed. For this purpose, formative research will be developed as an active strategy, supported by elaborating educational solution projects.

In the preprofessional internship environment, students can face real situations that demand responsible, critical, reflective, and creative actions that contribute to problem-solving and the well-being of the people with whom they work. Acosta and Hernández [10] state that preprofessional practice contributes to the consolidation of the quality and integrity of the future professional by establishing reflexivity processes that direct the career’s intrinsic processes. In this same line of thought, Terranova [11] considers the preprofessional internship to be a formative process of knowledge, skills, and values of permanent transformation. This is based on the subjects’ reflection as a way to guide their practical action. To do this, the students face a set of complex situations, which present them with new challenges to assess the importance of their future profession.

Students in the early childhood education program carry out their preprofessional internships in any public, private, or mixed educational entity. Considering the areas

of intervention at the different levels, students must comply with the curricular planning and development of activities based on: the national curriculum guidelines, current Organic Law of Intercultural Education (LOEI for its Spanish acronym) norms, LOEI regulations, and the preprofessional practice programs of the career. In conclusion, preprofessional internships help students develop interpersonal skills not taught in a classroom.

## **2.5 Preprofessional practice and ethics in the early childhood education career**

After emphasizing the definition and nature of preprofessional internships carried out by students in the various degree programs of higher education institutions, we will focus on the ethical and moral values that should be present in the exercise of these internships. In an education degree, as in all other careers, preprofessional practices must be carried out following the profession's ethical principles. It is not enough for students to comply with the number of hours of practice included in the curricular plan of their course; they must make of them a situation to develop cognitive, linguistic, technical, and instrumental competencies, and social skills, among others.

In training education professionals, the internalization of values and ethics should be promoted so that the teaching practice respects the students' dignity and rights, tending to the welfare and development of skills and competencies that enable personal improvement and contribution to the social group. Hence, in preprofessional practices in the Early Childhood Education Career, ethics should be a transversal axis that permeates all the activities developed in the teaching-learning processes.

The three ethical principles that are connatural to a career in early childhood education are respecting the dignity and rights of all people. Respect for dignity implies recognizing that everyone has the same right not to be discriminated against because of race, social status, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. In this sense, the children's learning style and pace of learning must be respected in participating in programmed activities and tasks. Integrity relates to honesty, truthfulness, accuracy, and objectivity in communications, as the confidentiality of each child's personal information. Scientific and academic responsibility to society is the principle of ethics that contributes to understanding people's value of themselves and others. This knowledge should be used to promote the individual's and society's self-improvement. The values associated with this principle are the responsibility to increase scientific and professional knowledge, which contribute to didactic and pedagogical performance and society's general welfare. However, adequate deliberation is required to make decisions oriented to the child's integral development and well-being in applying ethical principles to concrete situations.

## **2.6 Ethical learning in university classrooms**

It is common knowledge that in all areas, most people seek their well-being at the expense of harming and trampling on others' dignity and rights. There is also a generalized clamor that society must change because there is no longer enough corruption, violence, femicide, crime, exploitation, discrimination, and other evils that, if one wanted to list them all, it would be too long and tedious.

Identifying the importance of ethics and morality in the actions of human beings and the need to live in a society where people can live with dignity and security, supporting each other to achieve individual and collective well-being, is a first step toward change. What and how can we do so that children and adolescents do not

become victims of all this horror and do not repeat the evil deeds of their parents, neighbors, friends, and authorities?

Since its beginnings, the university has trained professionals and specialists in all areas of knowledge. Today, in the twenty-first century, the university is also responsible for training competent professionals who contribute to solving society's problems. This training must be related to the significant problems of twenty-first-century society. On the one hand, the communication and information society demands professionals who know their discipline, learn autonomously, build their knowledge with the capacity for discernment, apprehend some contents, and unlearn others that no longer contribute value in this new scenario. Furthermore, the integral formation of the professional is also a university task.

Indeed, to integrate the ethical dimension into university education, there must be an effective articulation between the student's and teacher's deontological education and the student's ethical education. According to Martínez et al. [12], the deontological training of the student deals with regulating responsibilities expressed through precepts, rules of behavior, and moral norms. The teacher's deontology refers to the set of duties within the profession and the student's ethical training. Deontological training for all professionals is necessary but not sufficient. Many professionals have explicit knowledge of their assignments; they know what they must do in certain situations and circumstances, yet they do not do it or do the opposite of the rules or obligations.

In higher education, all professional careers have a subject of ethics in their curricula that provides students with knowledge of professional values and the appropriation of ethical principles inherent to the profession. It is good that there is a subject that addresses everything concerning values, morals, and ethics. However, it is necessary to move from knowledge transmission to the necessary skills and abilities development to serve as tools to meet the demands of a difficult and diverse society where it is necessary to make decisions with responsibility, autonomy, and freedom for the complex problem-solving that may arise in the exercise of the profession. In this line, Martínez et al. [12] state that it is a matter of attending to the two sides of the same coin: professionals training who build their knowledge autonomously and strategically, and citizens training who act in a responsible, accessible, and committed manner.

Ethical education is not only about accumulating scientific and humanistic knowledge but also about learning experiences, developing personal plans, and participating in shared projects, where students can accept and welcome others. Therefore, the university context must be formative, and the learning environment must be favorable for ethical learning to occur. The elements that promote this learning are the interaction between teacher and student, also an open and honest dialog. The contents must have a high degree of significance for the students and promote the analysis, reflection, and evaluation of cases, facts, and problems related to the contents of the profession.

According to Martínez et al. [13], ethical and moral learning at the university should include welcoming learning, learning responsibility, professional learning, and knowing how to be a university student. Welcoming learning refers to the interpersonal relationships between students, teachers, authorities, and administrative and service personnel. It is a welcoming relationship based on truth and knowledge; this relationship takes place within the framework of respect. Learning responsibility is a formative intention incorporated into the academic curriculum corpus and academy culture [14]. University students must know their role in constructing a fairer and more equitable society and know that someone needs them. Professional

learning is related to taking a position from the knowledge that gives meaning to a professional field and from the culture. The students should ask themselves: What kind of teacher do I want to become? If there is no empowerment with the profession one intends to develop, it is unethical to obtain a professional degree. Finally, learning to know oneself as a university student refers to the fact that the university student, in his/her behavior, must be a reference of an educated person, a source of good judgment for his/her community, an example of good manners to behave, to be respectful, and supportive of others, and more.

In order to achieve ethical learning in university classrooms, it is necessary to establish the aims and objectives of ethics in the construction of the professional's personality. That is, spaces and conditions must be created that guarantee personal training in both its individual and social dimensions so that the person acquires a higher level of satisfaction and equity in exercising his or her profession. It is proposed to create different subject conditions in the classes so that students can appreciate a set of values, recognize and reject anti-values or counter-values, and develop their own values, allowing them to act coherently in their personal and professional lives.

Learning scenarios are not about implementing life models or ethical and moral values that must be learned or imitated. Instead, they are about proposing accurate models or case simulations related to the subject learning in a way that allows them to reflect, reason, and draw their own conclusions. Likewise, the student's involvement in collective projects that demand self-control and self-regulation leads to developing collective values, enriches and reaffirms personal principles, and contributes to professional commitment.

Consequently, in addition to what was said above, the university must incorporate citizenship training to achieve ethical preparation since this focuses on renewing strategies that give citizens opportunities to assume their roles in society responsibly. This approach to the subject must be creative, dynamic, and based on life experience. To this end, active methodologies, such as problem-based learning, should be used. This is important because the professionals of the twenty-first century operate in a changing, insecure, and challenging scenario that demands decision-making that affects their own individual and the whole collective.

### **3. Conclusions**

Ethics in the preprofessional practices of the Early Childhood Education Career is an indispensable component of the student's integral formation. Teachers are responsible for educating children from 0 to 6 years old—the essential human life cycle stage. It is a moral duty to favor motor, cognitive, socio-affective, language, communication, and autonomy development.

The preprofessional internship must be carried out with responsibility, respecting dignity and safeguarding each child's rights. In practicing, students must act honestly, truthfully, and objectively in communications, keeping the information concerning children, their families, and the educational institutions where the practice is performed confidentiality. Likewise, they should be concerned with increasing and updating their knowledge and training in using strategies and techniques for teaching and learning. Therefore, they can offer a quality service and achieve a pedagogical and didactic performance that gives them well-being, self-esteem, and a contribution to the community.

It is advisable for ethical learning to propose accurate models or case simulations related to the subjects' learning to allow them to reflect, reason, and draw their own conclusions and also to involve students in collective projects that demand self-control and self-regulation that entail collective principles development, enrich and reaffirm personal values, and contribute to professional commitment.

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## Chapter 5

# The Role of the University in Building an Ethical Culture from the Students' Perspective

*Ximena Moscoso-Serrano, Juanita Bersosa-Webster,  
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### Abstract

This article aimed to explore the perceptions of the students in the Faculty of Management Sciences of an institution in the region in relation to the role of the university in the construction of an ethical culture. An exploratory study with a qualitative approach was carried out, in which, based on the literature review, a semi-structured interview tool was developed and applied to 15 students from different careers related to administrative areas. The results show that the participants consider that the university can have a positive impact on the promotion of ethical culture and suggest strategies that could contribute to this purpose. It is concluded that universities, and in particular the degree courses that train students in administrative fields, should not focus their efforts only on the development of technical skills and hard skills, as they have an undeniable role as promoters of reflection and analysis of social problems and the responsibility of businessmen to generate value in society.

**Keywords:** ethical culture, the role of the university, student perception, ethics, business

### 1. Introduction

The formation of the human being includes the personal and the professional, as well as the formal and the informal; therefore, it is relevant to be aware of the impact of formal education and, with it, the commitment of higher education institutions to the holistic formation of citizens, based on ethical reflection.

The term ethics refers to customs as well as to character, good living, and coexistence. In general terms, it is the branch of philosophy that studies the good; therefore, ethics is responsible for the foundation of those actions that come from the human will and have an impact on the well-being of oneself and others. Thus, Cortina recognises that ethics as a philosophical theory has the task of directing actions, as she expresses it in the following terms:

“The ethical task consists, then, in my opinion, in accepting the moral world in its specificity and giving a reflexive reason for it, so that people may grow in knowledge

about themselves and, thus, in freedom. Such a task does not have an immediate impact on everyday life, but it has that enlightening power proper to philosophy that is irreplaceable on the road to freedom” [1].

Corruption levels in the country where the study was carried out are high; in the Transparency International publication, Ecuador is ranked 105th out of 180 countries in terms of perception of corruption, with a score of 36/100. This publication highlights the need for a systemic approach to corruption because “while the fight against corruption stagnates and deteriorates, human rights and democracy are under attack” [2].

Koris and his colleagues [3] question the approach of business schools oriented exclusively from a business perspective, without considering the propositional criteria of new professionals aimed at the common good. Employees of institutions should develop ethical knowledge, behaviours, and skills that help organisations compete in their markets [4]. Thus, American universities have implemented specialised centres for teaching business ethics, believing that these courses should prepare students for moral decisions and not just for making profits, ignoring the undeniable role of companies as co-responsible actor in social issues [5].

Shah et al. [6] argue that, despite repeated calls for reflection in business schools and business education, the narrative of responsible business has been muted and overshadowed by the prominence given to issues of employability and profit maximisation. With these objectives in mind, priority is given to the development of hard skills, minimising in the curriculum those subjects that contribute to an integral education. Consequently, it is necessary for managers and teachers in institutions that train managers to focus their efforts on developing these other types of skills. In this context, it makes sense to reflect on the ethical aspects of the profession and, therefore, the importance of analysing this issue in university classrooms. For this reason, the study focuses on the ethical culture of students in degree courses related to the field of business.

Ethical culture is understood as the way things are done in an organisation and refers to integrity and honest behaviour. Ultimately, this concept can be thought of as a set of unrelated systems, the complexity of which lies in the fact that these systems need to be aligned to promote honour and integrity [7]. According to Julian Pitt-Rivers [8], honour is both a feeling and an objective social fact that prevents unworthy actions, while integrity is defined by Cortina as a match between what a person does and the values he or she claims to uphold, as long as those values are universally upheld [9]. Maintaining a culture of honour and integrity is a challenge, particularly in higher education, where the community is made up of students, faculty, and staff. The student body, the largest part of the community, changes from semester to semester and year to year. On the other hand, it is not easy to maintain the momentum of these efforts in the midst of changes in the leadership of the institution.

Through their educational work, universities could contribute to the promotion of ethical culture. Studies such as those by Ohreen [10] and Kreismann and colleagues [11] show the effectiveness of ethics training and suggest an active learning approach, especially with interaction between participants through discussion of ethical dilemmas and case studies. In addition, peer discussion can improve most students’ moral reasoning by exposing them to multiple perspectives. Decisions can be modified or validated after being discussed and debated, a process that benefits even shy students who participate in these discussions [11].

## 2. Methodology

Against this background, the aim of this study was to find out the perceptions of students in the Faculty of Management Sciences of a regional university regarding to the role of their institution in strengthening their ethical culture. An exploratory study with a qualitative approach was carried out with the participation of 15 male and female students from different courses, aged between 20 and 25 years, who were interviewed using a semi-structured interview based on a literature review.

In the first phase, a literature review was carried out in relation to ethical culture and the role of higher education institutions, in particular, the management programmes. Based on the findings of this review, an information-gathering tool was constructed (Annex 1), in which the following categories were considered: the lack of ethics in the global context, the impact of the lack of ethics at the individual and community level, the role of the university in strengthening the ethical culture, academic experiences that have influenced students' behaviour, methodological strategies that have influenced or could influence students' ethical behaviour, and some subcategories were considered in each of these, as shown in **Table 1**.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face and virtually, in the first case through voice notes and, in the second, through the recording of the session. After the application of the interview, the information obtained was systematised by transcribing the audio of the interviews using Sonix software. The researchers then analysed the narrative content of the interviews, identified recurring patterns in the responses, and organised the findings.

Category	Subcategory
Lack of ethics in the global context	Perception of the lack of ethics in the country.
Impact of misconduct at the individual and community level	Affecting misconduct at the individual and community level.
The role of the university in strengthening ethical culture	University as an instance of strengthening ethical culture.
Academic experiences that have an impact on students' ethical behaviour	Pedagogical experiences that have had a positive impact on the ethical behaviour of students.
	Pedagogical experiences that have had a negative impact on the ethical behaviour of students.
	Academic experiences that could contribute to the strengthening of the ethical culture at the University.
Ethics and academic curriculum	Subjects and contents of the curriculum strengthen the approach to ethics.
Ethics and business relationship	Ethical business.

**Table 1.**  
*Categories and sub-categories of the study.*

### 3. Results

The first interview question sought to understand the participants' perceptions of the lack of ethics in the national context. The results of the interviews indicate that all participants felt that there was a high level of ethical deprivation, with eight of the 15 interviewees explicitly associating it with the word corruption. Terms related to political power, such as leaders, government, and state, among others, were mentioned by 33% of the participants. Lack of education was mentioned by 27% as having a direct impact on a lack of ethics. Three out of 15 respondents identified the lack of ethics as a major problem in the country, manifesting itself in several areas, including the academic and professional fields. Forty per cent believe that it is a matter of individual behaviour, which, as such, is strongly influenced by subjectivity and the tendency to relativize ethics, which leads to great complexity in its analysis, in line with Cortina's perspective [1] that there is a moral diversity from which reflection is necessary to motivate, from freedom; however, Rawls considers that society is well ordered not only when it is organised to promote the well-being of its members but also when it is effectively regulated by a public conception of justice [12], consequently, it is of vital importance to recognise that the criteria of justice and the common good far exceed individualistic bias.

In reference to the impact generated by the lack of ethics at the individual and community level, all the participants mentioned some kind of affectation; for example, they perceive that in the professional sphere, situations that violate ethics are evident and have become naturalised. On the other hand, 33% mentioned some kind of impact on the country's development caused by wrong political decisions. In relation to the above, Kliksberg [13] addresses the harmful effect of the lack of ethics in organisations as well as in public management, seeking to relocate, through the exemplification of real cases that show the relationship between corruption and the deterioration of the living conditions of society in general.

The interviewees believe that the situation would improve with a change at the individual level, which reaffirms ethics as a reflection and analysis of what is considered good and valuable in a given society, with individual well-being and the common good as a reference, and which requires "minimums" for human beings to develop with dignity. In Cortina and Martnez's terms, "the ethics of justice or ethics of minimums deal only with the universalisable dimension of the moral phenomenon, that is, with those duties of justice that are demandable of any rational being and which, in short, only make up minimum requirements" ([14], p. 117). Framed within this conception, we can mention certain discourses that show that the authors' aspiration is not fully internalised by two of the participants in this study. We refer to expressions such as "It is not something that is very important for people, myself included" and "I grew up thinking that certain situations were ethical, but in reality they were not", from which we cannot approach ethics from a static perspective but rather recognise its dynamism and systemic character.

The issue of corruption has been identified as a situation with which we have become familiar, to the point of behaviour that could be considered negligent, associating it with extreme individualism and laissez-faire thinking. It is necessary to raise awareness of the need to understand that there is a gap between "want" and "duty", and that it is essential to deepen and strengthen duty in order to ensure a good life in the community, as one of the interviewees stated, "what is right is not necessarily what you want to do".

Another category investigated was the perception in relation to the role of the university in the strengthening of ethical culture, taking as a premise that ethical training begins in the family. One of the 15 interviewees considers that, due to the age at which one enters university, when there is already some degree of maturity, it is very difficult to modify behaviour. They also maintain that reflection on ethics should start at school or college, recognising that it is strengthened in the workplace. 87% of the participants consider that the university can strengthen the practise of ethics through experiences of an academic nature (related to the subjects) and also of a relational nature (student–teacher interaction). This perception coincides with the moral development theory of psychologist Kohlberg, who, based on Piaget's theory of evolutionary development, maintains that the development of moral conscience runs parallel to evolutionary development, with the post-conventional stage being the pinnacle of the development of moral conscience, in which social norms have been assumed to be beneficial for good living, strengthening a sense of otherness.

Regarding positive pedagogical experiences related to ethical reflection described by the students, 27% stated that they had not had this type of experience in their academic life, indicating that teaching concentrates on technical aspects and hard skills. 47% indicated that the approach of certain teachers in their subjects lent itself to this type of experience; for example, one student commented “I got more out of a simple lecture from my teacher talking directly to me about what should be ethical rather than a lecture on ethics in the auditorium”. Another student mentioned as positive the analysis of ethical cases at the end of the chapters of his textbook, together with the teacher, and the use of anti-plagiarism software for the assessment of assignments. Seven of the 15 students said that they had not had any negative experiences, but one of them mentioned virtual classes as a negative experience since virtual assessment facilitates copying; on the other hand, two students referred to the negative effect of their lecturers' attitudes, such as unequal treatment of students or tolerance of academic dishonesty.

These assertions coincide with the thinking of Vallaeys, who refers to the responsibility of the university in terms of training the leaders of society, with the consequent need for the academy to reflect on itself in a contextualised manner, with a holistic vision being indispensable as it is immersed in the chronic problems of society, which is why the university's commitment requires articulating the various parts of the institution in the promotion of ethical principles, equitable development, and sustainable development [15].

The students also emphasise the importance of articulating ethics in the decision-making processes that are evident in research, thesis development, and projects—spaces that allow them to demonstrate this dimension of behaviour by putting their knowledge into practice through practice and their relationship with society. Ford and Richardson [16] consider that the ethical decision-making process is of an individual and internal nature, while Porter and Córdoba argue that decision-making from a social responsibility perspective occurs at the organisational level [17].

In reference to the questions that sought to identify academic experiences that could contribute to strengthening the ethical culture among students, all the interviewees stated that it is of vital importance to link theory with reality, for which they suggested, on the one hand, active learning practises such as talks focused on their career, debates, conversations, and testimonies of professionals, and, on the other hand, activities that contribute to the development of critical thinking such as case studies, workshops, and contents that lend themselves to reflection in their subjects.

In the relational sphere, five students highlighted the role of the teacher in situations of informal education, understood according to Sarramona [18] as a continuous process through which people acquire and accumulate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and ways of discerning through daily experiences and their relationship with the

Category	Subcategory	Findings	
Lack of ethics in the global context	Perception of the lack of ethics in the country.	Subjective – relative behaviour.	
		Complex approach.	
		There is a perceived lack of ethics, which manifests itself professionally and academically.	
Impact of misconduct at the individual and community level	Affecting misconduct at the individual and community level.	Lack of ethics in business and other areas has become naturalised.	
		Divorce ethics and business.	
		Corruption – power relationship.	
		Negligent attitude towards corruption, manifested in laissez-faire.	
The role of the university in strengthening ethical culture	University as an instance of strengthening ethical culture.	Based on academic experiences and teacher examples.	
		Objective application of rules.	
		The importance of professional ethics.	
		Methodological strategies that motivate curiosity.	
Academic experiences that have an impact on students' ethical behaviour	Pedagogical experiences that have had a positive impact on the ethical behaviour of students.	There is no clear association of any experience, apart from the use of the anti-plagiarism software, with any revised content in any subject or any lecture.	
		Pedagogical experiences that have had a negative impact on the ethical behaviour of students.	Online education led to copying.
			Academic experiences that could contribute to the strengthening of ethical culture in the university.
	Experiential experiences, which highlight the ethical implications of professional practice.		
	The teacher's behaviour must be rigorous, e.g. with regard to copying.		
	Teacher example.		
	Ethical training should be cross-cutting in all subjects; and throughout the degree course.		
	Focusing on the specific area of each career.		
	Ethics and academic curriculum	Subjects and contents of the curriculum strengthen the approach to ethics.	Contents, talks on general subjects. Not specifically identified.
Ethics and business relationship	Ethical business.	A divorce between these areas is recognised.	

**Table 2.**  
*Categories, subcategories, and study findings.*

environment; they mentioned the need for teachers to be more rigorous in copying, to promote teamwork, equal treatment, and incentives for student contribution, as well as the teacher's example.

At the curricular level, the participants mentioned subjects such as accounting, entrepreneurship, legislation, administration, computer security, and networking as the subjects within their curriculum that strengthen the approach to ethics. In addition, 93% of the students stated that ethics training should be worked on in all subjects in a cross-cutting manner, from the beginning to the end of university education, through related ethical issues. Finally, 100% of students believe that it is possible to do ethical business.

In this sense, it should be acknowledged that what was stated by the interviewees coincides to a large extent with what Kliksberg [19] said in relation to the fundamental role of universities, a responsibility that requires going beyond the implementation of a subject that addresses ethics in degree courses but rather the urgent need to mainstream its teaching through the discussion of ethical dilemmas linked to the contents, based on reality.

Based on the urgency expressed by Kliksberg regarding the reevaluation of ethics and its potential in the university, as it is responsible for professional and citizen training, as well as the implicit and explicit message of the students interviewed, it is appropriate to review pedagogical proposals that promote ethical dialogue, duly contextualised, in such a way that professional training and its subsequent exercise are inspired by an ethical position. Thus, Eurasqun [20] states that dialogic ethics calls upon the responsibility we have in relation to the world in which our children will live and to the improvement of the quality of life for all through a consensus that does not avoid conflicts but rather faces them from involvement and commitment rather than from regulations or prescription.

A summary of the results of the interviews by category can be found in **Table 2**.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The research allows us to conclude that, from the students' point of view, the university can indeed promote the ethical culture of future professionals in administrative areas. The participants recognise that corruption in the public and private spheres is closely related to a lack of ethics and undermines the common good, a situation that they consider to have become naturalised.

The participants' suggestions as to how the university could foster an ethical culture involve incorporating the approach and reflection of ethical issues in the subjects that make up the curricula of the degree programmes. They consider it important to study ethical dilemmas related to their profession through experiential reflections and experiences based on the day-to-day reality of business people.

The results of this research pose a challenge for universities that focus their efforts on the development of hard skills and technical abilities, neglecting the treatment of key aspects such as ethics, which contribute not only to the formation of the individual as a professional but also to his or her development as a whole person. Both the theory and the opinions of the participants in this study indicate that universities, and particularly the degrees that train in administrative areas, cannot ignore the obligation to train entrepreneurs and leaders who are capable of proposing solutions to economic and market problems, as well as those of a social nature.

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## Chapter 6

# Ethics and Online Education

*Giancarlo De Agostini*

### Abstract

Before the pandemic, both in Ecuador and in the world, e-learning was not widely used, although it was known. This proposal is since in the post-pandemic period there has been an increase in the use, in general, of distance education, in its different modalities, with very little experience on the part of teachers in the design of courses for online or virtual education, in the various educational platforms. However, ethics, mainly from the teacher's point of view, has not been wholly developed. The teachers' training in the design of virtual events is necessary, together with their human capacity to relate to students and their preparation to properly use educational platforms with their dozens of internal facilities and the hundreds of existing and free Open Educational Resources (OER). This document discusses the teachers' ethics, especially for the online modality, as an essential point, in its various perspectives.

**Keywords:** ethics, education, online, teacher, post-pandemic

### 1. Introduction

The proposal in point six of the article emphasizes teachers' ethics, their training in the design of virtual events, their human capacity to relate to students, and their preparation to properly use educational platforms with their dozens of internal facilities and the hundreds of existing Open Educational Resources (OER) that can be freely used.

After reviewing various sources on ethics in educational environments, several works were found that emphasize the dishonesty of students, and summative memoirist tests leave aside the formative ones that are much more creative than the others. Regarding teachers, few findings are confirmed, so the purpose of this work is justified, as it proposes a teachers' ethics based on their preparation, evaluation, relationship, and treatment with students.

"Towards an Educational Humanity for Teacher Education: Building the Relational, Emotional, and Ethical Bases of Teaching Practice" is one of the studies that discuss the teachers' ethics and emphasize the educators' role in medicine. It proposes humanizing teaching through poems and metaphors to harmonize the teacher-student relationship; it also illustrates how discussing such lyrics offer a substantive approach to teaching ethical values that promote a "humanistic education" [1].

It should be noted that there are two experiences in Ecuador concerning training their teachers. The first entirely online, with 18 years of experience thus far,

has been approved by the Ministry of Education and awarded by UNESCO and the IDB. Other prizes include a Japanese<sup>1</sup> and a Swedish<sup>2</sup> recognition. This is the Ibero-American Virtual School [2], concerned about the high desertion in the country [3–6]. It works with 3 years of elementary school, 3 years of high school, and four specialties. The other one: The Catholic University of Cuenca (UCACUE). Since 1990, this institution has worked with Distance Education (traditional) and lately with totally online education, with complete technical careers and in several postgraduate subjects.

## **1.1 Objectives**

### *1.1.1 General*

The mission is to promote the complete formation of the individual by incorporating new technologies in the teaching and training communication process. In this sense, it is desired to train highly prepared professionals who can provide innovative solutions to communication and learning problems, using, planning, experimenting, and creatively executing the new technologies of Learning and Knowledge (TAC by its Spanish acronym) with heuristic and procedural skills, which allow them to apply the theoretical foundations to the analysis of educational problems (technological transfer) with appropriate research methods. Teachers will be able to do the following:

### *1.1.2 Specific*

1. Encourage innovative virtual communication processes;
2. Design, execute, and reflectively evaluate educational and online distance learning events and programs;
3. Apply the new TACs to everyday teaching-learning processes based on research and experimentation;
4. Apply appropriate methodologies to their online distance teaching practices;
5. Conduct applied and innovative research in the area with creative and novel approaches;
6. Analyze educational-communication contexts within the technological and andragogical perspective;
7. Coordinate and develop interdisciplinary activities that consider the importance of social and cultural processes toward technology;

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<sup>1</sup> Winner of the first prize of the “*Global Development Awards and Medals Competition 2008, GDN, Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project*” awarded in 2009.

<sup>2</sup> “Special Mention for excellence in the use of information technology, OnLine CVI, In the Education Category the Stockholm Challenge 2008.”

8. Design, implement, and evaluate educational plans and systems and distance learning, non-face-to-face, mainly virtual;
9. Design, implement, and evaluate complete online distance education systems in administration, student services, content, and teaching, among others.

## **2. Technology**

A conscientious and ethical teacher, designer, and facilitator of online courses and workshops must learn to master technologies, that is, online course managers. The two educational platforms or online course management systems used by the Catholic University of Cuenca are MOODLE (for undergraduate careers) and CANVAS (for postgraduate). With the evolution of educational platforms toward the implementation of artificial intelligence [7], these have incorporated elements of instant monitoring of the activities carried out by each participant and systems for reviewing similarities in work done by the students. This process allows monitoring of the ethical and honest conditions of the proposals.

Today, technology has been incorporated into human activities, transforming and challenging our societies with unimaginable implications. One of them is supporting students in their high school and university studies, and implementing info centers throughout the national territory, with adequate technology so that future professionals are qualified and can aspire to better work sources.

In several countries, distance education is considered lower quality<sup>3</sup> than face-to-face education. However, a study [8] by Russel evaluates 355 projects and shows the opposite: In some cases, distance education exceeds the traditional one thanks to the excellent use of technology.

## **3. Ethics**

Ethics has multiple synonyms, such as honesty, integrity, values, commitments, honor, morality, principles, justice, responsibility, conscience, correctness. Of course, we must know that its implication and application differ significantly among the various existing cultures, even within the same continent, region, and country.

Ethics and honesty, crucial elements of human behavior, must be lived in academia by students and teachers. Strict punishments are inflicted on students who fail to comply with the norms of honesty and those who cheat. The teacher, from the beginning, must clarify these rules and their consequences. In addition, it is recommended to hold forums at the first day for students and teachers to introduce themselves and reach the productive levels of interrelation.

Student evaluations are also recommended to promote formative assessments with clearly described personal and group work, case studies, problem-based learning and projects, analysis, and proposals forums, among other interactive activities, with few summative evaluations used mainly for control activities. For these last evaluations, which are totally deferred in time and space, technological mechanisms allow students to be monitored using video cameras and fingerprinting, among other

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<sup>3</sup> Ethics in e-learning. (PDF) Ethics in e-learning (researchgate.net).

resources. In this way, it is not necessary to physically summon students to take their tests. Later on, we will propose an adequate training offer for teachers.

#### **4. Proposal**

Hereunder, some rules and regulations will be proposed for good behavior, functioning, and ethical work within a virtual classroom for online course tutors. Ethics is not only the responsibility of the student but also of the teacher.

The following ethical recommendations for the teacher-facilitator in a virtual environment are based on experiences of the University of Wisconsin with a trajectory of more than 100 years in distance and personal education, which mean more than 20 years of work on the subject and 80 courses designed online, in half a dozen educational platforms, in addition to the evaluation of online courses, totally inoperative:

- Prepare oneself responsibly in courses for the “online” modality without assuming face-to-face practice is sufficient.
- Know the situation of students regarding technology with the availability of equipment and bandwidth for excellent communication, using surveys.
- Do not settle for one or two courses. Be prepared with at least 140 hours of online learning processes, through 4 to 7 courses of 40 hours each<sup>4</sup>, among which there must be one of the “didactic techniques for online classes” [9].
- Emphasize formative evaluations to assess learning.
- Use summative assessments primarily for controls.
- Follow this recommendation: “Let’s evaluate results and not intentions” [10].
- Plan for the student as the center of every teaching-learning process.
- Teach how to discover knowledge rather than memorize the subject.
- If teaching, teach with love; in short, let us be human.

In addition, as a teacher, to work correctly and with quality in any online classroom, it is essential to consider the following: enter the platform several times per day, have discipline, fulfill the dates established on the platform, participate early in the morning, review and suggest improvements in the activities throughout the week, and promote the learning and knowledge of students, providing ideas, suggestions, and opinions in the forums, assessments, and assignments. Have interest, discipline, motivation, and dedication to working as a tutor facilitator.

It is imperative to define the forms of communication and behavior in the network (Internet etiquette or netiquette). The following is recommended:

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<sup>4</sup> Suggested by the University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA.

- **Rule 1:** Never forget that the person reading the message in a virtual classroom forum is, in effect, human, with feelings that can be hurt.
- **Rule 2:** Behave online just as one would in real life. Be respectful. Remember that an activity gathers people from different regions, countries, and even continents, coming from different cultures. Take care of the local language and be polite.
- **Rule 3:** Writing everything in capital letters resembles screaming, making it difficult to read. Do not do this unless a certain emphasis is necessary.
- **Rule 4:** Respect others' time.
- **Rule 5:** Show your good side while staying online.
- **Rule 6:** Share your knowledge with the community. Building knowledge, and sharing it, is the idea.
- **Rule 7:** Help keep discussions in a healthy, polite, and learning environment. Our point of view is important, as is everyone else's, although they are diverse. Diversity promotes learning.
- **Rule 8:** Make sure students avoid cyberbullying.
- **Rule 9:** Do not abuse your power of knowledge. Encourage and allow other students to participate. Support them.
- **Rule 10:** It is crucial to be known, so take advantage of spaces to introduce yourself and communicate. Upload your photograph in the virtual classroom.

Everyone, students and teachers, must believe that they are honest; therefore, one must work based on honesty, always at the service of oneself and others.

## 5. Resources

Each teacher will have in the virtual classroom a series of resources for their students' individual and cooperative participation. Some of these internal resources of the educational platform are described below:

- A text produced for each module
- Short videos
- Readings that correspond to the conceptual content, organized by topics
- Not graded summative assessments through questionnaires; they are usually "self-monitoring" and serve to verify self-learning
- Forums and Wikis, the former, are spaces for individual reflection and analysis, where participants can share their criteria. The latter are team-building spaces, like collaborative forums.

There are also external resources to the platform, like OER—Open Educational Resources—such as “freely accessible educational resources in the public domain” [11].

## 6. Training

The ethical attitude is a crucial aspect that ensures the success of any online teaching-learning process and, therefore, requires the training of teachers. The virtual modality is very different from the face-to-face one, although it is based on the same philosophical framework of education. It is not about uploading material as a repository or just depositing documents and videos. It can operate with other modalities: dual, hybrid, blended, inverted, etc., and the “video conference” modality, which has increased since the last pandemic. This modality is “face-to-face at a distance” (synchronous), and its communication is done *via* video. It is much less effective than the traditional one, where a teacher is in a physical classroom. It can be useful in emergencies and congresses and for brief clarifications or consultations during office hours, but not for a “lecture” of two or more hours. The dynamic performance of the teacher through technology promotes student participation; it is crucial for the success of the course and requires effective asynchronous virtual communication and motivation of the students [12].

In Ecuador and the Region, there is a need for professionals who have mastered the new educational platforms, which, indeed, are of recent use. Promoting communication processes and designing innovative online educational events and teacher training programs are also necessary. In various Spanish-speaking institutions, one or two courses have been proposed to train teachers in the design of virtual courses, which are, by experience<sup>5</sup> and, as suggested by the University of Wisconsin, insufficient. Therefore, seven courses and a final project, each of approximately 40 hours, are proposed below to ensure teachers can design quality online courses. This itinerary could serve to qualify and professionalize teachers from Ecuador and the Region. The courses would be as follows: 1. Distance and Online Education, 2. An introductory adventure to HTML, 3. Group Processes of Online Communication, 4. Systemic Instructional Design, 5. Online communication (theory and lab), 6. Distance Student Services and Online Assessment Strategies, 7. Technologies for distance learning with Statistics fundamentals. And the individual Project [12]. The detailed program will allow them to provide appropriate solutions to the various problems of Ecuadorian and regional education, through the adoption and application of new technologies and with innovative and creative pedagogical models. It is worth noting that training facilitators and designers of online courses are another vital aspect of a proper teaching ethic.

Learning is a process of motivation, cooperation, analysis, and interest. It is a collaborative process that generates a community of knowledge. Ultimately, active learning requires the learner to perform activities, analyze, reflect, think critically, self-assess, relive their process, and lead their self-learning. In this “process,” the facilitator must guide the learner. The Catholic University of Cuenca proposes that the Region and Ecuador be oriented toward the development of an inclusive, participatory, and interactive knowledge and communication society, with equal opportunities

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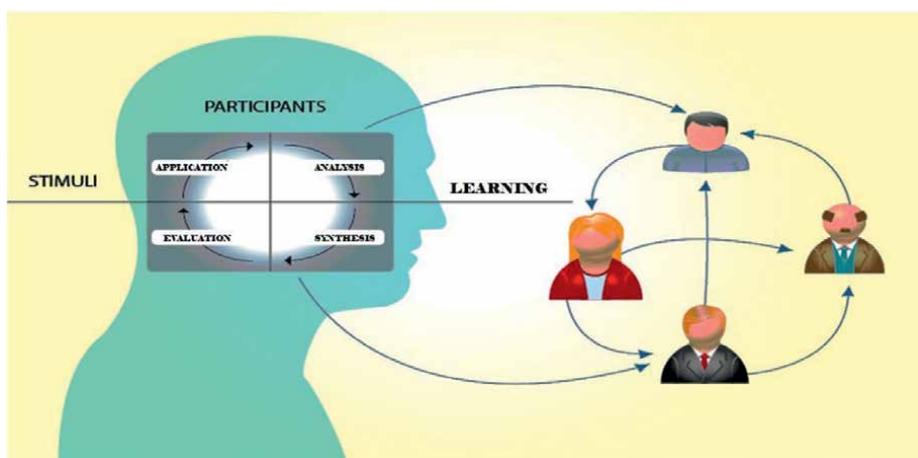
<sup>5</sup> At the University of Wisconsin, Madison, faculty teachers are trained to design quality subjects online, with seven courses, equivalent to a Specialization.

for all, integrating the various actors and sectors of society to meet the challenge of being a country integrated into the digital era [13].

## 7. Teachers

Virtual tutors and online course designers should be aware that the activities to be designed and developed are totally different from those of face-to-face or traditional distance education, or the “tele classes” practiced during the pandemic. Online education processes are distance learning, but they should not be isolated. The virtual classroom should become an internal network of collaborative learning using the infinite resources available on our educational platform. It is necessary to use an adequate methodology that encourages the development of logical thinking, contextualized socio-critical activities, the use of “high performance” technologies toward the “ubiquity” of knowledge, with emphasis on reading and writing, that develops a true “self-discipline” for life, that increases self-esteem and achievement in study and prepares for the education of the present and the future. It requires “personalized” teaching, materials with active “multimedia” content, quality content with immediate editing—emphasizing the “pedagogy of the question,” learning based on problems and projects, the selection of teachers prepared for this modality, the use of a constructivist and connectivism methodology, a model to discover instead of covering material, resources that use “multiple intelligences”—by Howard Gardner-, “wikis,” simulations, participatory and collaborative forums, summative evaluations, co-evaluations, and continuous self-evaluations.

The following advantages will be reported: lower cost than face-to-face one (in the medium term), use of online materials, immediate measurable results, fully asynchronous, and highly interactive; it promotes active learning, storage of material that can be modified immediately, and personal and self-paced, among other advantages. The learning network is the teacher and the participants, a whole “team” generating knowledge (**Figure 1**). The only constant must be change; we must all be honest.



**Figure 1.**  
*Giancarlo De Agostini, Marco Yamba-Yugsi.*

## **8. Conclusions**

As teachers, we must incorporate motivation in our lessons through adequate and necessary resources to support students and timely intervention as tutors to avoid and control conflicts. It is also required to resort to the learners' experiential field, clearly organize the planned materials, promote group work with real problems, and provide effective feedback, since online education or online learning (e-Learning) for adults is a collaborative teaching-learning process based on collective and individual work, essentially with asynchronous motivating and participative activities, mediated by new technologies for learning and knowledge with the support of interactive resources from open environments, synchronous and asynchronous, with multimedia content, to create a human learning community that generates commitment and knowledge, constructively.

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# Reconstruction of Ethics: Nature as a Subject of Rights

*Fernando Moreno-Morejón*

## Abstract

The recognition of the rights to a new subject, nature, and its moral consideration requires an ethical analysis for the theoretical-legal construction. In anthropocentric thought, the relationship between humans and living beings is discussed from the definition of their power and hierarchy towards the environment. In contrast, Andean philosophy surpasses the vision of an independent rational subject, alien to nature and reaffirms its interconnection, interdependence and cooperation between all living beings in the community, with a fundamental approach to the care of life. Against this background, this question was proposed: Does the existing value scheme in today's societies ensure the vital processes of nature? or is it necessary to change the ethical-moral paradigm in which nature is subject to rights? This work, considering the Andean philosophy and ancestral knowledge, the path of intercultural interpretation of human-nature relations marked through the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court of Ecuador that recognizes the ethical and moral principles that regulates them, which proposes the use of natural resources in a sustainable way, avoiding their exploitation and guaranteeing the survival of species and ecosystems. A combination of the historical, comparative, analytical, and argumentative method was used as an investigative method.

**Keywords:** anthropocentrism, biocentrism, ecocentrism, ethics, Andean philosophy

## 1. Introduction

Is the existing scheme of values in today's societies sufficient to ensure the vital processes of nature? or is a change of ethical-moral paradigm necessary in which nature is the subject of rights, not the object of rights? In the light of this question, it is proposed to analyse the approach of Andean philosophy and ancestral knowledge, the ethics of Good Living (founded on the principles of relationality, correspondence, complementarity, and reciprocity between man and nature), and the philosophical bases of Andean culture with its ancestral knowledge about Pachamama. Thus, in contrast to these approaches, anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism are analysed from the axis that relates to man and nature. The jurisprudential analysis of the sentences issued by the Constitutional Court of Ecuador is also proposed, which marks the path of intercultural interpretation of human-nature relations. Likewise, the ethical and moral principles generated in the relationships recognised in a transversal way in Andean philosophy allow us to mark the emergence of a new normative behaviour, totally distant from economic extractivism, as the foundation of the

capitalist system, towards an economical form of subsistence characterised by respect and harmonious coexistence of the different elements that coexist in this world. To this end, a combination of historical, comparative, and argumentative analytical methods was used to analyse Western thought and an amalgam of oral and symbolic transmission of the sayings of the village elders to the vision of Andean philosophy<sup>1</sup> and ancestral knowledge.

### **1.1 Initial discussion on anthropocentrism**

From the beginning of humanity, the fear of the unknown and the struggle to survive were a motivation to know the human and to coexist with non-human entities. The Greek tradition discussed human-animal and society-nature relations and identified humans and nature with the divine and animals as inferior entities. This initial sacred, eternal, and spiritual vision was surpassed by another that left the spiritual outside of nature and transferred it to the sacred temples. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (XIII and XVII), the human being was considered the most virtuous of all species that inhabited the earth and administered goods, animals, and the natural environment (in a limited way since complete dominion was exclusive to God) [1]. Nature, with its domestication, became an exploitable and external resource, subject to modification (raw material) for economic purposes and subject to market laws. It was accompanied by philosophical thought, which limited morality to man alone and preserved the natural world under a utilitarian conception. It considered man the absolute master of nature, whose progressive and rational mission was to dominate, use, and abuse it without limits.

However, the dominion is not for all, but only for some because the same human beings attributed to themselves characteristics that served the physiognomists to classify them hierarchically [2]. Psychic and moral characters were deduced from their resemblance to a particular animal. After passing through Gall's phrenology [2], together with Lombroso and the positivists [3], it was a tradition that entered the legal field to give scientific status to criminology, consecrating aesthetic values as the basis of racist hierarchies and associating the ugly with the bad or primitive [4].

For Plato, the separation between body and soul and contempt for the body prepared capitalism, and [5] simultaneously relegated the animal and the human—for its corporeal dimension, close to an animal condition—to the state of pure body. The human was not to worry about earthly suffering because his destiny was in his soul, and he would go to paradise [6]. The human concerned with the body, as vanity, was the closest criminal to the animal. In this environment, Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626) introduces his concern for nature by comparing character with the inmates: science tortures nature, as the Inquisition did with its inmates, to reveal the last of its secrets... [7].

For his part, René Descartes (1596–1650), in the fifth part of his *Discourse on Method*, summarised his book *Treatise on Light* [8] and concluded that animals and the universe were machines regulated by laws. Animals lacked a soul, or if it was admitted that they had one, it was very different from that of man. Therefore, they could not be punished, nor was there any obligation in this regard; on the contrary, they were objects of human domination and had no rights, ethics, or legal limitation.

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<sup>1</sup> The thought of the Andean philosophy and ancestral knowledge claims the existence and viability of differentiated and alternative ways of life to the Western one; it is based on a worldview based on the understanding that recognises as valid the spiritual and emotional in the constitution of the human being and his ability to relate to his fellow men and with his natural environment.

As for the universe, everything was reduced to matter (extension) and motion [8]. In addition, he referred to God as the great clockmaker of the world, responsible not only for building the universe but for keeping it running. When analysing the method of incipient modern science, he said that the human being must become the owner and possessor of nature [2].

Schuld considers danger as the basis of inquisitorial punitive power. Nonhumans were animals, and the criminals, heretics, women, and inferior colonised humans were half-animals to be protected by superiors. In contrast, others had to be eliminated to prevent them from destroying humanity. This originated a stage characterised by political and legal domination over the subjected peoples to satisfy the interests and needs of the imperial economy.

Enlightenment and liberal philosophical thought of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century and all modernity did not consider the animal as a machine. The Enlightenment had two contradictory bases: an empiricist one that gave rise to Bentham's utilitarianism and an idealist one, proper to Kantian rationalism. Kant limited ethics and the right to human relations [9]. However like Hobbes, he excluded not only animals from the contract but also some human enemies because (understood as autonomy) he could decide what would make him happy and pursue it without obstacles by making use of his freedom unless another had been granted the power to determine through a covenant [10, 11]. In one of his 1983 book, *The Case for Animal Rights*, the author Tom Regan corrects Kant by asserting that every living being must be considered or treated as an end in itself, not only those endowed with a moral conscience, as Kant claimed [12]. He based this assertion on the fact that many humans do not possess a moral conscience—such as very young children and the severely mentally disabled. This is the basis from which he builds the principle that no living being should be treated as a means to serve other people's ends.

Then, from the chronological review of the philosophy underpinning anthropocentrism, it can be concluded that knowledge is based on reason—knowledge contained in science and the construction of ideas. Thus, anthropocentrism uses the scientific method and denies everything that cannot be demonstrated. Furthermore, it upholds the separation of the mind from the body and emotions. It poses the denial of the spirit or the soul to justify power and its hierarchy regarding the environment.

## **1.2 Notes on biocentrism**

Biocentrism, as a philosophical stance, seeks to expand the limits of morality towards non-human living beings and organisms, granting them value and respect for sharing a common element, life. For this, it considers: a) the capacity, or not, to feel as a moral criterion for using species and b) the intrinsic value of each species regardless of the attributes of its life.

In this sense, concerning the capacity or not to feel, we have Bentham's utilitarian discourse in which he proposes the greatest happiness for all. He seeks to avoid pain in sensitive beings such as animals, thereby summoning their respect and recognising their rights. This was continued by Henry Salt, who published his book *Animal's Rights* in 1892. Also, Peter Singer, in 1975, in his book *Animal Liberation*, proposed avoiding animals' cruel treatment or experimentation as part of the animals' rights. In this environment, a French philosopher, Michel Serres, tested the thesis of the creation of subjects and concluded on the need for a contract with nature [13].

On the other hand, regarding the intrinsic value of each species regardless of the attributes of its life, the author Charles Darwin, in his theory of evolution, referred

to the survival of the fittest, understood as the most fertile and not as the strongest in the physical sense. Therefore, in evolution, competition should not be privileged but rather cooperation. Nature selects the fittest individuals and eliminates the least favourable variations [14]. Symbiosis recognition as an essential evolutionary force has profound philosophical implications. All macroscopic organisms, including ourselves, are living proof that destructive practices ultimately fail; only creative individuals who know how to cooperate and progress survive [15].

On the other hand, according to the law of natural selection (nature selects the most suitable individuals, eliminating the least favourable variations), Herbert Spencer, manager of subhuman justice, concluded that it was necessary to apply the same rule to humans through the homogeneous or the heterogeneous. On the other hand, they could evolve from cosmogenesis to humans, clearly divided between the white superior and inferior races. However, the tutelage of the most biologically evolved race was necessary for this [16]. Evolution was a process in which, according to positivism, the half-animals of other races were to be protected by the superiors (neocolonialism), and within the race itself, the inferiors (the delinquent half-animals) were to be eliminated, by either natural or artificial selection. The latter must be understood as the evolutionary process by which humans consciously select for or against certain characteristics.

Based on each species' intrinsic value, egalitarian biocentrism appears, establishing that every organism is a teleological centre endowed with uniqueness, an individuality whose final cause is to pursue its good [17]. This position defends substantial equality between all forms of life without considering the proper values of nature and all forms of life and their inequalities. Thus, for example, an ant is not the same as a person; rights that do not focus on individuals but on species or ecosystems are generated.

In contrast, hierarchical biocentrism conceives of a community of human and non-human living beings linked together by vital independence rather than a relationship of ranks in which humans are superior. Taylor, on his part, posits the belief that humans are not inherently superior to other living things, implying their equality [17].

James Lovelock states that the Earth regulates, maintains, and recreates life conditions using living beings. It is evident that we could not survive without living beings that supply oxygen, and they could not survive without us, as we produce their nutrients. In fact, he claimed that there is a "planetary intelligence"; that is, the Earth is not a collection of rocks or other inert elements but a coherent system linked to a purpose [18]. In this way, it was changed from a mechanistic paradigm, in which the Earth was a large mass of stone, to one in which it can be affirmed that the Earth is a living being. This thesis was called Gaia, the name of the ancient Greek goddess who generated all the beings that inhabited the planet. In terms of Varela and Maturana, it is an autopoietic system [19].

Leopold changes the status of nature from property to a member of the biotic community based on the axiology of a philosophical value, which is superior to mere economic significance [20]. For his part, Berry [21] considers the Earth an integral community that includes all its human and non-human members, limiting the human being to be just another member (biotic community).

Under the premises analysed, it can then be concluded that biocentrism analyses the conflicts between non-human living organisms, which have value and respect for the fact of sharing life. However, while the proper values of nature and all life forms are recognised, they are not necessarily equal. A person is not the same as an ant. This position generates rights that focus not on individuals but species or ecosystems.

Their concern is the survival of populations and the integrity of ecosystems, which enables using natural resources, albeit under certain conditions. On the one hand, it ensures the persistence of these life forms, and on the other, it guarantees exploitation to enable their quality of life satisfaction.

### **1.3 On ecocentrism**

It starts from a holistic vision of the human being. It proposes to broaden reflections on the moral community, questioning the anthropocentric idea of harm and, with it, our exclusivity as subjects of rights. Its justification rests on an ontological belief and a subsequent ethical claim. The former denies that sufficient existential division exists between human and non-human nature to justify human beings as (a) the only bearers of intrinsic value and (b) possessing greater intrinsic value than non-human nature. Thus, there is a further ethical claim for equality of intrinsic value between human and non-human nature and biospheric egalitarianism.

The ecological question not only focused the attention of scientists but also of ecology theorists and raised a kind of division between a) an environmentalist ecology, which continues to consider that humans are the holder of rights and that, although they can recognise their obligations regarding nature, it is not up to them to assign human beings the character of holders of rights; and b) a deep ecology, which recognises personality to nature, as holder of its own rights independently of humans.

Keller & Truschkat defined deep ecology, coined by Arne Naess, as a movement that rejects the image of the man in the environment, in favour of the relational notion of a whole [22], characterised as an egalitarian and holistic environmental philosophy founded on a phenomenological methodology. In this sense, Keller & Truschkat [22] focused on an egalitarian system of values (axiology), as well as on a set of interconnected individuals within a whole (ontology) [22]. As a result, the idea of economic and productive development was accentuated in the twentieth century. The need to preserve nature in the face of environmental impact and ignorance of the ethnic and cultural diversity of nationalities became evident. Thus, the definition of a theory that would grant the status of good to nature, in itself, even in the absence of risk to human beings, emerged.

### **1.4 Andean philosophical thought**

The Andean worldview is cosmocentric; the human being submits to the order of the cosmos expressed in nature and society and, therefore, belongs to Mother Earth (Pachamama). Knowledge, based on the concrete experiences of the people, within specific spatiotemporal parameters of being (that in which the different objects coincide and in which, in turn, they are distinguished) and its essence are expressed in the ritualisation of life as a form of relationship with natural and cosmic or spiritual human communities, which defend the hermeneutic subjectivity to understand the depths of life, in which its celebration (way of being and living), symbols, and stories are elements of socialisation.

Consolidation and evolution of consciousness are acquired by living the rituality of life with daily gestures of reciprocity with Mother Earth. Celebrations, as forms of interpretation of reality, promote a complementary, balanced, consensual relationship with full respect for the identity of the other (one and one-all). Each individual lives in unity with nature, the cosmos, and the totality of reality to achieve well-being, individual, and collective realisation of all the elements of life.

The learning method of the Andean communities is experiential, conscious, and experience-based. At the same time, the transmission of knowledge is oral and symbolic, and its valuation is carried out by the elderly. In addition, emotionality, feeling, and subjectivity are recognised in cyclical space-time under solidarity, redistribution, and reciprocity. On the other hand, spirituality is expressed in the way of living personally and with nature in which the application of the principles of relationality, correspondence, complementarity, and reciprocity is advocated, which is based on a conception of space-time.

The Pachamama, according to Andean thought, is everything in which man is and what is in his environment, above and below him. That is, where everything that exists, material and spiritual, occurs. Humans belong to it, and therefore, no one can appropriate it. It is separated into Pacha and mama [23]. The Pacha refers to the unity of space-time. In this sense, it is vibrational energy in which infinite energies-matter flow in all directions, in nonlinear or spherical-pyramidal movements, simultaneously concentric and eccentric, contractive and expansive, and compact and non-compact, which give the illusion of having a spiral-circumferential shape. There is no top, and there is no bottom, there is no right, there is no left, and there is no centre or periphery. Thus, the Pacha is concentrated with all its power on each human being, bacteria, star, mountain, or drop of water, so that each thing is a whole [24, 25]. According to Pacari [26], the mama is the Mother Earth or “allpa-mama,” which wraps in its womb the seeds and, after specific processes, constitutes the food of living beings. It must be cared for, respected, and equally nourished. During this relationship with the “allpa-mama,” when the harvests are produced, the indigenous peoples sing their songs known as the “Jahuai-jahuai,” and rituals of gratitude are prepared. They toast with it by watering the land with “chicha” (fermented corn drink) and food (challaco), which is nothing more than sharing the commitment to continue generating life.

### **1.5 Complementary duality**

Complementary duality states that nothing exists without its complementary opposite or pair. On the one hand, the cosmic force of Pachata (father cosmos-masculine energy or cosmic force, above) and the telluric force of Pachamama (mother earth-feminine energy or telluric force below) are interrelated through reciprocity and complementarity so that everything remains in a complementary relationship and perfect balance [27]. Indigenous knowledge has a multidimensional worldview. It considers the existence of other planes, such as the world of the dead or non-visible beings of nature accessed through sacred plants. In the personal sphere, the indivisible world refers to the interior of the human being, where emotions and thoughts originate and are then reflected in the external world.

The “chakana,” a bridge of transition between the world above and the one below, contains and synthesises the conceptual keys of thought, its philosophical principles, and the vision of balance and harmony in the relationships between human beings and nature and the universe. Estermann [28] states that the “chakana” bridges between the human and the divine, the living and the inert, the feminine and the masculine, and the past and the future. Man’s holistic, relational harmony with the mythical living nature, which has a humanitarian, non-discriminatory reason, is explained in the living experiences of rituals and the development of the agricultural, medicinal, and other cycles. The researcher concludes that if the Andean cross did not exist, the world would be in complete disorder, and reality would be totally dislocated [29]. Rituality constitutes an element through which man is linked with the tutelary

spirits and “Apus” (mountain spirits), propitiators of the “Sumak Kawsay (good life or life in harmony).”

All beings of nature are invested with energy, that is, the “samai.” Consequently, they have life, enjoy a family, and have joys and sorrows, just like humans [26]. Nature maintains communication with human societies. Thus, peoples recognise what can be done or not. They know the risks and changes; they hold a series of rituals and restrictions that respond to the knowledge of the natural cycles of other species and the understanding of natural laws. In addition, nature is the space for celebrating life with a series of guardian beings known as “owners” who, in the form of spirits, ensure the good use of their protectors. The relationship with the owners is mediated by the “shamans,” who are responsible for negotiating the use of resources [30]. According to Aguirre Palma, water is considered the germ, lactation, and regeneration of man [31]. In addition, it has a sacred value on which the success of the agricultural cycle and life itself depends. For this reason, in the dry season, the community members practice rituals of requesting rain. The essence of sumak kawsay is expressed in the centre of the chakana as the meeting place of complementary, corresponding, proportional, and reciprocal energies linked to life as a whole [32].

## **2. Ethics of Pachamama**

The ethics of Pachamama, as a model of a holistic life, has as its backbone the principles of relationality, complementarity, balance, and reciprocity, which are reviewed below:

### **2.1 Relationality**

For Andean philosophy, the individual as such is “nothing” (a “non-entity”). It is part of a network of multiple relationships [28]. Disconnecting from the natural and cosmic nexus (a postulate of the Enlightenment) would mean for the Andes people to sign their own death warrant [28]. This principle has to do with a holistic conception of life. Everything is related, linked, and connected to each other. This fact can be stated negatively and positively. In the first, there is no unrelated entity; therefore, all are necessary. In the positive way, what one entity does or does not do will affect others. The relationship is not causal but ontological. This means that the important thing is not that one entity can alter the other but that all entities “are” one. There is no causal relationship but an essential one.

### **2.2 The correspondence**

Andean thought involves a mutual and bidirectional correlation between two elements manifesting at every level and aspect of life [28]. Meanwhile, the rational or causal explanation is only one way—and not exclusive—of understanding the world and of knowing [33]; the Andean interpretation is symbolic, ritual, celebratory, and affective. When the correspondence manifests in all areas of life, there is a cosmic, an earthly, and an infra-terrestrial reality. There is correspondence between the cosmic and the human, the human and the extra-human, the organic and the inorganic, life and death, the good and the bad, the divine and the human, etc. The principle of correspondence has universal validity, in gnoseology, cosmology, and anthropology, as well as in politics and ethics [28].

### **2.3 Complementarity**

All entities coexist [28]. An element depends on all the others to be absolute or complete. To be an element requires the one that could be considered opposite, and within the opposite, precisely so as not to consider it that way, we have in the centre the point of the different. That is, the elements are not exactly opposite but complementary and harmonious. All aspects “suffer” from an ontological deficiency. Thus, for example, the author Boaventura de Sousa Santos, to exemplify this approach, mentions that the principal countries are developed in technology but underdeveloped in social communitarianism. In this sense, ignorance of rational knowledge can mean emotional wisdom [34].

### **2.4 Reciprocity**

It is the practical form of interaction between the other principles briefly stated [28]. In every interaction, human and non-human, every time an act or phenomenon occurs, a reciprocal action is manifested as a complementary contribution. Every human action has cosmic transcendence and is part of a universal order. This way of seeing the world does not make sense for Western thought, which is profoundly individualistic and promotes, on the contrary, the autonomy of the will and the freedom to make decisions. The acts of human beings, like those of nature, are mutually conditioned in such a way that the effort or “investment” in action by one doer will be “rewarded” by an effort or an “investment” of the same magnitude by the receiver [28]. From this, it follows, for example, that barter makes much sense in economic relations between people. The basis of reciprocity is what Estermann calls “cosmic justice” [28], which would bring together all our compartmentalised ways of understanding justice (economic, judicial, social, among others). Therefore, the basis of all relationships is the cosmic order, and an improper act can alter the global order.

Cosmic balance (harmony) requires reciprocity of actions and complementarity of participants. For the Andean people, a (unilateral) relationship in which one party only gives or is active, and the other only receives or is passive is neither imaginable nor possible [28]. The principle of reciprocity can be appreciated, lived, and applied in any sphere of life, from the daily and seemingly personal to the transcendent and cosmic. As for the relationship with nature, the human being, when interrelated with the soil when sowing or harvesting, does not do so as with an object but as a subject with whom he works and transforms. The sowing ritual is an interrelationship of deep respect and reciprocity. If nature is reciprocal with the human being and vice versa, preserving this interrelation through the notion of law is appropriate, whereas, if neglected, it deprotects and damages nature and irreparably affects the principle of reciprocity. The Andean philosophy does not start from the conception that the human being is the only and exclusive recipient of the benefits of the discourse of rights. On the contrary, Andean logic does not consider and, therefore, anthropocentrism is discarded in the foundation [35].

### **2.5 The development of the right to nature since the sentences issued by the Constitutional Court of Ecuador**

In Ecuador, a jurisprudential line has been developed regarding nature as a subject of rights through the Constitutional Court. Thus, several rulings have been handed down in the recent years, for example: a) in Ruling No. 012–18-SIS-CC Case No. 0032–12-IS, the violation of the rights of nature is recognised due to effects on the

Vilcabamba river; b) in Ruling No. 22–18-IN–/21 Case No. 22–18, it is stated that mangrove ecosystems are holders of the recognised rights to nature and have the right to have their existence, maintenance, and regeneration of their life cycles, structure, functions, and evolutionary processes fully respected; c) in Ruling No. 1149–19-JP/21, the affectation of the rights of nature by allowing mining activity in the Protective Park “Los Cedros” is recognised. It was determined that nature has intrinsic value as a holder of rights and not necessarily as a value linked to human beings. Therefore, it has legal protection for itself; d) in judgement No.1185-20-JP/21 (The Aquepi River) case No. 1185-20-JP, the legal valuation of the river as a subject of rights individually and simultaneously as part of an ecosystem, recognised that rivers are dynamic, complex, and integrating ecosystems with multiple connections with other ecosystems.

Therefore, the Constitutional Court has established a jurisprudential line that recognises nature as a complex subject that must be understood from a systemic perspective. This comprises an interrelated, interdependent, and indivisible set of biotic and abiotic elements, in which, when one part is affected, the functioning of the entire system will be altered. Thus, Ruling No.253-20-JH (habeas corpus action in favour of a Chorongó monkey named Estrellita) recognised wild animals as subjects of protection rights by being part of nature.

### **3. Conclusions**

Having the Constitutional Court developed the jurisprudence marked by the path of intercultural interpretation of human-nature relations and the ethical and moral principles generated in the relationships recognised transversally in the Andean philosophy, it is possible the emergence of a new normative behaviour, totally distant from economic extractivism as a foundation of the capitalist system, because it tends towards a financial form of subsistence marked by respect and harmonious coexistence of the different elements that coexist in the world. This situation leads us to a social, cultural, and philosophical commitment external to the Eurocentric.

Therefore, jurisprudence has initiated the path with a reconstruction process of the ethics of good living. The challenge is to make an active transition to abandon that productivist economy, uprooted from the Earth, immaterialist, separated from the biosphere, and materialistic, which exploits natural resources to indefinitely increase the material well-being of people, and move to an economy in which nature is not a resource or requires a continuous accumulation of wealth that submerges subjects in the free game of supply and demand. Such an economy will not wish to multiply what it has in the future and will consider the reciprocity between nature and human beings and moral consideration. The practice of a new ethic will be achieved by constructing a society where the productive objectives go hand in hand with the laws of functioning of natural systems, with attention to human dignity.

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## Chapter 8

# For an Ethics of Equity: Working Women in the Present between Guilt and Freedom

*Ana Salazar*

### Abstract

This article deals with the importance of reflecting on the experience of working women based on an analysis of the gender social order. It identifies the effects of simultaneously assuming domestic and work roles to make visible the emotional implications that affect women's health and way of life. Although it could be said that the female population has achieved significant conquests regarding their collective rights, in everyday life, the old and the new order coexist in relation to society's expectations of them. The work is the result of qualitative research applied to the University of Cuenca teachers, where the gender gaps in the academic career are identified, as well as the limitations for personal and professional development throughout their academic experience. This reality is reproduced in all work environments, negatively affecting the construction of women's autonomy as social subjects, and arises from the double working day that the female population assumes, which in turn benefits the current neoliberal economic model.

**Keywords:** gender, social order, health effects, working women, sacrificial logic

### 1. Introduction

The transformations of all kinds that humanity is facing at an accelerated pace demand a revision of the models of femininity and masculinity in our culture. The participation and recognition of women in society have undergone an important evolution in recent years. Women have reached great goals and achieved great things that have implied personal perseverance considering the adverse conditions under which society functions. Although women have been massively incorporated into the labour market, in most cases, they continue to be responsible for tasks in the private sphere. This is due to the prevalence of a social order that reproduces the way in which society and its institutions are organised.

There are two pillars that sustain gender gaps: structures and culture. These elements respond to the historically established social order whose system of practises (habitus) institutes relations of inequality and subordination that function under the concentrating mechanisms of power and control. Society reproduces culture as a function of the social order, reinforces the roles assigned to men and women,

reproduces power structures, and normalises situations of discrimination, devaluation, disqualification, or even violence.

Since the 1950s, women have been massively integrated into the labour market, a major advance in their rights. However, this integration has been accompanied by negative conditions such as lower salaries for the same work, fewer opportunities for promotion and recognition, and glass ceilings that hinder professional careers. There have also been experiences of hostile, discriminatory, and sometimes even aggressive environments on the grounds of gender. What is not of particular interest in this analysis, however, is the difficulty of reconciling caring and working roles.

According to our social canons, it is women who should stay at home to ensure that things run smoothly and that the needs of all members of the household are met. How often do we hear that those who prioritise work are bad wives or mothers? Faced with this, women often feel guilty about having to sacrifice their presence at important moments in the lives of their families and homes. Some even decide to give up work to take care of the home, children, the sick or elderly relatives, i.e. women often sacrifice their economic needs or their professional aspirations to meet the needs of their loved ones.

For Bourdieu [1], the social order functions as a symbolic machine that tends to ratify domination, the sexual division of labour, and the strict distribution of activities assigned to each of the two sexes. For this reason, the health of working women is currently being seriously affected both physically and emotionally due to the accumulation of tensions that daily life generates, causing an ambivalent pressure marked by the disjunctions that women must face when assuming this double responsibility, especially when they do not have the support of other family members or institutional policies that seek to improve this reality.

## **2. Development**

### **2.1 Necessary reflections**

The family is a reproductive agent of the social order, where models of femininity and masculinity are learned from cultural prototypes, justifying their existence for reasons of custom, tradition, or culture (Salazar) [2]. Under this social order, the work assigned to each gender is organised. The metaphor of the “sticky floor” is used to refer to the difficulties women have in detaching themselves from household chores that demand daily dedication, limiting job opportunities, and inducing women to stay at home as their natural space.

The family, the media, and religion, among other factors, reinforce in a naturalised way different behavioural models for men and women. Working life is very competitive, with long working hours and schedules that are incompatible with domestic responsibilities. In a society that demands that women do not neglect their domestic role, many institutions prefer not to employ women because of maternity or marital status, while men are encouraged to work outside the home.

Legal reforms, advances in gender equality, and affirmative action are not enough to change the conditions of structural inequality. The reconciliation of family and work is an issue that, contrary to its importance, does not translate into sufficient institutional policies to balance these two roles. When the levels and expectations of women’s responsibilities are not met, frustration arises with multiple effects on their health and well-being and on the quality of their interpersonal relationships.

Currently, sexist expressions are more elusive and difficult to recognise behind the kind behaviour with which women are treated. This is known as benevolent sexism, which idealises women as self-sacrificing mothers, wives, and romantic objects, highlighting the role of women as a complement to men (Garaigordobil) [3]. With an affectionate tone, women are relegated to certain socially approved roles, reinforcing cultural stereotypes typical of the current social order. Taking care of the home and the family is an act of love, and under this justification, women are induced to stay at home as the main person responsible for care tasks. From an early age, women are educated in a sacrificial logic that considers as merit the obliging, obedient, and submissive attitude of women, who must be willing to sacrifice their rest and personal fulfilment to attend to the well-being of their partners, sons, daughters, or parents, which is considered a demonstration of affection. Prioritising the needs of the family is seen as an attribute of women, that is learned naturally in the home and in society.

Sacrificial logic romanticises work overload. In order to fulfil all the household chores, women get up earlier and go to bed at the end of the day. This is the only way to meet the expectations placed on them. Foucault [1] speaks of biopolitics as the process of permanently producing certain ways of life based on mechanisms that creep into the most intimate part of our subjectivity, operating on our bodies thoughts, behaviours, and affections. Although no one forces them to assume all the tasks, if they do not, the work accumulates. Under these conditions, self-blame is frequent and is aggravated when others accuse them of prioritising their work.

Women feel guilty or are singled out as such when bread and milk are not bought when food is missing, when the child is not taken to the doctor, and when the children have learning difficulties at school. Research shows that women with jobs and small children have physical and emotional conditions that result in constant stress, muscle aches, gastrointestinal and cardiac discomfort, lack of sleep, and permanent fatigue. Symptoms such as insomnia, anxiety, and hypersensitivity are common, producing wear and tear with negative effects on their quality of life. A mother cannot neglect the care of her children, their schoolwork, food preparation, the children's doctor and dentist, clothes, and house cleaning, and in many cases, she is a teacher, nurse, or psychologist.

Women are always thinking about every single thing that remains to be done. When tasks are not accomplished, frustration surfaces with multiple effects on interpersonal relationships. This accumulation of stress and fatigue generates the so-called Burnout syndrome or burned-out woman as a result of progressive exhaustion. Work and social pressures, caregiving tasks, and the effort to break glass ceilings at work end up affecting women's emotional health and well-being.

If women are taught to be sensitive, maternal, nurturing, caring, dutiful, and helpful, men are taught to be competitive, courageous, conquering, providing, and dominant. These teachings define the behaviours and the ways of being, feeling, and relating to others. Undoubtedly, men are privileged both in the public sphere and at home. At home, they have the attention of their wives, clean clothes, and food served to them. In many cases, adults reinforce this model of masculinity where men exercise strength, control, and power, and women attend to, arrange for, and serve others. It is difficult for young men and women to discard socially legitimised models. They naturalise them without asking any questions.

Despite theoretical and normative advances in terms of equity, the pillars of the patriarchal structure and the macho culture survive. Domestic work as a team is not always fulfilled. Men help with some things, but they do not feel responsible for domestic chores. According to the National Council for Gender Equality [4], men

spend approximately 13.9% of their time on unpaid work and 86.1% on paid work, while women spend 40.4% on unpaid work and 59.6% on paid work. It is clear that there is a great inequality in family care work and that women devote much more time to it than men. It is true that men are increasingly joining in the tasks of childcare and housework, but they do so from a subsidiary position, not one of co-responsibility. For example, there are things they almost never do, such as cleaning toilets, folding clothes, glueing buttons, and washing windows, among others. Their perception of work in the home is understood as a collaboration and not a priority activity in the life of the home, and it is even seen as heroic for a father to stay home to take care of his baby, when this simply means that he is taking responsibility for his role and exercising paternity. The lack of shared responsibility in a couple's life is often a source of conflict, since it is difficult to find emotional satisfaction in an unequal relationship.

In adult life, hegemonic masculinity and femininity are reaffirmed through behaviours that must be proven; for example, it is considered that men are the main providers of the family, which leads many to dedicate themselves only to work, neglecting other dimensions of life such as fatherhood. On occasion, women are prevented from looking for work because that is what they are there for. Although being a provider is complex in realities such as ours, with high unemployment rates and an economic crisis, thus, men may feel like failures if they cannot find a job.

Another behaviour typical of traditional masculinity is that men should not show fear; they should be brave and protective, a behaviour that usually translates into an attitude of control over women inside and outside the home, for which boys are encouraged to be dominant and girls to accept domination. Men are mandated to be brave and prove their manhood through fighting, distorting the sense of honour with the use of violence. Similarly, self-reliance is another common demand that causes men not to seek help in the face of problems, so they tend to be more prone to the use of drugs and alcohol.

Men are expected to be cold, brave, and aggressive and not to express feelings such as fear, shame, indignation, frustration, sadness, anguish, pain, insecurity, or tenderness. They are required to hide their feelings. So anger, rage, and frustration are usually expressed through violence. Women, on the other hand, can show their feelings, cry, openly express their fears, and show themselves to be weak and in need of protection.

Frequently, men's violence against women is justified when they break socially approved norms such as not fulfilling their domestic responsibilities, taking care of the house and children, having sexual relations, even if they do not want to, etc. Segato [5] affirms that men will always have difficulty joining the proposal of equity because they feel that they would be betraying their loyalty to the mandate of traditional masculinity; therefore, they need to constantly demonstrate their capacity for power and dominance.

The gender order is thus a hegemonic form of thought that reproduces social roles, presenting them as natural and repressing or punishing those who do not comply with them. In this context, it is imperative to review the ways in which we educate for a new ethic, an ethic of equity based on new referents of masculinity and femininity. These and other hegemonic behaviours affect men and women, hence the importance of overcoming heteronormative education. We are obliged to think of new ways of being in the world.

This article seeks to contribute to this line by analysing the factors that hinder the process of building female autonomy in relation to the expectations that society imposes on them as mothers, wives, daughters, and workers. The research is

descriptive and explanatory in that it allows for analysing, relating, and interpreting the variables related to the reconciliation of domestic and work roles of women, in this case, working women. These variables are contrasted with the main reference theories, mainly from gender studies. Semi-structured interviews and discussion groups were conducted to deepen the analysis of the collective meanings of gender constructions for women.

## **2.2 Between guilt and freedom**

The Spanish psychologist Violeta Alcocer claims that three out of four women bear an invisible mental burden, and when they discover it, they realise that on them falls not only most of the tasks but also the responsibility of coordinating that everything goes well for the tranquillity of the family. The mental burden is behind many fights, marital crises, and even breakups since it generates tension and feelings of anxiety. It is common that these disputes are covered by hiring someone to clean the house, but when there are children or sick relatives, it is more difficult to delegate this task. Alcocer argues that phrases such as “Leave it like this, I’ll do it”, “I’m going, but I left the food ready” and “Anything, call me”, are common among women, which prevents other people from taking responsibility [6]. There are times in people’s lives when the mental burden is more evident. After childbirth, or when parents get older and need more care or when they move back home, women have been shown to use more antidepressants and anxiolytics than men,” says Alcocer. In addition, 58% of women who become mothers decide to give up or reduce their working hours, compared to 6.2% of men who become fathers [7].

The issue analysed is a crucial aspect that affects work and family roles in the context of a society organised around production and work as an element of human fulfilment, so that the balance between these two roles becomes an institutional policy issue that requires concrete efforts in order to overcome inequalities. According to Ana Buquet, the integration of women in the world of work is marked by structural and cultural elements that perpetuate inequalities by subordinating women as a group to men, constructing arbitrary differences that lead to the performance of differentiated and hierarchical social roles that are reproduced in all areas of human being and activity. This differentiation is both a product and a producer of gender differences [8]. For example, there are feminised occupations such as nursery school teaching and working in daycare centres, which are an extension of the caring role that women perform at home. Women tend to postpone higher education, especially when they have young children.

Working mothers tend to postpone their studies or motherhood so as not to interrupt their studies, as it is more difficult for them to separate their professional and private lives, and they are often forced to choose one or the other, whereas for men, the family is generally not a restrictive element in their careers. Workplaces also reproduce the social order, reinforcing the roles of men and women, reproducing hierarchies, normalising situations of discrimination, and even encouraging harassment and violence against women.

In general, women face various obstacles in their working lives and various difficulties in climbing the institutional structure. These obstacles are known as glass ceilings, which refers to the cases where women, despite their background, training, or experience, create vertical segregation due to the prevalence of a patriarchal culture that values men more for managerial positions; statistics always show that there are more male managers, chiefs, deans, rectors, directors, deputies, ministers, and

presidents. The glass ceiling is not a legal barrier but prejudice that prevents women, despite their training and experience, from being entrusted with positions of responsibility or a similar category for the same functions as men.

The lack of institutional politics displaces women's career aspirations. Although there is an open discourse towards equality, the concept of what it means to be a woman and a man is permeated by social learning and is translated into the performativity of traditionally masculine workspaces. When women enter these spaces, it is perceived as a kind of transgression, the effect of which is a differential treatment that provokes greater scrutiny of the possibility of error. Women are required to prove that they can do the same jobs as men with equal capacity and ability. In addition, the long working hours required for managerial positions are an obstacle that, in many cases, forces them to give up these positions due to the high family and personal costs that this level of work responsibility entails.

Evidence shows that working women experience high levels of stress and anxiety, increasing the level of pressure in the face of work obligations, which is where the effects on their health and well-being appear. Work responsibilities, administrative and management tasks, high-performance standards, performance appraisals, work reports, deadlines, work meetings, etc. do not exempt them from their responsibilities at home. These common and real situations are an obstacle to the construction of women's autonomy at work, and in the face of them, unfortunately, institutions have not implemented sufficient policies such as flexible working hours, safe and nearby daycare centres, breaks, and facilities for breastfeeding at work, among others.

However, from what has been analysed, it is more difficult for women to argue for the importance and legitimacy of their work; there seems to be a sort of colonised unconscious that materialises in the institutional structure. The struggle for women's rights has made working environments uncomfortable; even women themselves avoid conflict by taking on tasks such as note-taking, organising logistical details, assuming low-profile positions, and other multiple activities that men do not want to do. Paradoxically, the general view, including among women, is that there is no need for compensatory measures such as affirmative action and that women do not need to be given points for free. This ignores the historical discrimination that has existed and the lack of opportunities for women in relation to men. On the contrary, affirmative action is a way of mitigating the consequences of discrimination and inequality in the social order and seeks to reward those who have been affected by these circumstances throughout their lives.

It is not uncommon for almost unconscious acts of symbolic violence to occur in work meetings when women are interrupted or are not listened to with the same attention as their colleagues because the voice or opinion of men is considered more important, making it seem that what women do or say is less relevant. Faced with this, women often develop mechanisms to reduce the frustration caused by low recognition and are often forced to tolerate discrimination in order to avoid conflict, as it is common to observe how they are accused of being problematic or exaggerated, although research has documented several cases of women writers or scientists whose unpublished ideas have been used by their peers. In short, there are countless situations or naturalised behaviours of control and dominance that exist with or without awareness.

On the other hand, as we have already pointed out, this situation strengthens the neoliberal model. Gender studies have shown the contribution of women to the economies of countries through the care economy, which refers to all the activities and actions that are developed to ensure the health and safety of people and the

planet, including the care of vulnerable people such as children, the elderly, the sick, food preparation, cleaning, caring for nature, animals, and so on. Most women carry out these activities unpaid, with low salaries, and without social benefits.

The time and labour required for these tasks contribute significantly to the family and national economies and are fundamental to the functioning of the economy as a whole. Caring tasks are often associated with additional emotional, physical, social, and financial burdens. Globally, between 57% and 81% of caregivers or caretakers for the elderly are women: wives, daughters, and granddaughters.

Women's domestic work saves the state enormous amounts of money in the implementation of infrastructure and services that guarantee the attention, safety, and care of dependent persons. Many of these tasks have been taken over by the provision of private services that not everyone can afford: daycare centres, nursing homes, godparenthoods, and other places that provide care on a paid basis. Similarly, maids or service agencies take over food preparation and cleaning tasks that not everyone can afford.

Today, the economic situation forces both men and women to work outside the home. Most households cannot afford the cost of these private services, so women are forced to contribute to the household economy to pay for food, medicine, education, housing, and transport while still fulfilling their domestic roles. This is known as the care economy.

### **3. Conclusions**

The social stereotypes assigned according to the sexual division of labour continue to reinforce feminine and masculine roles. In the collective unconscious, a series of models of masculinity and femininity persist and condition the way of seeing and living the world, beliefs that do not admit the possibility of debate. Androcentric and patriarchal prototypes have prevailed over the characteristics of each sex and what each of them should do. As long as women were in the shadows, outside the history written by men, no one doubted that these models were social constructions with a certain intentionality: to maintain control. Therein lies the importance of questioning these models in need to overcome the ties that keep thousands of women from reproducing submissive roles that prevent their full realisation and self-determination.

It is important to emphasise that not all men are responsible or agree with what is happening. According to Herrera Gómez [9], this reality is the result of a struggle waged by the most violent men against peaceful men, women, children, and natural resources. The way in which men and women are conceived in terms of thought, culture, politics, and their relationships lead to the perception of women and men as beings with different natures. For women, when it comes to thinking, especially criticism, women are silent, obedient, and dependent on men, while men are mostly active and autonomous in thinking. Women's and men's identities are constructed under the influence of traditional stereotypes, such as hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity, contained in the social and cultural gender order.

Feminist theory, based on the analysis of data and concrete realities, confirms that there are innumerable circumstances that have created deep gaps between the opportunities available to men and those available to women. Despite this, far from the fantasy that women have already achieved equality, there are a number of indicators that show that gender equality is a pending issue, the consequences of which affect women's health and well-being. Discrimination is the antithesis of merit; where there

is discrimination, there is no meritocracy, and in hegemonic environments, women's efforts are not valued. In this context, glass ceilings are a cultural and structural problem that will not disappear unless concrete policies are implemented to eliminate the mechanisms that allow them to function.

Although micromachism may seem inconsequential or banal, and although many people may think that a discriminatory situation is "no big deal", its naturalisation creates an unfavourable climate for women, which threatens their personal and professional fulfilment and therefore goes against their psychological integrity, limiting the construction of their autonomy. It is a situation that can be prolonged because of its invisibility, since it does not involve obvious abuses.

To achieve equal opportunities and contribute to the construction of a culture based on an ethic of equity that allows women to improve the quality of their lives, their health and their well-being, much more than good intentions are required. It requires political will to transform structures, regulations, practices, conditions and habits. In other words, everything that is hidden in everyday dynamics and expressed naturally in their structures and organisational culture; that is, the existence of a habitus expressed in the ways of relating and interacting, such as the existence of multiple forms of segregation, the normalisation of sexist language, the tone of voice, sexist mockery, the declassification of the discourse of equality, the occasions in which women self-marginalise and lower their profile, the times when professionals hide their femininity to obtain respect and attention, the exclusion from decision-making spaces, the multiple additional tasks that women assume without recognition, the under-recognition of their contributions, among other factors.

Current working conditions affect women's physical and mental health, stop their full development, and limit their potential contribution to society. Work pressure, instability, fear of reprisals, and stress affect women's well-being, and maintaining these conditions prevents them from raising their professional standards. It is important to redefine historical constructs in order to dismantle the categories of patriarchal culture.

The concern for women's health care is an issue of growing interest due to the lack of institutional policies and strategies to help reconcile domestic work with work, which forces women to seek support from third parties, which conditions their working careers, especially when they have dependents. The democratisation of domestic and care work in households will only be possible through shared responsibility, which implies that men and women, as well as families, the state, and the market, share responsibility for the care and, consequently, act in a coordinated manner to distribute the time and effort required in an equitable manner. Finding the right balance between work and family responsibilities is an important challenge in forming a new social ethic.

We need to unlearn the roles acquired throughout life and perpetuated over centuries. The culture and the hegemonic mentality attempt to prevent the construction of quality relationships between men and women. One of the most widespread mental blocks is the belief that feminism is a position against men. There are still millions of reasons to keep talking about gender. There are still millions of thoughts to liberate, millions of ideas to overcome, and millions of lives to defend from normalised violence.

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## Chapter 9

# Analysis and Reflections on the Current Situation of the Health Care Ethics Committees (HCECs)

*Claudio-Esteban Bravo-Pesantez, María-Belén Ochoa-Jiménez and María-Cristina Cevallos-Loyola*

### Abstract

Health Care Ethics Committees (HCECs) advise health personnel and patients in making morally difficult decisions. This work aims to analyze in a general way the current situation of the HCECs. The methodology used was a literature review. A low level of knowledge about HCECs was found, and internal and external conflicts were identified for their development. As they are beneficial organisms in hospitals, their role in facing current ethical dilemmas in health care is highlighted.

**Keywords:** bioethics, ethics committees, clinical ethics committees, medical ethics, review

### 1. Introduction

Decision-making in health can often be complex, as doctors face daily ethical dilemmas in their professional practice. It is essential to make correct decisions to achieve the patient's best interest, respecting their autonomy, dignity, and values; this can be achieved with the support and contribution of the HCECs. Currently, the provision of health services generates constant tension between doctors and patients. This can be explained in terms of the technological development in health that has extended the limits of life, which has generated conflictive situations in which the doctor's criteria are not enough to comply with bioethical principles. Therefore, the need to implement HCECs in hospitals with high technology has spread worldwide for several decades. Its mission is to provide advice – when ethical dilemmas arise from medical care- and guide decision-making – always trying to achieve the best for each patient [1, 2].

Medicine has always been characterized by basing its actions on the principles of Beneficence and Non-Maleficence. In recent decades, respect for autonomy has also emerged, considered an inalienable right. Advances in medical knowledge and the enhancement of bioethical principles have made it possible to improve patient care. Still, they have also led to situations in which the individualistic or paternalistic approach is insufficient to decide. At the institutional level, the existence of the HCECs is justified by the conflicts that arise between the bioethical principles, most often between the autonomy of the patient and the beneficence/non-maleficence that

the doctor seeks. The HCECs seek, through pluralism and deliberation, to find the best possible alternative in each case.

### **1.1 Definition of HCECs**

The HCECs are organizations structured at the hospital level, whose priority is to support health professionals toward ethical conflicts arising from medical care, seeking the benefit of all those involved. For Crico et al. [3], HCECs are teams of people defined by a hospital or healthcare institution and assigned to consider, debate, study, take action, or report on ethical issues that emerge in patient care. In Ecuador, Article 20 of Ministerial Agreement 4889 [4] defines the Committee on Health Ethics (CEA by its Spanish acronym) as a multidisciplinary deliberation body, at the service of professionals, users, and management teams of health facilities, created to analyse and advise on ethical issues that develop in health care practice.

### **1.2 Historical background**

The first CEA in history was the “Seattle Committee,” established in 1962 in the United States to decide which patients were eligible for hemodialysis treatment, developed by the physician Scribner. This first committee was widely criticized and was nicknamed the “Committee of Death” because its criteria for selecting patients were nonmedical, giving greater importance to aspects such as social status or income level. This form of decision-making is at odds with the principles advocated by Bioethics and today with the focus on medical judgment in assigning treatment [5].

In 1968, the Harvard Medical School, in response to the need for an “ad hoc” ethics committee to examine the definition of brain death, produced a special report containing a set of criteria for identifying what they called “an irreversible coma.” This committee produced a special report containing a set of criteria for the identification of what they called “an irreversible coma.” The need for a committee arose from medical concerns about defining brain death, seeking to provide a reliable diagnosis of irreversibility in mechanically ventilated patients, and implementing transplantation programs, which emerged in the 1960s. It is evident that this historical milestone caused physicians to become aware of the ethical dilemmas they may face, and these required not only scientific knowledge but also moral knowledge to be addressed [6].

A paradigmatic case, which reinforced the need for CEAs, was that of young Karen Ann Quinlan. Karen was a 21-year-old American who suffered permanent brain damage and was left in a vegetative state after alcohol and benzodiazepine intoxication, so she was placed on a mechanical ventilator. In 1976, Quinlan’s parents filed a lawsuit to have her right to be disconnected from the ventilator that kept her alive recognized, arguing that her condition was irreversible. Following the New Jersey court order, Karen was progressively weaned off the ventilator but continued to breathe spontaneously until she died in 1981 of nosocomial pneumonia. From this case onwards, greater importance was given to CEAs and their functions [7].

With Van Rensselaer Potter’s publications on Bioethics and the Karen Quinlan case, in the 1980s CEAs were present in 60% of US hospitals, then in the 1990s, the number rose to 90%. Today in this country, almost every hospital has a CEA. Such bodies have become the primary mechanism for addressing ethical issues in patient care [8].

In Spain, the first CEA was established at the Hospital San Juan de Dios in 1974. In the 1990s, Circular 3/1995 was issued for the creation and accreditation of CEAs in

the INSALUD system (National Health Institute). Initially, the CEAs were voluntary, but they are now mandatory [9].

In Latin America, Argentina was the pioneer in the creation of CEAs. In 1996, a national law was enacted, determining that, in each hospital of the public health system, there must be a CEA with advisory functions. In Colombia, progress has been significant. Although there is little legislation on CEAs, Resolution 13,437 of 1991, by which CEAs are constituted, is known; Decree 1757 of 1994, which expanded the functions of CEAs by assigning them administrative and quality control roles in the provision of health services, which elevated the committees to the category of guaranteeing social participation in the activities that are developed within the institutions of the social security health system [9, 10].

In the case of Ecuador, there have been regulations for the creation and formation of CEAs and CEISH (Ethics Committee for Research on Human Subjects) since 2014; however, few hospitals have these committees, which highlights the importance of this study.

### **1.3 Role of the CEAs**

The main role of the CEA is to discuss individual dilemmas or moral conflicts in clinical practice, to seek the best decision-making in each case, and to educate health-care personnel on bioethical issues. Among the objectives of a CEA are to make recommendations on ethical conflicts that may arise in the context of everyday medical care, to improve the quality of care, and to seek the protection of all those involved in an ethical dilemma. In addition, to promote bioethics training for committee members as well as the staff of the institution. Consultation with CEAs achieves important benefits for healthcare personnel, such as consensual decision-making, strengthened moral competence, and improved medical care [2, 11, 12].

The aim of consulting a CEA is to identify and resolve existing and potential ethical problems related to health care, to improve the patient-physician relationship, to ensure the well-being of the patient, and to resolve conflicts between health care personnel, patients and their families, i.e., CEAs seek not only the benefit of the patient or their families but also the benefit of the health care personnel. In some countries, the role of CEAs is also to evaluate and supervise clinical trials involving human subjects, although this is a function that corresponds to the Human Research Ethics Committees, which is why it is necessary to carry out training on CEAs and raise awareness of their institutional contribution [13].

Medical staff, patients, family members, legal surrogates, and other healthcare personnel should have access to CEA counseling, which is why information about the availability and process of counseling should be widely disseminated. Although hospital-based ethics consultancy is the most common, the possibility of consultancy in the outpatient setting should be recognized and supported at the institutional level [14].

CEAs usually have scheduled meetings, often once a month, to discuss cases or plan future training. The physician usually consults the committee because he/she wishes to clarify doubts and obtain recommendations on sensitive issues, such as discontinuation of nonbeneficial treatments. It should be mentioned that anyone involved in the care of a patient can request consultation with the CEA, fulfilling its advisory role. This allows the patient's relatives or caregivers to reduce their moral distress and find adequate support in the CEAs [15].

Per Moon [16], CEAs in the United States promote the practice of ethics through a variety of activities, including continuing education on bioethical issues for health

professionals, review of hospital policy, and consultation on clinical cases that present dilemmas in their approach. Raoofi et al. [11] mention that the functions of the CEAs in Iran are to solve problems that arise during health care in hospitals, to increase healthcare personnel's awareness of conflicting situations and participation in decision-making, to foster communication and to educate on bioethical issues.

Galván et al. [17] mention in their work that in Spain, the function of the CEA is to advise patients and health personnel in ethical conflicts that arise in medical practice; however, problems in the structure or in the way they work limit their true scope. Carillo et al. [9] indicate in their work that in Colombia CEAs are available to both physicians and patients, and their functions are to advise on ethical conflicts and education.

Current regulations in Ecuador state that second and third-level hospitals, due to the complexity of their services, must have a CEA, which allows professionals with ethical doubts to seek advice and counseling. The recommendations of the CEA are not binding, i.e., in the end, medical judgment will prevail, but they demonstrate commitment to the patient to exercise proper professional practice [4].

## **2. Methodology**

A literature review was used, as full articles were consulted in databases such as PubMed, Web of Science, SciELO, Scopus, and Google Scholar. To search, the following health descriptors were used in Spanish: "Hospital Ethics Committees," "Institutional Ethics Committees," "Clinical Ethics Committees," "Knowledge," "Objectives," "Development," "Functions," "Benefits," and "Challenges."

Articles were selected from the last 5 years, published in English or Spanish, that addressed general aspects of the HCECs for analysis. Fifty-one articles were thoroughly evaluated, 39 were discarded, and 21 papers containing the main aspects were chosen for reflective analysis of the HCECs.

## **3. Results and discussion**

Zurzycka et al. [2], in their work, analyzed the information available on the WEBSITE of accredited hospitals in Poland. From 227 hospitals, only 56 confirmed having an HCEC. Most of them expressed how they could request their services and their functions. Raoofi et al. [11] interviewed 19 members of Iran's hospital HCECs about the main challenges they have faced in their roles; the most common barriers to the proper functioning of the committees were lack of support from the authorities, lack of knowledge in Bioethics, and poor communication.

An important characteristic of the CEA is its multidisciplinary composition. Jansen et al. [15] in Australia, when analyzing a hospital committee for 24 months, found that it was made up of various professionals in different areas, mostly physicians (45% of the total). Carrillo et al. [9] found that in Colombia, CEASs were composed of both professionals and representatives of civil society. Zurzycka et al. [2], when reviewing the websites of hospitals with accredited CEAs in Poland, found that no hospital specified who the committee members were. Scherer et al. [12], when interviewing members of a CEA and physicians in a hospital in Germany, found the need for more staff to achieve a multidisciplinary approach, such as nurses or psychologists.

Baker et al. [8], by exposing a series of cases in an emergency room in the United States, which generated critical ethical dilemmas, emphasize the need for these

services to have a trained person in Bioethics or a member of an HCEC who can be consulted through digital media, for a better approach to this type of situation. In Germany, Scherer et al. [12] interviewed 28 people among HCECs and healthcare personnel members on the main challenges of the proper functioning of the committees. Lack of communication and hierarchical asymmetry were identified as situations that hinder the work of these bodies.

Glusiec [18], in Poland, investigated the frequency of priests' participation in ethical dilemmas that the HCEC must resolve. The few requests were surprising, considering that it is a Catholic country. The main topics on which the help was requested were the limitation of therapeutic effort and termination of pregnancy. Something that should be mentioned is that most of the priests consulted acknowledged not having adequate knowledge of these issues, so the support of doctors was required for a better understanding. Crico et al. [3], in a systematic review, identified that both physicians and members of HCECs considered the presence of these organizations in hospitals practical since less satisfaction was identified among physicians concerning the service offered by the HCECs, possibly due to their critical stance toward the decisions adopted by the committees.

Gradinarova and Zlatanova [14] compared the level of knowledge about HCECs, among doctors and patients in Bulgaria. The vast majority of physicians and patients were unaware of the existence of these organisms. Those who knew about the HCECs reported that hospitals lacked more information about their functions. Jansen et al. [15] evaluated the role of HCEC in the pediatric area of a hospital in Australia. There was great satisfaction with the role played; the pediatricians who came to this body mostly expressed that this organization was beneficial and would recommend it to their colleagues.

Moodley et al. [19] analyzed the reality of HCECs in African countries, interviewing 20 physicians and bioethicists. These organisms were found to be nonexistent; there was a greater need for ethical consultation during the pandemic and, therefore, the need for HCECs. As for the level of knowledge, this was very low. Pons Valls et al. [20] investigated the level of expertise about HCECs in a hospital in Spain. A high level of knowledge was found about its existence and functions, while the knowledge recorded was low on how to address it. Most recognized that when faced with an ethical dilemma in their work, they would go to these organizations.

Ferreira et al. [13] analyzed the level of development of HCECs in Paraguay. They found that, out of 130 hospitals, only 28 had an ethics committee, and only four identified as HCEC, reflecting the need to boost state policies to promote their further development. Ávila et al. [21], in Mexico, explored the level of knowledge, in traumatology and orthopedics residents, about Bioethics, which turned out to be low, and about HCECs and their functions, which turned out to be in the majority. However, it is surprising that most would never have encountered this body due to an ethical dilemma.

Among the main challenges faced by CEAs in their proper functioning, the work by Raoofi et al. [11] is one of the most comprehensive because it identifies external, internal, and committee factors, especially highlighting the lack of management support as an impediment to achieving real impact. Scherer et al. [12] describe lack of communication and hierarchical asymmetry as the main challenges to committee functioning. Moodley et al. [18] cite a lack of knowledge and resources as challenges to achieving functional CEAs. Galván et al. [17] state that the bureaucracy of the committee impedes good work, which Carrillo et al. Pitsshelauri [1] highlights the following factors for the good functioning and development of CEAs: good institutional

attitude toward care, professional interests, patient demands, and social development, and a consensus decision-making model based on cooperation and recognition of plurality.

In relation to the topics consulted Zurzycka et al. [2] found that very few committees published this information in Poland, Głusiec [20], when interviewing Catholic priests, found that the main topics consulted to the CEA were on Limitation of Therapeutic Effort (LTE) and contraception. Moodley et al. [18] found that the main topics consulted in Africa were LET, futile treatments, Informed Consent in children, and patient complaints. Carillo et al. [9] found that the main topics consulted were LET, Organ Transplantation, and Brain Death in Colombia. In general, consultations with CEASs are related to conflicts regarding the Start or End of Life, poor doctor-patient relationship, and analysis of the benefit or futility of certain treatments, especially in critical areas.

#### **4. Conclusions**

HCECs are required in all hospitals that provide highly complex services. In today's medicine, ethical conflicts are constantly presented, and an organ that can advise the health professional in decision-making is required. Even though HCECs have developed exponentially since the eighties, this has not been uniform because they are non-existent in low-income countries, which violates bioethical principles in healthcare. However, it is interesting to confirm that knowledge of their functions in developed countries is still scarce, which means that the HCECs do not have a real impact.

Despite having regulations for their formation and execution, HCECs present numerous challenges regarding the performance of their functions. This invites the development of new strategies to promote optimal functioning. Several topics are consulted at the HCEC; this requires a multidisciplinary approach in which its members can deliberate and recommend the best decisions. More significant support is required from the authorities to fulfill this goal, which unfortunately is not the case due to the little importance given to ethics in the healthcare field.

The role of HCECs needs to be strengthened. Precisely, this work highlights the need for moral knowledge as a weapon to improve health care. It is recommended to combine certainty with prudence to achieve the best in favor of the patient. It is also necessary to remember that the primary objective of the HCECs is to achieve the patient's well-being and respect their rights, which must be shared by healthcare personnel and society in general.

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## Chapter 10

# Ethics in the Digital Age as a Principle of Professional Conduct

*Yan-An Cornejo-Montoya and Sofía-Alejandra García-Cornejo*

### Abstract

Ethics in the digital era, as a principle of professional behaviour, has become increasingly important and is seen as a future concern with the development and technological progress in this era of digital transformation. The aim of this research was to integrate the collected studies on the evolution of ethics in the technological field as well as the implications provided in those researches where ethics applied to the field of technology and communication need a rigorous and systematic handling. The methodology used presented a qualitative, descriptive, and documentary approach, analysing the relationship between technology and the importance of ethics in the professional field. The research is supported by Kitchenham's systematic literature review method, which allows evidence of the behaviour of professionals who use information technologies as part of their daily performance. In view of this finding, it is concluded that technology must apply a principle of responsibility with the aim of benefiting society and not just the scientific field, as a support for ethics to raise awareness among stakeholders about informed consent and professional codes of conduct, which are unknown in most of the technological fields.

**Keywords:** ethics of technology, digital era, ethics in digital environments, social impact, literature review method

### 1. Introduction

Ethics in the digital age is fundamental for any professional working with information technologies and is considered a philosophical discipline that emphasises ideal human behaviour, especially in the use of IT tools that can cause a social impact on issues such as patents, copyright, cyber warfare, privacy, intellectual property, freedom of expression, and security. Professionals need to consider not only the technical aspects but also the ethical and moral aspects of their work [1].

Ethics in the field of technology was an event in the early of the 1970s and was an event that had repercussions in the health and technology sectors, due to the implications of invasion of privacy that revealed controversial situations [2, 3], mainly in the United States. As a result, unexpected effects were generated that contributed to the intervention of many professionals who proposed codes of ethics in which rationality and ethical values are adopted with responsibility [4–7].

In this way, the advances in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have demonstrated their vertiginous growth, whose management of digital information provides and allows the management of a large amount of data where the legal and moral aspects are confronted [8, 9], generating a debate on the regulation of aspects of interest between the parties involved; it is necessary to protect the privacy of users, guarantee the security of information, be transparent in their practises, and take responsibility for their actions.

The aim of this research was to qualitatively analyse the integration of the collected studies on the development of ethics in the technological field, as well as the implications provided in these researches, where ethics applied to the field of technology and communication needs a rigorous and systematic management with clear boundaries between work, learning, and leisure [2], with an emphasis on justice, humility, and professional secrecy.

The problem arises from the fact that the principles of human behaviour, namely honesty, truth-seeking, community welfare, and the environment, are assumed to be the expectations of values that are expected to be found in individuals [3]. IT professionals often have a responsibility to ensure that their practises are ethical and transparent. However, in some cases, it can be difficult to determine who is responsible and how ethical practises should be communicated to users, leading to the research question. What problems arise when ICT ethics are not applied in a professional context?

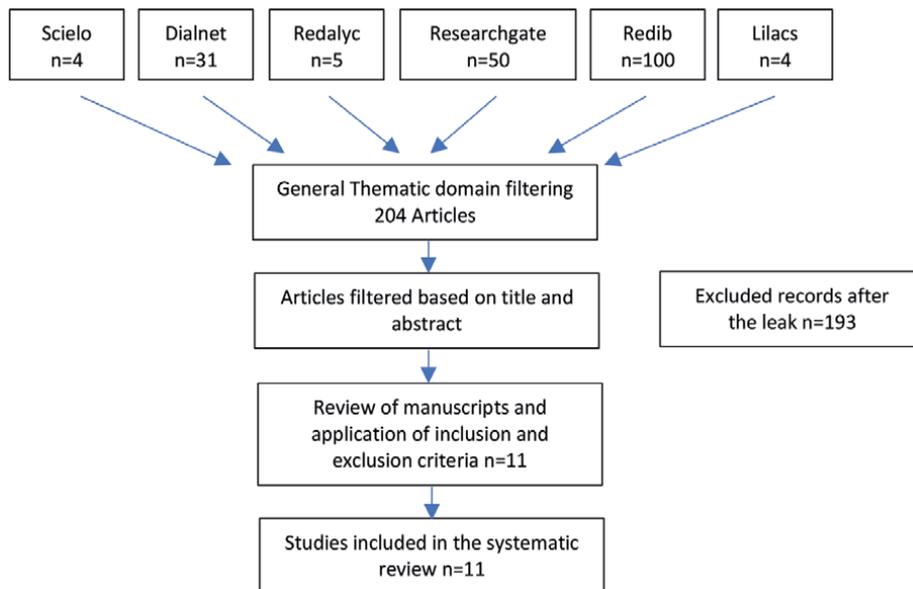
The approach of this research was qualitative, and the design was non-experimental, as no variables were manipulated. The entire study was based on the SLR (Systematic Literature Review), which was the study tool and was based on Barbara Kitchenham's methodology, applying Cochrane's PRISMA model [10–12]. As part of the protocol used for this systematic literature review, articles were retrieved from databases such as Scielo, Dialnet, Redalyc, Lilacs, and Researchgate, and search engines such as Google Scholar and Redib. Descriptors, such as "ethics in technologies and communication" and "ethics in digital environments," from English and Spanish sources were used to search for articles.

In addition, the research was descriptive because it explained the reasons for the object of study and cross-sectional because articles from different time periods were analysed for the prevalence of the variable "ethics." It is situated in the field of technology, which is in line with the qualitative approach, with secondary sources of information gathering and providing a summary of a specific topic that answers the research question [11].

The use of SL made it possible to synthesise articles by other authors (primary studies), where the evidence of contributions with similar characteristics was analysed and compared in a short time, guaranteeing validity and veracity. In addition to having methodological quality and reproducibility of results, this type of review must be objective, rigorous, and meticulous [11, 12]. The population we worked with was based on selected articles that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria explained in the design phase, as shown in **Figure 1**.

## **2. Results**

It is worth mentioning that the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct was created with the intention of guiding and inspiring the conduct of computer professionals, as well as any person related



**Figure 1.**  
*Record selection flowchart. PRISMA model.*

to technology, by establishing ethical principles to guide professional conduct in the field of computing and information technology, whose performance generates an impact on society [2, 13].

By virtue of this, **Figure 1** shows the number of selected primary studies that evidence the approach towards codes of conduct and ethics in the professional field that manifests the opinions or criteria of citizens, such as weaknesses and the absence of values; mismanagement of information; a lack of guarantees in legal security, which are prone to being devalued; and clear behaviours of manipulation of fraudulent activities [7].

## 2.1 Data collection and analysis

The way in which the information was evaluated and interpreted was through the systematic review of the literature, because it facilitates and summarises the content of the selected articles according to inclusion and exclusion criteria and that complies with describing a transparent and comprehensible process of collection and selection of multiple articles as well as sources of information, considering qualitative aspects of primary studies with the intention of synthesising the data in terms of ethics in this era of digital transformation [13, 14].

From the results obtained when carrying out an SLR, the problems of ethics in the economy, health, and professional fields are evident, whose characterisation is represented in **Tables 1** and **2**, which show how each author emphasises certain characteristics or infallible qualities that are related to ethics in the professional field, correlating the different alternatives and behaviours to determine the codes with which professionals currently develop.

It is worth mentioning that there are few studies related to this issue of ethics applied to the era of digital transformation, but it is necessary to distinguish between the intention to deceive and the error as a result that can affect the degree of trust

Code	Behaviour
A	Objectivity
B	Practical discipline
C	Basic moral principles
D	Honesty
E	Strictness
F	Community welfare
G	Justice
H	Professional Secrecy
I	Privacy of Information
J	Integridad
K	Transparency
L	Informed consent
M	Abuse of power
N	Responsibility

**Table 1.**  
*Behavioural codes.*

Authors	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
[1]			X											
[2]							X				X	X		X
[3]	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
[4]			X	X				X			X	X		X
[5]	X					X	X	X						X
[6]						X								
[7]						X								
[8]				X					X			X		
[9]						X								
[10]				X								X		X
[11]				X								X		X

**Table 2.**  
*Characterisation of expected behaviours of an ethical nature.*

between collaborators or members of work teams. Likewise, most authors propose basic ethical principles that integrate the principles of respect and helping others, incorporating ethics [15].

On the other hand, the Organisation of American States has a Programme for the Education of Values, which calls for the socialisation of the content of attitudes and norms in order to develop new constructs, with a focus on human rights that promote harmony in all participants [13], situations that are little disseminated in some areas.

Its aim is to promote education in democratic values and civic ethics in the Americas, and it has a series of specific objectives to achieve this goal.

### **3. Conclusions**

From the evidence presented, it can be concluded that technology needs to apply a principle of responsibility with the aim of benefiting society and not just the scientific field. To support ethics, stakeholders need to be made aware of informed consent and professional codes of conduct, which are unknown in most technological fields. Professionals should be made aware that their work should be guided by ethical and moral standards and carried out without having negative effects on users.

Finally, it is recommended that for future studies the search for articles not be limited to a single language, as international sources are an important support when searching for other publications, and there are several areas of research in this field, such as ethical frameworks for emerging technologies, cybersecurity, ethical regulation, artificial intelligence. As a limitation, we mention the scarcity of information found on the web at a local level that would allow the analysis of intervention groups from the same cohort.

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## Chapter 11

# Architectural Trend and Style a Historical-Ethical-Esthetic Approach to Design Praxis

*Marco Avila-Calle*

### Abstract

Throughout the history of mankind, there have been great cultures that have excelled in the creation of architectural works that endure to this day; these works have been catalogued of great architectural value for multiple characteristics. Today, with the globalization of information, architecture has undergone a dizzying change, the distinctive characteristics of the styles marked in history have been mixed, creating an eclectic architecture, the function has gone to the background, the form prevails over the structural and functional, magazine spaces are conceived in places that do not correspond without considering the context in which they are located, so there is no correct definition of the value of the current architectural work. From the above, how to know what characteristics give true value to an architectural work, and if the beauty of architecture always represents the good of humanity, this academic essay addresses the analysis and search for the relationship between ethics, aesthetics and design praxis. Through critical reflection and discourse analysis, ethics and aesthetics in architecture are contextualized, relating the processes of conquest, abstraction, transformation and generation of new knowledge, in order to interpret how the architectural work influences the daily life of man and society.

**Keywords:** knowledge, style, trend, ethics, design, project design

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Fundamentals

I would like to begin this analysis by quoting a phrase of Frederich Nietzsche, who reflects, “If you kill a cockroach you are a hero, but if you kill a beautiful butterfly you are a bad guy. Morality has aesthetic criteria” [1]. Under this premise, I asked several friends, relatives and professional colleagues, what would you do if you came across a butterfly or a cockroach? More than 95% affirmed that they would kill or at least move away from the cockroach and that they would appreciate the beauty of the butterfly, affirming that the beautiful is good and the ugly is bad; it is in the innate of the human being the prejudice of the esthetic, ethics and morals. I wonder now, does the same principle apply to architecture, could we affirm that every beautiful architectural work can be good? To answer this question, we will analyze the following



**Figure 1.**  
*The project design process and its ethical–esthetic implications.*

concepts that will allow us to answer the question posed, considering that the process of project design is a complex system of knowledge and concepts used to transcend from the idea (intangible) to the design (plans – the tangible) (**Figure 1**):

### 1.1.1 Architecture

The construct architecture has had several conceptualizations through time. From the historical analysis of Jorge Sainz, some concepts are cited below: Vitruvius indicates that the architect has to be imposed in many branches of knowledge and gather knowledge from many different fields, because, in his work, the value of the sciences and the arts are contrasted, Carlo Lodoli mentions that architecture is an intellectual and practical science aimed at establishing with reasoning the good use and proportions of the artifacts, and with experience, to know the nature of the materials that compose it, on the other hand, Francesco Milizia asserts that architecture is the art of building; and takes different denominations according to the diversity of its objects. Also Etienne L. Boullée defines architecture as the art of producing and bringing to perfection any building. Other authors also define architecture from different historical contexts, for example, Eduardo de la Rosa, citing Villagrán J. postulates that architecture is the art, science and technique of constructing, designing and projecting habitable spaces for human beings. Jorge Sainz Avia quoting E. Viollet – Le – Duc comments that architecture consists of two parts, theory and practice; the theory comprises: the art itself, the rules inspired by taste, based on traditions, and the science that can be demonstrated with invariable, absolute formulas [2].

In summary, we can say that, architecture is the art of projecting, transforming or creating space to satisfy the habitat needs of the human being. If the word art is implicit in its definition and classically architecture has been part of the seven fine arts, it is imperative to define art.

### 1.1.2 Art

According to Muñoz [3] art, in the classical conception, is a system of rules drawn from experience, but logically thought out afterwards, that teach us the way to perform an action tending to its perfection and repeatable at will, an action that is not part of the natural course of events and that we do not want to leave to the whim of chance. It is a habit or intellectual virtue that is learned through the exercise in cases,

the imitation of examples and the study of doctrine through the discipline taught by the masters. Hegel sustains: "Art is a particular form under which the spirit manifests itself" "The task of art consists in making the idea accessible to our contemplation under a sensible form," Heidegger affirms in one of his conferences: "The essence of art would be, then, this: to put into operation the truth of the entity." Now, it is important to analyze what is the relationship between man and art, Medina analyze:

¿Can art be considered a necessity for human beings or is it simply a luxury with which they adorn their lives? From the outset, it must be said that it seems clear that art is something that belongs to the very essence of man, since man has been "forced" by his own interiority to represent or express something, whether it be the exterior that surrounds him or has surrounded him or the interior felt at certain specific moments in history. If by necessity we understand "something" without which another "something" would not be possible; and by luxury we understand "something" that is superfluous and that only serves to please reality or life more, it is clear that art is a necessity of the human being. Art gathers the present for the future and remains as the past. It is obvious, then, that art is a total and absolute necessity of the human being. Does art exist since there is man; or perhaps it would be better to ask: does man exist since there is art? Art takes us to a dimension of transcendence that is necessary for the human being and that we cannot reach in that modality in any other way. Whether through literature in general, architecture, painting, sculpture or music, man has been forced to create artistically since he is man. And something that is imposed from within as a mandate, as Kant would say, is undoubtedly a necessity. The artist is the creative subjectivity that creates the work of art. Trying to reach a deep understanding of this component of art involves looking at many decisive elements that occur in the artist and lead to creation. The artist is that creative subjectivity that is capable of creating (art) from himself. A first element to highlight in the analysis of the artist is "inspiration," which is the state in which he finds himself when he feels impelled to create. Hegel states in this regard: "Artistic production thus becomes a state to which the name of inspiration is given" [4].

The avant-garde theoreticians define: art as that human activity that produces beauty, that represents or reproduces reality, that creates forms, that expresses, that produces esthetic experience, among others; each word and concept cited allows us to articulate our analysis in a deeper way, in short, art is the process of creating beauty in an intentional way and motivated by the artist's inspiration.

### *1.1.3 Esthetic*

According to Acosta, etymologically, esthetics comes from the Greek *aesthesia* = perceptible by the senses. This term designates the science of art and beauty. Hegel considered esthetics as a sensible manifestation of the absolute. For Schopenhauer, the esthetic is the idea that liberates the cosmic pain and for Heidegger, art is realized as the putting into action of truth as the manifest presence of being. In trying to make a general definition, we can say that esthetics is the science of the beautiful, a concept on which the so-called philosophical esthetics has been built, to be distinguished from the simple philosophy of art. The beautiful involves ontological structures and also includes rational factors. In the beautiful, all aspects of the being are harmonized. Philosophical esthetics clarifies, from the point of view of being, the essence of the beautiful in general (nature) and in particular (art), a problem that has an ontological-metaphysical sense; from the point of view of human nature, it is the manifestation of an anthropological-existential problem, since it

studies the essence of the esthetic experience in a double sense: that of the creator and that of the contemplator. From this analysis, derive the problems of esthetic value and esthetic valuation [5].

For there to be esthetic value in an architectural work, there must be a consensus of the social masses or of an expert group on the subject, which is why not everything can be called art and not everything can be beautiful; therefore, esthetics is directly articulated with the ethics of man.

#### *1.1.4 Ethic*

Ethics defined as a theory is the reflection on free acts and the argumentation of the motives of human action. Important factors are included in this definition: reflection, argumentation, rights and duties. Each epoch brings its own vision of the events, its complaints, its questions and difficulties. The present time has its particularities and its complaints, one of them referring to a society with a crisis of values, selfish, corrupt, godless and lawless. In the face of this complaint, a call is made to ethics as a remedy for the current “evils”; it is ethics that must take charge of these vicissitudes of the present time. Given the great transformations, it can be said that ethics is in vogue when the great summaries are not credible, rights swarm and multiple possibilities of decision open up. This is, therefore, the time of ethics where it is important to rethink it in a new way, with the characteristics of a postmodern society. As Lipovetsky rightly says: Therein lies one of the reasons for the success of ethics: it enters into a state of grace at the moment when the great ideological breviaries no longer respond to the urgencies of the moment [6].

Since ethics is the one who must respond to the moral conduct of man, good or bad, after his performance in a given social reality, within the work of the architect, it is necessary to articulate this concept with the essence of our study, esthetics.

#### *1.1.5 Architectural ethics and esthetics*

We will speak of a work of art as autographic if, and only if, the distinction between the original and the copy is significant; or better yet, if, and only if, even the most exact duplicate cannot be considered authentic. If a work is autographic, we can also qualify that art as autographic. Thus, painting is autographic and music nonautographic, or allographic. The identification of an architectural work with a design rather than with a building is less clear than that of a musical work with a composition rather than with a performance. Insofar as architecture has a reasonably adequate notational system and some of its works are unequivocally allographic, art is allographic. But insofar as its notational language is concerned, it has not yet acquired sufficient authority to divorce the identity of the work in all cases from the particular production; architecture is a mixed and transitional case.

For example, plans result from the appropriate combination of lines, data, and symbols represented on an agreed scale, but they also include certain specifications such as the materiality of the building or considerations regarding construction that cannot be considered notational. They would find their parallel in music in the verbal specifications of tempo. “The class of buildings selected by plans-plus-specs is narrower than that defined by plans alone; but plans-plus-specs form a brief, not a score” [7].

Each of the arts uses a different language, that is, a system of symbolization to order, classify, represent a world of objects. Each symbol refers to something

that is not itself; it stands in place of something else. Referring to something is the core of symbolization, even if the difficulty of elaborating an infallible theory of interpretation of the work of art persists. Goodman admits that “the search for the precise interweaving of the symbol and the symbolized requires the utmost sensitivity and is a never-ending quest.” There are, then, no infallible rules of interpretation, no artistic vocabularies that link sounds to feelings, forms to emotions. That said, Goodman does not, however, renounce the articulation of an analytical system of interpretation: “pluralism and endless openness do not dispense the analytical philosopher from analysis. It merely obliges one to elaborate techniques sensitive enough to unravel the richness and complexity of aesthetic symbols.” Esthetic experience is an articulated search for meaning, placing it in the realm of epistemological objectivism, even though he recognizes that the existence of “logical gaps” in the passage from symbol to knowledge hinders its interpretation.

Architecture, whose nature shares artistic values and material principles, will not be able to continue the “theoretical discourse” for long, let alone become independent in metaphysical audacities; hence the failure that accompanied the elimination of the theoretical debate on the city and the postulates of planning globalist (according to which the construction of the industrial city should be understood as a “moral model” for the new uses, freeing man from the formal slavery of styles) should not come as a surprise. This is why our era has become a decidedly industrial-economist period and the relationship with objects is dissociated from their anthropological and functional links. The architectural project today manifests itself as integrated, as a reproductive phenomenon of objects in the spaces of culture and is inscribed in the emerging processes of the information society, whose accelerated changes constantly demand spatial structures of growing flexibility and mutation, alien to their intrinsic functionality [8].

When thinking about the relationship between ethics and esthetics applied to architecture, the question immediately arises as to what can be understood by ethics of architecture; in what sense does the notion of good intervene in the architect-creator when creating his work? We could answer that traditionally it has done so with respect to three values: constructive sincerity, suitability to function and decorum, and dignified form. These three values refer to the three classic Vitruvian principles found in all architecture: *firmitas*, *utilitas* and *venusta*.

1. Constructive sincerity does not only refer to the material composition of the elements of architecture according to the good rules of the science of construction (art as a way of doing something well: ST. THOMAS) but to the fact that this good work is clearly reflected in the final appearance of the finished work without deceptive appearance. This point also covers the whole field of structural stability, as well as the specific treatment of each material according to its own nature. And, logically, to the whole field of installations, the display of which has been the compositional theme of many buildings today.
2. The adequacy of the function requires a correct response of the spaces to the real needs of the activities to be developed inside, both for its characteristics (volume, shape, ventilation capacity, lighting and other elements of comfort) or the relative situation of the different spaces, as well as the possibilities of real communication, visual, auditory, etc., between them. But beyond the character of response, often the concrete form of solving the spaces has become a guid-

ing character for the activity to be carried out, a leading character. By creating spaces, the architect has often tried to teach the user how to live them, so that architecture takes on an educational role in society. It is the architect assuming the role of social reformer through his work. To some degree, this has often been put into practice, and in a more radical way, we find it in the utopias and drawn architectures present in all ages.

3. The search for decorum, for the form worthy of the man who will inhabit the architecture, is a constant aspect, as it seeks to respond not only to the physical needs of man but also to his spirituality. It refers to the dignity of every man by virtue of the fact that he is a man, and also to the dignity added by the professional or social function he performs. In some cases, it is no longer a question of the individual man, but of the institution that will house the building, which may represent the city, the nation or even God himself in the case of temples. In certain epochs, this decorum was given preferably by the ornament, which according to ALBERTI “consisted first of all in the columns,” that is to say, in the typified forms of the classical orders. But it also consists in the spatial determination, proportions and even measures of the spaces, being the physical greatness in all the epochs a symbol of the moral greatness [9].

### 1.1.6 Styles

According to Córdoba [10], quoting several authors, he mentions: style is a norm that presents an order, a system, a method, which is materialized in an art form, it is the element from which archaeologists can access the logic of style. Therefore, the study of style as a construction in itself must always be, at first, a descriptive investigation that accounts for the constructive form in which it materializes, a system of knowledge-power, it is therefore the materialization of thought and of an order of rationality. But at the same time, as a material, corporeal representation of this system of knowledge-power, style becomes a social product, immersed in the fabric of social practices. Style, and in this case art, is then a social phenomenon, inserted in social practices and in the fabric of any society, defined from an aesthetic criterion proper to this phenomenal expression and therefore of historical character. As art is an aesthetic phenomenon inserted in the social, political and cultural, expressing itself as the materialization of a way of thinking and of a certain social rationality of thought, it reproduces in its interior a set of essential elements of a certain social reality. In spite of the different subjective pretensions of the author, its materialization always responds to his social being, that is, to the set of perceptions shared by the collectively of a group of individuals in a society. A style appears at a given time and place as an expression of an ideological situation that manifests itself in a set of forms and contents that represent the individual performances of creative activity, born of a certain attitude toward artistic transmission. Later, the style can gain influence on other circles, and it can be transmitted, but as soon as it goes beyond the limits of its environment, its country or its time, it loses its content of ideas and can only be “norm,” “fashion” or “model” [11].

Style can be considered as the universalization of a language in a given time; it implies canons, characteristics, and particularity, which, together with the technology of the time, allow the art object to be located in space and time. The style possesses its own syntax and the object will be elaborated within the terms of a given composition [12].

### 1.1.7 Trend

A trend is a preference or a current that tends toward a specific end or ends and usually leaves its mark over a period of time and in a certain place. Originally the word trend meant the direction a river takes. Later it was used to designate the course taken by events [13].

The scientific natures of tendencies are impersonal and lack the dramatic coloring of heroic personalities. The term also lacks the necessary moral and ethical implications. For example, when the marriage trend increases or when the birth rate trend decreases, it impersonally states the facts without suggesting progress or regress, although of course, they can be interpreted as good and bad. For some, a declining birth rate is regrettably for others and desirable. But the trend line alone says nothing about it. To project a trend, a past trend must be taken into account; a past trend must have a certain duration. The farther out a trend projection is carried, the greater the error, and the projection of trend lines into the future is not a prediction of what the time series will actually be like [14].

### 1.1.8 Project design

In order to contextualize the ontological dimension of the sciences of design, it is imperative to distinguish the origin of the object of study of our discipline: space. Great philosophers have tried to describe and define their position on the surrounding space, relating it to the inner and outer world; in the interior of each being, there is a complex system of ideas and knowledge that can be inherited or abstracted, while in the outer world, the abstract of our idea is concretized. The task of the architect is to translate these ideas, thoughts and sensations of our clients into a tangible medium capable of being verifiable. There are no preestablished laws (unlike the laws of physics) that govern the model of abstraction of knowledge, the development and reconstruction of ideas and their subsequent realization in a project proposal for our client, however; the impact of this process of creation promotes a change from the intangible to the tangible, even allows modeling the social behavior of people, because through our designs we guide the daily work of our clients, if we propose adequate spaces the activity will be adequate, but if we propose deficient spaces the activity will be deficient. On the other hand, to establish the epistemological dimension of the design sciences, we must understand that the design process is based on the transfer of knowledge through the representation of graphic signs, for example, the conception of a house begins with the idea that comes from the cultural and social needs of the individual, this idea is materialized through a graphic representation in a plan, and then made tangible in the construction. In this context, there are several systematic, rigorous and objective processes that validate the scientific character of design sciences, not only as a mere representation process but as a science that allows transforming reality.

**Table 1** summarizes the relationship between the terms analyzed.

Architecture	Art	Esthetic	Style	Trend	Ethic
Art of projecting	Produces beauty	Study beauty	Regulations that materialize in the form of art	It lacks moral and ethical implications	Reflection of free acts and argumentation of reasons for action

**Table 1.**  
*Epistemological relationship.*

## 1.2 Objectives

### 1.2.1 General

The objective of this academic essay is to analyze the relationship between ethics and esthetics in the design processes through critical reflection of contents in order to evaluate the professional work of the architect in today's society.

### 1.2.2 Specific

- To determine the relationship between ethics and esthetics in the design process through the conceptualization of architectural terms.
- To know the esthetic evolution of architecture through time by analyzing the styles and trends used in architectural works of each culture.
- Describe the patterns of esthetic expressions, linked to ethics, that architects have used in their works and that have been socially accepted.

## 2. Development

Knowing the involvement of the architect, in the creation of works of art-architectural, articulating esthetic criteria in trends and styles, we proceed to analyze from an ethical point of view the architect's actions throughout history to distinguish their motivations in the constructions made in different periods of the history of mankind (Figure 2).

### 2.1 Prehistory

The human being since its inception has sought to meet their basic survival needs, protection and habitat is one of them, for these purposes, adapted natural formations as shelters, the caves have shown the ingenuity of man and the intention to create habitat spaces, but how to analyze the ethics and esthetics in prehistory, possibly the menhirs and dolmens allow us to identify the first intentions of man in modeling the

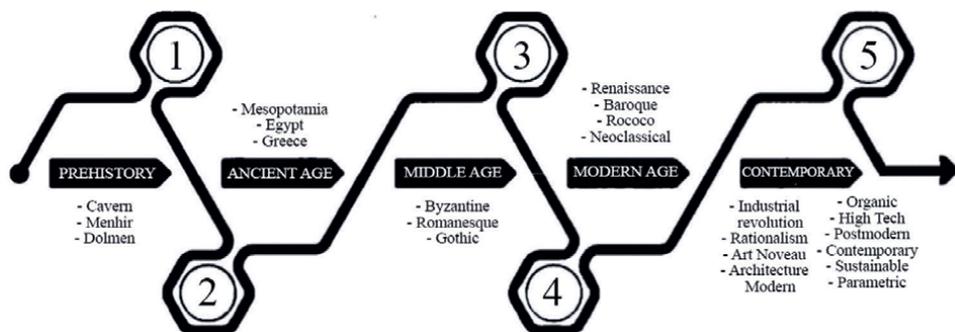


Figure 2.  
Schematization of authors of design methodologies.

surrounding space, however the final objective, its functionality, is uncertain, for example Stonehenge is a megalithic monument type cromlech, which has impacted the scientific community by the magnitude and arrangement of its elements, many theories relate this construction with cosmic and astronomical aspects, however, nothing is scientifically proven; nothing is scientifically proven, it could be said that the beauty does not lie in the physical and tangible part of the element built by man, rather it is implicit in the enigma of its creation, both in the construction process and in its functionality. There is evidence from the Neolithic and primitive cultures in which the stars represent the deity, the sun, the moon, the stars and the constellations have their direct incidence on the daily chores, and the representative architecture of that time is based on it.

## **2.2 The ancient age**

With the development of man in the Neolithic and then in the age of metals, many cultures emerged, each one of them contributed to the progress of the ethyles, with architectural elements and constructive systems that transcended in time. The instinctive nature of protection produced the conquest of culture to culture of man by man, the protection of the strongest became the struggle for power, and at that crossroads, the ego overcame reason and humanity. The figure of representatives of gods on earth brought with it the slavery and supremacy between cultures; it is here that stand out monumental buildings representative of each culture, Mesopotamia with its ziggurats contributed with ramps, load-bearing walls, stepped pyramids, each king wanted to be more than a god, the mythical tower of Babylon is an example of the power that man wanted to achieve. The Egyptian culture shared great similarities and knowledge in the social, agricultural and construction systems, and the kings were replaced by pharaohs who maintained the vision of being Gods on earth; all the beauty of the architectural work is represented by their tombs or mastabas better known as pyramids monumental buildings that keep an enigma about its construction. Contemporary and then conquerors appeared the Greek culture, perhaps the best known for its styles and esthetic contributions of compositional principles in architecture, the detail of the ornaments on facades and columns of the temples dedicated to the gods still cause admiration among archeologists and architects who study their culture. Finally, the conquest of the Greek empire by the Romans allowed them to abstract the knowledge, transform and generate their own contributions to architecture, the semicircular arch, the barrel vault, the domes allowed the Romans to transcend in history, the beauty of the buildings were represented in the coliseums, theaters, and monuments representing the emperors of the time. It is unquestionable not to admire the beauty of the ziggurats, the pyramids, the temples, the coliseums of the analyzed cultures, for the monumentality, the details and constructive systems used; however, the question arises from the ethical point of view, is it conceivable to appreciate constructions that were the result of years of conquest, of slavery of several generations and peoples to represent the ego of the rulers of the time, or does the end justify the means, or does beauty always represent the good?

## **2.3 The middle age**

The representative buildings and architectural styles of the Prehistoric and Ancient Ages were created for the gods of each culture, with the arrival of Christ, the world had a turning point leading to basilicas, temples and Christian churches to have greater representativeness in architectural esthetics, the building is still monumental,

abstracted scale of the gods of the ancient age. The Byzantine, Romanesque and Gothic styles were those that transcended in history the constructive system through semicircular arches, oval, vaults of spouts and cross vaults, domes, spires, stained glass rosettes, facades loaded with ornaments of sacred nature were the main esthetic characteristics that stood out in this age, the decoration of its interiors was also significant in these styles. It is easier now to understand the intentionality of man in this era, beauty is implicit in religion, it can be said that the incentive or motivation of esthetics was due to the faith professed by Christianity. Esthetics could be said to represent the good.

## **2.4 The modern age**

As Christianity was the turning point in the Middle Ages in the modern age, the Renaissance is the paradigm shift that society undergoes and changes the way of seeing the reality of the physical world and the metaphysical world, it is here where man puts in crisis the existence of a supreme being and its representativeness on earth and proposes to place the human being in the center of the physical earthly world and leave the gods in the metaphysical world. All fine arts including architecture now revolve around the human being; however, the scale abstracted by previous cultures is still maintained. The most representative architectural styles and trends are the baroque, rococo and neoclassical, the first two are based on the extreme ornamentation of the facades and interiors of basilicas and temples, esthetics outweighs the functionality of space, in the neoclassical considered as the recovery of classical Greek and Roman cultures presents a paradigm shift of the Renaissance representative buildings go from the religious and imperial to the public, for example, the Capitol in North America, is a world reference but no longer representative for kings or gods is for the common man, however, its scale is still in monumental proportions. How to analyze ethics and esthetics in this era, there is a more human intention to create architectural works placing man at the center of the world; however, there is still the manipulation of faith and monarchy in these built elements. Ethically the beautiful still fulfills its function of representing the good, discerning that now the good is centered on the human and not the divine.

## **2.5 The contemporary age**

Perhaps it is in this era where there is a transcendental leap for man, an unchecked evolution, that today we see its consequences, it could be said that in this era, there are two moments that changed the paradigm of man; one is rationalism, that is to think, if from the Renaissance man is the center of the world why is still working in architecture on a monumental scale, That is why the modulation of architectural elements on the scale of man began at this time, another historical moment is the industrial revolution, undoubtedly facilitated the life of societies by replacing the driving force of man by mechanics and steam, without considering that the CO<sub>2</sub> product of this development would influence future generations, now called climate change. The industrial revolution brought with it unquestionable technological and economic development, but it marked a great social gap that still exists today between developed and developing countries. In the field of architecture, the systematization of processes, mass production, the production of materials such as concrete, iron and glass, together with rationalism, allowed the birth of the modern style of architecture. It is here that the representative buildings pass from the religious, imperial and

monarchical to express themselves on small scales as public buildings, skyscrapers and houses. The beauty of the architectural work passes from monumentality and ornamentation of facades to the simplicity of form and purity of the construction system and materials used. Little by little, the mechanical moved to the digital, the evolution of technological sciences allowed us to think of new styles or architectural trends such as organic architecture, high-tech, postmodern, contemporary, parametric and sustainable. Each of them responds to a need of the society of that time; however, there is no doubt that since the industrial revolution to the present, the meaning of human power has changed from the power of demand or manipulation to economic power regardless of the deterioration of the planet and the excessive consumption of nonrenewable resources, this is where the esthetics of architecture should take on a new dimension, we cannot base that the intentionality of the beauty of an architectural work represents only ornaments in facades or new constructive systems must go beyond thinking that the technological evolution must solve problems of the habitat now if as at the beginning of survival before an enemy of the man that is the same man. Can architectural ethics and esthetics in the 21st century reinvent its definition for true sustainable development?

## **2.6 At present and its prospective**

We are currently living with the consequence of the first industrial revolution, the indiscriminate use of nonrenewable natural resources and the high production of CO<sub>2</sub> have caused climate change, architectural production has not been the exception, and it is of worldwide concern to seek strategies to mitigate these environmental problems, it is here where ethics plays a transcendental role. There is talk of sustainable projects, a term that involves economic, environmental and social responsibility. Here, a new concept of tectonic ethics is born. On the other hand, globalization and the fourth industrial revolution in which we live force us to project ourselves to design processes and construction processes based on current and future technology, for example nanotechnology or artificial intelligence will allow us to speed up and perfect design and construction processes, it is here where a new vision of the ethics of artificial intelligence arises, where man must program ethically so that the machine can do good and improve society, without prejudice to human activities. One of the characteristics of Modernity has been the advance of techno-sciences in almost all aspects of life. While before Modernity, techno-scientific knowledge found in nature a moral criterion for its interventions, Humea's criticism that linked a "naturalistic fallacy" allowed the separation between both fields, scientific and ethical [15]. However, doubt is born. A machine could replace the creative processes of an architect modeling the reality of society with better and more accurate concepts?

## **3. Conclusions**

By way of conclusion, answers are given to the main concerns that have been raised throughout this essay and that allow us to visualize the achievement of the proposed objectives:

- a. How can we know what characteristics give true value to an architectural work?  
An architectural work has value when it serves for the good of man and society, providing comfort and improving the quality of life for which it was created;

therefore, esthetics in architecture is subordinated to the functionality of the work. Ethics, esthetics, art, style and trend are part of architecture and if one of them is not involved in the design process, it could be said that the architectural work does not have the true value it should have.

- b. Does the same ethical principle apply to architecture; could we say that any beautiful architectural work can be good? As has been observed, not all architectural productions considered of esthetic value are the product of good acts of humanity. Many of them are products of slavery of several generations to satisfy the ego of monarchs and empires, styles and trends were evolving from the conquest and abstraction of knowledge from culture to culture; we could not speak of modern architecture without the contributions of Greek columns, Egyptian lintels, the philosophical thought of the Renaissance or rationalism.
- c. Could a machine replace the creative processes of an architect modeling the reality of society with better and more precise concepts? Artificial Intelligence is not independent and has no ethics or morals; it is man who is behind its implementation and control. The only perfect machine created by nature is the human mind, and its ethical performance responds to a spiritual conscience that has not been possible to replicate so far. However, there are several esthetic patterns that the AI can use to model society according to the architectural styles that are intended to design and build; each culture abstracts and proposes its own type of architecture based on the spatial and temporal reality that lives.

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*Edited by Katina-Vanessa Bermeo-Pazmino,  
María Del Cisne Aguirre-Ullauri  
and Marco Avila-Calle*

This work systematically compiles eleven outstanding research papers that were presented at the 3rd International Congress on Ethics in Cuenca, University City, Ecuador in November 2022. The Catholic University of Cuenca, beyond hosting the event, is committed to ethics in a holistic way. As such, to deliver this work for the benefit of the community is to expand the debate on it in areas of collective relevance such as face-to-face and online university education, pre-professional practices, professional qualifications, the equity of women workers, nature as a subject of rights, professional conduct, Ethics in Care Committees, the trend, style, and praxis of architectural design, and particularly the role of the university in the construction of an ethical culture from the perspective of students. Thus, this book invites those attending the event and readers to empower themselves with the work in order to strengthen ethics in all its dimensions and in everyday practice.

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