### THE PLACE OF APPLIED ETHICS IN THE STUDY OF MORALITY

#### **RUBEN APRESSYAN**

Center for Applied Study, Münster University, Germany
Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia
rapressyan@gmail.com

#### Abstract

Although at the level of handbooks and encyclopedias, applied ethics is considered as one of the main components of the system of ethical knowledge, along with philosophical ethics and normative ethics, and applied ethics has long been institutionalized in academia, the relationship between philosophical ethics and applied ethics has not acquired the character of organic unity. Specialists in applied ethics do not always feel the need for concepts and theoretical schemes developed in philosophical ethics, and not all moral philosophers are ready to see applied ethics as one of the closest sources of empirical knowledge about morality and the possibility of implementing general moral ideas into practice. The article gives a brief history of the initial efforts in applied ethics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, showing the beginning of applied ethics as largely a response to the society's request for clarification of value foundation of special kinds of public practice. The same need, reinforced by the transformational processes of post-industrial society, is revealed in the second half of the 20th century when applied ethics was impressively developed. Taking into account particular experience of normative development, the article shows how in reality there is an application of general moral ideas to professional and corporate activity - in particular, by rethinking its goals and objectives in the context of moral principles, the actualization of its orientation for the benefit of people and society. The analysis undertaken leads to the conclusion that through normative action in the field of professional and corporate activity, the latter becomes de-particularized, ethically generalized. This gives reason to recognize applied ethics as a factor of social well-being.

**Keywords:** applied ethics, practical ethics, normative ethics, moral philosophy, practice and moral experience.

Applied ethics is a branch in the study of moral phenomena, along with metaethics (philosophical ethics) and normative ethics, and as such it represents one of the major components in the study of morality. It has acquired such a place relatively recently, in the last few decades, as a result of the intensive development of ethical-applied research in the fields of various professional, corporate, and area-specific[1] practices and the institutionalization of this research in the form of academic disciplines in university curricula, as well as distinct

educational and research units within universities and research centers (Bakshtanovsky and Sogomonov, 2007; Collste, 2012; Steinbock, 2013).

It is with the acquisition of academic status by applied ethics that society redefines its place in the study of morality, and it begins to be perceived on a par with and often mediated with philosophical and normative ethics.

Applied ethics aims to explore the normative-ethical content of practice in its specific manifestations. Practice here is understood as intentional and typified actions that have individually, communicatively and socially significant effects. Taking this into account, it is important to clarify that applied ethics is aimed at studying the socio-cultural conditions of professional and area-specific activities, their ethos, normative attitudes, social devices and mechanisms through which their effectiveness is ensured. It critically rationalizes the normative content of activities and formulates ethical standards on this basis. Applied ethics is sometimes associated with professional ethics in the sense that professional ethics is the subject matter of applied ethics [2]. The unreasonableness of such an understanding of applied ethics has been repeatedly noted in the literature by various authors (Apressyan, 2004; Beauchamp, 2005; Collste, 2012), who pointed out that applied ethics was also aimed at studying normative problems that are not related to a specific professional activity, but which persons in their personal capacity encounter either in private or in public life. These are issues related to security, justice, dignity, freedom and the meaning of life[3]. The internal disciplinary differentiation of applied ethics depends on the diversity of practices it studies and normatively rationalizes. The most developed today are biomedical ethics, business ethics, environmental ethics (with a special focus on the ethics of climate change), ethics of science and technology, in particular artificial intelligence and autonomous technical systems. The variety of different professional and area-specific practices of interest to applied ethics, or ethical issues of concern to society, has been constantly growing, and the intra-disciplinary spectrum of applied ethics has expanded accordingly.

However, the division between philosophical ethics and applied ethics remains to some extent (Rorty, 2006; De George, 2006). On the part of some moral philosophers who prioritize abstract moral concepts, this separation is fundamental, and they consider their adherence to it as a sign of fidelity to the metaphysical purity of philosophical ethics. As philosophers, they have no genuine interest in practical questions and, moreover, believe that an appeal to the

dilemmas of moral practice robs moral philosophy of its sublimity and rigor (Guseinov, 2004; Steinbock, 2013: 59). On the part of some applied ethicists, the division of philosophical ethics and applied ethics is due to their inattention to fundamental moral concepts and their self-limitation of research interest to narrow areas of particular spheres of practice. The latter usually follows from the fact that applied ethics is most often developed by specialists in their specific fields, as a result of which their ethical-applied developments may not be related to the full philosophical, ethical and normative-ethical context.

In general, however, a different trend has become increasingly prevalent: just as applied ethicists are well aware that without a defined and grounded idea of morality, clearly considered in its prospects for the individual, society and culture, their developments "hang in the air", so moral philosophers, while remaining within the framework of purely conceptual analysis in their research, are increasingly aware that the ethical-philosophical notion of morality is most convincingly verified in the context of certain communicative and social practices.

# Forerunners and beginnings

The predecessors of modern applied ethics deserve attention – what were their forms, in the continuation of which traditions and for what purpose they arose, how distinctive they look now compared to the modern applied ethics.

Many people believe, without much thought, that the term "applied ethics" emerged simultaneously with the beginning of active research on the normative-ethical foundations of professional, corporate and area-specific activities in the 1950s, and perhaps even later (Beauchamp, 2005), with the statement in universities of the first courses in Applied Ethics. However, already at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many journal articles devoted to applied ethical issues appeared, and the issue was discussed precisely in this applied way. It seems that at that time the word "applied" became newfangled and was widely accepted. Applied ethics was distributed along with applied algebra, applied chemistry, applied art, etc.

For the sake of historical accuracy, it should be noted that the very expression "applied ethics" appeared more than half a century earlier, in the late 1830s. Among the available publications, one can mention the *Manual of Political Ethics* by Francis Lieber, who, discussing the question of the possibility of applying ethics to politics, spoke of political ethics as applied ethics (Lieber 1839: 67, 69). At the same time, he considered applied ethics along with general

ethics and believed that political ethics was a kind of applied ethics. Without naming other varieties of applied ethics, the author emphasized that it was ethics applied to the socio-political sphere that had the greatest reason to be called as applied one. This term was in no way incidental to Lieber's reasoning. Throughout the book, in the context of political ethics, he discussed norms (laws) applied *to* specific cases. It is clear that applying a law to a particular case was a common discursive move in legal and juridical thinking. It cannot be excluded that this thinking experience influenced the change in the modality of ethical thinking and its turn from general normative reasoning to practical reasoning in the literal sense of the word, i.e. dealing with particular cases in their typicality and regularity.

Since the late 1860s, the term "applied ethics" took root in ethical literature, both philosophical and theological. The concept it denoted was interpreted rather broadly, but nevertheless, the reconstruction of its connotations may be of interest both from the perspective of the history of ideas and for understanding its possible "coiled" meanings.

To begin with, unexpected uses of the term are noteworthy. For example, the German Protestant theologian Adolf Wuttke objected to what he saw as a widespread understanding of Christian ethics as applied ethics secondary to "pure" philosophical ethics, and advocated an understanding of Christian ethics as theological ethics, which at the same time should have a deep scientific grounding (Wuttke, 1874: 35). And Rev. Henry Calderwood, an editor of the American one-volume edition of Kant's Ethical Writings [4], in describing the contents of the volume, pointed to its last two sections, "Elementology" (i.e., "Doctrine of the elements of ethics") and "Methodology" (i.e., "Doctrine of the Methods of Ethics") – as the simpler and more accessible part of the book, which was devoted to *Applied Ethics* (using capital letters and italics to denote a scholarly discipline) (Calderwood, 1871: xx). In both cases, applied ethics refers to the application of general ethics to behavior. In other words, it is the practical part of practical philosophy.

D.S. Gregory adhered to the same understanding of applied ethics, distinguishing theoretical, or pure ethics, on the one hand, and practical, or applied ethics, on the other, and distinguishing in the latter the task of explaining how general principles were applied to regulate human behavior in specific life situations (Gregory, 1875: 19). Ernest Bowden discriminated in ethics the same two branches – abstract, or theoretical and concrete, or applied (Bowden, 1895:

617), considering this division in ethics to be analogous to that in mathematics. There are many examples of this kind.

A few years later, the same understanding of applied ethics was embodied in a series of summer courses at the School of Applied Ethics in Plymouth (USA) [5]. Each course offered a series of lectures in three sections: economics, ethics, and history of religion (several hundred lectures in total). All lectures were given under the general heading of "applied ethics." According to a review of the three schools, their leaders (Henry Adams, Felix Adler, and Crawford Toy) arranged the program so that the subject matter of each cycle focused on the problem of labor (Youmans (ed.), 1895). However, this is fully true of the program of the 1894 Summer School, whose ethics section offered such lecture cycles as "Introduction to Economic Ethics: (which dealt mainly with social ethics), "The Family and the Labour Problem", and "The School and the Labour Problem", while the economics section included, along with socioeconomic topics, such cycles as "Ethics and the Economics of Distribution" and "The Ethical Foundations of Social Progress in the United States". The lecture topics of the Ethics section at the first two schools were rather general-theoretical: "Classification of Ancient and Modern Ethical Systems," "Varieties of Moral Norms Illustrated by the History of Ethics," "Religious and Moral Education," "Development of Conscience in Child," and "The System of Responsibilities" (including individual ethics, social ethics, ethics of family, profession, politics, friendship, and religious associations); socio-ethical issues were offered in a number of shorter special courses [6].

Applied ethics acquired a similar configuration in the program of philosophical education adopted at Cornell University on the basis of the School of Philosophy, founded in 1891 thanks to the generous contribution of the industrial magnate Henry Sage, after whom the school was named. Ethics became one of the curricular areas of philosophical education, with a course in "Practical or Applied Ethics" alongside "Foundations of Ethics," "Christian Ethics," and "Fundamental Problems of Ethics." As can be gleaned from advertisements in the Philosophical Review, founded a year later, this program was maintaining at the Sage School of Philosophy for over twenty years. (Sage School, 1898; Sage School, 1920).

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many articles appeared devoted, relatively speaking, to issues of medical ethics. Some of these were on the ethics of the physician, some on the ethics of nursing, with little overlap between the two. A significant example was the

Ethics Section at the annual meeting of the British Medical Association (summer 1895), the proceedings of which were published in a special issue of the *British Medical Journal*. Dr W.A. Cleveland, Chairman of the Section, gave a lengthy introductory address.

Much of the report was devoted to propaedeutic ethical topics, but it also touched upon the practical ethical aspects of the medical profession itself – the role of the "medical code of ethics" in it, the formation of proper relations in the professional environment, a clear understanding by physicians of their duties to each other, to themselves and to society (Cleveland, 1895: 635 [7]). It can be seen from other papers and the following lively discussions that medical ethics was interpreted in many ways as a kind of etiquette – but an etiquette adapted to the peculiarities of the medical profession and different aspects of medical activity, such as private practice, the conduct of patient appointments, and relations between consultants and practitioners (Horder, 1895: 635–638). As the materials of the Ethics Section meetings show, medical ethics developed by strengthening professional ethical reflection and actualization of ethical meanings in the doctor's activity. With appropriate substantive amendments, the same approach was pursued in relation to nursing ethics.

It is noteworthy that the use of the term "applied ethics" was innovative in all the events described. In the latter case, this term was used in conjunction with and to clarify another term, namely, "practical ethics". The designation by this term of the normative and ethical aspects of specific activities was common in the centuries-long history of moral philosophy.

Traditionally, moral philosophy used to be conceived of as threefold: Ethics, Economics, and Politics. As Jill Kraye has shown, this understanding of moral philosophy originated with the Peripatetics, who associated moral philosophy with a set of works that included the Aristotelian *Ethics* and *Politics*, and the pseudo-Aristotelian *Economics*. It is generally believed that this division was designated by Aristotle himself in his indication of the subject matter of the science that studied human activity and the good as its goal – "politics, economics, and wisdom" (Aristotle, 1994: 10). It retains its force in the Middle Ages; with the emergence of the universities this scheme becomes commonplace in the teaching of moral philosophy. Remaining in the initial stages of early modern philosophy, it is sometimes interpreted in the spirit that ethics is concerned with general principles, and economics and politics with the special application of these principles to the conduct of economy and public affairs (Kraye, 2008: 303–306). Gradually, the view developed that the study of moral

philosophy should begin with ethics as a fundamental and comprehensive discipline, continue with the study of economics, and conclude with the study of politics. Related to this was the notion that economics and politics were the fields of activity relevant to the subject matter of moral philosophy, and activities in these fields were morally accountable.

Meanwhile, with the strengthening of theoretical rigor in the description and explanation of the phenomenon of morality in early modern thought (which was expressed in a change in the view of human being as a moral agent and, in particular, emphasizing autonomy as its essential characteristic), changes occurred in moral philosophy as a whole. Economics and politics inchmeal branched off from it as independent disciplines. An increase in the level of philosophical analysis of morality led to a gradual separation of philosophical ethics, i.e. the theory, the subject of which is the essence of the moral phenomenon, from normative ethics and, more broadly, practical ethics, the subject of which is the content of values and norms, in particular, in their application to specific types of activities. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this trend developed in attempts to build a "pure" moral theory, i.e. free from value content (which has long been associated with metaethics). For analytical moral philosophy, it costed the loss of normative and ethical content (Steinbock, 2013, p. 58) and the loss of interest in ethical and applied problems. However, starting in the 1960s, many analytical philosophers have step by step turned to practical problems and taken up the development of ethical and applied problems. Today, a rare moral philosopher (theorist) does not deal with them.

It is clear that 20<sup>th</sup>-century ethics was not limited to analytical philosophy, and within the other areas of philosophy, the discussion of moral problems was often carried out in projection to practical issues. Moral and ethical research and development related to specific types of activities, the surge of which under the cap of applied ethics in the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was presented in general terms above, was never suspended

The current applied ethics has become the result of a number of factors (Beauchamp, 2005; Steinbock, 2013), among which at least two should be distinguished. Firstly, the changing in various spheres of public practice. For example, the introduction of new technologies into medicine. They made it possible to qualitatively change the possibilities for maintaining and prolonging life, but at the same time sharply raised the question of the necessity of appropriate procedures in each individual case. The possibilities for life support are not unlimited, but is it always advisable, whenever possible, to use high-tech medical equipment, and if the

expediency of using this equipment is not universal, then who can be authorized to make a decision about it?

Bioethics, or biomedical ethics, began with this and a number of other similar issues, gradually completely replacing "deontological ethics", as the ethics of a doctor was traditionally called. In 1982 an eminent analytical philosopher Stephen Toulmin looking back at the trends in the development of moral philosophy a quarter of a century before rightly noted in his article, "How medicine saved ethics from death", that ethics had to be saved, because, in the form of analytical ethics, which limited itself to analyzing the foundations of moral judgments and moral concepts, it had lost any connection with practice and actually found itself at a dead end (Toulmin, 1982, 749). Secondly, the development of applied ethics was a response to the situation that arose in Western democratic societies in the wake of large-scale liberal democratic movements for civil rights, equality, and freedom of expression in the 1960s and 1970s. These movements, directed against many common values and social habits, changed the role of traditional social institutions (family, state, local government, cult), which required rethinking of the ethical foundations of many aspects of public life.

Since the 1970s, the face of applied ethics has changed significantly. Researchers and specialists in various fields of applied ethics have been increasingly less satisfied with applying general provisions to particular public practice and sought its normative and ethical reinterpretation – its description in terms of values and principles, its analysis in regard to decision-making situations, possible conflicts, and attempts to resolve them. Unlike the "old" applied ethics, the emphasis is no more on general ethical provisions that adapt to concrete, professional, corporate and area-specific activities, but on the features of moral experience related to this activity.

This became possible due to the fact that representatives of the special sciences and professions were involved in ethical-applied research and practical studies. Without their work, the enormous progress made in various fields of applied ethics over the past decades would not have been possible. However, only thanks to their efforts, without the contribution of theoretical philosophers, such progress would hardly have been achieved. The advancement in today's applied ethics has been largely ensured by methodological and theoretical work carried out on various practical problems by philosophers already known for their work on moral theory. The peculiarity of current applied ethics is quite clearly visible against the background of the former

applied or practical ethics that developed at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the difference between them is significant.

### **Turning to practice**

As one can clearly see from the comparison of handbooks devoted (as their titles imply) to applied ethics and practical ethics (Cohen and Wellman, 2005; LaFollette, 2005; Singer, 1986), the terms "applied" and "practical" are used in this context mostly interchangeably. These publications clearly show that, in general, "applied ethics" and "practical ethics" are identical concepts (Beauchamp, 2005). If there are any differences, they are similar to the differences common to different authors, with their special approaches and conceptualization. These are not differences in subject matter, ways of problematization, methodology. In the works of individual authors, there may be a separation of applied and practical ethics. However, the divergence between them, when it takes place (Bakshtanovsky and Sogomonov, 2007), is not self-evident and needs clarification and justification.

A non-trivial variant of the conceptual distinction between applied and practical ethics is demonstrated by Andrei Poama in his discussion of two possible approaches to the issue of ethics of public life. Speaking of "public policy ethics", Poama refers to a special case of "practical ethics", which is faced with the task of rationalizing the principles of public policy. Practical ethics can be "applied" and "constructive": according to the first approach, one's moral stance "needs to be ultimately derived from or constrained by a foundational ethical theory," according to the second approach, it "can (and sometimes ought to) be formed independently of the recommendations given by any one particular foundational theory" (Poama, 2019, 37). This conception deserves attention as an example of the differentiation between "applied" and "practical" in ethics, showing how such a distinction can be at the same time distinct and arbitrary.

The problem pointed out by Poama is important and interesting for understanding possible ways to connect normative ethics and practice. Only at first glance, the approaches indicated by Poama correlate with deontological (applied approach) and consequentialist (constructive approach) ethics, and logically with deductive and inductive reasoning logic. Regarding the constructive approach to rationalizing the foundations of public policy, a reasonable question arises: what parameters are used to construct principles? Obviously, we are

talking about the principles of policy making in the best way for this particular area. But "the best" is an evaluative concept, and as such it presupposes a criterion. Such a criterion will be nothing more than the very general principle with which practice correlates, which, in this sense, is applied to practice. Poama says nothing about this, but it is significant that, having divided the selected approaches and discussed their features, he comes to the conclusion that these approaches should not be opposed to each other, but, on the contrary, it is necessary to synthesize them in order to include them in an integrated ethical-practical discourse.

Poama's theory correlates quite closely with the discussion that took place in Russian literature in the 2000s. Starting it Vladimir Bakshtanovsky and Yury Sogomonov argued that applied ethics is, on the one hand, a normative value system as a "product of concretization of morality," and on the other, knowledge obtained and developed on the basis of applied research and innovations; it "is not directly deducible from moral-philosophical theorizing", but is generated in the course of understanding the difficulties that arise on a particular practical path, and ways to overcome them (Bakshtanovsky and Sogomonov, 2007: 120). Unlike Poama, which opposes two approaches in practical ethics and unambiguously elevates practical ethics to normative, Bakshtanovsky and Sogomonov consider these approaches as a continuation of one another. It may seem that they do not define whether applied ethics is the result of concretization of philosophical-theoretical or normative-ethical ideas. This impression is due to the fact that they talk about the concretization of "universal morality", but universality can be associated with the content of moral norms, and not with the peculiarities of their functioning. But as soon as one listens to what they say and how they understand "the universe of morality", it becomes clear that it is about specifying general normative regulation and its application to partial spheres of human activity.

Although these discussions differ in the ways of problematization, the degree of reference to the available literature, and the nature of the authors' reflection, in general they are located in the same problem space and as such are quite comparable. They reflect in different ways the same discursive situation in the applied-ethical literature. It is noteworthy that when Poama refers to two research strategies in practical ethics, he refers to one author or the other, and it soon becomes clear that the difference between these approaches is most relevant not so much to the experience of ethical-applied research as such, but to the results of the interpretation

of their theoretical reflection in the critical literature, which, understandably, is carried out by each author according to their methodological guidelines.

It is not by chance that Poama concludes his article by stating the need to synthesize these approaches. Those who have experience in ethical-applied research realize that at different stages of their work, when solving different problems, one or the other approach may dominate: in some cases it is necessary to apply the general provisions of moral philosophy to the ethical analysis of specific situations (Gert and Weinert, 1982: 51–52), and in others, on the contrary, ethical-applied consideration leads to the identification and understanding of moral problems or some aspects of known moral problems that have not previously been the subject of attention by moral philosophy (Beauchamp, 2005). Therefore, it would be wrong to consider an unambiguous choice in favor of any one approach as productive.

The relation between general and particular moral provisions is ambiguous – it is not exhausted by one-dimensional normative dynamic of reasoning from general provisions to particular ones. And, of course, it is not a matter of concretization of general philosophical moral concepts. The very concept of morality is, figuratively speaking, a "secondary" concept - a concept of the second order. It was historically formed in the process of generalization of special (in the context of morality) normative concepts – good and evil, virtue and vice, justice, etc. (which, in turn, were the product of preceding reimagining significant in the terms of behavior and character qualities), as well as generalizing rethinking of the concepts of law, motivation, deed, punishment and distinguishing some special content in them. The philosophical concept of morality was formed on the basis of generalization of a certain quality of various normative, mental, behavioral, communicative, social, etc. phenomena. This quality is to serve the coordination (ideally, harmonization) of private interests, bringing them into conformity with each other for the good of individuals and society. Interests are considered here in a broad sense, not limited to the pragmatic aspirations of agents. Social order is formed through the coordination of not only interests in the material sense of the word but also individual opinions, beliefs, ideas about an ideal way of life. Taking this into account, we can say that social order is mediated by the coordination (mutual adaptation, not always reaching agreement and, even more so, harmonization) of private dispositions. In this function, as a mechanism for regulating the decisions and actions of individuals in order to harmonize them, morality is required precisely when it is necessary to weaken and remove conflicts between private dispositions, to ensure cooperation, to create conditions for the agents of these dispositions in their decisions and actions to promote the good of each other and the good of the whole.

Moral regulation is carried out by moral agents themselves through self-regulation, as well as their mutual regulation of each other's behavior through a wide range of influences (hints, wishes, appeals, assessments, recommendations, reasons, references to values, traditions and precedents). In this sense, the main actor in morality is an individual who relates him/herself to other individuals, groups, and society. Actions aimed at the benefit of others and contributing to it are valuable. Actions can be taken for specific private purposes, but having a positive effect for someone else's good or they can be directly and exclusively aimed at someone else's good. Actions of this kind are valuable, i.e. desirable, useful, meaningful, important. The experience of perceiving and comprehending such actions is reflected in values, in particular, ranging from non-harm to compassionate care, implemented on various grounds. For these actions to be successful, their agent must possess certain qualities and abilities, or virtues, which are also values in certain extent. Quite common in their content, these values are fixed in various texts, including edifying and normative ones. Thanks to the latter, they gain a foothold in culture as imperatives and, taking, as mentioned above, different forms, they are presented for practical implementation in people's actions and relationships.

Philosophical ethics is aimed at studying the essence and meaning of morality, the peculiarities of its formation, development and functioning in general and at the level of its particular forms. These studies are of a generalized nature. In order to verify and develop the obtained results, they can be continued on the material of specific and concrete public practices. But the empirical verification of general provisions included into research does not make the latter applied. As a theoretical *construct*, the philosophical concept of morality in the abovementioned capacity is not a subject to concretization for application in practice. But the inclusion in the research of empirical verification of general provisions does not make these studies applied. As a theoretical *construct*, the philosophical concept of morality in the abovementioned capacity cannot be adopted for application in practice.

Another thing is the application of general *normative* provisions to particular fields of practice, to professional, corporate and area-specific activities (Gert, 1984; Prokofiev, 2015). What may be perceived as a specification of general principles (theoretical or normative) is in

fact their application to practice in its specific manifestations. If implemented consistently, it may require adapting these provisions or developing new ones – according to the challenges, faced by in a given practical area and an understanding of these challenges and their relationship to the public good.

# **Application and specification of moral principles**

A particular position on this issue was expressed by Alasdair MacIntyre in the early 1980s, when applied ethics was still in its infancy, in an article with the provocative title: "Doesn't Applied Ethics Rest on Error?". As one might guess from the title, the article was directed against applied ethics, which, as MacIntyre was convinced, arose from an error in understanding the nature of moral norms and the nature of their efficacy. This error consisted, according to MacIntyre, in the very project of applying general moral principles, or rules, to activities in specific areas of social practice – medical, business, legal, political, military, and so on – for the sake of which general moral principles would have to be adapted or transformed in some way.

In opposing the ambitions of the proponents of applied ethics, MacIntyre questioned the dominant position in moral philosophy that moral principles (or rules) were inherently historically and socially neutral, and that, accordingly, the moral agent guided in his/her decisions by these principles acted as a universal and rational person, as if independent of his/her particular social determinations. Such an understanding of moral principles can lead to difficulties in applying them to the special fields of activity mentioned above. And then the scheme of the work of moral principles appears as follows: first, the rules themselves are formulated, for example, rules concerning truthfulness and honesty, and then, if there are special relationships between people included in some areas of social practice, such as medical or legal, these rules must be applied in accordance with them, with appropriate practical purposes (MacIntyre, 1984: 501).

According to McIntyre, moral rules do not exist in abstraction, in a timeless and extrasocial context. They arose from the special needs of practice and are given in application to practice. McIntyre agrees that something is going on with the rules, they are not static in their content and scope. Their application can expand, and this happens in various ways. McIntyre identifies three possible expansion trajectories in the application of the rule. First, a rule may be formulated in a particular socially concrete situation but formulated in an abstract form sufficient to be perceived as a supra-situational rule addressed to each individual. Such a rule does not need to be adapted to special situations: in each special situation, the moral agent is able to be guided by a general rule known to him/her. A person who understands what truthfulness is does not need an explanation of how the principle of truthfulness applies in the practice of a doctor or lawyer. Secondly, one can imagine a case where a rule is formulated based on the experience of certain situations to regulate behavior within such situations, but then it may be considered appropriate in situations of a different kind. There is also no special need for applied ethics here since the point is to reformulate the rule, which can be considered as the task of formulating a rule, i.e. the usual task of morality. Thirdly, an extension of the rule may be required if there is an understanding of the urgency of its application in cases previously considered different from the traditional application of the rule. In other words, there is a change in the understanding of the application of the rule, and in this sense, a change in the understanding of the rule itself. Have we in this case an extension of the application of a known rule or the formulation of a new rule? The answer to this question depends on whether the arguments used in the justification of the updated rule are the same as those used in the justification of the previous rule and to what extent the normative context of the rule is preserved when the scope of its application is expanded.

According to McIntyre, in no case of extrapolation or transformation of rules is there a need for applied ethics, since such procedures are used in one form or another in ordinary normative processes, which the proponents of applied ethics do not understand, dooming applied ethics to error (MacIntyre, 1984: 512).

Regardless of MacIntyre's position, the very question of how general moral principles can be applied to special spheres of practice (in MacIntyre's version, how the known rules can be applied to new cases) has important methodological implications. The answer to this question is not obvious, and the procedures of application and extrapolation are not at all trivial. However, it is necessary to clarify the statement of the problem.

In discussing MacIntyre's approach, I have used the word "norm" to refer generically to the forms of moral imperative. As to McIntyre, he speaks of "principles" and "rules," most often using these words almost synonymously and labelling normativity as such. The distinction between forms of normativity allows us to differentiate normative thinking and trace its manifestations at different levels of the moral agent's self-determination. Attentive to such distinctions, authors distinguish between imperatives of a high degree of generality, which express the initial grounds for decisions, judgements and actions, and relatively special imperatives, such as prohibitions and prescriptions, which deal with situations specific in one respect or another.

This may be the division between principles and rules. Inattention to rules in this conventional sense of the word can lead to a moral skepticism that reduces morality to an abstract admonition unrelated to practical tasks, and thus to an abstract understanding of morality. This is an understanding which, for example, does not see behind the principle of non-harm less general prescriptions: *not to kill, not to cause suffering, not to steal, not to perjure, not to lie, to respect others' rights, etc.*, and behind the principle of care such prescriptions as: to be compassionate, to treat the other as oneself, to participate in another's life, if needed, to sacrifice oneself for another, etc.

MacIntyre's approach might have been clearer with a richer conceptualization of the genealogy and ontology of moral norms and, accordingly, a separate consideration of the nomogenesis and transit of norms, on the one hand, and the process of norm assimilation, on the other. On one particular case, MacIntyre makes an observation that includes such emblematic words: "the movement from the several prohibitions of several distinct types of killing to a single comprehensive prohibition of homicide, a movement actually made in a number of earlier societies..." (MacIntyre, 1984: 506). This remark reflects an essential regularity in nomogenesis, which is that norms (not only moral ones) are formed on the basis of generalized reflection on the experience of conflict resolution. Nomogenesis thus consists in the movement of normative thought from the situationally specific to the super-situationally generalized. The latter is embodied in values and *principles* as their imperative correlates. In turn, principles are concretized in *rules*, through which the general value content is adapted to specific situations of communicative and social practice.

From a historical point of view, the principles of non-harm and care were the result of a long process of generalizing the specific experience of human relations, abstracting the result of generalizations from specific situations. The abstract nature of the principle (for example, "Love thy neighbor") is necessary to ensure the normative and logical possibility of its application in a wide variety of situations. However, this does not exclude the inquisitive or

confused question: "Who is my neighbor?", to which, as we know, was definitely answered (Luke 10:25–29). "Love your neighbor", "Be caring", "Help the weak", "Cause no harm" – these and similar norms are organic to the daily experience of each person, intuitively understandable, learned by everyone during the process of socialization (which, however, in individual cases does not guarantee spontaneous or conscious rejection of them). Nevertheless, there is a demand to comprehend their value and imperative content, to isolate it, to formalize it, to transform it into admonition and edification, as well as additional moralistic explication, theological and philosophical substantiating interpretations, the baton of which, starting from the ancient wisdom literature, has more than one millennium.

For a number of reasons, among which we should mention, first of all, the atomization of individuals, the weakening of the role of communitarian ties in social life, the excessive institutionalization and technologization of public practice, especially its individual isolated segments, the hypertrophy of pragmatic goals (seemingly justified due to their professional, corporate, institutional, business rootedness), this traditional cultural heritage is losing its importance in modern society. The concern about these trends leads to an understanding of the need for additional moral-regulatory tools, especially in those areas of public practice, where people, being objectively connected to each other by the situation of encounter and inevitable interaction, find themselves in an unequal position with respect to each other (with all possible adverse consequences). This inequality stems, among other things, from differences in functional statuses, in the ability to make decisions or influence the decision-making process. Applied ethics has been formed for the sake of developing additional moral-regulatory tools and studying the means to ensure their effectiveness.

In terms of applying general norms to the conditions of specific social practices and the possible norm-creation, the task of applied ethics is similar in its own way to what happens at the level of ordinary morality. Strictly speaking, moral norms – principles and rules – are not prescriptions of direct application: they most often do not prescribe specific actions; the choice of action is always up to the moral agent [8].

However, in special (professionally, corporately, and area-specifically defined) activities, the choice of morally relevant actions is often complicated by the presence of strong pragmatic demands on the agent, such as productivity and efficiency. Some types of practice are not perceived differently, except from a pragmatic point of view. But suddenly something

happens that makes a person change their mind about a certain activity. Usually value-neutral, it begins to be perceived through the prism of moral values. Pragmatic demands are potentially always in conflict with moral ones; due to many different factors, this potential conflict is easily actualized. As soon as, due to certain shifts in value thinking and social experience, some practice begins to be perceived as ethically relevant, this occurs in the form of awareness of the contradiction between the traditional pragmatic goals of activity within this practice and the moral meaning of this activity revealed with a new look.

Applied-ethical innovations are aimed at preventing the dominance of pragmatic requirements. This can be clearly seen in the example of the *Guidance on ethics of tuberculosis prevention, care and control* (WHO, 2010), which is the most elaborated, from a normative-ethical point of view, document of this kind. It provides a certain understanding of ethics (ethical values): they point out "how we should live our lives." This means that ethics tells us that we must live our lives *well* and *with dignity*, based on the criteria set by ethical concepts as the basic value bases for decision-making. The understanding of ethics as principles of activity oriented towards the good of other people goes back through the *Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights* (adopted by the United Nations, 1948), the decisions of the Nuremberg Trials in the case of doctors (1947) and, further, to the tradition of modern moral philosophy with its principles of autonomy, respect for the dignity of the human being, individual responsibility, universality, justice, mercy, etc.

So even the abstractly formulated concept of ethics given in the *Guidance* fits into a completely distinct moral-philosophical and normative-ethical context. This is clearly seen in the less general principles put forward in the *Guidance*: *social justice* (*understood primarily as equality*), *solidarity*, *the common good*, *autonomy*, *reciprocity*, *subsidiarity*, *participation*, *transparency*, *accountability* (WHO, 2010: 6–7) [9]. From a strictly ethical point of view, not all of these principles look like ethical ones. But an analysis of this document developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) shows that it establishes solutions aimed at helping those in need and those in specific biomedical and social circumstances as ethically significant. These circumstances set the focus on caring for the human well-being: creating conditions for everyone's access to high-quality diagnosis and effective treatment, reducing the suffering associated with the disease, reducing the material burden caused by it, efforts to improve

pharmaceuticals and improve treatment methods, promoting accessibility of both, respect for human rights to prevent and treat the disease.

In other words, at the level of specific measures aimed at fulfilling individual tasks to combat the disease, ethical principles are transformed into principles of activity and, to the extent that they control the area-specific activity, they take the form of operational principles. In fact, their implementation is aimed at giving this activity a character corresponding to ethical guidelines, because solving publicly significant tasks of establishing a timely diagnosis, proper treatment and concomitant care up to the recovery of patients, comprehensive disease prevention, maximum containment of the spread of infection during peak periods require medical workers not only to fulfill their professional duties but also to realize their responsibility for ensuring the public good.

During the pandemic, the question of the vaccination regime may arise as one of the most urgent, namely: whether to carry it out forcibly or to give citizens the right to decide for themselves whether to get themselves jabbed or not. Whether transparency is indispensable in resolving the issue of compulsory vaccination and whether public discussions are necessary on this issue seems to depend on the state of society (the development of institutions of self-government and public opinion, the level of education and civic consciousness of the population, etc.). However, the decision-making on this issue requires discursive support. No matter, whether the discussion is public or expert, a number of fundamental considerations should be borne in mind when discussing it: whether compulsory vaccination is necessary and whether its implementation is commensurate with the risks to public health and the health system that abstinence would pose, how safe the vaccine is, how effective it really is, whether compulsory vaccination would violate trust between the public and the health system, and whether it would be appropriate for the public and the health system. These criteria were formulated in the WHO document (WHO, 2021).

Thus, we can see that the regulatory effectiveness of normative-ethical concepts, which are common in their value content, is ensured by their adaptation to professional, corporate and area-specific activity – namely, their concretization in accordance with the goals and objectives of this activity, filling it with additional normative content set by the general ethical concepts.

In ordinary moral practice, the adaptation and localization of general principles occur spontaneously, through moral sensitivity, intuition, or specifically, through ingenuity, on the

basis of reasoning and the moral experience of the actor (one's own or others'). In contrast to everyday practice, in specialized social practice, especially when it is associated with extraordinary phenomena and processes, such adaptation requires special expert and collective-reflexive work based on an analysis of the ongoing innovations and the possibilities of applying the known normative experience under new conditions. The coordinated, based on collective reflection application of moral principles in specialized public practice presupposes formal institutionalization of ethical regulation, which is all the more intensified with the adoption of codes of professional and corporate ethics.

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As various authors have noted, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century applied ethics developed out of the numerous and diverse contacts of moral philosophers and moral theologians with representatives of professions (medical workers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, engineers, etc.) and civil movements (for the protection of the rights of women, minorities, animals, consumers, prisoners, the mentally ill, etc.), as well as representatives of social and psychological sciences (Beauchamp, 2005: 1–2). However, as we have seen, this is also characteristic of applied ethics at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Applied ethics was formed as a result of intellectual and cross-disciplinary rethinking of changes in socio-moral experience, moral practice, and moral expectations of society. The codes of professional and corporate ethics emerged not so much in response to the needs of professions and corporations as in response to public concern about the socio-moral challenges revealed by particularistic trends in the development of professions and corporations, particular areas of social activity, such transformations in them that may threaten the common good.

Moral values are formulated in such a way that they presuppose the individual as such – a "universal" person, as if not bound by partial determinations. However, the empirical or real individual, which in an ideal is fully rational, empathic and receptive to cultural norms, in practice is limited in his/her decisions, judgements and actions by various partial circumstances. Some of them, conditioned by an individual's professional, group, communitarian affiliation, are such that the activity carried out in these circumstances needs additional normative regulation, which is designed to ensure, on the one hand, that activities comply with the values

of the profession, corporation, organization, etc., and, on the other hand, the values of society, the principles of the common good [10].

Normative problems may arise within professions, corporations, and organizations due to possible unfair performance of professional and official duties that discredit the dignity of the profession and the corporation. But society, represented by its various agents, is much more sensitive to problems of a different kind related to the observance of human rights in the profession and the corporation and ensuring the common good. Professions and corporations are expected to contribute to the common good in their functioning, and this applies to both the direct and indirect effects of their activities.

It is evident, that the codes of professional or corporate ethics have dual orientation – professional-corporate and public. Professions and corporations are interested in using special codes of conduct to ensure the effectiveness and loyalty of their members. But society is interested in ensuring the social responsibility of representatives of professions and corporations, so that they take into account the public interests as much as possible, and this should be guaranteed by professional and corporate codes.

Society tries to "supervise" over particular activities by means of morality. This supervision is carried out both from the outside — with the help of mass media, public organizations, and from the inside — through individual agents of this activity who are interested in maintaining their dignity and thereby preserving their moral reputation, as well as by imputing codes of professional and corporate ethics to collective agents.

Efforts aimed at the normative arrangement of special types of activities, the conditions of such normative regulation, ways to increase its effectiveness, etc. are one of the most important research focuses of applied ethics. In addressing specific spheres of practice, ethics does not lose the generality of its concepts but rather contributes to the "moral generalization" of these spheres of practice. Ethics (as a part of practical philosophy) strengthens its practical character through applied ethics. And ethical-applied work, both at the expert level and at the level of collective "field" reflection, becomes one of the important factors of social wealth – in those aspects of it that are associated with the stability of social relations (mediated by professional or corporate activity), the balance of social actions and their more reliable predictability.

### **NOTES**

- [1] There are areas in public practice that involve representatives of different professions, different organizations, and individuals in their private capacity. The very activity in a certain practical area, for example, in politics, in civil society, in the interaction between people and nature, more broadly, the ecosphere, may have constraints determined not by profession or membership in an organization, but by the area of the activity itself. In this case, I am talking about area-specific practices, as different to professional or corporate ones. These constraints can be seen as a part of a general moral system, they are most likely (but not necessarily) part of professional and corporate regulations and codes, but they are not always explicitly given (especially to those actors for whom professional and corporate constraints do not matter), and require special normative attention.
- [2] Both in the media and in the specialized literature, the word "ethics" is used in different meanings as a subject matter of a study (of professional ethics) and as a theory studying this subject (professional ethics).
- [3] The degree of completeness of this register of problems, which ultimately has rather close boundaries, deserves critical discussion, and can be further specified.
- [4] This edition presents Kant's "metaphysics of ethics" as a single work in four sections. The first one includes the complete text of *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, the second one includes extracts from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and the last two sections present the complete text of *The Metaphysics of Morals*).
- [5] The first summer school was held in July 1891, the second in July 1892, and the third in July 1894. No summer school was held in 1893 because of the First World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, one of the conferences was held during the World's Fair. The fourth summer school was also planned for July-August 1895, but no information could be obtained about it. See. (School of Applied Ethics, 1891; W.L.S., 1892: 113-114; School of Applied Ethics, 1892; School of Applied Ethics, 1894; J. Educ., 1894; Huling, 1894; Summer Schools, 1895).
- [6] Some of these lectures were later published. See: (Adler, 1892; Adams (ed.), 1893). About the key figures of this remarkable movement see (Friess, 1981; Shields (ed.), 2017; Heinrichs, 2018).
- [7] The professional ethics of the doctor was regularly discussed on the pages of the journal throughout its subsequent history (until 1980, when it was transformed into *The British Medical Journal*).
- [8] In the case of norms such as "Do not kill", "Do not steal", "Do not perjure yourself", "Do not commit adultery", it is clear what should not be done. As it has been variously expressed in the literature, prohibitive norms are unambiguous, while incentive norms are subject for different interpretations and can be implemented through various actions. As for the certainty of prohibitions, not everything is so obvious here. For example, the difference of connotative associations in relation to some discursive words and expressions often leads to mutual

misunderstanding between interlocutors. This mutual misunderstanding can be stimulated by the deliberate ambiguity of what is said, when all the spoken words are true, but the meaning of what is said is not explicated with evidence, so that an understatement on the part of one interlocutor leads to a misunderstanding on the part of the other. In other words, the implementation of the prohibition of lying (if we admit that such a prohibition is unconditional) in different situations requires actions, the relevance and adequacy of which are established by a moral agent him/herself, independently or in discussion with communicative partners. Moreover, creative ingenuity is required from a moral agent in actions to implement the norms "Help those in need", "Be beneficent/merciful", "Be care".

[9] With minor variations, this set of principles is presented in other documents (WHO, 2007; WHO, 2016).

[10] Discussions on the "common good" often lead to a question: who decides what the common good is and what are its principles? This question seems to suggest that there is some kind of "that very" common good, and then that there are some "experts" who have "reliable" knowledge about it. This view is quite consistent with the spirit of classical enlightenment thinking, even if "experts" actually mean moralizing ideologists, who have appropriated the right to speak "in the name of morality", while translating under this name some private interests. But it does not fit into modern socio-political and socio-ethical thinking, according to which the common good is a dynamic concept generated by an endless public discourse, part of which are speeches by politicians and media persons, civic actions, normative documents proposed by various social agents, etc.

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