

# THE VIEWS OF PHILOSOPHY AND MEDICAL ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

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## ABSTRACT

In the research paper studied about the philosophy and medical ethics in detail. Which includes definitions, its meanings and the characteristics? The relation between the philosophy and the medical ethics. Studied about the importance of the philosophy and medical ethics.

**Key words:** Ethics, Philosophy, medical ethics

What is philosophy? **Philosophy** ('love of wisdom' in Ancient Greek) is a systematic study of general and fundamental questions concerning topics like existence, reason, knowledge, value, mind, and language. It is a rational and critical inquiry that reflects on its methods and assumptions.<sup>1</sup>

### Etymology of Philosophy:

The word "philosophy" is derived from the Greek words "philo" (φίλο), meaning "love," and "sophia" meaning "wisdom." It literally means "love of wisdom."<sup>2</sup>

The branches of philosophy normally divided into four major branches.<sup>3</sup> they are as follows:

### *Metaphysics, Epistemology, Axiology and Logic.*

1. **Metaphysics:** Examines the nature of reality and existence.
2. **Epistemology:** Focuses on the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired.
3. **Axiology:** Concerned with values, ethics, and aesthetics.
4. **Logic:** Deals with reasoning and critical thinking.

The research paper mainly focused on the medical ethics so the sub branch of axiology ethics was explained.

Ethics may be defined as the science of human conduct, or character.<sup>4</sup> Ethics is a normative science, a study of the good and bad, right and wrong, just and unjust, virtuous and vicious

actions of individuals and institutions. It deals with certain principles and standards by which we judge individual and institutional actions to be right or wrong, moral or immoral. Ethics not only describes principles and standards by which we judge but also concerns itself with justification of those principles and standards. Hence, ethics is called a normative science.

The word 'ethics' is derived from the Greek word *ethos*, which means custom or character.<sup>5</sup> The moral is derived from the Latin word *mores*, which means convention or practice. The word morality refers to the customs and practices of an individual or a social group, where as the word ethics is used to refer to a set of moral principles and rules explicitly held by that individual or a social group. Morality is used in the relative sense of one's own culture, religion, or ethnicity, where as ethics cuts across and transcends such considerations and refers to universality.<sup>6</sup>

Ethics is concerned with actions of human beings. It does not refer to the capacity or potentiality of a person, but to the goodness or badness of the activities of the person. Human conduct has a social reference.<sup>7</sup> Most of our actions derive the moral significance largely from our relations to our fellow beings. Hence, the aim of ethics is guiding people in the practice of right conduct or the art of living the good life.

Medical ethics or biomedical ethics is a branch of applied ethics with its own principles, rules and methods. Medical ethics is concerned with the ethical problems arising from the interaction of patients and healthcare professionals, and with the way in which medical technology as a whole should be used in the existing healthcare system.<sup>8</sup> In the field of medicine there are some crucial questions such as what is the sanctity of human by quality of human life and value of human life; which one will be given priority when there is a clash between quality of life and value of life and soon. There are persistent disagreements and controversies on these issues and medical ethics by means of reasoning tries to resolve these issues and provide morally acceptable solutions to them.<sup>9</sup>

Medical ethics deals with moral human relationships between healthcare professionals and patients on one hand and the principles and problems of medical care on the other. The knowledge of medical science and technology has undergone tremendous change in the recent past. As a result of constant experimentation and innovations in the field of medical treatment the concept of ethics itself is fast changing. The new techniques invented in recent times can emote human life and prevent human suffering to a great extent. However, the progress of medical science and technology in isolation from the overall value system of society raises many ethical issues.

Medical ethics gets its inspiration from philosophical values. It is concerned with the ethical values appropriate to the professionals working in the fields of medicine. Medical treatment for curing human diseases is not like repairing and replacing some defective parts of a machine. It deals with human persons, and as such, it goes beyond the techniques used in a machine to human problems. Curing a human disease means restoring the person to his normal health for performing his or her routine functions. Medical treatments for human diseases is constantly evolving as new drugs are developed, as new drugs are developed, as new techniques are devised, and as age old medical beliefs and truths are critically examined in the light of the new scientific knowledge.

Medical practice is a social institution, and medical practitioners are gained special rights by the government.<sup>10</sup> these rights bring certain obligations with them, the obligation or the duty of exercising those rights for saving human lives and providing relief to the sick and the diseased, but not for fulfilling the selfish interests of medical practitioners. The primary function of a medical practitioner is to relieve pain, to cure the disease, and to promote health of the patients. Hence, every medical practitioner must dedicate his knowledge and skills to safeguard the health of the patients, but not to promote his or her economic interests. In other words, the medical practitioners are expected to subordinate their personal interests in the pursuit of their professional goals.

Long ago, the ancient Greek moral philosopher, Socrates said 'it is better to be an unhappy man than to be a happy pig' the satisfaction of a pig with the things as they were may be contrasted with a human being's struggle to make things better. Man's willingness to run the risks for requisite changes and improvements is what makes men as humans. Technology is nothing but a combination of human reason and natural process, which supplements, alters, or replaces nature's way of doing things.

The principles such as human dignity, individual autonomy or self determination, informed consent, rights of patients, truth telling and justice will provide a clear idea about the changes brought in the recent times in the field of health care ethics.<sup>11</sup>

Ethical principles are concerned with the behavior of persons, whose actions may be beneficial or injurious to their fellow beings. Ethical principles apprise us which human acts are morally right and which acts are morally right actions from morally wrong actions. In general, morally right actions are those that are in accordance with moral principles and morally wrong actions are those that are being disapproved by most of the rational men, who advocate for not doing such actions.

Ethical principles are universal in the sense that they are applicable equally to all persons, in all situations without any exception.<sup>12</sup> the universality of an ethical principle tells us to what sort of persons the principle may apply and the scope of the principle informs us as to what sort of practice or situation it applies. In the context of medical practice, moral principles specify the rights and responsibilities of medical professionals towards their patients and the rights and duties of the patients. In addition, ethical principles help us to evaluate whether or not the use of a particular medical technique or innovative medical procedure in specific conditions is morally permissible and its practice is ethically justified.<sup>13</sup> Application of ethical principles is an essential aspect of moral argumentation to justify certain medical choices and procedures as right or wrong.

Human life is basically value-oriented. To make human life worth living, it must be based on certain morals and values. Medical ethics or healthcare ethics is concerned with the values appropriate to the professionals working in the field of medical practice. Sometimes conflict of interest may arise in these areas, and medical profession seeks to codify a set of rules to guide their members.

**Why Is Medical Ethics Important?**

Doctors deal with life or death decisions every day and it is vital to have a universal framework to help make these choices. The decisions you make must always have the patient as the focus.

### Four Pillars of Medical Ethics<sup>14</sup>

The four pillars of medical ethics are:

1. **Beneficence (doing well):** e.g. you have just finished your shift as a resident doctor on the ward and your colleague taking over is stuck in traffic, meaning they will be an hour late. Beneficence dictates that you stay on the ward for an extra hour to ensure the patients are safe until your colleague arrives and can take over.
2. **Non-maleficence (to do no harm):** e.g. a patient is requesting antibiotics for an infection that you suspect is viral. Non-maleficence dictates that you do not prescribe antibiotics as the patient will not benefit and may be at risk of developing resistance in the future due to inappropriate usage.
3. **Autonomy (giving the patient the freedom to choose freely, where they are able):** e.g. you are an oncologist and your patient has diagnosed breast cancer and needs a mastectomy in order to survive. You give them all of the information about the surgery including the risks and benefits and they decide not to go ahead with it. According to autonomy, given the patient has capacity to make the decision, you should respect their decision.
4. **Justice (ensuring fairness):** e.g. you are a dermatologist. Justice dictates that you must learn how different skin conditions present on every skin color to ensure that patients of different races do not receive different standard of care.

### Conclusion:

In the research paper describes about the philosophy. How the relation between the philosophy and medical ethics was explained. The ethical principles applicable to the medical practice are discussed. And the four pillars are **Beneficence, Non-maleficence, Autonomy, and Justice.**

Medical ethics or biomedical ethics is not only concerned with the physician - patient relationship, but also includes a larger area of medicine such as – truth telling and confidentiality, human dignity and informed consent, the rights of patients to refuse life sustaining treatment, abortion, euthanasia, artificial methods of reproduction, organ donation, distribution<sup>15</sup> and transplantation, genetic therapy, human cloning and stem cell research, experiments on dying patients, involuntary hospitalization and treatment of mentally disturbed people, experimentation on human subjects and so on.<sup>16</sup> It is concerned with the establishment and maintenance of moral human relationships between the sick and the dying on the one hand and the health care providers on the other. In other words, medical ethics is concerned with how medical professionals should treat their fellow human beings in matters of illness, injury, dying and death.<sup>17</sup>

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