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# Ethics in Research

Principles and Practical  
Considerations



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Antonio Russo · Mario Serio  
Editors

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# Preface

Ethics and Research operate in two different disciplinary fields and have each one an autonomous theoretic foundation.

This volume, however, aims at highlighting the intimate connection established between the two terms just mentioned, under the specific aspect that even research activity, which is usually understood as intended for the maximum expansion of intellectual and cognitive freedom, must observe some ethical rules.

Such an adherence by researchers to ethical standards pursues a twofold objective.

On the one hand, it aspires to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information and, thus, to guarantee that no source of knowledge is neglected. Attention to the selection and collection of data is, in fact, an essential requirement for the reliability of any scientific research.

On the other hand, the firm and stable reference to ethical rules allows the researcher to report results objectively, without any improper bias and with particular attention to the compliance with those rules, methodologically and ethically, that are commonly accepted by the scientific community.

This link between research, as a completely free and purely intellectual activity, and ethics, as a dimension of the human beings striving to identify, on their own, the rules that limit their actions, finds full confirmation in this study.

The matter at issue may be approached from a plurality of perspectives, as it transcends the boundaries of a specific topic or field of enquiry, broadening itself on the scope of the intrinsic and extrinsic values of research.

It has been deemed fruitful, however, to deal with the topic looking at every specific research field rather than developing it in general terms. Ethical rules should be declined according to a certain discipline, be it part of social sciences or natural sciences, emphasising the specific features of each branch. Although it is possible to trace a common ethical core to every subject under investigation, each field of research—as will emerge from this volume—has its own peculiar rules. In other words, if completeness and accuracy in collecting data and correctness in reporting results are features that are common to all scientific research ensuring its integrity, it is clear that the way of approaching the dialogue between ethics and research depends on the specific character of the methodological framework of each science.

It varies from natural sciences, which are susceptible to experimental verification to human or philosophical sciences, that can be evaluated in terms of completeness of the information.

The volume, therefore, offers the reader a wide range of insights into the aspects that the topic of ethics and research can present, within a plurality of fields of study, from medicine, dentistry, biotechnology and robotics to philosophy, law and urban studies.

In particular, the authors explore ethical issues concerning the relationship between philosophy and medicine and caring for patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some ethical concerns for researchers came to light also looking at their role within university institutions and academic publishing. Finally, the ethical dimension of legal research, as observed from a comparative law perspective, urban studies and robotics are deeply analysed.

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# Philosophy and Medicine. The Search for Happiness



Lorella Congiunti

**Abstract** Philosophy and Medical Sciences have something in common. They search for truth in different ways but they have sometimes the same material object and they ever must have the same goal: human happiness. We can discover this common trait, from the history of both, thanks to some important figures of philosophers and doctors. In this context, a reflection on science and technics in their fundamental epistemological meanings is a matter of interest. We will offer some reflections about this—referring ourselves to two great ancient philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, as well as the great doctor, Galen.

## 1 Introduction

Philosophy and medicine, while being distinct, are strongly related to each other, and in a certain sense, have the same anthropological goal: the happiness of human beings.

The relationship between medicine and philosophy is very old; philosophy has always found in medicine a standard of knowledge which unites the characteristics of both science and technics in the classical sense of these terms. Technics, just as medieval arts, or better said, the plurality of technics and arts, used to have a broad meaning which included not only making and producing things but also knowing and acting morally and politically [1].

Therefore, when I refer to medicine as technic and art, I mean it in the classical sense when they were still synonymous, which was extremely meaningful from a theoretical point of view, as the separation between utility and beauty had not yet been produced.

In Aristotle's first book of *Metaphysics*, we read that technics consists in the capacity of obtaining the universal from the particular experiences of the same type, that it is a science of the "why," and that it can be taught. The first technics were from the necessity to satisfy our needs, then afterward appeared the technics not

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strictly aimed at a practical use. In fact, *technē*<sup>1</sup> forms part of the dialectical virtues, or rather perfections of the intellect, and is distinguished from other virtues because it aims at the “how to do” without limiting itself to the production of objects which are external to the subject, but rather has a primary cognitive value pointed towards an ethical and political goal which surpasses it.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, medicine and philosophy have the common goal of human well-being, although from different points of view, both of them cannot take care of woman/man without knowing her/him.<sup>3</sup>

We will offer some reflections about this—referring to two great ancient philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, as well as the great doctor, Galen.

## 2 Medicine as Technics and Art

Interesting to us is what Plato offers in *Gorgias*, a dialogue dedicated to the analysis of rhetoric, which has as protagonists Plato’s master, Socrates, together with the sophist, Gorgias, as well as both of their respective students, Chaerephon and Polus, with the noble young Callicles, who hosts Gorgias in Athens. Socrates, while searching for a definition of rhetoric which he holds as persuasion without knowledge, institutes some comparisons between the different disciplines, including medicine. In fact, in the dialogue Socrates states:

The soul and body being two, have two arts corresponding to them: there is the art of politics attending on the soul; and another art attending on the body, of which I know no single name, but which may be described as having two divisions, one of them gymnastic, and the other medicine. And in politics there is a legislative part, which answers to gymnastic, as justice does to medicine. (Plato, *Gorgias* 464b–c)

Therefore, Plato judges medicine to be one of the arts that regards the good of the body, together with gymnastics, and medicine is analogous to justice: as medicine cares for the body, justice cares for the soul:

and the two parts run into one another, justice having to do with the same subject as legislation, and medicine with the same subject as gymnastic, but with a difference. Now, seeing that there are these four arts, two attending on the body and two on the soul for their highest good. (Plato, *Gorgias* 464b–c)

The goal of all these disciplines is the greater good; for medicine and gymnastics, it is the good of the body, while for justice and law, it is the good of the soul. It is interesting to see how, from the Greek perspective, “being a human being” and “being

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<sup>1</sup> Originally, *ars* used to be the translation of *technē*. There was a separation between technics and arts until the Modern Age, when gradually the term technics is used more in the field of utility, while art becomes a term used in the field of beauty, which value can be discussed.

<sup>2</sup> Virtue—*aretè*—in the classical sense refers to the perfection of a being, in a way that a virtuous man is he who perfects his own human being, in moral context, acting according to the good, and in the intellectual context, knowing according to the truth.

<sup>3</sup> See also: Wulff [3]; Pellegrino [4]; Pagnini [5]; Federspil [6]; Gifford [7]; Campaner [8].

a citizen” correspond, so that the care of the soul consists in justice and politics, that is, in a political dimension. Unfortunately, these disciplines have to endure attacks of “flattery”, which is a false knowing:

Flattery, or rather guessing their natures, has distributed herself into four shams or simulations of them; she puts on the likeness of someone or other of them, and pretends to be that which she simulates, and having no regard for men’s highest interests, is ever making pleasure the bait of the unwary, and deceiving them into the belief that she is of the highest value to them. Cookery simulates the disguise of medicine and pretends to know what food is the best for the body; and if the physician and the cook had to enter into a competition where children were the judges, or men who had no more sense than children as to which of them better understands the goodness or badness of food, the physician would be starved to death. Therefore I deem this flattery activity to be of an ignoble sort, Polus, for to you, I am now addressing myself, because it aims at pleasure without any thought of the best. I do not call it an art, but only an experience, because it is unable to explain or to give a reason of the nature of its own applications. And I do not call any irrational thing an art. (Plato, *Gorgias* 464c–465b)

The arts that care for the body and soul are counterfeited by false arts, which do not aim at the good but instead at pleasure. Cookery is the counteract of medicine, since it does not have any knowledge about either human nature or food, and it is an irrational activity.

Plato continues: “Cookery, then, I maintain to be a flattery which takes the form of medicine; and tiring, in like manner, is a flattery which takes the form of gymnastic, and is knavish, false, ignoble, illiberal, working deceitfully by the help of lines, and colors, and enamels, and garments, and making men affect a spurious beauty to the neglect of the true beauty which is given by gymnastic.” (Plato, *Gorgias*, 464b–c)

Plato compares the false arts to a rhetoric which aims only at emotional persuasion, at consensus, while the true arts, such as medicine, are analogous with philosophy and speak about that which they know, thus aiming at the good and at the truth.

And this, I say, is the natural difference between the rhetorician and the sophist, but by reason of their near connection, they are apt to be jumbled up together; neither do they know what to make of themselves, nor do other men know what to make of them. For if the body presided over itself, and were not under the guidance of the soul, and the soul did not discern and discriminate between cookery and medicine, but the body was made the judge of them, and the rule of judgment was the bodily delight which was given by them, then the word of Anaxagoras, that word with which you, friend Polus, are so well acquainted, would prevail far and wide: ‘Chaos’ would come again, and cookery, health, and medicine would mingle in an indiscriminate mass. (Plato, *Gorgias*, 465b–e)

Without the cultivation of knowledge, there would be a confusion between true and false arts, and it would not be possible to distinguish true care from merely apparent care.

Then consider what truth as well as Hippocrates says about this or about any other nature. Ought we not to consider first whether that which we wish to learn and to teach is a simple or multiform thing, and if simple, then to enquire what power it has of acting or being acted upon in relation to other things, and if multiform, then to number the forms; and see first in the case of one of them, and then in the case of all of them, what is that power of acting or being acted upon which makes each and all of them to be what they are? (Plato, *Fedro*, 270a–d)