

Responsibility, Integrity and the Role of Ethical Experts in Clinics and Science

Conference: Integrity and Responsibility in Science:
Navigating through Conflicting Social and Epistemic Demands
ZiF Bielefeld, October 2018

Part I: The problem of letting happen

Part II: The problem of ethical expertise in clinical ethics

Part III: Integrity

Part I: The problem of letting happen

Mackie's Straight Rule of Responsibility

An agent is responsible for all and only for his intentional actions.

Problems:

- No responsibility for the consequences of our actions.
- No responsibility for things we do non-intentionally.
- No responsibility for things we let happen.

Ascriptivism: Mackie's rule tells us what actions are.

Our **responsibility** goes as far as the normative expectation that we could find an **explanation** for whatever happens in the intentional attitudes of the agent.

In making an agent responsible we do not merely demand that what she does is explainable from her intentional attitudes, it also has to be **justifiable**.

Part II: The problem of ethical expertise in clinical ethics

Three historical factors that have been responsible for the development of applied ethics

- Atrocities and catastrophies.
- Value changes in society.
- Dilemmas.

“If the moral philosopher cannot help with the problems of medical ethics, he ought to shut up shop.”

(Richard Hare, „Medical Ethics. Can the Moral Philosopher Help?“

In: ders. *Essays on Bioethics*, Oxford 1993: 1)

Part II: The problem of ethical expertise in clinical ethics

The problem of ethical expertise in clinical ethics

How could experts in ethics be of help in dealing with moral dilemmas?

- They deduce the answer from the universal moral principles.
- They add to the descriptions of the situation until the dilemma vanishes.
- They draw on intermediate principles.
- They aim at a reflective equilibrium.
- They should not pretend to be moral experts.
- They facilitate acting morally responsibly (albeit not necessarily morally right)

Part III: Integrity

It is at the core of **being a person** to have her or his own profile of things they care about.

We have to take care for our individual kind of **consistency in our sphere of responsibility**.

Part of what we have to care about are **ethical concerns**

By facilitating to act responsibly, **applied ethics helps professionals** in medicine and science in staying decent in their decisions.

Since ethics usually does not deliver final solutions to moral dilemmas, but only more and more intricate arguments, considerations and doubts, there are always **new challenges** a responsible, upright person will have to answer.

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Thank you !

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