
Regional Panorama

Present Status and Prospects of Bioethics in Argentina

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Most developments supporting the study of bioethics in Argentina are of relatively recent vintage. This article is dedicated to describing those developments—including creation of Argentina's Institute of Medical Humanities, formation of a bioethics working group at the National University of Mar del Plata, initiation of a two-year graduate bioethics course at the same university, and the holding of an international symposium and workshop on bioethics at Mar del Plata in 1988. Particular attention is devoted to the graduate course, the detailed design of which is outlined in Annex 1.

Creation of Argentina's Institute of Medical Humanities in 1972 represented a milestone in the history of Argentine bioethics and led subsequently to establishment of the Chair of Medical

Humanities at the La Plata University Medical School in 1980. This concern for research, teaching, and public reporting of health matters related to the humanities and bioethics is attributed in great measure to Dr. José Alberto Mainetti, who has devoted himself to the teaching and development of this area of study. In addition, in recent years a Bioethics Center created at the Institute of Medical Humanities has promoted the formation of similar centers in Buenos Aires, Tucumán, Mendoza, and Mar del Plata.

It should be noted, however, that most of the interest in bioethics does not extend outside these centers, some hospitals, and certain other private health care institutions. Articles about the subject do appear sporadically in the press, and one does hear comments about it on the ra-

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dio. In general, the Catholic Church is the institution that has contributed most to publicizing bioethics, but its concern has generally been limited to *in vitro* fertilization, embryo implantation, and other aspects of reproductive technology.

The technologic and scientific advances of our time have made it possible for people to intervene in the affairs of others and their environment, and this has produced basic, profound, unprecedented changes in the field of science. Even today, in a time of major technologic expansion, we cannot foretell what the limits of such changes will ultimately be.

As Tyrrel (see bibliography) has noted, there is no proof that present-day man has evolved mentally and morally at the same pace as this technologic explosion has occurred. This absence of proof raises certain questions about man's ability to administer with restraint, equity, and humanitarianism the dizzying advances occurring in every scientific field. The emerging discipline that we today call bioethics, and which some authors pursuing a wider meaning call "scientific ethics" or "technoethics," tries to find answers to such questions.

Although in Argentina the main concerns of this nature that have arisen have related to specific aspects of medical practice (abortion, euthanasia, etc.), it has also become necessary to extend bioethics to the basic sciences, which are the foundation of medical practice and health care, in order to broaden the sphere of interests involved and to adopt interdisciplinary criteria capable of encompassing the problems found.

Many people view present-day scientific and technical advances with a mixture of concern and hope deriving from the broad avenues these advances have opened up. They feel concern because of these advances' unforeseeable consequences, the lack of legal standards limit-

ing their application to both man and his environment, and the great responsibility borne by the present generation in making decisions affecting future generations.

With this in mind, the National University of Mar del Plata has brought together a group of representatives specializing in different disciplines who are interested in these matters. This team includes anthropologists, biologists, educators, jurists, philosophers, physicians, psychologists, and sociologists belonging to the university's teaching and technical teams and other professional and scientific bodies of the community.

The team considers bioethics as a discipline reflecting the ethical problems derived from current scientific and technologic expansion, one that adopts an interdisciplinary approach to those problems with a view to having them considered in the course of actual scientific and professional activities as well as in legislation and public decision-making. The product of a year and a half of work by this group has crystallized into two quite important undertakings: design of a postgraduate bioethics course and the organization of the First Mar del Plata Workshop on Bioethics as part of the VI International Symposium on Bioethics.

PHILOSOPHIC FOUNDATION AND FRAME OF REFERENCE

The sciences dealing with humanity enable us to know with increasing precision what a human being is, but they do not explain to us that being's essence and the meaning of its existence. In contrast to the situation prevailing in antiquity, expansion of such knowledge and the rapidity with which it has been changing make it impossible for a single person to comprehend it all. Therefore, specialization in different areas of knowledge and

even in proliferating subareas is necessary. While recognizing this need, however, it should be noted that such specialization places us in danger of losing sight of the whole.

Moreover, to understand even a part of the whole, and to avoid losing sight of our origins, we must have some reasonable guiding ideas about the nature of that whole. Hence, we believe there is an urgent need for clear answers to the following questions: What sort of human development is desired? What sort of society? and What sort of science do we need?

Regarding the first question, a human being may be seen as a unique and unreplicable person who requires sufficient freedom to develop individually and socially in a responsible way. As a person, this being does not deal with the world indifferently but makes value judgments through which he or she discerns and judges what things mean.

Regarding the second question, a person's social life constitutes an essential dimension of that person. Indeed, a person's intimate, personal, and social relations are inseparable, together comprising that person's life in the community. Freedom for human beings will therefore be achieved fully and authentically in a society that ensures recognition and realization of equal freedom for all in an environment of necessary interdependence between individuals and society. Within this context, bioethical training of educators, professionals, and scientists is essential in order that they can identify problems needing axiologic study and devote appropriate attention to those matters.

Regarding the type of science that we need, it is important that science not be autonomous or sterile, since the knowledge that it generates should be at the service of human beings conceived as ends and never merely as means to

others' ends. However, the more we know the more power we accumulate, and this presents us with the risk of using human beings as tools for our own purposes.

It is unquestionable that science has provided positive benefits for humanity and will be able to provide more in the future. Despite this, it must also be borne in mind that science is neither the only nor the ultimate criterion of truth. And the man or woman of science must be aware of personal dignity (both his or her own and that of others), always regarding the human being as the end. Otherwise we run the risk that technoscience values will be deemed worth more than human values, and that all done in the name of technoscience will be justified, even when it leads to increasing dehumanization.

It must be noted that not everything that is technically possible is ethically justifiable. Science and philosophy, then, are not separate things, but instead are disciplines that must be practiced together, complementing each other in the eternal search for knowledge.

In the field of the life sciences, the scientific and technologic revolution is of such a magnitude that today it presents physicians, biologists, lawyers, and other professionals with problems that cannot be solved with technical information alone. It is also necessary to take philosophic questions into consideration if we do not want a cold and technified world dominated by a science without conscience—a world that might very well be headed toward its own destruction.

GRADUATE BIOETHICS COURSE

This course was proposed to the University of Mar del Plata's Governing Council and approved in August 1988. Its structure conforms to existing regula-

tions governing university graduate programs, being of two years' duration and demanding successful completion of appropriate evaluative requisites for promotion. The course is directed at professionals in all disciplines whose work affects the individual and social lives of people or which takes this as a general subject of study.

The course's aims are as follows: to motivate and train professionals and investigators to identify and resolve bioethical problems in their own areas of work; to train "multiplier" agents in bioethics who can act in government and within the scientific community at large; and to create the first group of teachers and investigators in this field, looking toward its future organization as an independent discipline.

The course has been designed by subject so as to focus upon certain problem nuclei—these being relationships between society and bioethics, institutions and bioethics, professions and bioethics, and humanity and bioethics (Annex 1). These relationships embrace aspects of the reality to be analyzed, and on this basis the content of the course has been established.

As the Annex shows, six central themes appropriate to the problem nuclei have been selected. These are health and illness, genetics and health, euthanasia, work and society, behavior manipulation, and delinquency and society. The first three of these have their roots in ecologic biology, while the last three have their origins in psychology.

These themes relate to one another in an interdisciplinary manner so that they can be arranged in an articulate and ordered sequence, and so that within the ground encompassed by each theme relevant material pertaining to the four problem nuclei and each of various areas within these nuclei are available for study.

Keeping in mind the course's design features, a multimedia teaching strategy was chosen—a strategy in which information is transmitted not only through the instructor's words in a personal encounter, as in a theoretical class, but is also conveyed through printed matter, audiovisual materials, case analyses, and other methods.

A BIOETHICS WORKSHOP

The second part of the VI International Symposium on Bioethics and the First Mar del Plata Workshop on Bioethics were held at Mar del Plata on 2 and 3 December 1988. As part of this event, three round table discussions were held. These dealt with "The Major Themes of Bioethics," "A Multidisciplinary Approach to Genetic Counseling," and "Presentation of the Postgraduate Course in Bioethics." Four lectures were also given.

The First Iberoamerican Studies in Bioethics Group was organized at the symposium. This group's objectives are to develop links among its members; promote the organization of a scientific society for research in this area; sponsor and organize research in related disciplines through courses, seminars, conferences, workshops, and congresses; participate in international congresses and workshops in the country and abroad; and maintain permanent contact with universities, research centers, specialists, and allied institutions.

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Annex 1. Design of the Graduate Bioethics Course, Mar del Plata National University, Argentina. Each central theme is intended to develop comprehension, analysis, thought, and decision-making for application to specific problems of an ethical nature.

A. Central Theme: Health and Disease

Area	Problem nuclei			
	Society and bioethics	Institutions and bioethics	Professions and bioethics	Humanity and bioethics
Biologic-ecologic	Health: Naturalistic and individualistic concepts Historic evolution of the concept of health Health as a social asset Standards of living and health indicators Psychosociosomatic illnesses Social implications of the health diagnosis Research on health needs Research on health systems Scheduling and planning (resource use and allocation)	Institutions and health Education and health, education and ecology Psychosociosomatic diseases Professional ethics and institutions Control of environmental management	Importance and participation of the different professions in public health Disease as a subjectively lived reality Psychosociosomatic diseases Application of the medical-social approach to clinical patient management Criteria for reasoning about health status Epidemiology as an interdisciplinary science Preparation of the health professional Professional ethics Professional confidentiality and medical-social information	Health as value; health as equilibrium Vulnerability to disease: A defective attribute of human beings Disease as a subjectively lived reality Psychosociosomatic illnesses Diagnosis of health status Medical technology and man
Psychologic	Health, disease, and normality Historic evolution of mental health Health criteria in relation to society and culture Psychopathologic epidemiology Health education	Public and private institutions The family and its influence on health and disease Education and prevention	The psychologist, the psychoanalyst, and the psychiatrist Psychology and medicine Psychopathology The professional-patient relationship Psychologic and psychiatric epidemiology Preparation of the health professional	Life and death: Eros and Thanatos Health promotion
Philosophic	Health as reward and punishment The dignity of the individual Philosophic concepts and their projection in life systems Philosophic views of the individual Humanism Values and their hierarchy	Normative ethics. Standards throughout history Educational systems as projections of values	Responsibility of the scientist and technologist Critical analysis of the various deontologies The concepts of "person" and "liberty" Axiology	The individual Human acts and moral acts Will and free choice
Anthropologic	Anthropology and health Medical anthropology: Epistemologic formulations Psychiatric anthropology The intercultural perspective and the notion of health	Institutions as generators of new sociocultural patterns at the level of public health medicine	Sociocultural contributions and the medical and behavioral sciences The anthropologist's role in the health field: Anthropology and public health	The human being as a biopsychosocial entity belonging to a cultural universe Man as a sick animal

Culture and subculture
 Community and global culture
 The emergence of bioethics as a social need:
 Implications
 Society and biotechnologic advances
 Endoculturation of social patterns
 Implementation of health programs in society
 Sociogenesis of disease
 Cultural factors in disease diagnosis and
 treatment
 Transculturation and disease: The case of
 immigrant families
 The healer seen through the intercultural
 stereoptican
 The therapeutic role of magic
 Socioanthropologic categories in health
 situation diagnosis
 The doctor-patient relationship
 Lactation and health: Bioethical considerations
 Health and sexuality
 Society, health, and marginality
 Prevention in groups at risk
 Incorporation of new sociocultural patterns into
 the community

Myths and beliefs in disease
 therapeutics
 The doctor-patient relationship:
 Incorporation of the anthropologic
 perspective in medicine and
 psychology
 Epidemiology: Anthropologic
 contributions about marginality

Legal

Health as a fundamental human right
 Health as a protected legal asset
 Mental health and the law
 Mental health and legal responsibility
 Health policies
 Legal projection of health
 Ecology and law
 Conditions of habitability and theories of justice
 Legal aspects of the doctor-patient relationship
 Diagnosis: Responsibility
 Public health policies

Legal regulation of health
 Rights to privacy, education, and
 health
 Ecology and the police power

Professional legal responsibility
 Codes of professional ethics
 The legal nature of the doctor-patient
 relationship
 Responsibility in the face of diagnostic
 errors
 Legislation on these matters

Human rights vis-à-vis scientific and
 technical development

Sociologic

Sociologic concept of health
 Historical-social transformations: Their
 implications for health models
 Production and health
 Man-machine analogy
 Concept of health and disease
 Level of development and social stratification
 Research and prevention and their relationship
 to social integration

Different types of medical institutions
 The family: Different forms of health
 promotion
 The school as transmitter of general
 public health patterns
 The role, development, and
 production of disease

The sociologist in epidemiologic work:
 Research and prevention
 Social discrimination regarding disease
 and disability
 Social forms of health recognition in
 different cultures
 Sociologic contributions to
 epidemiologic knowledge
 Maladjustment between social needs
 and individual choices of profession
 Level of specialization: Loss of the
 holistic concept of health

Annex 1. (Continued)

B. Central Theme: Genetics and Health

Problem nuclei				
Area	Society and bioethics	Institutions and bioethics	Professions and bioethics	Humanity and bioethics
Biologic-ecologic	Genetics and health. Society-based selective <i>criterion</i> Standards tending to meet this objective Reproductive techniques Future genetic technologies Limits of genetic research: The degree of control that society has in this area Ecology and genetic research	Genetics and health: Centralized or <i>decentralized planning</i> Birth control Limits of genetic research: Institutional norms and prescriptions in this area Ecology and genetic research	Genetics as a branch of medicine: Its <i>scope and objectives</i> Limits of genetic research from a professional standpoint (deontologic criteria) Extension to all living things	Consideration of man as an end or a <i>means</i>
Psychologic	Psychosocial effects derived from genetic research and genetic engineering Psychologic counseling Consideration of the psychosocial effects that can be foreseen from use of future genetic <i>technologies</i>	Incentives and limitations on clinical research and internment institutions	Directed or undirected counseling Incentives and limitations on clinical research Artificial intelligence and psychologic identity	Consideration of man as an end or a <i>means</i>
Philosophic	Concept of the individual Humanism and the hierarchy of values Concept of the <i>individual in political ideologies and projects</i> Need for an ethics of the future Different contemporary ethics (lifeboat morality) Liberty, will, and free choice	Institutional customs Implementation of projects through institutions	Deontologies	Values: Concept of the individual; self-ness
Anthropologic	Genetic anthropology Control of birth and marginality Reproductive technology from the anthropologic viewpoint Bioethical considerations regarding sterilization Social construction of the bioethical paradigm <i>Social limits on biotechnologic advances</i> Respect for the human species	Institutions and genetic advances Institutions and the various bioethics positions on birth control and reproductive techniques	Anthropologic genetics. The professional and marginal groups Professional limitations and sociocultural patterns	Human identity Genetic manipulation
Legal	Inviolability of the individual as a fundamental human right Protection of the genetic heritage Comparative law Need for regulation Genetic manipulation and its limits Genetics, artificial fertility, and the law	Population policy Institutions, autonomy of the individual, and birth control Limits of genetic manipulation	Professional responsibility Constitutional and legal limits on genetic research	The individual as an object or subject of the law The personal rights of the individual

Sociologic	Development of biotechnology. Social consequences Social Darwinism: The humanistic reaction Biologic assignment of social roles	Family planning: Social institutions Family planning. The family and consumption	The role of science in contemporary society	Man as a means or an end The human ideal
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C. Central Theme: Euthanasia

Problem nuclei				
Area	Society and bioethics	Institutions and bioethics	Professions and bioethics	Humanity and bioethics
Biologic-ecologic	Sustaining life by artificial means Consequences of the diagnosis of death Euthanasia: Social criteria regarding euthanasia Terminal illness The Baby Doe problem	Sustaining life by artificial means Consequences of determination of death Euthanasia. Medical-legal aspects (regulation by law) The Baby Doe problem	Problem of determination of death (technical aspects) Euthanasia: Technical aspects, active and passive euthanasia Terminal illness The Baby Doe problem	Consequences of determination of death Terminal illness The Baby Doe problem
Psychologic	Man and death Psychologic representation of death Denial of death	Need for institutions to provide psychologic assistance for the patient, family, and staff Need for reflection on possible intervention in terminal situations	Need for reflection on possible intervention in terminal situations Interdisciplinary contributions to the problem of determination of death	The individual and death Psychologic representation of death Denial of death
Philosophic	The meaning of death	Concept of the individual	Concept of the individual	The meaning of death
Anthropologic	Nature and culture: The terminal patient's sociocultural universe Organ donation, the social problem Human suffering The anthropology of death: Implications The sacred and the profane Euthanasia. Social and cultural aspects and considerations relating to the manipulation of life	Institutions and transplants. The institution and human suffering Death and institutions	The anthropologist and euthanasia The anthropology of suffering The anthropology of death The terminal patient	The sacred and profane of death Human suffering The individual, marginality, and subculture Human dignity and codes of ethics
Legal	Organ transplants Life as a legally protected asset Legal criteria for determination of death	Conflict between humanistic values via-à-vis technologic and practical values and their projection in the law Comparative law Euthanasia and the law	Codes of professional ethics Legal regulation of the medical professions Euthanasia and the law	The right to die with dignity
Sociologic	The social being and the biologic individual Scientific efficiency, its reflection in society Science as a manipulator of social values	Conflict between the system of values of the medical institution and the family		

Annex 1. (Continued)**D. Central Theme: Society and Delinquency**

Area	Problem nuclei			
	Society and bioethics	Institutions and bioethics	Professions and bioethics	Humanity and bioethics
Biologic-ecologic	Biological basis of aggression			
Psychologic	Society and delinquency	Administration of justice Internment institutions: Penitentiaries and institutions for minors	Psychologic assistance and counseling on crime prevention, resocialization, and skill development Experimentation with behavior	Crime and responsibility Disease and responsibility Liberty and responsibility Liberty and the common good
Philosophic	Hierarchy of values Education systems	Hierarchy of values Education systems	Hierarchy of values Education systems	The concept of self-ness The individual and liberty
Anthropologic	The delinquency subculture	The delinquency subculture	Subculture and delinquency	Subculture and delinquency
Legal	Criminology and criminal law	Preventive systems Penal systems Education and treatment Auxiliary sciences	Need for legal assistance Legal regulation of the auxiliary legal professions Dignity of the individual as a limit on human experimentation	Concepts of fraud and culpability The limits of imputability
Sociologic	Anomie and social disintegration	Established (institutionalized) concepts	Sociology and criminality Development of sociologic skills The problem of social insertion	Crime and its causes from the perspective of society

E. Central Theme: Behavior Modification

Area	Problem nuclei			
	Society and bioethics	Institutions and bioethics	Professions and bioethics	Humanity and bioethics
Biologic-ecologic	Production-consumption equilibrium Ecology and rational use of natural resources		Behavior modification using surgical methods and medications	The therapeutic value of talk The relationship between man and the freedom of others
Psychologic	Production-consumption in contemporary society Advertising and behavior modification	Public relations agencies and communications media Legal regulation of programming and publicity	Psychology and communication The psychologist as public relations adviser Psychologic techniques in behavior modification	Communication as a characteristic of man Communication and liberty Free versus induced choice
Philosophic	Inversion of the scale of values Regarding the individual as a means to an end	Inversion of the scale of values Regarding the individual as a means to an end	Inversion of the scale of values Regarding the individual as a means to an end	The concept of self-ness Liberty and the individual
Anthropologic	Communication and culture	Communication and culture	Communication and culture Sociocultural consequences of behavior modification	Suppression of human identity
Legal	Legislation for consumer protection Law and natural resources	Normative regulation Applicable legal regimen	Criteria of professional responsibility: Ethical and legal	The right to privacy as a fundamental right of the individual Freedom of expression and the right to information
Sociologic	Relationship between production and consumption in contemporary society	Marketing research	Communications media and mass psychology	The individual and mass psychology

Annex 1. (Continued)

F. Central Theme: Labor and Society

Area	Problem nuclei			
	Society and bioethics	Institutions and bioethics	Professions and bioethics	Humanity and bioethics
Biologic-ecologic	The medicine of human activity Occupational diseases	Work-related accidents Unhealthful work	The physician as job selector Labor medicine Health examinations	
Psychologic	Work and society	Labor relations	Psychologic counseling Human relations Job selection Psychology and production incentives Experimentation in labor psychology	Labor relations and freedom Work. Self-realization or alienation
Philosophic	The problem of the individual and the problem of values The dignity of work as human fulfillment	The problem of standards The problem of liberty and responsibility	The problem of standards The problem of liberty and responsibility	Self-ness
Anthropologic	The anthropology of work: Problems regarding age and sex Work and free time		Work, identity, and professions	Work and identity
Legal	Human rights and the law The right to social security	The right to work and to social security Occupational accidents and diseases	Autonomy of the individual Rights to privacy Constitutional principles relating to work and social security	The right to work and professional associations
Sociologic	Labor relations in contemporary society	The sociology of organizations	The sociologist and manpower training	Social preparation of the individual