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ETHICS [projected 5500 words]

[untitled intro]

Ethics is the systematic, critical reflection on human action oriented toward both increasing knowledge and improving action. As such it bridges the producing of knowledge and the taking of action and constitutes a site for multiple interdisciplinary engagements. That is, although often formally located as a branch of the discipline of philosophy, ethics will necessarily draw on a number of other disciplines which may also be described as having emerged from it, from psychology and anthropology to politics and economics. Moreover, applied ethics itself breaks out into a number of regionalizations such as environmental ethics, biomedical ethics, engineering ethics, business ethics, and scientific ethics — all cases in which interdisciplinary interactions with specialized forms of knowledge and action are the norm. Finally, interdisciplinarity itself exhibits

1. Historical Development [750 words]

Brief historical overview of the development of ethics, emphasizing its interdisciplinary roots and relationships. In premodern learning in both the traditions of both Asia (Buddhism and Confucianism) and Europe (Greek, Jewish, Roman, Christian, and Islamic) ethics served as a unifying focal point. This only began to break down in the modern period, but then experienced a revival in second half of the 20th century.

2. Relation to Education [750 words]

The central role of ethics in education in all disciplines. The invention of “ethics across the curriculum” (EAC) programs and how they can presume different kinds of interdisciplinary — i.e., cross-disciplinary EAC as different from multi-disciplinary EAC.

3. Relation to Research [750 words]

The need for ethics in providing boundary conditions on research and knowledge production: How this requires ethics to step outside its own disciplinary limitations to appreciate the specific character of different forms of knowledge production, and how research itself is called by ethics to recognize its own limitations and acknowledge other methods and ends. Exemplified especially in biomedical research and the ethics of experimentation on human subjects.

4. Areas of Interdisciplinary Applied Ethics [2500 words]

Taking off from the example of biomedical ethics, a review of different areas of applied ethics as these have arisen since the mid-20th century: nuclear ethics, environmental ethics, bioethics, computer ethics, agricultural ethics, et al. In each case the emphasis will be on the inherently and necessarily interdisciplinary character of these “applied” ethics fields. This section, which will be longest in the chapter, will naturally break out into different subsections according to the applied ethics fields being reviewed. Then it will conclude with an argument for interdisciplinary synthesis of science, technology, and ethics (including the social sciences, the humanities, and the arts).

5. What Works and Does Not Work [500 words]

An effort to identify from the survey in section 4 some of the successes and failures and relate these to the kinds of or commitments to interdisciplinary involved.

6. Needs and Prospects [250 words]

A plea for enhanced interdisciplinarity in ethics and between ethics and all other fields of knowledge production and action.

7. Essential Readings and Links

References and bibliography. Preliminary indication of some key citations:

Bulger, Ruth Ellen, Elizabeth Heitman, and Stanley Joel Reiser, eds. *The Ethical Dimensions of the Biological Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Herkert, Joseph R., ed. *Social, Ethical and Policy Implications of Engineering: Selected Readings*. Piscataway, NJ: IEEE Press, 2000.

Mitcham, Carl, ed. *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics*. 4 vols. Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2005.

Post, Stephen G., ed. *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, 3rd ed. 5 vols. Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2004.