

PHILOSOPHY, ETHICS AND MENTAL HEALTH

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Over the last few decades, ethics has taken on a new dimension in regard to scientific disciplines, and to medicine in particular. This has been the result of a process that began at the end of the Second World War and which has continued until now. First, in order to act as a brake on criminal and indiscriminate research on human beings, it undertook, through committees, to evaluate and enforce the various regulations that were internationally established as research protocols, and the safeguarding of the inalienable rights of research participants. Second, it made evaluations and intervened in clinical situations, where decisions become problematic and affect, in a very fundamental way, the rights of subjects who, suffering from some condition, find themselves under professional care.

Ethics, being discursive and interdisciplinary in thought and action, thus avoids that one specific and generalizing way of thinking and which may not be in agreement with the scientific thinking of their time, should threaten the rights of the individual subject, who has an interior world in his or her own right.

Ethics is a part of philosophy. This means that a specific ethical position, consciously or otherwise, is linked to a specific metaphysics, ontology, and gnoseological epistemology. Consequently, under the adoption of all ethical stances lie the big questions that often defy systemized and protocolized knowledge and that indicate that man is a singular and inconcludable project, always yet to be defined.

Indeed, in mental health, it is of the utmost importance to reflect upon philosophy and ethics, as it discovers what conception of man underlies the decisions that are taken. In other words, what conception of the human subject is most suitable for keeping those who suffer from mental issues clear of stigmatization and threats to their rights and which conception of the human subject brings us closer to recognizing its singular, subjective, and unique expression, which is fundamental to assuring our patients the possibility of a life in the community.