

Applying ethical reflection to ongoing challenges faced by society

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As the year 2022 comes to an end, we continue to face challenging issues and uncertainties about the right approach to various ethical problems society faces. In approaching these problems, we reflect on our existing guiding values but also discover new ones. We then try to figure out how our actions and decisions could align with our well-considered judgments until we achieve some degree of reflective equilibrium.

The ethical problems we face require solutions that are sufficiently robust to address the complexity of the challenges themselves. The solutions cannot come from just one field of study but should rather come from various disciplines that have relevant resources to contribute. The editors of *Etikk i praksis – Nordic Journal of Applied Ethics* understand “applied ethics” in this multidisciplinary inclusive sense, and we agree with others who clarify that doing applied ethics does not simply involve applying ethical theory to practice (Felder & Magnus 2022). Applied ethics involves using the normative tools that can help us to understand the underlying issues and to present relevant reasons that are informed by ethical theory, methods of ethical analysis as well as established consensus in applied ethics literature. The application of normative resources that applied ethics bring to bear parallels the application of relevant resources that other applied fields of study consider. The example of applied philosophy demonstrates that the practical application of knowledge from that field does not merely involve applying philosophical theory but all the relevant resources available from that field of study.

Authors working in different disciplines that address ethical issues are welcome to submit their work in their various fields of expertise. Contributions from the field of philosophy are just part of the broader conversations we wish to give voice to in this journal. We welcome contributions to the broader normative discussion on various ethical issues from relevant fields such as political science, science technology & society (STS), sociology, psychology, anthropology, medicine, public health and other fields of study grappling with various moral quandaries.

Applied ethics broadens and deepens our understanding of the ethical issues we face to help us figure out the reasons to support certain courses of action that we have good reasons to believe are ethical. Applied ethics can also address other normative issues facing professionals, including the impact of confronting barriers to acting according to what is ethical. Addressing moral distress requires a different kind of approach that goes beyond the usual analysis to resolve ethical dilemmas. Moral distress can affect a professional’s sense of purpose and meaning in continuing to practice their profession when moral action is prevented by barriers or constraints beyond their control. Moral distress requires a different type of ethics consultation (Hamric & Epstein 2017). It has been suggested that applied philosophy can play a role in addressing moral distress (Alvarez 2022).

In the Early View article “Nazism, Genocide and the Threat of The Global West. Russian Moral Justification of War in Ukraine,” Arseniy Kumankov critically examines how the Russian invasion of Ukraine was preceded by several public actions that aimed to frame the military operation as necessary and inevitable. He examines how, during these events, the Russian authorities used moral language to justify the war and the use of force against Ukraine. This article looks at why Russian officials used moral language to justify the war, what arguments they used, and whether these arguments can be effective in the long term. It examines speeches by the Russian President and materials from the Russian Federation Security Council meeting to answer these questions. Kumankov concludes that Putin's lack of legitimacy led him to justify the war in moral terms, which the nature of Russian moral discourse allowed him to do, but that this justification strategy may not be stable or sustainable in the long term. The author analysed speeches by Putin and other senior officials to show that the conflict was initially presented as a moral clash with the West rather than just a political rivalry. This strategy was intended to give legitimacy to the decision to attack Ukraine. The author also reproduced and classified the arguments used to support the war, showing that the Great Patriotic War was employed as a framework to justify this war and maintain Russia's image as a victorious and moral state. Other reasons for the war included the perceived threat of the West to Russia's values, and the Nazi character of the Ukrainian regime. The effectiveness of this strategy is discussed and uses some statistical information to come to the conclusion that although initial support in Russia for the war appeared high, the author questions the depth of the moral grounding and commitment for this war in the long term.

A commentary by Jennifer Bailey accompanies this original article by Kumankov. Bailey uses a political science lens to examine the thesis and arguments presented to help readers broaden their thinking about the issue.

In another Early View article, “Socratic dialogue on responsible innovation – a methodological experiment in empirical ethics” by Bjørn K. Myskja and Alexander Myklebust, the authors describe an experiment in which the Socratic dialogue method was used to promote Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) in an interdisciplinary life sciences research project. The authors present an approach to avoiding the imposition of predetermined norms in interdisciplinary research projects by engaging researchers in group discussions. The method, which is based on Svend Brinkmann's epistemic interviewing, was used in two research group sessions to facilitate reflection on the issue of responsibility in research and innovation. This approach differs from other empirical ethics methodologies in that it aims to develop knowledge through dialogue, and the facilitators are active participants in the discussions rather than just observers. Myskja and Myklebust discuss the potential of this method as a supplement to other approaches to RRI and argue that it can contribute to both knowledge production and reflexivity. The main focus of their article is on the methodology used to produce knowledge. The effectiveness of this approach will be determined when the central arguments are developed and integrated into academic papers. The authors believe that researchers have valuable knowledge based on their experiences that can be used to contribute to academic or public debates. They are not concerned with whether the participants are representative of their group or whether the data generated in the sessions is valid. Instead, the validity of the approach will be tested by its

contribution to knowledge when the arguments are presented to a competent audience.

We hope that these Early View articles will help stimulate your thinking on these issues and assist in reflective thought about challenging ethical issues that we face. We invite authors to consider submitting their own work in applied ethics to this open access journal. *Etikk i praksis* aims to help readers be more informed when examining various ethical issues. We are looking for articles that use ethical theories and principles to analyse and evaluate different aspects of society, such as politics, science, technology, and the economy. We are particularly interested in articles that explore the ethical implications of new and emerging issues, such as artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, climate change, politics of disinformation, etc. We welcome articles from a wide range of disciplines and perspectives, including philosophy, sociology, law, and public policy. We are also open to articles that use different methods and approaches, such as case studies, thought experiments, and historical analysis. We look forward to reading your work and helping you share your insights and ideas with our readers.

Upcoming issues and call for papers

The next Open Issue of *Etikk i praksis* will be Spring 2023.

We also would like to invite submissions for the Fall 2023 Special issue on environmental (food and water) ethics. The deadline for this Special issue is 1 May 2023.

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