



7th International Conference on Ethics Education

ROUND TABLE I. Interdisciplinary debate and Ethics Education

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INTERDISCIPLINARY DEBATE AND ETHICS EDUCATION

- questioning, framing and exploring

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First, I would like to express my gratitude to the organization: thank you for the invitation, thank you for this wonderful title you gave us - *Interdisciplinary debate and Ethics education* (that is a superhero-sized gift in such small amount of time). These thanks have, at the same time, the acknowledgments for the challenge, the pleasure to think this topic and a concern by the size of the task in a few minutes. Anyway, I really would like to approach the issue with a critic look and a synthetic mode - focus and simplicity.

We propose to go in a three stage *travel*, and leave to the end a fourth stage, of debate.

First, we put the questions on the table, **questioning** the possibilities. To assure we are focusing on the same (or near) terms (words), we **clarify the concepts**, doing a kind of framework for our topics.

And then, **explore some ideas**, explaining what we think could be a framework for analysis and reflection to share and discuss, a kind of walking path.

I. QUESTIONING

There are some initial questions, generated by the title, to understand the complexity that can emerge. What do we intend by «**ethics education**»? Seems different than explaining what we understand by **teaching ethics**? Because education is not about teaching - it could be about teaching and learning. So, when we put together «ethics» and «education» what do we have? Is there a need for an ethics education definition? Are there ethics educations in all degrees, for example?

In higher education, can we consider that there is a transversal universal axis of teaching and learning? Should be, in several scientific, technologic and professional domains? If so, why is it important? What is the aim of ethics education?

How can we, those who believe in their relevance, make clear the need for an ethics education no matter the field? What would those who don't follow that supposition say?

But «ethics education» could be general. Thinking in a social community? in some «clusters» dedicated to ethics or bioethics? What about **interdisciplinary**?

Are we sure it is interdisciplinary: meaning, we are not talking about multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary? Are we thinking about interdisciplinary learning? Or about interdisciplinary curriculum? Or interdisciplinary professional approaches?

Notice that «interdisciplinary» and «debate» are together... so, is the debate that is interdisciplinary? Or is an interdisciplinary debate required in ethics education?

Why should it be «**Interdisciplinary debate and Ethics education**? Is it on purpose? Or can it be commutative, that math property that if we change the order of (some) operands does not change the result? Or is ethics education a ground for interdisciplinary debate?

Let's clarify concepts (and skip the temptation to start without them, because we need to agree on our speech terms, and their meaning, so we can really understand each other).

II. CLARIFYING CONCEPTS

About **Ethics** there is no universally accepted definition (naturally!). Nevertheless, we think it could be defined as reflection about principles and values that rules our decisions and behaviors or the way we conduct an activity.

Ethics is directed toward what is right and good, the correctness of a conduct, covering issues as how to live a good life, the relation with others in institutions we want to be fair - this idea is close to Paul Ricoeur definition, on *Soi-même comme un Autre, Oneself as other*, in which he states "Let us define "ethical intention" as aiming at the "good life" with and for others in just institutions"¹.

It is quite interesting the "ethic's boom", mentioned by some authors, a kind of renewed focus on ethics especially in some type of convulsion (crisis, news or changes) in society, science or technology - in the last two years, for example, we've had a lot of talk on climatic changes, gene editing, scientific responsibility and misconduct, economic consumption and ethical brand, business ethics and social responsibility, personal data protection and big data, cyborgs, robotics and artificial intelligence, tech ethics and biometric technologies, also poverty, migrations and refugees, humanitarian ethics, informed consent, ethical health issues, vaccination, dating violence, gender issues and so on... We have, nowadays, a more extensive use of the word «ethics» but also specific principles, such as dignity, justice, equity, autonomy, confidentiality, solidarity, accountability.

In general sense, **education** is a process of facilitating learning and acquiring knowledge or experiences that have a formative effect. We all want those meaningful experiences of apprenticeship that affects mind, values, beliefs, and way of thinking.

Education is not only about scientific or technical knowledge's and competences - as Paulo Freire² said, it's about education that liberates, as humanization process of becoming more fully human, of *praxis* as reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. Now and in the next generation - as Abraham Lincoln said "The philosophy of the school room in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next."

¹ Ricoeur, Paul (1992) *Oneself as Other*. Trad. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago: University Chicago Press. p.72.

² Freire, Paulo (1972) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Reflection is a form of inner cognitive activity that is more than mere conscious apprehension; may be prompted by curiosity, or by a troubling incident, or by a deliberate effort to address a problem. Reflection is always social in nature - we learn to reflect through our interaction with others and the world. Our existence as social beings bears on both the form and the content of our reflection - so, our knowledge develops as we interact with an ever-changing world.

Ethics education, therefore, should be a broad term (like an umbrella) for learning experiences intended to help students develop ethically, whether in terms of increased ethical awareness and understanding or motivation to act ethically in the world. (To use a repeated word of our time) requires ethics *literacy* - meaning, a set of capabilities and skills that strengthen and encourage ethical agency by moving from ethical awareness to ethical action. We can, probably, agree that ethical education aims to provide people with a way to make better decisions by their conscience and will, sustained by principles and values. Therefore, teaching ethics has a necessary and irreplaceable place in education.

Let's go for the first part of our title - interdisciplinary debate. When we talk about **disciplinary**, as Piaget said, we think in a specific body of teachable knowledge with its own background of education, training, procedures, methods, and content areas³. So, **interdisciplinary** should be defined as a knowledge view and curriculum approach that consciously applies methodology and language from more than one discipline to examine a theme, problem or experience.

It isn't the juxtaposition of several disciplines focused on one problem with no direct attempt to integrate (that would be multidisciplinary) or the approach that goes beyond the scope of the disciplines; that is, to start with a problem and bring to bear knowledge from the disciplines (would be transdisciplinary and bioethics is a classical example). The **interdisciplinar** appears as a way of combining two or more disciplines, with a view of understanding the object from the confluence of different points of view and with the objective to elaborate a synthesis about the common object. There is a relationship of reciprocity, of interactivity, enabling dialogue between stakeholders.

³ Piaget, Jean (1972). *The Epistemology of Interdisciplinary Relationships*. Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Interdisciplinarity has been evoked by higher education institutions to support courses, by research centers to sustain projects, by *mass media* with analogy to globalization and mass culture⁴. Anyway, it forces us to question disciplines and their frontiers. And more than a theoretical point of view, it should be a practice of research and teaching.

I take as a premise that interdisciplinarity should be seen as an epistemological attitude - an epistemic attitude in favor of dialogue and against the reduction and fragmentation of knowledge. Therefore we should be interested in detecting - not the smallest common dividers of knowledge - but their common multiple maxims, as Georges Gusdorf⁵ claims. He states "Here again, it seems indispensable to break the vicious circle of established usages, and to define the elements of a new pedagogy, the only one capable of restoring to intelligence the sense of human reality as the common horizon of all knowledge."⁶

Interdisciplinary debate could be recognized as a methodology - for example, inside a course (interdisciplinary learning activities), between professionals, inviting scholars with different background to create interdisciplinary perspectives.

Today it makes a lot of sense, to move from the *mono*-perspective and think about *inter*-research and perspectives - instead of each disciplinary area address a subject from their perspective, a team could pick up on the subject in an interdisciplinary way.

Anyway, being "outside the lines"⁷ means that we tend to blur the boundaries of disciplines by addressing issues in a more global way, highlighting the complexity of most problems.

⁴ Torres, Rui (2007) Apontamentos sobre Interdisciplinaridade em Projectos de Investigação sobre Humanidades e Informática. Seminários do Grupo de Estudos dos Média, Cultura, Linguagem e Hipermedia, CECICLO-UFP. Available in <http://telepoesis.net/papers/Interdisciplinaridade.pdf>

⁵ Gusdorf, Georges (1967) Les sciences de l'homme sont des sciences humaines. Paris: Société d'Éditions les Belles Lettres. p. 86. Available in http://classiques.uqac.ca/contemporains/gusdorf_georges/sc_homme_sc_humaines/sc_homme_sc_humaines.pdf

⁶ Gusdorf, Georges. ob. cit., p. 84. "Là encore, il parait indispensable de rompre le cercle vicieux des usages établis, et de définir les éléments d'une nouvelle pédagogie, seule capable de rendre à l'intelligence le sens de la réalité humaine comme horizon commun de tous les savoirs".

⁷ Liara Salter, Alison Hearn (1997) Outside the Lines: Issues in Interdisciplinary Research. McGill-Queen's University Press.

EXPLORING SOME IDEAS

Now, what kind of relations can we find between **interdisciplinary debate and ethics education**? What do these have in common, no matter the field?

We organized nine statements for which we request your attention and further comments.

1. All disciplines are cooperative activities with standards of excellence

Each one of us, no matter in what field we work, research and/or teach, usually stays in a discipline, a knowledge domain.

We practice *there*. And "all practices are cooperative activities whose constitutive rules are established socially; the standards of excellence that correspond to them on the level of this or that practice originate much further back than the solitary practitioner"⁸.

Each field of knowledge, research, action, have their own constitutive rules and, by that, a sphere of meaning in which can be appraised, because their normative nature is attached to precepts of doing well. When we say «good practices» and «best practices» it becomes clear that there is a proper ethical dimension - usually called "standards of excellence" - and we use them to characterize what we do (a researcher, a teacher, a nurse, an architect, a painter, a driver or a cook) as good. So, only by this, do all our activities have an ethical approach and ethical dimension.

Disciplines (and professions) can be more closed or more communicative with others but we all need communication. It will be easier to communicate if disciplines are closer (in the object, in their methodologies, for example). By definition, to communicate is to share arguments, exchange points of view. In a global world, with so many ways to communicate and gather information, the challenge could be, not about the pure content, but about a chosen and accepted methodology to dialogue.

2. The *good life* (each one looks for) is related to interpersonal relations and to living well in institutions.

Each one of us wants to live well, to have a *good life*, and find ourselves embedded in an organized community, with norms that regulate cooperation between

⁸ Ricoeur, ob. cit., p. 176.

us. In each institution we find a certain set of roles, "normative expectations that the members of the group reciprocally have in relation to their behavior"⁹, says Tugendhat. We understand ourselves and our roles in an already established community, which means that we relate to ourselves, to our having-to-be-now on the human and social plane.

Ricœur said that institutions are the point of application of justice and equality, taking as «institutions» the structure of living together, belongs to a historical community; institution is the bond of common rules. So, we found ourselves in institutions where a meaning for life can only be projected if it is considered *estimable* - as a judgment of value - which means, it is estimable along with others and with cooperative activities.

Higher education institution's primary responsibility is with the future, therefore, in the dimension of temporal and social responsibility. Living well the good life is not limited to interpersonal relations but extends to institutions, while structures of living together as a community.

Whenever we make a decision, we have to take - meaning, we have to be able to answer, to give reasons, to justify and be accountable. Savater said "Responsibility is to know that each of my actions is building me, defining me, making me up. By choosing what I want, I gradually transform myself. All my decisions leave their mark on me before they leave it in the world around me."¹⁰.

It's curious that, first of all, responsibility is a matter of education. Responsibility operates the synthesis between knowledge and action and its effects; our knowledge is always enriched when we confront the intention and the results; so it is never responsible for once and for all. But it tends to be cumulative - its exercise makes us increasingly responsible.

In a broad metric, Ricœur said that "responsibility extends as far as our powers in space and time"¹¹. This idea appeared in the *Spiderman* movie, "With great powers

⁹ Tugendhat, Ernst (1933) Autoconciencia y autodeterminación: una interpretación lingüístico-analítica. Trad. Rosa Helena Santos-Ihlau. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica. p. 210.

¹⁰ Savater, Fernando (1997) Ética para um jovem. Lisboa: Ed. Presença. p. 81-82

¹¹ Ricœur, Paul(1997)O Justo ou a dimensão da justiça. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget. p.55.

come great responsibilities" a quote from Benjamin Parker, Uncle Ben, which has already been used in a Supreme Court ruling¹², in 2015.

3. Ethics can be taught, learned, debated, the *issue* could be the way we do it.

Some authors doubt ethics can be taught. They usually speak about the difficulties of effectively imparting values and principles to adults. Undergraduate and graduate students arrive in our classrooms in different stages of moral development, they argue.

It's life, I would say. People come as they are, with their experiences, their concerns. And with their frames of values that, as we know, are mobile and develop, adjust, to situations. Students, like all people, are under construction, in development. The classic (optimistic) belief of a teacher is that the learners can be touched; they can review their thinking, pay attention to the way they think. And those kind of skills can be learned and exercised in a proper environment.

Several ways to look for ethics education are available. Meaning, we can teach ethics from various views and approaches. But (there's a huge *but*) that also depends on the teacher.

If the teacher chooses to take ethics education as an opportunity to teach about philosophical theories of ethics, a kind of list of authors and theories could be very hard for neophytes to follow.

"Among philosophers of education, who have dealt with ethics of teaching, however, it is generally agreed that this applied-theory approach to ethics education is particularly problematic"¹³.

Or if the teacher chooses to take ethics education as an opportunity to teach about codes and laws, in their domain of work, it could be difficult to discuss in a more free way.

There is, probably, no recipe - no matter what agenda of syllabus and methodologies we have, each group of students makes their own difference.

¹² Elena Kagan. Kimble v Marvel case. Opinion of the Court. Available in https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/13-720_jiel.pdf

¹³ Warnick, Bryan R. & Silverman, Sarah K. 2011. A Framework for Professional Ethics Courses in Teacher Education. *Journal of Teacher Education* 62: 273-285 (p. 274)

As teachers and educators, our basic professional responsibilities (individual, collective, institutional) towards our academic discipline, our profession, our educational institution and to society as a whole, should include the ethic debate and promote students' moral development.

Kant wrote "Education, therefore, is the greatest and most arduous problem that is offered to men"¹⁴. Pedagogy grounded in principles for a formation that contributes to a better future, to improve the human life conditions. In other words, the most relevant aspects in education are to ground character and learning to think consistently, both are fundamental for the elevation of an authentic humanity.

4. We shouldn't avoid / must approach the ethics foundation problem.

We are now living times without "fear of hell", as Hannah Arendt states. We live today in a secular, multicultural and pluralist society, a potentially conflicting or confrontational with regard to ideas and tendencies, requiring more attitudinal tolerance skills, respect by the other and by differences.

I've just stated the beginning of a philosophical position. Why do we build one? In a very general way, a philosophical position aims to describe the conditions of possibility of knowledge or experience, that is, the description of the presuppositions of our whole understanding. For example, if we refuse an ethical relativism in practice, we must approach (not abandon or avoid) the problem of ethics foundations. As Tugendhat theory¹⁵ points out "in the absence of a foundation for ethical propositions, the only alternative left is violence".

On one hand, ethical propositions, being normative, cannot be founded empirically - an interpolation between the philosophical and scientific levels is theoretically disastrous, as Hacker sums up: "No philosophical question can be answered by scientific enquiry, and no scientific discovery can be made by philosophical investigation. Philosophy can reveal the incoherence, not the falsity, of a scientific claim."¹⁶

¹⁴ Kant, Emmanuel (2000) *Réflexions sur l'Éducation*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, p. 20

¹⁵ Tugendhat, E. (1988) *Problemas de la Etica*, Editorial Critica, Barcelona (Spanish translation of the original German *Probleme der Ethik*, Reclam, Stuttgart, 1984) - Tugendhat, E. (1992) *Justicia y Derechos Humanos*, Publicacions de la Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona.

¹⁶ Hacker, P.M.S. (2009) *Philosophy: a Contribution, not to Human Knowledge, but to Human Understanding*. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 65:129-153.

On the other, ethical propositions founded on religions are no longer possible in our times. The possible foundation is the individual's personal decision to belong to a moral community determined by universal mutual respect. This decision implies accepting the rule of acting in accordance with Kant's categorical imperative, equivalent to the impartial application of the golden rule.

Habermas, in his discourse ethics theory, argues that moral principles capable of laying down rules of action could only be effective in a dialogue involving all concerned parties; a rule is only valid *when and if* "all those affected can accept the consequences and lateral effects of their general observance"¹⁷, satisfying the interests of all, the conditions of legitimacy are determined. Only through a process of intersubjective understanding can we reach a reflected agreement. The discourse ethic "defends a morality of equal respect and solidaristic responsibility for everybody"¹⁸ from a rational reconstruction. It should be noted that the two basic principles are the claim of equal respect, affiliated to justice, and solidarity, "relates to the well-being of the parties in an intersubjectively shared way of life."

And Habermas's language looks very much like Arendt's, in holding that equal rights and equal respect for personal dignity are supported "by a network of interpersonal relationships and reciprocal relations of recognition"¹⁹.

5. Ethics is lacking and should be present in all curriculums

A few years ago, the Permanent Working Group on Science and Ethics produced a Statement about *Ethics Education in Science* declaring:

"New ethical challenges are raised by scientific developments. The challenges facing contemporary science and the complex relations between science and society highlight the need to be aware of the responsibilities of scientists. In view of recent events and debates, education in research ethics needs to be strengthened to ensure trust and confidence in scientific research"²⁰.

¹⁷ Habermas, Jürgen (1999) *Comentários à ética do discurso*. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget. p. 65.

¹⁸ Habermas, Jürgen (2002) *The inclusion of the Other - Studies in Political theory*. Massachusetts: MIT Press. p. 39.

¹⁹ Habermas, Jürgen (1999) *Comentários à ética do discurso*. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget, p. 22.

²⁰ All European Academies (2013) *Ethics Education in Science*. Statement. p. 4. Available in https://allea.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Statement_Ethics_Edu_web_final_2013_10_10.pdf

You are, probably, thinking about scientific and academic integrity. And "ethics of science should be an integral part of the education and training of all scientists"²¹.

So, ethical responsibilities of scientists are to be integrated into the curriculum of scientific education and learned as part of the mastery of the specific field of research.

This statement wants to reinforce the idea that, no matter what discipline, we really need to pay attention to ethics education and join two issues: quality of education in research ethics and the scientific field in question.

Some studies lamented that "teacher education neglects the teaching of ethics"²² and urged that more emphasis must be placed on moral and ethical education because teacher training programs are "the initial place to acquaint new teachers with the moral dimensions of their chosen profession."²³ A major finding of Boon's study was the lack of explicit ethics instruction in the Bachelor of Education degree. Other study, in a Business school, finds that "faculty believes they can have little or no impact on students' ethical behaviors. Most faculties believe ethics is a values-driven and internal construct but teach using compliance-driven and external methods. Our data correspond closely with moral reasoning theory and affective learning and education theory"²⁴.

The requirements in the **ethics curriculum** should emerge from discussions among the leading scientists and research ethicists in a given field, and be revised on a regular basis in the light of scientific advances and new international guidelines.

6. Interdisciplinary debates and students choices are successful methodologies

Interdisciplinary approach has been used in many ways and at all levels of Education, from early childhood to higher education. Because they are challenging and allow a more global perspective, interdisciplinary studies become more and more popular. "Graduate and undergraduate students who achieve awareness and

²¹ Idem.

²² Campbell, E. (2008) The ethics of teaching as a moral profession. *Curriculum Inquiry* 38 (4), 357-385 (quote p. 372)

²³ Boon, Helen (2011) Raising the Bar: Ethics Education for Quality Teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*. Vol 36, 7, 104-121 (p. 107) <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2011v36n7.2>

²⁴ Dean, Kathy Lund; Beggs, Jeri Mullins (2006) University Professors and Teaching Ethics: Conceptualizations and Expectations. *Journal of Management Education*. 30; 15-44

conscious ownership of their ethical beliefs are ultimately better prepared to influence organizations in ethically responsible directions."²⁵

Interdisciplinary study allows the student to learn by making connections between ideas and concepts across different disciplinary boundaries. "The approach of **interdisciplinary debates** favors the knowledge and comprehensiveness of a given topic"²⁶.

The most effective approach to interdisciplinary study enables students to build their own interdisciplinary pathway - it is not too difficult to find a theme which crosses disciplinary areas in health, literature, history or science or art. Studying topics thematically is one way to bring ideas together resulting in more meaningful learning. In my experience of teaching bioethics, when students choose their own subjects, their learning is deepened and they *discover* connections between what they are learning in different disciplines and curricular units.

Besides curriculum design, another constraint is to achieve *true* interdisciplinary study with the need for collaboration between educators. Interdisciplinary teaching and learning is maximized when professionals from different disciplines work together to serve a common purpose and to help students make the connections between different subject areas.

A good strategy could be to collect subject specific cases and share them with other teachers - a kind of «bank cases» or/and «bank exercises». Other strategies can include seminars, study visits, lectures focused on real cases, movies, group work with some time to learn how to argue and to balance conflicting norms in an appropriate manner.

7. Ethics education is very suitable for interdisciplinary learning and teaching

"One area that has been identified as being suitable for interdisciplinary learning and teaching is **ethics education** (McMichael, Irvine, & Gilloran, 1984; Peach, 1999). Ethics education in interdisciplinary classes has the potential to develop mutual

²⁵ Taft, Susan H.; White, Judith (2007) Ethics Education: Using Inductive Reasoning To Develop Individual, Group, Organizational, and Global Perspectives. *Journal of Management Education* 2007; 31; 614-646 (p. 640)

²⁶ Andrade, F. et al (2016) Processo Ensino-Aprendizagem em Bioética: um Debate Interdisciplinar *Revista Brasileira de Educação Médica* 40 (1) : 102-108. "A abordagem de debates interdisciplinares favorece o conhecimento e a abrangência de determinado tema, enriquecendo imensuravelmente a vivência dos profissionais da área de saúde e humanas por meio de valores e princípios vivenciados."

support on ethical issues and to help establish the notion of good between disciplines (Edward & Preece, 1999)."²⁷

As students transition from school to the workforce, they will encounter ethical issues that influence interdisciplinary teams. They will need to have a solid grasp of how interdisciplinary teams work together to provide ethically supported decisions. "Graduate and undergraduate students who achieve awareness and conscious ownership of their ethical beliefs are ultimately better prepared to influence organizations in ethically responsible directions."²⁸

Conflict resolution is sought through communication, shared self-understanding - which, given the features of pluralistic societies, can be a difficult, if not condemned, endeavor. However, it is the *common effort of rational reflection*, through dialogue, which lays the groundwork for an ethic of consensus.

Faced with the scourges of our existence - hunger and misery, torture and continued violation of human dignity, growing unemployment and disparities in social wealth, and self-destructive risk of life on Earth -, at the crossroads of the differences between the various responses to the world's great problems, structures with universal validity will appear - it is worth illuminating the distinctions and recognizing some **universal norms**, as is the case of human rights.

And these rights, which are clearly delineated in Arendt's thinking, the supposed universalism of human rights could only be guaranteed through **citizenship**. "The field where freedom has always been known, not as a problem, to be sure, but as a fact of everyday life, is the political realm. And even today, whether we know it or not, the question of politics and the fact that man is a being endowed with the gift of action must always be present to our mind when we speak of the problem of freedom; for action and politics, among all the capabilities and potentialities of human life, are the

²⁷ Knight, Carrie; Mayo, Robert; and Porter, Michele (2017) "Interdisciplinary Ethics Learning in Higher Education: Students' Perceptions," Teaching and Learning in Communication Sciences & Disorders. Vol. 1, issue 2, Article 4. Available at: <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/tlcsd/vol1/iss2/4>

²⁸ Taft, Susan H.; White, Judith (2007) Ethics Education: Using Inductive Reasoning To Develop Individual, Group, Organizational, and Global Perspectives. Journal of Management Education 2007; 31; 614-646 (p. 640)

only things of which we could not even conceive without at least assuming that freedom exists"²⁹.

8. There are closeness between citizenship and ethics education

Briefly, let's put ethics education and politics talking to each other. To Hannah Arendt, what defines us is **plurality** - the "fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world."³⁰. Exist is to be-in-common and to be-with others, to be "between" others (*inter homines esse*), which are both singular and unrepeatable; therefore, where there is plurality there can be singularity: plurality is the condition of human action because we are all humans but in such a way that no one is ever the same as anyone who has lived, live or will live³¹.

Only humans are capable of political action and therefore of innovation and creation of new relationships with each other because only humans, in their constituent plurality, are singular, unique and unrepeatable beings - without these characteristics, this existence would no longer be human³².

Plurality is understood by Arendt as human condition with a direct relation to the ordinary world of appearances in which humans can express their uniqueness through their acts and words. If this is so, **plurality is the condition of all political life**, and then it must be considered that there can be no effective democratic politics in the absence of a plurality of agents capable of acting and talking among themselves, able to agree and dissent about realities that appear to them.

"We became aware of the existence of a right to have rights (and that means to live in a framework where one is judged by one's actions and opinions) and a right to belong to some kind of organized community, only when millions of people emerged who had lost and could not regain these rights because of the new global political situation."³³. For Arendt, belonging to a community is vital to having rights, its absence is also an opportunity for mass movements to mobilize "the masses" who belong to no

²⁹ Arendt, Hannah (2007) *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. New York: Penguin Books. p. 145.

³⁰ Arendt, Hannah (1989). *The human condition*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. p.7.

³¹ Arendt, idem. p.8.

³² Arendt, idem. p. 10.

³³ Arendt, Hannah (2004) *Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Schocken Books. p.297.

class or political opinion - "the chief characteristic of the mass man is not brutality and backwardness, but his isolation and lack of normal social relationships."

Arendt does not believe racism comes naturally, but needs people who are uprooted and feel they have no place in the world. People were primed for the appeal of totalitarian leaders because they were isolated from any community — political or otherwise: "What prepares men for totalitarian domination in the non-totalitarian world is the fact that loneliness, once a borderline experience usually suffered in certain marginal conditions like old age, has become an everyday experience of the ever-growing masses of our century."

9. There are challenges of interdisciplinary debate in ethics education

Now, we quote International Association for Education in Ethics (IAEE) site,

"Ethical challenges exist in all domains of scientific inquiry. For future professionals and practitioners, learning how to cope with such challenges underlines the relevancy of teaching ethics. This is especially important at the university level as students will develop from learners into professionals in their specialized areas of study. Ethics teaching has a special significance at a global level since it will address a variety of different perspectives providing new insights into ethics from various cultural experiences from around the world."³⁴

Promoting teaching of ethics, in different science and technology areas could be a little different than the exchange of experiences among experts from different parts of the world. Consciousness is the ability to perceive realities (internal and external), our ability to evaluate, our practical judgment about ourselves and others. Being more aware of our freedom and our responsibility allows, for example, to realize that circumstances do not decide our life; "circumstances are the ever new dilemma before which we have to decide, but who decides is our character."³⁵

Our life, both personal and organizational, stems from what we do with circumstances. What we include is our circumstantial nature, which is historical, temporal, changeable, as well as the decisions we make and the paths we choose. Our

³⁴ International Association for Education in Ethics.
<https://www.ethicsassociation.org/contents/show/2/about-iaee.html>

³⁵ Ortega y Gasset (2000) *A Rebelião das Massas*. Lisboa: Relógio d' Água.

life is concrete, with individual limits, developed in interrelation, inter-subjectivity, and associated with the limits of the relationship with the others and the world.

Each one of us does what we are able to do but our ability depends on the preparation, knowledge and reflection. And if human dignity requires recognition, respecting it means promoting the capacity to think, decide and act. And that requires ethics education, one of the most interdisciplinary fields.