

Bioeditorial

Bioethics and scientific integrity

Almudena García Manso*

Giovane Mendieta Izquierdo**

Juan María Cuevas Silva***

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The emergence of ethical approaches, as well as the current regression towards moral dogmatisms, in the field of scientific research, is generated thanks to the crisis of ethics and morality in the research environment. In recent years, the discourse on scientific integrity has been prolific, which has linked it with ethical aspects of the researcher's work and related to (good or bad) practices and (good or bad) behaviors arising within the processes of investigation. If scientific integrity is conceived in this way, that is, as an element that evaluates, judges, measures, coerces and punishes the bad practices of the researcher, the concept is being limited from its nature. Thus, the following questions arise: why scientific integrity and not only integrity? Why give a surname when integrity is holistic in its essence and principle?

In this writing, we will make an invitation to link training in and for integrity with a bioethical sense. The apology will be the paradigmatic emergency and the critical state of scientific integrity.

Scientific integrity, together with bioethics, goes beyond the analysis of the researcher's practices and behaviors. By making a list of attacks against scientific integrity, for example: fraud, plagiarism, falsification of data, the absence of informed consent, among others, a strategy of control and supervision of compliance of ethical principles with a moral conscience, which must have internalized the researcher, rather than a deontological, normative, restrictive code and control of the actions and decisions of the researcher. For this reason, it is necessary to ask: what requirement does the university education with investigative nature pose to scientific integrity and bioethics? The universities have decided to focus their action on research, on which teaching and extension depend, in such a way that they develop and propose their

* Ph.D. in Sociology, post-doctorate in Human Rights and Public Health. Contract Professor at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid, Spain. Email: almudena.manso@urjc.es. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8781-5020>

** Ph.D. in Public Health Sciences. Research professor in bioethics and co-editor of the Latin American Journal of Bioethics, of the New Granada Military University, Bogotá, Colombia. Email: giovane.mendieta@unimilitar.edu.co. ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5085-3242>

*** Ph.D. in Social and Political Processes of Latin America. Research professor and editor of the Latin American Journal of Bioethics, of the New Granada Military University, Bogotá Colombia. Email: juan.cuevas@unimilitar.edu.co. ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1680-6223>

educational and strategic projects from the research paradigm, as an element that defines the socio-epistemic and socio-cultural task of the citizen that is educated in this type of institutions.

When deciding to promote research as an articulating axis between university-state-society, in addition to the paradigmatic model university-company-state, it is required to have clear principles of action that guide the decisions of researchers. That is to say, the scientific integrity has to do with the beliefs and ethical formation, structure and moral conscience of the researcher, with his convictions as subjectivity, a human person, citizen and his consciousness of belonging to a species, a human group, a society, a State; its interrelation with its peers and biotic and abiotic environment. Scientific integrity cannot be disaggregated from the social processes and contexts that accompany those who carry out the research, either in the university field or from any other influential and significant social status for humanity. The ethical crisis of research is a replica of what happens in politics, economy, religion, and education as central levels that indicate and show how to act. The plight of scientific integrity in research is evident evidence of the failure of educational projects, centered on anthropocentric perspectives, grounded in the system of the commodification of knowledge, modeled and constructed to respond to business needs composed by “professional proletarians”; tinged with the rise of technologies that revolutionize the systems of relational life between humanity and humanity with other beings in the world. Also conjugated with a “moral and ethical nihilism in research” that has favored the dogmatic reaction of ethics and morals. These are trends and perspectives that have not allowed elucidating on the sense of scientific integrity.

Faced with this dark panorama of scientific integrity in the investigation, it seems that there was no light of hope at the end of the tunnel. Educational projects must be integrated into a curricular form by the transversality of ethics, morals, and integrity (not only scientific), not understood as a class with philosophical content, but as an action that must start from the teacher, from the example of transparency in all daily actions, in such a way that the conception of integrity is discouraged as an element that should be encouraged exclusively when “the citizen is already in the process of re-educating”, as Makarenko affirms. The conception of training in integrity¹, current concern in universities and centers that have research as a socio-epidemiological goal, should permeate all levels of education, so as not to perpetuate the “nostalgia of deontological morality not internalized” that we confuse with ethics, in addition to nuancing it with coercive legal aspects.

Integrity education requires the resignification of the sense of schooling, contextualization of the role of the educator in the midst of the avatar of technological development, current childhood, and youth culture. Relevance of the processes of university education and the spirit of research within a specific society and culture; awareness of the educator (teacher, teacher, researcher) of his role as an agent that transforms minds, transmits lifestyles, communicates ways of constructing possible and impossible worlds, and possesses the strongest weapon to transform, through science, the systems of life: science and knowledge.

1 Different from integral education, educational project that failed in the Colombian case. As evidence we have structural corruption in political, religious, educational, economic leaders...

It is, then, a call to the universities so that what they have shown in the research practices of professors and scientists does not turn it into a problem of ethics committees or sanctions that do not solve the underlying problem, or in an inofficious documentary axis (where paper holds everything). If integrity is in crisis, we affirm again, and it is because the economic and social structures and processes mark out in that direction; because the practices of social, epistemic, scientific, political, and economic leaders are characterized by having everything but integrity; rather an individuality that reaches corruption. The university must assume a critical and proactive, non-deontological role, and initiate (some have already done so) a process of articulation between social, cultural, political, economic and production processes with knowledge, science, and research, taking into account the context that surrounds it.

Now, the word *integrity* itself calls for unity, for the unbreakableness and indivisibility between man and the planet in general. That is, the context, science, nature, environment, ecology, poverty, migration, human trafficking, emerging gender perspectives, structural corruption, moral and ethical inventions, such as post-truth, extinction of animal, plant, and mineral species (biotic and abiotic), artificialization of life (not only human), global warming, natural phenomena that claim their space within the world (called by man “natural disasters”, when they are disasters caused by the denaturing process in which they find themselves the same man, unaware of his unity with the world). In short, that fatalism appears again, paraphrasing Fukuyama, “an end of history and the last man,” as current paradigms of life. Well, it is bioethics that, within the project of training in and for integrity (not only scientific), provides key elements to respond to the challenges and demands of humanity that has lost its integrity with nature and even with itself.

Bioethics is a discipline or knowledge that has arisen from the clinical and medical dilemmas caused, for example, to scientific advances in the area of health. But, already in the 21st century, to think about proposing or developing bioethical projects limited only to the clinical or medical, to the medical decision that occurs within the hospital or clinic institutions, is to ignore that these situations also have an origin in the social, political, economic, environmental and ecological problems, among others, that require bioethics to “deterritorialize” from mere medical cases. That is to say, the task of bioethics is nourished by elements that, as indicated by its essence, are transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary, not only with medical sciences but must articulate reality and contexts with research processes that allow improving the life systems (biotic, abiotic, anthropological). Thus, by linking training in and for integrity with bioethics, nothing new is being done, it is simply a call to resignification and rescue of the meaning of life, the implications, and importance of bioethical and ethical principles and integrity in social processes, that at present the crisis of and with “scientific integrity” becomes fertile bioethical land. In the words of Susana Vidal (2010):

This Bioethics “bridge” will be called a transforming Social Bioethics, capable of linking critical paradigms, contributing to the construction of a transdisciplinary between areas of knowledge that converge in a model of “human development” and, in the same way, contributes to the construction of a new discourse of bioethics.

It would be interesting that the intentions of Colciencias² (Colombia) and the National Council of Science and Technology (Conacyt, for its acronym in Spanish) (Koespell and Ruiz Chávez, 2015) (Mexico), state entities responsible for promoting, developing, monitoring, controlling and supporting research processes scientific, they will be able to link bioethics with the integrity of scientific research, taking into account bioethics, not as deontology resulting from discussions, but as a bridge that unites the realities of contexts with the demands of scientific practice, from research and its impact on life systems. In certain academic circles, bioethics is considered an ethical discourse with a great philosophical essence, but it is time to realize that this has been transformed by the same emerging dynamics in the socio-technological, economic-cultural and teleological-vital processes of society and the current nature. The bridge between bioethics and training in and for integrity, before being built between research and the practice of the researcher, must be fostered between the human being, his citizenship and the practice of citizenship, the uniqueness of the human person with the ecological and vital processes natural. If you want to have the real effect of the policies of ethics, bioethics, and scientific integrity, they must be “integrated and articulated” with all the training processes, in all socio-cultural estates. It is impossible to achieve scientific integrity of the researcher if there is no ethical and bioethical integrity of the researcher as a human person, subjectivity, individual, citizen, fundamental aspects that permeate their practice.

The bridge between bioethics and scientific integrity is urgent, but to build it, fundamental training bases are needed and not only policies, proposals and speeches that try to respond to critical and circumstantial demands, which fragment and open more and more the gap between ethical discourse and investigative action, social reality and scientific research, scientific researcher and citizen conscience, social processes and university.

Ethics, Bioethics and scientific integrity, more than a public policy for control, must be a conviction of the human being as a research citizen, a social commitment of the institution that promotes and sponsors a commitment to science and knowledge for human support and planetary.

Reference

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2 Policy on ethics, bioethics and scientific integrity. Date of approval May 2017, Bogotá. Available at: www.colciencias.gov.co/sites/default/files/upload/noticias/politica-etica.pdf