
But the opposite happened. Bioethics opened up shop—elsewhere. Arguably, if enrollments in philosophy and its placement rate are metrics, bioethics began to kill philosophy and take some most talented refugees.

When philosophers interested in medicine were able to achieve success in developing their study and reform of medical practice, it was primarily because they left their philosophy department and took up jobs in the world of medicine. In effect philosophy did close up shop to the sort of inquiry that Toulmin envisaged; the vicious attack on reductionism in bioethics textbooks was among the final nails in the coffin where recognition of complex bioethics by philosophy colleagues was concerned.

In the 20th century, chairs of American and British philosophy departments made a profound but foreseeable mistake in allowing bioethics to essentially spin off into a separate discipline, often in new quarters, rather than growing philosophy to accommodate the new work in new methodological traditions.

So bioethics has developed a role consonant with that played by philosophy at the dawn of the 20th century, with multiple prestigious graduate programs, journals and social roles.

Philosophy has comforted itself with the gentle illusion that its spawn, bioethics, made a Faustian bargain, trading rigor for fame. Many pages of the professional literature of the American Philosophical Association are devoted to speculation as to why, for example, the media is not more interested in philosophy as it is currently practiced. “Why isn’t there a PBS series on Kant,” asked one philosopher, who later told me that he doesn’t own a TV. Why, philosophers asked in a special committee at the dawn of the 21st century, can rigorous philosophy not just be recognized without any shift in how the discipline trains its young, conducts its activities, and in particular how it interacts with trade presses and television.

Philosophy of medicine, a small coalition peopled by philosophers almost all of whom work primarily in the world of bioethics while holding appointments in departments of philosophy, holds on to its role in philosophy with vigor, keeping alive a newsletter of the American Philosophical Association, a few journals (though even they shift

more every day; witness the transformation of the excellent journal *Theoretical Medicine* to *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics*), and a smattering of books and series, including one, the *Philosophy of Medicine* series, that until roughly 1985 contained, arguably, more than 75% of the canonical books in what would become philosophical bioethics. Today, one can only (with great effort and considerably expense—trust me) obtain these books, and they cannot be searched on the Internet.

Philosophers of medicine are not saving the life of philosophy, and in fact as sophisticated as the work of a ranking bioethics scholar or even philosopher of medicine in a philosophy department might be, bioethics as it is involving into a robust area of research can never be truly excellent in the minds of those for whom the application of philosophy means traditional dissemination of epistemology or metaphysics to the public. For them, there is little that is truly “philosophical” about bioethics’ activities. As a friend once noted, only philosophy, among all the great disciplines, spends so much time asking of all work published by its practitioners, “is this really philosophy?”

The question at hand is not, then, whether bioethics can save the life of philosophy. The question is whether bioethics’ success in integrating philosophical research with the research life of the biomedical science community and community on the whole will lead to a genuine attempt to reorganize and repopulate philosophy departments and change their products such that the philosopher is again part of the broader community and yet she is said to be teaching philosophy.

Resurrecting “public pedagogy” and “public service” as genuine duties for any philosopher, duties that require innovation vastly beyond what is currently seen in philosophical practice, these are first steps toward a world in which not medicine, but the practice of research in the community of biomedical sciences, breathes new life into a discipline that has never been more beleaguered. But ultimately, philosophy departments must embrace the interdisciplinary philosophically trained scholar, or bioethics may very well play a role in shrinking, but not closing, the philosophy shop.