

Lévi-Lucien Bruhl's Ethics and the Science of Moral Habits: A Critical Study

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Abstract

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, moral philosophy underwent a profound transformation under the influence of emerging social sciences. Within this intellectual context, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl proposed a critical rethinking of traditional ethics in his work *La Morale et la Science des mœurs* (1903). Rejecting the possibility of a purely theoretical morality, he challenged the classical assumptions of a fixed human nature and the organic unity of moral conscience. Drawing on sociological and historical analysis, Lévy-Bruhl argued that moral life is shaped by complex social conditions and historical developments rather than by universal and immutable principles. He was influenced by the positivist tradition of Auguste Comte and the sociological approach of Émile Durkheim, his perspective sought to transform the study of morality into an empirical inquiry grounded in observation and analysis of social realities. By emphasizing the contextual and practical dimensions of moral norms, this approach contributed to the

intellectual foundations of contemporary applied ethics.

Keywords: Lévy-Bruhl; Moral Philosophy; Moral Conscience; Applied Ethics.

Preface

Man, as a being whose human nature makes him multidimensional, is connected to the world of the universe (substance), which is governed by nature that does not know leaps and extends to a transcendent horizon whose principal labor is metaphysics, a horizon in which contemplation is an act and has an outcome, it begins with a question that necessarily turns into a composite inquiry made up of several problematic elements that determine the course and the researcher's plan. Thence, his life becomes bound to the problem of facts and their problematization, through which he seeks to formalize reality within a symbolic system termed knowledge, into which philosophy with its interrogative spirit serves as the initial entry point for all its fields of research, and as a practice of evaluating this knowledge at the stage of results.

Philosophy, in its comprehensive perspective, is a human search for truth and a method by which one organizes the movement of one's thinking. However consensus on defining it with a single definition is itself a problematic issue as philosophers and schools have differentiated in defining it and in determining its field of inquiry, in two antagonistic directions in a positive context this disagreement enriches conceptions. Besides, methodologies grow and flourish within the field of plurality in philosophical orientations, which we consider it to be the essence of philosophizing and the spirit of scientific research in general. Thence, returning to philosophical sources is a principal foundation for grounding and deepening philosophical research, and the same judgment extends to fields of specialization within philosophy, for mastery of a domain of knowledge within the philosophical sphere requires entering that world and remaining within it. We may represent this in the following statement: If the researcher wishes to know philosophy, he must dwell in it and it must dwell within him.

The position of moral philosophy within philosophical systems is primary and crucial, on the basis of the teleology that originally drives philosophizing, which is defined in cultivating the human being's attachment to wisdom as love or friendship which is the elevation of the human being through regulating action and behavior according to a value system termed ethics. For, reflection on

foundations and principles is a distinctly philosophical principle. Ethics, in the ordinary human perspective, is an act and an individual behavioral practice "Morality" and collective as customs and norms "Morals" and thus moral philosophy is realistic in its point of departure and abstract in its aim, so that the principal distinguishing feature of moral sources is contemplation and abstraction, even though what is required is the embodiment of commonly accepted values in behavior.

Ethics:

In derivation:

The root of the word: Ibn Faris's creation has two sources: "The letters kha, lam, and qaf have two origins: one is the estimation of something, as for the other one is touching something; as for the first, their saying: "I created the leather for the water-skin," meaning I prepared it... and from that comes the word "creation," which is the disposition, because its possessor has been given power over it, So-and-so is worthy of such-and-such, and he is worthy of it, and how worthy he is, meaning he is one of those who are capable of it. (Ahmad, 1979, p. 213)

In Terminology:

Arab and Islamic Heritage:

Miskawayh: "morality is a state of the soul, a gentle inclination towards its actions without thought or deliberation." (Miskawayh, 1981, p. 51) In view of the fact that, the moral act becomes moral when spontaneity is achieved in the act itself, thus it becomes imitative of the

habitual act. Hence, Islamic moralists focused on the originality of the moral act or morality, but in a way which suggests that the moral act is a conditional and inevitable act, in which freedom and will are absent, but the preliminaries of the act, or the stage of thinking about the act, require awareness and intentionality.

In Western Heritage:

The word *Morale* in Western languages intersects in both the phonetic structure and the semantic meaning of the term, since it appears closely related in French and English, and it is derived from the Latin word *Mores*, meaning habit, its counterpart in Greek is *Ethice*, and in Latin *Ethica*. Thence, ethics becomes an expression of public manners or the ethics of social life. Nevertheless, social ethics does not only reflect public manners, since individual ethics constitutes a constant reference for moral goodness.

Ethics can be viewed or distinguished from two perspectives: a practical one and a theoretical one, the first constitutes the subject matter of theoretical ethics and a normative field through which the validity and effectiveness of moral values are measured, and it is necessary to point out these two models because of the clear difference among moral schools in dealing with concepts, and with the concept of ethics itself.

What stands out in the context of the title and its semantic construction is that the essential characteristic distinguishing this type of ethics

is its theoretical nature, based on dealing with concepts and principles through scholarly research and interpretation, where abstraction thus becomes a means for generalizing what the researcher reaches in the field of ethics. Considering that, establishing boundaries and conceptions within the context of conceptualization and lexical semantic relations, becomes the most prominent approach in this regard.

Among the manifestations of this is the effort of philosophers and researchers to define the concept of ethics and moral habits. Additionally, it becomes evident that no matter how much ethics ventures into the realm of theory and navigates within it, its principal aim remains directed toward the world of human behavior. However, the indicators of disagreement work to deepen the gap that separates human beings.

One of the most important of these is language, which intensifies differences on the basis of understanding intentions. For, translation is distortion and betrayal, and the multiplicity of languages in the human world complicates meaning even though the origin lies in unity rather than multiplicity. On the grounds that, whatever the differences among human beings, the space of commonality remains the widest in the realm of aspiration. For this reason, researchers have endeavored through a new branch of linguistics known as unified linguistics, to discover what is common and universal in language, whether at the level of

knowledge or values. Further, the present distinction between ethics and morality among philosophers reveals the theoretical tendency that still accompanies ethical research, as well as the ongoing opposition among philosophers regarding the determination of moral value as either subjective or objective.

Ethics and Science:

Scientific results contributed to creating a shock within the philosophical sphere. For, the precision of the conclusions reached, and their capacity to be embodied in reality within scientific fields prompted many scholars to reconsider traditional philosophy. Considering that, at the level of moral philosophy, it was observed that an abstract tendency had come to dominate ethical studies. Seeing that, the human being referred to in these studies does not exist in real human life; rather, he is merely a representation or a conceptual model of the human being.

Over and above that, what concerns us in this situation experienced by traditional moral philosophy is the problematic character that has accompanied moral questions throughout their history. Inasmuch as, ethics is raised and problematized when it faces a crisis, the search for a new ethics suited to a new reality accompanies theoretical research in ethics. Hence we may enumerate the criticisms directed by supporters of the scientific approach in the study of ethics toward advocates of theoretical ethics as follows:

First Objection:

The rationalization of moral values does not necessarily require their formalization. For, the claim that moral principles can imitate the concepts of mathematics involves a kind of exaggeration. Inasmuch as, the difference between moral and mathematical concepts goes back to the principle and the source of these concepts, and concepts in mathematics are purely mental constructions whereas moral concepts are not the product of pure reason alone and this is what we can infer from the attempt of the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza to mathematize ethics in his book *Ethics*.

Notwithstanding this, ethical theorization remains a matter of disagreement among the major schools of philosophy, intersecting with the particularities of the philosophical role. As the belief that moral life is the subject matter of ethical theory is a proposition that places ethical theories in a logical predicament in which every foundational attempt to establish ethics loses its usefulness and significance. Thus the statement of Blaise Pascal is realized: "True morality mocks morality."

Second Objection:

Advocates of the scientific school in ethical studies maintain that the notion of a normative science is untenable. For, the term science in their view cannot properly apply to a study that goes beyond the limits of description, observation, or reporting. Correspondingly, science concerns only and exclusively phenomena that are capable of explanation and

positivization. As for what is related to understanding, it cannot be considered a scientific field, because philosophical ethics is an exercise of rational reflection. It is therefore closer to metaphysics than to science. Therefore, the belief in the existence of a study that is both scientific and normative at the same time is from a rational standpoint, impossible.

Third Objection:

The establishment of moral principles on the basis of universality and comprehensiveness is an approach whose limits have been demonstrated. For, to claim their universality implies accepting the possibility of deriving them automatically, which is difficult since moral concepts are highly complex, and the evident differences in the conception and practice of moral values show the limits of such a claim. In view of the fact that, to assert their universality would imply their unity, inclusiveness, and generality; however, the differences in values among societies provide further evidence of their relativity.

Moreover, their argument in this regard is based on the analysis conducted by scholars of the European moral conscience, which developed through successive stages and under multiple and diverse influences. Considering that, the individual conscience itself is the product and the arena of a conflict of opposites. As Bello states:

“The individual conscience is not formed only from those residues that have accumulated one

upon another throughout history; rather, it is also composed of a set of partial consciences that exist side by side, such as the family conscience, the professional conscience, the civic conscience, and the human conscience. These consciences are not always in harmony; rather, conflicts or contradictions often arise among them. Consequently, moral feeling is not a cohesive unity but a composite of different and diverse elements.” (Gustave, 1907, pp. 68-70)

Fourth Objection:

Positivists object to the assumptions upon which advocates of theoretical moral philosophy base their judgments and universal principles, where these thinkers argue, and did not attempt to examine the validity of their assumptions, which resemble the self-evident propositions upon which Euclidean mathematics is founded. Thence, the claim of the unity of human nature, its permanence across time and space, and the idea that the data of the moral conscience are innate and shared, are matters that require proof and argument, and not self-evident intuitive truths, as these philosophers maintain.

When pioneers of the social school turned to the branches of the social sciences, it became clear that the idea of a human being in itself is a metaphysical myth. For, every individual and every people possesses its own ways of thinking, feeling, and reasoning. As Émile Durkheim states:

“Every individual and every society places under the concept of ‘man’ the man of this age or of that society. If it is true that the ancient Greek gave no consideration to the barbarian, it is also true that the European man today believes that ‘man’ is precisely the man of this Western Christian society...” (Zakaria, 1990, p. 14)

Imitating science reflects that original relationship between science and ethics, or between scientific progress and the fields of knowledge that philosophy once encompassed. Considering that, reaching the level of precision and logical rigor achieved by the sciences became an aspiration for these studies. Therefore, many scholars attempted to examine ethics through a scientific lens that would distance it from the abstract tendency it had taken throughout its history. We will attempt to point to some of these studies.

The social school and the question of ethics:

Social studies witnessed, at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the French school, a knowledge revolution at the level of concepts and methodology, where the fashion of the time consisted in imitating the experimental sciences through their methodological approach, in the hope of attaining the logical rigor and precision that accompanied scientific results. Among the most important pioneers were Auguste Comte, Émile Durkheim, and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. In this study, we will attempt to present the book *Ethics and the Science of Moral Habits* by the sociologist

Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, which embodies the social project of the French school in dealing with ethics through the application of the experimental method in the study of moral phenomena, which are nothing but manifestations of the development of social structures.

Lucien Lévy Bruhl 1857/1939:

A sociologist and moral philosopher, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl was born in Paris in 1857. He studied at the Charlemagne Institute, and then entered the École Normale Supérieure, where he obtained the aggregation in philosophy in 1879 with distinction.

He earned his doctorate in philosophy in 1884, his dissertation was entitled *The Idea of Responsibility*, and his second thesis dealt with *The Idea of God in Seneca*. He was appointed to higher education in 1895 at the École Normale Supérieure and later at the University of Paris (Sorbonne), where in 1904 he succeeded Émile Boutroux as professor holding the Chair of the History of Modern Philosophy. He also delivered lectures on the history of political ideas at the Free School of Political Sciences.

In addition, he was a close friend of Émile Durkheim, and this likely encouraged him to devote more attention to sociology and ethics. He produced several studies that resulted in two works which created considerable controversy when they appeared: *Ethics and the Science of Moral Habits* (1903) and *How Natives Think* (1910).

His works include:

1. The Idea of Responsibility: a dissertation completed in 1884 for the doctoral degree.
2. The Philosophy of Jacobi 1894.
3. The Philosophy of Auguste Comte 1900.
4. Ethics and the Science of Moral Habits published in 1903.
5. How Natives Think. Published in 1910.

His central concern was to separate ethics from metaphysics by grounding it in experience capable of providing objective rules for behavior. Within this framework he surpassed many of his contemporaries. For, he believed that the ethics of nations, both primitive and civilized are natural and subject to development through changes in social factors. Furthermore, he argued that the benefit of the science of morals lies in enabling us to form a moral art, that is, a set of rules through which we deal with our conditions, without these rules possessing a binding character and without our actions having an intrinsic value expressed as good or evil.

Lévy-Bruhl and Auguste Comte 1798/1857:

The close relationship between Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Auguste Comte appears in the book prepared by Lévy-Bruhl in tribute to his teacher Comte, the pioneer of the positivist school in Western philosophy. Some studies, however, attribute this novelty to the French philosopher Claude Henri de Saint-Simon. Comte became known for the Law of the Three Stages, a principle through which he attempted to interpret phenomena, hoping thereby to

refute the metaphysical foundation of concepts and perspectives. Nonetheless, a careful examination of the issue reveals that while Comte sought to explain phenomena in a positivist or scientific manner, metaphysical thinking still unconsciously dominated his thought in his dependence on the idea of a principle and the notion of universal generalization, an aspiration long cherished by philosophers (Tawfiq, 1979).

Nevertheless, Comtism contributed to preparing the first premises of a new moral thought through the questioning it directed at ethics. Among the examples is the idea of altruism, which Western philosophers often believe to be a product of Christianity, the doctrine that in their view contributed to delaying the European Renaissance. Further, Comte called for cutting the umbilical cord with theology and relying instead on an objective scientific vision of the individual and of collective values. According to Tawfiq al-Tawil, his call aimed “to establish social life on the basis of love for humanity, to give priority to altruism over egoism, and to rely in its study on observation rather than imagination. In this way he dealt with the human being as a being that actually exists, not as a being we imagine and wish to exist.”

According to Lévy-Bruhl’s interpretation of Comte, ethics occupies a middle position between theoretical philosophy and politics. It is grounded in philosophy while politics derives its principles from it (Lévy-Bruhl, p.

212). Concurrently, ethics lies outside the purely theoretical sphere, since it forms a partial field within the social studies that sociology investigates. For Comte, ethics is a science that organizes human emotions, feelings, and desires according to the individual's particular nature; as a positivist science, it ultimately depends on sociology (Lévy-Bruhl, p. 213).

For Comte, the moral problem essentially consists in striving to make affection among people prevail over motives of selfishness, so that the social tendency might overcome individualism (Lévy-Bruhl, p. 219).

What is striking in Comte's thought is his recognition of the inability of many traditional philosophies and religious institutions to solve the contemporary problems of moral life, as Lévy-Bruhl writes: "How can religious doctrines serve as a support for morality if they cannot sustain themselves? And what can we expect in the future from beliefs that have been unable to resist the advance of reason? Instead of religious beliefs being able to provide ethics with a solid foundation, we find that they increasingly cause it a double harm: on the one hand, they oppose the replacement of their role by reason in founding ethics; and on the other, they no longer possess sufficient power even among their followers to exert an influence on behavior." (Lévy-Bruhl, p. 316)

Ethics and the Science of Moral Habits:

The book *The Science of Moral Habits* is considered one of the most important critical

works in moral philosophy, it consists of nine chapters and a conclusion. We will first attempt to present the book through the first three chapters, and then point to its importance in moral philosophy and its role in establishing the new ethics, or what is known as applied ethics.

Chapter One: There Is No Theoretical Morality

Lévy-Bruhl chose a provocative title for the chapter, which states: "There is not and there cannot be, a theoretical morality," or, as Professor Mahmoud Qasim demonstrates it: "There is no theoretical science of ethics, and it is not possible for such a science to exist." In this chapter, Lévy-Bruhl clarifies the true meaning carried by the words theoretical and practical, and discusses the dual meaning that philosophers have given to the theoretical-practical distinction in ethics; he also affirms the realistic or actual nature of morality. Moreover, moral realism appears in the individual's commitment to values and social regulations while being conscious of them.

Lévy-Bruhl draws on the history of sciences in order to confirm his point of view regarding the ambiguity surrounding the distinction between the theoretical and the practical. For, abstract sciences such as mathematics did not become independent and fully developed until they overcame the primitive and naïve bond that once united the sciences. Initially, Lévy-Bruhl accepts a premise that reveals the path he intends to follow in demonstrating the

empirical dimension of moral studies in which he states that the nature of sciences differs: in some sciences the distinction between the theoretical and the practical is easy and possible, while in others it becomes extremely difficult, even impossible. Lévy-Bruhl says: "In some cases the distinction between science and art or more precisely between the theoretical aspect and the practical aspect is very easy, whereas in other cases this distinction is much more difficult." (Lévy-Bruhl, 1953, p. 50)

Through presenting several examples from the sciences, Lévy-Bruhl reaches the conclusion that sciences have progressed only after reaching a critical epistemological moment in which they reexamined their concepts and methods, or achieved what Gaston Bachelard calls a rupture. In this notion Lévy-Bruhl writes: "...Although we do not wish here to outline the main lines of the history of the relations between medicine and the sciences on which it depends, we can nonetheless observe how theoretical research gradually separated from the practical point of view. Indeed, we can determine the principal stages of this development. The distinction first appeared, then became clearer as science, in the strict sense, freed itself from its personal character that is as a distinction was made between the phenomena and laws that must be studied and, on the other hand, the beliefs, emotions, and practical demands that were not initially

separated from them." (Lévy-Bruhl, 1953, p. 56)

What Lévy-Bruhl deduces is that the exact or experimental sciences did not merge science and practice, nor theoretical studies and their practical applications and the separation between the research subject and the practical effects of its results is therefore necessary. Hence Lévy-Bruhl relies on this principle to refute the purely theoretical dimension of ethics, because it contains an evident contradiction. Giving the fact that ethics is originally a normative science "...whose function is not knowledge but the issuing of judgments; it at least assumes that knowledge and the determination of rules of conduct are one and the same thing, owing to the fact that it aims to reduce the rules that guide human behavior to a single principle." (Lévy-Bruhl, 1953, p. 62)

Bruhl also discusses the normative character proposed by moral philosophers as a way out of the epistemological dilemma created by combining theory (knowledge of a thing) with its application. He refers, for example, to Wundt, whom he mentions in the text. Considering that, according to Lévy, this position also contains a contradiction. He questions, in a critical tone, whether it is possible to accept sciences that are essentially defined as normative. He states in this context: "...Every norm concerns conduct that is action, it is subject to knowledge only indirectly, insofar as it results from knowledge.

If this norm is empirical, it depends on traditions, beliefs, and representations whose connection with objective truth may be more or less distant. But if it is rational, it depends on accurate knowledge of this truth that is on science. However it does not follow from this that science, considered in itself is normative.”

Summary:

The sociological orientation in ethics is not a sudden breakthrough in the history of moral philosophy; rather, it is the result of several accumulated research efforts, even if they were not very extensive. For, the approaches of Espinas in his study of animal societies, the works of Auguste Comte in Positive Politics, and later the more developed studies and writings of Émile Durkheim such as *The Division of Social Labor* (1893), *The Rules of the Sociological Method* (1894), *Suicide*, and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, all contributed to this development.

The studies of Lévy-Bruhl constituted a major contribution to establishing the sociological position regarding morality. Among the objections raised against the social doctrine is its excessive rejection of the theoretical approach in ethics, based on confusion in the understanding of science among its proponents, where Tawfiq Al-Tawil argues that: “...this doctrine had a narrow understanding of science, considering it to be natural science that relies solely on the experimental method, and on an understanding that prevailed in the middle of the last century.

Later, scientists broadened their conception of science to include every organized study aiming to know facts and explain them in light of an experimental, rational, or intuitive method. Therefore, the scientific method became broader than the experimental method and more comprehensive...” (Sedgwick, 1949, p. 17)

However, objectivity requires that we deal with this position within its historical and cultural context. For, the attempt of the sociological school was still in its early stages, and social studies had not yet reached their peak. Nevertheless, when we view the theory from the perspective of the present which was then the future for those thinkers we can observe its clear presence and significant role in ethical research and studies, particularly in areas connected with anthropology and ethnography.

Chapter Two: What Are the Moral Doctrines at the Present Time?

In this chapter, Lévy-Bruhl begins to reaffirm his viewpoint by refuting the foundations adopted by the current that defends the theory of morality; he does so by examining the bases of moral doctrines and demonstrating their contradictions and conflicts at the foundational level. In view of the fact that moral doctrines represent the philosophical presence within ethics, and through his usual dialectical style he argues that the only constant element in morality is its practical dimension. For, social agreement in the practice of morality confirms

its practical character, in contrast to the theoretical aspect, which has never achieved consensus in its understanding of morality. Besides, this persistent disagreement confirms the absence of any logical connection between rules of conduct and the principles that philosophers derive from them. Hence Lévy-Bruhl refers in this regard to Paul Janet, who maintained that beginning with theory in ethics in order to reach practice leads nowhere. Theoretical moral doctrines he says differ among themselves, whereas practical morality tends to agree. For, it is impossible to reconcile the various moral doctrines, each of which attempts to prove the falsity of the others in terms of principles, while they nevertheless agree on the duties that must be performed (Lévy-Bruhl, 1953, p. 90).

Correspondingly, practical morality becomes the necessary origin and foundation for ethical studies. Giving that starting from idealized theoretical conceptions of morality, produces only negative and ineffective values that reinforce illusory values as substitutes for real and effective ones, and the emergence of certain moral doctrines that glorify action and practice, in Bruhl's view represents only an anomaly in the history of moral doctrines exceptions to the prevailing theoretical monotony of ethics, examples include Cynicism, Epicureanism, and others. Likewise, the critical view of Friedrich Nietzsche toward those theoretical doctrines is considered rare and influential only among a

small group of people (Lévy-Bruhl, 1953, p. 91), Their limited impact according to Lévy-Bruhl stems from several considerations: their orientation toward practice does not arise from a coherent philosophical vision but from personal experience. For, they represent according to Bruhl a sensitive intellectual class capable of listening to practical advice that stimulates their curiosity without necessarily aligning such advice with their actual conduct. As a consequence, these anomalous doctrines are not genuine moral theories organized attempts to establish a new doctrine but rather protests against ancient customs or moral hypocrisy (Lévy-Bruhl, 1953, p. 91).

Lévy-Bruhl also relies on the stark contradictions among major ethical theories to demonstrate the invalidity of the purely theoretical conception of morality. Giving that the principles on which the founders of Stoicism and Epicureanism based their systems were opposed to each other, and even their conceptions of human nature were entirely contradictory.

From the second chapter we can also discern the intellectual sources and critical references that Lévy relied upon in criticizing theoretical ethics, where he refers to the French philosopher Alfred Fouillée (1838–1912), author of *Critique of Contemporary Moral Systems*. According to Fouillée, research in theoretical ethics has deviated from its scientific course and become immersed in subjective tendencies. As a result, the

theoretical foundational claim of morality becomes nothing more than a justification for personal positions. As he explains, every moral doctrine whether based on Kantian principles, utilitarian critique, pessimism, positivism, revolutionary thought, spiritualism, or religion defends the originality of its theoretical principle with zeal against the objections of other doctrines. Yet it does not hesitate to employ the same formulas used by its rivals when determining the rules that guide conduct and the moral commands related to justice and benevolence (Lévy-Bruhl, 1953, p. 92).

Chapter Three: The Principles of Theoretical Ethics

In this chapter, Lévy-Bruhl examines the foundations upon which theoretical ethics relies and through which it claims legitimacy, he identifies two main assumptions: the claim of the unity of human nature and the claim of harmony among the value components of the moral conscience, which through analysis and reasoning, he attempts to demonstrate the limitations of both assumptions.

First Confiscation:

"The first of its postulates consists in admitting the abstract idea of a human nature, both individual and social, always identical to itself in all times and in all countries, and in considering this nature as sufficiently well-known so that one can prescribe to it the rules of conduct that are most appropriate in each circumstance." (L. Lévy-Bruhl, 1910, p. 67)

Second Confiscation:

"The moral conscience of man would possess an organic unity, a kind of internal finality comparable to that of living beings; the commandments it issues would support among themselves logically irreproachable relations, and this harmonious unity of the moral conscience would correspond to the systematic unity of theoretical morality." (L. Lévy-Bruhl, 1910, p. 83)

The philosopher Baroudi explains the critical position adopted by Lévy-Bruhl toward these two postulates, stating: "But history and sociology show us that the conscience is constantly divided within itself, and that in every era it is the product of complex, multiple, and diverse social conditions; and they reveal within it obligations and prohibitions of very different origins, successive layers that are not organized." (Baroudi, 1958)

According to Lévy-Bruhl, morality is based on objective data and possibilities that allow the attribution of an objective dimension to ethical studies. In the words of Baroudi: "Since moral events or specific moral thoughts are real events that the scholar cannot think of replacing, he can nevertheless study them, classify them, and attempt to extract laws from them just as the biologist does, for example. This would produce a science of moral customs that would become theoretical and explanatory as long as it ceases to be normative in itself." (Baroudi, 1958, p. 35)

Lévy-Bruhl says: “We can represent moral reality in two ways at the same time: one subjective and the other objective. On the one hand, we may submit to the influence of the social reality in which we are immersed and feel it realized in our own conscience; on the other hand, we can grasp in that objectively perceived reality the stable relations that constitute laws.” (L. Lévy-Bruhl, 1910, p. 31) Therefore, the codification of morality and the attempt to confer scientific objectivity on ethical research became the hallmark of that era and a defining feature of scientific inquiry at the time. This tendency was a double-edged sword for morality, since the human organism became the primary field and research domain for these sciences, and also their first beneficiary. Furthermore, biology, through its subfields such as medicine and physiology, worked to reduce mortality among human beings and opened the way for scientific research to intervene in and modify the processes of the human organism, which in turn opened a new debate within ethical thought.

Conclusion:

From this brief presentation of the book *Ethics and the Science of Moral Habits*, it becomes clear that Lucien Lévy-Bruhl was a model of the scholar who remained faithful to his teachers Auguste Comte and Émile Durkheim. In view of the fact that, the concern that troubled the pioneers of the school at that time was to elevate social studies in general and

ethical studies in particular to the level of precise scientific disciplines. This was to be achieved by applying the scientific method based on problematic observation, hypotheses, and experimentation, which varies according to the nature of the subject studied. This approach rests on the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the human phenomenon and the social phenomenon as an ontological human model observable and capable of being studied scientifically. If the results in this field remain limited, this is due according to Lévy-Bruhl, to the delayed independence of this science from philosophy and its difficulty in overcoming the cultural heritage transmitted through generations. Giving that, the social school thus regards cultural and philosophical heritage as an obstacle to scientific progress. For, if we wish to reach objective truth, we must adhere to it and strive to uncover the relations upon which it is founded without being constrained by the dictates of subjectivity.

The relativistic tendency in ethics, which characterized the French school in the social sciences, also contributed to the emergence of a new field of research in moral philosophy known as new ethics, classified as a branch of applied philosophy. Besides, the expression applied ethics or new ethics suggests a kind of conceptual tension within the term itself. On the one hand, it intersects with ethics as a concept and as a cumulative product of philosophical history; on the other hand, from

a terminological perspective, it indicates the distinctiveness and specificity of this type of ethical study.

Furthermore, defining new ethics through the obstacles faced by research reflects a pragmatic orientation. Thus, applied ethics is understood as a new grounding of moral values on relative rather than absolute foundations, unlike classical moral philosophy, which remains situated within the purely theoretical and abstract domain, a domain which, according to the poet Heinrich Heine lies at the North Pole of thought, where the human mind risks freezing in the frost of abstraction.

For this reason, realist and pragmatist philosophy established new ethics on changing foundations derived from reality and from the crises that accompany it. Considering that, the shock experienced by humanity in the contemporary period revealed the necessity of returning to ethics or what is sometimes called the ethicalization of science in general and technology in particular. Appropriately, some definitions determine the nature of applied ethics in terms of purpose and intention, while others approach it from the perspective of crisis or obstacle, since the crisis affecting values has largely motivated the emergence of this field.

The thinker David B. Resnik provides a definition of this kind in his book *The Ethics of Science*, and according to his reference to the collaborative work *Moral Reasoning* by Fox and DeMarco, applied ethics is defined as:

“The study of moral dilemmas, choices, and standards within specific professions, functions, and concrete situations, and the manner in which ethical theories and value concepts are applied within particular contexts.” (David, 2005, p. 36)

In this text, applied ethics is connected to crises encountered in certain fields of knowledge, especially in the decisions that scientists must take within their areas of specialization for instance, the situation in which a physician finds himself hesitating, almost like Hamlet, between the fate of the patient in his hands and the ethical values and principles that govern the relationship between doctor and patient.

In the work of the Italian scholar Michela Marzano we find a historical account of the beginnings of applied ethics where she dates the emergence of this field to around 1960 in the United States, when Anglo-Saxon moral philosophers began addressing essential moral issues while moving away from meta-ethical analyses, which had been limited to the study and analysis of linguistic meanings and concepts in ethics (Michela, 2012, p. 3).

For the Tunisian thinker Fathi Triki, general ethics differs from applied ethics. General ethics imposes a comprehensive reflection on the human being and on ways of life, whereas applied ethics takes on different forms depending on the field in which it operates. When applied to sport, for instance, it gives rise to sports ethics, whose main aim is to protect sport from commercial interference,

violence, and violations of its principles (Fathi, 2009, p. 191).

Similarly, Omar Bouftas offers a synthetic definition of applied ethics: “It is a set of practical and domain-specific moral rules that seek to regulate practice within the various fields of science and technology and the social, economic, and professional activities associated with them. It also attempts to resolve the moral problems that arise in these fields not on the basis of ready-made and absolute moral standards, but through deliberation and consensus, and through ethical treatment of particular, complex, or difficult cases (casuistry) ” (Omar, 2011, p. 109).

Applied ethics is accordingly not an arbitrary development disconnected from a reference framework or historical reality. For, the call for a new ethics or new moral thought results from a set of premises, some of which are historical and emerged from the context of modernity. Inasmuch as, the affirmation of subjectivity, the fragmentation and crisis of meaning in modernity and postmodernity, the collapse of totalizing conceptions, the information revolution, and advances in biotechnology have all contributed to the emergence of new ethical thinking. Additionally, within moral philosophy itself, we also find the premises for the appearance of this type of ethical study, which will inform our argument for the existence of a moral thought described as “new” in earlier studies. Human thought,

however, cannot be confined to a single moment of periodization; for every attempt at periodization is ultimately a form of classification and sometimes an ideological framing of thought.

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