# Ethics

## Prof. Ingrid Basso

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The aim of the course is to reflect on philosophical sciences’ scope and limits with respect to ethical *argumentation.* What is ethics? What is its specific “subject”, that enables to formulate meaningful ethical propositions? Can ethics be defined from a philosophical perspective and can it have a rational basis?

At the end of the course, students will have acquired the ability to detect the special features of philosophical method applied to ethical issues and to apply it to solve problems also stated in other branches of philosophy. Furthermore, they will have acquired skills that enable them to interpret a text and to elaborate problems and personal judgement on current events, communicating ideas and solutions with clarity so as to carry on their studies autonomously and expressing critical judgements.

***COURSE CONTENT***

(MODULE I)

The issue regarding the relationship between ethics and philosophical method will be explored following L. Wittgenstein’s reflections, especially focusing on the years following the publication of the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*,with the purpose of ascertaining whether the impossibility to use the logical-philosophical lexicon to talk about ethics must necessarily lead to the refusal of making any attempt to deal with it. Hence, the exam will cover the link between ethics and religion in late Wittgensteinian thought, nonetheless without leaving out the learning acquired by reading the *Tractatus*.

(MODULE II)

The topic of the relationship between ethics and philosophical method will be further examined, covering S. Kierkegaard’s reflections regarding the difference between “first ethics”, the normative ethics that expresses itself through a logically structured and objective philosophical argument, and a “second ethics”, that cannot be separated from the religious sphere, based on the assumption it is impossible to logically make sense of the world. The Kierkegaardian examination of the second ethics will argue through the possible, but imperfect, existence of an ethical “language” in the form of “indirect communication” and subjective reflection. The comparative analysis of the common ground and special features of the issues raised by the two authors will be covered.

***READING LIST***

**Module I:**

Lecture notes and reading materials uploaded on Blackboard.

L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* and *Quaderni 1914-1916*, Einaudi, Turin 2009 (parts specified during lectures).

L. Wittgenstein, *Lezioni e conversazioni sull’etica, la psicologia e la credenza religiosa*, Adelphi, Milan 1976 (parts specified during lectures).

Texts recommended for in-depth reading:

- L. Perissinotto, *Introduzione a Wittgenstein*, il Mulino, Bologna 2018.

- D. Marconi, *Guida a Wittgenstein*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 2021.

- R. Monk, *Wittgenstein. Il dovere di un genio*, Bompiani, Milan 2000.

**Module II**

Lecture notes and reading materials uploaded on Blackboard.

S. Kierkegaard, *Il concetto dell’angoscia*, in Id. *Le grandi opere filosofiche e teologiche*, Bompiani, Milan 2013 (parts specified during lectures).

S. Kierkegaard, *Postilla conclusiva non scientifica alle “Briciole di filosofia”*, in Id., *Le grandi opere filosofiche e teologiche*, Bompiani, Milan 2013 (parts specified during lectures).

S. Kierkegaard, *Gli atti dell’amore*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2009 (parts specified during lectures).

Texts recommended for in-depth reading:

- E. Rocca, *Kierkegaard*, Carocci, Rome 2012.

- J. Garff, *SAK. Søren Aabye Kierkegaard. Una biografia*, Castelvecchi, Rome 2015.

- I. Basso, *Verità e storia in Søren Kierkegaard*, Guida, Naples 2019.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures in the classroom.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

At the end of the course, students will be assessed on the basis of an oral exam designed to test their knowledge and understanding of course content. . Furthermore, the assessment criteria will include clarity of expression, proficiency in the use of the specialist lexicon and argumentative correctness and efficacy.

Marks:

30 with honours: excellent, solid knowledge, excellent expressive language skills, comprehensive understanding of concepts and topics.

30: very good, comprehensive and adequate knowledge, correct and well-structured expressive language skills.

27-29: good, acceptable knowledge, fundamentally correct expressive language skills.

24-26: fairly good knowledge, albeit non comprehensive and not always correct.

21-23: generally good but superficial knowledge. Frequently not appropriate expressive language skills.

18-21: pass mark.

Less than 18: failure to achieve a pass mark.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

There are no prerequisites in order for students to attend the course, except for the requirements of graduate degree programme admission criteria.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.