



If we consider research-activity as work its ethical load does not become lighter as the practice extends, but appears instead to increase. This load can either come out as the weight of practical experience and wisdom (*phronesis*), or define a smudgy trail of missed occasions/poor judgment.

The thing being that we always will *land* somehow—whether on our own accord, or by life passing: the difference between our *findings* in research and our *memories* of the journey, will be counter-pointed with how it went. *How did it go?* We're we taken down by competition, illness and old age?

Most extended research biographies contain observations on this: either formulated as complaints, taken with stoicism or—more rarely—engaging into the effort (and work) to grow wise on the historical necessity hatching, as the surrealists claimed, in *coincidence*: the mating of desire and random.



Since ethics—in the Aristotelian sense—is to seek happiness by partaking of the ‘life in the city’, in this sense being a *citizen*, by developing a practical experience and knowledge of how individual and collective happiness connect (*phronesis*), it is clear that ethics is connected the *idea* of socialism.

But there are also tensions between them: socialists would scuff at the idea of bourgeois ethics—as *philanthropy*—and would place the collective *before* the individual, in a [science of happiness](#) with an important part played by the State: a government empowered as an ethical warden of *social justice*.

That is, a public wardenship where decisions on ethics are tied to the rungs, and lines, of *command*. Thereby the ethical path is not one of emancipation but fosters a kind of alienation that—in the present inquiry into the alienation of work—forces us to formulate work at new/different level.

In the definition of physics, all effort is work (*ergon*): measured in [joule/ergs](#). So, this is not only salaried effort, but all effort. We may ask: what does it take to formulate work, at this level? It would seem that it would have to be both *emancipated* from and *redeemed* of mercantilism for this to occur?

Then we are back to a fairly classical definition of ethics: for *action* to be ethical it needs to cultivate a certain type of internal *consistency* (from the Judaeo-Christian tradition to Kant), for *agency* to be ethical—i.e., what *action does* (Foucault)—we need to take stock of its *consequence*.

Because consistency may be seen as our ethical *apparatus* (that emancipates), while its consequence is *discursive* they *never* exactly correspond. Or, they correspond only in the sense that *difference* between the two works as a constant *news-reel*: it constantly produces an amount of *information*.

While *consistency in action* affords *emancipation*, the *consequences* following in the *wake* of action—the *backdrop* of discursive *agency*—must somehow be *redeemed*. In practice, this means that the would-be ethical person is caught in a *lateral drift* between *consistency* and *consequence*.

*Looking back on our paths* we realise that we have to *invent our positions anew*, on account of this lateral drift. Hence living an ethical life will depend on *accountability*: sustaining the (perceived) extra work of *levelling with reality*—as we are caught by the lateral drift—and make it *readable*.

Research is an activity that involves pairing *originality* with partaking off the *peer-community*, where this sort of *accountability* is in demand. So, here ethics is *not* a dimension *added* to an activity, but defines it *intrinsically* and is *immanent* to research, if done properly: featuring its *provenance*.

In other words, the *longer* research is *sustained*, the *more* it comes with a *baggage*. Arguably, this is what is *valuable* about it. And the question is how this value can become *alienated* (or, not). It relates to *care and crisis* in more than one way: being *careful* will always bring up *critical* perspectives.