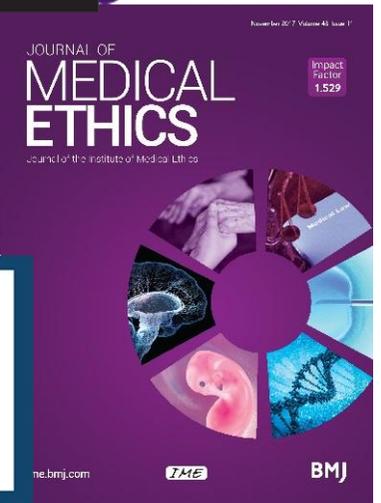
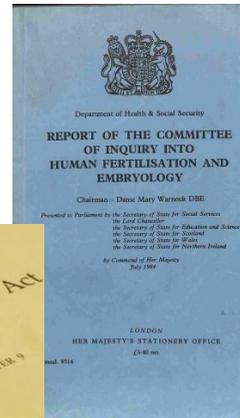


# Introducing UK Bioethics

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University of Bristol  
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# Overview

- What is bioethics?
- What is the UK?
- Where is UK bioethics?
- What is UK bioethics?



# 🔥 What is Bioethics?

“the systematic study of the moral dimensions – including moral vision, decisions, conduct, and policies – of the life sciences and health care, employing a variety of ethical methodologies in an interdisciplinary setting’.”

Reich, W.T. (1995) *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, Vol. I, New York: Macmillan, xxi

“bioethics is the study of the ethical, legal, social, philosophical and other related issues arising in health care and in the biological sciences.”

IAB (International Association of Bioethics) (2017) ‘Introduction’.

<http://www.bioethics-international.org/work-progress/>

- Broader in scope than medical ethics
- Critical and practical
- Various people and perspectives
- A multi/inter-disciplinary **field of study** (not a discipline?)

# What is the UK?

## The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland



- Great Britain: England, Wales, Scotland
- Northern Ireland

### But

- Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own legal systems
- Welsh legal system increasingly differing from English legal system
- Channel Islands and Isle of Man are nearby dependencies (not strictly part of UK)

# Where is UK Bioethics?

“I want to introduce a possible **hierarchy of medical ethics** discourse. Under this model there are three different ‘sectors’ of discourse regarding medical ethics: *formal*; *semi-formal*; and *unofficial*.”

Miola, J. (2006) ‘The interaction of medical law and medical ethics’, *Clinical Ethics*, 1(1), 22-25, 23

Law	Formal sector	Semi-formal sector	Unofficial sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthcare law, medical law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Medical Council (power to regulate medical profession, sets standards)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>British Medical Association (trade union)</li> <li>Royal Colleges (issue guidance)</li> <li>Nuffield Council on Bioethics (independent policy advice – closest equivalent to UK bioethics commission)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic sector</li> <li>Special interest groups e.g. Institute of Medical Ethics; UK Clinical Ethics Network</li> <li>Pressure groups, religious groups</li> <li>Public</li> </ul>

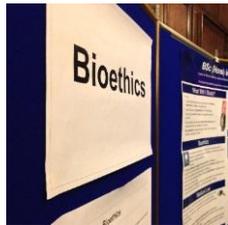
# 🌟 Where is UK Bioethics?

## Centre for Ethics in Medicine, University of Bristol

Multidisciplinary Centre (est. 1996) dedicated to research, education and engagement in bioethics (and healthcare ethics and law especially)

### Education

- MBChB Medicine
- BSc (Hons) Bioethics
- PhDs, training



### Research

Main research themes:

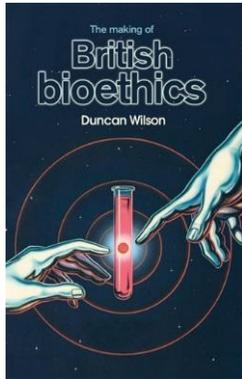
- End-of-life ethics & law
- Reproduction, families & healthcare
- Methodologies in bioethics
- Research ethics & integrity
- Clinical ethics support & education
- Surgery, invasive procedures & innovation

### Engagement

- University Prize 2016
- Public
- Professionals



# What is UK Bioethics?



“there is still no consensus on what bioethics is or how it should function, and it continues to be remade in line with changing professional and political outlooks.”

Wilson, D. (2014) *The Making of British Bioethics*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 265

## Two approaches to capturing bioethics in a territory

Bayertz, K. (2004) ‘Struggling for Consensus and Living Without It: The Construction of a Common European Bioethics’. <https://www.uni-muenster.de/imperia/md/content/philosophischesseminar/mitglieder/bayertz/texte/consensus.pdf>

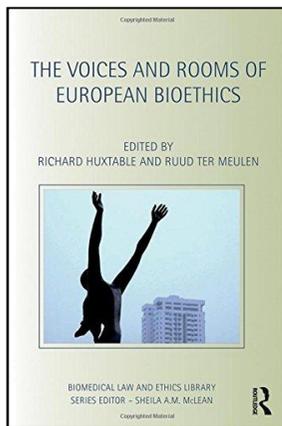
- 1) Negative and functional account
- 2) Positive and substantial account

# 🔥 What is UK Bioethics?

**Negative and functional account** (i.e. what is UK bioethics **not**?)

UK bioethics seen as different from bioethics elsewhere e.g.

## 1) American bioethics



“European bioethics is distinctive by virtue of its plurality... [T]his is not the pluralism of **principlism**, since European bioethics often chooses to look through different ‘lenses’.”

Huxtable, R. (2015) ‘Introduction: All of the Future Exists in the Past?’, in R. Huxtable and R. ter Meulen (eds.), *The Voices and Rooms of European Bioethics*, 1-8, Abingdon: Routledge, 7

# 🌟 What is UK Bioethics?

**Negative and functional account** (i.e. what is UK bioethics **not**?)

UK bioethics seen as different from bioethics elsewhere e.g.

## 2) Asian bioethics

“In Western society, patient **autonomy** is emphasized, but in the East, especially those regions influenced by Confucian teachings, an individual is regarded as a smaller self within a larger self, specifically the **family**.”

Cheng-Tek Tai, M. (2013) 'Western or Eastern Principles in Globalized Bioethics? An Asian Perspective View', *Tzu Chi Medical Journal*, 25, 64-67, 64

# 🔥 What is UK Bioethics?

**Negative and functional account** (i.e. what is UK bioethics **not**?)

UK bioethics seen as different from bioethics elsewhere e.g.

## 3) European bioethics

“Britain is the home of **utilitarianism**, which is the dominant philosophy in bioethical discourse at the moment. The medical and scientific establishment is dominated by a utilitarian mindset which has set the agenda for debates on embryo research, stem cell research and assisted dying around the world. As one cynical writer commented, ‘when it comes to bioethics, Europe might be **better off without Britain**’.”

Cook, M. (2016) Brexit and English utilitarianism. *Bioedge*, 25 June.  
<https://www.bioedge.org/pointedremarks/view/what-does-brexit-mean-for-bioethics/11941/>

# 🔥 What is UK Bioethics?

**Positive and substantial account** (i.e. what is UK bioethics?)

UK bioethics might involve particular approaches and values e.g.

**Consequentialism (and Utilitarianism)** e.g. J Harris, J Savulescu

“Consequentialist is what other people call me... What I say, I think, is consistent with a consequentialist approach.” Harris, J., in Westerman, P.C. (2005). *The Moralist. A conversation with John Harris about bioethics. Rechtsphilosophie & Rechtstheorie*, (1), 46

“People think I am a utilitarian but I am not...I try to live my life according to ‘easy rescue consequentialism’.” Savulescu, J. (2014) *Why I am Not a Utilitarian*.

<http://blog.practicaethics.ox.ac.uk/2014/11/why-i-am-not-a-utilitarian/>

**Deontology (and Human Rights)** e.g. D Beyleveld, R Brownsword

“The framework for the debate and discussion of bioethics in the *United Kingdom* is that of the conflict between utilitarian and human rights perspectives.”

Rendtorff, J.D. (2002) ‘Basic ethical principles in European bioethics and biolaw...’ *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy*, 5, 235

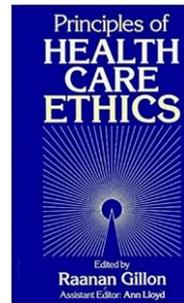
# What is UK Bioethics?

## Positive and substantial account (i.e. what is UK bioethics?)

UK bioethics might involve particular approaches and values e.g.

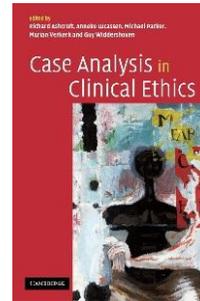
### Principlism

e.g.  
R Gillon,  
D Sokol



### Casualty

e.g.  
R Ashcroft,  
A Lucassen  
et al



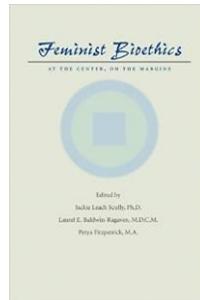
### Virtue Ethics

e.g.  
AV  
Campbell



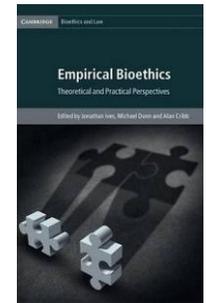
### Feminist Ethics

e.g.  
J Leach Scully,  
V Entwistle,  
S McGuinness



### Empirical Bioethics

e.g.  
L Frith, I Singh,  
J Leach Scully,  
J Ives et al



# 🔥 What is UK Bioethics?

“...**mistakenly identifying** bioethics as a monolithic entity with a single perspective and mode of inquiry.”

Wilson, D. (2014) *The Making of British Bioethics*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 8

“Perhaps, then, what we need to do is abandon the notion of ‘**Asian Bioethics**’, as although this was some distinct and easily described entity. Instead, we should discuss what might be important features of ‘**Bioethics in Asia**’. This would suggest that we are dealing with the same discipline, but that the Asian context can add new dimensions, raise new questions or help to shift perspectives.”

Campbell, A.V. (2011) ‘Commentary: Autonomy Revisited – A Response to H. Haker’, *Journal of Internal Medicine*, 269: 370-382, 381

## Beware stereotypes and reductionism?

- Particular approaches and values might occasionally dominate **but** UK bioethics is pluralistic
- Better to think of **bioethics in the UK** (rather than UK bioethics)?