

HUBUNGAN ETIKA DAN KEPENTINGAN: Studi Filsafat Hukum Politik dan Ekonomi

THE RELATIONSHIP OF ETHICS AND INTERESTS: A Philosophical Study Of Political Law And Economics

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Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas hubungan yang kompleks antara etika dan kepentingan dalam hukum ekonomi politik. Hubungan ini menjadi semakin relevan dalam konteks kontemporer, di mana kebijakan publik sering dipengaruhi oleh kepentingan politik dan ekonomi yang lebih dominan daripada pertimbangan moral atau etika. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dinamika pertemuan dan konflik antara nilai-nilai etika dan kepentingan dalam hukum ekonomi politik, dan untuk mengkaji bagaimana etika seharusnya memandu kebijakan dan lembaga publik, terutama dalam hal keadilan dan kesejahteraan sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi literatur dan hukum, menganalisis karya-karya filsafat klasik dan teori-teori hukum dan etika terkait. Melalui pendekatan ini, penulis mengidentifikasi tantangan yang timbul dari ketegangan antara kepentingan pribadi atau kelompok dan tuntutan moral yang seharusnya menjadi dasar pembuatan kebijakan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa peran filsafat sangat penting dalam menjaga integritas nilai-nilai dalam praktik hukum dan kebijakan ekonomi, dan mengkritisi pendekatan teknokratis yang sering mengabaikan pertimbangan moral. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa untuk menciptakan kebijakan yang adil dan berkelanjutan, etika harus menjadi dasar utama dalam setiap proses pengambilan keputusan dalam hukum ekonomi politik.

Kata Kunci: Etika, Kepentingan, Hukum Ekonomi Politik, Filsafat, Kebijakan Publik.

Abstract

This article discusses the complex relationship between ethics and interests in political economic law. This relationship becomes increasingly relevant in the contemporary context, where public policy is often influenced by political and economic interests that dominate over moral or ethical considerations. This study aims to analyze the dynamics of the meeting and conflict between ethical values and interests in political economic law, and to examine how ethics should guide public policy and institutions, especially in terms of justice and social welfare. This study uses a qualitative method with a literature and legal study approach, analysing classical philosophical works and related legal and ethical theories. Through this approach, the author identifies challenges arising from the tension between personal or group interests and moral demands that should be the basis for policy making. The results of this study indicate that the role of philosophy is vital in maintaining the integrity of values in legal practice and economic policy, and criticise the technocratic approach that often ignores moral considerations. This study concludes that to create fair and sustainable policies, ethics must be the primary basis in every decision-making process in political and economic law.

Keywords: Ethics, Interests, Political Economic Law, Philosophy, Public Policy.

Keywords: *Advocate Organizations, Divisions, Professional Ethics, Political Interests, Indonesian Legal System*

A. INTRODUCTION

There is often tension between normative ethical values and pragmatic instrumental interests in political, legal, and economic practices. Politics, as an arena for the power struggle, is often based on calculations of strength and short-term interests, not moral considerations or substantive justice. The law, which should be the guardian of the value of justice, often becomes a tool of legitimacy for dominant political power or economic interests.¹

In economics, efficiency and profit accumulation often trump ethical principles such as distributive justice, social solidarity, and ecological responsibility. The neoliberal capitalist model, for example, promotes deregulation and free market competition, which often sacrifice the interests of vulnerable groups and widen social disparities.² In this context, ethics often appears only as rhetorical decoration in public policy, rather than as a philosophical foundation that guides actions and decisions.

Social philosophy seeks to critique the dominance of these pragmatic interests. Through a reflective approach and normative analysis, philosophy can highlight how social, legal, and economic structures are shaped by certain powers and interests that are not necessarily just. It is essential to examine this tension so that the orientation of policies and institutions does not fall entirely into the logic of power or the market alone, but remains based on the values of justice, freedom, and moral responsibility.³

In the contemporary global context, political, legal, and economic realities often favour power and capital over ethical considerations. Decisions in many public policies and institutional practices are usually determined by calculations of political interests and market logic rather than by moral principles such as justice, humanity, or the common good. This is becoming increasingly evident in the global capitalist system integrated with political power through the corporatisation of the state.⁴

Capital dominance can be seen in how laws are produced and enforced. Laws that should protect citizens' rights are often made to facilitate the interests of large corporations. In critical studies, law is considered an ideological instrument reproducing socio-economic inequality and perpetuating dominant power structures.⁵ Under these conditions, ethics become subordinate to pragmatic political and economic strategies that pursue power, stability and financial gain.

Social philosophy is here to reveal these inequalities and offer structural critiques of political and economic institutions that fail to realise justice. Through a normative approach, social philosophy questions the legitimacy of power not rooted in universal moral values. It is essential to examine the relationship between ethics and interests, so that the development of law and policy does not merely become an

¹ Michael J Thompson. "Ethics, Politics and Society: A Philosophical Introduction to Moral and Political Philosophy." *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 46, no. 9, 2020, pp. 1091–1105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453719882254>

² Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Zone Books, 2015.

³ Jürgen Habermas. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. MIT Press, 1991.

⁴ Colin Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*. Polity Press, 2011.

⁵ William J Chambliss and Robert B. Seidman. *Law, Order, and Power*. Addison-Wesley, 1971.

extension of capital or political elites, but can accommodate more humane and reflective values.⁶

In the era of globalisation and the complexity of modern governance, philosophy has a vital role in reassessing the relationship between values, norms, and public policy. Politics, law, and economics, the three main pillars of national and state life, are often influenced by pragmatic interests and short-term power strategies. In this situation, philosophy becomes crucial to reflect on whether public policy is still based on fundamental values such as justice, the common good, and respect for human dignity.

Philosophy, especially in political and social ethics, questions power structures and relations and offers a normative framework for evaluating whether a policy is morally legitimate, not just procedurally legitimate. According to Habermas,⁷ the legitimacy of a policy depends not only on the legal-formal process, but also on communicative rationality that allows for deliberative citizen participation. Thus, philosophy functions as a tool for criticizing policies that deviate from collective ethical norms.

In addition, political philosophy plays a role in distinguishing between is and ought, between reality and what should be. It becomes a bridge between social facts and ideal values that legal and economic systems should aim for. As explained by Sandel,⁸ Public policy must be based on honest moral debate, not just on efficiency or cost-benefit calculations. Philosophy can revive ethical discourse that provides direction for more humane policy-making. Therefore, this study uses philosophy as a critical analysis tool to understand and evaluate the tension between moral values and pragmatic interests in the contemporary public policy.

This study aims to analyse the encounter and conflict between ethical values and pragmatic interests in politics, law, and economics, and to examine how philosophy, primarily moral and social philosophy, can provide normative guidance for public policy and institutions. In practice, politics is often carried out not for justice or common welfare, but rather to maintain power or fulfil the interests of certain groups. Instead of being a guardian of justice, the law sometimes becomes an instrument of power. Likewise, the economy, which should support common welfare, actually deepens inequality because the logic of capital controls it.

This study aims to analyze how the clash between interests and values emerges systematically, and to explore philosophical ways of thinking in assessing and directing policies towards a more ethical and just direction. Ethics is not an idealistic moral ornament in this framework but a reflective and critical foundation in formulating public governance. According to MacIntyre,⁹ the moral crisis in modern society is rooted in the disconnection between social action and orientation towards the common good.

⁶ Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*. Columbia University Press, 2009.

⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. MIT Press, 1996.

⁸ Michael J Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

Therefore, ethical philosophy is needed to rebuild normative awareness in every policy dimension.

Taking a philosophical approach, this research wants to show that ethics is not an alternative to interests but a fundamental principle that must guide every form of policy so that it is not only technocratically effective but also morally legitimate and fair for the wider community.¹⁰

This research is significant because it enriches the treasury of political ethics and economic law while offering a philosophical critique of the technocratic approach that has dominated public policy practice. Politics, law, and economics are often treated as autonomous and morally neutral domains in various contemporary contexts, even though all three have profound ethical implications for people's lives.

This study attempts to construct a conceptual argument that reconnects policy with moral values through the approach of ethical philosophy and social philosophy. Ethics should not only be a normative discourse outside the institutional realm, but must be integrated into the policy framework in formulation, implementation, and evaluation. As stated by Sandel,¹¹ the separation of policy from moral considerations weakens democracy by eliminating valuable public deliberation space. Therefore, this study provides a conceptual basis for principles such as justice, responsibility, and integrity to become an inherent part of political and economic decision-making.

In addition, this study criticises the logic of technocracy, which emphasises efficiency and instrumental rationality without considering the moral legitimacy of policies. This approach has created a gap between policies and substantive justice, as reflected in social inequality, legal marginalization, and manipulation of power.¹² Therefore, this study is relevant to expand the analysis paradigm in public policy studies, emphasising that good policies are technically adequate and morally correct.

This research is novel in offering an interdisciplinary philosophical approach that explicitly examines the dialectical relationship between ethical values and pragmatic interests in three dominant domains of national life: politics, law, and economics. Unlike previous research focusing on technocratic or sectoral descriptive analysis of political institutions, legal systems, or economic policies, this study integrates ethical philosophy and social philosophy as a normative and critical analysis of power structures and public policy formation.

The novelty also lies in the combination of normative ethical approaches (deontology and utilitarianism), ideology critique (Marxian), and discourse theory (Habermasian) in reading contemporary state practices that are often trapped in calculations of power and capital interests. In this context, this study voices the importance of restoring justice, integrity, and impartiality to vulnerable communities in policy making, where the three realms of politics, law, and economy are not merely seen as administrative systems but as moral and social battlegrounds.

¹⁰ Mark Bevir, *Democratic Governance*. Princeton University Press, 2010.

¹¹ Michael J Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

¹² Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. MIT Press, 1996.

This study reinforces the urgency of philosophical reflection in public policy discourse that often loses its ethical dimension. As stated by Flyvbjerg,¹³ Public policy should be determined not only by what works but also by what is right. Therefore, this study's novelty is that it opens up a space for conceptual and normative reflection to re-arrange the relationship between ethics and interests in the structure of political, legal, and economic institutions.

From the background above, the author focuses the research on several questions: How is the relationship between ethics and interests in political, legal, and economic practices? How can philosophy provide a critical framework for this relationship?

B. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative-analytical research type, which focuses on understanding the meaning, concepts, and structures of thought that underlie the relationship between ethical values and interests in political, legal, and economic practices. The main objective of this approach is to deeply explore the normative and philosophical dimensions hidden behind modern policy and institutional discourses, and to critique the instrumental rationality that often dominates. The methods used in this study are philosophical literature studies and conceptual analysis. This approach relies on in-depth exploration and reading of classical and contemporary philosophical works and scientific articles in academic journals relevant to the themes of ethics, political philosophy, legal philosophy, and political economy. In the analysis process, critical interpretations of the texts are carried out to identify key concepts such as justice, public interest, legitimacy of power, and public morality.

This study uses a political and social philosophy approach and normative ethics, including deontological views (Immanuel Kant), utilitarian (Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill), and John Rawls' theory of justice and Jürgen Habermas's discourse theory. Thus, this study is descriptive, evaluative and normative in answering modern society's fundamental problems. The primary data sources are classical and contemporary philosophical literature, such as the works of Plato, Marx, Rawls, to Habermas, and academic journals such as the *Journal of Political Philosophy*, *Ethics & International Affairs*, and *Philosophy & Public Affairs*.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Definition and Dynamics of Interests in Legal Economic Politics

In politics, law, and economics, "interest" is a central and multifaceted concept. Interest is often defined as an orientation or drive that directs the behaviour of individuals or groups to achieve specific goals within a social and institutional framework. In public policy and legal drafting, explicit and implicit interests are the main drivers in decision-making. This is based on interest theory, which states that law and public policy often result from articulating and aggregating various interests in society.¹⁴

¹³ Bent Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

¹⁴ Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*. Harvard University Press, 2002.

In the political context, political parties, bureaucrats, and interest groups play a dominant role in shaping the policy agenda. They fight for diverse interests, ranging from social welfare issues, economic investment, to legal protection. However, problems arise when the interests of the political and financial elite, who have greater access to resources and power, are more dominant. This dominance causes an imbalance between the public interest and the interests of specific groups (particular interest), so that law and policy become instruments of legitimacy of power, not tools for distributing justice.¹⁵

The conflict between public and elite interests creates tension in a democratic order and the rule of law. In many cases, public policies that seem neutral benefit elite groups systemically. For example, economic deregulation policies claimed to be for market efficiency often increase social inequality and weaken protection for vulnerable groups.¹⁶ In this case, the law loses its emancipatory function and tends to function as a mechanism for perpetuating domination.

Social philosophy plays a vital role in dissecting these dynamics. Through the lens of philosophy, interests are not merely seen as empirical facts, but as social and political constructs that need to be criticized. Karl Marx, for example, saw class interests as the primary foundation in the structure of capitalist society, where law and politics function to protect the interests of the bourgeois class.¹⁷ Meanwhile, John Rawls emphasised the importance of the principle of justice as fairness to balance the distribution of rights and interests in a plural society.¹⁸

From this perspective, legal and policy studies should not simply accept interests as neutral; they should question: Whose interests are accommodated, and whose are sacrificed? Thus, this study proposes that the relationship between politics, law, and economics must be critically analysed to avoid getting trapped in pseudo-legality that legitimises inequality.

2. Ethics as a Basis and Critique of the Practice of Power

Ethics, as a branch of normative philosophy, plays a fundamental role in assessing and directing the practice of power, whether in the political, legal, or economic realms. Moral principles such as justice, the common good, responsibility, and human dignity should be the basis for formulating laws and public policies. In the Aristotelian view, political ethics aims to achieve eudaimonia, collective well-being and shared happiness in national life.¹⁹ In the contemporary context, public ethics emphasizes the importance of integrity, accountability, and distributive justice in political and economic decision-making.²⁰

However, in practice, there is often a conflict between the ethical principle of "what is right" and the pragmatic calculation of "what is profitable". In the political realm, electoral interests, lobbying of certain groups, or power stability are often the

¹⁵ Joseph E Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2012.

¹⁶ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2005

¹⁷ Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels. *The German Ideology*. International Publishers, 1970.

¹⁸ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press, 1971.

¹⁹ Richard Kraut, *Aristotle: Political Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 2002.

²⁰ Dennis F Thompson, *Restoring Responsibility: Ethics in Government, Business, and Healthcare*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.

main determinants of policy direction. Meanwhile, in economics, the logic of profit and efficiency usually pushes aside moral values such as social solidarity or environmental sustainability.²¹ On the legal side, there is a tendency for the formulation of laws not to be based on the principle of universal justice but rather on the interests of elites and dominant actors.²²

The tension between ethics and interests in public policy is evident in various cases, such as the privatisation of basic services, deregulation of the industrial sector, and the criminalisation of vulnerable groups marginalised socially and economically. Policies that are legally valid but ethically detrimental to the poor show how rational calculations based on interests can ignore moral values. In this context, ethics plays a role as a tool for criticizing power that exceeds the limits of its justice. Jürgen Habermas,²³ The communicative action theory emphasises that the legitimacy of law and policy cannot rely solely on force or formal procedures but must arise from inclusive and participatory rational discourse to achieve an ethical and just consensus for all parties in society.

Social philosophy provides a deep understanding that power, if not guided by moral and ethical values, tends to become a tool of oppression and domination, rather than an instrument of social justice. Within this framework, laws and public policies that only rely on formal legality without an ethical basis will lose their moral legitimacy in the eyes of society. Therefore, integrating ethics and power is a theoretical (epistemological) demand and a practical (praxis) necessity in realising a just social order. Ethics must be positioned not merely as a normative complement, but as the primary foundation that guides the direction of power and determines its boundaries so that it remains on the side of dignity, justice, and humanity.

In this study, the role of ethics is understood not merely as a set of abstract ideal values but as an active and reflective critical force in assessing, directing, and even dismantling oppressive or unjust legal and political structures. Ethics can be an evaluative tool for the legitimacy of power, and functions as a moral compass that guides the direction of public policymaking. Through a philosophical approach, it is hoped that a collective awareness will emerge that laws and policies must not be separated from moral principles that uphold human dignity, human rights, and social justice. Thus, ethics is a normative foundation ensuring power is exercised responsibly and oriented towards the common welfare.

3. Philosophical Thought Review: Ethics, Power, and Law in the Perspective of Social Philosophy

The philosophical thoughts of several classical figures, such as Plato, Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx, and Jürgen Habermas, offer a deep and diverse conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between ethics, law, and power in society. Each figure provides a unique approach: Plato emphasises the importance of ideal justice in

²¹ Michael J Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.

²² Roger Cotterrell, *Law, Culture and Society: Legal Ideas in the Mirror of Social Theory*. Ashgate, 2007.

²³ Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. MIT Press, 1996.

the state; Kant highlights universal moral principles as the basis for the legitimacy of law; Marx criticises the capitalist social structure that oppresses the working class; and Habermas emphasises the importance of rational communication in a democratic public space. Their thoughts are relevant in a historical context and provide critical analytical tools for modern social, political, and economic structures, especially in examining how ethical values can counter the domination of unjust power.

a. Plato: Ethics as the Basis of Ideal Order

For Plato, ethics is not only a moral guideline for individuals in determining reasonable and proper actions, but also the primary foundation for forming an ideal and harmonious social order. In his monumental work *The Republic*, Plato outlines the concept of justice as a condition in which each individual carries out his role and duties according to his abilities and natural disposition. He divides society into three classes—philosophers, guardians, and workers—each with a specific function. According to Plato, justice will be created when these three elements work in balance, without interfering with each other or going beyond the limits of their respective roles.²⁴

For Plato, the ideal social order should be based on universal moral principles derived from reason and the highest good, with the ultimate goal of achieving *eudaimonia*, namely the collective happiness and well-being of all members of society. In his view, political and legal power should not be used to fulfil personal ambitions, pragmatic interests, or the domination of certain elite groups. Instead, both should be directed entirely to upholding justice and fostering public virtue. According to Plato, the ideal order is one built on a solid ethical foundation, where leaders have the philosophical knowledge and moral integrity to direct society towards the common good, not just power.

b. Immanuel Kant: Universal Moral Principles in Law

Immanuel Kant brought the concept of ethics into a more systematic, rational, and universal dimension by introducing a principle of morality known as the categorical imperative. In his work *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), Kant asserted that an action can only be said to be moral if it is driven by duty and can be used as a general principle that applies universally, namely, an action that can be accepted and followed by everyone without exception. This principle demands moral consistency that does not depend on results or personal interests. Therefore, according to Kant, just laws and political policies are based on universal ethical principles that every individual can rationally accept as an autonomous and dignified being.²⁵

This implies that in Immanuel Kant's view, law should not be understood merely as a tool of power to regulate society, but as an expression of just and rational moral principles. According to Kant, legitimate law is based on respect for human dignity as an autonomous being, capable of determining actions based on reason. Thus, law must guarantee individual freedom, protect the fundamental rights of every person, and must not be subject to pragmatic interests or oppressive power. If a legal rule conflicts with universal moral principles, the law loses its ethical legitimacy, because it no longer reflects true justice as intended in the Kantian ethical framework.

²⁴ Plato. *The Republic*. Translated by B. Jowett, Dover Publications, 2004.

²⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

c. Karl Marx: Critique of Bourgeois Morality and Class Interests

Karl Marx gave a sharp critique of capitalist society's social and political structures, which he believed were controlled by the bourgeoisie to maintain their economic dominance. Marx considered that morality in this system was not the result of pure ethical reflection, but rather an ideological construction formed to perpetuate the ruling class's power. In *The German Ideology* (1846), he stated that the dominant ideology in society reflects the material interests of the ruling class, and therefore, the prevailing moral values merely legitimise social inequality. Bourgeois morality, in Marx's view, serves to cover up exploitation and prevent the emergence of critical consciousness from the working class or proletariat.²⁶

For Karl Marx, ethics cannot be separated from the material context and social class structure surrounding it. He asserted that true morality can only emerge in social conditions free from exploitation and domination of the bourgeois class over the working class. Therefore, the liberation of the proletariat is the main requirement for creating a just and equitable ethical system. Within this framework, laws and policies in capitalist society tend to be repressive and favour the interests of the dominant class. Law is no longer a tool of universal justice, but rather serves to perpetuate inequality of power and protect the privileges of the economic elite. Marx's critique provides a critical foothold for how law and morality are used in the structure of modern capitalism.

d. Jürgen Habermas: Ethical Discourse and Communicative Rationality Against System Domination

Jürgen Habermas presents a more contemporary and democratic approach to ethics through ethical discourse and communicative rationality. In his work *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), he asserts that the legitimacy of political and legal power cannot come from domination or one-sided interests, but must be formed through rational communication that is open, equal, and inclusive. This means that every member of society has the same rights and opportunities to participate in creating public norms and policies. This ethical discourse assumes openness to criticism and argumentation, where decisions are taken not based on power or economic pressure, but through rational consensus that respects the dignity and interests of all parties in a fair and balanced manner.

Habermas sharply distinguishes between the system—institutional structures focused on efficiency, power, and instrumental logic—and the lifeworld, the social space in which interpersonal interaction, meaning-making, and normative consensus occur. In his view, modern society is experiencing a colonisation of the lifeworld by the system, where economic and bureaucratic logics begin to dominate social spaces that values, traditions, and ethical communication should protect. As a result, political and legal decisions tend to ignore moral considerations and the wider public interest, and serve technocratic or purely economic interests. Habermas calls for policy-making to return to communicative rationality and maintain democratic legitimacy and ethical integrity in the social order.²⁷

²⁶ Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels. *The German Ideology*. International Publishers, 1970.

²⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Beacon Press, 1987.

In Habermas's view, ethics has a fundamental role in maintaining the quality of democracy through upholding freedom, equal dialogue, and achieving rational consensus in collective decision-making. He emphasizes that an open and inclusive deliberative process allows all citizens to voice their interests and values equally. However, Habermas also warns that modern systems—whether in the form of economic markets or political bureaucracies—tend to operate with the logic of efficiency and instrumentality, which can shift attention away from moral considerations and principles of justice. Therefore, if ethics is not given space in the system, public decisions can lose normative legitimacy and move further from just and rational common interests.

The thoughts of Plato, Kant, Marx, and Habermas provide a rich and profound conceptual framework for analyzing the complex relationship between ethics, law, and power in social and political life. Each philosopher contributes a unique perspective: Plato emphasises the importance of justice as social harmony, Kant introduces universal moral principles and the categorical imperative, Marx reveals the role of ideology and class domination in the formation of law, while Habermas emphasises the importance of rational communication and ethical dialogue in shaping the legitimacy of power. Their contributions open space for critical reflection on legal and political systems that tend to serve the interests of dominant groups. Through this framework, social philosophy becomes an analytical tool for identifying inequalities and encouraging more just and ethical policy reforms.

4. Implications of the Relationship between Ethics and Interests in Public Policy

The relationship between ethics and interests in public policy plays a vital role in shaping a just and equitable social order. In reality, public policy is often influenced by considerations of political, economic, and social interests, which frequently conflict with ethical principles. In this context, corruption, economic oligarchy, and neoliberal deregulation show how elite interests often dominate policy decisions that should focus on public welfare. Therefore, it is essential to reassess how substantive justice can be applied in legal and economic development so that public policy better reflects just moral values.

Corruption is a clear example of the tension between ethics and interests in public policy, where the drive for personal or group interests replaces moral idealism that should be the basis for policy making. In many countries, policies designed initially to advance public welfare are often misused by certain public officials to gain personal benefits through practices such as bribery, nepotism, and manipulation of project tenders. These actions undermine the principles of justice and accountability, exacerbate social inequality, and reduce public trust in state institutions. Therefore, eradicating corruption must be an ethical agenda in developing equitable public policies.

From a social philosophy perspective, corruption reflects the dominance of elite interests that systematically ignore morality for the benefit of specific individuals or groups. This phenomenon shows how ethical values are sacrificed in the practice of power, thus damaging the social order. In countries with high levels of corruption, the impact is very real: infrastructure development is slow and uneven, the health system

loses integrity and accessibility, and education policies fail to reach all levels of society. Therefore, improving public policy must begin by instilling ethical principles into the legislative and decision-making process to create fair and civilised governance.

Another example of the tension between ethics and interests is the practice of economic oligarchy, which is the domination of power by a handful of individuals or large corporations with significant control over public policy. In such a system, monetary policy tends to favour the interests of the elite, not society. Oligarchs often use their political influence to obtain fiscal incentives, market monopolies, or regulatory protection, while workers' rights are ignored and social inequality widens. As a result, economic development loses its justice dimension. Social philosophy criticizes this situation as a form of structural inequality that weakens the principles of ethics and justice in state governance.

In this context, the relationship between ethics and interests becomes increasingly apparent when public policies designed to ensure social justice are instead used to benefit a handful of parties with economic power, such as political elites or large corporations. Social philosophy views such practices as a form of moral deviation that undermines the primary goal of a just social order. When the distribution of resources and opportunities revolves only around the circle of power, vulnerable communities will be increasingly marginalised. Policies that ignore the principles of ethics and social justice fail to create shared prosperity and deepen the inequality gap. Therefore, the integration of ethical values in the formulation of public policy is a moral and political necessity.²⁸

Another example is Neoliberal Deregulation. Neoliberal deregulation is an economic policy that aims to reduce state intervention in market mechanisms to increase efficiency, innovation, and economic growth. However, in practice, economic elites and large corporate actors often use deregulation to expand their power and profits, without considering the social impacts caused. The banking and financial sector is a clear example of the adverse effects of deregulation, where the elimination of supervisory rules triggered high-risk speculation that eventually led to the global economic crisis in 2008. As a result, millions lost their jobs, homes, and savings, while a handful of parties continued to benefit. Therefore, deregulation policies must be reviewed ethically to prevent greater social losses.

In social philosophy's view, policies prioritising economic efficiency often ignore ethical values, such as social justice and common welfare. Economic interests driven by neoliberal principles tend to prioritise economic growth without considering the social impacts caused, such as inequality and marginalisation of vulnerable groups. Therefore, it is essential to consider the social and moral implications of these neoliberal policies. To achieve sustainable development, the principle of substantive justice must be integrated into every economic policy to ensure a fair distribution of resources and opportunities for all levels of society and support common welfare.²⁹

Substantive justice is a concept that emphasises the importance of distributing resources and opportunities fairly across society to reduce social and economic inequality. In the context of public policy, substantive justice is concerned with ensuring that every individual has equal rights and creating conditions that allow

²⁸ Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Harvard University Press, 2014.

²⁹ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

everyone to access equal opportunities to develop their potential. This involves the active role of the state and institutions to create policies that are not only formal or procedural, but also pay attention to the specific needs of various groups in society. Thus, substantive justice encourages creating a more equitable social, economic, and political balance.

In this case, equitable legal and economic development must empower the most vulnerable communities by ensuring that policies can address existing social and economic inequalities. This means that policies must ensure that not only a few parties benefit, but also provide fair access to all levels of society. For example, in wealth redistribution policies, the law is vital to enforce policies that support social justice. The law must guarantee that redistribution not only benefits the dominant economic group but also ensures that these resources reach those in need, thereby reducing inequality and improving the welfare of society as a whole.³⁰

The implications of the relationship between ethics and interests in public policy are crucial in determining the direction of just and sustainable social development. Cases such as corruption, economic oligarchy, and neoliberal deregulation show how the interests of power and dominant groups often dominate decision-making, setting aside ethical considerations that should guide policies for public welfare. When such policies only benefit a few parties, substantive justice, which ensures that the basic rights and interests of the people are protected, must be the main principle. In this context, legal and economic development that pays attention to social justice and equality becomes the foundation for public policy to focus on reducing inequality and increasing collective welfare.

D. CONCLUSION

This study found that the relationship between ethics and interests in politics, law, and economics functions as a tug-of-war field that greatly determines the direction of policy and law in society. Political and economic interests often conflict with ethical values, creating tensions that can lead to policies that benefit specific groups while ignoring the welfare of society at large. This is seen in practices such as corruption, economic oligarchy, and neoliberal deregulation, which often show the dominance of elite interests over more fundamental moral principles such as justice and equality. However, ethics is essential as a critique and guideline in public policy-making. Moral principles contained in ethics, such as substantive justice and freedom, can be a reference that guides policies to not only benefit certain groups, but also to ensure a fair distribution of resources and opportunities. Social philosophy proposes that policies that consider ethics will be better able to respond to the needs of marginalized communities and reduce existing social disparities. In contrast, pragmatic interests in politics and economics often view ethics as an obstacle to achieving short-term goals. This leads to practices that are detrimental to the public and exacerbate social inequality. Therefore, integrating interests and ethics in public policy is crucial to creating a just and sustainable social order.

This study shows that philosophy, especially in the context of ethics, has a vital role in maintaining the integrity of values amidst the dominant pragmatism of power in politics, law, and economics. The pragmatism of power, which often prioritizes short-

³⁰ Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice*. Harvard University Press, 2009.

term interests and political or economic power, can ignore moral values and justice that should be the basis of public policy and social order. In many cases, political or financial interests can lead to decisions detrimental to the broader community, such as policies that worsen social inequality, increase injustice, or exacerbate the influence of elites. Philosophy acts as a tool for criticism and reflection on the social order and policies taken, emphasising the importance of maintaining moral principles, justice, and freedom. Ethics, as an integral part of philosophy, invites policymakers to look beyond pragmatic interests and focus on values that can create a more just and sustainable order. In this context, philosophy functions as a guideline and as a guardian of the integrity of values amidst the pressures of interests that often prioritise profit and power dominance. Furthermore, social philosophy teaches the importance of critically viewing the relationship between individuals, society, and the state. It helps reassess whether the policies and laws reflect social justice, respect human rights, and reduce economic inequality. Thus, philosophy provides theoretical understanding and practical guidance in maintaining a more moral policy direction that favours the people.

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