


Chapter 8

Standardizing Ethics

East and West:

The Need to Conform to a One World Standard

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ABSTRACT

A basic element that separates primates from Homo sapiens is language, which serves as a socializing catalyst for interpersonal and intercultural communication. Linguistic rules can be regarded as the ethics of communication. Without such rules, encoding and decoding of communication between a speaker/writer and a listener/reader would be impossible. Etiquette and the social emotion of shame, which have dissimilar connotations in Confucian heritage cultures of the East and Socratic or Judeo-Christian cultures of the West, are examples of moral qualities having different attributes and applications for diverse peoples. Whereas distinctive societies, cultures, and civilizations define morality based on their particular history and culture, including religion, humans everywhere are the same. Thus, drawing on Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 1762 Social Contract, the current reality of globalization requires a cultural contract that harmonizes the morals and ethics of Eastern and Western civilizations.

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INTRODUCTION

The need for global ethics for the purpose of guiding international and intercultural research is by no means a novel phenomenon. In 1996, James Bretzke wrote about a then-growing appeal for global ethics, which led to a habitude of scholars to employ hermeneutical and communicative theories that were thought to represent workable models for Christian ethics. Since then, communicative modalities employed by various cultures have failed to curtail misunderstandings in the global arena of intercultural epistemology.

In light of the pervasive nature of ethics, which is applicable without exception to all of human activities, this chapter excludes other areas of ethical concern and highlights cultural epistemology as an example of an aspect of human characteristics that tend to distinguish one people from another. Such divisive attributes include geographic orientation, political persuasion, economic ideology, religious doctrine, and language. Such a notion is exemplified in health care (Cooper & David, 1986; LaVeist, 1994) and human biology (Scarr, 1993). Given the unity of humanity, as medical sciences have proven, it is easier to argue in favor of a single morality and ethical epistemology, using the health care domain as justification. Our contemporary civilization, as a global society, bestows different conditions upon humankind compared with the original human condition (Cartwright, 2016; Krutch, 1959) in the Aristotelian animalistic human environment.

Information is scarce, if accessible, regarding the ethics requirements in health care that are applicable in a global research methodology. Such scarcity belies the fact that different societies, cultures, and nations apply their modes of ethics in medicine in conformity with their respective traditions, moral epistemologies, religious beliefs, and civil codes of behavior. There are ample reasons for dissatisfaction with the prevailing ethical *modus operandi*. One basic reason for the need to change from local to global is that events occurring in one country or culture impact events and people in other countries and cultures; such is a consequence of globalization.

The descriptive reference or application of the notion of morality is one that is used by socio-anthropologists when they report on the moral comportment of the societies that they study (Howell, 2005; Milesi & Alberici, 2016; Robbins, 2004; Rydstrøm, 2003). A descriptive explanation should suffice as a micro definition for the purpose of associating the notions of ethics and morality with the conduct of individuals on the basis of membership affiliation. A normative definition that is applicable to all human beings would depict a macro or universal account. Gert and Gert (2016) specified that a condition of rationality is almost always a requirement for moral agency. Normative codes of morality and ethics are neither mutually exclusive nor necessarily complementary given the numerous dissimilarities of the cultures that comprise the global arena in which human activities are conducted.

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