

Universal Ethics: A Search Beyond Western and Indian Ethics

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Abstract

Human beings have often been thinking with certain simple issues about the correct form of living globally. Both in the West and East, they sought to address the problem in their own special way. The present paper explores how the East and the West think and cope with spiritual and ethical issues in life. The two methods do have a distinction, and there is only one and only one individual intent at the centre of their thinking: making the planet a safer place to live in. This essay also explores how globalisation has pushed East and West to join in universal ethics or world ethic that will lead future generations.

Keywords: Eastern ethics, Western ethics, Morality, Normative ethics, Metaethics, Applied ethics; Personal, professional, Global ethics, Golden rule.

1. Introduction:

From the beginning of humanity, citizens have raised questions such as: How can we live? Should we strive to be content or to have wisdom, virtue or beautiful objects? If we want pleasure, will it be our own or everyone's happiness? And what about the more particular problems confronting us: is it right for a just reason to be dishonest? Will we justify living opulently when people are dying elsewhere in the world? Will fighting be acceptable in situations when innocent civilians are liable to be killed? Is it unethical to replicate a human being or in medical experiments to kill human embryos? What are, if any, our responsibilities to the generations of citizens who will obey us and the non-human species with which we share the planet?

Ethics discusses these problems at various stages. Its subject comprises the basic problems of realistic decision making, and the existence of the ultimate meaning and criteria for judging human behaviour correctly or wrongly constitute its key concern [2].

2. Root & derived meaning of Ethics:

The English term ethics comes from the ancient Greek word *ethikos*, which means "relating to one's character" which itself comes from the original word *ethos* which means "character, moral nature" This term was translated into Latin as *ethic*, then into French as *ethic*, and was then translated into English [1].

Rushworth Kidder notes that 'traditional ethical meanings usually contain terms such as 'the science of ideal human character' or 'the awareness of moral duty'. "[5] Richard William Paul and Linda Elder describe ethics as "a collection of concepts and values that direct us in determining whether actions benefit or harm sentient beings" [8].

The term ethics in English applies to several things [9]. It is a project that seeks to use justification to address different kinds of ethical concerns, and it may apply to metaphysical ethics or moral theory. To understand the morals, English moral philosopher Bernard Williams wrote. : "What makes an inquiry a philosophical one is reflective, rationally persuasive" [10]. Williams explains this area of study's substance as grappling with the very broad question: "how one should live"[11]. Bioethicist Larry Churchill wrote, "Ethics, understood as the capacity to think critically about moral values and direct our actions in terms of such values, is a generic human capacity"[11].

3. Ethics and morality:

The words morals and ethics are closely knit. It is now popular to appeal to ethical judgements or ethical values of which moral judgements or moral principles were once more accurate to speak. These implementations expand the sense of ethics. In earlier use, the word applies not to morality per se but to the area of research or branch of investigation that is subject to morality. Ethics is similar to moral theory in this way.

Ethics has long been seen as a morality branch, but the whole of its practicality rests in several other fields of research, including anthropology, genetics, economics, culture, politics, sociology and theology. However, ethics is different from other fields since it is not a topic of factual expertise. It has to do with assessing the essence of ethical ideas and adapting them to realistic moral concerns.

4. Major areas of Ethics:

Three major areas of study within ethics recognized today are:

1. Meta-ethics: the theoretical sense and comparison of moral claims and how (if any) their truth values can be described.
2. Normative ethics: about how to evaluate the moral course of behaviour.
3. Applied ethics: about what an individual is obliged (or required to do) in a specific circumstance or sphere of behaviour.

4.1. Normative ethics:

The content of our moral actions is of concern to normative ethics. Normative ethical theories are structured as instructions for action; protocols for answering the realistic question ("What should I do?"). Kant and Bentham's moral theories are instances of normative theories that aim to justify a particular course of moral behaviour and find the categorical imperative for the former and the utility concept for the latter [5].

4.2. Meta Ethics:

The essence of ethics and moral thought is explored by Meta ethics. Discussions on the relative essence of ethics and the fact that we all behave with self-interest are forms of meta-ethical discussions. In reality, it is a "metaethical analysis." that the philosophical distinction between metaethics, normative ethics and applied ethics is drawn.

4.3. Applied Ethics:

Applied Ethics aims to resolve special areas of human interaction and establish guidelines to examine those spheres' problems. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the current area of applied ethics was aroused. Today, it is a prosperous part of the ethics industry. Most books and blogs deal with subjects such as corporate ethics, machine ethics and computing ethics[6].

5. Western Ethics:

The modern Western normative structure is distinguished by the independent ethics of the Judeo-Christian theological culture. Christianity believes that God formed the Earth, who created humans according to His design as well. Since all men have been made in the image of Heaven, all people are equal. Every individual has the nature of mankind and obeys God's divine commandments. Since the Renaissance in Europe, this idea of man and his simple discourse of divinity shifted significantly. The cartesian theory of dualism distinguishes humans from the outside universe as they are. Rationalism stressed the free will and subjective judgement of a person. Liberal capitalism's expansion has led greatly to the emergence of individualism. The Western idea of self-formation includes a dualist interpretation of the universe in the intellectual milieu of individualism. It distinguishes strongly between mind and matter, awareness and love, self and community, nature and culture, etc. Self is conceived as a "dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, judgement and action, organised into a distinctive whole that contradicts both other people as well as their social and natural backgrounds." The soul's inner existence has a strong border, which distinguishes it from the outer social universe, made up from the mask, position, law or meaning, by its spontaneity, anonymity, individuality, sincere feeling, and constancy. In the western perception of the self, the personality is conceived before, and the outside culture is considered an abstract framework meant primarily to meet human beings' needs. If a societal order cannot fulfil this mission anymore, it should be redesigned and rebuilt to recover its purpose. In this basis, Western morality is defined by an insistence on civil freedom. Dworkin (1977) notes that all moral codes contain personal privileges, personal

responsibilities and social aims, although they may vary due to the importance granted to these three categories. Western morality is focused not on natural roles or societal goals, but on the principle of natural rights. Because individuals are interpreted as near-sacred and utter, their rightful requests should be respected carefully.

The entity is an ultimate, indivisible monad, and each human community consists of monads of the same human existence. The free will of the citizen and the right to independence are universal, intrinsic and inevitable. Likewise, the obligation to protect the interests of others is both natural and inevitable. The fair rights of all citizens are restricted, and everybody is urged to work for all persons' rights to the fullest absolute equality. The execution of negative omission duties (e.g. not murdering, not stealing, not fraud, etc.) is regarded as a spiritual agent's condition. Infringing moral codes in this category may be denounced as cruel. In comparison, the practise of constructive commission tasks is open to the right of preference of a person. Persons who plan to commit an altruistic act should be praised for their virtue. As a result, there is also a certain state of conflict between popular need and the individual's need for independence of option. The autonomous perception of oneself appears to include the conviction that upholding societal responsibilities despite human rights will have the detrimental consequence of limiting one's personal freedoms. Even though one can justify operating with the good of another individual, the act of taking up the obligation is a settlement of one's choosing with respect to either utilitarian or social considerations. Kohlberg's philosophical view of morals as well as Gilligan's moral traits are associated with the Western ideology of individualism. Both emphasise independence of choice and accountability for the person. Commitments to interpersonal treatment are treated not as commitments to an Eastern social objective but as personal decision-making matters.

6. Eastern ethics:

A strong comparison to the West's spiritual features can be taken from the content of the Eastern world's moral structures, whether from Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam or Buddhism. In comparison to traditional Western dualism, a monistic interpretation of origin is defended in most eastern ideologies. This means that one's existence is perceived as an inseparable part of the universe, not as a single force that stands against the outside world [9].

Traditional Chinese theory conceives of the creation in the world of everything by the dynamics between the two conflicting powers of ying and yang. The unification of ying (female) and yang (male) also contributes to the life of the person[10][11]. The confucianism conceives a family as the body of a human being; any family member is a part of a body. For example, the connection between the parent and the child is like that of between the bone and the flesh.

The Hindu view of existence is often focused on the universe's practical interrelationship. The Hindus had assumed that Rta (dynamic equilibrium) is the dominating dynamic theory underlying the practical harmony of the celestial order from the earliest Rigveda periods (about 1500 BC). Rigveda's well-known Purusha sukta claims the functionality of all living beings. Many current phenomena reach Rta status when each of their components stays in their proper position and works in their own right of action. Hindus think of their culture as an immense celestial creature with some roles allocated to each of the four key sections: the head, limbs, trunk and feet. Each of these four reflects one of the Hindu society's four castes. Staying in the right function fulfils the purpose of seamless interaction between community as a whole.

Instead of drawing a person's cap across his or her own outer surface, most oriental theories think of this limit as being expandable to encompass his or her relatives or culture as a whole. Fans of Oriental thought prefer to assume that external factors define the social structure. Oriental value structures thus allow obligatory characteristics to duties. The instances are, for example, filial piety and obedience (good conditional duty) in Chinese culture, repayment (favours or kindness) in Japanese society, and utang Na loob in Filipino society (debt within oneself or debt of gratitude). Such constructive tasks or categorical imperatives motivate people to meet commitments with respect to particular goals in the society. These responsibilities guarantee that the culture works smoothly instead of defending human freedom.

Eastern morality is focused not on freedom but on activities or community aims. Compared to Western sovereignty ethics, ideas about human freedom in conventional Eastern moralities are relatively rare. In the Eastern value structures, too moral dialogue is advocated not for the defence of human freedom but for maintaining social order or on religious grounds. The act of murdering someone, for example, contradicts the concept of compassion (ren). Ren demands that all citizens perform their moral obligation in their intimate

community. To make others stand out is the basic moral norm in Chinese society for preserving psycho-social homeostasis.

Five conditions to be complied with by Buddhists: "Do not kill, steal, lie, be lustful or taste intoxicants or meat." Violation of either of these conditions may contribute to the immediate vengeance of Karma in later life. According to Islam, the current existence is brief and temporal, while the future life is infinite and everlasting. Those who are devoted to love, especially those who sacrifice for Allah the Almighty, will ascend to Heaven. All that do bad will fall to Hell. Such a religious debate falls within the paradigm of Eastern moral structures, which include ethics of culture or divinity, not autonomy ethics. A moral discourse which promotes an ethic of community or divinity in the Oriental world is documented in classics such as The Analects of the Confucianism or religious scriptures such as the Koran of the Muslim religion or the Upanishads of the Hinduism. Those thinkers, such as Confucian scholars in traditional China, Hindu Brahman, priests in Islamic countries, and monks in Buddhist societies, who are able to translate these classics or scriptures, have kept high ranks in traditional, and even contemporary societies. Their status is close to that of priests in the Christian world before the Reformation Revolution in Europe.

7. Modern western ethics and its influence on eastern culture:

The contemporary Western view of morality supports a secularist position, which claims that all moral agents are morally equals. All can uncover the natural rule of moralism without the aid of a prophet or sage's revelations. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the Communist East European regimes at the end of the 1980s, several nations have been included in capitalism's global economic structure. In the age of globalisation, the exponential rise in possibilities for intercultural interaction and trade between East and West citizens has contributed to the emergence of ideas like multiculturalism and global ethics. As part of the UNESCO-sponsored Universal Ethics Initiative the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was introduced by a community of international philosophers consisting of a list of global ethics with four categorical imperatives that are proposed based on the essential demand of the human being[13][14].

An analysis of the list indicates that it comprises of a variety of detrimental duties present in most societies, while the optimistic roles of a single oriental society experience dramatic cultural shifts under the control of Western individualism, commercialism and materialism. For example, in Confucian culture, filial piety was the central principle of families in East Asian cultures. Empirical research on the basis of a dual model of cooperative and authoritarian filial piety found that in Chinese communities such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and China, different developed paths of contemporary filial piety emerge with an overall propensity to decline in authoritarian filial piety, whereas the mutual filial piety remains persistent. Alongside these cultural shifts, in East Asian countries, conventional arranged marriage trends developed in a number of transient matches selection patterns. Yet autonomous marriage has been a prevalent practice in Japan, Korea and Taiwan with cohort variance. Likewise, intergenerational ties in these areas share common characteristics both in their transition and in their continuity patterns. Although cohabitation remains patriarchal across generations, the key flow of integer assistance goes from child to parent. Instead of children's birth orders, children prefer to carry out separate filial duties. However, filial responsibility's real activity is also divided by adult siblings according to their diverse resources.

8. Eastern and Western Ethics: Similarities

With the radically different cultural and historical circumstances of ancient Greece and China, one is shocked to see parallels between Aristotelian and Confucian's virtuous ethics structures. However, there are parallels, but the two structures follow the control motif. For Aristotle, power was manifested by the deliberative phonic mechanism leading to virtuous life, peace, and pleasure. This usage of realistic experience was attributed to self-restraint or temperance. In Confucian virtue ethics, discipline was a feature of self-regulation; primal impulses were kept under control, and the individual became more humanely capable and brave. This control was not only advantageous to the individual, but also to the family and, ultimately, to the country. The way Confucius developed order was self-regulation. The theme of power is common to the Aristotelian and Confucian systems of virtue ethics.

9. Eastern and Western Ethics: Dissimilarities

Given such parallels, there are variations in the two cultures, the most noteworthy is the locus of ethics. Aristotle put this locus upon people who were indeed called to serve their task and to embrace the destiny with humility and aplomb. This approval was focused on justification. For Confucius, representing China's historical suffering, the locus was the family that he wanted to end anarchy and set it on its proper path by offering the fundamental pattern of personal and professional ties. Certainly, Aristotle's family was the same as Confucius, but the focus was different with each method. Aristotle recognised that "a single man has a hard life because it is not easy to continue one's activities, but it is easier in partnership with others and other people."

10. Integration of personal and professional life:

The convergence between personal and work life is another essential aspect of Eastern and Western virtue ethics systems. An individual, especially civic leaders, merchants, teachers and rulers, cannot behave in the public domain one way and in entirely different ways in home. People's modern tendencies to separate diverse facets of life and act differently in different situations would have confused the citizens living in ancient Greece or China. Everyone needs market performance, but expressing our personal and professional values will lead to 'dispersed personal responsibility'. Then, What does convergence between personal and working life appear, and how can we incorporate it incorporate relationships? Consider the essence of a good individual that each ethical structure seeks to build to address this query. Aristotle, the noble individual, saw the truth in all sorts of circumstances. Once it has been acknowledged and recognised, the reality cannot be disputed without losing dignity. Similarly, Confucius taught, "A gentlemen would not depart from civilization for the space of a meal. He adheres to it in hurry and flurry; he adheres to it in slip and fall."

But despite the importance put on these structures, character was not essentially what constituted the virtuous person, family, city-state or nation. Rather, it transformed the person into another kind of man who would work virtuously, even though nobody is looking. When the individual reflects on the means used to meet a goal, the means ultimately become much more important than the end itself. Not only does the means have to meet the goal, but they also describe the virtuous individual.

Personal and private life convergence has two effects: inspiration and understanding. The motive is a desire to do the best thing because, even though there is little perceived gain, this is the right thing. It is here that the real essence of the personality is uncovered. The other influence is the opportunity to see the ethical component of any case, judgement and behaviour. Many market scandals might be stopped if people more recognised the importance of human resources and appreciate the need to see the bigger picture; in other words: accountability for profitability. Or, as Confucius might claim, it is a man who can widen the way, not the way that broaden a man.

11. Three levels of ethics:

There exist three levels of ethics: personal, professional, and global.

11.1. Personal ethics:

Personal ethics are also viewed through a moral or legal lens because it expresses general norms as to how an individual is to behave in a group or society. The lessons we give our children, the manner in which we believe we can behave and the standards that we place on others are part of personal ethics. If we look at our acts' ethics, we can ask questions like "Is it right?" "Or "Is it justifiable?" Trust, integrity, honesty, concern for others, regard for the autonomy of others, little to no injury to others and inherent fairness or justice can be found in personal ethics concepts.

11.2. Professional ethics:

A layering of values will extend to all, from the personal to the area of professional ethics. Professional accountability guidelines can be subject to the requirements of the selected profession or organisations. Many professional fields have set codes of ethics and workers are to act under a certain norm of behavior to be deemed "in good standing." Some may focus on precedent legal norms, such as in medicine, law, finance or engineering. Others may be created by an association or the profession itself to direct its members' behavior. Examples include schooling, social care, psychotherapy and nursing. Professional ethics should cover related ties, security, efficiency, and fulfilment of the public benefit, impartiality or objectivity, complete transparency, due diligence, duty allegiance, and avoidance of conflicts of interest.

11.3. Global ethics:

Global ethics or a basic code of principles is the most divisive and the most interpretative of the three stages. Many people are debating whether the definition of global ethics is real. Is it necessary to create an accepted code of conduct or a set of principles which all communities and cultures share? A number of scholars say that there is a "golden rule" in many areas of the world and advises personal and professional ethics at a global level or "do to others as you would."

The one element of global ethics involves problems and dilemmas emerging from economic, technical, legal, political, social and cultural globalisation for individuals or communities. Global ethics expands personal and professional ethics to provide a broader variety of values regarding classes of individuals or communities. They address areas and debates such as social justice, civil rights, cross-border concern for the community, social responsibility and transparency, and interdependence across a worldview.

Global ethics discusses a variety of ethical problems impacting the planet, including an emphasis on acts committed by people and the representatives of countries, and investigates international law. International rules analyse and evaluate the kinds of acts performed by countries as virtuous or dishonest according to common principles that are widely recognised. Examples of fundamental principles which are widely recognised and are codified under international law include: preservation of human rights; prohibition of violence by a government, the prohibition of targeting of arms against civilians or hospitals during war, the prohibition of genocide.

12. Global ethic:

In the ethics analysis, a central issue is whether fundamental, concrete moral facts that intersect societies, geographical circumstances and time can be established. At the most simple stage, the answer may be yes. Ethics is not a study, as Aristoteles pointed out, but an art. Global ethics applies to a collection of universal spiritual principles and ethical practises shared by the diverse denominations and societies across the globe. [9] Such shared fundamental principles and ethical expectations are human morality or the ethic of mankind. In view of globalisation's mechanism, the esteemed Roman Catholic theologian and philosopher Professor Hans Küng called this human ethic the "global ethic."

While Professor Hans Küng initiated the idea of a universal ethic in 1989, in his own term it is "not a new invention, but merely a new discovery" of popular concepts as old as humankind. There should be no doubting that a modern planet with its enormous socio-economic, ecological, and moral challenges requires, in brief, a globalisation of moral ideals and ethical norms, a global morality to exist as a place for a better existence for our grandkids. Indeed, already today and in the past, many fellow human beings across the globe were unable to live a life with integrity, precisely because human beings were not willing to obey the universal standards of human coexistence that our religious and non-religious practises have developed over centuries.

Global ethics is not a modern faith, but a compilation of universal fundamental principles and ethical practises held by all religious systems. Without a fundamental consensus about ethics, sooner or later every culture is endangered by anarchy or tyranny. Therefore, without global ethics, there can be no sustainable world order.

In Professor Hans Küng's language, "global ethic does not denote a global philosophy, a single universal united faith that transcends all established faiths, nor a synthesis of all religions. Humanity is wary of coherent philosophies, and in every case the world's sects vary too much in view of their beliefs and dogmas, in their icons and practises that their 'unification' is pointless and an awkward syncretic mixture."

According to Hans Küng "global ethics aim instead to establish what is already popular among the world's religions amid their discrepancies in human behaviour, religious principles and core moral convictions. In other words, global ethics does not restrict faith to spiritual minimalism, but rather reflects the minimum of what the world's religions currently have in terms of ethics. The global ethic is not aimed towards

anybody but encourages all, including believers and unbelievers, to render this ethic their own and to live accordingly."

As Professor Küng has consistently emphasised, global ethics are "no alternatives to the Torah, the Sermon on the Mount, the Qur'an, the Bhagavadgita, the Buddha's Discourses or the Confucian Analects." "World ethics is nothing but the required minimum of universal principles, norms and fundamental attitudes. In other terms, there is the minimum common agreement on the binding principles, irrevocable norms and moral practises which all faiths, considering their 'dogmatic' disagreements, should accept and which non-believers should endorse as well.

On 4 September 1993, the Parliament of the World's Religions embraced the global ethic in the context of the "Declaration for a Global Ethic." For the first time in modern history, those members of diverse denominations and faiths decided for a collection of universal fundamental principles and ethical practises that are common to everyone. This has never existed before in the past of faiths! Here is the immense value for the survival of humanity of the "Declaration on global ethics."

The definition of global ethics implies that there is a shared basis for fundamental ideals [8]. Thoughts, judgments, and acts are seen to respect beliefs or norms, which are then filtered through one's understanding of "the justice of the action" or the compliance with the rules.

The golden rule is the most important universal ethical denominator in both Earth's faith and non-religious structures. It is the essential rule of peaceful human coexistence and can thus be defined as a mother of human ethics.

The golden law is set out in the fundamental scriptures of all world religions and in the core metaphysical non-religious philosophies, where it is also referred to as the theory of reciprocity. Once the renowned German philosopher Immanuel Kant named the golden rule the categorical imperative of human coexistence on Earth.

Since the golden rule is present in almost every significant religion and non-religious value structure in the entire human experience, it appears to be a fundamental human right or constitution. And all the other traditional precepts common to our religions are drawn from this fundamental right to human coexistence. Such ethical views are the following: "You won't kill"; you won't steal; you won't lie" and "You won't commit sexual immorality."

There are also other universal principles and ethical norms held by both religion and belief structures, such as regard for human rights (each person must be humanly treated), love and kindness, fairness, care and sharing, climate conservation, authenticity, dignity, responsibility, restraint etc., all of which form part of global ethics.

Cultural transition and global ethics:

With the fall of the Communist empires in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, most countries have been absorbed into the international economic structure of capitalism. In the age of globalisation, the exponential rise in possibilities for intercultural interaction and trade between East and West citizens has contributed to the emergence of ideas like multiculturalism and global ethics. As part of the UNESCO Universal Ethics Programme, the Universal Declaration of Human Obligations was introduced by a community of foreign scholars of philosophy, consisting of a set of global ethics with four categorical persuasive concepts on the basis of a basic demand to humane treatment of any human being.

13. Conclusion:

The DHDR was established in 1998 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to strengthen human rights compliance by UNESCO and the UN High Commission of Human Rights. The DHDR transforms privileges into unique roles and obligations. The codification of universal commitments and duties in DHDR has been used to enhance global ethics comprehension and encourage them.

International ethics discussions produce passionate reactions and intense debates. It is also challenging to address ethical issues. Issues like "There is a universally accepted definition of human dignity," for example, can never have a universally acceptable solution. Ethical circumstances or dilemmas may be helpful but may

often inflict great disruption or unintentional effects on others. Acts done as a part of ethical discussion can also therefore be treated with caution.

So what is to be done? Work to guarantee that as many individuals as possible embrace the universal rule and many other universal ethical principles and shared cultural ideals as the human race's global ethic! Clearly, suppose the overwhelming majority of citizens decided to obey a global ethic's directives and practice the golden law. In that case, we will certainly exist in a stronger, more prosperous and fairer planet. It is also incredibly necessary to continue teaching our children about the golden rule and other universal ethical values. We cannot only pursue this in our communities but also the system of public schooling. Education on the golden law, universal fundamental principles and common ethical practices can become an aspect of the curricula of primary and secondary education in the world. Indeed, such an education will be an education for peace – family peace, neighbourhood peace, country peace and nation-wide peace. Such schooling will be a friendly, but energetic tool against the spread of violence on both sides.

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