

HOW TO TALK ABOUT ETHICS FROM A WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENGINEERING PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND EDUCATION 2011 (KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, MAY 17-19)

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Abstract

The rise of English as a global language has brought with it ethical concepts that may not translate effectively into other cultures. Whether they choose to agree with Western concepts of ethics or not, understanding these concepts is important to anyone conducting their profession in this globalising world. The process of understanding is best undertaken through dialogue, a dialogue entered into with an open mind and a generous spirit. This dialogue needs to be a two-way process between Western and other ways of understanding what is the right way to live our lives. Understanding ethical concepts is necessary, but we need to avoid confusing understanding with agreement. I need to understand others to agree with them but do not need to agree with them to understand them. In this globalising world we should remember that ethics does cross national and cultural boundaries and we should engage in a process of understanding what behaving ethically looks like, sounds like and feels like in different cultures. This talk is intended to contribute to that process.

Keywords – trust; rights; globalisation; professions; principles; dialogue; ethics

Introduction

In a globalising world engineers are increasingly likely to be working in a country which is not their own, with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and communicating in a language that is not the first one they learnt. In such situations it is vital that we try to understand why each of us acts in certain ways and vital that we set up an environment where we can discuss issues with and learn from those we work with.

The most common language of commerce and the professions around the world is English. And with the English language comes many concepts and ideas that are hard to translate in such a way that they mean the same thing in different languages. Key among these in a globalising business world are the concepts and the vocabulary of ethics.

Lost in translation

While Western ethics has been strongly influenced by Christian moral principles and the various Christian religious groups still have a voice in ethical behaviour, in the West ethics has grown into a substantial secular discipline. And although there are now numerous theories and ways to view ethics, there are some key elements that most conceptions of ethics agree are important – even if they do not agree on the detail. Some of the elements may also be evident in non-Western cultures but it is important to note that although many Western moral concepts appear to have distinct similarities to the moral principles found in moral systems based in religions other than Christianity,

we need always to beware the problems of translation: we need to beware of assuming that because there is a superficial similarity that the concepts are the same and that people mean the same thing when they use words that refer to these concepts.

The problem of translation is there even between English-speaking nations and we can't assume that an expression or a concept is understood the same way in the United Kingdom or Australia as it is in any other country where English is spoken. One simple example comes from work I have been doing that looks at Alzheimer's disease. An Alzheimer's charity in the United States developed a number of simple aids for people in the early stages of the disease. One of these is a daily calendar that tells people what day it is, and what time of day it is. So we might see that it is: Tuesday and morning. One problem came up when the calendar was sent to Ireland. When the calendar was set to time of day, one of the choices was "evening", but the Irish said this could not be used in Ireland because "evening" was not a time of day, but an event. You might go out for an evening at the theatre, have an evening with friends. Evening in America refers to the time of day after the sun has set: it is a polite way of saying it is 'night time'. In Ireland, the time of day after the sun has set is 'night'. If native English speakers can be confused over a simple matter of the time of day, how much confusion can there be over more complex concepts such as those we find in ethics?

Cultural difference

There are clearly differences in the flavour of ethics in one culture compared to another. This takes on a particular importance for those of us who publish or intend to publish research articles outside our own country. I'll look at one issue as an example –the apparently straightforward question of whose name should be listed as an author. Not being clear on this quite basic question can lead to misunderstanding and embarrassment if not professional damage if we are accused of wrongdoing.

Here is a useful scenario from Dartmouth College in the United States¹

Dr. Elaine McNeil is writing several papers reporting research findings in several different studies.

Her boss tells Elaine that she expects to be listed as an author for all of the papers, even though she has not contributed to the work being described in the paper. The boss justifies her authorship request by saying "Without my help in giving you this position and covering clinic when you are doing research, you would not have been able to complete this work."

The standards covering authorship in most Western journals indicate that the boss in this case should not be listed as an author. It is clearly written in Australian regulations, for example, that in situations such as this the boss cannot be included as an author because she has not had a 'substantial intellectual involvement' in the content of the articles and the 'right to authorship is not tied to position or profession'.² However, if this situation were in Japan, for example, I understand that there would be an expectation that the boss would have his name on the paper. This would be justifiable at least because of the Confucian influences on Japanese ethics, influences where respect should be shown the role someone has played in such things as establishing a research centre or

¹ Chertoff, J., Pisano E. and Gert, B.

http://www.aur.org/Document_Library/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=2578 Accessed April 2011.

² Australian Government (2007). *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*. Section 5.

securing the research funding. Putting the boss's name on publications coming from the research centre he has set up and continues to maintain is one accepted way to demonstrate this respect.

Ethics as dialogue

Understanding ethical rights and wrongs is complicated because in much of the West, ethics is a dialogical process where we listen to people, talk to them, and come to a shared understanding of right and wrong ways to behave. We don't always agree. Sometimes we don't agree because there can be more than one ethically justifiable way to proceed. Sometimes we don't agree because we fail to understand the other's position. Sometimes we don't agree because we take different principles as the most important. I'll talk a bit more about that shortly.

For now I want to suggest to you that, whatever our backgrounds, to engage with ethics as it is understood in the West we need to listen *to* each other and listen *for* understanding; that is, listen with the intention of working out what another person might *mean* and not just take their words at the face value you would put on them if you were talking. In doing this we should remember that understanding is not to be confused with agreement. I do not need to agree with you, but if I am to enter into a discussion about ethics in a practical situation, I do need to try to understand why you do what you do. You may, for example, have reasons that in your culture or religious background are good, sound ethical reasons for behaving in a certain way: I need to know about these to understand why you might be doing things the way you do.

This need to understand, however, does not just apply to one group and not another. It need not be another form of Western cultural imperialism where the West speaks and others listen: Westerners need also to engage in dialogue with non-Westerners, not as the source of knowledge, but as a participant in a process of mutual understanding. Of course, not all Westerners do what I am suggesting here. There are clearly some who have a dogmatic approach to ethics in which they claim to know what is right and also claim that theirs is the only way to be right.

Intercultural exchange of concepts

Perhaps despite those with a dogmatic approach to ethics, some key concepts from other moral traditions are finding their way into Western thinking, too slowly perhaps, but it is happening. Take the idea of 'face' – *mianzi* in Mandarin – and its partner concept *guanxi* (social relationship). To operate in countries with a Chinese heritage we need to understand (as best we can) what *mianzi* and *guanxi* and other related terms are and how best to respect what they mean to those for whom it is part of their tradition. To take another example, as Westerners engage with Asia and Africa more as equals than as colonialists, some Westerners are grappling with concepts from Islam and are seeking a better understanding of the importance of the *Qur'an* and the role of *Shari'ah* in the moral lives of Muslims. We do not have to agree with concepts that come from outside our own cultural norms, or – particularly – accept them as part of our own moral world. But – using respect in a Western sense – it is important to demonstrate that we respect each other's beliefs. In trying to understand concepts from outside our own cultures what we are doing is showing respect for the beliefs and customs of others and trying to find ways in which we can, respectfully, engage with each other.

Ethics as dialogue

Understanding Western ethics as a dialogue or dialectic through which we come to a shared understanding of right and wrong may help us to work together because a dialogue is a shared activity and dialectic is a way to bring opposing ideas together in the pursuit of truth. Here the dialogue does not require more than a willingness to try to understand and so should not be seen as a threat to one's own values.

We need to note that as Western ethics is – in part at least – a dialectical process it cannot be a simple thing that is the same everywhere. It is highly complex and differs from place to place: there can be great disagreements on what is right and wrong and many times when it is not clear what is right and wrong. Disagreement, in fact, is a necessary part of dialectic, a process in which an idea comes up against an opposing idea and the ideas battle it out. Sometimes the product of these opposing ideas is a synthesis: a new idea. Sometimes one idea wins out over others. Sometimes each of those in the dialogue end up keeping their original views. In all cases it is a pursuit of truth. In being willing to enter into dialogue with an open mind, we are likely to learn something important about the others who are part of the discussion. We may continue to disagree, but if all goes well it will be a respectful disagreement and we will understand just a little better how we can demonstrate our respect.

I have to warn you, however, that this view of ethics as a dialectical process – while common in the West – is not universally agreed. As I noted earlier, the West has its share of people who are absolutely certain what is right and what is wrong.

The dialogue of Western ethics has generated some key common elements. But before we have a closer look at some of these, let's see what might be some of the elements that all ethics have in common.

Trust

Ethics adopts a flavour based on the customs and practices of different places and can look and sound very different in diverse parts of the world. But we should not think that there is no common ground between cultures.

The first thing we need everywhere is *trust*. I discuss this in more detail in my other paper at this conference so won't be going too deeply into it here.

Let's imagine a world without trust. We could not conduct business. We would not feel safe. We would have no intimate life with others. Social life would be almost impossible and we would be in a state of perpetual unease, if not of perpetual war. Trust is something none of us can do without, wherever we are.

So, what are we talking about when we use the word "trust"? And why is it important? What do I mean when I ask you to trust me?

There are basically three types of trust. In order of increasing generality they are:

- trust that is the property of an individual engaging in the activity of trusting (I trust)
- trust as a property of social relations (mutual trust as a ground for the relationship); and

- trust as a property of a social system (it has to be there for the system to work).

Trust is a social mechanism that is necessary for all social interactions, but especially exchange relations – situations where one expects something (goods or behaviour) from someone else and there is some time lapse between exchange of goods or services. In buying from a shop, for example, I have to trust the shopkeeper and that the products I am buying are as described, but there also has to be mutual trust: the shopper has to trust the shopkeeper and the shopkeeper has to trust the shopper – even if only to a small degree. If trust breaks down, then social interactions, generally, suffer. When shopkeepers begin to feel they should keep a weapon behind the counter, trust is breaking down. When shoppers confront a steel grille and bulletproof glass when they go to buy something, that is a sign that trust is breaking down.

Trust is a property of a social system. Trust functions as part of the ground of society, as a necessary condition for the existence of social interaction. This means that at some point we all have to trust someone. But trusting involves risk because we don't know until we try whether someone can be trusted, and each time we try we take a risk that those we are trusting will take advantage of the fact that we are trusting them and cause us harm. You may trust me, but in fact I am not trustworthy and your trust is ill-placed. I may be trustworthy, but you don't know that I am until you have tested me in some way and in testing you I have to trust you even just a little bit, and thus take a risk that you will take advantage of my trust.

People have the characteristic – or virtue – of being trustworthy (to one degree or another), but a professional role is no sure guide to the trustworthiness of individuals. You may be able to do your job, but do not always fulfil your side of the trust "contract". You might, for example, use 90mm concrete instead of the recommended 100mm and so save thousands of dollars in construction costs, but in the process increase the risk to future users and deceiving your client. And, even if you have the characteristic of being "trustworthy" that does not mean I have to trust you. You may be personally trustworthy but be a member of a group which in my previous experience has not been entirely trustworthy. If one member of a profession is found not to be trustworthy, the whole profession suffers a little. If more are found to be untrustworthy the profession suffers more. As the reputation of the profession as a whole declines, the reputation of each individual member of the profession also suffers.

The paradox of trust

How are we to resolve the problems of trust? Unfortunately we cannot introduce laws that make others believe we are trustworthy as attempts to legislate or codify for trust come up against a paradox identified by Onora O'Neill in which

'the more formal effort is put into ensuring trust – efforts such as compliance audits, codes of ethics and the like – the less likely it is that perceptions of trustworthiness will be enhanced'³.

In effect, members of the public will ask: if members of that group are trustworthy, why is there a need for legislation or rules.?

³ O'Neill, O. (2002). Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (p.144).

Each of us has a working knowledge of trust because it is part of the currency of the communities we live in. We are born into communities where trust is already in place – to a greater or lesser degree. We learn trust when very young because our parents look after us, because significant people in our lives have done what they said they would, or have simply looked after us. People who grow up in an environment where trust is rare are damaged as a result: witness the psychological damage suffered by refugee children.

Trust at the heart of a social contract

At the heart of our understanding of trust is a sort of social contract under which we are justified in believing that people who make promises to us will honour those promises, that people in general have an obligation not to cause us harm and so on. Trust is like glue holding the society together. We have to trust when we enter into a commercial transaction that each party will honour the agreement, whether the agreement is signified by a handshake or a detailed contract constructed by teams of lawyers. People who do not give what they said they would are not trustworthy and we learn not to trust them.

It should be obvious that we cannot do without trust, no matter what culture we come from.

Rights

The next idea we are likely to find in common between cultures is the idea of rights – whether those rights are granted by the society or the society believes that the rights come from a higher source, such as God.

A right is, roughly, an entitlement that constrains behaviour.⁴ The most common way of understanding this is that my right places you under an obligation and so constrains, or limits, the way you should behave toward me. If I have a right to free speech, say, you have an obligation to let me speak. Or, if I have a right to join a trade union, you have an obligation – at least – not to prevent me. If I have a right to clean water you have an obligation not to pollute the water supply or deprive me of access. If I have a right to walk over a bridge without risk that it will fall down, an engineer has an obligation to build a safe bridge.

Each society will have some notion of rights, whether those rights rest only in the ruler or ruling class or whether they are held in some degree by all people in that society. Even though there may be a notion of rights in all cultures, rights may look, sound and feel different across cultures and countries. However, if your country or the country you work in is a signatory to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, then you should take time to understand the Western sense of rights because that is what the Declaration is based on.

Rights may be something we are likely to see in all sorts of cultures, but in Western ethics they take on a particular flavour.

In understanding the idea of rights, we should recognise first that rights are not simple things. Firstly, if I have a right (or entitlement) to something then others have a corresponding obligation to behave toward me in a certain way. In this way, rights can guide us in how we should behave because they

⁴ Mackie, J.L. (1985). *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

have normative force that applies to the whole society. In effect, when we recognise that we have an obligation we see that we *ought* to act in certain ways. Once we recognise a moral right the normative force – the *ought* – never goes away as moral rights are inalienable: they cannot be traded or given away. I may choose not to exercise my right and excuse you from your obligation but that does not indicate in any way that I do not have the right or that you do not continue to have an obligation, albeit one that you have been allowed not to act on.

Rights have complex structures. From the work of Hohfeld early last century we can see rights as comprising four ‘incidents’ (Hohfeld 1919)⁵: the **privilege**, the **claim**, the **power** and the **immunity**.

- I have a **privilege** to do ‘x’ if I have *no duty* to [do] ‘x’. In Australia, for example, I am privileged to be able to swim without cost at clean public beaches. I don’t have to do this, but can if wish.
- I have a **claim** that P does ‘q’ if and only if P has a duty to me to do ‘q’. I have a claim on my government to provide me with basic services such as street lighting and water because where I live the government has a duty to provide these.
- I have a **power** if and only if I have the ability to change my or another’s ‘incidents’. A local government or a court might be able, for example, to remove someone’s privilege to swim at a public beach as punishment for anti-social behaviour.
- I have **immunity** if and only if P does not have the ability to alter my ‘incidents’. For example, I have immunity in cases where my human rights are affected. My rights may still be impinged, but this does not remove my claim that I be treated in certain ways.

Rights may conflict. A miner’s putative (unproven) right to extract minerals may conflict with an indigenous group’s unproven cultural rights over an area containing ancient rock art or other sacred site. However we should remember that although claimed rights can conflict, rights are also a powerful tool for resolving conflicts. Once it has been agreed who has rights and which right is superior to another, the conflict is resolved. This is primarily the case with legal rights rather than moral rights and we should remember that the paradigms of moral rights and legal rights are not aligned. I may, for example have a legal right to build a road through a valley, but in doing so I infringe the moral right of an indigenous group to maintain the integrity of a sacred space. In such a case the types of rights may be incommensurable and getting legal redress for infringement of moral rights may not be possible. The indigenous people will have been wronged, but the road-builder is protected by the law. In recognising a legal right I acknowledge that my legal system can compel me to meet the obligations I am under because of the right. Moral rights do not have the same protections as legal rights, but the obligation on us remains.⁶

Rights are in a reciprocal relationships with obligations and there are two main ways to regard this. The first is that my right exists because you have an obligation. This is called the control theory. The second is that your obligation exists because of my right – called the interests theory. It is however,

⁵ Wenar, L (2007). “Rights”. Zalta, E. (ed). *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2007/entries/rights>)

⁶ This is complicated in copyright law where an author has moral rights. These rights are protected by legislation in many jurisdictions e.g. the Australian Copyright Act (1968), part IX and Section 195AC in which an author has a moral right not to have certain things done, such wrongly attributing the author’s work to another person. Here I am not talking about these types of moral rights.

prudent to see rights and obligations as a dyad, as a pair of concepts such that wherever there is a right there is likely to be a corresponding obligation.

Finally, rights may be negative or positive, passive or active. A negative right is the right to be left alone, but if I have a positive right then someone has an obligation to help me in certain ways. If I have a positive right to clean air, for example, others have an obligation not to smoke cigarettes around me.

In having an active right I may do something; I may act in some way. A football coach, for example, has an *active* (power) right to move players to and from his bench. If I have a passive right then an other should act in some way toward me. A university academic, for example, has a passive (immunity) right that the University not dismiss her for publishing unpopular views.⁷

In all this we should remember that we have a choice whether to meet the obligation or not. There will be consequences if you choose not to honour your obligations, but it is in the nature of being human that we have the ability to make choices – even if a particular choice causes damage to ourselves or others – and the nature of ethics for there to be the ability to choose how to behave.

Rights are a commonly used in Western ethics, but they are just one of a set of tools we can use to understand ethics. Let's look a little more closely.

What ethics is

Western ethics in the main presumes that making ethical decisions is a rational activity undertaken by people who can give reasons for what they do. Reason in this sense has a flavour influenced by Western philosophy, but there is not space in this talk to address this adequately. Ethics in the West also places a lot of store in principles that guide the actions of rational people. Some of the dominant principles have origins in Christian and Jewish ethics, such as the admonition to “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” or “to not do unto others what you would not have done to you”, but the dominant principles have long histories and can be expressed in secular terms. A principles approach has come to dominate professional ethics and a small number of principles are the cornerstone of biomedical research ethics. The key principles come down to those set out by Tom Beauchamp and James Childress in their *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*⁸. These principles are: respect, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice. Respect is primarily for the right of people to make decisions in matters that affect their wellbeing. This is often called respect for autonomy and can be demonstrated best by receiving consent or permission from people who fully understand what will happen to them if they consent. Beneficence is doing good. This can be seen as having two elements: bringing about a benefit through your actions; and also having the intention to bring a benefit. The flip side of this is the principle of non-maleficence which means we need to try not to do harm. Like beneficence this, too, can be viewed in two ways: actually not causing harm; and intending not to cause harm. The final principle, justice, is usually defined in terms of distributive justice: making a decision that leads to a fair distribution of benefits and harms. It is generally thought to be unfair to cause harm without there being some sort of benefit that mitigates, or limits, the harm.

⁷ Wenar, L. (2007).

⁸ Beauchamp, T. and Childress, J. (2009). *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. 6th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

In addition to being dominated by principles, ethics needs also to be cultivated locally: it is a home-grown thing based on a shared understanding of what is right and wrong for the community – whatever the community is. This is not to say that ethics is purely relative or that something is right simply because it is right for me and those close to me. The ethical claims we make and the principles we use need to be valid for us individually, but also have to be valid for all people in similar situations.

The primary question in ethics since as far back as Plato is “how ought I live?” and built into this question is the requirement that we have choice. Ethics is more than just not doing wrong or in doing right. It involves CHOICE. It is about choosing what to do. Sometimes the choices are hard, but whatever choice we make we need to be able to give sound reasons for what we do. And although what is right in one culture may not always be right in another, I repeat, ethics is more than just what is “right for me”. Finally, ethics is also linked to emotion: for example, if it feels wrong or you are uneasy about the rightness or wrongness of something, that is time to stop and think and to bring reason to bear on the situation. A Catholic priest friend of mine uses the word ‘squirm’ to describe this. If something makes you feel ‘squirm’ or uneasy, that is the time to stop and think carefully about that thing.

What ethics is not

Ethics in the West is not solely about religion. The religions are one of the sources of moral guidance, but I contend it is possible to behave ethically and be a moral person without adhering to a religion. There are, however, many religious people who would disagree. Nor is ethics a system of simple rules that we can learn and apply or something we can know just by doing a calculation of harms and benefits, profit and loss and so on. Ethics is also not merely obeying the law. Ethics and the law are different and while one might influence the other, in the West law and ethics are not the same.

Main approaches to ethics

To really understand ethics from a Western perspective, we need to understand four main approaches. These can be summarised as the four C’s: Consistency, Consequences, Character and Care.

The basic elements of ethical decision-making are **Consistency** of principle, **Consequences** and **Care**, with people of good **Character** more likely in general to make good ethical decisions.⁹ We are likely to make the best ethical decisions if we make a conscious, deliberate attempt to do the following:

We should employ consistent moral principles, that is, we should act from a principle we would want all other people to use in making the same sorts of decisions. This principle needs to be both valid for you individually and one that can be universalized as a principle that all people should use in similar circumstances. Some of you may know this as the categorical imperative of Kantian ethics.

We should try to bring about the best possible consequences (a balance of pleasure over pain) for all of the people affected by our decisions. Some of you will know this as Utilitarianism. There are several variations of Utilitarianism but they all take the form of a hypothetical imperative – an *if/then* statement: *if* you want to bring about X *then* do Y.

⁹ The elements of Consistency, Consequences and Care are based on the Borromean Knot in Haynes, F. (1999). *The Ethical School*. London: Routledge.

We need to demonstrate care in at least three ways. We should *take care* in the sense of making sure the job is done correctly and safely. We should care *about* the issues, that is the issue has to be at least on our moral radar: we have to be able to recognise that there is a problem. And we should care *for* the people involved. This means we have an obligation to look after the people who are affected by our actions and, in particular, to value the *relationships* that people have.

If we consciously and reflectively consider all three elements in decision-making we will improve our own character.

If we add clear communication in decision-making, we can build a more ethical culture in our workplaces.

There is clearly much more to Western ethics than can be voiced in a single speech. Whatever view we take on ethics, though, we need to be able to identify what sorts of moral problems we are facing, so I want to end this talk by indicating some different types of ethical problems you may encounter.

*Types of ethical problems*¹⁰

There are different ways that we encounter ethical problems in the professions. Three main ways are ethical distress, ethical dilemmas and the locus of authority.

Ethical Distress is something you, the professional, may feel. Distress comes from knowing (or feeling) that something is wrong, but being unable to act because there is some sort of barrier to acting. There are two types of barrier. The first is a barrier preventing you from doing what you know is right. This barrier might be the law or the regulations you have to operate by, a poor regulatory environment or even a boss. The other type of barrier comes when we know something is wrong, but are not sure what exactly it is that is wrong.

An **ethical dilemma** occurs when there are two morally correct courses of action, but you can't follow both. Usually, in choosing one course of action harm will be caused to the people who would benefit if you chose the other course. There are countless dilemmas in the case studies that form the basis of Western professional ethics teaching. Professionals can face real dilemmas, but not as commonly as the number of cases might indicate. Dilemma cases are useful tools because they help us analyse the nature of moral problems, not because they are the most common ethical problems for professionals. An ethical dilemma can arise because of a conflict in such things as loyalties, principles, or values.

The **locus of authority** problem is the problem of knowing who should have the authority to make an important ethical decision: that is, who is the rightful person to carry out the course of action and to decide the desired outcomes or results? This shows that it matters who has decision-making power. The locus of authority problem is sometimes expressed in terms of **substantive** and **procedural** matters. I might recognise that there is a problem (i.e. a substantive ethical issue), but not have the power or (procedural) authority to act. This can lead to ethical distress if we do not understand that there are ethical problems we do not have the power (or authority) to resolve.

¹⁰ Purtilo, R. (2005). *Ethical Dimensions in the Health Professions*. 4th ed. Philadelphia: Elsevier. pp.xi-xii, pp. 36-45.

Conclusion

In understanding ethics from a Western perspective we should remember that though there may not necessarily be widespread agreement on details, there is wide agreement about general things, such as the principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, justice and respect for autonomy.

Basically, these principles tell us that to be ethical, we should try to bring benefits to all people, that we should try to minimise the harms they are likely to suffer, that we should ensure that the burdens of a decision are not borne unfairly by a small number of people and that we respect the right of each individual person to have a say in what happens to them.

These principles have been widely adopted in the West. But if we are to develop a more global understanding of what is right and what is wrong and of how to make good ethical decisions in different cultures, we do need to engage in dialogue. We need to listen to others and try to understand why they do what they do. The way we listen is important. We should listen with generosity and charity and with the intention of finding out what someone means as we should not assume that in using certain words or appearing to make certain claims that others mean the same thing as we would in using those words.

Being willing to understand why others do what they do and what they actually mean in saying certain things is a good place to start, but we all need to be engaged in a discussion or dialogue for understanding to grow. I hope this talk contributes in some way to that discussion.

Thank you.

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