

(Perry 2007) (Reese 1978) (Shah 1998) (Nussbaum 1986) (Isaacs 1976) (DeMarco n.d.)

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### Seeking World Morality

There are certain concepts of morality and ethics on which the world agrees, but does this make them right? And how do we grasp these loose mental notions and apply them to real world situations and actions? Next, there is the matter of human rights, which ideally would result in positive morals and good behavior, but then can human rights ever be called universal? When a man punishes (beats) his wife in the Middle East it is his right as a husband to do so, but what about her right to live a safe and healthy existence? What if a woman hits her husband in North America? All of these questions begin to prove that there could never be an enforceable document to protect the world's human rights because the concept of 'rights' is too culturally variable, but hopefully by teaching common ethical standards, the world can slowly thwart the need for such a document in the first place.

First it is necessary to explore which human rights are worldwide and which are dependant on the local culture. It is clear that rights such as life, freedom from torture, freedom from slavery, and the avoidance of mass killings such as Holocausts are common to the world. Like Michael J. Perry said, "Some things are bad, indeed some things are horrible...undeniably horrible-for any human being to whom the thing is done." (1) It is just innate, inside of every human being; whether or not their culture tells them that it is acceptable they will know it is wrong to kill another man. As Nussbaum's said, there are "features of humanness that lie beneath all local traditions and are there to be seen whether or not they are in fact recognized in local traditions," (2) and it is this that makes certain human rights

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universal. The proof of this is all around us, when a nation pulls together to create a relief fund for disaster relief or the mere fact the UN exists.

There are, on the other hand, human rights that nations would disagree on due to religion, location, prosperity, or social structure. These rights are: fairness, free world trade, free thought, education, justice, dignity, equality, marriage with consent, democratic values (the right to assemble, private property, participation in government, and leisure) and also the idea of innocence until proven guilty. Fairness is a relative term, what is fair to an American in a democratic society may not be fair to a man from Somalia in a tribal community. The idea of an education may be a man passing on education to his son (not his daughter) and not in a school but in his stories, that doesn't mean that he didn't educate his family. He'll deal out the justice of his tribe, marry off his daughters for the good of the tribe, and on his death bed feel he lived a very dignified life even if he never wore a shirt, and had to build his home straight on the dirt. We all need different things and that is how human rights end up being so diverse depending on your culture.

The issue with this imbalance of human rights is whose values are being promoted and are some cultures and morals overshadowing others that need to be heard? When one hears tales of female abuse and males forced to circumcise each other the answer that comes quickly is that some kind of education system or police system needs to begin. Naturally this doesn't solve anything. What really needs to happen is an education system that could break through the world of "us-ism" and show people that everyone else in the world is a person too. The idea of pseudohumans can't exist anymore and sentences like this "For they are not doing these things to fellow human beings, but to Muslims," (3) can't continue to be

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spoken. You might be asking what pseudohumans means? There are people in this world that have convinced themselves that because someone is of a different culture, race, religion, or color than them than they are 'fake humans'. This is the thinking they use to justify their racist and violent actions against others and the same thinking they pass on to their children and dispels.

Global ethics can be viewed in many different lights, an ethical economy, female power in Islam, child labor laws, or ethical views on sexuality and health care. How does a citizen of the world take an ethical stand on all these ideas? What kind of stand are the countries of the world currently taking? If the world is on its way to becoming a more just and ethical place than it behooves each and every citizen to consider every aspect of what it takes to being an ethical individual and how that effects and eventually promotes an ethical world view.

Economy is a sticky subject as it brings up questions of morality based on years of plundering, conquering, slavery, and empires. Those countries with 'good' economies have gotten where they are based on years of theft of resources from countries they held in their empire. When they were finally freed from their colonizers their recourses were depleted or they had a one-crop economy. It is taught to students that these lands were discovered (not previously populated), or Europeans went into these counties for religious reasons, "The truth is that neither British nor American imperialism was or is idealistic. It has always been driven by economic or strategic interests" (4). Europe and the Americas never went into a country to colonize it if they didn't think they could get some monetary gain out of it, hence they held on to these colonies for so long, because their economies growth was dependant on these cheap recourses. Is there still a way to be ethical after such

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a horrible travesty of history? Can Europe and the Americas ever make amends for what they have stolen from these developing nations?

Racial and religious views might seem like a simple task, be generous and open to everyone, but what if your neighbor sacrifices their dog? Or beats their wife? Or has darker skin than you and got a job you really wanted, would you blame affirmative action or would you say that he was probably more qualified than you? It can be difficult to see where the problems will occur and even more difficult to know how to handle them ethically; especially if you begin to think outside the realm of your own country. Racism is different in every country yet always the same. "Ethnic minorities and different cultures in one country can often be used as a scapegoat for the majority during times of economic crisis" (5) this leads to different groups of people being looked down upon in different areas. If racism is so prevalent, and it is so different, how will we ever come together as one ethical world? From here ideas like pseudohumans develop to help the majority cope with their alienation of the minority race and religion.

Of course violence isn't always aimed at religious groups, there was over 900 hate crimes against gays lesbians in 2008 in the United States alone. (5) Often violence against minority groups rises in improvised areas due to the escape goat theory and the rough circumstances of everyday life making violence more acceptable. Specifically violence against gays rises in areas where religion is very

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prevalent or extremist as it is seen as an 'un-holly choice' that spites G-D's creation plan of a man and a woman. An area that is especially homophobic, afraid of gays and possibly violent against them, is Afghanistan and Pakistan. An issue as a global ethically community is weather or not to step in as a world police, is it un-ethical if it is against their religion? When a person is hurt for no reason beyond sexual orientation can it ever be called ethical?

Closely related is the subject of how females are treated in the religion of Islam. There are many misconceptions floating around about Islam being a religion that promotes the idea of women as objects but in the time of the prophet Muhammad women and men were believed to have equal rights. It is the abuse of the religion, extremists and the evolution of a culture unrelated to Islam that ends with women as second-class citizens. Having said this some women are unhappy with their treatment in Islamic nations while others have adapted to this way of life. Knowing this, what is the ethical reaction to the Taliban and other such extremist groups?

Like religion the ethics of health care can change based on the country you are in. The Hmong believe that epilepsy is a spiritual connection to the spirits that will one day make them a medicine man/woman. In the U.S. if you are diagnosed with epilepsy you will be pumped with drugs, have several surgeries and everything

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will be done to try and prevent another seizure. It is commonly believed in the U.S. medical community that every seizure causes a little bit of brain damage. This is not the only difference of course, in countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan the religious beliefs of the area play heavily into what is 'allowed' medically. Abortion and certain reproductive technology are considered taboo, practices, which are common, place in many European nations. What then is ethical, to deny the people of a region certain health care based on the minority in power? Is it more ethical to assume that every person wants to treat or even considers his or her ailment and 'illness'?

Child labor is a major issue when it comes to global ethics. Most of the children in factories are from developing countries but the factories are from corporations in the top percentile of the world. What does this mean? That those holding all the money, now that they have given up their colonies and stolen resources, have now moved on to exploiting the people of the countries they used to colonize. Apart from sweatshops being an ethically disturbing picture children workers is something that all developed countries have outlawed as part of their path to industrialization. Children's minds are underdeveloped and need education not 24 hour labor, not to mention the horrible conditions found at these factories. But how will the cycle ever end if the countries in power continue to outsource and

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consumers continue to purchase the byproducts of child labor?

Now that we have seen the global differences and a few of the problems the question is what is the solution? How does this kind of violence get stopped? By teaching basic ethical standards all around the world that the UN agrees on until the citizens of the world develop the consciences to act within the parameters of human rights. The standards are simple, the very same ones that the Ancient Greeks once agreed upon as “cardinal virtues”: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. They are the virtues of the world, not because the Greeks agreed upon them but because everyone else since continues to. David Isaacs of England, who wrote *Character Building: A Guide for Parents and Teachers*; agreed that sincerity (with the application of prudence), fortitude, justice, moderation and also twenty-eight other ideals are necessary. (6)

These ideas are carried worldwide as well, in Africa, while trying to point out why their tribal culture is so different, the people landed on these values: respect, restraint, responsibility and reciprocity. Respect is equal to the Greek idea of prudence because it is doing what one ‘ought to do’. Restraint is similar to temperance because they are both about control and avoiding too much pleasure. Responsibility is common to fortitude in that they are both often hard to follow and about doing the right thing. And finally reciprocity is like justice because it is about giving others what they deserve; no less and no more.

So what are the global ethical standards? A simple list of four words that every school child should learn: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, or is it perhaps a bond of humanness made by the world. Is it a promise that we as citizens of this world will protect life without question and without culture? When looked up

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in the dictionary ethics is defined as: “(used with a singular or plural verb) a system of moral principles: the ethics of a culture.” or “moral principles, as of an individual: His ethics forbade betrayal of a confidence.” If the world is going to create a single view on ethics than it can no longer involve cultural in the definition or an individual.

However the world is already on its way, the very fact that people like Mother Teresa and Albert Schweitzer exist proves that there are common standards of ethics already. When describing these ‘moral saints’ one doesn’t talk about how religiously clean they were or how easily they gave up when a problem came their way. The quality’s that stand out the most in our heroes are their prudence, sense of justice, fortitude, and their temperance against all the other pleasures in their lives. “Control is crucial; although the ideal person may be pulled by temptation, ultimately temptation does not win.” (7) Though some claim that knowledge, immortality and humbleness are necessary to be a true ‘moral saint’ it is clear that these are not ethical standards, for when describing Mother Teresa it is generally said that her goodness stems from her kindness and sincerity not purity. Clearly the Greeks got it right and if these ideas were part of a curriculum it is possible that there could be more Paul Farmers and Martin Luther King Jr.’s in the world. Therefore it is also possible for each and every one of us to be heroes in the quest towards global ethics.

The question from here is how to get equal education globally, because that is the only way it would be ethical, and how to get the world to agree on the importance of education. Global education isn’t as simple as it sounds, when half the world lives on a dollar or less a day education isn’t there top priority, survival is. To

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give up a son that could be on the fields to sit in a classroom all day or a daughter that could be making a profitable marriage is only seen as a loss for the family. And most countries don't have the money to fund a free education system within their countries so when you add the cost of school to the laundry list of obstacles it seems impossible that education could ever be globally ethical. Can education ever be ethical if only the top percentile of the world is getting educated?

In conclusion, human rights can never be universal until the set of common ethics are taught to more of the world's citizens and they begin to act on them. Hopefully it is the answer to the inhumanity of the world to spread the fundamental framework of being a moral human being. When we all start acting like humans to one another than documents like the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights will truly be able to be enforced and taken seriously. Global ethics seems like an unattainable dream considering culture and previous attempts, but the next generation always accomplishes dreams that their forefathers thought were impossible, and there are too many planes, trains and automobiles in the world already.

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