

Readings

Patricia A. Marshall and Barbara A. Koenig, “Bioethics in Anthropology: Perspectives on Culture, Medicine, and Morality” in *Medical Anthropology: Contemporary Theory and Method*, revised edition edited by Carolyn F Sargent and Thomas M Johnson, pp 349-373.

Bioethics v Medical Ethics

Bioethics—new technology

Medical ethics—older, patient-doctor realm

Ethical and moral challenges of healthcare and cross-cultural populations

Four principles of bioethics of western philosophical tradition:

- Autonomy—understanding competence
 - Question: How is this not western? We view individuals as discrete. John Locke: relation of persons to government, protections of rights to property—of white males—in state of freedom and equality.
 - Example: Informed consent and competence in USA. In Haiti, families may go to the doctor to get the diagnosis, rather than an individual
 - Disclosure—only 1 person in the USA, but in Italy, one can talk to the family and not tell the patient if s/he has terminal cancer
 - Example: Western concept of medicalized self not present in Haiti. A Haitian woman loses her husband and son, who do not get proper burial and rituals. Woman got flashbacks and memories of her family. The Western model would try to impose mode of PTSD to facilitate healing. But for the woman in poverty, the lowest of the low without burial rites there is a great social stigma. From an anthropological perspective here are multiple layers of issues (not simply medical)
- Beneficence—to do good (Hippocratic Oath)
- Maleficence—to do no harm (Hippocratic Oath)
- Justice—equitable and fair distribution/access to care/who should bear burden.

Rosenberg: biological enterprise situated in time and context—new forms of knowledge, how medicine and the biosciences are linked to the state and beyond

Illness is universal, but how illness is experienced is not. How are anthropology and bioethics compatible? Can we find universal morals?

- Student: Should there be a decision of what is morally right for the sake of globalization?
- Student: Intuitive sense of what’s right—based on culture, beliefs, education, background, conditions.
- Utilitarian—most beneficial for all?

- Western philosophical tradition—civilizing mission—build markets—modern forms of government (think Iraq).

Incommensurability – are systems of thought incompatible across time and culture?

Power: onus of MD to make decision—1 atom in the institution, apparatus, history/culture, set ideas about the body, symbol of MD

Epistemology: different cultures, theory, thinking, viewing

Is there a universal model in a dynamic and complex world?

Culture: traditions, practices, ways of thinking, doing, viewing, history of beliefs of various groups, local, molding behavior—nurture

- 1871 definition of Culture: Edward Taylor *Primitive Culture* Culture or civilization complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society
- Presume that American Indians evolved socially from “primitive” to “civilized”, who fits where on a hierarchy of society and “races”
- *Where is science in culture? Is science cultural?*

More ideas

- Montesquieu: National culture—18th century—each nation has its own national culture and spirit
- Darwin: that some are more advanced than others
- Ruth Benedict 1946: is there something distinctive about national character?
- Franz Boas—cultural relativism—dispelled notion of evolutionary (hierarchy; biological determinism) Our actions are not bound by biological but habits, backgrounds
- Are there rights that each individual should have?
- Kleinman: Look at the local moral world—take into account for what is at stake, the points of conflict
 - Organ transplant: what is “dead”
 - Abortion and genetic counseling: what is “life”/a “person” with rights
 - Human subjects

More experiences of medicine

Gluten allergy diagnosis

Dehydrated—recognized; when you know what is wrong with you

Requesting a female doctor

Ankle/joints

Malaria and dengue

Dentists

Traditional non-western medicine
Viral infection