Ethics and Morality of Care
by
Dan R. Graham, LPC-S, NCC, BCPCC

The Random House College Dictionary, first edition (1980) defines 'ethical' as an adjective "pertaining to or dealing with morals or the principles of morality; pertaining to right and wrong in conduct…in accordance with the rules or standards of conduct or practice, esp. the standards of a profession" (p. 453). 'Moral' is also and adjective defined, in part, as "pertaining to, or concerned with right conduct or its principles; being in accordance with such principles" (p. 867). In addition, the dictionary continues by stating "morals refers to generally accepted customs of conduct and right living in a society, and to the individual's practice in relationship to these" (p. 867). Both 'ethical' and 'moral' are commonly used words to describe positive behavior in accordance with an expected norm, that being the loosely defined societal standard.

In a large multi-pluralistic society, such as in America, there are several so called 'social norms'. What is morally correct in one group of society may be considered damnable in another. Likewise, what is revered in one profession as good and proper may be frowned upon and perhaps illegal in another. Even within the same profession, such as mental health, there are numerous variations of ethical rules. It is not difficult to conclude that each person is expected to possess some sort of inner moral compass, as it were, to guide him through life and its innumerous decisions. Knowingly or not, we all base our decisions and behavior on one or more ethical systems which is simply a moral theory or basic set of principles of right and

wrong. Pollock, J. (1998) <u>Ethics in Crime and Justice</u>. California: Wadsworth, Inc. According to Pollock who cited Baelz, 1977:19, these ethical systems have certain commonalties within them. For example, they are prescriptive - meaning certain behavior is required because such behavior goes beyond the abstract and seriously impacts what we do (or don't do). The systems are authoritarian in nature and not subject to disputation. Hence, relativity has no valued position in these ethical frameworks. The very nature of relativity leans toward situational change which is diametrical to the goals of social stability. Lastly, what is moral and right for one person today will be moral and right the next day also, not only for the individual, but for all of us since most systems are not self-serving.

In reviewing Pollack's writing many useful passages are found in several ethical systems, but few would represent my overall viewpoint in their entirety. The two systems which come closest would be based on Religion, specifically Christianity and the Ethics of Care.

Pollard states that "there must be a willful and rational god or god figure before there can be a judgement of right and wrong, and thus before a religion can serve as the basis for an ethical system" (p. 37).   She also states that religious ethics are much broader than simply Christianity (p. 37), after all, there are many older religions which have similar ethical standards (p. 41). I find her statement concerning 'a willful and rational god or god figure' interesting. It implies, and rightly so, that many religions are man-made and have little to do with the eternal Creator of the universe. A man-made religion and its resulting ethical system is useful to some degree in providing social guidance. The major drawback, however, is that the ethical system

will be as moral and ethical as its human creator. Consequently, society ends up

with convoluted religious ethical systems governed by the whims of someone no

more righteous than the general public and certainly unqualified to set moral

standards for the rest of humanity.   To discover which religions are man-made a

person need go no farther than an encyclopedia. If a particular religion has a date of

origin and/or a founder with a birth date, then the religion is man-made and not from

the Creator. To my knowledge, the only ethical standard which was not conceived by

man is Christianity.

As Pollard brought out, Christianity is not without its problems (p. 39).

Differences within the overall Church notwithstanding, the history of the Christian

faith has been traced back to ancient Judaism, Noah's Ark (which has been found),

the Tower of Babel and before. Historical accounts and archaeological studies date

Christianity's origin several centuries before the actual birth of Christ, and before the

foundation of all other organized religious belief systems. Certainly, the Scripture

itself is most helpful in determining these facts, but they are strongly supported by

scientific, empirical data discovered by researchers having no loyalty or connection to

Christianity. (Thompson, F. (1964) The New Chain Reference Bible; Archaeological

Supplement by G. Frederick Owen, D.D., Ed.D, Kirkbride). One may ask what

Church history has to do with ethics; the answer is validity. If a religious or other

ethical system is man-made, it is no better than I. If we, as a society want to know

what is truly right and wrong, ethical, and unethical, then we must seek to know the

God who created us and established a balanced, standard of behavior that only an

infinite God could. God is God, holy and righteous. Man is man, unholy and far from

perfect. To follow an ethical system based on man's thinking instead of God's is counter productive.

Generally speaking, the Ethics of Care supports the ethical system within Christianity. A primary concept unique to Christianity is not an expectation of perfect obedience per se, but a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.   Theoretically, a relationship with the Lord should influence one to care more about the needs of others than for oneself - to treat other as you want to be treated, alas - the Golden Rule. Holy Bible, KJV (1611).   Pollock states (p. 47) that "In personal relationships, the ethics of care would promote empathy and [the] treating [of] others in a way that does not hurt them". She continues by describing the benefits of 'peacemaking' and the role of 'peacemakers,' both of which have strong ties to Biblical teachings.

If we hope to curb unethical behavior in our society, we must begin in the home - teaching our children (and ourselves) God's sense of morality. Historically, when the major portion of a society has embraced general Biblical principles in and outside the home, that society flourished (i.e. America, Great Britain). Conversely, when a society drifted from Biblical truth, that society's positive global influence dwindled, and in some cases the society itself became extinct (i.e. Roman Empire). The ethical systems of care and Christianity are most evident when individuals within a society subordinate their own needs to the needs of others. Most other ethical systems, in my view, has not - and will not - stand the test of time in promoting consistent, positive ethical behavior. Because those systems originated in the minds of mortal men, they lack the infinite, foundational wisdom necessary to guide

mankind.   The efforts of men to determine what is right and wrong may be beneficial

in the short term, but reliance on God's eternal wisdom is the most valuable.

REFERENCES

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