

Ethics and culture:
which comes first;
how are these related
or are they not rela...

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



Philosophy

Ethics refers to the study of a person's action as having moral worth, amoral bearing, or anything that has value for its own sake. In most cases, ethics binds an individual's thought, feeling, and action in direct or indirect influence upon himself or others. On the other hand, most people regards culture as related to one's community background (e. g., norms, traditions, mores, etc.) valued for its collective sense. In many countries across the world, different cultures and ethical understanding exist. However, the question remains as to which has come first - ethics or culture? And, how are these two concepts related - or are they related?

Depending on one's scholarly resources, ethics would have come first for the simple reason that man and woman (or couple) existed first before multiplying as group/s. The man/woman ought to deal with himself or herself, with another kind, other creatures, and/or to his/her surrounding. It is not surprising then that man/woman could have imposed upon him-/herself a moral code: " you do (don't do) this/that." Consequently, the man/woman has to abide with his/her own predispositions later on, that is, no matter how crudely he/she would have advanced in having mastery over and above other beings, and/or his/her environment. It would have been self-defeating if man/woman have not endeavored initially to take account of his/her interest /survival before coming to terms with others (other living beings).

When men/women multiplied in numbers, they continue to enforce and preserve what rules and laws they put in place until such time those became part of their culture (e. g., religion, customs, mores, etc.). Culture, though it

defines individual behavior, prevails in consideration of the larger communal interest. Ethics may have its proper place in individual and collective actions, so much so that culture has also an equal appeal in view of the interests of every communal member. Although ethics is just the other side of the group's culture, its appeal could not have been overemphasized without taking into account the individual or the state. As such, ethics and culture are so much related from the point of view of an individual living within a particular community.

Nietzsche's "Morality as Anti-Nature," World Ethics, and Cultural Diversity

Ethics sometimes overlap with culture in the sense that different peoples/races/ethnicities have different views about what good, right, proper, appropriate, taboo, etc. are. For instance, during Nietzsche's own time, he personally regards morality as anti-nature. For Nietzsche, man is not subject to any subjugating force (which, in this essay extendedly includes ethics/morality and culture) that limits man's will for power. Nietzsche rather considers ethics or even culture for that matter as anti-nature because man has the power to become an Overman and not a slave to anyone. Although such is Nietzsche's personal viewpoint and understanding, it can be inferred that people like him may not subscribe to anything that serve to limit man's far greatest potential for greatness. Nietzsche poignantly offered his views concerning human abasement caused by "poor[,] spirited" and naïve fallacy. He may have shown defiance to Christianity, hurled desensitizing words to priest/prigs, and called himself immoralist because he valued appropriateness of actions more than the

ideation of the reality.

In today's global setting, peoples all over the world seem to have the same understanding about specific aspects of ethics (e. g., honesty, loyalty, etc.). They exercise various form of ethical conduct when dealing with themselves, family members, groups, or other living organisms . Depending on their location, nevertheless, they also value what other people worldwide value as well; yet, there are also minute or vast differences in the presence or absence in their types of cultural practices (i. e., symbols, rites, stories, food gathering, cooking). What is considered ethically worthy or culturally valuable by some people is, on the contrary, inhumane, dehumanizing, immoral, etc. by others. Hence, there is only but diversity or differences in ethical views or cultural backgrounds of people across the world - not to mention people, who like Nietzsche, have shown how unique their perspectives are about ethics/culture.

Specifically, in some countries, groups call for appropriate actions against ethical/cultural practices (e. g., clitoridectomy, child marriages, gender-role stereotyping) deemed as violations of the rights of person. Some ethicists defy what is viewed as culturally relevant for some countries (but not theirs) because they have their own supposedly highly-developed and systematic view of what a human person ought to be, which when seen under the Nietzschean lens are the passionate and intelligent societal members. Nonetheless, moralist groups advocate safeguarding peoples' inalienable basic human rights (e. g., life, liberty, self-ownership) because of the peculiarities in cultural practices. Ethics, for most ethicists/moralists, has the semblance in all individual, yet some cultural practices only make a

caricature of individuals' real worth as human beings. Thus, culture seems not to overlap with ethics, but that culture is under what ethics is to the civilized world.

In view of diverse ethical and cultural practices, culture is viewed by people as an inherent property of a community. No matter how idiosyncratic a cultural practice is there are those who argue that it is valued for its own sake and that ethics is subsume under it. For instance, in polygamous patriarchal marriages, male can have as many wives as their religion permits them to have. However, there are countries where it is illegal to do so; nevertheless, there are those with divorce and legal separation laws. Whether one's laws or practices are culturally- or ethically-based, indeed, even religious consciousness plays a significant role in the life of an individual and society, as a whole and not unlike Nietzsche who despised the hypocritical conduct of the moralists.

Religious Diversity and Nietzschean Perspective (Anti-Christianity)

Religion has created among the world's civilizations a great abyss/divide as deep as ethics and cultures are. No country on earth, except communist countries, that has no religion, sect or cult. Even a world religion, such as Islam or Christianity, has its 'inner divide' because of the vast number of denominations, internal belief system, fanatic activities, and so on. In relation to ethics and culture, religions have their proper abode. Whatever a person's culture is, whatever his/her personal ethical beliefs are, religion or non-religiosity is already a defining characteristic of a person's individuality and communal relationship just like when Nietzsche proclaimed to the world

that “ God is dead,” according to his own account.

Despite religion’s appeal to most people, there are many anti-religious people (e. g., atheists, anti-Christians). They believe only what their minds / creativities dictate to them as good, bad, etc. For them, god has no bearing at all. Everything is just a matter of evolution, that is, “ what fits in to me is what is best for me.” On the other hand, some individuals may thus be affiliated/practiced religion either for ethical reason or not depending on their own understanding of their own circumstances in life. Hence, it can be inferred that they have a ‘ culture’ (e. g., knowledge, belief, behavior, goals, values, “ on-line communities”) that they can call their own such as when they have gathered a sufficient amount of followers for their ideologies. Given the contrasting views between religious and non-religious individuals, at this juncture, it seems that ethics may have not come first than culture, or vice versa. There is also no instance that ethics and culture are even related at all. Given the diverse “ ethical” and “ cultural” practices worldwide, the defining factor of what is ethical or not and culturally relevant or not, depends entirely on the individuals or community. Having said so, there is a seemingly vague correlation why an individual / community prefer a specific ethical behavior or cultural practice over others. Only one thing is sure, though, that people are bound to create their own reality as much as they want to survive using their unique understanding of the world.

Concluding Remarks

Ethics seems to be innately a human attribute whereas culture is the collective/societal invention for people to live harmoniously within a

community. Although ethics and culture resemble and share the same properties (e. g., in religion, customs, etc.), there seem to be no less than dominating factor why one is above the other. Some individuals do not even think that ethics has dominance over cultural beliefs. It seems that ethics should simply be universalizable for the most part (e. g., being honest) why culture is sometimes confined within a specific locality. The consensus, which came first (or if the two are related), is sometimes hard to delineate. Anyone can have a relativistic view of reality (i. e., what is right, good, etc.) and that it is not up to anyone to judge/evaluate the merit of an action, reality or perspective using one's own or communal standard. Anyone is either free or un-free in thinking about ethics or culture using his/her own understanding and interpretation of it. Thus, ethical considerations and cultural practices are somewhat subsumed under the weight of a universal view of what a human person is apart from his/her personal (or ' collective') views of, for instance, Christianity or of the world - as highlighted by Nietzsche in his " Morality as Anti-Nature."

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