When it comes to solving ethical issues in medicine in a global context, some experts have argued that there is no such thing as "global bioethics." In the case above, two bioethicists, Scott Stonington and Prinit Ratanakul, argue that Western bioethics is insufficient to solve the problems that arise in the practice of conventional medicine in non-Western contexts. They point out that typical Western bioethical principles such as the ones proposed and popularized by Beauchamp and Childress (principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice) fail to give any helpful ethical guidance in this situation. To their credit, Stonington and Ratanakul point out some of the weaknesses and inadequacies of some aspects of contemporary Western bioethics. They show that Western bioethics has been whittled down to principles most important to those who live in the West, that is, freedom and autonomy. Nevertheless, they do not give a proper justification of their own position.

In order to solve these ethical questions, we may find helpful conceptual resources in the work of C.S. Lewis. Before we begin to analyze Lew- is's influence, it is useful to note how different he was. As noted above, a few more common comments are in order. First, few bioethicists would ever argue against the reality of cultural diversity and the need for cultural sensitivity in medical settings. However, culture diversity and cultural sensitivity do not in themselves undermine the idea of a global bioethics. Second, the problem is that the arguments that some experts want to raise against global bioethics go much deeper than issues concern- ing cultural differences. Their underlying concern seems to be that the new global medicine requires a new ethic altogether—an ethic that addresses not only cultural diversity and the new complex questions that arise in medicine because of new technologies, but also one that addresses the issue of "ethical diversity."

Now, it is one thing to acknowledge the reality of cultural diversity, it is quite another to claim that if there is cultural diversity, it follows that there is also ethical diversity. The argument that is being made, in other words, is that ethics is subjective and particular. Those, like Stonington and Ratanakul, who take ethical diversity to be prima facie true assert that it is necessary then to jettison "traditional" ethics altogether because of its irrelevance and inapplicability in modern situations. In order to develop a new ethic, so the argument goes, which takes into consideration cultural and ethical diversity and questions arising from technological complexities, we must start from scratch.

**The Impossibility of Creating Diverse Ethics**

It is that statement from scratch, from a moral vacuum as it were, and create a whole new "diverse" ethical system to meet the needs of modern medical ethical issues? C.S. Lewis says it is simply not possible. He argues that a new ethic cannot start with a blank slate, if we did, however, we would end with a blank slate. Those who claim that we need a new ethic can give no moral motive for entering into a new ethic unless that motive was borrowed from traditional morality, which, according to Lewis, is neither Christian nor non-Christian, neither Eastern nor Western, neither ancient nor modern, but gen- eral. The moral law, in other words, is objective, not subjective. Lewis does not give a religious argument in order to support his claims concerning the objective nature of morality; but one that is based on reason—that grand, classic, and robust understanding of reason. Lewis associates the current problem with ethics and morality with the fragmentation of thought brought about by modernism. He makes the point that after studying the natural world, human beings began to lose faith. When they did that, it was "as if we took out our eyes in order to look at them." Reason then appeared to be nothing more than chemical or electrical events in the brain which itself is the by-product of evolutionary process. In light of this, there is no good reason to think that human beings can know anything about ethics or morality or truth.

In his essay, “The Poison of Subjectivism,” Lewis drives the point home that the whole attempt to get rid of traditional morality as something merely subjective and to substitute it with a new morality is wrong. This can be stated in two propositions:

1. The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of planting a new sun in the sky or a new primary colour in the spectrum.
2. Every attempt to do so consists in arbitrarily selecting some one maxim of traditional morality, isolating it from the rest, and then saying, "It would be better if we were. Let us improve our morality." Out of this there is some objective standard of good, overarching Germans, Japanese and ourselves alike whether any of us obey it or no, then of course the Germans are as competent to create their ideol- ogy as we are to create ours. If good and better are relative, then even in- verting their sole meaning from the ideology of each people, then of course ideologies themselves cannot be better or worse than one another. Unless the measuring rod is independent of the things measured, we can do no measuring. For the same reason it is use- less to compare the moral ideas of one age with those of another: progress and decadence are like meaningless words.

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In order to not compromise their own karma, Dr. Nok and Lek prepare a strategy to circumvent their dilemma. Gaew's physician feels that it is Gaew's mental attachments that are preventing him from dying and if they can unknot his mind Gaew's spirit might be released. Dr. Nok says that such an action is unethical and it cannot be done because their religion, Buddhism, forbids it. Not only is killing strictly prohibited, but various doctrines in the religion teach that the last part of the body to die is the breath.

Gaew, like many Buddhists, has no advanced directive. In their culture, the act of changes from moment to moment and a person is not the same as they were two days ago. It would be impossible for a person to know what they would want years later in a different state of consciousness.

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Seeing his brother suffering, Lek makes the decision to remove his brother from the ventilator. Dr. Nok says that such an action is unethical and it cannot be done because their religion, Buddhism, forbids it. Not only is killing strictly prohibited, but various doctrines in the religion teach that the last part of the body to die is the breath.

The impossibility of creating diverse ethics is that there is no real ethical vacuum from which a moral vacuum as it were, and create a whole new "divers" ethical system to meet the needs of modern medical ethical issues. C.S. Lewis says it is simply not possible. He argues that we never start with a blank slate; if we did, however, we would end with a blank slate. Those who claim that we need a new ethics can give no moral motive for entering into a new ethical code unless that motive was borrowed from traditional morality, which, according to Lewis, is neither Christian nor non-Christian.

Lewis associates the current problem with ethics and morality with the fragmentation of thought brought about by modernism. He makes the point that after studying the natural world, human beings began to look within. When they did this, it was "as if we took out our eyes in order to look at them." Reason then appeared to be something more than chemical or electrical events in the brain which itself is the by-product of an evolutionary process. In light of this, there is no good reason to think that human beings can know anything about ethics or morality or truth.

In the world of science the consequences of the contemporary disposi- tion to undermine reason is minimized in that the scientist must assume the validity of his or her own reason, if for no other reason than to prove its subjectivity. This subtle dance with subjectivity can be dangerous for the scientist. There seems to be a move away from the use of words like truth and reality as defining terms of the scientist's overall objectives. Instead, there is much talk about the objective being "practical results."

It is quite a different story when it comes to practical reason, where the full forces of the consequences of subjectivism are felt. Until modern times no influential thinker ever doubted that the judgments of good and evil were rational judgments or that what they discovered was something objective. It was taken for granted that in temptation, desire and pain, we were diurnally opposed to the feeling, but to reason. Lewis shows that the contemporary view is quite different. Value judgments are not judgments at all. They are feelings forced in a community by forces in its environment and its traditions, and varying from one community to another. To say that something is "good," in other words, is to say that there has been a preference for it, a preference that has been shaped by one's social environment.

It is important to hear Lewis in his own words as he expands on the consequences of this view:

But if this is so, then we might have been conditioned to feel otherwise. Perhaps," thinks the reformer or the educational expert, "it would be better if we were. Let us improve our morality." Out of this apparently innocent idea comes the disease that will certainly end our species . . . if it is not crushed, the fatal superstition that men can create values, that a community can choose its "ideology" as men choose their clothes. Everyone was indignant when they heard the Germans define justice as that which is to the interest of the Third Reich. But it is not always remembered that this indignation is perfectly groundless if we ourselves regard morality as a subjective sentiment to be altered at will. Unless there is some objective standard of good, overarching German, Japanese and ourselves alike whether any of us obey it or no, then of course the Germans are as competent to create their "ideology" as we are to create our own. What is true of one's meaning from the ideology of each people, then course ideologies themselves cannot be worse or better than one another. Unless the measuring rod is independent of the things measured, we can do no measuring. For the same reason it is useless to compare the moral ideas of one age with those of another: progress and decadence are like meaningless words.

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1. The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of planting a new sun in the sky or a new primary colour in the spectrum.

2. Every attempt to do so consists in arbitrarily selecting some one maxim of traditional morality, isolating it from the rest, and erecting it into an aristocratic ethic where the claims of our relatives or our class are of greater worth than of planting a new sun in the sky or a new primary colour in the spectrum.

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2. Every attempt to do so consists in arbitrarily selecting some one maxim of traditional morality, isolating it from the rest, and erecting it into an aristocratic ethic where the claims of our relatives or our class are of greater worth than...
If reverence for parents or care for strangers is merely subjective, open to human opinion, and a by-product of the forces of nature, then so is cherishing our children and love for our families.

This last point may seem to contradict the argument that traditionality is an objective standard which does not change. Lewis offers an answer that can only be understood by comparing a real moral advance with more innovation. Moral philosophers from the Stoics to Confucius who say, “Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you,” succeeded by the Christian who says, “Do to others as you want done to you,” reflect a real moral advance.

The Poverty of Subjective Ethics

The morality of Friedrich Nietzsche, which finds no rational grounds for value judgments at all, is a more innovation. The refinement of the Golden Rule is an advance because those who recognize the validity of the Christian ethic and outside of it are free to produce a value system at some later stage in our philosophy. Any value we reintercede can be counted in the same way. “Every argument used to support it will be an attempt to derive premises in the indicative mood from the supposed ethical moral vacuum, we could not attain any of them. If reverence for parents or care for strangers is merely subjective, open to human opinion, and a by-product of the forces of nature, then so is cherishing our children and love for our families.”

Finally, with respect to the notion that karma is a moral law which describes the consequences of certain behaviors in the afterlife, there is nothing in this assertion which necessarily undermines Lewis’ argument for the objective moral law. The objective moral law, as far as Lewis is concerned, points to a Moral Lawgiver, who is transcendent overall. Lewis is a thiet who argues that the moral law reveals something of God’s nature, his holiness. The choices we make in this life, in other words, matter for all eternity. Though Bud- dhist, he endorses the moral law, as it was presented at CBHD’s 2009 Annual Conference, Global Bioethics: Emerging Challenges Facing Human Dignity. This essay serves as an example of broader reflection upon moral theology or theological ethics that can assist in developing a foundation for a more deeply rooted engagement of bioethical issues from a Judeo- Christian Hippocratic approach.

QUESTIONs

would you like to offer comments or responses to articles and commentaries that appear in Dignitas? as we strive to publish material that highlights cutting-edge bioethical reflection from a distinctly Christian perspective, we acknowledge that in many areas there are genuine disagreements about bioethical conclusions. to demonstrate that bioethics is a conversation, we invite you to send your thoughtful reflections to us at info@cbhd.org with a reference to the original piece that appeared in Dignitas. Our hope is to inspire vigorous conversations between our readers and those who contribute material to this publication.
Consider the scientists who say that they must get rid of "taboo" traditional morality, and that its time to forsake the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual problems of the whole field of ethics. This is impossible."5

New moralities which bid us to consider the local nature of ethical problems are the creation of reason, and a by-product of the forces of nature, then so is cherishing our children and love for our families.

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The Poverty of Subjective Ethics

The morality of Friedrich Nietzsche, which finds no rational grounds for value judgments at all, is a more innovation. The refinement of the Golden Rule is an advance because those who recognize the validity of the rule recognize the Christian principle as a positive extension of the same principle. The Nietzschean ethic demands that we all start from scratch and become "value-creators," the very thing which is impossible to do. It is the difference between a man who says to you: "You like your vegetables moderately fresh; why not grow your own and have them perfectly fresh!" and a man who says, "Throw away that loud and trying brick and confide instead.

Do these arguments for the objective and universal nature of moral-ethics mean that we will never face moral quandaries like the ones encountered in the case of Gaew? Not at all, says Lewis. It is the moral law that creates these questions in the first place, just as the rules of a particular game create problems related to that game. The person who is not literate is free from grammatical problems. The person who does not know algebra is free from algebraic problems. The person who is not literate is free from grammatical problems. The person who is not literate is free from grammatical problems.

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4 Ibid., 75.
5 Ibid., 76.
6 Ibid., 76-77.
7 Ibid., 77.
8 Ibid., 78.

Editor’s Note: This essay was an expanded version of parallel paper that was presented at CBRHD’s 2009 Annual Conference, Global Bioethics: Emerging Challenges Facing Human Dignity. This essay serves as an example of broader reflection upon moral theology or theological ethics that can assist in developing a foundation for a more deeply rooted engagement of bioethical issues from a Judeo- Christian Hippocratic approach.

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