The Difference in Value between the Western Ethics and the East Ethics

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Abstract:
Ethics is a necessary value for human beings living in an emotional society. If humans have no ethical base as a standard to instruct their behaviors, humans will be similar to other living beings, neither more nor less. The difference between humans and animals is that humans have a reason, emotion, and love which are expressed in relations between people and people. And the society of humans formed from these ethical values is prerequisite for it to exist and develop. In each culture, country or region with different cultures or different doctrines, we see different concepts of ethics. However, all the concepts have one common characteristic that is to direct people to good behaviors in relations between people and people. In this article, We will present and analyze some concepts of ethics of Québec and of Vietnam and then we will state my own opinion about the concept of ethics. This article includes 3 parts, the beginning, the body, and the conclusion.

Keywords: *Western ethics, east ethics*

1. Introduction

To survive and develop, a society must have a firm Cultural foundation. When we say culture is the spiritual foundation of the society, we are actually meaning ethics as the fundamental element of culture. Each socio-economic form has its own ethical norms suitable for it. Once it transforms into another, its existing ethical norms will be gradually replaced with new ones. Ethics come into being due to social needs, reflect social existence; and, ethical expressions are rules and social norms which orientate, evaluate, and regulate human behaviours in line with certain social requirements to maintain social discipline. Though being a reflection of social life, ethics has its own relative independence, and it can either make the society unceasingly progress or restrict its development. In addition, ethics is considered a value system; every product of human activities can be values which are viewed differently based on different degree and ways of looking at them. As a result, in terms of the ethical value system, whether an action will be judged ethical or not within its own value system; or, in other words, ethical values depend on the evaluator subjectively, the evaluation place, and the evaluation time as well as evaluative criteria.

Eastern and Western concepts of ethics have long differed in terms of value. We will analyse in this assignment some eastern and western notions of ethics to further clarify the difference. Then we will provide our own ideas about ethical values and mention some violations of ethics to clarify those ethical values.

1. Analysis of western concepts of ethics

Ethics is a compulsory turn for everyone in power to help them have a better understanding of themselves, think about using their power well; the ruling game; care for themselves, cultural context, and the distinction between power and obligation". [1]

Ethical views are seen in rules and laws. Every nation has its own legal system to assert an ethical norm and to make them become a habit. Ethics and the law both aim to regulate human behaviour to ensure normal social activities. As a result, a violator of ethics is also one that breaks the law. Ethics and the law do not come into existence. To make people have a sense of ethics and laws requires a longtime education. Educating people to become ethical also means to educate them to respect the law. Ethics involves compliments and criticism, and regulation of human behaviours through social and collective opinions. One will keep and promote good behaviour and change a bad one. Yet, whether there is a change depends on that person's personality. In contrast, the law is compulsory forcing people to regulate their behaviours in line with social norms, and people may not have a choice. On one hand, ethics and the law both aim at people. On the other hand, they use different ways to regulate human behaviours. While ethics involves sentiments and flexibility carrying the common sense and direction, resulting from a long-term education, and being

[1] Prof. Hugo Roy. Ethics and Public Management. Vietnam. 2010

sustainable, the law is compulsory and specific in nature which helps gain immediate results though those results may not be sustainable.

Ethics is a new way to do business: In this approach, ethics refers to a specific profession and particularly business ethics.

One Indian proverb circulating in the business circle of developed countries reads, "You will get a habit from conducting behaviours, a personality from habits, and a destiny from personality". It implies that the survival of a business not only relies on the quality of its products and services but also, mainly, from its business style. It's business acts show its style which in its turn has direct impacts on its success or failure. Business ethics is a strategic factor in business development. People tend to argue that the only purpose of a business is to earn profits, and ethics cannot be discussed there because business activities are "unethical". As a result, for optimal business productivity, a businessman has to harmonise three acts: economic duties, moral duties, and ethical duties. The former means production and supply of goods and services to earn profits. The business has to follow the law and contribute to the construction of an "open economic environment for the society" other than becoming a monopoly for more profits. Its ethical duties are demonstrated through "voluntary" behaviours out of requirements by economic or moral duties. It is not "charity programmes of the business", either; however, it is expressed by the binding between the business and its consciousness in doing business with every one of its partners. For example, when one business earns profit from a lack of information on products, it may not violate social morals as that behaviour is not forbidden by the law; however, it is an unethical behaviour in doing business. In addition, ethics is always mentioned in businesses because various problems come from the employer-employee relationship. Apart from following state policies and laws, they maintain an ethical relation: the employer has to respect his employees' personality, pay attention to the improvement of working conditions, and provide relevant welfare policies… In the relation between the producer and the consumer, it is an ethical requirement that the producer has to observe his professional ethics producing goods to announced specification, quality, and models. He shall be responsible to the consumer for his sold goods in terms of quality and price.

The Vietnamese have been informed of business ethics but their understanding of it remains much limited. The reality has been quite clearly shown through the results of my accidental survey on 02 August 2010 in which 40 out of 60 inhabitants in Điện Biên Phủ City, Điện Biên Province, said they often got informed of business ethics while the rest 20 rarely did so. Being asked how business ethics is conceptualised, 55 out of 60 interviewees believed that "It is observance of the law" while merely five argued that "it is protection of customers' rights" and none though it comprised both. As a result, business ethics should be always regulated by common social-ethical norms and value system.

According to Georges A. Legaulf, "ethics differs from morals in that it is based more on values than obligations. As a result, it places our dynamic decisions in relation to the values we want to apply". The author was the first-ever who identified the relation between individual and organisational values and ethics. That is, ethics is value-based and seeks realisation of some of the values. Both individual and organisational values are not invariable but keep changing along the time. He distinguishes the two types of ethics: preventive and reactionary ethics. Auto-regulatory ethics is applied on a preventive perspective expressed through subjective responsibility which is shared from the beginning of taking actions. On an auto-regulatory perspective, responsibility tries to make people respect the common sense of a decision or an action and is established before through discussions and dialogues. Moreover, ethics exercised on a preventive perspective means one that is conducted before making a decision and taking action. The common value for the whole mankind that ethics study brings should ensure "individual autonomy" based on the ability to maintain the unity of the self-entity; in other words, individuals may maintain their own orientation and will when following orders absolutely: only taking action in line with those rules that we can make them common ones when following them. Yet, when ethical standards have not been particularly reflected in the legal framework and rules, it is difficult to distinguish standards from behavioural principles.

For example, because openness and transparency are still limited in Vietnam, Vietnamese civil servants may use them arbitrarily, but it is difficult to reveal those cases. Accordingly, one civil servant can deal with a

similar case either with advantage or disadvantage for a citizen depending on their relation, intimacy or outlawed gifts. This gradually becomes a habit and makes corruption increasingly popular. Every public service such as applying for a birth certificate, land registration, business registration… requires "grey money" or "lubricant" to ease the process. One businessman told me that procrastination is among the simplest tricks of civil servants to receive "grey money" from businesses because the latter do not want to waste their time and opportunities that may lead to losses and bankruptcy.

As a result, there should be laws and rules on the basic values of public service and standards for everyone's behaviour. Ethical ground, independent discovery and investigation of such wrong behaviours as corruption should be upheld in developing administrative management mechanisms for civil servants. At the same time, preventive measures for ethics-violating behaviours should be provided other than dealing with done cases. Citizens and organisations should be enabled to exercise their supervision to limit civil servants' excuse for their duties or actions that damage social interests.

1. Concepts of ethics of QueBec

In this part, I will analyze two concepts of ethics which are used in mass media in Québec. The first concept is that ethics is a symbol of good behaviors, examples and the second one is that ethics is seen in rules, laws.

1.1 Ethics is a symbol of good behaviors, examples

"Ethics is a symbol of good behaviors, examples". This concept of ethics is now popular in the world and is agreed by the majority of people. In this concept, an existing symbol including values that are considered ethics will be used as models to form a category of ethics. Then, the behaviors of this symbol will be considered ethical standards which are appropriate with the values of an organization, society or community. We can see that symbols of good behaviors are frequently used as ethical examples for studying, educating ethics in society. These are actual examples that help to facilitate education. By recognizing, sympathizing and comparing actions of oneself, people believe that it will be right, noble if imitating an available formula by applying symbols' acts to some specific events (to bring benefits, happiness, safety,…for other people). One person practices ethics according to this concept is a person who knows to study and imitate good things.

Symbols of good behaviors are great people, people having great contributions to the nation, country, people sparing no pains to sacrifice in order to bring about pleasure, lives for other people,…According to credit that one person is respected and engraved into somebody's memory. For example, Vietnamese people always respect Ho Chi Minh, a good ethical example. Although our generation is impossible to see the Person with our own eyes and witness acts of the Person from generation to generation we have passed to each other ethical behaviors that are sometimes great and sometimes are of everyday life but all of them are good behaviors.

However, a man is difficult to be a standard symbol and is difficult to be acceptable by many people as a symbol to follow because each person has his own private value and nobody may be perfect. Therefore using symbols with good behaviors as a concept of ethics may not reflect social value. Perhaps we need many different symbols to fully define ethics according to this concept. Besides, the ethical base of society will be easily threatened if one symbol fails (when there is a gap in ethics or an ethical symbol has a wrong act).

1.2 Ethics is seen in rules and laws

Another concept of ethics given by the correspondent of Québec: "ethics is seen in rules and laws". In my opinion, rules and laws are set based on studies and considerations of behaviors according to ethical values. These behaviors bring about common benefits, standards that are appropriate with common values of an organization, a nation.

For example, for code of practice, rules, laws may be obeyed by a group of people or some people as an institution to control their behaviors in accordance with ethical values.

This concept allows us to create behaviors based on standards, regulations which are considered appropriate, right to community values which have been previously defined. It stipulates what a person can do and what a person can't do to be in accordance with ethical standards. Before doing anything, a person can know his coming behaviors are true or false and which penalty he will get for his behaviors.

However, rules, laws are drawn out to control the acts the people. If there is the intervention of rules, laws, the acts in some cases will not come from values or aspiration of the subject. When mentioning an ethical

person according to this concept, this person will only be a person who obeys disciplines, rules. He himself won't adjust his behaviors without being bound by these rules, laws. Ethics is formerly values of behaviors which have the main characteristic of changing based on ethical values of a society, which may be influenced by rules, laws but which won't be decided by rules, laws, and people must think, seek appropriate methods of implementing.

This concept has irrational points that are, in some stances, people still have ethical actions but this is against rules, laws or vice versa. For example, decisions on diagnosing and treating diseases free for the poor, this is a humanitarian decision of the government and it is supported by a lot of people. And this is appropriate for mutual affection spirit of Vietnamese people. However, this decision will be against the law on equal treatment, equality for everyone as stipulated by Constitution and law. Or giving emergency aid for a person who has a traffic accident, unless the person is given emergency aid, he may die. This will be against the morality of helping people in periods of misfortunes". However, to do so won't preserve the scene of the accident, resulting in difficulties in inspecting, clarifying violations according to the regulation of preserving the scene. Therefore in Vietnam, ethics is also considered based on rules, laws but these rules and laws must be appropriate with good moralities and traditions of the nation.

2. The Vietnamese concepts of ethics

As Vietnam is going under globalisation, it's market economy provides an important material condition for the formation of a new ethical value system, promotion of social attention paid to human interests, making people more dynamic and self-controlling. It has become an important driving force of social democracy generating new elements from within ethical values and norms. In addition, the traditional Vietnamese ethical relations are recovered and important in consolidating the family, the society and the community.

The traditional Vietnamese Confucianist concept of ethics involves "loyalty to the king and filial devotion". The former suggests people be loyal to both the king and the country because they are considered one and the same. One should die to show his loyalty if his king wants him to do so. Filial devotion was seen only in the family. The late President Hồ Chí Minh extended the two concepts socially to "loyalty to the country, devotion to the people". Accordingly, loyalty will be seen through construction and defence of the people's government being people-centred in all activities, and the country is no longer synonymous with its head though the head of state is elected and excellent. Citizens now exercise their mastery in their country through either directly or indirectly electing representative organs or members who manage the state and social affairs on behalf of them while, at the same time, submitting themselves to their control and supervision. Civil servants then serve citizens. "Devotion to the people" suggests devoted public service to citizens. As a result, President Hồ Chí Minh's ethical concepts on the country and the people are totally different from the feudal ones.

Moreover, "Ethics is a form of social consciousness, a set of social principles, rules, and standards that regulate and evaluate human behaviours in interpersonal and social relations, which are conducted with individual beliefs, traditions, and public opinions altogether in mind." [2] By this definition, the author emphasises that ethics is a form of social consciousness involving rules and standards that regulate human behaviours. Accordingly, ethics is considered a sub-system of the systems of values, norms, and institutions of society, culture, and ethical behaviours by individuals, groups, and community. Here only the sense of ethics is concerned while ethical behaviours are ignored. Though mentioning that an ethical tradition involves passing down of certain ethical principles from one generation to another, the author does not pay attention to mechanisms that ensure that transference. In addition, the author does not mention the other elements of ethics such as the socio-culture institution which includes the family, school, state, social organisations, religions…, which play an important role in ethical life. In terms of ethics, we should mention typical ethical personalities for each nation and each era as an example for the whole community. The above-mentioned concept has not pointed out the basic characteristics of ethics being the development level of an expression or symbol (that is the way ethical values and norms and ethically famous people are honoured).

[2] Hồ Chí Minh National Politics Academy. Course Material on Ethics Study, Political Theory Publishing House. Hanoi. p.7. 2000

3. Ethical values

Values make a thing useful, significant, and valuable in one aspect sought by people. Values vary into personal, professional, organisational, governmental, and social ones. Based on this concept, ethical values can be understood as those chosen and evaluated by humans who are positive for social life and suitable for public opinions. The formation and development of ethical values rely on particular social and historical conditions. Ethical values result from interpersonal relations under certain historical contexts.

Describing the traditional ethical values of the Vietnamese, Prof. Trần Văn Giàu emphasises, in an order of importance, on the values of "patriotism, hard-working, heroism, creativity, optimism, compassion, and righteousness". Patriotism is considered the most fundamental ethical value of the Vietnamese. Apart from the advantages, they do show many limitations of ethics and a culture which are developed in an agricultural country usually at wars against invasions. The list shows an appreciation of saving the country from invasions while to a certain extent underestimating labour and construction of a wealthy country. At the same time, the list shows an appreciation of community values with vague individual values. Vietnam is undergoing a comprehensive renovation with both opportunities and many challenges influencing the national ethical foundation. All fields of the social life are changing profoundly and affecting the spiritual life, mainly the ethical values. That new social evils appear in the society are seriously affecting the traditional ethical norms and values. Ideas of pragmatism and the new liberalism are mainly attacking the national culture and ethics, and the traditional national ethical values are changing. Patriotism today means love of the Vietnamese and other peoples in the world. Patriotism must be expressed through self-independence and creativeness at work, in learning and studying to exploit every potential of the country for national defence and independence, equality among the nationalities, and gradual improvement of people's living standards. New ethical values contribute to the development of the spiritual life of the society, and they are motivating the cause of country's renovation.

To clarify more about the ethical value, I offer a few professional ethics values. Professional ethics is a form of regulation which imposes duties to members of a profession or an organization. It is mainly of simple acts of regulation because the external authority assigns the regulation. The purpose of professional ethics value is to preserve the credibility of the organization, to protect the image of the profession, to unify the real act, to protect the public, to prove the professional feature. So the professional ethics is getting more and more recognizable and popular.

Pragmatism and appreciation of economic effectiveness are good virtues for businesses while they will be socially criticised should they be applied in such fields as education, healthcare… or into other social relations such as that between spouses, or between parents and children. As a result, business ethics, apart from upholding the values of honesty and respect for people, is still regulated by a socially common ethical norms and value system.

Honesty: businesses should not earn their profits through tricks, but they should keep their promises. They should be honest in observing the law without such violations as tax evasion, production, and sale of state-prohibited goods, or delivery of services that dirty fine customs and traditions. Moreover, they should be honest in working with their partners (i.e. transactions, negotiations, and signing contracts) and to their customers through not producing or selling fake goods, not over-advertising or using famous brand names illegally, not violating the copyrights... Businesses should be honest to themselves conducting neither bribery nor corruption.

Respect for people: Businesses should respect employees' rights, freedom, development potentials, and other legitimate rights; they should respect customers' needs, tastes, and psychology; and, they should respect their competitors' interests. They should link business interests to those of their customers and the society upholding effectiveness and social responsibility.

To specify the implementation of ethical business issues, each business should construct and apply, in my opinion, one consistent set of ethical rules which guides its employees and forms the basis for settling problems related to business ethics. The set should comprise four main contents: 1. Business leaders' support and requirement of implementation; 2. Commitment and responsibilities of the business to its employees; 3. Ethical values and responsibilities the employees have to implement before their colleagues,

leaders, customers, governments, and the community; 4. Ways of information and settlement of ethical problems.

In my opinion, the ethical values of mass media are highly auto-regulatory. While an irresponsible doctor or teacher may negatively affect hundreds or thousands of patients or students respectively, a newspaper article can even shake one corporation or a government. Some people even commit suicide after hard pressure from public opinions, which in many times come from mass media.

The ethical values of journalists include honesty at work, objectivity, and respect for the truth, justice, and righteousness. An unethical reporter may harm many people, their office, their readers and the whole society.

Honesty means telling the truth: A reporter should neither tell lie in his articles nor use another person's name to collect information. He should not plagiarise because his dishonesty if found, will ruin the reputation of his own and his office. He should, therefore, be impartial and respectful of individuals' privacy and sources of information.

Serving the public not oneself: A good reporter should serve the beneficial public than benefiting himself through his job. He should neither earn money from exploiting information from his sources nor have received money and gifts from interest groups through writing custom-made articles. He should be independent and neglective of briberies.

Justice: Being just and balanced is important to an article. Information should be provided objectively, honestly in a multifaceted way to ensure a consistent healthy relation between governments, organisations and the public. In my opinion, a set of ethical values for reporters and editors should be developed to identify acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and punishments given to violators of those rules. The set should then be dispersed to all reporters and editors for their understanding and implementation.

No profession can compare with the healthcare because of its necessity and depth in human life. The healthcare is as old as the human history and may last until human extinction on earth. A mistake, no matter how small, can severely damage human health or even be fatal and cannot be corrected. Healthcare has long been considered by the Vietnamese an important profession related to human life, family happiness, births, power and wealth of a nation and the whole society. Its ethical values are seen in a high sense of responsibility, dedicated service and care for patients, honesty, solidarity, overcoming difficulties to fulfill tasks, and devotion to the construction of the Vietnamese healthcare system.

Healthcare staff should have consciousness, high responsibility, a great love of their job, and unceasing training of their ethical qualities. They should unceasingly study and conduct scientific research to improve their technical qualifications. Yet they should not use patients for experiments of diagnosis, treatment or scientific research without permission from the Ministry of Health and agreement by patients.

In addition, healthcare staff should respect the right to health examination and treatment of people and patients' secrets. They should be polite in examining or caring patients with proper attention paid to those under social policies having neither discriminating of patients nor showing the attitude of doing favour to them. Healthcare staff should show a welcoming and helpful attitude to patients and their families to make them trust in the staff.

Moreover, they should explain about diseases to patients and their family so that the latter understand and cooperate in treatment. Healthcare staff should inform them of regimes, policies, rights, and duties related to patients comforting and encouraging them to follow treatment and gain quick recovery. The prescription should be in line with diagnosis and ensures the proper and safe use of medicine not giving them low-quality or improper medicine to earn their benefits.

4. Behaviours that violate ethics

Though corruption has long been well known and criticised, Asian and Vietnamese socio-psychology to large extent favour the existence and development of corruption and bribery, the latter being considered a cultural trait of the Vietnamese. Gifts seem natural and easily accepted in every transaction. A social survey in 2009 reveals that up to 41% of the interviewees believe that gift-giving is only an expression of gratitude to those who have helped to settle their work; the interviewed businesses argued that this is the quickest and easiest way to process their work (48.9%) or that gifts cost much less than benefits they bring (46.4%), and that both civil servants and businesses should be "benefited" (28.2%).

Unethical behaviours of Vietnamese businesses:

Profits constitute the ultimate aim of businesses, so they try to grab every advantage in doing business, seeking all ways to establish good relations with those decision-makers important to their businesses. It is the reason why they may pay to gain their aims. Based on political power or acquaintances, some businesses try to limit the development of other companies in the field; others trying to damage the image of their competitors' products or hack information from them. Abusing the loose management of the authorities, some businessmen even copy others' products with their own brand names.

Related to customers, businesses may produce low-quality fake goods cheating them or use instructions which contain confusing information on trade names, business slogans, business logos, packaging, geographical instructions and healthcare elements to distort customers' awareness of goods and services to compete.

Businesses may also have unhealthy competition tricks such as stealing business secrets, forcing customers and partners of their competitors to stop transactions with their competitors through threatening and coercion, lowering the image of another business through either directly or indirectly providing dishonest information that worsens their competitor's finance and business activities; or causing obstacles and interruptions to the latter's business. They may also advertise or promote their sale unhealthily, or sell illegal multi-level sales.

Regarding journalism, acts that violate its ethics can be misinformation, basing on unreliable informants. As a result, some big newspapers require reporters to base on at least three reliable sources (i.e. the authority, related people, and independent observers, the latter being experts or well-informed people. Reporters may conduct insufficient verification, wrong quotation, or even make-ups.

In addition, misinformation is sometimes not corrected in line with relevant regulations. Some newspapers make merely rough corrections of misinformation, and e-newspapers do it through removing the misinforming articles other than apologising readers.

Moreover, many reporters may arrive at ill-grounded conclusions and offend other people's face: many write to criticise or accuse others without meeting them and giving them an opportunity to present from their side. It is very popular that when the reported reacts upon a misinforming article, some newspapers will report their opinions as a way to correct misinformation. Many newspapers "convict" suspects much earlier than the court, the prosecution or the police do. Some increase their profitability by attracting readers with non-human information or asking for benefits and conditions before writing… that may even violate the law. To worsen the case, reporters may use others' information, articles, and photos without asking for permission or making public sources from which they take information or translate into their own articles.

Abusing the job for illegal interests is another serious problem and potential crime. The first type of this receives briberies to hide information on corruption and negativities reporters have collected. Blackmailing or briberies may happen after a report has collected important evidence and documents on corruption. The second type receives gifts and other interests to write to advertise businesses or organisations. This type provides unobjective, sophisticated, beneficial information for gift-givers and thus violates reporters' professional ethics.

Acts that violate ethics also frequently occur in the field of healthcare. According to a survey by the Hà Nội Medical University on reality of awareness and practice of the professional ethics conducted between 2006 and 2009 shows that 5.7% of the doctors regularly violates the ethics with more violations found in upper levels (3% at the district, 6.7% at the provincial level and 7.0% in central hospitals).

Some drug stores have not strictly followed the regulations on price listing and following prescriptions. Some collude with doctors to raise prices many folds more than the listed prices registered to the Ministry of Health, even to three folds.

Some hospitals have not strictly followed the regime on payment of health insurance in treatment; they may help their acquaintances pay in the name of the poor or children under 6 who enjoy exemption or reduction policy. Some medical staff sells state medicine and supplies out onto the market for money while some hospitals are overloaded with patients so that their staff may ask for money to give earlier treatments. Many doctors prescribe unnecessary expensive medicine for patients sold at their "friendly" drug stores to earn commissions or gifts from pharmacy businesses; or, they may take insurance pays through abusing

examination and diagnosis; or even guiding public hospital patients to private ones to take more money from patients.

In terms of purchasing healthcare equipment, some bidding does not have sufficient numbers of contractors as required by the law. Some contract provisions are so loose that delivery of purchases is slow and contract fines are not enacted. Unplanned contract packages are approved or bought more than estimates; some hospitals play trick to buy equipment without bidding or import free and trial medicines such as vaccines from abroad for popular use and sale that damage future generations.

CONCLUSION

This article has mentioned some theories and practices of ethics. To build a state ruled by law, it is apparent that people should be encouraged to live and work in line with the Constitution and laws. Moreover, attention should be paid to building good social relations and suitable ethical values and norms while public opinions should strongly criticise unethical behaviours to limit unhealthy social phenomena.

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