

Sample from 11th Century: Kutadgu Bilig and the Four Principles of Bioethics'

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(Received 28 Oct 2007; accepted 17 Apr 2008)

Abstract

There are various ethical approaches in the history of philosophy. Beauchamp and Childress introduced four basic principles which were acceptable in all communities: beneficence, non-maleficence, respect for autonomy and justice. Yusuf Khass Hajib is the first author of the Islamic Turkish Literature whose work was found out. This study aims to reveal the existence of four principles of bioethics in this work, in Kutadgu Bilig, presented to the prince of Karakhanids, Tavghach Bugra Khan, by Yusuf Khass Hajib in 1069-1070. It was found out in this study that all these principles were included in Kutadgu Bilig in different forms. The principles that Beauchamp and Childress argued to be acceptable in all communities and all cultures have already existed in different communities in different ages. Yusuf Khass Hajib's work, Kutadgu Bilig, constitutes a good example of this reality.

Keywords: *Principles, Ethics, Rule, Kutadgu bilig*

Yusuf Khass Hajib and Kutadgu Bilig

Kutadgu Bilig is the oldest monument of Islamic Turkish literature. A long didactic poem in the mirror- for- princes tradition, it consists mainly of dialogues set within a frame story. The language of the work is technically referred to as Krakhanid, or Middle Turkish (1, 2).

In the 11th chapter of his book Yusuf Khass Hajib writes about the name of the book and its meaning.

Have named the book "Wisdom of Royal Glory" (Kutadgu Bilig) May it bring fortune (kut) to reader and guide his way. I have uttered my discourse and composed my book. It will be true guide.

Today there are three known copies of Kutadgu Bilig:

Kutadgu Bilig has been translated into various western languages since 1870.

The Turkish Language Association published all three copies in 1942-1943. It was translated in 1947 by Reshit Rahmeti Arat with an annexed

critical text and published in 1959 and its index was published in 1979 (3).

The second edition used in this study of the translation of Arat and the English translation of Robert Dankoff was published under the title of Wisdom of Royal Glory (1983) (2).

Yusuf's originality did not consist merely in adapting Turkish language and Turkish royal traditions to the genre of Islamic mirrors for princes. He also made a highly original contribution to that genre. He dramatized the issues in the form of dialogues set within a frame story; he gave the main characters significant allegorical names; and he attempted, quite successfully, to incorporate Sufi asceticism as an opposing, and ultimately complementary, ideal to the prevailing community and statecraft ethics.

Resources of Kutadgu Bilig

Turkish mythology, Turkish history and culture, Ancient Turkish religion, Influence of India-Iran-China, Islamic religion, Karakhanid State and the cultural environment of the period.

Yusuf Khass Hajib employs the mythological notions in his work including those in myth of creation (4). Yusuf Khass Hajib was naturally an intellectual who knew much about Turkish history and culture. Turkish folklore, proverbs, language, art and all other notions concerning the civilization are presented in a cultural richness in Kutadgu Bilig (5).

Yusuf Khass Hajib was a worthy Muslim. However, he employs in his book notions specific to Turkish religion which do not conflict with Islam (6).

Fundamental Principles of Medical ethics and Kutadgu Bilig

Certain ethical principles are used to cope with ethical problems arising in medicine ethics. It is a widely accepted attitude to search for the notion of principle and its resources in ideas of Hippocrates, which have been nowadays commonly used in medical ethics.

Today it is possible to refer to numerous principles in medical ethics. Some of these principles are as follows: respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, informed consent, justice, respect for privacy, fidelity, liberty, veracity, promise-keeping and equity. Throughout history people concerned with medical ethics have qualified some principles of ethics as basic, essential and universal principles. Two medical ethicists from the United States, Tom L Beauchamp and James F Childress are among the prominent scientists who highlighted the importance of ethical principles in medical ethics and of how to make use of them. The four principles, that is respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice, which they included in their work Principles of Biomedical Ethics, which was first published in 1979, are going to be the main titles of our study (7).

Principles of beneficence and non-maleficence

Medical ethics implies primarily and above all regard for the benefit of patients. This ethics is closely related to sensibility and certainly involves the notion of responsibility (8).

When we search for a notion which is proved to be valid until today in the traditions of western

medicine, the rule mentioned in a text concerning broken bones written by Hippocrates comes to mind: to be beneficial or at least not to harm (9). It is believed that contemporary ethics starts with GE Moore's researches on nature of ethics. In former researches the field of ethics was limited to human behaviors; however, Moore enhanced this field and added the question: What is "good"? His response to this question is quite interesting: "Good" was not defined. Moore believes that many philosophers throughout the history of ethics have always confused the notion "good" with the stable features (which have always existed intrinsically) of natural objects. Moore named this phenomenon as "Natural Fallacy". W Frankena opposed to Moore's idea, claiming that natural fallacy could not be a logical or reasonable fallacy if logical argument was used. Moreover, he included benevolence and justice in basic virtues (10, 11).

According to W. Frankena, in order to judge an act ethically as right or wrong, or as a responsibility, it is required to link this act directly or indirectly to good or evil. The rightness or wrongness of the acts which do not have such a relation with good and evil can not be questioned. What he emphasizes is that to spread "good" all over the world and to prevent "evil" is at least one of our prima facie responsibilities. W Frankena's ethics of beneficence is a principle which leads us to strive to glorify "good" as much as possible against "evil" (10,11).

The king answered: "The worthy man is he whose beneficence extends to all the people as their shore, who does not lend out his favors as a loan, who seeks only the welfare of others". (K.B. line 856)

Good" is defined in this expression. The basic quantity of god is being beneficial. It is possible to find herein the response of Moore's question "What is good?" In addition, it is said in KB line 236:

Now good chief, high position has passed to you in Turn. Therefore do only good.

One good deed deserves another; indeed, the return for one kindness should be then like it.

Being of no use to others, he is a good as dead. So be of use then, do not be dead. O manly and renowned!

This expression leads us to think that the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence are handled on an equal footing. The principle of beneficence in the field of medical ethics is essentially achieved by two different principles. These are absolute beneficence and ensuring the balance between beneficence and maleficence. Absolute beneficence can be explained in a detailed way by the existence of three basic elements which are prevention and elimination of maleficence and enhancement of beneficence. Sharing information is very important for fulfilling the aim of enhancing beneficial behaviors. Kutadgu Bilig (line 5729) says the following on this matter:

By your clement exercise of this power you have achieved a good name. The people are Content, the realm is prosperous your subjects' tongues never cease their benediction. The useful man is mankind's head.

The prevention of maleficence implies taking measures to prevent potential harms of actions. The expression "Avoid evil, be away from evil; always be useful; control your acts and actions" in Kutadgu Bilig (line 1508) can be considered a call for the prevention of maleficence as mentioned above.

Guard your tongue and you will live secure; guard your soul and you will grow old in good health.

The principle of absolute beneficence is an issue which conflicts with its content. Some resources argue that it is not right to render people liable for such a powerful and absolute ethical task such as "being absolutely beneficial". The people who defend this idea must be regarding this principle as a virtue rather than a liability (7).

According to Kutadgu Bilig, people having moral values shall avoid doing harm to the others. This viewpoint is mentioned in line 2006:

When a man has modesty and purity, his hand never reaches out for what is improper.

To whomever god gives modesty and water-of-eye- (tears), He also gives fortune and water-of-face (honor). It is modesty that holds one buck from all that is improper, and joins one to all that good. What a fine thing is modesty, on adornment to a man! It is the tether which binds him to all good things (K.B. line 2008) (K.B. line 2009)

R. M. Hare argues that good behaviors - even if they are not right - are the behaviors of good people. "Good" behavior, except for certain differences arising from the motivations of people, is usually like a rational behavior in terms of ethics. Good person (a person who has had a good ethical education) has a certain motivation and trend to improve the principles in his mind (12). "In order to act humane, always be a human, thus human beings found out the essence of their humanity" says line 2308 of Kutadgu Bilig.

This expressions call on people to be humane and to be good human beings.

Human beings socialize in the community, imposing each other what is ethically right and what is ethically wrong. Human beings can not be happy if they ignore the voice of their conscience, even if we manage to distort ethical values. We have not conformed to what our conscience has said ,we have to pay heavy social costs .Even a sociologically rational immoralist does not desire the change of general conditions in a socialization process which rejects the conscience because they know the importance of ethics in the society.

Having good moral values will make people acceptable members in a society. Examples from Kutadgu Bilig on this viewpoint are given below:

The bad remembered for a curse, the good for praise. Decide for yourself which one you want. Go then and do good, excellent man, for the deeds of the good always prosper (K.B. line 345).

Wickedness stands ethically in the opposite of good; it can be described as a wrong or an unacceptable act and defined as a situation or formation which hinders reaching happiness, ideals and objectives. Wickedness is a situation which is the consequence of conscious human

acts and which does great harm to the life of human beings in the world. The opposition of human beings to their ethical tasks also leads to the emergence of evil and maleficence. Numerous examples of expressions on avoidance of evil and harmful acts and enhancement of beneficence are included in Yusuf Khass Hajib's work: *Wickedness, on the other hand, is cheap, and to do evil is easy (K.B. line 901).*

The good is like an incline, difficult to ascend, while the bad is a dechae, easy to descend (K.B. line 903).

But he who desires the good does good, without regard to weakness and oppression (K.B. line 912).

In this work "good" is described as an element which is the object of desire and value, and which is deemed valuable by the rational will and defined as a value which serve for the self-realization of human beings.

Principles of Respect for Autonomy

Autonomy consists of "auto" and "nomos". This means self-government in Greek language, and Ancient Greece a city state was said to be autonomous, when it was self governing.

In the Western tradition autonomy has been linked with the freedom of the individual and the possibility of the harmonious development of the human person according to personal choices and also wishes for his or her future life (13).

It is possible to define autonomy as competence of human beings to orientate, motivate and direct themselves independent from all external oppressions and pressures, and to consider themselves a defender of the ethical law in which they are included.

Western philosophy and clinical ethics are replete with theories of autonomy based on secular, anthropocentric world-view. This stands in stark contradistinction to the theocentric cosmology posited by Islam. Muslims and non Muslims agree that autonomy is a right of mature humans and that the welfare of non autonomous people should be vigilantly guarded. Secular thinkers conclude that humans have a right to autonomy because they are capable, ra-

tional beings or because they are inherently free and hence autonomous. Therefore no one needs to, nor should anyone make decisions for others when the people themselves are capable of it (14). According to Islam, Ilm (knowledge) is essential for decision making and all Muslims are, therefore, expected to act with Ilm. It could be possible to say that absolute knowledge is predominant to individual autonomy (15).

In Kutadgu Bilig we encounter viewpoints on people who are able to express themselves and display their autonomy:

A well-spoken man with tongue and heart in accord, put this way: It is true that another may utter your words, but no one can be true to your interests than yourself (K.B. line 516).

The actions and choices made within the framework of competence and perfection included in the definition of autonomy are highlighted in Kutadgu Bilig as the preconditions of "individual values" which people of today are expected to have.

And even though you must ask someone's advice in a matter, you still have to do what your heart is satisfied with (K.B. line 2495).

An autonomous individual is able to realize whether his actions are autonomous or not. The above mentioned citation from Kutadgu Bilig is an important consideration since it supports the autonomous action and decision of an individual made following an autonomous choice. In order to make an autonomous action the autonomous individual has to comprehend and realize the action he aims to make, otherwise the action will not be autonomous. The citations from Kutadgu Bilig also emphasize the importance of making actions consciously.

As Beauchamp states, autonomous actions are intentional and conscious and are made without oppression. An individual should be informed in order to make a conscious action (7).

Then speak all your words wisely, and know that wisdom alone makes men great (K.B. line 209).

If the individual is informed before the decision-making process, he will be provided with adequate time and opportunity to revise such ele-

ments as his values, beliefs, choices and viewpoints which affect the development of this process.

Informing an uneducated person who does not know about the principle of autonomy or getting the approval of such a person does not suffice to create solutions for the problem of autonomy. The content of Kutadgu Bilig includes both the principle of respect for autonomy and the knowledge which we can closely link to this principle.

Calling on the society for respect for autonomy is considered to be helpful and valuable in terms of medical ethics.

Principle of Justice

It has been among the most important problems of social life for centuries to apply principles of justice into life.

Accepting that the notion of justice is a posteriori, it can be said that this is related to the idea of equality. However, the most striking point in implementation of justice is that equality does not have an absolute content. Justice which has been eternally desired by the humanity is basically the fulfillment of ethical tasks (16).

As the prominent German jurist Jhering said, “justice holds a scale which weighs justice in one of its hands and a sword which defends justice in the other”. A sword without a scale signifies brute force whereas a scale without a sword results in the weakness of law (17, 18).

Jhering’s words are parallel to the notion of justice referred to in Kutadgu Bilig. A selection from Kutadgu Bilig concerning this matter is given below:

The king then set down a three- legged stool made of silver and sat upon it (K.B.line771).

In his hand he took a large knife, with worm wood on the left side and sugar on the right (K.B. line772).

It has three legs, and nothing with three legs ever wavers but all three stand level (K.B. line 802).

As explained above, justice, equality, freedom and tolerance are qualifying values. These values form an ethics of life style which glorifies the right of individuals to convert themselves to individuals who are conscious of their collec-

tive responsibilities and who adopt ethical expectations as general binding expectations and apply them practically in their life.

Everything with three legs is straight and even, while there are four, one must be uneven (K.B. line 804).

When something is even, it is stable; and when a thing is stable, it works well (K.B. line 805).

In legal jargon, justice means convenience to the law and being just. It refers to a stable certain wish for recognizing the right of everybody within a subjective scope, and an equality based on the law among all conflicting mutual interests within an objective scope.

Since justice is deemed as the supreme virtue, the risks to be faced with when justice is ignored are highlighted as follows in Kutadgu Bilig:

But when something wavers, it is crooked and crooked things produce bad result (K.B. line 806).

If a thing wavers, it cannot stand but a falls don; if it is straight, it cannot fall but stand firm (K.B. line 807).

In his work “Theory of Justice” John Rawls argues that human beings should initially adopt the principle of justice (7). The principle of justice that Rawls explains is based on two fundamental principles. The first one is that every person should have equal rights, and the second one is that social and economic inequalities should be eliminated for the benefit of every person. The latter point certainly includes the equality of opportunity and providing the greatest benefit to people who are in most favorable situation. The origin of Rawls’ opinion on this matter can be seen in Yusuf Khass Hajib’s following expression:

Know that my nature is unwaveing and straight. It is on the basis of right alone that I settle a case. Without regard to whether a man is a prince or a slave (K.B. line 809).

According to Sidgwick, justice is behaving similarly to people living under similar conditions whereas injustice is making discrimination among people living under similar conditions. Frankena believes that this formula is an indispensable precondition for justice (10). It is possible to

observe in Kutadgu Bilig the origins of the ideas of these two philosophers on justice.

The concept equity (hakkaniyet) is different from justice. Although both concepts refer to the same objective-ethics- the ideas lying behind them are different. Justice signifies the supreme ethical idea which prevails among legal norms whereas equity is one of the ideas which is at the basis of the implementation of justice, taking account of the features of concrete events. The idea of equity is a means to find the most appropriate solution for an event, taking account of its specific features and the balance of interests within the said event. The below expressions extracted from Kutadgu Bilig reveal Hajib's sensitive approach to the concept of equity:

This dagger in my hand is a cutter (K.B. line 810). O noble one: I cut the case if with a knife, and I do not make the plaintiff wait (K.B. line 811).

In western culture, Themis- the goddess of laws, customs and traditions- was asked to distinguish the just from the unjust and to punish the unjust. Kutadgu Bilig also includes ideas on the establishment of real justice:

The sugar is for the wronged party to eat, who comes to the gate to receive my judgement (K.B. line 812).

Such a man goes away sweetened as with sugar, with a smooth brow and full of cheer (K.B. line 813.).

The wormwood is for the wrongdoer to drink, who floss from what is the right (K.B. line 814).

This selection indicate that justice is recognized by everybody as an absolute value.

The content of ethics may change; however, the demand for ethics never changes.

As Aristotle states, justice is a virtue in its broadest meaning and temperance in its narrower meaning. The notion of justice and its definition in Kutadgu Bilig is parallel to Aristotle's idea.

According to W Frankena, the basic criterion of justice is equality in behaving people. The principle of justice implies behaving equally to people, which is a prime facie liability. Behaving equally does not mean improving their life

at an equal level. It is wrong to think that justice is able to achieve this aim (10).

The establishment of a healthy society is crucial for the human model and concepts presented in Kutadgu Bilig. While defining spiritual richness in following couplets, Yusuf Khass Hajib responds to Fromm's idea that such features as "greediness, colonialism, narcissism" should not exist in a healthy society:

To gain the wealth of this world, Be straight in soul and speech, (KB. Line 1747).

The full-eyed man, though poor, are counted rich; and the patient man succeed in all he undertakes. (K.B. line 2618).

The specific conception of human, society, ethics, politics and state defined in Kutadgu Bilig should be used to reach a healthy society. This study made on medical ethics revealed that Kutadgu Bilig includes universal values which should be presented to whole society. Kutadgu Bilig and similar Turkish classics will assume an important responsibility in East-West convergence. The knowledge of the East presents important experiences and high values to Western world. as Rene Guenon states, "the East tolerate the West patiently because the East holds the conscious of eternity in its profound existence". In addition, we must not forget the aphorism "Light rises from the east" (19). A philosopher is the person who loves wisdom in the Western world whereas a wise person s identified with wisdom and knowledge in the Turkish-Islamic world.

Conclusion

Kutadgu Bilig, which has to be evaluated in terms of ethics and medical ethics, indicates that universal values are expressed by different discourses but similar values wherever you go in the world.

One of the hottest issues in medicine, these days, is the subject of medical ethics, morality and liability. It will also be of interest to note that problems faced by the physicians and the patients to day are not only different from the problems faced in earlier periods of history (20).

Kutadgu Bilig is a beautiful illustration of the fact that problems of responsibility, ethical dilemmas and needs of the society are nothing new to medicine.

The expressions in Kutadgu Bilig that we evaluated in terms of medical ethics are not related to any religion although Yusuf Khas Hajib lived in an Islamic environment. His discourses are universal. When the philosophers of actual medical ethics and their principles are considered, it is concluded that Yusuf Khas Hajib's ideas are still valid.

Although many studies and researches on medical ethics have been recently conducted in the West, it is not scientifically acceptable to say that we owe all knowledge on medical ethics to the Western world. The revelation of the relationship between Kutadgu Bilig and medical ethics proves the richness of this work. Following the ideas of philosophers on medical history in the history, numerous studies based on Ancient Greek have been initiated. However, the studies on Kutadgu Bilig and eastern classics are insufficient. New studies in this field will make original contributions to medical ethics.

These contributions to medical ethics will lead to changes not only in basic universal principles but also in the concept of ethics itself and its practices. In a dynamic community there are always open-ended questions whose answers have not given "yet", or problems whose solutions have not been found out "yet". Kutadgu Bilig, which used to be as a book of politics or an advisory book, must be recognized as a valuable resource for ethics. The universal principles on many fields in this work will enlighten the new generations in shaping and altering the future.

As debated some paper (21), it is hoped this paper serves the ethicist as a starting point for in dept analysis of Islamic bioethics literature Vis-a Vis secular ethics.

Acknowledgements

The authors declare that they have no Conflict of Interest.

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