

Exploring diverse ethics

Christopher Wareham

Abstract

In deliberating on ethical issues of global importance, arguments are typically put forward on the basis of a limited, predominantly western range of moral theories, values and principles. Non-Western theories by contrast are severely underrepresented. It is common point to this disparity as justifying greater emphasis on African and other non-Western ethical traditions. However, the fact that there is a disparity does not itself justify a greater emphasis without intervening premises. This paper fills this gap by demonstrating that the over-representation of western concepts is a serious problem, epistemologically and ethically. It is an epistemological problem since western moral theories are propagated by a relatively small percentage of the world's population. As such they may represent only a small subset of the world's attractive moral viewpoints, meaning that the sample of plausible moral theories employed by ethicists is thus unscientifically skewed towards the west. The under-representation of non-western accounts in ethics is also an ethical problem for three reasons. First, it denudes the 'marketplace of ideas' that Mill argues would increase utility. Second, under-representation of non-Western theories is a case of epistemic injustice. Third, it potentially alienates non-Western students and academics. Having justified a project to explore greater moral diversity, I sketch directions for projects to discover and evaluate potential competitor moral theories in Africa. This method, I suggest, allows us to explore the exciting likelihood of novel moral concepts that can guide ethical decision-making.

Introduction

In this article, I claim that there are grounds for an investigation of, and greater emphasis on, African moral concepts. My argument for this claim differs from similar calls in that it does not rest on a demonstration that there are African moral theories that already provide valuable alternative moral concepts.^[1] While I believe that such alternatives are available, my argument functions independently from, and complements such demonstrations by providing epistemological and ethical reasons for a wider emphasis. While proponents of African ethics typically rely on their own favoured accounts of what African ethics constitutes, this paper does not prejudge this, and instead calls for a systematic exploration of African moral concepts.

I offer four arguments for the claim that an investigation of moral concepts is required. The first is epistemological: the sample of theories typically employed in ethical argument is too small. Philosophical ethics is reliant on moral theories and concepts developed and forged by a small percentage of the world's populations. Thus when we compare such theories, it is *prima facie* unlikely that we're comparing the best ones.

The remaining arguments point to ethical reasons for exploring diverse moralities. First, doing so populates the 'marketplace of ideas' that Mill argues would increase utility. Second, it is a step towards undermining persistent epistemic injustice. Third, exploring, understanding, systematising and applying

African moral values to social institutions may contribute to transformative efforts and alleviate alienation.

There are many limitations to what I will attempt here. I will not explicitly define what I mean by western and non-western, non-western and African theories. This is too large a topic to undertake here.¹ I will also not attempt to justify theories or concepts that compete with western ones, although I will provide some examples I believe are convincing exemplars. Similarly, in this paper, I will not provide a conclusive set of ideas about what this investigation hopes to find. I will refer to the output of potential descriptive projects as 'moral concepts,' without attempting to define this in a rigorous way. Finally, I will not give a definitive account of how to go about uncovering and evaluating moral concepts, although I will sketch approaches to doing so.

In part 1, I present the epistemological case for greater emphasis on African moral concepts. In part 2, I discuss the three ethical arguments. In part 3, I sketch an approach to exploring and evaluating African moral concepts.

1. The epistemological case for exploring diverse ethics

In this section I argue that the sample of moral concepts typically employed in moral arguments in the English language is too small, such that it hinders the epistemological goals of moral theorising. This claim requires three sub-claims: The first sub-claim concerns assumptions about the epistemological goals to which moral theory aspires. The second sub-claim requires is that there is a limited set of moral concepts that dominates western ethical discourse and that there is, or may be a set of moral concepts that is ignored. The third sub-claim is that ignoring these moral concepts is an obstacle to the epistemological goals of normative ethics. Below I explain and defend each of these claims.

The epistemological goals of normative moral theory

There is substantive disagreement in metaethics concerning questions such as whether or not moral claims can be true. At the level of normative ethics, though, the aims of moral theorising are relatively uncontentious. Theorists aim to find and present moral truths, taking it as given that such truths are possible. These moral truths concern how one ought to live, what is of value, and what one ought to do in particular situations. In this paper I will assume that the aim of moral theorising is to arrive at moral truths of this kind.

The limits of western ethical discourse

The claim that western ethical discourse is limited and lacks conceptual diversity immediately raises objections. Ethicists next door to one another in the same department may hold apparently radically different philosophical, political, and ethical viewpoints. Even theorists that subscribe to the same ethical theory may disagree about particulars and substantive implications of that theory. How then, can it be claimed that western ethics lacks diversity?

¹ See e.g. Mbiti, Gyekye, Wiredu, on this topic.

I respond to this objection with two related clarifications. First, I should clarify that my claim is not that western thinking is the homogenous, individualistic, ahistorical mass of ideas it is often caricatured as by its continental detractors. I fully acknowledge that western theory holds a rich, often well-developed array of concepts, many of which could play a role in a full, robust account of morality that would arrive at true moral claims. However, the claim that western thinking lacks diversity is not the same as the claim that it contains only a few moral ideas. Instead, the claim here rests on an understanding of diversity as relative, rather than absolute. While there is vast variability in western ethical thinking, my claim is that this variability is likely to be limited relative to the total space of potential ethical concepts.

This point can be brought out with an analogy with genetic diversity. ‘European’ genotypes give rise to immense phenotypic variability. There are many types of beauty and ugliness and so on. If one had never encountered non-European phenotypes, there would be no suggestion that the human species lacks diversity, phenotypically or genetically. However, Caucasian phenotypic diversity is just a small fraction of the total diversity of the world. Similarly, my claim is that, while there is great variability within western theorising, it may represent just a small fraction of the total diversity. This, at least is the hypothesis whose truth I argue to be worth exploring.

To push this analogy further, note that sub-Saharan Africans possess greater genetic diversity than is found in the rest of the world combined^{2,3}. If the analogy holds for morality, then the African continent is likely to hold a staggering array of underexplored moral concepts. On the face of it, there appears to be no strong reason to think that moral diversity should be this extensive on the African continent. However, given the size of the continent, the number of people, the comparative diversity of the cultures, and the relative lack of existing research on African morality, there is equally very little reason to think that the level of moral diversity would not be even greater than the level of genetic diversity.

The point, then, is not that Western theories are all similar. Instead, the claim is that the diversity of Western theorising is limited, since there may be a much broader domain of moral ideas that is overlooked.³ In the next sub-section, I argue that this inhibits the epistemological goals of normative ethics.

African under-representation weakens the justificatory basis of western theories

Given the likelihood that there is a large space of moral concepts ethical theorists have not considered, why should it be thought that western concepts are the correct ones? Below I suggest that given at least one widely used method of arriving at moral truths – the application of intuitive judgements – the relative absence of attention to non-western concepts weakens western theories’ claims to represent moral truth. This is because western theories may not cohere with African intuitions and because theories derived from African moral beliefs may better match western and global intuitions. I will also

² <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/30/AR2009043002485.html>

³ Although I will not endorse any of the particular accounts here, it is worth providing some concrete examples of intriguing novel moral ideas that have been explored. Barry Hales, one of few philosophers to employ empirical means to investigate African moral concepts, uncovers an intimate and perhaps inextricable connection between moral value and aesthetics in Yoruba culture. The value of community in African moral systems is well-known and has been developed by theorists such as Gyekye, Wiredu. Metz in particular is at pains to argue that African morality has clear advantages over western ethical theories.

suggest that the under-investigated possibility of African alternatives to the method of cases further weakens Western theories' claims to moral truth.

One proposed family of methods aimed at moral justification is to employ moral intuitions. This may involve comparing theories on the plausibility of the answers they provide in particular cases, or whether they match deeply held intuitions, or whether they are compatible with 'moral axioms' that attract a degree of consensus (Sidgwick, 1874/1967, 338). Theories that provide coherence with intuitions or axioms is considered successful.⁴

A lack of attention to African moral ideas presents at least two problems for western theories justified by their coherence with widely held intuitions.

The first problem is that there is little evidence that African intuitions are the same as those of Western people. Improving knowledge about African beliefs might confirm, narrow, or remove altogether any consensus about particular cases or intuitions. It may also introduce new intuitions or beliefs that are plausible and which conflict with Western intuitions. The absence of attention to African moral intuitions thus casts serious doubt on theories based on the consensual appeal of particular intuitions.

An objection this idea is that moral axioms already accepted, by utilitarians for instance, are sufficiently basic and unshakeable as to undermine any conflicting considered moral judgements we may encounter. However, even within utilitarian theory, the idea that moral axioms are inevitably compatible with one another has been challenged by Arrhenius, who argues that one or more axioms of population ethics must be discarded.^[4] It is at least possible that concepts or axioms derived from non-western theories could assist with some of these deep problems and incompatibilities in Western theories. Perhaps more significantly, this objection assumes that African concepts will not include self-evident moral beliefs, or axioms that can complement, enrich, or conflict with other axioms. Without further argument, this seems unjustifiably closed-minded.

The second problem is that African concepts and theories may better match consensus-attracting intuitions. Metz, for instance argues that Confucian and African concepts of harmony can be developed into a moral theory that, on the face of it, better matches considered moral convictions and intuitions.^[1] The theory that results may also avoid the counter-intuitive elements of western moral accounts such as principlism, deontology, utilitarianism, capability theory, and care theory. While I do not here endorse Metz's broader claim, the general point is significant: a greater emphasis on non-Western concepts may contribute to the development of theories that better match considered moral judgements.

A potential response to this suggestion is that we already have theories that perfectly match moral intuitions. This seems highly dubious, both because most theories appear to have highly counter-intuitive consequences (such as, arguably, being unable to lie to a murderer in the case of Kantian deontology, or justifying killing patients so that their organs may save more lives, in the case of

⁴ I am not suggesting that this is the most defensible root to moral truths. However, it should be noted that most ethical theorising involves some reliance on intuitive judgements. This intuitionist method thus serves at least as a useful example of how the absence of competing moral concepts is problematic.

consequentialist ethics) and because there is dissensus about which considered moral judgements are decisive.

There is also a deeper problem that I will not explore in detail here, which is that intuition-based justification may itself have competitors yet to be acknowledged. The general reliance on intuitions in western theory has many internal detractors, but it may be the best option available to western theorists. However, the fact that westerners have not encountered a better option does not mean that a better option does not exist. One intriguing possibility, then, is that exploration of non-western moral concepts may improve moral theory by providing a better way to distinguish moral truth from falsehood.

There are thus serious epistemological shortfalls stemming from the emphasis on western theories and concepts in ethics: Western theories may not cohere with considered African intuitions, theories derived from African moral beliefs may better match western and global intuitions, and non-Western theories might contribute competitors to western methods of moral justification. These possibilities should at least reduce any confidence about the truth value of western theories. A systematic exploration of African concepts may contribute a solution to these problems by increasing the sample for potentially justified moral concepts and truth-seeking methodologies that can be applied by ethicists. Unless this larger sample of moral ideas and intuitions is investigated, western normative ethicists have good reason to question the reliability of their accounts.

Ethical arguments for exploring diverse ethics

This section advances three ethical arguments for deeper engagement with African moral ideas. First, I apply and extend Mill's argument for freedom of expression to the positive claim that we ought to actively seek alternative ideas. Second, I employ the idea of epistemic injustice and suggest that overemphasis on Western thinking is an instance thereof that requires redress. Third, I indicate how epistemic injustice has contributed to alienation on the part of black scholars and students and argue that an increased knowledge of and emphasis on non-western values might be in keeping with the transformative ends of social institutions.

Mill and the marketplace of ideas

In this section, I argue that Mill's claim that it is wrong to suppress ideas can be extended into a positive argument that we should actively promote the discovery of novel ideas in ethical theory. In defending freedom of thought and expression, Mill argues that

the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.

This passage provides two instrumental arguments for freedom of expression. The first is that, in the event that a suppressed value is true, the human race is harmed by the loss of that suppressed truth.

The second is that, even in the event that a suppressed opinion is false, the human race is harmed by a missed opportunity to improve its understanding of the truth.

These arguments can be extended and applied to the current context. I extend them, in the sense that I claim that what is an argument for a negative duty not to suppress contrary opinions should be translated to a positive *pro tanto* duty to seek and encourage contrary opinions. If the suppression of such ideas can harm the human race, then the human race can equally be harmed by failing to bring such opinions to light through neglect or negligence. Thus we ought to actively seek out novel perspectives.

When the strengthened claim is applied to the current context, it implies that there is a positive moral duty to seek and encourage moral opinions that differ from dominant ethical theories. This duty provides an ethical reason in support of investigating African moral systems. If ethicists do not do so, they may miss on important moral truths out through negligence. They may also surrender important opportunities to hone and clarify truths contained in dominant theories and thereby contribute to moral progress.

African moral theory and epistemic injustice

Miranda Fricker, in the context of feminist theory, popularised the notion of epistemic injustice. Below, I expand on Fricker's idea and show that the underrepresentation of African moral concepts is representative of two types of epistemic injustice. Thereafter, I discuss remedial actions proposed by Fricker and Elizabeth Anderson. I claim that these remedies can be translated to the current context and provide an additional moral basis for developing knowledge of African moralities. In the following subsection I argue that Anderson's remedies in particular require reforming the ethical basis upon which institutions are built and apply this finding to higher education.

Epistemic injustice focuses on prejudices and challenges related to knowing and expressing truths in contexts of oppression. For Fricker, epistemic injustice comes in two forms. Testimonial injustice occurs when testimony is not accorded the credibility it deserves due to a prejudiced audience. For example, a person's testimony about a sporting event might be disbelieved or downplayed because prejudices about a particular gender. Hermeneutic injustice occurs when prejudiced linguistic or structural arrangements make it more difficult or impossible for individuals or groups to express their social experiences or beliefs. Fricker gives the example that, until relatively recently, experiences of sexual harassment and the wrongness thereof were difficult to express, since there did not exist a socially recognised concept of harassment.

Unsurprisingly, both types of injustice are evident in the context of African moral concepts. The ethnophilosopher Barry Hallen, who provides one of the first systematic discussions of Yoruba moral beliefs and epistemology, provides an example that encapsulates both kinds of epistemic injustice:

The sad fact of the matter seems to be that there was little interest in attempting to specify the criteria governing the application of epistemological vocabulary in African languages because of a presumption that sub-Saharan thought generally rated so low on the scale of universal rationality –

was so lamentably unsystematic – that any such study would not be worth the effort (Hallen 2000, 14).

This is a clear example of testimonial injustice, since the credibility of the speakers' moral ideas is downplayed due to a prejudiced audience. A prejudicial belief that African morality was at a primitive stage contributed to a lack of attention in understanding and translating concepts that, Hallen argues after a more careful consideration, provide novel insights on both moral epistemology and normative ethics. The above quote also exemplifies hermeneutic injustice: the moral concepts, ideas, and lived social experiences of sub-Saharan people find difficulty in expression, since they are viewed through the distorted lens of western, English-speaking interpretations.⁵

The under-representation of African ideas in philosophical ethics is thus a clear instance of epistemic injustice that requires correction. Fricker argues that one response to this injustice is that hearers should develop the virtue of testimonial justice, which requires maintaining an awareness of contexts of oppression and correcting for embedded social prejudices. A person who possesses this virtue will critically reflect on individual and social prejudices and discount initial judgements of credibility to counteract any potential prejudices. Applied to the current context, the virtue of testimonial justice appears to require an engagement with African moral beliefs, again providing ethical motivation for investigating African moral concepts.

Transformation and alienation

In a South African context, the most significant rationale for exploring African moralities is the need for national and institutional 'transformation.' In recent times, this need has been vociferously and effectively expressed in the '#RhodesMustFall' and '#FeesMustFall' movements. While the latter movement has nominally focussed on economic injustices and achieving affordable higher education for all, both campaigns reflect a wider sense of alienation and frustration on the part of black staff and students at academic institutions. Below I claim that an exploration of African morality can assist in the project of informing transformation at the fundamental level of ethics.

Alienation has many sources. One source of this type of alienation involves the white 'texts' with which black people are confronted every day. Buildings in European architectural styles are named after white people. The languages of instruction are European. Professors, lecturers and people in positions of power tend to be white people. Lack of representation in these areas is commonly acknowledged, and institutions are involved in a difficult ongoing struggle to increase the representation of black people. However, one seldom acknowledged strand of text in this alienating palimpsest of whiteness concerns fundamental ethical values. As it stands, the ethical values which define the goals of transformation are not, or are not clearly, African values. This is evident in the Constitution, for instance, which contains no

⁵ In this case marginalised groups may be able to develop and express moral ideas within their communities, but the more advantaged are unable to understand them. This is thus an amendment to Fricker's account (Anderson 2012, 170)

reference to the sub-Saharan principle of ubuntu, but many references to values with a western pedigree, such as freedom, equality, justice, and dignity.⁶

Transformation is directed to the achievement of these latter ends. However, it is not clear the extent to which these values are representative of African values.⁷ There appears to be little reference to or explication of distinctively African moral concepts in documents that define what it is for a nation or institution to be 'transformed.' The starting point for transformation to a more representative society is, itself, unrepresentative of Africans.

None of this is intended to cast doubt on the place of values like dignity and justice in South African society, nor to claim western ownership of them. The point is not that these values are flawed, or un-African. (A good case can be made that they are objective values that any society ought to accept.) However, these values do not exhaust the range of fundamental moral concepts, and it is likely that they will conflict with values and principles that have an African pedigree, in much the same way that values like freedom and equality can conflict with one another.

Investigating African moral concepts allows for moral ideas that have typically received attention in western ethics to be scrutinised and reinterpreted. African concepts, in combination with reworked Western concepts, can contribute to the transformation of the ethical underpinnings that guide transformative processes in South Africa. The possibility of combating alienation through transformation at the fundamental level of values provides an additional ethical incentive for bringing African moral concepts into the academic and social spotlight.

Thus far I have argued that there are strong epistemological and ethical grounds for projects that investigate African moral concepts. Indeed, I have suggested that there is a prima facie duty to do so, in order to avoid the ignorance of potential moral truths and negligent slowing of moral progress. Moreover, there are reasons to think a virtuous agent should embrace such a project as a corrective to epistemic injustice. Finally, projects aimed at uncovering and bringing to bear African values are morally significant in that they contribute to African ownership of the values that define institutions. Given the ethical and epistemological reasons for investigating and developing African ethical theories, I make some methodological suggestions for doing so.

3. Methods for exploring diverse ethics

My concern in this section not to critique or exclude existing methodologies, nor to argue decisively for the usefulness of particular methodologies. Instead, the aim is to briefly sketch potential some potential directions for exploring African moral diversity. These suggestions have separate emphases. The first set of suggestions is concern descriptive methods. I indicate ways to map the domain of African moral ideas. The second set of suggestions concerns normative and analytical methods to gauge the implications of African moralities for how we ought to act or to be.

⁶ Interestingly, Ubuntu was mentioned in an epilogue of interim constitution (Constitution of RSA Act 200 after 251).

⁷ This is not to presuppose any resolution of such conflicts.

Descriptive suggestions

Descriptive projects aim to develop and employ empirical methods to understand and bring to the fore African moral concepts. As mentioned earlier, I prefer to leave open what is meant by a moral concept. However, I envisage that moral concepts might include:

- Well-developed theories
- Evidence of tacit theories
- Novel 'moral foundations' (in a sense to be expanded upon in a moment)
- Ethical intuitions / responses to cases
- Axiomatic ethical beliefs
- Values (e.g. moral-aesthetic)
- Emphasis on/ rankings of values e.g. community
- Principles, maxims, rules
- Ideas of the good life, or how one ought to live
- Sources of moral motivation
- Moral behaviours or customs

How is it possible to describe and map these concepts? While the existing and potential methods for doing so are themselves diverse, here I suggest the application Moral Foundations Theory can play at least a limited role in such a description.

Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) attempts to explain and map human moral reasoning on the basis of a limited number of basic elements, or foundations. Jonathan Haidt and Jesse Graham, the architects of MFT, initially put forward five moral foundations: Harm, Fairness, Loyalty, Authority, and Purity. This number has since been expanded to six with the addition of a Liberty foundation. MF theorists accept that additional foundations are likely to be discovered with further empirical research, particularly in non-Western cultures.

MFT holds that argue that human moral disagreements stem from different emphases on particular foundations. Famously, Haidt et al provide empirical evidence that disagreements between liberals and conservatives are related to a conservative preference for loyalty, authority, and purity foundations, while Liberals emphasise the Harm and Fairness foundations.

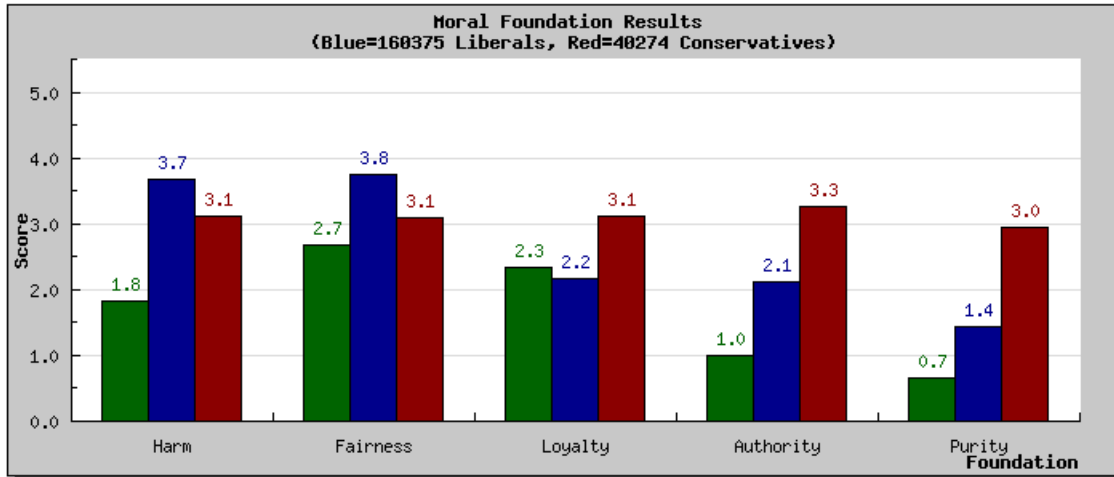


Figure 1: Results of the Moral Foundations Test (My results in Green; Liberals in Blue; Conservatives in Red)

There are a number of reasons MFT should be considered an attractive method for mapping and describing African moral ideas. First, it is flexible. As mentioned, there is no suggestion that the set of foundations is complete or final. On the contrary, MF theorists regard it as likely that additional Foundations will be discovered with more empirical work. A further attraction is that limited studies have been performed applying MFT in an African context. The vast preponderance of MFT research is in a western context or through internet surveys. Finally, the MFT project is largely open source. MF theorists have made available numerous qualitative and quantitative resources that can assist in both the discovery and testing of moral foundations.

There are of course also numerous limitations to MFT as an approach to investigating African moralities. One major limitation is that MFT provides no obvious means for reaching normative conclusions, which is one of the desired outputs. Knowing that a disagreement comes about because of an emphasis on a particular foundation does not, on the face of it, provide a way to resolve that disagreement. It is, however, too much to ask for a descriptive theory to provide a normative method. Some suggestions for doing so are discussed in the next section.

A further limitation is that the MFT appears to be extremely coarse-grained, and will almost certainly miss out many moral concepts, beliefs and practices that may be of value. Note, however, that the proposal here is not that MFT should be pursued in isolation. Rather, it may be useful as an initial map of theories. As Christian Gade points out

The task of drawing such a map may, in some but not all dimensions, be compared to the task of an explorer who wants to make a map of a geographical area that is only familiar to other travelers in parts, and that has never been mapped out in its entirety before. The first map that is created of such an area might lack detail, and the map is likely to be improved by others later on.^[6]

MFT might assist in drawing this coarse-grained map, which can be complemented by other descriptive methodologies, such as ethnophilosophy, experimental philosophy, and anthropology.

Towards normative African ethics

The descriptive project above, comprising MFT and other descriptive methodologies is an important step to undermining the obstacles to epistemological and ethical goals discussed in Parts One and Two. This increased knowledge of African moral concepts improves the sample of moral viewpoints and concepts, meaning that the set of ideas upon which moral theories are formed is likely to be more complete. Nonetheless, a significant further step is required – that of honing the ideas and determining the moral concepts that *ought* to be employed. This section discusses potential methods for doing so.

One goal of moral epistemology is to provide a means for justifying moral beliefs and deciding between moral theories. Earlier I discussed the idea that intuitions about particular cases can guide theory choice. If a theory better coheres with intuitions than other theories, that theory should be preferred. Metz, for example, holds that his African-derived deontological principle better accounts for key intuitions, particularly intuitions concerning preferential treatment of those with whom we are already in communal relationships.

Additional methods include demonstrating coherence with foundational moral axioms, or morally basic intuitions.⁸ The moral foundations discussed above appear to be good candidates for such basic moral beliefs. As mentioned, though, while MFT may provide a description of moral beliefs, values, and foundations that are involved in moral judgements, this does not provide a method for reaching moral judgements when foundations are in conflict. Suppose, for instance, that one person, emphasising the *sanctity* foundation, believes it is wrong to have intercourse with a dead chicken, while another believes that there is no wrongness involved, since there is no *harm* caused. Which moral foundations should hold sway?

One prospective means for adjudicating questions such as this is to debunk particular foundations or foundational intuitions. Debunking involves demonstrating that the intuition has a cause that is likely to be distorting, or is unlikely to lead to moral truth. If, for instance, it could be demonstrated that the emphasis on purity is historically caused by power hungry religious leaders wishing to assert control over the sexual activities of practitioners, this would go some way towards debunking the purity foundation. Similarly, if a moral foundation can be shown to be explained by a prevalent cognitive error that inhibits reasoning, this casts doubt on the normative status of the foundation.

While a map of African moral beliefs is valuable, it does not, in itself provide a means for adjudicating disagreements or resolving conflicts between African beliefs, or between African beliefs and Western ones. Above I have suggested a few ways in which existing methods of moral justification might assist in achieving this goal.

Conclusion

⁸ As mentioned earlier, the descriptive project may result in novel ways of discerning moral truth from moral falsehood. Such a finding is unlikely to stem from MFT, which examines the basis of moral belief and not their justification. As a result discovering candidates for methods of moral justification requires other descriptive methodologies. Candidates for alternate modes of justification might be found in sub-Saharan modes of ethical argument and decision-making, such as story-telling and indaba.

In Part One, I argued that the lack of emphasis on African theory means that western philosophical ethics has serious shortcomings that should lead us to doubt ethicists claims to moral truth.

In Part Two, I provided three ethical arguments for greater emphasis on African moral ideas. First, to fail to take into account potentially true African moral perspectives is to risk negligently slowing moral progress. Second, such neglect perpetuates epistemic injustice and fails to demonstrate epistemic virtue. Third, discovering and developing African moral ideas may contribute to transformative efforts by providing means to challenge, improve, or replace western values upon which many institutions are based. These arguments strengthen the rationale for investigations of African moral concepts.

In Part Three, I sketched some methodological approaches such investigations might employ. In particular, I suggested that MFT provides an attractive basis for a coarse-grained mapping of African morality, while also acknowledging that such methods require supplementation by other descriptive empirical methodologies. Thereafter, I pointed to ways in which theories of moral justification might be brought to bear upon novel African moral concepts.

My hope is that these and other methods contribute to the discovery and development of novel African moral concepts, and thereby rectify some epistemological and ethical shortcomings of western moral theorising.

References

1. Metz T. Harmonizing Global Ethics in the Future: a Proposal to Add South and East to West. *J Glob Ethics* 2014;10(2):146–55.
2. Gurdasani D, Carstensen T, Tekola-Ayele F, Pagani L, Tachmazidou I, Hatzikotoulas K, et al. The African Genome Variation Project shapes medical genetics in Africa. *Nature* 2015;517(7534):327–32.
3. Long JC, Li J, Healy ME. Human DNA sequences: More variation and less race. *Am J Phys Anthropol* 2009;139(1):23–34.
4. Arrhenius G. An Impossibility Theorem for Welfarist Axiologies. *Econ Philos* 2000;16(2):247–66.
5. Anderson E. Epistemic Justice as a Virtue of Social Institutions. *Soc Epistemol* 2012;26(2):163–73.
6. Gade CBN. What is Ubuntu? Different Interpretations among South Africans of African Descent. *South African J Philos* 2012;31(3):484–503.