Special Section: International Voices

From the Editors

Although keeping up with developments in any field is a challenge, because of bioethics' interdisciplinary nature and growing international community, it is especially important to keep the larger landscape in view, beyond one's own specialty and nationality.

CQ's annual "International Voices" Special Section does not presume there is, or should be, a "one-size-fits-all" global bioethics in the sense of a homogenized formula for deciding dilemmas. Instead, global bioethics should consist of an international sharing of approaches and experiences. As the reports below illustrate, we can, and must, learn from each other.

Farhat Moazam and Aamir M. Jafarey give an account of the current state of bioethics in Pakistan, including a historical overview of the field, developments in research and clinical ethics, the constitution of a National Bioethics Committee, and the recent development of the Center of Biomedical Ethics and Culture in Karachi.

Sirkku Hellsten's report from Tanzania focuses on the complexities involved when applying universal ethical standards of medical practice and research in a developing country in social transition, as well as in poor countries in general. She discusses the HIV/AIDS epidemic as a clear illustration of the need for establishing a closer alliance among international bioethics guidelines, national laws, and social norms to avoid the current disparity and contradictions.

Peter Herissone-Kelly reports on the first license to clone a human embryo recently granted in the United Kingdom and the moves to take what had been an academic debate to the public primarily through two events: the publication of John Harris' book *On Cloning*, and the subsequent airing of a BBC television drama-documentary, *If Cloning Could Cure Us*, addressing the science of cloning, its risks, and the ethical issues it raises. Herissone-Kelly examines some of the conflicting philosophical, theological, and social arguments raised in the debate following the program.

Akira Akabayashi, Brian Slingsby, and Yoshiyuki Takimoto provide some of the history and recent events that have brought conflict-of-interest issues in medical practice and research to the forefront of Japanese bioethics discussions. Although recognizing that conflicts of interest are universal temptations for physicians and researchers, the authors point to Japan's traditional reliance on fiduciary relationships to suggest the need for guidelines that are specific as to culture, society, and healthcare system.

Veronique Fournier reports on the establishment of the Center for Clinical Ethics in Paris, marking a new development in bringing clinical ethics to Europe.

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The author also describes France's unique historical, political, and cultural heritage that informs and influences the evolving parameters of doctor–patient relationships and methods of ethical decisionmaking.

Alister Browne and Bill Sullivan explain how Canada became one of the few countries in the world to decriminalize abortion. They offer an ethical reflection on that position and point to the fact that in postdecriminalization Canada obstacles still exist, and the new frontier in abortion debates centers on nonlegal issues such as access.

Recent changes in the Netherlands regarding attempts to address the rising cost of healthcare and end-of-life care in several high profile cases are the subject of Gerrit Kimsma and Evert van Leeuwen's paper. Developments in healthcare in some nations seem to be shifting away from traditional welfare systems based on social cohesion and toward marketplace concerns, and end-of-life care debates about what constitutes "suffering" are moving beyond physical considerations alone. The question is whether these shifts are steps forward or backward.

Viewing familiar issues through the prism of other countries and cultures reminds us that bioethics is rich because it includes a diversity of voices, methods, and approaches. As a discipline, our greatest advances will come only when we learn to recognize and appreciate that it is the larger shape of bioethics around the world that is determining the future of our field.

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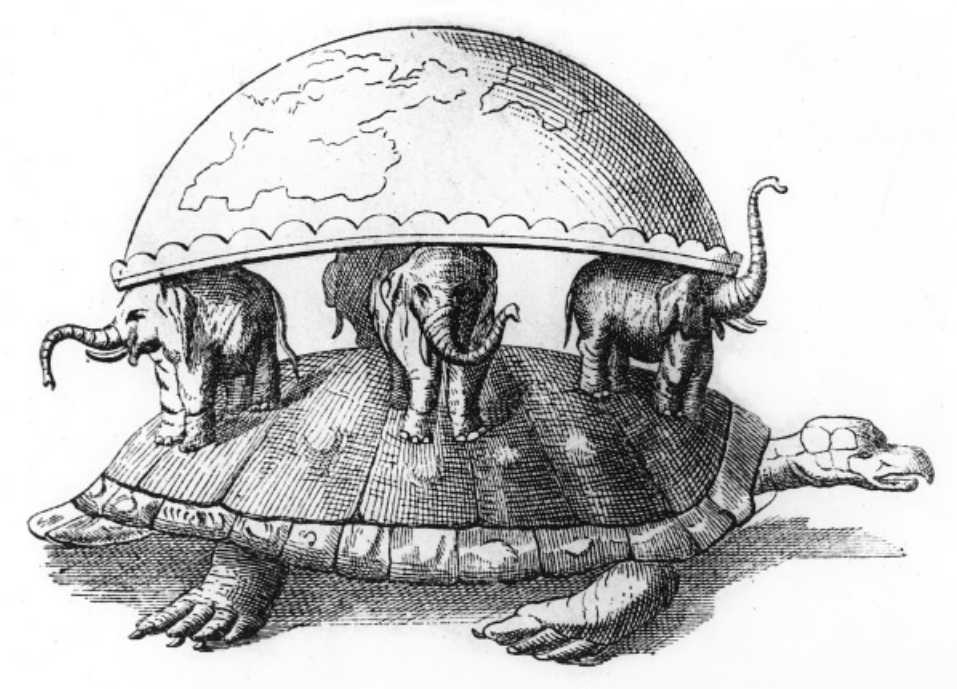


Illustration of the support of the Earth according to the ideas of Hindu priests. Photo credit: Foto Marburg/Art Resources, New York. Reproduced by permission.

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