

ACOMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF MEDICAL ETHICS IN SECULAR AND ISLAMIC THOUGHT

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Abstract: The principles of medical ethics, common as they are in the world at the present time, have been formed in the context of Western secular communities; consequently, secular principles and values are inevitably manifested in all corners of medical ethics. Medical ethics is at its infancy in Iran. In order to incorporate medical ethics into the country's health system, either the same thoughts, principles, rules, and codes of Western communities should be translated and taught across the country, or else, if the principles and values and consequently the prominent moral rules and codes of Western medical ethics are not consistent with the culture, customs, and religion of our country, then new principles and values should be formulated that are more in harmony with our society. According to the available literature in Iran, the four principles proposed by Beauchamp and Childress do not contradict the Islamic-Iranian culture and can thus be generally applied in the mentioned context. However, the application of these four principles and their derivatives (e.g. regulations and codes) requires careful examination and adaptation to Islamic ethics. A comparison of the ontological, anthropological and epistemological foundations of secular and Islamic attitudes shows the differences between these two attitudes to be deep-rooted. "Rationalism," "scientism," and "humanism" are the main foundations of secularism, whereas "God centrism," "pure human servitude to God," the belief in "returning of humans to God," "resurrection day," and also human's accountability to God are all fundamental beliefs and principles of religion for Muslims of all cults and sects. It can thus be concluded that the principles of secularist thought are different from and to some extent inconsistent with the principles of Islam. Instructions derived from secular thought can therefore not be implemented in an Islamic community; rather, these communities should adopt Islamic foundations as the source for the norms and standards of their medical ethics. The capacities of religious thought (in particular, Islam) make possible the formation of an ethical system consistent with Islamic Ummah.

Key Words: Medical Ethics, Secular Thought, Religious Thought, Foundations, Muslim Communities, Islamic Thought