BOOK REVIEWS

International Management Ethics: A Critical, Cross-Cultural Perspective, by Terence Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). ISBN: 9780521618656

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International Management Ethics: A Critical, Cross-Cultural Perspective challenges us to think differently about international and cross-cultural management (ICCM) research, and its general "insistence on difference" (Narayan, 1998) by trying to establish theory that focuses on cross-cultural interactions. This brings us to the core of Jackson's book: "what do we make of ethical standards that are different to our own, and how do we understand them? And, armed with this knowledge, how do we understand how to manage cross-culturally across different ethical systems?" (4). By applying ICCM theory and making it relevant to international management ethics, this book asks how we can understand management ethics internationally from a cross-cultural perspective that assumes that we can learn from others with different cultural spaces.

The starting point for Jackson's book is his observation that current ICCM theory has insufficiently and inadequately addressed the issue of ethics, which is contained in cross-cultural interactions. At the same time, he argues, ICCM has neglected the geopolitical power dynamics that frame and shape these cross-cultural interactions. As a mainly descriptive/ predictive science, he maintains, ICCM has focused primarily on comparing and contrasting similarities and differences across cultures. While current ICCM and international management ethics has become quite good at explaining *how* things are, it seldom reflects on asking *why*, for instance, the inequalities implied by measures of power distance (Hofstede, 2001), are socially accepted and regarded as ethical in one culture but not another. Jackson attributes this focus on '*what is*' to the positivistic paradigm informing much of current ICCM research. Whereas this might be a good starting point for international managers, in the sense that it gives them (basic) insights into what makes us similar and different, it does not tell those managers what to do when interacting with people from a different cultural background. The latter brings us into the realm of ethics or what those managers '*ought to do*.' In order to start formulating such a theory that does tell managers what to do, Jackson agues, a radical shift is needed about how culture is conceptualised.

Part I of the book lays down the foundations to do so by focusing on the current state-of-the-art in ICCM and international management ethics theory with a view to pushing its boundaries. Central to this endeavour is trying to understand *why* things are different and what can we learn from these differences. "Why does ethicality, or the meaning of what is ethical or not, differ among countries and regions?" (11). *Why* is it considered bribery if I offer you a gift in, for example, the US, while the same gesture may be seen as an important and integral part of building business relations in other parts of the world? Jackson argues that theories à la Hofstede (2001), with their focus on bipolar value dimensions fail to answer this important question as they tend to remain at the descriptive level by using cultural values as explanatory variables for, for instance, the high incidence corruption in a certain country. While this 'sophisticated stereotyping' (Osland & Bird, 2000) is helpful to a certain degree, it does not explain what we can learn from each other. By referring to interactions (or interfaces) of culture and institutions at macro, meso and micro levels, and considering the importance of power dynamics framing and shaping these interactions, Jackson argues, we may come to a better understanding of why ethicality differs across cultures. In order to theorise the ways in which cultures and ethical values systems may interact, Jackson suggests an eclectic approach drawing on structural-functionalism (systems theory or institutional theory), phenomenology (or cultural theory) and behaviourism. Focussing on the macro (e.g., the [inter]national level), the meso (e.g., the organisational level) and the micro (e.g., individual level) levels of interaction, this eclectic approach offers a view on the context (structures and networks of rules), the content (people's perceptions) and conduct (people's observable behaviours and social interactions) involved in cross-cultural encounters. At the confluence of context, content and conduct (at the macro, meso and micro levels) these encounters at the cross-cultural interface and the power dynamics framing and shaping these encounters form the centre piece of Jackson's theory explaining why ethicality across cultures differs.

Part II aims to illustrate what we can learn from other cultures and ethical value systems by looking at what the US, Europe, Asia (China and India), and sub-Saharan Africa may have to offer. Drawing on Flyvbjerg (2001), he argues, that social sciences cannot take a position from nowhere, as much of current ICCM theory has done in the past. Social scientists are not neutral observers of a reality that is unfolding before them. They observe, analyse and interpret this reality based on a view from somewhere. Therefore, a first step in achieving a better cross-cultural understanding is making the invisible visible. Taking his cue from the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Jackson analyses the so-called universality of these rights and America's dominant position in the way management ethics is seen internationally. Drawing on postcolonial theory and Bhabha's (1984, 1994) notions of mimicry, hybridity and Third Space, he illustrates how geopolitical power dynamics (and resistance against it) are at play. In this way he elucidates the "apparent 'invisibility' of the white normative culture that underlies [American] value structures and ethical attitudes" (125).

The concept of social Europe, with discourse ethics as its corollary may provide a way forward by teaching us the importance of 'good conversation' (Bird, 1996,

as cited in Jackson, 2011) as a process of negotiation across cultures that is rooted in the idea of fair dialogues. Hence, Jackson argues, that "discovering one's own cultural space, in negotiation with discovering others' cultural spaces, could be a way forward" (272–73) to developing a deeper understanding of the different ethical systems international managers may be confronted with.

While the notion of social partnering is an important concept of a social Europe, the contribution of Islam to the discourse on management ethics may lie in its emphasis on stakeholders. Islam provides the basis for an ethical system, with specific principles, many of which are also applied in business and management. While the notion of *wasta* (nepotism) and gender relations might be ethically difficult for western managers, Islam has much to say about relations between people (especially in the way it puts a stakeholder perspective forward), and between people and their natural environment (the notion of people as trustees of the earth). This transpires in the concept of *'adl* (or equity, balance) as Muslims are asked to behave justly to all and do things in a balanced matter.

Turning to sub-Saharan Africa, the humanistic 'locus of human value' (Jackson, 2002), which emphasises the intrinsic value of people in their own right (as opposed to an instrumentalist approach that views people as means to certain ends), reflects a more social concept of entrepreneurship (as embodied in the Xhosa term *Ubuntu*, which means a person is a person through others).

Similarly, the notion of *guanxi* (personalised networks of reciprocal obligations) in China or the Vedic concept of *purusharta* (things sought by human beings) offer a concept of striving, or finding or following a path, in which the idea of the virtuous person or the virtuous firm takes a central place. While it may remain uncertain if the international manager may ever reach this ideal, this notion may provide a path for working towards this ideal.

As Jackson points out, ethical decision-making is "all about making sense of ambiguity, by trying to understand what has led to where we are; then taking risks, making a leap in the dark almost, by taking some kind of action based on what has worked in the past, and your estimation of what the results of your action will be" (269). The above theoretical framework offers an avenue to start dealing with this ambiguity. Taking this forward with regard to management education and training, the question is: what can we learn from others? The first job of the international manager is understanding the cultural context in which she works. This necessitates making the invisible visible and being critical about own assumptions about what is good or wrong in understanding what we can learn from others and how to manage cultural differences that may arise. Here Jackson misses an opportunity, I believe, to engage with the notion of cultural intelligence (CQ) (see, e.g., Earley & Ang, 2003; Thomas et al., 2008). CQ refers to "an individual's capability to function effectively in situations characterised by cultural diversity" (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008: xv) and includes meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural dimensions. As such, by combining a focus on both mental capabilities and behavioural capabilities it relates to dealing with the ambiguity, which is inherent to ethical decision making and effectively and appropriately managing across different ethical value systems. While CQ is not without its critics (e.g., Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars,

2006), by engaging with the notion of CQ, Jackson might have rendered the abstract thinking exposed in his book a bit more concrete. This, in turn, might represent a significant break from conventional approaches of focusing on comparing and contrasting cultural values in intercultural training and management education (see also Earley & Peterson, 2004).

Apart from this remark, I think *International Management Ethics: A Critical, Cross-Cultural Perspective* offers an engaging approach and new direction in theorising ICCM as encounters at the interface of cultural spaces. And, as Jackson, points out, rather than following the social and behavioural sciences "it may be time for cross-cultural scholars to take a lead in developing new theory and concepts for understanding management ethics within this emerging dynamic" (276) and developing novel approaches to the much needed courses in international management ethics education and training.

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