

## **Connecting the East and the West, the Local and the Universal: The Methodological Elements of a Transcultural Approach to Bioethics**

Jing-Bao Nie, Ruth P. Fitzgerald

Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal, Volume 26, Number 3, September 2016, pp. 219-247

**ABSTRACT.** From the outset, cross-cultural and transglobal bioethics has constituted a potent arena for a dynamic public discourse and academic debate alike. But prominent bioethical debates on such issues as the notion of common morality and a distinctive “Asian” bioethics in contrast to a “Western” one reveal some deeply rooted and still popular but seriously problematic methodological habits in approaching cultural differences, most notably, radically dichotomizing the East and the West, the local and the universal. In this paper, a “transcultural” approach to bioethics and cultural studies is proposed. It takes seriously the challenges offered by social sciences, anthropology in particular, towards the development of new methodologies for comparative and global bioethics. The key methodological elements of “transculturalism” include acknowledging the great internal plurality within every culture; highlighting the complexity of cultural differences; upholding the primacy of morality; incorporating a reflexive theory of social power; and promoting changes or progress towards shared and sometimes new moral values.