



## Srikant Sarangi

### **Situated communication ethics and the epistemology of professional practice**

Contemporary professional practice, in the healthcare domain for example, is embedded in scientific expert knowledge but is also routinely mediated by four major interlocking and competing trends – bureaucratisation, marketisation, technologisation and humanisation. As far as everyday healthcare practice is concerned, it then becomes untenable to confront situations and cases characterised by uniqueness and uncertainty through an over-dependence on scientific expert knowledge which is rooted in positivist technical rationality. Within the general ethos of post-normal science marked by a reversal of status of ‘scientific facts’ and ‘moral values’, the recent calls for (re)humanising healthcare accentuate the relational, reflective, communicative dimensions of client-professional encounters. In outlining a proposal for ‘communication ethics’, my point of departure is ‘situated ethics’ in juxtaposition to ‘principles-based ethics’ as a way of dealing with the contingent, complex healthcare communicative environments involving providers, clients, carers etc. The proposal for ‘situated communication ethics’ needs to pay particular attention to the topography of discourse types vis-à-vis participation structure and role-sets, while acknowledging the unintended consequences of communicative acts/actions. I illustrate my argument with exemplars of neutrality in mediation, client-centredness in psychotherapy and non-directiveness in genetic counselling.