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Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics

AUSTRALIAN ETHICS

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the 2025 Summer Edition of *Australian Ethics*!

This edition is jam packed with evocative ethical reflections and intriguing explorations, with many contributions centring on themes of interconnectedness, and evolution and growth in ethical thinking, both at an individual and societal level.

Howard Tankey starts things off by putting forward an illuminating contrast between Western ethics and attitudes and Indigenous ones, across a range of dimensions including reward systems, needs and wants, and relationships with the environment, concluding that assimilation should occur in the reverse direction to the one so often assumed.

In her piece, Di Dibley continues themes developed by Tankey, including of Indigenous wisdom, in describing her own journey to Earth Ethics and the significance of environmental ethics and Cultural Landscapes, and the ensuing need for an Earth Ethic.

James Page opens for consideration the intriguing question of whether pacifists should play chess—a game that, as he shrewdly observes, models deadly conflict, but nevertheless occurs between consenting and cooperating players.

Finally, Theodora Issa offers some reflections on the 110th anniversary of the Syriac-Aramaic Christians 1915 Genocide, considering whether a change in Ethical Mindsets could have delivered a different outcome.

Moving forward for the year, the 2026 AAPAE Tertiary Ethics Olympiad will be held over Zoom on October 8. The 2025 event was excellent, with undergraduate teams from around Australia exploring a wide range of ethical controversies including aggressive orcas, butterfly bombs, AI romantic partners, and more! As always, points were allocated not just for clear analysis and intelligent argumentation, but also for close engagement with others' ideas and respectful dialogue—leading to a consistently high-standard level of ethical deliberation. If any AAPAE members associated with tertiary education want more information, or are thinking about getting involved (perhaps in the exciting role as coach for a university team), feel free to email me at h.breakey@griffith.edu.au.

All the very best for the year ahead.

Hugh Breakey

AN ARGUMENT FOR ASSIMILATION

Howard Tankey

Assimilation is a dirty word for many First Nations people. They are very conscious of their culture and past interactions that have seen people from another land come and initially force them, often by massacres, from their country, their spiritual home, the place they strongly identify with. That was followed by separation from their parents and families, one of the greatest injustices humans can do to each other. At the same time, they were being told that their culture was irrelevant in the modern world, and many had their strongest connection to culture, their language, literally belted from them when they regularly received a cuff over the ear for practicing culture or speaking their mother language.

Over the last 30 years the reconciliation movement has raised awareness of some of these injustices across the wider community and many people enjoy experiencing aspects of Aboriginal culture through art, music, dance and travel to remote parts of Australia.

However, many First Nations people refuse to contemplate assimilation because they can't see how Western, capitalistic ideas can help us meet two of the main challenges facing humankind.

Our relationships with each other have led to great inequality in the way wealth and opportunity are distributed.

And the way in which modern Western industrial societies relate and interact with the natural world has led to great damage to the biosphere and existential threats to both humans and many plants and animals. We are in the process of mass destruction of the biosphere, that part of the planet that supports all living things.

Embedded within and outcomes resulting from these relationships are two immediate existential threats, climate change and nuclear war.

To help us put our heads in a better place for thinking about how humans should be behaving in the future, I would like to examine just six aspects of human existence. And create a spectrum for each where modern Western capitalist ideas are at one end of the spectrum and First Nations 'philosophy' is at the other. **Refer Figure 1 (sections A, B, C, D, E and F).**

I will occasionally introduce a personal anecdote, which does not prove the ideas I am putting, but rather to simply illustrate the concept more strongly. It is accepted that these are big picture concepts and there are literally millions of people who do not fit on the spectra for both Western or Aboriginal cultural norms at either end of the spectra.

I am confident I have not misrepresented these big cultural ideas. However, I am aware that many modern First Nations people do not live closely to their culture, but this is not surprising because their values and beliefs have been distorted or broken by capitalist concepts, including materialism, education, law and welfare.

Firstly, let's look at how we see being on this planet, how we see ourselves living with and relating to others, a major factor in the way we behave and justify our actions. **See Figure 1. Section A.**

Western culture places a strong emphasis on the individual. Individual rights and freedoms. The right to compete in the modern world for the best outcomes for yourself and family. Margaret Thatcher once famously said 'there was no such thing as society'. Maybe social scientists will debate this idea, but if she was right, I am not sure how to classify the behaviour of Doris from Yuendumu, a remote Aboriginal town in Walpiri country in the Northern Territory. One day in Savers in Greensborough she walked down the aisles which held children's clothing at a far lower price than what she would have to pay in Yuendumu. She was pulling clothes off their hangers without any apparent consideration for size or colour. When I asked who she was buying them for, she simply said 'someone on community will be able to use them'. Aboriginal people, when they are behaving true to their culture, have a strong sense of community and base their behaviour on what is best for most.

Another spectrum worth considering looks at the ways we believe are the best for tackling a problem, the most effective and efficient way of

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Figure 1.	Section A: How we behave as part of a society
Western capitalist ideas based around individualism	First Nations philosophy in which community is central
Section B: The most efficient, effective, productive way of behaving	
Western capitalist ideas based around competition	First Nations philosophy based around collaboration and co-operation
Section C: Meeting our needs and wants	
Western capitalist ideas based around consumerism	First Nations philosophy in which people take just what they need
Section D: Our reward system	
Western reward system is often irrational and unfair	First Nations share much more equally
Section E: Relationship with the natural world	
Western capitalist ideas based on exploiting the environment for economic gain	First Nations relationship which is spiritual and involves deep knowledge and respect
Section F: How we see the world	
Western thinkers divide and study the world in smaller and smaller sections	First Nations people believe that everything is connected

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doing something. **See Figure 1. Section B.**

Western capitalist thinking in a free market has competition between individuals and organisations as the most effective and efficient dynamic for creating products, providing services and even producing a fair result.

First nations people work more co-operatively and collaboratively when approaching a task that is recognised as needing to be done.

A third spectrum is one covering the idea of needs and wants. **See Figure 1. Section C.**

In the past, the concept of needs was clearly defined. They were essentially water, food, shelter and protection from predators, to survive. This idea has been blurred by the Industrial Revolution, by technological innovation over the past 150 years. We now believe that we all need a car, and TV, and mobile phone, and air-conditioning, for example, to have a satisfying life. Concepts such as advertising, the idea of 'keeping up with the Joneses', the idea that we almost have a social duty to consume to keep the economy growing and providing jobs, are all pressures on people living in the modern material world to consume.

Aboriginal people have a strong belief that you just take what you need to share fairly and maintain the natural world.

The fourth spectrum looks at our reward system. How we are compensated for our labour. **See Figure 1. Section D.**

Our reward system is questionable. If we use the following rational criteria based on the human condition and human needs, we might arrive at a very different result. Take pay scales based on a worker's risk of death or injury at work; sacrifices made to obtain entry qualifications; physical demands of the work; job security; responsibility for others; and of course, the most important criteria, the value of a person's work to society and the impact this work has on the environment. The free market is the most powerful, but irrational and obscenely unfair, determinant on our reward system.

After assessing a person's true worth using rational criteria, it is difficult to argue for rewards greater than twice a nurse's or teacher's salary. The situation is even worse when we contemplate the rationale for profits.

An Aboriginal hunter who kills and brings the kangaroo back to community on his shoulders is the last person to eat from the carcass. Everyone else in community has their

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SHOULD PACIFISTS PLAY CHESS?

James Page

This is a question with a seemingly obvious answer, namely, why not? After all, in chess, no-one is actually killed or injured. Thinking about this question, however, poses some interesting ethical questions. It also introduces some of the complexities of the notions of a culture of peace and a culture of violence, as well as telling us something about the complexity of our own society, and of our attitudes towards peace and violence.

The obvious element of chess that is so easy to overlook is that it is all about simulated violence. It is a board game which simulates a battlefield. The pieces represent elements of an army. And there is a strong argument that the taking of a piece represents the killing of that piece. The aim of chess is to achieve check mate, that is the defeat of the opposing king by manipulating one's chess pieces so that the king has nowhere to move out of check.

Further, chess can be viewed as a balancing act between maintaining initiative, calculated restraint, dominating the board, and maintaining numerical superiority. There are specific strategies whereby a chess player will concentrate upon one aspect of the above, in order to gain an advantage. For instance, a player can sacrifice a major piece, and in so doing place himself or herself at a numerical disadvantage, in the interests of immediate positional and momentum advantage.

These choices are also evident in warfare itself. An actor, usually a military commander or even a nation-state, may prioritize one of the above strategies, for a range of reasons. A commander may decide upon an audacious (reckless) attack, in the realization that the long-terms odds are not favourable. Conversely, a commander may opt for a cautious strategy, allowing the enemy to exhaust resources in attacks which are unlikely to be successful.

War and chess are both generally adversarial activities, that is, there is generally an agreed end, that is, a winner defeats the enemy (opponent). Yet that's not always the case, as in chess the contenders may agree to a draw and in war the contenders may agree to a cessation of hostilities. There's also a strange complementarity within both activities, war and chess. Although both activities are adversarial, the existence of the activity relies upon there being an opponent or an enemy.

As with so many other cultural representations of violence, chess is a sanitized representation of violence. There is no suffering or pain involved, other than perhaps the psychological pain of losing the chess game. Admittedly, there are many other ways that our society provides us with sanitized representations of violence, such as through film and literature, although chess is arguably a little less obvious than such representations. Part of the appeal of such representations is that we can participate, vicariously, in the excitement of dangerous warlike situations, without any of the actual risk.

Although chess is a game originating in and centred upon violence, at least symbolically, there is, however, a paradox with chess, in that chess, as with other activities and sports, involves people meeting together, with a common set of rules, in a civil and most often amiable setting, and with a common goal of intellectual challenge and enjoyment. This is why chess diplomacy can at times be so effective, such as during the Cold War. In participating in a chess game, we get to see our opponent – our opponent becomes a real person, with whom we relate via an ancient board game.

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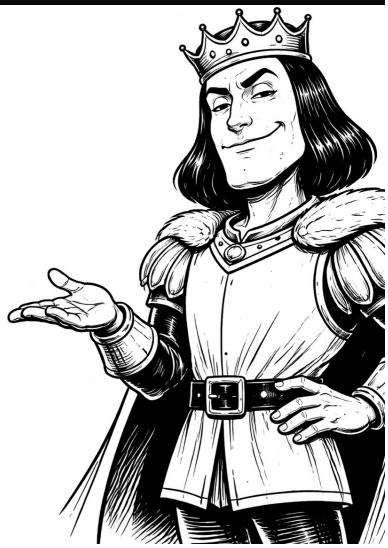
Some of you may die, but that is a sacrifice I am willing to make.

Graphics courtesy of ChatGPT (free version)



Further, what the popularity of chess tells us is that we actually enjoy the challenge and energy of conflict. We see this in so many areas of society, such as in sport, film, literature and politics, and, if we are honest, sometimes in our personal relationships. Is there therefore anything wrong with playing chess, especially if we happen to believe that peace is desirable? I would suggest not. But at important caveat is that, as with so many other areas of social life, we need to acknowledge that what the game is based upon is not harmless.

In some ways, the paradox of chess is similar to the paradox of military virtue. Military training and military endeavour can be argued to bring out the best of ourselves, in terms of character development. We can speak of character traits such as self-discipline, patience, concentration on a task and strategic thinking. It can be argued that military training and endeavour, and chess, can serve to foster such virtues, despite the fact that, at least in the case of military training and endeavour, the end being served is a destructive one.

Some 500 years ago, the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536) articulated the notion *dulce bellum inexpertis*, that is, war is sweet to those who have not experienced it. That's a useful adage on how we might approach peace and war, as well as chess. Yes, activities such as chess are intellectually challenging and socially beneficial, and engagement with such activities ought to be fostered and encouraged. Yet we need to be aware and indeed educate ourselves as to the reality behind the game. We need to be aware and indeed educate ourselves on the reality of war.

Dr James Page

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Chess for beginners	**Ethical reflection for everyone**
Plan ahead but be open to change	Ethical decisions require foresight *and* moral flexibility
Every piece matters	Every person has dignity and deserves respect
Sacrifice strategically	Who bears the cost of our decisions, and is it fair?
Impatience is a weakness	Patience is a virtue
Every move has consequences	Be accountable for intended and unintended outcomes
See the whole board	Ethical choices require seeing all stakeholders
Learn from mistakes	Ethical growth comes from honest reflection, not blame
Timing is key	Knowing *when* to speak or act is a moral choice
Opponents teach	Disagreement can sharpen ethical reasoning
Endgame requires precision	Ethical standards matter most under pressure
The strongest moves are often the quiet ones	Ethics is what you do when no one is looking

AN EARTH ETHIC: Resetting our Moral Compass

Di Dibley

For the last ten years I have been on a quest to find a set of common and complementary principles, encapsulated in an Earth Ethic to guide decision-making in the Anthropocene.

Following the publication of Darwin's theory of evolution in 1871, there was support for a marriage of ethics and science. Evolutionary ethics claimed that what was natural was moral. For some, human sovereignty was based on the belief that human nature could be understood through the language of biology—scientific facts provided the moral certainty that had been lost with the decline of religion. There are those who still look to science to provide the standard for moral evaluation. They argue that science can close the gap between *ought to be* and is by turning moral claims into empirical facts. Richard Dawkins (2000) claims science is the only way we know to understand the world. This suggests that an ethical position can only be established through science.

Science is not the only institution of knowledge that has claimed moral pre-eminence and the right to set the standards for moral evaluation. Standard economics contains a wealth of ethical assumptions and implications drawn from its eighteenth and nineteenth century underpinnings in emergent Western capitalism. For example, the concept of the *invisible hand* was developed by economist Adam Smith. It is a metaphor for the unseen forces of self-interest that impact the free market. In theory, consumers basing decisions on self-interest create a positive outcome for the economy.

I found that the dominant knowledge brokers of their time legitimised power by claiming the high moral ground whether grounded in wizardry, heroic myth, religion, science or economics. However, widespread recognition of environmental degradation and the devastating effects of climate change is challenging the traditional value positions of disciplinary knowledge. Ecological economists are developing new moral foundations for an economics that would see the human economy embedded in Earth's biogeochemical system. Post Normal Science is an open, issue-based science which requires ethical as well as technical solutions and consideration of the effects of scientific and technical practice on the Earth system. Earth Jurisprudence is a new system of law that proposes ethical and pragmatic ways to protect Earth's natural systems from harmful practices for which humans, both as legal subjects and as a species, are responsible.

The question of how we ought to live has provoked centuries of debate. Now the threats to Earth that threaten all life could provide an agreed context for discussing how we ought and indeed how we can live in the Anthropocene.

The application of ethics to practical problems, such as inequality, human rights abuse and animal rights has been shown to provide a pathway through competing interests. Ethical thinking is not constrained by rigid methodologies associated for instance with measuring economic growth. It is not a branch of enquiry concerned with factual knowledge like the sciences and it is not bound by precedent or prescription like legal systems. Concepts of what is *good* and *right*; understandings of obligation and value, are materially different from other ways of thinking. Ethics, unwittingly or otherwise, applies to all our thinking.

I am interested in a shared ethics, a new public philosophy that can address the moral and environmental challenges of the Anthropocene and guide our decision-making and practice. A review of the history of environmental ethics is a good place to start.

Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics were strongly influenced by the American nature writers, naturalists and conservationists, in particular, John Muir (1838-1914) and Aldo Leopold (1887-1948). Muir founded the Sierra Club in 1892 and was instrumental in establishing the Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks. Leopold was a forester and wildlife biologist whose famous wakening to the interdependence of Nature was expressed in his provocative essay, '*Thinking like a Mountain*'.

Muir and Leopold were practising naturalists who advocated for the

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appreciation and conservation of things natural, wild and free. Their concerns were expressed in a combination of ethical and aesthetic responses to Nature, as well as a rejection of what they saw as crude economic approaches to the value of the natural world. Their writings reflected both scientific understanding and aesthetic appreciation. They understood how natural systems worked and they saw intrinsic beauty and value in Nature. In his essay '*On a Monument to the Passenger Pigeon'*, Leopold wrote "It is a century now since Darwin gave us ... the origin of species. We know now ... that men (sic) are only fellow voyagers with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution". In advocating for the adoption of a land ethic to extend moral concern to the natural environment and its non-human contents, he offered a moral test: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise".

However, while the Muir and Leopold view of nature is holistic and inclusive, a worrying distinction between environmental values emerged in the 1980s. Nature was seen as having either instrumental or intrinsic value: *instrumental value* values things as a means to ends and *intrinsic value* values things as ends in themselves. Making a distinction between instrumental and intrinsic value in environmental ethics reinforced the idea that the primary value of Nature and natural resources is in its service to human beings (ecosystem services).

Humans attributing value to Nature is a reckless act of hubris that separates our species from the rest of the natural world. The absurdity of this separation is starkly exposed in the Anthropocene where humans and nature 'as we know it', share a common 'destiny' — our stratigraphic signatures are recorded together in new minerals and rock types reflecting rapid global dissemination of novel materials including aluminium, concrete and plastics that form abundant, rapidly evolving techno-fossils.

What happens over the next few decades will determine whether or not the Earth will continue to be hospitable to human life as we have known it in the stable Holocene.

Cultural Landscapes

Recognition of our indivisibility with Nature is expressed in the idea of cultural landscapes. In 1992, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) recognised cultural landscapes as the interface of human culture and Nature, tangible and intangible heritage, biological and cultural diversity — they represent a closely woven net of relationships, the essence of culture and people's identity.

From time immemorial this relationship has been explored and expressed in the arts and humanities. The book *Landscape and Memory,* written by contemporary historian and landscape writer Simon Schama, is organised around the three elements of wood, water and rock: the forest primeval, the river of life and the sacred mountain.

"It feeds me, it provides water, the sun comes out and the seasons turn — it's the only place we have."

Dr Paul Collins

Australian Indigenous man, Tyson Yunkaporta, writes about songlines, "These are ancient paths of dreaming etched in the landscape in song and story and mapped in our minds and bodies and relationships with everything around us: knowledge stored in every waterway and every rock".

The concept of a cultural landscape represents a shift from the old human/Nature divide. The perspectives of Muir, Leopold, Schama and Yunkaporta understand environmental ethics as inseparable from cultural ethics.

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To explore ethical decision-making in contemporary practice, I spoke with ethicist, historian, broadcaster, writer and former Roman Catholic priest, Dr. Paul Collins.

Collins' top priority as an ethicist is human population: "it sits behind environmental destruction; it is responsible for global warming and biodiversity loss".

Collins values the services that the environment provides: "It feeds me, it provides water, the sun comes out and the seasons turn — it's the only place we have". He also appreciates the beauty of Nature. Collins says that "he no longer finds spirituality in churches but in the natural world". He claims, "I'm convinced that we need an entirely new foundational moral principle to guide us, one that prioritises the Earth and biodiversity first". He argues "that the natural world and the survival of other species take priority over everything else, including the desires, needs and even the survival of individual human persons and communities".

Conclusion

The history of ethics shows how they are shaped by contemporary reality. They are responsive rather than fixed. Environmental ethics value Earth. Human activity that protects ecosystems for the long term is regarded as *good* and *right*. Environmental ethics can be internalised so as to consistently guide decision-making and actions (commonsense). Drawing on the experience of Indigenous cultures around the world, it can be seen that over time, shared beliefs and behaviours that value Nature are expressed in cultural mores and practices (moral lore). Elsewhere, moral lore is codified or formalised in legal enactments such as the common law and statute law.

The history of environmental ethics and my conversation with Paul Collins support my belief that moral lore embodied in an Earth Ethic could bring legitimacy and moral authority for Earth as for humans—a shared sovereignty. On the matter of ethical decision-making and conduct, I am encouraged by the emergence of post normal science, ecological economics and Earth jurisprudence which all acknowledge the place of humans in the Earth system and the responsibility that flows from this.

Dr Di Dibley

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References: Please contact the author direct for a list of references.

Acknowledgement: *The Earth graphic on page 7 is curtesy of Stux at https://pixabay.com/vectors/earth-blue-planet-globe-transparent-330300/*

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share before the successful hunter. A very different way of sharing the products of one's labours.

The fifth spectrum, involves the way we relate to the natural world, our natural environment. **See Figure 1. Section E.**

The Western capitalistic world generally has a view that spends a lot of time deciding what wealth we can extract. How can we exploit plots of land, whether it be for the resources they contain, property development or tourism.

Compare this to the way First Nations people relate to mother nature. The spiritual connection, the deep knowledge, respect and responsibility Aboriginal people feel for the natural world are so profound that non-Aboriginal people have difficulty understanding this relationship.

A sixth spectrum is one covering how we see the world. See **Figure 1. Section F.**

Especially after the scientific revolution, Western cultures continually split the world into smaller and smaller sections on which people – scientists mainly – became experts. There was greater emphasis placed on the specialist rather than the generalist. For First Nations people everything is connected. Each part impacting on how the rest survives and functions. This applies to both within society and the natural world and the interaction between them.

In closing, I would argue that to put our heads in a better place for contemplating how we should be relating to and behaving towards each other and planet earth, we all should be further to the right on each of the five spectra described. Non-Aboriginal Australians should be assimilating First Nations' ways of thinking.

Howard Tankey

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References: Please contact the author direct for a list of references.

Book review:

THE GOLDEN RULE for Indigenous reconciliation

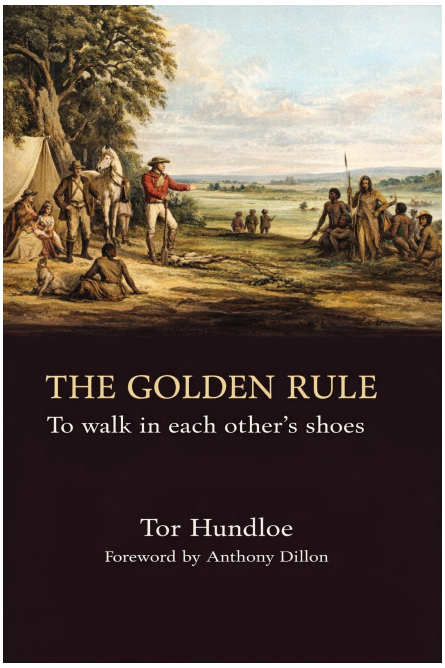
Ron Hohenhaus

A prominent academic, arguing from the principles of anthropological economics, questions Australia's approach to Indigenous reconciliation. He suggests the failed Voice referendum opened up the debate to much more in-depth scrutiny than so far applied.

In his recent book ,"The Golden Rule: To Walk in Each Other's Shoes" Emeritus Professor Tor Hundloe discusses the nation's embarrassing inability to redress longstanding Indigenous issues such as a low life-expectancy, increasing incarceration rates, deteriorating health outcomes – plus the unresolved challenges of treaty, and truth telling.

The book includes a foreword by Dr Anthony Dillon, a Sydney-based academic and long-term commentator on Indigenous affairs.

Both writers argue that answers to these challenges can be found in the application of universal ethics guided by the ancient philosophical notion of the Golden Rule.



Although the concept of 'do unto others' has been part of both philosophy and religious thinking going back to our earliest historical records (dating to Buddha, Confucious, and the ancient Greeks) Hundloe argues a concerted effort to follow Golden Rule principles Is the "fair go" Australian way to increase our efforts to close the loss of life gap in remote Indigenous communities. From seven to ten years of life is lost on average in these communities.

When Hundloe turns attention to the controversial matters of invasion, treaty making and truth telling, Hundloe challenges much of the conventional wisdom. He takes readers to eminent philosophers, from the Age of Reason to John Rawls, in search of answers and finds ones that challenge the common views, especially those expressed by the dominant Indigenous spokespeople.

Hundloe argues the assertion that shiploads of shackled prisoners were an invading force cannot be sustained. When he goes to treaty-making , he asks readers to consider the little the First Australians would have received (bangles, beads and blankets and not much else) compared to what they got via the Mabo decision. He argues that truth telling has to be comprehensive , including the brutal treatment the prisoners, some primary school children, received in the penal era.

Anthony Dillon says that while many current popular ideologies portray Indigenous people merely as victims of white Australia and history, he welcomes the approach outlined in The Golden Rule: To walk in each other's shoes".

"I strongly believe the only way we will close the gap between Indigenous Australians and the rest of us is by ensuring Indigenous people have access to the opportunities that most Australians take for granted," Dr Dillon says. "Tor Hundloe raises issues that are crucial for understanding how to empower Aboriginal people to be the best that they can be. To achieve this requires us all to focus on the commonalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and abandon the myth that Indigenous Australians are deeply culturally different from other Australians."

The ***Golden Rule*** is published by Connor Court Publishing (*email:* connorcourtbrisbane@gmail.com) and is available directly from them, priced at $39.95 plus postage, or through major bookshops and can be borrowed from libraries.

https://www.connorcourtpublishing.com.au/search.asp?keyword=the+golden+rule

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110th anniversary of the SAYFO 1915 Genocide

Theodora Issa

In the Summer 2015 issue of *Australian Ethics*, I shared an article about the 1915 SAYFO (Syriac-Aramaic Christians) Genocide on its centenary. While I briefly discussed a lecture on this topic I conveyed at the John Curtin Research Centre (JCRC) in October 2015, I primarily posed a question linking this issue to research on 'ethical mindsets' (Issa, 2009).

The question raised was: "Could the presence and adoption of 'Ethical Mindsets' by the aggressors have altered history by preventing the atrocities faced by the Indigenous People of Mesopotamia and their descendants?"

In the year past, we marked the 110th anniversary of the atrocities against the Indigenous people of Mesopotamia by the Ottoman Empire. It is important to remember that one-third of the Syriac People (now known as Syriacs/Arameans/Assyrians/Chaldeans) lost their lives in areas like Diyarbakir, Kharput, Mardin, Tur Abdin and Urfa (ancient Edessa). This persecution and extermination did not end in 1915 but continues to this day, with alarming statistics showing a decline in the Christian population in the region where Christianity originated.

Recent literature by Akçam et al. (2023) suggests that the Ottoman Empire's transformation into a new nation-state led to the expulsion and extermination of Greek, Armenian and Syriacs (i.e., Syriacs, Arameans, Assyrian and Chaldeans) elements. There was evidence of the use of violent practices to eliminate the Christian population, including discrimination, persecution, and extermination.

Tseligka (2025) argues that the late Ottoman Empire genocide was part of a broader agenda of Christian extermination in Asia Minor. The 'Millet' system in the Ottoman Empire, meant for religious conflict resolution, led to subordination of Christians and ethnic cleansing when perceived as defiance by Ottomans.

> Any meaningful change – particularly in deeply held mindsets – requires both the willingness to change and the capacity to bring about that change.

This mentality persists in some regions today, where certain communities are treated as second-class citizens and face discrimination, violence and displacement. Many find themselves confronting an unjust dilemma: remain in their homeland while enduring fear, humiliation and harm, or leave in search of safety at the cost of separation from familiar cultures, traditions and sources of meaning.

Here, it is worthwhile to remind all what Ethical Mindsets components are: aesthetic spirituality, religious spirituality, optimism, harmony and balance, truth seeking, pursuit of joy, peace and beauty, making a difference and professionalism. The outer influences on these (as shown in the figure on p.11) are divided into two parts: individual characteristics or demographics , such as age, gender, experience, education, etc., and external factors like society, culture, religion, ethnicity, organisational leadership, occupational norms, and professional standards.

To me, it seams clear that the answer to the question I posed back in 2015, is a resounding YES. This 'resounding YES' must be qualified, as any change, especially in 'mindsets', needs to be generated from the 'will' to change, and having the power to affect this change.

Following from the discussion above, the question first posed in 2015, and revisited today, may be answered in the affirmative, though with important qualifications. Any meaningful change – particularly in deeply held mindsets – requires both the willingness to change and the capacity to bring about that change. In this regard, applying the Ethical Mindset framework, to address the challenges faced by various communities in the Middle East regardless of their religious beliefs is important and can be supported through sustained education and dialogue among those who inhabit the region.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that ethical behaviour is

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not static; it is an ongoing process shaped not only by individual perspectives but also by wider influences such as culture, social structures and family values. These influences may, at times, be driven by agendas that struggle to accommodate diversity. Consequently, ethical development must be accompanied by both the will and the institutional capacity to influence change at individual, society and governmental levels.

As 2026 begins, attention must remain on those who have suffered loss and displacement, with the hope that the difficulties faced by all indigenous people and the members of other long-established communities will ease.

May we also continue to pray for the repose of the souls of all who have lost their lives through suffering and injustice, whatever their faith or circumstance.

Dr Theodora Issa

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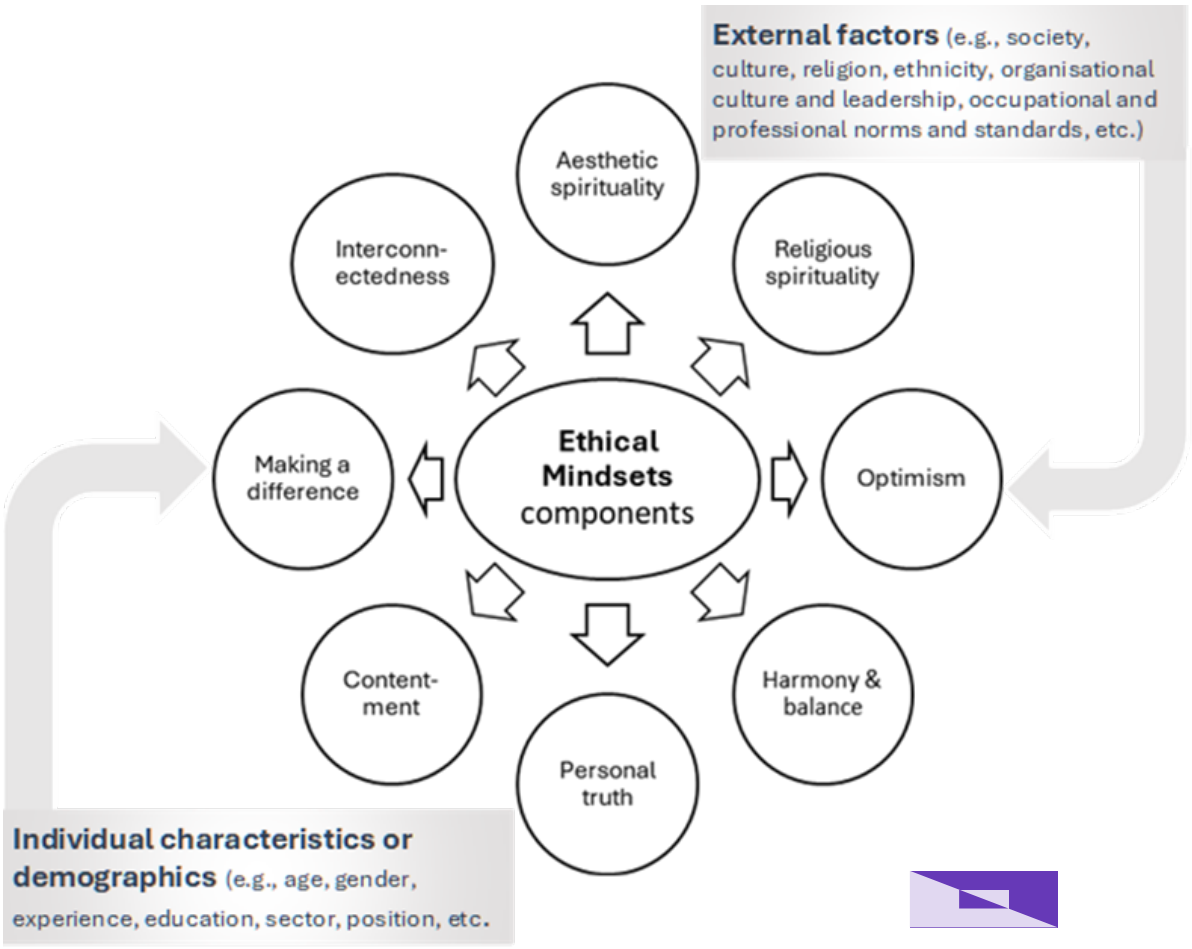
References: Please contact the author direct for a list of references.



The draft closing date for the Winter 2026 edition of ***Australian Ethics*** is 1 June 2026 — All articles, news items, upcoming events, book reviews, interest pieces, etc. are welcome. Please email the editor at: info@aapae.org.au

AAPAE Listserv

If you have any information or notices that you would like us to relay to your peers, please email your request (MS word format) to: **info@aapae.org.au**

The AAPAE's Listserv has over 700 subscribers locally and overseas.

The AAPAE is on Linkedn https://www.linkedin.com/company/australian-association-for-professional-and-applied-ethics/

The **AAPAE Ethics Olympiad** is a competitive yet collaborative event in which eth-letes (students) analyse and discuss real-life, timely, ethical issues. It will be held over Zoom on Oct 8, 2026.

The AAPAE Ethics Olympiad differs from a traditional debating event in that eth-lete teams are not assigned opposing views; rather, eth-lete teams defend whatever position they believe is right and win by showing that they have thought more carefully, deeply and perceptively about the cases in question.

Experience shows that this type of event encourages and helps develop intellectual virtues such as ethical awareness, critical thinking, civil discourse and civil engagement while fostering an appreciation for diverse points of view.

Want to find out more...

If you're interested in becoming a coach or 'eth-lete', or want more information, visit:

https://ethicsolympiad.org/?page_id=1458 or email Matthew Wills: ethicsolympiad@gmail.com

Ethics Olympiad

←**Thursday, 8 October 2026**

AAPAE
AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR PROFESSIONAL AND APPLIED ETHICS

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AAPAE Charter

The broad purpose of the AAPAE is to encourage awareness of, and foster discussion of issues in, professional and applied ethics. It provides a meeting point for practitioners from various fields and academics with specialist expertise and welcomes everyone who wants or needs to think and talk about applied or professional ethics.

The AAPAE fosters and publishes research in professional and applied ethics, as well as attempting to create connections with special interest groups.

However, the AAPAE does not endorse any particular viewpoint, but rather it aims to promote a climate in which different and differing views, concerns, and approaches can be expressed and discussed.

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