

AUSTRALIAN ETHICS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

WELCOME to the 2018 Winter edition of *Australian Ethics*.

I'm sure everyone is looking forward to the AAPAE Conference in Melbourne in September! The theme – ethics in a crowded world – is very topical. Issues of globalisation, population, immigration, sovereignty, cosmopolitanism, infrastructure, environment and international organisations are all dominating domestic and world headlines. The crowded world in which we live lends a new urgency to all these concerns, and the ethical issues they raise.

The conference will take place in a terrific location, at Storey Hall on Swanston Street, at the RMIT City campus. It's very accessible, and an extraordinary building. Once again, we will be having a prize for the best two papers from PhD students. This initiative was a great success last year, and we had a terrific turnout of PhD candidates at the conference. This year first prize is sponsored by The Anode Group – warm thanks go to their director, Dayo Sowunmi, for the sponsorship. If you or one of

your students is considering entry, make sure to note the due date for entries: 13 August.

I look forward to seeing you all in Melbourne, for some engaging presentations and enjoyable discussions on these fascinating themes!

Speaking of fascinating themes, this issue of *Australian Ethics* is packed full of thought-provoking pieces – from ball-tampering, to moral change in business ethics performance, to the public interest in truth-telling. As always, there seems to be no end to the ethical quandaries and challenges thrown up by the twenty-first century. Both *Australian Ethics*, and the AAPAE annual conference, provide a valuable opportunity to think deeply about these issues, and to draw insight from the different perspectives and experiences of others.

Warm thanks go to the editor, Charmayne Highfield, for another wonderful edition.

Enjoy!

Regards,
Hugh

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ETHICS: PROFESSIONAL & APPLIED

- BUSINESS
- EDUCATION
- ENGINEERING
- ENVIRONMENT
- LAW
- MEDICAL
- NURSING
- POLICE
- PUBLIC POLICY
- PUBLIC SECTOR
- SOCIAL WORK
- TEACHING

25TH ANNUAL AAPAE CONFERENCE

To be hosted by:

**The School of Global,
Urban and Social Studies
RMIT, Melbourne****CONFERENCE THEME****Ethics in a Crowded World****Wednesday, 5 September to Friday, 7 September 2018****KEY DATES**

- ◆ **Registration now open**
- ◆ **1 August 2018:** Last day for submission of full papers for refereeing
- ◆ **16 August 2018:** Last day for submission of papers/abstracts
- ◆ **31 July 2018:** Early bird registration closes
- ◆ **13 August 2018:** for submission of full papers for the PhD Award
- ◆ **5-7 September 2018:** Conference

VENUE**Storey Hall****RMIT City campus**

Building 16 Level 7

Conference rooms

336–348 Swanston Street

(near the corner of La Trobe Street)

Melbourne, Victoria

Getting there: Public transport options can be found at:<https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/>**Best PhD paper presented at the Conference**First prize is an award for **A\$500** and second prize **A\$250****First prize is proudly sponsored by The Anode Group**

(<http://anode.com.au/>), a Melbourne-based firm, specialising in leadership development and management consultancy. Established in 1999, the firm's focus is in developing more effective leaders, with an emphasis on strategy, performance, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, health and wellness.

Visit Victoria: [http://www.visitvictoria.com/Events/September for ideas](http://www.visitvictoria.com/Events/September%20for%20ideas)

CONTACT DETAILS

Conference convener:

Dr Vandra Harris

Conference email:

aapae2018@rmit.edu.au

CONFERENCE WEBSITE

<https://www.rmit.edu.au/events/all-events/conferences/2018/september/ethics-in-a-crowded-world>

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS AND PAPERS

The **25th Annual AAPAE Conference** calls for abstracts and papers related to the central theme of **ethics in a crowded world** and other issues in applied ethics and the professions. Papers are invited that question, critique, support or encourage the role that individuals and institutions can or do play in promoting ethics in the contemporary global economy. Submissions from practitioners and from outside Australia will be particularly welcome. Potential topics may include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ ethical challenges of populism
- ◆ humanitarian ethics
- ◆ corporate social responsibility
- ◆ contested values, pluralism, and authority
- ◆ the role of media and education in a crowded world
- ◆ globalisation, inequality, and human movement



SUBMISSIONS

Submissions are welcome from academic faculty, doctoral students, and professionals. If you wish to make a submission for presentation at the 2018 AAPAE Conference, please submit a 250-word abstract by **16 August 2018**.

Authors will be notified of submission outcomes within 10 working days of submitting their abstract.

Full papers may also be submitted, to be peer reviewed if required by your funding institution (submission deadline **1 August 2018**).

PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITY

Authors of papers presented at the conference will be invited to submit completed papers to the AAPAE's associated journal, ***Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations*** (REIO).

REIO is a peer reviewed journal, listed in the ERA submitted journals list and the ABDC list, and all submitted papers will go through a rigorous double-blind review process to determine suitability for publication. Please note submission for peer review prior to the conference does not guarantee acceptance for publication.

DO YOU ASPIRE TO BE A FUTURE AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER?

Michael Schwartz

Forget about the polls. Ignore the rumours. Avoid the gossipmongers. Consider the facts. Our current prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and his predecessor – although can that word be used for someone you wilfully removed as unsuitable for the position you now hold *unless* you too prove equally unsuitable? – Tony

Abbott, both attended an AAPAE Conference. In fact Abbott and Turnbull both attended the very same AAPAE Conference in Can-

berra. There they heatedly debated the merits of the monarchy and the ripeness of a republic in our old parliament chambers. And from there they went forth. One after the other: In strictly alphabetical order: Each to become an Australian Prime Minister.

Today throughout the land speculation mounts as to their political futures, but after holding the very highest position in the land what more is there for a politician to achieve? And for those who might ask about the merits of achieving increasing budget deficits, and creating antiquated submarines to defend our sea lanes, and the peculiar relationship between foreign sandpaper and Australian cricket balls, please remember that as a Prussian Prime Minister named Otto von Bismarck said in the Reichstag in 1867 – just after

thoroughly defeating Austria and her German allies on the battlefield – “politics is the art of the possible”. So seemingly in Australia today very little is possible politically. But that is an entirely different issue. Both Abbott and Turnbull attended our AAPAE Conference and both became our prime ministers.

You don't have to attend an AAPAE Conference to be an Australian Prime Minister, but it might help!

Some might argue that such circumstances are a sheer coincidence. And that any assertions of a causal link are absolute chicanery. Well, perhaps that is so. Nonetheless, some might remember an Australian politician named Bob Brown who once led the Greens. Whilst leader of that party Bob Brown agreed to speak at our AAPAE Conference in Goulburn. But later he changed his mind. Brown did not attend. We never saw him. Within a few years Brown had resigned as leader of the Greens and left Australian politics forever.

For those cynics still desperately insisting that was just another coincidence please consider this. In 2005 a young Nick Xenophon attended our Adelaide AAPAE Conference. Within a short time his political career rocketed. In

2007 Penny Wong, whose party was still – after many years – in opposition, attended our Melbourne AAPAE Conference. Within months her party was in power and she was a government minister. So please attend our forthcoming 2018 Melbourne AAPAE Conference. And look carefully around the room. Examine all who

are there. Should you spy amongst our conference attendees a red haired female senator from Queensland you will know where politically Australia is headed. It's

good to keep informed. I hope I see you in Melbourne.

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AAPAE Listserv

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

The AAPAE's Listserv has over 480 subscribers locally and o/seas.

A RECALIBRATION OF CRICKET'S MORAL COMPASS

Julie Crews

The recent ball tampering incident in cricket brought forth as Ella Fitzgerald once sang, 'cry me a river'. Many, it seemed, wept along with these revered cricket players and called on Australians to send their support and love. This outpouring of grief prompted me to do a quick mental checklist. Did anyone die? Has anyone been diagnosed with a life-threatening disease? Will these players be left penniless following their sanctions? Is their capacity to play or earn money from being an elite cricketer over? The answer to these questions is absolutely no!

There is no disputing the role sport plays in the Australian culture. It lifts our spirits, unites and weathers us through good and bad times and entertains and excites us. Cricket, in particular, is deeply embedded into Australia's history and cultural identity. The expression 'it just isn't cricket' has become the measurement we apply to a myriad of situations to assess justice, fairness and integrity.

For a moment let's examine this cheating from a business perspective. Cricket is a very lucrative and successful business. The cheating scandal has clearly damaged the business brand and reputation of cricket with major corporations severing their sponsorship with the offending players. Can you imagine any senior executive of a major corporation who has cheated in business and fronted the press to offer some form of apology and redemption would be

offered our love and support? A resounding no!

When business executives and elite athletes are embroiled in scandal they share more than we are prepared to recognise or acknowledge. Both occupy an elite and powerful position in their field and enjoy remuneration and privileges which are far in excess of most other members of society. In the case of our disgraced cricketers we need to remember they excel at a game. They have not added to the scientific body of knowledge for which many await the cure for debilitating diseases nor contributed to any advances in science which changes the quality of life we have in the 21st century.

**Six and out,
now go fetch!**

Some business executives and elite athletes lose what is termed their 'moral compass' because in occupying this privileged and revered status, they begin to think that 'being special' is synonymous with evading the rules which apply to everyone else. Their mantra becomes 'win at all costs' and they develop this arrogant and breathtaking idea that if they make the decision to do something which is not in the spirit or

rules of the game of business they will not be found out. In cricket, those responsible for the culture that may have lent tacit support to this cheating incident extends way beyond the cricketing field.

There has been talk about the 'recalibration' of the sanctions handed down to the cricketers. This euphemism evades using the word they really mean - reduction. Those in the business of cricket must examine more critically beyond the cheating players to identify where the culture of cricket is failing and each and everyone's responsibility for what has happened. Ball tampering is the product of much more serious issues in the cricketing culture and unless this is acknowledged the incident will be deemed as a 'one-off' scenario. Players need the psychological tools to make ethical decisions, even under great pressure. A recalibration of the cricketing culture's moral compass is required not a reduction of sanctions.

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**Ball tampering:
What is it and why is it such a big deal?** <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/03/28/sport/australia-steve-smith-david-warner-ball-tampering-cricket-intl/index.html>

BUILDING A PROFESSION – FROM THE OUTSIDE IN

Hugh Breakey

Many readers of *Australian Ethics* will be familiar with the standard model of a profession. This vision typically involves a group of service-providers with specialised expertise who develop and adopt a professional code that delivers goods to the public as a whole, and to clients as individuals. Historically, the classic professions (like medicine and law) were substantially self-regulating. Growing out of guilds, these professions developed their own codes of conduct, and, through various measures, controlled entry into the profession and – in principle at least – exit from it through suspension or debarment for failing the standards expected. With the rise of the regulatory state, government agencies and laws increasingly also govern professions, often in tandem with professional organisations. But it remains the case that these professions began, developed and are maintained to some extent autonomously. The service-group itself *wanted* to become a profession, and was motivated to do what it took to gain social and legal recognition as such (this is sometimes referred to as the ‘professional project’ – e.g., Macdonald 1999).

But can a profession be created from the outside in? Can professionalisation be forced onto a service industry that may not want to professionalise, or that has a considerable vested interest in not doing so? This is now the attempt being made, across much of the

developed world, and in Australia, for financial advisers. Historically, financial advising grew out of a hodgepodge of financial services such as insurance advising (Cull 2009). It is not, and has never been, a profession. Instead, it is a sales industry, with advisers typically working for the creators of financial products (such as large banks) and being employed to sell their products. Advisors not employed in this way, and thus with a measure of independence, still tended to make their money, in a sales-orientated fashion, through (often hidden) commissions.

Over time, this arrangement became increasingly problematic. The giving of financial advice often implicated complex considerations (tax, superannuation, estates, trusts, social security) requiring sophisticated knowledge. As well, financial products themselves became increasingly complicated and more opaque to the layperson (especially given relatively low levels of financial literacy). These changes made clients of financial advisers *vulnerable* in many of the ways professional clients are vulnerable: clients can desperately need the service; can suffer greatly from poor service; yet struggle to accurately gauge the quality of the service at the time it is given, and perhaps even in retrospect (Breakey 2016). Indeed, even providing the service can expose the client to new vulnerabilities, such as breaches of confidence or privacy. Combined with these increasing vulnerabili-

ties (and perhaps because of them), clients of financial services tended to intuitively perceive their adviser as a professional – supposing the adviser to be bound by the same standards of expertise and integrity as their doctor, lawyer or accountant.

No doubt many individual advisers tried to conscientiously live up to these new expectations, and some banded together in organisations that closely paralleled professional bodies, which helped drive the development of improved education options. As well, the pre-existing accountancy profession played a role in promoting independence and fee-for-service arrangements. Yet for the greater part the industry retained its sales culture, and its traditional product-based remuneration arrangements. Scandal after scandal ensued as consumers of financial services had their vulnerabilities brutally exploited, rather than professionally protected.

Yet even as calls for professionalisation became louder (Cull 2009), many providers in the industry had good reasons to resist professionalisation. After all, professionalisation would impose serious costs. The existing arrangements were lucrative to many in the finance industry, including advisers and their employers. As well as disrupting existing revenue streams, professionalisation would raise education standards, which are costly – in both time and money – for existing practitioners to acquire.

BUILDING A PROFESSION – FROM THE OUTSIDE IN (CONT.)

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So rather than professionalisation efforts coming from within the industry itself, government began to respond to impose profession-like attributes on it, going far beyond the then-existing regulatory-style license arrangements. These gained substantial headway with the 'Future of Financial Advice' (FOFA) reforms (beginning in 2013) that, among other changes, aimed to prohibit practices of conflicted remuneration and to strengthen a 'best interests' obligation (preventing advisers from tailoring their advice to maximise hidden commissions). There are obvious parallels here to the fiduciary obligations familiar to professions.

Yet the scandals continued, with independent media, commissioned reports, and the regulator (ASIC) gathering considerable and ongoing evidence of poor standards of service, ethics and expertise. Recent legislation – passed with bipartisan support in late 2017 – makes the government's attempt at external professionalisation even clearer. The legislation establishes:

- professional-level educational requirements (with transitional arrangements for existing providers);
- the passing of an exam covering core competencies;
- the requirement of completing a certain number of hours each year of continuing professional

development education;

- the requirement of a performing a year of supervised work as a 'provisional' financial adviser;
- the construction of a new body (which became the *Financial Adviser Standards and Ethics Authority*) to provide continuing guidance on education pathways and the exam, and to develop a code of **ethics**;
- the requirement to be bound by a code of **ethics** that goes beyond the existing legal obligations, and to police this code with a monitoring body operating a compliance scheme;
- an enhanced register of all financial advisers who have met these conditions; and
- the legal protection of 'title' and 'function' – prohibiting anyone from practicing financial advising, or calling themselves a financial adviser/planner, unless they have met the relevant conditions and are on the register (and conform to other parts of the regulatory landscape, such as being or being employed by a licensee).

As this list demonstrates, there are few aspects of the hallmark professions that are not being imposed on the industry. (However, the changes will take time, with roll-out of the new conditions (such as the educational requirements) stretching until 2024.)

Will this endeavour succeed? Can

a profession be created from the outside in – driven by external demand, rather than internal motivation? If all of the institutional elements of a profession are established by legislation and regulation, will the culture and ethos of a profession eventually arise? Even if such a transformation can occur in principle, is it possible it will work in this case – where there are longstanding and powerful forces arrayed against its development?

Of course, it is too early to say. In some respects, the devil will lie in the details. How strong can the developed Code be in prohibiting *any* conflict of interest where advisers reap benefits correlating with the type of advice they give? How stringent and pro-active will the monitoring bodies be in policing the Code? And even if everything possible is done on these fronts, there is still the open question about how hard certain sectors of the industry might push back against any principles that threaten to disrupt their lucrative revenue **streams**. For those interested in questions of governance, (self)regulation and integrity systems, the message is: *watch this space*.

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CLOSING THE GAP – CAN THE GREAT BOOKS HELP?

Sunil Savur

I begin my Business Ethics course at UniSA by asking students to cite examples of unethical organisations. They identify well known offenders from the popular media channels – Enron, WorldCom, Tyco, Volkswagen, Ford, Toyota, HIH, the Australian Wheat Board (AWB), to name a few.

This leads into discussing the consequences of such behaviours such as the loss and/or damage to share value, employment, personal investments, the environment, etc.

From this we explore subsequent events, including class actions and parliamentary committees, as well as royal commissions that hand down recommendations to mitigate, redress, or even eliminate unethical behaviour. Governments and regulators then enact laws and formulate policies and regulations to ensure these unethical behaviours are not repeated.

In Australia, there have been revelations from various Royal Commissions (a total of 135 commissions since 1902), 10 since 2000 including the recently concluded inquiry into *Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* and the ongoing *Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry*.

In addition, almost every educational institution today offers courses in ethics and most organisations adopt ethics programs. However, in spite of such mediations from regulators and the efforts from educational institutions and organisations, ethical failures continue in all spheres of business and society.

What more can be done to close the gap between what should be happening and what's actually happening?

Several ideas have been proposed, here are just two: the first is based on George G. Brenkert's forthcoming paper, *Mind the Gap! The Challenges*

and Limits of (Global) Business Ethics, while the second idea draws on Martha Nussbaum's book *Not for Profit – Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* and two articles from the Inquirer section of The Weekend Australian of June 30-July 1 2018 – Bob Carr's *The great books broaden minds, pave way for works of other civilisations* and Greg Sheridan's *Humanities are a lost cause at our big universities*.

Brenkert describes ethical failures and scandals similar to the ones listed earlier and considers the broader issue of what can be done about the negative impacts that today's society struggles to manage. To close the gap between what businesses should do and what they actually do, Brenkert argues for a **theory of moral change**.

One suggestion to bring about moral change is to **appeal to the ethical principles** of the individuals engaged in iniquitous actions through discussion, interpretation, and application of these principles. However, this may not

bring about moral change as there is no universal theory of morality and there could be other stronger motivational problems such as self-interest. Even if there was a change, it could be behavioural change rather than moral change.

Another suggestion is **moral imagination** – positive change comes from creative thinking rather than from rational reflection or empirical discoveries, where the popular literature lights up people's moral imagination with regard to everyday situations.

We can also rely on **ethical leaders** to bring about moral change. There are numerous examples of exceptional leaders who set high ethical standards and have the knowledge, insight, and wisdom to lead others. However, ethical leaders come and go – so positive change might be limited or not sustainable.

Background institutions such as laws, government

What more can be done to close the gap between what should be happening and what's actually happening?

CLOSING THE GAP – CAN THE GREAT BOOKS HELP? (CONT.)

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regulations, customs, unions, consumer and environmental groups, influencers, and social media, may also be agents for moral change. However, as previously mentioned, these background institutions rarely ever close the gaps permanently or completely.

Brenkert further suggests **that** business ethics must consider how and why various cultural, social, and political institutions support and defend (leading to resistance to change) certain principles and positions. From these insights, business ethics can legitimately use persuasion, influence, and power to counteract those who defend and support unethical positions.

But Brenkert's suggestions to bring about moral change have already been in practice over many decades with limited success! The challenge now is: What more needs to happen to bring about moral change in business and society? What more needs to be done so that ethical values and principled decision-making are embraced and sustainable in business and by all stakeholders?

The second idea is the value of **reflecting on the past to inform ethical behaviour**. In her book, Nussbaum suggests there is a worldwide crisis in education. In pursuit of economic growth and global competitiveness, policy-makers propound 'education for profit' (p.10) and ignore the inherent value of the humanistic aspects of science and the social sciences that spawn resourceful and inspired solutions through deep critical thought. Nussbaum reasons that in addition to a strong economy, modern democracies need the humanities and the arts to promote a climate of responsible stewardship and a culture of creative innovation.

I agree with Nussbaum that education takes place not only in formal institutions, but also in families and in the community. This informal learning is important because not everyone has access to mid to higher levels of education. Families, including business families, pass on values, principles, virtues,

world-views, and articulate how we should live.

This perspective gives context to the importance and contribution of the 'Great Books' that humanity has produced. Carr asked: *'Shouldn't we be challenged, forced to stretch our consciousness with literature as much as mathematics, science, languages?'* There is a need to understand the challenges posed in the great works – be it Homer's *Iliad*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, or the Henry tetralogy, Cao Xueqin's *A dream of red mansions*, or Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. And then we have the modern classics such as *Jane Eyre*, *Sense and Sensibility*, 1984, *Animal Farm*, *To kill a mocking bird*, *Midnight's Children*, *Catch-22*, *The Book Thief* and many more.

I will conclude **reflecting on the past to inform ethical behaviour** with a brief note on an Indian classic that my grandparents shared when I was about four – *Mahabharata*.

Mahabharata (between the 8th and 9th centuries BCE) is considered to be the longest poem ever written. It is an epic narrative of the events leading up to the *Kurukshetra* war between two princely cousins and its aftermath. It theorises about *dharma-yuddha* (dharma=righteousness, yuddha=war) 'a just war', and establishes the rules of engagement. It is also suggestive of the dilemmas and 'wars' that

... in addition to a strong economy, modern democracies need the humanities and the arts to promote a climate of responsible stewardship and a culture of creative innovation.

(Continued on page 11)

IS TELLING THE TRUTH IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST?

James Page

Often it helps to ask a question to which there seems to be an obvious answer. I would suggest one such starting question: is telling the truth in the public interest? And, if so, why? These questions go to the heart of contemporary public ethics, not the least because there are many, if not explicitly then by their actions, who would suggest that telling the truth is not in the public interest.

can be considered a virtue, that is, a settled disposition arising out of habitual practice. It often takes courage to tell the truth, and the act helps develop courage. Telling the truth also supports personal integrity, in that one does not need to second-guess oneself as to what one has said to whom. Personal integrity may be taken to mean that a person is one person, where thought and deed are in accord. Telling the truth reinforces

need for individuals to tell the truth about what is happening. Simple transparency may not be enough. The action of truth-telling is also linked to a preparedness to ask difficult questions, and sometimes asking these publicly. It is possible to argue that a willingness to ask questions and tell the truth is the only way we can ever overcome wrongdoing.

All that said, clearly there are ex-

... we need to be true to others, and true to universal values.

Before addressing these questions, however, it is useful to note that the notion of truth has not generally been popular in contemporary philosophy. In recent decades, however, there has been a revival of this notion within the school of thought known as critical realism, which posits that there is a mind-independent reality and that we can know this. The description of this mind-independent reality is what we sometimes call truth. Thus we can know truth and speak the truth.

I want to suggest three reasons why telling the truth may be properly considered as in the public interest.

The first reason is that telling the truth can be considered to underscore personal integrity and to build character, and it is in the public interest that we do these things. In a sense, telling the truth

that unity.

The second reason is that telling the truth helps build a better society, through encouraging trusting relationships and through building trust in our social institutions. Indeed, trust can be identified as the crucial building block for contemporary complex societies, in that our everyday transactions are based upon mutual trust. It could be argued that the slow decay in trust is one reason modern societies and modern social institutions are under such pressure. Put simply, people increasingly don't trust social institutions any more. Telling the truth may well be an antidote to such decay.

The third reason is that telling the truth is crucial in uncovering wrongdoing. Unless individuals are prepared to tell the truth, then wrongdoing will continue unchecked. It is true that transparency is important for overcoming wrongdoing, but there is also a

reception to the principle that telling the truth is in the public interest. For instance, telling the truth may at times put individuals in danger. Telling the truth may involve betraying a confidence or a loyalty, and telling the truth may also involve a breach of privacy.

Students of ethics will know that the complexity of truth-telling was famously addressed in an essay by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, entitled 'What does it mean to tell the truth?'. The essay was not merely an exercise in abstract speculation. Bonhoeffer was a member of the German resistance, and the unfinished essay was written in November 1943, whilst he was imprisoned at Tegel, near Berlin, and undergoing relentless interrogation by the German military police.

Bonhoeffer commences the essay by observing that, from the moment we become capable of

IS TELLING THE TRUTH IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST? (CONT.)

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speech, we are taught that our words must be true. But what does this mean? Bonhoeffer's answer, if I understand it correctly, is that there needs to be a wider ethical framework when we think about telling the truth, that is, we need to be true to others, and true to universal values. We need to go further than merely considering whether what we say is technically accurate.

The need for consideration of a wider ethical framework is a useful guide to how we ought to consider exceptions to the principle that telling the truth is in the public interest. Governments, govern-

ment agencies and corporations will often assert that telling the truth is not in the public interest, suggesting that information about their actions may, for instance, endanger lives, constitute a breach of loyalty, or be contrary to the national interest.

Of course, there may be sometimes substance to such claims. Yet it seems that we need to look at the ethical framework or context in which such claims are made, and to question how realistic such claims are. Is the entity claiming that telling the truth is not in the public interest really attempting to avoid the embarrassment of public scrutiny of improper actions? Indeed, given

there is an overarching duty to tell the truth, it should follow that the onus should be on those claiming an exception to this duty to substantiate the claim.

It is common for commentators to decry the widespread moral decay in modern societies. It is not entirely clear that this situation really is so modern or widespread. Yet if it is, then rehabilitating the notion of telling the truth, and insisting that it is in the public interest to do so, is surely a start to addressing this decay.

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CLOSING THE GAP – CAN THE GREAT BOOKS HELP? (CONT.)

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we have in our minds and daily life - **moral blindness** - the way we deceive ourselves, how we are false to others, how we oppress fellow human beings, how deeply unjust we are in our day-to-day lives. It is about how the state treats us and whether we can redesign our institutions. It is about how it takes moral courage to be impartial. It teaches that human vanity comes in the way of engaging correctly with the world and discusses how our ego, envy, hypocrisy, status anxiety, and revengeful emotions are forms of vanity. It teaches us to question society's values rather than lead an unquestioning life. Numerous ethical dilemmas, decisions, and judg-

ments are discussed through stories and narratives.

But discussions, reflections, and contributions from these and other great works seem to have retreated from our minds, homes, educational institutions and, indeed, our organisations. Is it time to think about this and revive the traditions?

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FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF *AUSTRALIAN ETHICS*

The tentative closing date for submission for the **Summer 2018** edition of *Australian Ethics* is **1 November 2018** — All articles, news items, upcoming events, book reviews, interest pieces, etc. are welcome. Please email the editor at: charmayne@enya-lea.com.

Ethics in a crowded world!

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.

President

Hugh Breakey

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