

# AUSTRALIAN ETHICS

DECEMBER, 2011

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT BY BETTY CHAAR

### ETHICS: APPLIED AND PROFESSIONAL

- ◆ Business
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Engineering
- ◆ Environment
- ◆ Law
- ◆ Medical
- ◆ Nursing
- ◆ Police
- ◆ Public Policy
- ◆ Public Sector
- ◆ Social Work
- ◆ Teaching

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Dear AAPAE members

It was cold and miserable outside; the unrelenting rain pounding the streets and the cold wind whipping through our hair. On the inside however, there was warmth and friendliness, cohesiveness and camaraderie. And we had a wonderful time.

Of course I am referring to the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual AAPAE conference convened by Dr Leila Toiviainen at the University of Tasmania's School of Philosophy, in June 2011. The Keynote speeches and presentations deliv-

ered at this conference were all outstanding, but two stand out in my memory for two totally different reasons.

The first of these two was delivered by Ms Barbara Etter CEO of the Tasmanian Integrity Commission. Barbara started off her illustrious career as a pharmacist, (and no, this is not the only reason her talk was memorable to me, although a good start!), and moved on to engage in work with forensics, coronial inquests and drug squads. As a woman in a male dominated field in those days, in her words she: *"smashed through glass ceilings, but walked on broken glass for a long while..."* Barbara captivated us with her talk about leadership, empowerment

and collaborations.

On leadership in particular, Barbara excelled. She reflected and elaborated on a number of quotes, for example: *"The first job of leadership is to inspire"* (Covey Jnr); and: *"Management is about doing things right, leadership is about doing the right things"* (Drucker).

I was personally inspired by Barbara Etter's presentation, and found it most helpful in my own choice to step up to take the role of President of the AAPAE. Michael

Schwartz, our immediate past President is a role model of leadership and integrity, with personal traits that make him a warm, reliable, trustworthy and wise leader. Those are the characteristics I aspire to, but this was no easy task I set myself!

The second memorable Keynote speaker was Mr Kiros Hiruy, who talked to us about *'People of African Descent – the moral reality'*. Kiros relayed to us his own journey to Australia, and his initiation to the "lucky country". It was sad; in fact heart wrenching, to hear what he had to say in his factual non-emotive way. His softly spoken argument could move mountains.

# The 19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL AAPAE CONFERENCE Ethics, Values and Civil Society

## MARK YOUR DIARIES!!

**Thursday 28th June — Sunday 1st July, 2012**  
**St John's College, University of Queensland, Brisbane.**

The 2012 Conference of the AAPAE will be a residential conference and will be held at St John's College, the University of Queensland, running from Thursday evening, 28 June until Sunday lunchtime 1 July.

Located within the University of Queensland campus, St John's College provides both a beautiful and practical conference location. Close to transport and the CBD, and with the added convenience of on-site accommodation, we are certain the College will provide you with an enjoyable stay.

Whilst other states will be in the midst of cold winters come conference time, Brisbane in June is blessed with mild temperatures and mostly clear skies. We will make the most of this weather with a boat cruise down the Brisbane River on board the famous Kookaburra Queen. The cruise offers passengers a unique and memorable view of Brisbane, whilst enjoying a delicious meal.

**The 2012 AAPAE Conference Convener is Rev. Prof. John Morgan, St John's College, the University of Queensland.**

john.morgan@uq.edu.au

Please feel free to email with any queries about the conference or paper presentation.

Website and Booking Details will be in place early in January.



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT (CONT'D)

As he left the lecture theatre I gently caught his arm to detain him. I thanked him for a momentous speech and asked him for the reference to the poetry he read out during that speech. Kiros promptly tore it from his notes and handed it to me...and I read it out again that evening at the conference dinner, so moved was I by the words. Some poetry, most in fact, is universal in application, which is why it is such an eloquent manner to reach out to touch people's heartstrings. The piece was written by Andrea Cork, and captures the essence of racism, and I thank Kiros Hiruy

for sharing with us these precious words:

### ***Racism: It's in the Way***

It's in the way you patronize

The way you avert your eyes

The way that you cannot disguise

Your looks of horror and surprise.

It's the assumptions that you make

On my behalf, and for my sake

And in the way you do not hear

The things we tell you loud and clear....

So, that was an excerpt of the wonderful time we had in Hobart, for which we thank Leila and her team profusely, and a taste of perhaps even more engaging, soul searching ethical deliberations at our next upcoming conference to be convened in Brisbane by Rev Professor John Morgan at the St John's College of the University of Queensland.

Betty Chaar,

University of Sydney

# Call for Papers!

## 2012 CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

The overall aim of the AAPAE is to increase awareness and encourage discussion about the issues in applied ethics. This conference will focus on the ethical concerns within and around *civil society*; a sector distinct from government and epitomised by non-profit organizations, though potentially encompassing aspects of business. The concept of civil society alone already faces ethical questions in terms of defining those organisations which should be considered to make up this sector. Within civil society too there are ethical issues when looking at the structure of organisations, participation within the organisation, and said organisation's interaction with outside influences. For more on the concept and practice of civil society please visit the Civil Society International homepage: <http://www.civilsoc.org/>

### Call for Papers:

We welcome all newcomers and encourage papers/research endeavours to be presented. Papers are welcome from both academics and practitioners in all areas of professional and applied ethics. The conference theme is open to interpretation by presenters. You do not need to be a member of the Association to make a submission.

This will also provide an opportunity for publication in the AJPAE if you wish to pursue peer reviewed publication with the formal journal of the AAPAE. Feedback and critique of the work presented at the conference will be provided which can then help to shape a better submission for peer review.

**The conference will have both a refereed and a non-refereed stream**

**Refereed track papers** are to be submitted consistent with *Australian Journal of Professional and Applied Ethics* author guidelines. Abstracts and full papers from the refereed track will be published in a Conference Proceedings CD. Authors should submit a short biography of no more than 100 words and an abstract of no more than 200 words with their paper. Papers for this track must be no more than 5000 words, and should be submitted to the Confer-

ence Convenor by **28<sup>th</sup> April 2012**. An invitation to submit the manuscript to the AJPAE will follow after the conference proceedings.

**Non-refereed track papers** should be proposed by way of an abstract of approximately 250 words to the Conference Convenor by **28<sup>th</sup> April 2012**. Presenters in this category should clarify that their paper is intended for the non-refereed stream in the Subject Line of the email submission of their abstract.

## Keynotes

**Professor Daniel E Wueste,**

Director of the *Rutland Centre for Ethics* at Clemson University, Florida, and President of the *Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum*

Dr. Wueste's research and writing focus on issues in three areas: legal philosophy, social and political philosophy, and professional ethics. Wueste has a special interest in what ethicists can learn from legal philosophers and vice versa. He is the editor of *Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1994).

Professor Wueste is an *ex officio* member of the Advisory Council of the Center for Academic Integrity, formerly at Duke University, which is now part of the Rutland Institute for Ethics at Clemson University. (Professor Wueste's visit to Australia is funded by UniSA)

### Special Offer! - Registration Fees for Academics

This conference offers a registration fee for academics that will include (along with satchel, lanyard, program, CD of presentations and catering):

One free registration for one of your students as a bonus to encourage younger generations to attend and participate in this conference.  
(Accommodation = extra)

### Book Review Session

Submissions for this session may be made by an author or others for a session which will critically evaluate a recent book centred around ethical issues facing civil society. The proposal review can be in the form of a panel, including formal papers, or a roundtable discussion. The submission should indicate the title of the book and date of publication as well as all the panelists if applicable. A copy of the book must be submitted for review.

**The deadline for submission of a proposal for a Book Review Session is 28<sup>th</sup> April 2012.**

**Further Keynotes will be confirmed soon!**

## Ethics in Creative Industries and Complementary Medicine

By Emma Rush

*Would you expect a graphic designer to have an understanding of what professional ethics requires of them? What about a photographer? A naturopath? A massage therapist?*

The deeper and more general question behind these specific ones is whether university-educated practitioners within such 'new' professions should be expected both to understand and to practise the relevant professional ethics.

Let's take a few steps back. The historical development of professions has been characterised by the development of more formal technical training for practitioners, resulting in the introduction of a range of new disciplines into universities. As part of the same process, we have frequently seen more formal articulation of professional ethics coming from within newly professionalised areas of practice. A question therefore arises about whether the technical excellence that university curriculums aim to develop is properly matched by an adequate grounding for practitioners-to-be (i.e. students) to meet the ethical aspirations of their profession.

As befits an institution which strives for excellence in education for the professions, Charles Sturt University has been asking such questions about its professional courses. Thus, I am currently involved in the development of two new undergraduate subjects: *Legal and Ethical Issues in Complementary Medicine* and *Ethics and Law for Creative Industries*.

*Legal and Ethical Issues in Complementary Medicine* was offered in distance mode for the first time in Semester 2 2011, and was very well received by students in the Bachelor of

Health Sciences (Complementary Medicine). These students already hold a qualification in their specific modality (naturopathy,

massage therapy, acupuncture, and so on), have usually practised for some time, and are seeking continuing professional development. They found the subject 'thought provoking and at times, challenging', 'timely and topically relevant', 'very beneficial to [my] understanding of ethics in practice', and best of all, 'enjoyable' and even 'fun'. The ethics section of the syllabus incorporated a week on each of the four principles of health ethics, with readings and questions designed to encourage students to share and reflect upon their experiences. The question has been raised in the complementary medicine ethics literature whether such principles are equally relevant to complementary medicine as they are to conventional medicine (Stone, 2005, pp.95-96).

My own view, bolstered by my experience with the students, is that they certainly are. A further week contrasted the advantages and disadvantages of three major ethical theories (deontology, consequentialism, and virtue ethics) and students reflected on the influence of each theory in their own ethical decision-making processes. Finally, during the week linking the ethics to the law part of the subject, students wrestled with the broader question of ethical policy-making: how should complementary medicine be regulated, and why? (AHMAC, 2011) *Ethics and Law for Creative Industries* is currently under develop-

ment, for offer in both internal and distance mode for the first time in semester 2 of 2012. It will be taken by undergraduate students in acting, animation and visual effects, design for theatre and television, television production, media communication, photography, graphic design, jewellery, and fashion design and technology. Many of these students have limited industry experience, so much will turn on the quality and practice-relevance of the scenarios and case studies we are able to provide them. I will report on the results of these endeavours here in due course!

My explorations to date suggest that there are still many gaps in the ethics literature in both of these professional/disciplinary areas (complementary medicine and creative industries), so I'd be delighted to hear from anyone else working in these areas who might be interested in future research collaboration.

**Dr Emma Rush**

Lecturer in Philosophy and Ethics  
Charles Sturt University

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Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC), 2011 (February). Consultation paper: Options for regulation of unregistered health practitioners. Available from: <http://www.ahmac.gov.au/site/home.aspx> (accessed 2 December, 2011).

Stone, J. 2005. Ethics in complementary and alternative medicine, pp.83-110 in Heller, T. (ed.) *Perspectives on complementary and alternative medicine*. Routledge: United Kingdom.





## Report: Code of Conduct and Ethics for Vietnamese Lawyers

Roderick O'Brien

In mid 2011, Vietnam Bar Federation issued the Code of Conduct and Ethics for Vietnamese Lawyers [attachment to Decision No 68/QĐ-LĐLSVN 20 July 2011]. The Embassy of Denmark has kindly provided me with an English translation of the Code. The Code is relatively straightforward, with twenty-seven rules, most of which are rather general in nature. The Code amplifies the provisions in the 2007 Law on Lawyers [No. 65 /2006/QH11].

1. The Code situates the lawyer and the law practice organisations (e.g. law firms) in a political context. Rule 1 states that "The lawyer has a duty to be loyal to the Fatherland. Through professional activities, the lawyer contributes to protection of justice, development of a rule-of-law state in accordance with the Constitution and the laws." This political orientation is developed in rule 24.5, whereby the lawyer is prohibited from [taking] "advantage of being a person participating in proceedings at court according to the laws to speak out words affecting the national interests, social interests, the people's solidarity, religion or disseminating illegal and unethical viewpoints." The Code simply repeats in another way the provisions of Article 9.1(g) of the Law on Lawyers: "Abusing the legal practice and/or lawyer's capacity to cause adverse impact on the national security and/or public order or safety, or to infringe upon interests of the State, the public or legitimate rights and interests of agencies, organizations or individuals." The roles of the state and the Communist Party raise difficult issues for lawyers who wish to practice with professional and ethical independence. The Vietnamese Lawyers Association is specifically organized under the "Fatherland Front" which controls non-government organizations. [http://

[www.hoiluatgiavn.org.vn/content/view/39/98/lang,english/](http://www.hoiluatgiavn.org.vn/content/view/39/98/lang,english/)]

2. The Code covers conventional areas of practice, including issues which would be familiar to lawyers in other jurisdictions:

The provision of legal aid (the level of commitment is not specified);

Relationship with the client (including fees, refusal to take a case or withdrawal, and conflicts of interest);

Relationship with colleagues (including competition, and trainee lawyers);

Relationship with "Proceeding Agencies" [courts] including collusion, behaviour in court, and evidence);

Relationship with other government agencies (including complaint and denunciation proceedings); and

Relationship with the mass media.

3. A clear concern of the Code is the use of intermediaries to influence parties to litigious or non-litigious cases. The use of intermediaries (touts) to gain business and the use of intermediaries to collude with court officials or with state agencies are prohibited conduct. Corruption is an issue of great concern in Vietnam, which rates 116 out of 178 in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index of 2010.

4. One of the prohibited behaviours under rule 14.9 is to "directly inform the client of the lawyer's personal relation with proceeding agencies, persons in charge of proceedings or authorized state officials in order to create the client's confidence on the work results as a criteria for choosing the lawyer by the client." This rule suggests that clients will expect lawyers to be able to 'enter the back door' of courts and government

offices, using their personal relationships

as the key, and the Code seeks to make it more difficult for the client to identify lawyers on this basis.

5. While the Code does provide for confidentiality, there is no provision for attorney-client privilege.

6. The Code of Conduct and Ethics does not provide for enforcement. This is the responsibility of the local Bar

Associations under article 85.2 of the Law on Lawyers: "The consideration and decision on disciplining lawyers shall be the competence the Board of Management of the Bar Association at the request

**"The roles of the state and the Communist Party raise difficult issues for lawyers who wish to practice with professional and ethical independence."**

of the Reward and Discipline Council of that Bar Association". The grounds for disbarment may be a cause for concern, as in the August 2011 case of human-rights lawyer Huynh Van Dong who has taken prominent cases for protestors and other dissidents. [http://www.observatoire-avocats.org/en/2011/08/19/huynh-van-dong-a-vietnamese-lawyer-arbitrarily-disbarred-by-his-bar-association/]

The gradual establishment of a legal profession, and the enactment of provisions such as the Law on Lawyers and the Code of Conduct and Ethics, can be regarded as positive steps on the way to establishment of a rule-of-law state in Vietnam. Perhaps a profession will emerge which can be effective, professional, and ethical. Or perhaps the laws and the Code will be simply a façade. The Vietnamese government has announced that its judicial reform includes strategic goals of rapid expansion and professionalization for the Vietnamese bar by 2020. The date is not so far off.

Roderick O'Brien

## A Return to EBEN

University of Antwerp,  
September, 2011

### Conference Report by Michael Segon

From the mid 1990s through to 2002 I was a regular attendee and member of the European Business Ethics Network and its annual conferences - including a very subdued 2001 event held in Valencia across the tragic events of 9/11.

EBEN is the premier association for applied and professional ethics across the expanding European Union and its conferences bring together a diverse range of academics and practitioners that almost give it a multi-disciplinary feel. Importantly the network includes consultants and practitioners who mix with ethicists and philosophers addressing the challenges of academia, research and of applied ethics within the education, business and public sector communities.

After a ten year absence I was able to attend the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual EBEN conference held in the University of Antwerp in Belgium from 15-17<sup>th</sup> September with its theme of "Dare to Care - Building a caring organisation" organized by Luc Van Liedekerke from the centre for Ethics,

University of Antwerp.

The Conference had five main themes of Business Ethics Education, Whistle Blowing, Virtue in Business and Management, Continental Philosophy and business Ethics and a debate workshop on the difficult interaction between caring and HR.

Over two and a half days over 100 papers were delivered across parallel and plenary sessions. Whilst it was impossible to attend all ses-

"One of the advantages of the EBEN event is its relatively informal nature that allows frank discourse between participants, and this year's event was no exception."

sions, it became clear that our European colleagues face many of the same issues that we do in the Australasian context. These include the difficulties of integrating ethics into and across the business and professional curricula in addition to challenges of applying ethics to the business

and public sectors. These are perhaps even more pertinent in the European Union amidst the financial crisis gripping the region. This was, as expected, a common point of discussion amongst many the delegates.

The social events were also fitting with Antwerp's historical context with an organ recital in the city's magnificent gothic Roman Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady, which also houses several major art works including Peter Paul Ruben's, "The Raising of the Cross." The conference dinner was held at the recently restored "Borla" Theatre and provided an opportunity for delegates to mingle in somewhat less formal surrounds over a buffet dinner.

EBEN is arguably one of world's most prominent ethics associations

and its conference is amongst the top two or three such events on the ethics calendar. The attendees at EBEN events commonly include some of the leading ethicists and philosophers from across the globe and one of the advantages of the EBEN event is its relatively informal nature that allows frank discourse between participants, and this year's event was no exception.

As with most academic conferences the importance of research output was also evident with several journals and publishers, including the Journal of Business Ethics having a strong presence in addition to numerous notices and calls for other conferences and special editions.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference will be held in Barcelona, Spain from the 19-22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2012. EBEN also organizes a somewhat more focused research conference each year typically in June hosted by one of the EBEN chapters, (EU member country networks) and the 2012 conference will take place in Newcastle (UK), June 7-9.

Whilst traveling from Australia to Europe for a two day event has its challenges, the opportunities to network with some of the world's leading scholars and practitioners proves more than a worthwhile experience. I would enthusiastically recommend EBEN events to AAPAE colleagues and I certainly hope that it will not be another ten years between EBEN events.

Michael Segon,

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.



## Conference Report: Australasian Business Ethics Network, (ABEN) Auckland, Dec 2-3,

**CÉCILE ROZUEL**  
**MICHELLE GREENWOOD**

A year ago, the Australasian Business Ethics Network (ABEN) was formally established as an open organisation aiming to support research that addresses ethically and politically topical issues of concern and relevance to both the international and Australasian community. The network held its first annual conference in Auckland, New Zealand on December 2nd and 3rd 2011.

Dr. Cécile Rozuel and her colleagues from Auckland University of Technology organised the event over a day and a half. The theme of this inaugural conference, "Business Ethics: Expectations and Disappointments", aimed to stimulate reflection on the state of business ethics research and teaching, and identify ways to raise moral awareness at all levels of an organisation. Submissions were invited on a wide range of topics and more than forty scholars from Australia, New Zealand and overseas

responded to the call with inspiring papers.

Of significant interest were sessions dedicated to ethics education and the interconnection between ethics, business and public policy. Other papers addressed the role of spirituality

**"The theme of this inaugural conference aimed to stimulate reflection on the state of business ethics research and teaching, and identify ways to raise moral awareness at all levels of an organisation."**

at work, the limitations of corporate social responsibility and existing business models, ethical challenges facing finance and human resource management professionals, issues of corporate governance and leadership, as well as moral tensions in academic life. Selected papers will be published in



late 2012 in the *Australian Journal for Professional and Applied Ethics* and the *Journal of Business Ethics Education*.

The small size of the event meant that all participants had the opportunity to network and discuss at length with colleagues about their research. A point of difference was the all organic and fair-trade catering which received unanimous praise. The *Business and Professional Ethics Journal* was (re)launched at the conference dinner, celebrating the journal's new editorial direction under Mollie Painter-Morland and Patricia Werhane from DePaul University.

The next conference is scheduled in December 2012 in Melbourne, and information about ABEN will be available on the network's website: [www.aben.org.au](http://www.aben.org.au).





## Book Notice: Applied Ethics – Strengthening Ethical Practices

Peter Bowden

The *Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics*, AAPAE, has brought out a new book on applied ethics. The book draws on the wide range of skills and knowledge within the Association on building ethical capabilities. Coverage of the ethical issues encountered across many different types of organisations and professions ensures that it is significantly more practical than any book on ethics currently on the market. Among the thirteen disciplines that are examined are medicine, engineering, business, nursing, the sciences, even veterinary ethics and animal welfare. Each chapter has been researched and written by a specialist in the ethical issues of that discipline, providing in total an unparalleled cumulative learning experience across the ethical concerns of our society.

Overarching the thirteen disciplines are examinations of five key issues in ethical behaviour – common issues across all aspects of moral practice within society. Their adoption is necessary if our social and business institutions are to behave more ethically. First and perhaps foremost is distinguishing

between right and wrong – a capability that is sometimes submerged beneath our tendency to go with the majority, or to place our own needs or desires first. It is a tendency that is not assisted by the multitude of often conflicting theories on moral behaviour that have emerged over the centuries. Two chapters, presented by well-recognised thinkers in the Association, provide methodologies that are widely applicable, of ready benefit to, and usable by people with little or no knowledge of moral theory.

**“Among the thirteen disciplines that are examined are medicine, engineering, business, nursing, the sciences, even veterinary ethics and animal welfare.”**

Second, codes of ethics are often regarded as public relations documents, designed by management to present a sound ethical image of the organisation. They are regarded by staff, and often by the public, as window dressing. The chapter on ethical codes draws on empirical analyses to document approaches for ensuring that codes are effective. Foremost among these approaches is *ownership* – the identification by staff of the actual ethical issues they face, and the development and management of their own responses.

Third, extensive research tells us that blowing the whistle is the most effective way to stop wrong doing. But speaking out is not without difficulty, creating above all huge

problems for the whistleblower, but also for the institution, and sometimes for the administrators who have to sort out the result. The chapter on whistleblowing examines and identifies policies and practices that make the process effective. It also provides guidelines for whistleblowers where effective protection legislation and practices have not yet been adopted.

Fourth, the corporate meltdowns of the previous decade and the dubious ethical behaviours behind the recent Global Financial Crisis have generated a near universal desire to introduce policies, institutions and legislation that strengthen ethical practices in the public and private sectors. The increase in these agencies and practices has been described as ‘exponential’. This institutionalising of ethical behaviour is recent, and has been subject to little research. The chapter on such institutionalisation examines what has taken place so far, reaching the conclusion that these processes show strong potential for strengthening ethical behaviour.

Fifth, one aspect of the increased emphasis on ethical behaviour is a stronger provision of ethics teaching in our schools, colleges and universities, and on ethics consulting and training in the work force. As the chapters of the AAPAE book demonstrate, this training necessarily must be undertaken by people with knowledge of the relevant ethical concerns in the discipline or organisation. It needs also to encompass the many issues raised in the book. They are both tasks that are wider than most discipline-based training or educational programs in moral philosophy. The chapter on ethics teaching and training examines the possible approaches that can be adopted.

**Peter Bowden (ed.) 2012 *Applied Ethics: Strengthening Ethical Practices* (Pahran: Tilde University Press).**





## BOOK NOTICE: ARISTOTLE'S POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR NATURE

STEPHAN MILLETT

Forms of life are dying out at an unprecedented rate. But what is life, what does it mean to be living and why does it matter? Does it matter if species die out? Does it matter if human domination of the planet creates an impoverished world that becomes less and less habitable? Does it matter that we behave 'responsibly'?

By going back to Aristotle and his idea of the motive force immanent in living things, we can begin to develop new approaches to these questions. By looking at the natural world through an Aristotelian lens it becomes clear that individual living organisms are the locus of value; that each organism has a unique value; and that individual living things are the prime objects of moral consideration.

In this book, published in October, the author describes an ethic with a unique Aristotelian flavour that applies to all living things, including humans. It mounts an argument that value enters the world with the emergence of living things and that individual living things are both the locus of value and the prime objects of moral consid-

**"By looking at the natural world through an Aristotelian lens it becomes clear that individual living organisms are the locus of value."**

an immanent motive force makes each living thing inherently and uniquely valuable and that each member of each species is a repository of a unique value, something that puts extinction of species into a clear value framework: it matters every time a species becomes extinct because a unique kind of value and a unique store of value is gone forever.

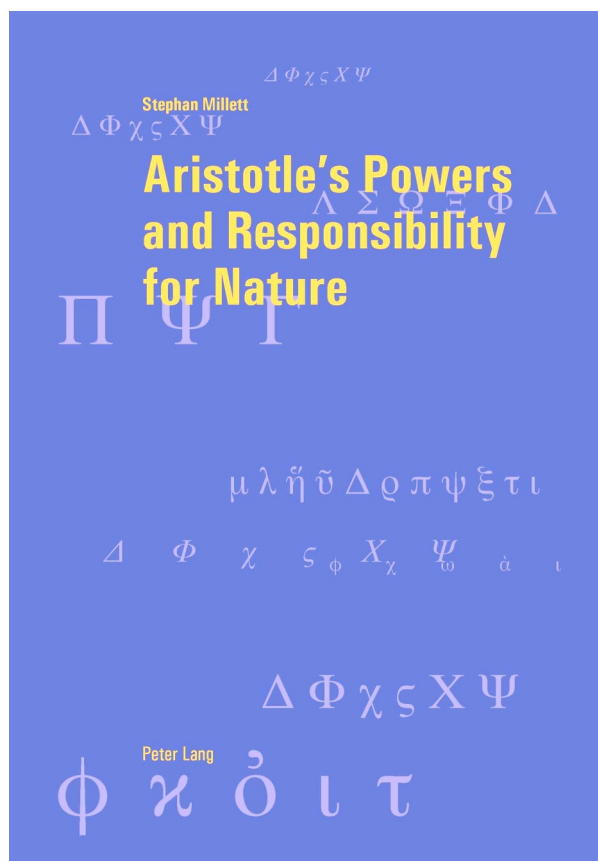
In the latter chapters the book develops an ethic of responsibility and explores the twin notions of bio-phenomenology and bio-semiotics, beginning with the work of Jakob von Uexküll and his concept of *Umwelt*, which describes a sort of perceptual bubble surrounding each organism as, in phenomenological terms, it creates its own world. Von Uexküll was a significant influence on some of the key phenomenologists of early last century.

By working from this bio-phenomenological view we can identify for each organism three related niche values which, when identified, have the practical value of assisting moral agents to differentiate in value terms between organisms. Assessments of these niche values (ontological niche value, semiotic niche value and the widely known ecological niche value) can be used in a sort of environmental triage to make judgments as to the practical worth of this or that organism in this or that situation.

In the ethic argued for in this

eration. It further argues that moral agents are under an obligation of responsibility toward each living thing and that adopting an attitude of responsibility to living things is an essential part of what it means to be human.

It begins by tracking Aristotle's idea of the motive force immanent in living things (*dūnamis*) through some of the significant figures in European philosophy and into some of the key theories of contemporary environmental philosophy. It shows that the presence of



BOOK REVIEW

Review by Howard Harris

***Moral Courage in Organizations: Doing the Right Thing at Work*, Debra R. Comer and Gina Vega (eds) ME Sharpe, Armonk NY.**

This is a book about the practice of courage, showing how individuals can behave courageously in the workplace. The intended audience, if the characters who appear in the examples and cases is anything to go by, will be found among supervisors and practitioners rather than on the executive floor – we hear from or about people who are working as a nurse, waitress, OD specialist, chef, graduate student, carpenter, fire captain, financial analyst and junior partner.

The balance in the volume is

illustrated by the positioning of the chapters containing examples and tools between book-ends, one written by Al Gini, a co-founder of *Business Ethics Quarterly* and the other by Dennis Moberg, a former President of the Society for Business Ethics. These chapters are not unduly academic, rather fit for purpose. Gini defines moral courage as the readiness to endure danger for the sake of principle, and argues that it is neither beyond our reach nor outside our reasonable aspiration.

Moberg reminds us that acting

courageously means we have chosen rightly in the face of harm, that there are dangers of excess as well as of deficiency for courage, and that courage needs to be aimed at good. The central sections offer examples of individuals who have acted courageously and an introduction to a range of skills and tools that will help people to act with courage. These examples serve a double purpose, not only showing that courageous behaviour is possible but also that it is needed.

Stephen Kohn encourages

**Aristotle's Powers and Responsibility for Nature (Cont'd)**

book, humans are part of the natural world and are subject to evaluation in terms of the ontological, semiotic and ecological niches they occupy, in the same way as any organism. They are part of, not apart from, nature (a concept that the book seeks to clarify). However, humans are more complex organisms than

most, if not all, others and complexity is important in this environmental triage because more complex organism occupy a greater ontological niche and have greater capacity for generating and interpreting signs (a greater semiotic niche) and have a greater capacity for interacting in an ecological sense with the living world around them. Triage is, however, situation dependent and one human life does not, for example, necessarily trump the loss of the last of a species.

This book is based on careful scholarship and contains a detailed subject index and a separate

name index.

However, despite the apparently difficult subject matter, the book is written in a style that will make it accessible to undergraduates and informed lay readers. It is available online.

Stephan Millett is a former journalist and school teacher who received his PhD in Philosophy from Murdoch University. He is an ethics specialist at Curtin University in Perth.

**Millett, Stephan (2011). *Aristotle's Powers and Responsibility for Nature*. Bern: Peter Lang. 303pp. Vol. 44 of the Berner Reihe philosophischer Studien. Series editor: Dr Andreas Graesser, Bern University.**



## Review: Moral Courage in Organizations (Cont'd)

Howard Harris

readers to act courageously by showing that whistleblowing has a critical role in the control of corporate fraud. Roland Kidwell notes that moral courage, arising from strong ethical impetus is one of the six characteristics of social entrepreneurs. He has a place for both the head and the heart, for reason and emotion, in the development and display of courage. Jeffrey MacDonald writes of faith and moral courage in a chapter which tells the stories of the car dealer, the nurse on the organ transplant team, the social worker and the young supermarket cashier who all act courageously in standing up for a principle. Gina Vega goes back to the first Israelite kings, Saul and David, to show that individuals have been yielding to the temptation to do nothing for centuries.

The editors, Debra Comer and Gina Veda, describe the Personal Ethical Threshold (PET) and include a questionnaire which can be used to establish one's individual PET score. The PET is an effective way to make the ideas of moral intensity and situation salient to individuals. Typical of the practice-focussed approach of the book, the questionnaire uses ten scenarios based on actual incidents that will be within the compass of many readers.

There is considerable consis-

tency in the tools and activities, and in the authors' confidence that the tools will work. The book begins with an acknowledgement that courage is often lacking because it involved effort for which we were unprepared and many examples show individuals preparing and

**"It tells the stories of the car dealer, the nurse on the organ transplant team, the social worker and the young supermarket cashier who all act courageously in standing up for a principle."**

practising in the face of expected difficulty. Practice can be demanding, and as Moberg points out it is disciplined practice which is the most effective. The book

is not holding out an easy answer, but it is repeatedly showing that something can be done.

There is an emphasis on reflection as part of the preparation and practice. Leslie Sekerka and her colleagues have the military taking time for a reflective pause. Mary Gentile notes that taking time to reflect on and name ethical challenges can help to prevent denial or freezing and even help us to reflect *in advance* of stress. Contemplation is the first step in the contemplation-observation-preparation process which Comer and Baker offer for building a morally cou-

rageous coalition in the organization.

The editors have produced a book which focuses on the positive and which prepares its readers to confront the issues which face them rather than give in to them and complain. The consistent message is that it is possible to do something, and that this is important to us both as individuals and as members or managers of organizations. Aristotle tells us that virtue is learnt by example and practice. *Moral courage in Organizations* provides many examples, in sufficient depth for us to see what is going on, and provides many ideas and programs for disciplined practice.

Each chapter comes with endnotes and a reference list. The editors have done a commendable job linking ideas from chapter to chapter with cross-references.

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***Moral Courage in Organizations: Doing the Right Thing at Work*, Debra R. Comer and Gina Vega (eds) ME Sharpe, Armonk NY,**

**ISBN 978 0 7656 2410 9  
USD39.95**

"Making the right moves...."

# AAPAE

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*Australian Ethics* is published by the AAPAE: ABN: 57 195 873 179