

AUSTRALIAN ETHICS

MAY, 2011

TASMANIAN TREES AND TURKISH RUGS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT BY MICHAEL SCHWARTZ

ETHICS:

APPLIED AND PROFESSIONAL

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

1

UPCOMING 2011 AAPAE CONFERENCE

2

LAST EXPERIENCE OF ETHICAL BUSINESS

4

DO POLITICIANS HAVE ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS?

6

ETHICAL MINDSETS AND ETHICAL CLIMATES

8

MORAL DISTRESS IN NURSING

11

The Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics 18th Annual conference will be hosted by The School of Philosophy at The University of Tasmania from the 7th to the 9th of June, 2011. The Conference Convenor is Dr Leila Toiviainen. Leila's convening of an 18th annual conference might not be that insignificant; especially when one remembers how often Leila has returned to work in India on behalf of those in need. After all, some have suggested that the number 18 might have significance in Hindu Mythology what with The Bhagavad Gita consisting of 18 chapters and being in The Mahabharata which consists of 18 books. Of course that might be a mere coincidence. But regardless of that we are most fortunate to have Leila convening our 18th conference and highly appreciative of all she is doing to make it the success it will be.

"Tasmania seems to embody many of the ethical issues which currently concern us."

ronment and those concerned with employment have often surfaced at AAPAE conferences. As have conflicts between those arguing that financial markets are efficient against those arguing that they are not, and that they do not discount all the probable costs: especially to those less vocal stakeholders such as the environment. It is of course interesting that in 2004 when the proposed pulp mill was announced Gunns' share price was at \$4.50. Seven years later it is close to one seventh of that. One can but speculate whether indeed financial markets are efficient and have it quite right, or whether they in the case of Gunns are not discounting all the significant costs, or have discounted numerous fictional ones.

Tasmania, furthermore, is a place where in 1803 some – what we term today boat people – arrived with every intention of staying. On arrival the local inhabitants numbered in excess of 5,000 people. Few survived the encounter. Presumably the outcomes of such encounters affected the Australian psyche. Currently, an Australian population of close to 22 million people views the arrival of proportionally far fewer boat people with extreme trepidation. Although, perhaps that is being both unfair: and inaccurate too. Nonetheless issues of dispersion and statehood plague the contemporary world and cause much ethical debate.

Admittedly such issues always existed. After all, way before 1803, in fact in 1066, a fellow named William together with others left France in some boats and headed for England with every intention of staying forever. And they did. Boats though were not always necessary.

The 18TH ANNUAL AAPAE CONFERENCE
Strengthening our Ethical Practices
 June 2011



Keynote Speeches

Tuesday 7th – Thursday 9th June, 2011
 The University of Tasmania, Hobart, School of Philosophy.

Barbara Etter

CEO of the Integrity Commission.
 “Leadership and its Critical Role in Strengthening Public Sector Ethics”

Professor Jeff Malpas

School of Philosophy UTAS.
 “The Demise of Ethics”

Associate Professor Michael Schwartz

School of Economics, Finance and Marketing.
 “Appeasing the Past: Denying History, Destroying Memories, Creating Myths.”

Kiros Hiruy

Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts, PhD student, Institute for Regional Development, School of Management, UTAS.
 “People of African Descent—the moral reality”

The [Draft Conference Program](#), and details on registration, accommodation, keynotes, and more, is now available at the Conference Website:

<http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/arts/philosophy/cpage.asp?ICpageID=465>



TASMANIAN TREES AND TURKISH RUGS (CONT'D)

Five years after that in 1071 the Turks, after breaking the Byzantine line of defence in Eastern Anatolia, invaded what in 1923, after the exodus earlier that year of the remaining 1.5 million Greeks, became known as Turkey. Persian rug aficionados insist that the flight of those Greeks explains why Turkey no longer manufactures those oriental rugs which were produced there prior to 1923. And indeed one aspect of globalisation has been the increasing migration of various populations seeking employment opportunities. The reception of such populations, and

the conflicting rights of those seeking refuge against those wishing to exclude both them and what they represent, occupies much of the current ethical debate. As do debates as to the ethics of nationalism and whether a nation is an illusory community. All of that is germane to Tasmania and what happened there in 1803.

For those reasons and many others the AAPAE is fortunate to be holding its 18th annual conference in Tasmania where we will debate various issues relating to applied ethics and, hopefully, through such debates

leave Tasmania able to contribute to a better world. Whether we are indeed able to or whether we are not, we will leave indebted to Leila and her colleagues in the School of Philosophy at the University of Tasmania.

Michael Schwartz,
 RMIT, Melbourne.

Welcome! By Conference Convenor Leila Toiviainen

Preparations for the 18th annual conference are well on the way at the School of Philosophy of the University of Tasmania, and the draft program has just been published on the conference website.

The staff of the School of Philosophy is well represented at the conference. Professor Jeff Malpas, an internationally renowned scholar of the philosophy of place and space, hermeneutics and the philosophy of language and the history of philosophy will deliver a keynote address titled 'The Demise of Ethics' on the opening day. The current head of the School, Lucy Tatman, will continue this questioning of our ethical assumptions in her paper 'Applied What?'

One of the afternoon sessions is dedicated to the investigation of alternative ethical perspectives by Kristi Gisellson, one of the lecturers at the School of Philosophy and by Cynthia Townley from Macquarie University. I have had the fortune of being one of her undergraduate and postgraduate colleagues at the University of Tasmania. Cynthia's paper develops the idea that cross-species collectives, for instance a household of human beings and their pets can form a moral and legal entity similar to corporations as legal persons. The third speaker of this session is David Wallace, one of Cynthia's postgraduate students from Macquarie University. He discusses the application of Aristotelian virtue ethics to child protection work.

Tasmania got its new Integrity Commission in June 2010. Its CEO Barbara Etter, a former West Australian Police Commissioner who holds a Pharmacy degree, an Honours law degree, an MBA and a Master of Laws, will deliver the keynote address on the morning of the second day of the conference. She will

speak on 'Leadership and Its Critical Role in Strengthening Public Sector Ethics'. Barbara will explore the role of integrity agencies further with two of her staff members, Louise Clery and Clare Mason.

An international dimension to the conference and to ethical thinking is provided by Kiros Hiruy. He is currently a PhD candidate at the Institute for Regional Development at the University of Tasmania, he is also an Honorary Research Associate at the School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania. He is a graduate of Tasmanian Leaders Program (TLP) 2007 and he holds BSc in Agriculture from Ethiopia, Diploma in Dairy Husbandry and Milk Processing from the Netherlands, Masters in Environmental Management from the University of Tasmania and Diploma in Project Management from Tasmanian Skills Institute. In this year declared by the United Nations General Assembly as the *International Year of People of African Descent* Kiros will speak on 'People of African Descent - the Moral Reality' on the second day of the conference after lunch.

The AAPAE members at various mainland universities, particularly those at RMIT and the University of South Australia have undertaken scholarly research and submitted papers to be presented at the conference. May I take this opportunity to thank Michael



Schwartz and Michael John Seaton at RMIT and Howard Harris at the University of South Australia for supporting me with the organisation of this conference. They have been available at all times with good advice and most helpful suggestions; I could not have done without their kindness and generosity.

We are fortunate in having our colleagues from Waikato University in Hamilton, New Zealand, travelling to Hobart to deliver papers at the conference. Richard Varey will discuss ethical marketing practices; Andrea Bather's topic is Corporate Social Responsibility and the Law. The university is further represented by Deborah Stevens and Catherine Syms who are conducting a practical workshop 'Strengthening Ethics Education' for teachers on the afternoon of Thursday June 9. The workshop is free for any delegate attending the main conference.

I look forward to seeing you in Hobart in June,

Leila Toiviainen,

School of Philosophy, University of Tasmania.



My Last Experience of Ethical Business

By Angela Hirst

I've always worked for ethical businesses. Each has attracted me via a charismatic figurehead's sales pitch (let's call this character CF). My last attraction had the largest CF I've ever met. When this man speaks, people listen. People look to him for answers, and for entertainment while he's giving them. He presents himself as the everyday man whose work is humble. He speaks with angry determination against injustice and with passion for his visions of a better place.

He runs what is called a 'Community Supported Agriculture' (CSA) enterprise. This particular CSA brings together local farmers producing food in a sustainable way (or intending to), and provides them with a growing demand for their produce through a consumer box system. In return, consumers get a much closer relationship with their food source, one they can trust, support, and learn more about.

The CF asked me to help set up a storefront business for this CSA, but as time went on, my role in the enterprise evolved. I'm a trained chef, a writer, and a food ethicist. I completed my PhD in Philosophy on the subject of urban people's relationship to food production. How come it's so easy to avoid responsibility toward the places where our food is produced? That was my question. Avoidance was the enemy and I



thought I'd found my friends, finally, in this CSA.

There was

plenty to do. I started a catering business, using produce sourced directly from the CSA farmers. I produced preserves from the seconds the farmers couldn't otherwise sell. I started marketing the farmers' value-added products to our customers, increasing the sales of cheeses, juices and dairy products significantly. And, along with 5 other staff members, I was voted into an organisational position within the business. We were tasked with helping the CSA to become financial sustainable, and to work effectively for the farmers, the customers and the CSA employees. I was happy and ready for the task, loopy almost, with the sense that I'd finally found a business that measured up to my ethical standards.

One of the first tasks I took on was organising our farmer information. Up to this point, information about our farmers was contained on scraps of paper and in the head of our produce manager (let's call him PM). He had direct relationships with the farmers, the exact terms of which were never written down. CF and PM had worked together from the very beginning, building up the enterprise from the involvement of just a few farmers to many dozens. It was unclear to all of us, except CF and PM, how many farmers we actually had on our books, and more importantly, how many were growing their produce organically.

"Avoidance was the enemy and I thought I'd found my friends, finally, in this CSA."

The issue of chemical farming was of intense interest to our customers, many of whom were willing to support farmers to improve their practice from minimal chemical use to organic farming. But still, most were becoming members of this CSA because we were providing them with affordable, local, *mostly organic* produce. We often told our customers that 80% of our farmers were farming organically, and I wanted to check this figure out, and put a process in place to help the other farmers, the ones that weren't farming organically, to better their practice.

So I started talking to the farmers, one by one. This was difficult in itself, as the PM would leave farmers off the lists he would dictate to me, or give me wrong contact details. I put this down to his own scattered process, which worked well enough while the business was small, but had grown unwieldy now we had so many farmers to deal with. So I turned detective, doing my own digging through the businesses invoices and receipts. I called every farmer, around 80 of them, and I asked them what they supplied to us, and what sort of farming practices they used.

I found out there were far fewer organic suppliers than we thought, but there were a lot of farmers describing themselves as 'low spray'. There were also some farmers that described themselves as entirely conventional. This seemed a surprise to all of us.

I decided we needed a more detailed method of collecting the

My Last Experience of Ethical Business (Cont'd) by Angela Hirst

farmers' data, particularly on the 'low spray' and conventional farmers, so we could see exactly what sort of chemicals they were using, why, how much, and whether there were alternatives to explore. I constructed a detailed questionnaire that I sent to all the farmers. As the surveys started coming back, it became clear that the farmers who described themselves as 'low spray' were really anything but that. It must be hard to admit conventional practice to an organization that's priding itself on its largely organic sourcing.

Maybe it's my naivety, but I saw this as just another step in the challenge, not a cover up. I figured that PM and CF's systems must have gotten away from themselves, and that this was the perfect time to bring transparency and accountability back into play.

PM and CF thought otherwise. Through a series of underhand plays and deceptions, too complex to get into here, I was bad mouthed behind my back to people who mattered and pushed out of my decision-making role. I decided to expose these plays and deceptions, and the reason for them, to the staff of the CSA. As a result, 3 other key members of the business quit in a flurry of anger and disappointment. But the CF never responded directly to my concerns.

Instead, he directed his charismatic voice to the public, describing the steps 'we' were taking to improve the farmers' practices. It was a flurry of promises and rating systems, but I knew enough about the state of the situation to see that these promises were impossi-

ble to achieve without systemic changes no one was willing, or able, to oversee. The people who were had already quit.

All the people that cared about this issue left the business. The staff that stayed maintained a fierce loyalty to the CF and were eager to distance themselves from the racket we made. I often considered going public with the information I had, but never did. Maybe I'm a coward? But I'd experienced the damage a little badmouthing can do, and I was frightened of feeling the full wrath of a man exposed in his hypocrisy.

What I did realize, is that I would never again work for charismatic figurehead. CFs attract people with their words. That's one of their gifts. But I am

yet to find one who is as passionate about following through on their vision as they are in promulgating it. Perhaps there is also a lesson here, about listening more carefully to the quieter voices, doing their business without the showcasing.

The experience has taught me a lesson that I've been taught many times before but to lesser degrees, and I'm finally embodying

the knowledge. If I want to work for an ethical business, I'm going to have to build that business myself. So that's what I'm doing now. Slowly, but with a strength and confidence that's building. I run a catering business that pays careful attention to the provenance of its supplies, and I write about food, ethics and sourcing at www.thegoodsoup.com. These are the small beginnings, but I do have quiet, hopeful visions for the future.

References

Hirst, Angela, 'Levinas separates the (hu)man from the non(hu)man, using hunger, enjoyment and anxiety to illuminate their relationship', *Cosmos and History* (Vol.3, No.1, 2007).

Hirst, Angela, 'Avoiding ethics in an inner city suburb', *New Talents 21C 2006* (Australian Public Intellectual Network, 2007).

The name of my business, *The Good Soup*, comes from an Emmanuel Levinas quote 'We live from 'good soup'...'

Levinas, Emmanuel, *Totality and Infinity, an Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by A. Lingis. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1961), p.110.

"These promises were impossible to achieve without systemic changes no one was willing, or able, to oversee."



Do Politicians Have Ethical Obligations?

Peter Bowden

All disciplines have ethical obligations that are particular to that occupation. We can argue, for instance, that engineers have the obligation to check their designs, so that their bridges do not fall down, as did the West Gate bridge in Melbourne (Royal Commission, 1971). Engineers build the roads, cars, power plants, etc., that cause much environmental concern. Lawyers also face specific ethical concerns. Those who know their client is at fault but who plead not guilty, rather than enter a no plea, or in other ways defend that client, can justifiably be accused of unethical conduct. Doctors, and others in the health professions, have ethical obligations of a higher order than most. The nature of their work has generated books, running into the hundreds of pages, totally devoted to their ethical obligations (Beauchamp and Childress, 2008, Kerridge et al. 2009). Even tow truck drivers have obligations not to arrive at the scene of an accident in their multiples, nor to harass some distraught driver overcome by the mess in which they have landed themselves.

We could extend this list. Journalists, some would say, have the highest ethical obligations of all. They have a huge influence; are even the overriding decider for many, on significant

aspects of our lives – how we vote, what are our attitudes to global warming, to foreign aid, and the like.

So what of politicians? What ethical obligations do they have? Obligations put on them by the nature of their calling? It is not an easy question to answer. To keep your election promises is an obvious response. But to keep your promise is an obligation put on us all; it is not therefore particular to politicians. In any case, the moral argument that we can break promises to meet a higher ethical obligation is not too far different from a classification by a former Australian Prime Minister of core and non-core promises.

We could point out that the massive swing against the recent NSW Labor government was in no small part due the dubious morality of that government. Nine ministers in two years must be a world record. But once we examine the nature of that morality, we do not find that it is in any way connected with their political tasks – paedophilia, unfortunately, is

universal. Sacking whistleblowers is likewise universal, as are gaining personal benefits through ignoring conflicts of interest. Nor is employing or otherwise benefiting people who support you. Even wandering hands at social gatherings is not unique to NSW Labor. In any case the wrongs of this party seem likely to be matched by the incoming Liberal government. The big black hole in state finances announced by the new Premier within his first few days was subsequently shown to be non-existent. Or the newly elected member for Rockdale, John Flowers, on a pension, unable to work since 1996, but now able to energetically represent his constituency. The Liberal government had to force through a change in parliamentary rules to allow it. But again, using the welfare system to your benefit is not uncommon. John Flowers is not unique. But it all adds to a widespread conviction that our politicians are unethical in the carrying out of their political roles. It is perhaps because we expect so much more of them that they appear particularly wrong, despite the fact that they are committing the same ethical transgressions as many others in the community.

If we were to search a list of wrongs for the public service – thirty eight of which are listed in a massive study of whistleblowing in the Australian Public Service, we find that none are particularly political in na-

“To keep your promise is an obligation put on us all; it is not therefore particular to politicians.”

Do Politicians Have Ethical Obligations? (Cont'd)

Peter Bowden

ture (A J Brown, 2008).

Internationally, of course, it is relative simple to pin down the political wrongs. There are many examples of governments ignoring the treaties they signed. A number of countries are erupting at the moment as their political leaders are overriding the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Others are refusing to sign treaties that they should agree to – notably the US on the International Criminal Court. In 2002 the United States together with only Israel and Sudan, formally withdrew its intent to ratify its membership of the court. There are, in fact, many countries whose politicians could be accused of human rights violations, but Australia is not one of them. Those who seek more support for refugees would perhaps disagree. The deplorable health and social statistics of its indigenous peoples have also attracted much criticism, but violation of their rights is not one of the causes.

Australia has signed all major international treaties. It is still debating the issue of its own Bill of Rights, but that is a domestic issue, not an international one. If we confine the question to domestic ethical issues, we are still faced with the problem of identifying those that lie within the province of politicians alone. Australians are very criti-

cal of their politicians, broadly regarding them as a collection of self serving individuals, exhibiting somewhat dubious ethical convictions. This belief must have some substance behind it.

Perhaps it is the definition of

“Australians are very critical of their politicians, broadly regarding them as a collection of self serving individuals, exhibiting somewhat dubious ethical convictions. This belief must have some substance behind it.”

what is ethical? As we all know, many guidelines have been proposed for deciding if an action is right and wrong – whether it is ethical or unethical. Is it universalisable, does it militate against personal autonomy, are the consequences good for us or bad, is the actor or action virtuous? These are some of the questions we use. None of them appear to identify unethical actions that are clearly associated with being a politician. One set of guidelines that seems to worth exploring, however, is contractarianism, a concept of a social contract between the governing and the governed that arose with

Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, but which has reached its current day fulfillment in the work of John Rawls. These writers propose a society in which a role for government is to redress the difficulties suffered by the members of that society.

It is certainly true that we expect governments to correct the problems society faces. Unemployment relief, sickness benefits, universal health care programs are evidence of these concerns. Yet there are people who claim that we go too far with these benefits. Calls to get the “dole bludgers” back to work are not uncommon. More liberal countries look with amazement on the conservative cry in the US against a national health system. For the more significant demands on a government would appear to be liberal vs. conservative issues. We have a political structure based on a government and an opposition. For reasons unknown to most of us, populations, at least in the western world, do divide broadly into these two camps. A conservative government will tend to reject demands for more assistance to those in need; a left leaning liberal government will embrace them. Any government has to decide, but whatever it decides will be rejected by those that have the opposite view.

Jonathon Haidt and Jesse Graham (2007) argue that the liberal / conservative split is anthropologi-

Ethical Mindsets and Ethical Climates: Research Work in Progress

THEODORA ISSA AND
DAVID PICK

Seeking a solution to the recent deterioration in ethical standards that are witnessed in organizations around the world, Alzola (2011) urged the establishment of a reconciliation of normative and descriptive approaches to investigate and research the relationship between business and ethics. Our research in ethical mindsets, which extended recently into ethical climates, comes in response to such calls and other diverse calls by several scholars from different disciplines such as Lane & Klenke (2004), Ashar and Lane-Maher (2004), and Ghoshal (2005).

This increased chorus of calls,

especially with the market meltdown and its global ramifications, have been appealing for a re-examination of ethics guiding individuals. These individuals continue to struggle with emerging issues such as: uncertainty, risk, ambiguity and suffering and, in severe cases, these individuals might feel alienated in this society (as argued by Arian, 1993). Such developments in this post-ideological period and post-modern society seem to threaten the very fabric of the society, by allowing individuals to stand alone, and to introduce change to or even reject the values that have hitherto defined the character of Western society.

This trend, if left unchecked, might lead to grievous consequences for the society as a whole. Our research has been designed with special attention to Ghoshal (2005), who argues for a re-casting of management theory away from the currently dominant 'scientific model' that has tended to reduce the role of ethical and moral dimensions in theories and therefore in ideas about management practice. This is similar to Weick's (1999) recommendation that we abandon the heavy tool of paradigms and monologues and focus instead on achieving a deeper awareness of organizations by

Do Politicians Have Ethical Obligations? (Cont'd)

cal in nature, even of evolutionary origin, and that it has generated five foundations to morality: harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity. They assert that "political liberals have moral intuitions base on the first two foundations". They are misunderstood therefore by "political conservatives who generally rely on all five foundations"

Haidt and Graham may well be right. Their conclusion is certainly borne out by general observation. Politicians, at least under this analysis, can never win ethical plaudits across the entire population. And if a government tries to

determine where the majority might lie, it will be accused of being poll-driven. So we regard members of a government as unethical, but only when they do not agree with our particular political view point. Otherwise they exhibit ethical and unethical behaviours no different to the rest of us.

Whether in greater frequency than the rest of us is another question.

Peter Bowden,

Department of Philosophy, University of Sydney.

References

Brown, AJ. (2008). *Whistleblow-*

ing in the Australian Public Sector ANU ePress p.64.

Kerridge, I., Lowe, M., Stewart, C. (2009). *Ethics and law for the health professions*, 3rd ed. Sydney: Federation Press.

Beauchamp, Tom L. and Childress, James F. (2008). *Principles of Bio-medical Ethics* 6th. ed. Oxford University Press, New York.

Haidt, Jonathon and Graham, Jesse. (2007). 'When Morality Opposes Justice: Conservatives have moral intuitions that Liberals may not recognize.' *Social Justice Research*. 20, 1, 98-116.

Royal Commission on the Failure of the West Gate Bridge, 1971.

ETHICAL MINDSETS AND ETHICAL CLIMATES (CONT'D)

Theodora Issa and David Pick

theorizing through intuition, feeling, stories, experience, awe, vocabulary and empathy, and most importantly the ability to listen attentively to create theories that have practical as well as academic value. With this in mind, the aim of our research is to examine the mindsets of individuals, expanding into ethical climates. It is argued that research in ethics, and specifically business ethics, is gaining momentum. Our interest in researching mindsets comes despite the call by Alzola (2008) that questions whether ethicists need to abandon the very enterprise of building a character-based moral theory in business ethics and organizational behaviour.

This research on ethical mindsets and ethical climates draws mainly on two separate but allied business ethics literatures relating to spirituality and aesthetics, two issues that were and continue to be probed using the theoretical lens of mindsets. In order to achieve the aims and objectives of this research, an interpretive mixed-methods approach was considered the most appropriate. This research contributes to the contemporary debate on business ethics, moving behind the progressively

“Spirituality draws attention to individuals’ conscientiousness in inventing ethical workplaces, whilst aesthetics focuses the conversation and discernment on ethical behaviour in business. .”

more modernized investigative languages that prevail and beyond the traditional. Indeed, this research goes past and well beyond the obvious. With the exception of the work being undertaken by the authors (e.g. Issa and Pick, 2010), there is relatively little research that integrates spirituality, aesthetics and ethical mindsets. Spirituality draws attention to individuals’ conscientiousness in inventing ethical workplaces, whilst aesthetics focuses the conversation and discernment on ethical behaviour in business. Mindsets provide a key perspective that combines spirituality and aesthetics into a single analytical framework, thus allowing the investigation of both the individual and the organization (i.e. the ethical mindset and the ethical climate). Ethical Mindset has been defined as ‘an appreciation of and reflection on any situation through the filter of personal beliefs and values such as honesty, integrity, harmony, balance, optimism, pursuit of joy, peace and beauty, truth seeking, making a difference, and being professional, deriving from the strength rooted in individual’s inner-self’ (Issa, 2009, p. 163).

The project puts into practice a research tool generated from

Issa’s (2009) PhD thesis that identified eight components of ethical mindsets (i.e. aesthetic spirituality, religious spirituality, optimism, harmony and balance, personal truth, contentment, making a difference and interconnectedness). The results to date are limited to Australia and indicate that people might be ‘spiritual’ but this is not necessarily religious; instead, evidence is gathering to suggest that it might be derived from aesthetics. The research to date clearly demonstrates the context dependency of mindsets. Furthermore, a number of issues and questions were raised that are worthy of further examination, particularly in relation to the influence and importance of ethical mindsets and to varying and sometimes conflicting understandings and definitions of the term ‘spirituality’. Whilst there is a place of religious belief in workplaces, with the emergence of ‘religious spirituality’ as one of the components of ethical mindsets, nevertheless, to make it the sole focus would be a mistake given the evidence from this research of a strong and vibrant secular spirituality. However, this religious spirituality should not be diverted from its religious meaning and connotations; whereas if individuals are keen to think of spirituality components with secular mindsets, this should be referred to as aesthetic spiritual-

**ETHICAL MINDSETS AND ETHICAL CLIMATES:
RESEARCH WORK IN PROGRESS (CONT'D)**

**Theodora Issa and
David Pick**

ity. This will reduce the confusion, and emphasize the necessity to consider this important concept and its positive influence on individuals and in turn their organizations, society and community.

As for ethical climates, our research results so far suggest that public servants rate highly such values as integrity, honesty, support and compassion that act as a positive force for making the workplace more tolerable, flexible, and most importantly, in support of an ethical climate that is accountable. However, some respondents expressed concerns that management do not necessarily maintain or display such values. This is reflected in the doubt cast by respondents that an individual with a self-serving (selfish) ethical mindset can be changed for the better. This suggests, just as with ethical mindsets, that there are a number of different possible ethical climates. Furthermore, the analysis suggests that respondents display a high level of respect for belief systems different to their own. While there are those who stated that they do not 'wear their beliefs on their sleeves', those belief systems come out in the way they treat others and the way they view the world. To improve the ethical climate of public service organizations, the data suggests that it is important to combat feelings amongst staff that favouritism is

being practiced. Interestingly, respondents concede that this too is in the hands of management, saying that they say 'set the ethical scene'.

The next phase is to focus on achieving a wider understanding of ethical mindsets and ethical climates by undertaking international comparative research beginning with Australia, South Af-

“The analysis suggests that respondents display a high level of respect for belief systems different to their own.”

rica, India, and Canada.

Dr Theodora Issa and Associate Professor David Pick,

Curtin Business School, Curtin University, WA.

References

ALZOLA, M. 2008. Character and Environment: The Status of Virtues in Organizations. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 78, 343-357.

ARISIAN, K. 1993. *Will Humanism Survive the Postmodern era? A preface* [Online]. [Online]. Available: humanismto-

day.org. Available: <http://www.humanismtoday.org/vol8/> [2005, July 29th] [Accessed].

ASHAR, H. & LANE-MAHER, M. 2004. Success and Spirituality in the New Business Paradigm. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 13, 249-260.

GHOSHAL, S. 2005. Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 4, 75-91.

ISSA, T. 2009. *Ethical mindsets, aesthetics and spirituality: A mixed-methods approach analysis of the Australian services sector*. Doctoral research thesis, Curtin University of Technology.

ISSA, T. & PICK, D. 2010. Ethical Mindsets: An Australian Study. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 96, 613-629.

LANE, M. S. & KLENKE, K. 2004. The Ambiguity Tolerance Interface: A Modified Social Cognitive Model for Leading under uncertainty. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 10, 69-81.

WEICK, K. E. 1999. Theory Construction as disciplined reflexivity: Tradeoffs in the 90s. *The Academy of Management Review*, 24, 797-806.

Research on nursing moral distress in nursing commences in New Zealand

Martin Woods

In what will be phase one of a two part research project, a pilot survey has been recently sent out to a small sample group of registered nurses across New Zealand whose practices represent a range of nursing roles in a variety of settings. The research is supervised by Dr Martin Woods, who has long been involved in nursing ethics research and education, and assisted by co-researchers Vivien Rodgers and Prof Steve LaGrow. All are members of the School of Health & Social Services at Massey University at the Palmerston North campus. Briefly, the research involves the use of a refined version of a survey tool, namely the MDS-R© questionnaire, that has been used by other nurse researchers in the USA and other countries.

Moral distress has been identified as a major concern within the nursing profession in several countries including New Zealand in recent years, not least because of the growing pressure on nurses to adapt to changing practices and working conditions within health care services. It is thought to occur when nurses know the right thing to do in an ethical sense, but are inhibited

from doing so by 'internal or external' constraints. Such constraints usually include both personal and institutional factors, e.g. unpreparedness for the complexities of a given ethical dilemma, lack of peer and/or managerial support, difficult working conditions, and many more.

In phase two, the research will involve hundreds of registered nurses nationwide who will receive a modified (i.e. a 'New Zealand') version of the MDS-R survey on moral distress. This survey will probe areas of contemporary ethical interest within the New Zealand health care arena, and includes items specifically designed

to elicit significant ethically related responses. It is hoped that when these responses are all finally collated, the findings will provide both nurses and health care agencies a reliable measure of nursing concerns relating to ethical practices.

If anyone is interested in finding out more about this research, or wishes to discuss the research with me, then please contact Dr Martin Woods via email at M.Woods@massey.ac.nz.

Martin Woods,

Senior Lecturer, School of Health and Social Services, Massey University, NZ.

Upcoming Spirituality, Leadership and Management 8th International Conference, Sydney 8th – 11th September 2011 "Wisdom at Work"



The 8th SLaM Conference will explore the concept of wisdom and its relevance to business and workplaces today. The challenges that face the world are complex, and the pressure to be competitive and profitable is constant, but this narrow focus is not enough to serve the long-term interests of our society, our planet or ourselves.

The concept of "wisdom" offers a perspective that is broader, more inclusive, fairer and more in harmony with the earth. But if wisdom is important, how does it emerge? What processes can be used to foster it? What conditions can create the space for it?

The conference program is designed around a blend of key presenters, panels and plenary sessions, as well as papers, workshops and poster sessions. Key presenters include:

Alan Briskin, Co-founder of the Collective Wisdom Initiative in California

Dr Steve Taylor, Associate Professor of Management at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Massachusetts

Peter and Alison Yiangou, Self Knowledge Global Responsibility Project, UK.

SLaM invites leaders, managers, consultants, workers, professionals and academics to be seekers of wisdom at our conference. Submissions to present at the conference are open until 17th May.

Early Bird registrations must be made by 30th June. For further information, visit www.slam.net.au
Enquiries: info@slamconference.org.au

"Making the right moves...."

AAPAE

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR PROFESSIONAL AND APPLIED ETHICS

Contact: AAPAE

c/o School of History & Philosophy
University of New South Wales
Sydney, NSW 2052, Australia.
Ph: (02) 9385 2320
Email: aapae@unsw.edu.au
Web: <http://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/aapae/>

The broad purpose of the AAPAE is to encourage awareness of, and foster discussion of issues in, applied and professional 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 applied and professional ethics as well as attempting to create connections with special interest groups. The AAPAE does not endorse any particular viewpoint, but rather aims to promote a climate in which different and differing views, concerns, and approaches can be expressed and discussed.

AAPAE 2010-2011 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President: Michael Schwartz
School of Economics, Finance & Marketing
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
Phone: (03) 9925-5515 Fax: (03) 9925-5986
Email:

michael.schwartz@rmit.edu.au

Vice-President : Betty Chaar
Faculty of Pharmacy , University of Sydney
Phone: (02) 9036-7101 Fax: (02) 9036-7097
Email:
betty@pharm.usyd.edu.au

Treasurer: Kay Plummer
School of Accounting, Charles Sturt University,
Phone: (02) 6338-4447 Fax: (02) 6638-4405
Email:

kplummer@csu.edu.au

Secretary: Peter Bowden
Department of Philosophy
University of Sydney
Phone: 0418 166 577
Email:
peter_bowden@usyd.edu.au

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Stephen Cohen
School of History & Philosophy
University of New South Wales
Phone: (02) 9385 2320
Email: s.cohen@unsw.edu.au

Michael Segon
Graduate School of Business and Law
Phone (03) 9925 0109
Email:
michael.segon@rmit.edu.au

Allan Tapper
Research Fellow,
John Curtin Institute of Public Policy
Phone: (08) 9306-2208
Email: alandtapper@gmail.com

Immediate Past-President: Howard Harris
School of Management
University of South Australia
Phone: (08) 8302-0748 Fax: (08) 8302-0512
Email:
howard.harris@unisa.edu.au

Anna Corbo Crehan
School of Policing Studies,
Charles Sturt University
Phone: (02) 4828-8954
Fax: (02) 4828-8786
Email:
acorbocrehan@csu.edu.au

Newsletter Editor:
Hugh Breakey
Research Fellow, Institute for Ethics, Governance and Law,
Griffith University.
Phone: (07) 5427-0970
Email:
h.breakey@griffith.edu.au

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

All contributions with references in *Australian Ethics* have been peer-reviewed.