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AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR PROFESSIONAL AND APPLIED ETHICS

AAPAE Newsletter - Nov 95

Letter from the editor

This is the first newsletter since our successful Brisbane Conference two months ago. Essentially, it is divided into two parts: News and Views. In the news section you will find various items of interest, both about the Association and in the larger world of applied ethics. In the views section you will find ideas from members about the directions that the association ought to be taking; and also discussions of current issues in applied ethics. To kick this off, I have included a brief discussion on the ethics of peacekeeping, to which your responses for the next newsletter are welcome.

Your contributions are needed. If there is any item that should be in the "News" section - for example, an upcoming conference or regional meeting - please let me know, including all relevant details. Likewise, if you have an issue that you want to raise in "Views" - be it about the association, or to raise an issue in applied ethics for further discussion - please contact me. For example, there may be an interesting case study that you think merits further discussion.

I look forward to receiving your feedback about this newsletter, and to receiving your contributions for the next newsletter.

Keith Joseph

NEWS

LAST ANNUAL CONFERENCE ...

In September 1995 the Association's second national conference was held in Brisbane, at St. John's College, University of Queensland. It was a very successful conference, which was due in no small part to the organising committee, and the staff of St. John's College. In particular, the committee would like to acknowledge the work of Revd Dr John Morgan, Mrs Noeline Hall, Mrs Jane Oliver, and the late Revd Ron Marks.

Conference Proceedings are being edited by Noel Preston and Seumas Miller, and should be ready early in the new year. To obtain your copy, forward your address and a cheque for ten dollars (payable to the AAPAE) to the Association.

NEXT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The third annual conference of the AAPAE will be held from the morning of Thursday 3 October to the early afternoon of Sunday 6 October, at Charles Sturt University (CSU) at Wagga Wagga. Seumas Miller, Professor of Humanities at CSU, is the Conference Convenor. Please note that the conference is not being held at the same time as the conference of the Australian Bioethics Association.

More details will be sent to you early in the new year.

COMMITTEE

A new committee, with many new faces, was elected at the Annual General Meeting in September. The new President of the Association is Dr. Noel Preston, from the Queensland University of Technology. Professor Tony Coady from the University of Melbourne remains as Vice-President. The Treasurer is Dr. William Grey from the University of Queensland, and the Secretary is Keith Joseph, Australian Catholic University. A list of committee members, and their contact details, is at page 8 of this newsletter.

The incoming committee would like to express its thanks to the outgoing committee, and especially to Simon Longstaff, for his hard work as the foundation president of the Association. We look forward to Simon's continuing contribution to the Association in the future. Our thanks also go to Michael Walsh, Lynn Gillam, Peter Jubb, and Anne Stonehouse for their contribution to the Association in its formative period.

POSTAL ADDRESS

The postal address of the AAPAE remains as follows:

Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics
PO Box A2526
Sydney South NSW 2000

All inquiries, and membership application and renewals should be sent to that address.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

It is intended to set up a number of special interest groups, comprised of members with a particular interest in that area. The following members have already offered themselves as convenors of special interest groups, in the area indicated:

Business Ethics Michael Schwartz
Ethics and Schooling Noel Preston
Institutional Ethics Committees Anne McMahon
Computing Ethics Paula Roberts

The contact details for the above convenors can be found on page 6 (details of committee members). Please contact them directly if you want to participate in that group's activities.

If you are interested in an area not mentioned, please contact the Secretary. This invitation is especially extended to any member who wants to be the convenor of such a group.

REGIONAL AND SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP MEETINGS

Would convenors of regional meetings and special interest group meetings please let the Secretary know as soon as possible of your plans, so that the meeting can be publicised in the next newsletter. It is intended to send the next newsletter out in February next year.

THE ASSOCIATION ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

The Association's home page can be found at:

<http://www.uq.oz.au/philosophy/index.html>

JOURNAL

Is Australia ready for a Journal of Applied Ethics? What would go into such a journal? Send your ideas and contributions to the Secretary.

MEMBERSHIP LISTING

It is intended to circulate to all members a complete list of your Association's membership, to enable easier networking and communication between members. It will probably be circulated in early 1996, along with the next newsletter. If you are a member you should find enclosed your details, as we have them, as a small slip of paper attached to the newsletter.

If these details are incorrect or have been changed; or if you would like additional information included (for example, work, mobile, or home telephone number); or if you do not want to be included on the list, or would prefer some of the information not to be included (such as home phone number), please let the Association Secretary know.

Also, please let the Secretary know if your postal address is incorrect.

The information is arranged across the page as follows:

1. surname
2. forename
3. title or salutation
4. postal address
5. telephone numbers (if indicated, w = work, h = home)
6. fax number and/or e-mail address
7. regional location, in accordance with the following:

AC Aust Capital Territory

QC Qld - Central (eg Rockhampton)

NE NSW - Newcastle

QN Qld - North

NN NSW - North (eg Lismore)
QS Qld - South (eg Brisbane, Toowoomba)
NP NSW - Provincial
SA South Australia
NS NSW - Sydney
VM Vic - Melbourne
NT Northern Territory
VP Vic - Provincial
NZ New Zealand
WA Western Australia

This last item is included to facilitate in the co-ordination of regional meetings.

NSW REGIONAL MEETING

A one day conference will be held by the Association, in conjunction with the Doctors' Reform Society, on "Confidentiality, Record Keeping, and Research", in March 1996. More details will be sent to members early in 1996; any person interested in making a presentation should contact Keith Joseph.

WITH THE NEXT ISSUE:

- List of members
 - List of Ethics Centres, University Schools and Departments involved in Applied Ethics, and the Ethics Sections or Co-ordinators of Professional and Community Organisations. Please send details for listing to the Association Secretary / Editor by 1 February 1996
 - More News and Views -- please send your contributions to the Association Secretary / Editor by 1 February 1996. Longer items are preferred on disk for PC, in Word or WordPerfect.
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FOR YOUR DIARY

Fifth International Conference on Ethics in the Public Service:
"Public Sector Ethics - Between Past and Future"
August 4-9, 1996, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.
Abstracts due by 1 February 1996. Further information from:

Howard Whitton
Principal Adviser, Ethics Public Sector Management Committee
PO Box 190
Brisbane (Albert St) Qld 4179

ph: (07) 3224 6663 fax: (07) 3224 6549
e-mail: howard.whitton@qldgov.telememo.au

"Where to now?": Human Research Ethics Committees Institutional Providers Conference
April 10-11, 1996, University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia.
Abstracts for papers, workshops and seminars welcome.

Further information from Louise Armstrong-Quincey, (08) 302 3956, fax (08) 302 3997

Conference: Association for Practical and Professional Ethics (APPE)
February 29 - March 2, 1996, St. Louis, Missouri, USA.

Further information from Brian Schrag, Executive Secretary
Fax: 0015-1-812 855 3315, e-mail: appe@indiana.edu

Conference: Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics
October 3-6, 1996, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia.

More details in next issue.

VIEWS

EXTRACTS FROM "COMMITTEE REPORT 1995"

Simon Longstaff
President AAPAE, 1993-1995

Introduction

One of the distinctive features of the AAPAE has been its determination to encourage membership from a broad cross section of the community. The Association does not only seek the active involvement of academics working in different disciplines; it also welcomes participation by people who are employed in industry, commerce, government and the professions. That is, the Association wishes to be a focal point for those who enjoy engaging with a variety of voices and traditions in an effort to explore the ethical dimension of our practices.

It is therefore very pleasing to attend various functions organised by the Association and participate in animated discussions between people who would rarely, if ever, find themselves together ...

Incorporation

Members may recall that last year's [1994] Annual General Meeting approved a new constitution for the Association as the basis for seeking incorporation under the Associations Incorporation Act 1984 (NSW). The process of incorporation has been completed.

Annual Conference

The 1995 AAPAE National Conference (which is the second for the Association) is being conducted around the theme 'Ethics in Practice: Applying Ethics in Workplace and Society'. Special Guest Lectures are being presented by Professor William May (Professor of Ethics, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, U.S.A. and Cripps Visiting Professor, the Australian Institute of Ethics and the Professions) and Mr Hugh Mackay (Author, Researcher and Social Commentator). Response to the conference is significant and encouraging - 135 registrants approximately, and more than 50 papers to be presented. This response suggests that the Association meets a need and has the potential to contribute to the discourse of the professions, academia and the community.

Special thanks are due to the Brisbane committee ... convened by Dr Noel Preston. The support of St. John's College in this regard has been excellent - in particular the Reverend Dr John Morgan, Warden of St John's, and his colleagues; the late Reverend Ron Marks and Ms Jane Oliver are owed special appreciation for their work in organising the conference ...

World Wide Web Page

The Committee has been exploring ways in which the Association can take advantage of communication opportunities afforded by access to the Internet. Peter Jubb has been undertaking research in order to determine the means by which an Association 'home page' might be created on the World Wide Web. Peter is also considering the types of pages that might be connected to the 'home page' by hypertext links ...

Conclusion

Membership of the committee is bound to change during the course of the Annual General Meeting. It may be fitting to close this report by thanking my colleagues for their support and particularly for their patience in the early months before the process of communication was improved to an adequate standard. On behalf of the retiring committee, I wish our successors well.

Some commentators have treated the rise of interest in applied ethics with cynicism. For example, it is not uncommon to hear it suggested that philosophers have only deigned to embrace applied ethics as a strategy which will satisfy a contemporary demand for 'relevance'. Of course, the same claim is made about similar developments in the so-called 'soft' disciplines of the humanities.

It may be that some of the current interest in ethics can be accounted for by the motive of institutional and professional survival. However, even if this were the original spring to action, I believe that most of those involved have discovered something quite compelling about the debates into which they enter. Speaking personally, I consider it to be a sort of 'home-coming' for philosophers as we once again take seriously the practical concerns of our fellow citizens. I never forget that Socrates operated in the marketplace and not the academy. And in this respect, I feel that philosophers have a lot to learn from others who have an unbroken tradition of dealing with the practical. Hence, my sense of the importance of the Association as a meeting point.

Of the lessons that might be learned I wish to suggest that perhaps the most important is the need for humility. It is immensely tempting to fall into the trap of being an acknowledged 'expert'. It is a venial sin when the consequences of adopting such a persona are nothing more than stimulating heated academic debate. However, there are far graver consequences when the putative expert begins to deal in the world of everyday experience.

In these circumstances, one encounters people who may be deeply affected by what is said and the manner of its saying. It is not for me to declare how such matters should be approached. After all, I am no expert. However, I do reserve the right to draw attention to the need for all of us to think through the implications of our engagement in the field of applied and professional ethics. Thus, in concluding, I would hope that the Association might explore the ethical dimension of its own activities - perhaps considering ways in which it can draw on the traditions of its members; and especially those supportive of a culture of care.

THE ETHICS OF PEACEKEEPING

Keith Joseph

Traditionally the use of military force has been for the protection and furthering of the interests of a community in war. However, since the Second World War we have seen the increasing use of military force as an integral part of peacekeeping missions. Australia, in particular, has been a significant

contributor to peacekeeping missions, and within the last ten years has sent substantial contingents of soldiers to Namibia, Cambodia, Somalia, and Rwanda.

Peacekeeping presents a different set of problems for the military to that which they are traditionally faced with. The intention is to prevent bloodshed, and the interests being furthered are likely to be those of the communities in which the peacekeepers are stationed, rather than those of the nation sending the military force. An additional problem is the unwillingness of some of those for whom the peace is being kept to accept the presence of the peacekeepers: this means that the military force, instead of facing a conventional military opponent will face either guerilla resistance or civilian non-cooperation. In an extreme case two or more of the parties in conflict may not really desire peace, and will attempt to continue the conflict with each other.

With this different emphasis comes different ethical problems. Two examples might help illuminate some of the ethical problems involved in peace keeping. The first represents the strong option to peacekeeping: that is, the use of overwhelming force to suppress violence. The second represents the "softly, softly" option, where there is not sufficient force to suppress violence: the presence of peacekeepers is to provide humanitarian aid or to act as observers.

The "Strong" Option

In Somalia Australian soldiers were detailed to take control of the city of Baidoa, to enable aid agencies to carry out their humanitarian tasks. Our forces occupied the city for less than a year. In that time they suppressed local militias and gunmen, trained a local police force, helped provide medical care to the local inhabitants, and provided a secure haven for the aid agencies to provide food to relieve the famine. Within a year of leaving Baidoa the situation was the same, if not worse, than before: it seems that our efforts were for nought. We were clearly successful in achieving our limited objective of maintaining peace and providing aid. Yet this did not resolve the underlying social problems, so that violence resurfaced almost as soon as the overwhelming force supplied by the Australian soldiers was withdrawn.

The "Softly, Softly" Option

In Rwanda, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) was responsible for providing the medical services to the United Nations peacekeeping forces stationed there: the medical contingent was accompanied by support troops and infantry as guards. Thus, in an unusual twist for the ADF the fighting soldiers were there to support the health services, rather than the other way around! Once again, the ADF acquitted itself very well. However, one incident epitomises the ethical quandary in which the peacekeeping forces often find themselves.

A team of Australian medics, accompanied by a small guard of 20 infantry soldiers, were present at a refugee camp in the south of Rwanda when the victorious forces of the new Rwandan government decided to disband the camp and send the refugees home. This had occurred before at various camps, with relatively little blood shed. However, in this case there was a massacre, over a period of several

hours, in which up to 4,000 refugees were killed by two battalions of government troops. What were the ADF troops to do? Legally they were entitled to intervene, with force, to end the massacre. However, there is little doubt that had they done so they would have been overwhelmed by the far greater fire power of the government troops; who probably would have then resumed the massacre with even greater vigour. So, the ADF troops stood on the sidelines, watching the massacre, occasionally venturing forth with great courage to treat the wounded. This is not meant as a criticism of the ADF troops: they took what was the only reasonable and moral course. The problem is that of humanitarian missions in general - do they end up only prolonging the agony and warfare, by providing an infrastructure of medical care, physical nurturing and rest which allows the madness to continue? Do they make things better or worse?

Summary

One approach to the moral problems is to look at the consequences of military intervention: will the intervention cause more good than harm, or vice versa. Unfortunately, when we embark upon these endeavours it is quite hard, if not impossible, to tell what the consequences of the use of military force will be. Sometimes the results can be quite successful - such as in Namibia and Cambodia, even though the situation looked foreboding. In other cases - such as in Somalia - intervention seems to have been largely futile.

On the other hand, there is a strong human urge to do something: it is simply wrong to watch individuals die and suffer if it is in your power to intervene. Very often the only thing that can be done is use the military in a peacekeeping role.

If you provide overwhelming force - as Australia did in Baidoa - how long are you willing to keep that force there to secure the peace? And if you use insufficient force to keep the peace - for example in a humanitarian mission - are you merely prolonging the agony of war? Another ethical problem is the duty that a nation owes to its armed forces: it should not unnecessarily endanger the safety of its troops. Peacekeeping is a risky occupation: the welfare of the peacekeepers needs to be considered, as well as the welfare of those whom they are protecting.

So, to conclude: is peacekeeping moral? It responds to a deep moral urge to help others; but arguably it often fails to do so. Finally, is it ethical to keep the peace where those for whom you are keeping the peace don't seem to want it kept?

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR PROFESSIONAL AND APPLIED ETHICS

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