

ETHICS IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINING CATHOLIC IDENTITY



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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A U S T R A L I A

WHAT IS ETHICS?

- Concerns: How we ought to live; how we treat one another; what are our responsibilities to one another and to our selves.
- Requires ethical awareness, analytical and decision-making/problem-solving skills; knowledge of moral principles, concepts, norms, attitudes and the law; and in our context, knowledge of Catholic social teaching.
- Requires the competence and confidence to implement decisions within complex workplace (and social) environments.



WHAT IS ETHICS?

- Has both personal/private and professional/public dimensions.
- Involves the activity of a well-formed conscience.
- Recognition that “**moral(/religious), legal and prudential** concerns interact in decision-making to make the process of decision-making messy.”*). The reasons that influence us most forcefully must often be determined *contextually*.

* (Tony Coady, *Messy Morality*, 2008)



REFLECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM

Grace and Cohen argue that:

- We ought to attempt to reach an equilibrium between our feelings, judgements and intuitions about behaviour on the one hand, and the principles to which we subscribe on the other – what ever the genesis of those principles.

Business Ethics, Oxford Uni. Press, 2010, p.9



ETHICAL COMPETENCE

While decision-making & reasoning are necessary components of moral action, they aren't sufficient for moral action since they don't emphasize:

- the role of lived experience;
- the need for self-insight;
- the cultivation over time of personal habits and dispositions that ensure integrity of character, consistency, dependability and responsibility; or
- the importance of self-care.



BIOETHICS

- Began in protest against abuses of medical authority under Nazism in WWII – Nuremberg Doctors' Trial (1946); Tuskegee Syphilis Study (1932-72 in Alabama) of poor black men with untreated syphilis.
- Interdisciplinary field - involves philosophy, theology, law, medicine, & the social and biological sciences. Highly professionalized in USA.
- Deals with ethical problems arising in biomedical & life science research, the healthcare professions, and organisations delivering healthcare services. (Reproductive technology, end of life care, transplantation, resource allocation, experimentation)



IMPLEMENTATION

- Ensuring consistent induction and professional development training appropriate to all levels of an organisation are in place to make mission explicit, but also:
- Providing opportunities for discussion clarifying basic principles of mission and exploring disagreement about issues that arise (GVV curriculum: Normalising disagreement, drawing attention to moral psychological aspects, challenging rationalisations etc).
- Looking for opportunities to extend mission within an organisation; e.g. by integrating spiritually oriented treatment as appropriate (e.g. use of spiritually oriented psychotherapies).



GVV: ETHICS AND VALUES

Three things are crucial to dealing with ethical concerns or conflicts: **Awareness, Analysis & Action**

Awareness & Analysis:

- the capacity to recognise an ethical issue and appreciate/understand the nature of a conflict of values.
- A recognition that **we do share some important values.**
- A recognition of the connection between the personal and public spheres of life in this context.



ETHICS AND VALUES

- **Action:** the capacity to act in defence of our values.
- “...in life, we often know what is the right thing to do, but we have trouble implementing it.”

Walter Isaacson, CEO of the Aspen Institute and biographer (*Steve Jobs, Ben Franklin*)

