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Applied Ethics: Remembering Patrick Primeaux

Michael Schwartz
Howard Harris

Editors

RESEARCH IN ETHICAL ISSUES IN ORGANIZATIONS
VOLUME 8

APPLIED ETHICS: REMEMBERING PATRICK PRIMEAUX

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Cynthia Townley completed her PhD in Philosophy at the University of Tasmania, and taught for two years in Las Vegas before joining the Philosophy Department at Macquarie University, Sydney, in 2003.

INTRODUCTION

This volume is dedicated to the memory of Patrick Primeaux. Of your editors, Michael knew him well, Howard knew his work. We both recognise his enormous contribution. Patrick was a very special individual who was unfortunately with us for far too short a time, but who in that time made a very unique contribution. The first three essays in this issue comprise a mini-festschrift issue to honour Patrick. They are by his American colleagues and good friends who knew Patrick well. A mini-festschrift seems particularly germane to Patrick. The festschrift or commemorative volume is deeply rooted in the culture of the Germanic universities, and Patrick, although having many attributes, could certainly not be construed as Germanic. We have no doubt that he would be as honoured by a mini-festschrift issue as he would be embarrassed by a full festschrift issue. The other essays are the result of the Australian Association for Professional & Applied Ethics 18th annual conference which was held in June 2011 at the University of Tasmania. The authors of these essays are academics in Australian universities who might not have known Patrick, but, as is discussed below, their essays reflect Patrick's contribution to applied ethics. There seems something very fitting about that conference being held at the University of Tasmania because their campus is in Hobart which is as far south as Australia goes. Patrick often spoke of visiting Australia but always ultimately dismissed it as too long a flight. It would, admittedly, have been a particularly long flight for Patrick who was a very heavy smoker. Nonetheless, we have no doubt that if Patrick had been able to embark upon the flight to Hobart and attended the conference, he would have enjoyed it. As it was his spirit was very much with us and pervaded many of our discussions about applied ethics.

Patrick, a past editor and joint founder of this series, was an outstanding teacher of business ethics and sometime chair of the Theology Department at St. John's University in New York. Patrick, through his teachings, his research articles and his books, had a profound influence on how many contemporary ethicists both teach and think about ethics. Patrick also initiated the Vincentian annual international business ethics conferences

which provided a venue for business ethicists to explore the field and engage with others concerned with these issues. But Patrick was much more than that. Patrick was a much loved gentleman from Louisiana of considerable charm. All who met him were immediately charmed by his manner, gestures and accent, although, given the latter he was perhaps not fully understood by all who met him. Michael remembers first meeting Patrick and being told by him that he was a Maoist and being very confused as to this assertion. Only later did Michael realise he was telling him that he was a Marist. Admittedly Michael, with his broad South African accent was in no position to comment on Patrick's distinguished Southern accent.

All who met Patrick were impressed by his extreme generosity, his enthusiasm, his dignity and his willingness to engage with others. He was a unique individual. He helped influence a generation of business ethics scholars not only by those annual Vincentian conferences, but also by his very visible presence at those conferences. Patrick was invariably the first Vincentian conference organiser a conferee would encounter when arriving at the conference. This was due to his habit of lingering by the door, or outside it whilst smoking a cigarette, but whilst there he would warmly welcome all. Later he would seek out all those he had met and discuss their papers with them offering valuable insights into how the paper might be further developed.

We could say much more about Patrick but we won't. After all, the first of the contributions in this issue is an essay which pays tribute to Patrick by Professor Moses L. Pava, who founded this series together with Patrick, and who was Patrick's long-time close friend and colleague. Professor Pava discusses how he and Patrick set out to edit this series. In it he relates that the theme of many of the articles they published in it was one which Patrick wrote about in his book *Reinterpreting the American Dream: Persons and Ethics*. A reprint of an earlier review of that book is the last chapter in this issue.

The following chapter is by Daryl Koehn. Professor Koehn writes that Patrick realised that there was far greater complexity to ethics than the manner in which we traditionally presented it to our students in the classroom. She explains that Patrick explored that complexity by bringing pop culture into business ethics and honours Patrick with an essay which builds on that insight.

Her essay is followed by Mark C. Mitschow's. Professor Mitschow explains that what made Patrick truly remarkable was that he expanded the business ethics field itself. Professor Mitschow examines Patrick's contribution to

business ethics teaching and research and he illustrates the impact which those contributions had on his fellow academics.

The following essay is by Professor Jeff Malpas. Professor Malpas is one of Australia's leading philosophers. It is possible that Professor Malpas was unaware of any of Patrick's work but, regardless of that, Professor Malpas in his essay returns to a theme which Patrick repeatedly raised. Whenever Patrick Primeaux presented a paper at a Vincentian conference, he would ask whether our conversations regarding ethics were just conversations, or whether they really had any meaning. Professor Malpas explores exactly that. He acknowledges that in our contemporary culture ethics is seemingly everywhere but he questions where 'we stand in terms of the reality of ethical practice and ethical commitment?' Much like Patrick Primeaux he asks what does it all mean?

Patrick Primeaux, as we already wrote, often talked of visiting Australia but never did. He was though familiar with the work of Australian philosophers. One such individual who impressed him immensely was Raimond Gaita, the professor of philosophy at the Australian Catholic University. Patrick was particularly impressed with Raimond Gaita's book *The Philosopher's Dog*. In that book Professor Gaita attempts to understand the mind of an animal, and to provide some understanding of what is an animal and what is a human. Patrick would have been interested to see analogous arguments made by other Australian philosophers. In a somewhat similar vein the philosopher, Cynthia Townley, in her chapter considers cross-species collectives and whether they can constitute composite or plural agents, arguing that 'multi-species plural subjects are possible'.

Both Moses L. Pava and Daryl Koehn refer in their essays to Patrick's book *Reinterpreting the American Dream: Persons and Ethics*. In that book, Patrick wrote how James Truslow Adams defined the American Dream in economic terms, in being able to afford and acquire things. That Patrick argued must lead us to question why 'we want the things we want?' Those aspects are explored by Cristina Neesham and Mark Dibben in a chapter which reflects many of those concerns which Patrick raised in his book. Their chapter attempts to answer whether all goods are in fact goods? Cristina Neesham and Mark Dibben reflect on the collapse of the global economy in 2008/2009 and argue that the people who influenced the direction of the global economy have forgotten what real human needs are and how they should be met. Patrick argued that this was because they had become enslaved by the American Dream.

Patrick might have been many things but amongst those he was a highly respected business ethicist, and much of what Patrick argued was for 'incorporating ethics within economics, accounting, finance, marketing, and management'. Those concerns are highlighted in Josie Fisher and Bligh Grant's chapter in which they consider both the reasons for an ethics component in business education, and how very imperative this has become given the new demands upon private organisations. In their excellent chapter, they argue how business ethics teaching may be strengthened by utilising Mark Moore's theory of Public Value.

Another chapter is also concerned with the teaching of business ethics. That is the chapter 'Categorising Person-Based Ethical Constructs Using a Framework of cognitive Skills, Moral Volition, and Personal Values' by Howard Harris, Erich C. Fein, Aise Kim and Libby Hobson. In their chapter, they argue that having a map, a framework or a taxonomy can help in the development of research questions for teaching business ethics. They, like Patrick Primeaux, recognise that ethics is complex, that to be relevant it has to include more than theory or cognitive skill and that our teaching needs also to address personal action.

Patrick did make a contribution to many spheres, but we should not lose sight of the fact that Patrick was a Marist priest with a PhD in Theology. As such Patrick was interested in both the living and the dead. Michael Schwartz in his chapter 'The Dead as Stakeholders' considers the dead. He argues that a corporation has stakeholders and those stakeholders are not only the living corporate stakeholders, but also those stakeholders in the corporation who are now dead. In his chapter, he considers the responsibility of the corporation to its dead stakeholders. In doing so, he explores philosophical arguments as to the dead, much like the living, having a public persona. Harm can equally be done to the public persona of the living and the dead, and it is argued that for that reason the corporation has a moral responsibility to its dead stakeholders.

In a similar vein, Peter Bowden in his chapter 'Harm to Others' explores the actual question of harm and whether minimising the harm to others is an overriding ethical obligation. Many readers of this series are not Australians. It seems necessary to add that Peter is an academic at the University of Sydney. It is also worth adding that Australia's premier annual yacht race is the Sydney to Hobart race. Peter both owns a yacht and is a keen yachtsman. Whether he sailed to the Hobart conference we do not know. But if he did we very much doubt that Patrick, who could not swim, would have been any keener to join him than to fly to Australia.

This issue concludes with a reprint of an earlier review of Patrick's 2000 book *Reinterpreting the American Dream: Persons and Ethics* which remains as relevant today as it did when it was first published. We all remain in Patrick's debt. The purpose of this issue is to acknowledge that.

Michael Schwartz
Howard Harris
Editors

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PATRICK PRIMEAUX: A TRIBUTE

Moses L. Pava

When Fr. Patrick Primeaux, S.M. and I set out to edit *Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations*, our guiding light was that research in business ethics should serve to promote the search for meaning in organizations. Further, we understood and wanted to promote the notion that organizational ethics (and the ideology of organizations) directly impacts individual ethics and that the reverse is equally true. Oversimplifying, we believed that there exists a dialectical relationship between organizational culture and personal character. This is a theme explored in many of the articles we published over the years in our annual series, and it is a theme Pat wrote about, especially in his book *Reinterpreting the American Dream: Persons and Ethics*.

It was our hope to push the field of organizational ethics beyond the simplistic search for 'efficient' incentive schemes, as so often discussed in the principal agency literature, and to focus on the ultimate importance of human interconnections to understanding ethics. As Fr. Primeaux once put it, there are those rare individuals who move beyond 'the disconnections of independence and the connections of dependence into the interconnections of interdependence'. He expanded:

They raise the bar, push the envelope to the edge, focusing on interrelationships and the possibilities of moving beyond relationships with ourselves, or others, or nature, or God, in particular. They want to know how it all comes together, and adopt a perspective for their own lives, and life in general, which concentrates on all of them for a consistent and simultaneous appreciation of the whole. They tend towards abstraction and idealism,

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