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What events in 2007 triggered your sense of ethics?

Our ethical sense is a constant presence. We intuitively weigh what happens during each day in terms of our ethical values. One event that received prominent news coverage recently was the sentencing of US athlete Marion Jones to prison for lying about her use of steroids.

Marion Jones

Jones used steroids to boost herself to victory in the Sydney Olympics in 2000, where she made history by winning three gold medals and two bronze medals. She was the first woman to win five medals at one Olympics. She was featured on the covers of Vogue, Time and Newsweek magazines and clinched multi-million dollar contracts.

It took seven years for Jones' story to unravel. In the end she admitted to steroid use before the Sydney Olympics, and to lying about it. She has now been stripped of every medal dating back to September 2000, and suspended from competing for two years. She pleaded guilty to Federal charges of using performance-enhancing drugs. This month she was sentenced to six months in prison for lying to federal prosecutors about her steroid use.

The ethical issues here are so universally accepted that they do not even need to be debated. The values in question are honesty and integrity. We all accept that cheating and lying are wrong.

Bernie Banton

What other events triggered our sense of ethics in 2007? In Australia, Bernie Banton died on 27 November. He died of peritoneal mesothelioma, having been a long-time sufferer of the lung condition asbestosis and asbestos-related pleural disease. Bernie worked with asbestos products during the 1960s and 1970s when he was an employee at a James Hardie plant in Sydney.

Mr Banton was one of the main leaders in the fight for compensation from James Hardie for thousands of asbestos victims. James Hardie initially sought to quarantine itself from liability by setting up a separate foundation to handle claims, giving it an endowment of about \$400 million. A state government inquiry subsequently concluded that the likely liability arising from asbestos-related claims was in the vicinity of \$4 billion.

Mr Banton was approaching death at the time of the federal election, and Prime Minister-elect Kevin Rudd included Mr Banton in his election victory speech. On Bernie's death shortly afterwards, Mr Rudd said, "He became a symbol, a living symbol, of what is right and decent and proper in the workplace relations of this country." He was granted a State funeral by the New South Wales Government.

Again, the ethical issues had become quite clear over the period of the action to gain proper compensation for asbestos-related disease sufferers. James Hardie was very slow to accept full responsibility for the harm its products caused to its employees. The values in question are indicated by Mr Rudd's comments – decency, fairness, compassion, and the threshold ethical value – acceptance of responsibility for one's actions (in this case the collective actions of a corporation).

From events to values

Reviewing events from an ethical perspective is a good way to renew our sense of what values are important to us. It is also good to do this in a questioning way. It is easy to condemn Marion Jones, for example. It is a straightforward case of cheating and lying to gain personal benefits. And in this case it seems worse because she had such innate talent.

How can we approach the valuing of events so that we lift our own game and avoid the vanity of self-righteousness? I would suggest as follows.

1. Remember that there are generally competing values and needs in play. Honesty is not the only value. Situations will often seem to pit one value against another (eg truth and harmony). This is because there are five core human values, not one. Dig for the reasons for behaviour, where the values and needs contend.
2. Apply the lessons to ourselves; don't use them as a platform for preaching to others (the plight of the self-righteous). There is a fine line here if you have a teaching/educator role. I find that I do not fall over the line if I remember compassion.
3. Generally, events make the news when situations have become extreme, when the players have entrenched themselves in positions and forced the situation to a climax. Our ordinary lives are seldom so extreme or spectacular, and we have the chance to change, to redeem our integrity, to restore a more balanced position in relation to ourselves and others.
4. Determine, again, to keep your values clear and your behaviour open to question, that is, to live in alignment with your values. Our biggest enemy is delusion – we might think we are being fair, or truthful, or kind, but in surveys on ethics, people invariably think they are more ethical than others think they are. We still have to make up our own mind, but the perceptions of others are a check-point to arrest our tendency to delude ourselves.
5. Remember the power of integrity. Living ethically is sometimes fraught with practical difficulty, but to live in integrity is to be unassailable. It took seven years for Marion Jones' cheating to surface, but a life lived in integrity can never be unmade.

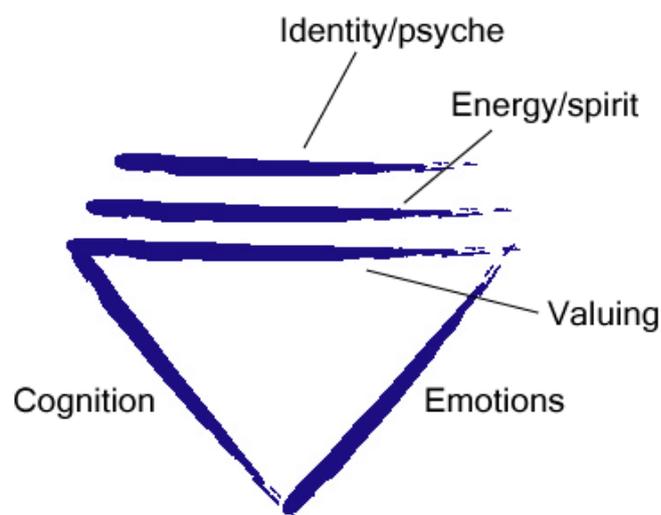
The creative tension of values

The model of the person that I present consists of five dimensions, all of which are required if we are to adequately understand humans and their behaviour. The fact that there are five dimensions explains why ethical decisions often have to consider several values and creatively reach a resolution between them. The five dimensions are:

- **Cognition** – dealing with the concrete facts of situations, and reasoning logically
- **Emotions** – dealing with the psychological aspects of people, their feelings and motivations
- **Valuing** – evaluating actions in terms of right/wrong, good/bad (ethics)
- **Energy or spirit** – the energy generated within and among people when they are functioning healthily in terms of cognition, emotions and ethics; leading to trust, team spirit, cooperation and enthusiasm
- **Identity or psyche** – the deeper sense of personal and collective meaning and purpose.

This model, which I call the Core Human Values Model or the 5D Model, can be applied to both organisations and individuals. The values associated with each dimension are as follows:

Cognition:	Truth and integrity
Emotions:	Peace and harmony
Valuing:	Right action (ethics; fairness, justice and decency)
Energy/Spirit:	Love and enthusiasm
Identity/Psyche:	Insight and wisdom



What are the distinctions between Business ethics, Work ethics and Office ethics?

This question was raised by Olufunmilayo Onasanya of Nigeria.

I think there are differentiations to be made between these terms. The term 'office ethics' is used by Nam DeMars (www.office-ethics.com/nan.html). She's clearly focused on ethical issues that arise within an occupation – the office/secretarial role.

I take 'work ethics' to be similar, in the sense that it is focused on ethics that arise in the workplace, and the inference is that it is about issues that arise within work roles which are non-managerial. My book is largely directed towards such people, because there are already lots of books that are directed at leaders.

Business ethics is the term that covers a broader field, because it is used to refer to issues that arise at organisational level – the behaviour of leaders and organisations – but it is also used to refer to issues at the level of society, eg the roles of government and business, and the morality of entire economic systems.

Again, I avoided concentrating on the latter in my book; I had a clear focus that I wanted to address ethical issues at the "shop floor" level. In doing so, one has to make certain assumptions about the bigger picture, of course. I was happy to accept the social and economic framework, because I believe that the decisions that people make at individual and group levels are more important than what the societal 'system' is. A staunch socialist would disagree with me. But as John Lennon said, "You say you want a revolution, well you better free your mind instead".

Ethics in government legislation and policy

Two recent actions by governments placed the focus on ethics.

1. US legislates on codes of conduct

Amendments to the US Federal Acquisition Regulations now affirmatively require most companies doing business directly or indirectly with the federal government to: (a) adopt a code of business ethics and conduct, and (b) educate all employees on its provisions.

The new regulations apply to government contracts of at least \$5,000,000, and which require at least 120 days to perform. The regulations require both an employee awareness program and a robust internal audit program.

The regulations came into effect on 24 December 2007.

Employers must provide for an employee training program which extends to all employees, and make an "ongoing" effort to ensure that employees both know and understand their obligations under their employer's Code.

2. Byron Shire Council adopts business ethics policy

Byron Shire Council, on the far north coast of New South Wales, has adopted a Business Ethics policy to apply to itself and to the companies it deals with. The policy came about after the Council was heavily criticised for awarding a major contract to a company that was a subsidiary of an arms manufacturer.

The policy requires tenderers to submit a disclosure statement of ethical conduct which includes identifying any criminal convictions, compliance with international labour standards, and a report of social responsibility. The aim of

the policy is to ensure that contracts are awarded to companies that consider the ethics of companies "in terms of the values of the Byron Shire".

It took two years for the policy to be developed, but the Council hopes that the policy will foster existing ethical businesses and encourage others to raise their standards. Other local councils are expected to keep an eye on how the policy plays out in practice. The policy came into effect in December 2007.

A look at books....

Opening our moral eye, by M.C. Richards, Lindisfarne Press, New York, 1996, 203 pages.

I found this book in the Rudolf Steiner Bookshop in Sydney. It was a lovely read. Not a treatise on ethics, but a collection of essays, talks and poems from over the life of Mary Caroline Richards. Mary's career included being a teacher, potter, painter and poet. She has a doctorate in English literature and has worked with people with disabilities.

One of the episodes covered in the book is the short lifetime of Black Mountain College in North Carolina, an alternative educational institution which began in the 1930s and ended in the 1950s. Caroline maintains that education is about the whole person, which is nowadays a trite phrase whose truth is generally ignored. What she says about "opening our moral eye" is indicated in this quote:

"We are cautioned to take three steps in moral development for every step we take in knowledge. How is this to be done? My hunch is that morality is a strong sense of connection, that it is built in, as are connections themselves, and that the whole moral imagination may be awakened as the sense of wholeness is awakened." (p 99)

Hence the venture to live a life that expressed feelings and ideas through art, pottery and poetry as well as the written word. She also has this to say about why organisations remain morally questionable so much of the time:

"We think that all we have to do is think a thought, say it's true, and everything else will follow. We don't take into account all of the forces of attrition and hostility. We assume that, if we call a value true, its truth will immediately be recognized and hosannahs will be sung. This is a kind of conceit of the spirit, an idea I owe to Rudolf Steiner's work." (p 39)

This is a very personal book. Fittingly, it ends with a discussion of hope. It distinguishes hope from optimism. Hope is more mysterious; it is not a blithe conviction that everything will turn out well. Rather, it is a relaxed form of non-acceptance that affirms the future as if it sees further possibilities. Hope waits, and refuses to see time as closed. It is hope that helps us to open our moral eyes and be fully human.

Ethics book available

My ethics book was launched at the Australian Publishers and Authors Bookshow at Leichhardt Town Hall on 18 November. Thank you to all those who came and made it such a lovely occasion. Alastair Rylatt, author of *Winning the Knowledge Game*, said some nice words about the book.

The book is now available for purchase through the Ethics and Values in Business website at www.ethicsandvalues.com.au.

Ethics and Human Values in the Workplace, published by GP Martin, 2007. 312 pages. \$AU38.50 plus postage. ISBN 978-0-9804045-0-0

Feedback

Let Glenn know what you think of the newsletter and the website. It's all part of the endeavour to bring an ethical perspective to business, one that enables people to work with integrity and organisations to operate with high principles.

Ethics and Values in Business is operated by Glenn Martin and based in Sydney, Australia. Glenn is available to write, speak, train or consult on ethical issues in organisations.

You are invited to visit Glenn's websites:

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And, some glimpses of the Woodford Folk Festival held between Christmas and New Year...six days, 130,000 people, lots of wonderful music and, this time, lots of mud and rain. Everyone gives of their best at Woodford, people talk to each other, and it is a fabulous time.



Woodford Folk Festival, December 2007