
BEGINNING OF SERIES ON TELOS AND VIRTUE ETHICS AND INDIVIDUAL ARTICLES

Cynthia E. Lynch, Editor
Assistant Professor

Nelson Mandela School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs
Southern University and A&M College

We close the fifth issue of the Global Virtue Ethics Review by beginning a new series that I hope will become an on going dialogue for many issues to come. We begin Volume five, Number four with the introduction of *telos* and virtue ethics and their role in ethics training and education. This is a most fitting topic as the Global Virtue Ethics Review journal was created in support of the notion of virtue ethics as the third and perhaps missing leg of the platform that supports a civilization and to give a voice to the burgeoning literature on the topic.

Certainly, deontological or rule based ethics is the first leg of this platform. Rules are what give order and direction to a society. Without them or with out the society's collective agreement to follow them, the society quickly devolves into chaos, as was seen in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

Teleological ethics or consequentialism is the second leg of the platform. Understanding the consequences of our actions and striving to serve the greatest good for the greatest number is essential for a civil society. This helps us to understand "otherness" and reach beyond ourselves and our own needs.

However, without a critical mass of individuals in a society aspiring or striving for excellence in character—in other words virtue ethics—there is no balance and nothing of substance can be built on a rickety foundation. The pursuit of excellence of character is essential for a society to thrive.

At the Third GVER International Symposium held in Cancun Mexico (December 2004) Samuel Zinaich Jr. from Perdue University and Thomas Lynch from Louisiana State University debated the possibility of virtue ethics as a viable theory for teaching ethics in Public Administration.

In *Returning To Virtue Theory: Some Problems And Challenges*, Professor Zinaich argues that virtue theory is simply another bad theory replacing previous bad theories and all attempts to teach ethics to college students are futile. He supports DesJardin's comments on the demise of virtue as a theory by pointing out that virtue ethics taught in college curricula do not and can not meet the requisite criteria enumerated by Aristotle. Specifically, he states that we have not identified the human *telos* (the perfect end purpose) nor do we have a community that honors and rewards virtuous actions in which to practice virtue ethics.

Professor Lynch takes the opposing view in *Virtue Ethics, Public Administration, and Telos*, he concedes that we currently live in a society that honors and appreciates hedonism more than virtue. However, he argues that at least in specific areas, such as in professional terminal degree programs, we can define and articulate a specific *telos* or end purpose for the practice of that profession. Therefore we can not only identify the professional *telos* but we also have a professional community in which to practice it.

In a similar vein, in their individual article, *Talking Virtue: Professionalism in Business and Virtue Ethics*, Professors Blackburn and McGhee in assert that business can also be viewed as a community of professionals in which character and virtue can and should be honored. They examine the usefulness of “talking virtue” with its emphasis on *telos* and character, as opposed to “talking rules” in the business context and explore what would count as business virtues if such an approach is adopted. They conclude that virtue ethics greatly enriches the professional ethics conversation in the business community.

Richard A Bernardi, Jennifer L. Giuliano, Emi Komatsu, Bryanne M. Potter, and Shuhei Yamamoto describe the effects of overlooking virtue ethics in education in *Contrasting The Cheating Behaviors of College Students from the United States and Japan*. They study the effects of gender, culture and history of cheating in high school to predict the likelihood of cheating in college. Their research raises some provocative questions such as how do we create a culture of awareness of the unethical nature of cheating in our institutions? And, will the lack of individual ethics in college students carry over into their professional careers?

Finally, in our Book Marks section, Professor Tripses, reviews *Marooned: An Inquiry into Government Business and Ethics* by Frank C. Hawkins. Hawkins’ book is a case study of a civilian federal government agency that exposes ethical dilemmas resulting from failures of bureaucratic systems of accountability. Again this book captures the need for virtue ethics and a *telos* as discussed in the preceding articles as ethical behavior in organizations stems from shared values consistently applied, enforced

when necessary, and reinforced through a community – whether a profession, or an organization.