

The Canadian Research Strategy for Applied Ethics: A New Opportunity for Research in Business and Professional Ethics

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ABSTRACT. In *Towards a Canadian Research Strategy For Applied Ethics*, I put forward proposals to advance Canadian research in applied ethics. I focus on the assessment made of Canadian teaching, consulting, and research in business and professional ethics and then on the strategy proposed for advancing work in these areas. I argue for research which is [1] oriented to the ethical needs of those in business and the professions, [2] interdisciplinary, and [3] involves the creation of national and international networks. I then offer some preliminary observations on the first two years of the new research strategy's operation.

The main purpose of this paper is to present international colleagues with the results of my investigation and proposals regarding Canadian research in applied ethics, focussing specifically on business and professional ethics. I do this for two reasons. First, on the basis of my 1990 visit to Norway to advise a committee of the Norwegian Research Council on the establishment of a special programme in ethics for Norway, I believe that there are some interesting lessons that can be drawn from the Canadian experience. Second, it is also possible that through this paper I will be able to encourage useful exchanges of information and joint research efforts between Canadian and other researchers in business and professional ethics.

In 1988, I had an unparalleled opportunity for examining Canadian research in the area of applied

ethics. I was the Principal Investigator on a project that took me over 6,000 km, from Canada's Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast; I talked to over two hundred researchers, research-users, university officials, and interested individuals from the public and private sectors. Through the distribution of over a thousand questionnaires, our three-person research team was in touch with every university and college in Canada and as many Canadian applied ethics researchers as we could identify. The end result of our work was a 350 page report consisting of over 120 pages of descriptions, analyses, and recommendation and supported by over 230 pages of supporting appendices. This report, *Towards a Canadian Research Strategy For Applied Ethics*, provides an up-to-date assessment of the capacity, needs, and potential for developing applied ethics research in Canada (McDonald *et al.*, 1989).¹

In the Executive Summary, I offered a capsule description of applied ethics:

*Applied ethics is the systematic and practical application of ethical criteria to vital human decisions. This research has three distinguishing characteristics: it [a] combines theoretical and practical insights; [b] is interdisciplinary; and [c] is user-oriented (McDonald *et al.*, 1989, p. i).*

I then described the areas central to our investigation:

The Federation's *Report* focusses on three specific areas of human decision-making: *biomedical ethics* [or *bioethics*], *business and professional ethics*, and *environmental ethics*. A central thrust of the *Report* is that research in these three areas addresses public needs in such important areas as health care, business, the professions, and the environment. The *Report* offers a realistic analysis of research in the three areas along with a comprehensive strategy for

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advancing applied ethics research in order to better serve the public interest (McDonald, 1989, p. i).

I am pleased to say that our recommendations were quickly acted on by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). SSHRC is funded by the Government of Canada and, as its name indicates, supports research in the social sciences and humanities. In April 1989, SSHRC adopted our *Report's* main recommendations by establishing a five-year strategic research theme in applied ethics, which commenced in 1990 (CFH, pp. 17–19).² SSHRC has committed a substantial amount of new money to this area and is actively soliciting additional support from other agencies and groups.

In the *Report*, I described business and professional ethics as a vast area of enquiry in which a variety of disciplinary methods are appropriate.³ I said that one might even want to relabel the field as *occupational ethics* in order to capture its main common feature, which has to do with ethical issues arising in our work lives.⁴ For, it includes ethical issues arising in business, including health and safety in the workplace, employee loyalty, employment equity issues, rights of labour and rights of management, business and the environment, advertising ethics, and the moral status of the corporation. Sometimes occupational ethical commitments are expressed in corporate or trade association codes of ethics. Professional ethics, as distinct from business ethics, centres on particular professions: law, medicine, nursing, architecture, engineering, forestry, accountancy, communications, counselling, and journalism, to name but a few. Most professions have a code of ethics (*un code de déontologie*) which often provides a focus of that profession's ethics. Unlike corporate codes, professional codes in Canada often are legally enforceable; moreover, entry into professional life is usually much more uniform and regulated than is entry into a career in business.

We also recognized that the three areas of applied ethics on which we focussed are not self-contained enterprises. Bioethics or biomedical ethics overlaps business ethics insofar as the bioethical issues in question arise out of the employee/employer relation for health care providers or responds to financial or other business exigencies. There is a similar overlap between bioethics and ethics for health care

professionals — doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, therapists, and the like. In fact, a great deal of what goes on in bioethics courses can be described as professional ethics education. Professional ethics also overlaps with environmental ethics, especially for professions that have a special environmental role, including forestry, planning, and geography. The same can also be said of the relation between business ethics and environmental ethics, particularly as the environment emerges as a leading business concern.

I will now present our findings on business and professional ethics in Canada under three headings: I. *teaching*, II. *consultations*, and III. *research*.⁵ I then will make some IV. *general observations* and conclude with a section on V. *implementation* of the research strategy.

I. Business and professional ethics teaching

In our three questionnaires, colleges, universities and researchers reported almost as many courses and students taught in business and professional ethics courses as in bioethics; by comparison, there were surprisingly few courses in environmental ethics, about half the number than in either bioethics or business and professional ethics.⁶ Specifically with regard to Canadian business schools, a 1987 survey showed that only 55% had a course in business ethics; of the remainder, close to half planned to have such a course by 1989, which would mean that 74% of Canadian business schools would then have business ethics courses. In the vast majority of schools [80%] ethics courses are not required and are offered only as electives (Singh).⁷

Most of those teaching in business and professional ethics came from business and professional programmes. There was less involvement by humanists and social scientists in teaching than in bioethics. Humanists represent about a third of those teaching and most likely offer general courses in business and professional ethics outside professional and business schools. Hence, in business and professional schools and faculties, most ethics courses are taught in house. Many professional schools have courses in which ethics is a significant or even major part, including such areas as engineering, law, forestry, architecture, accountancy, planning, veterinary med-

icine, social work, journalism, information sciences, counselling, communication, and education. All too often, we received reports of courses in which the instruction failed to rise above the merely anecdotal learning of professional etiquette, or a purely descriptive awareness of professional and legal requirements. In some professional schools, ethics courses managed to take a wider and more reflective look at the profession's place in society. These were often in younger, less established professions, like journalism and communications. We also had reports that there were strong pockets of resistance in business schools to the introduction of such courses into the business and professional curriculum — that such courses were regarded as “unprofessional” or even invasions of the students and the instructor's privacy. We even heard support for the view that “*business ethics*” is an oxymoron!,” which is to suggest that successful business people must behave immorally.

On the opposite side, there was serious concern expressed about the “cut throat mentality” of those graduating from M.B.A. programmes. Paul Martin, Chief Executive Officer of CSL Group Ltd. has said:

In the aftermath of Boesky, Guinness, and other scandals, it's obviously important that ethics be taught at business schools. It has to be an urgent concern because even if only one percent of business people are crooks, the negative impact on the image of business is devastating. We can't risk losing our sanction to operate (Olive, 1987, p. 143).

Now in my view, our research into teaching in business and professional ethics raises two key questions: first, should there be any place for business and professional ethics on the business and professional school curriculum or any other place in institutions of higher learning; and second, if there should be a place, who should teach it and how should they teach it? As to the first question, I believe that education in business and professional ethics is an indispensable part of the education of those who will have or already have business or professional careers. Those of us responsible for the education of these individuals short-change them if we convey the impression, either intentionally or through omission, that a business and professional education is simply a technical one — a matter of becoming, as it were, an amoral expert. Now it is very tempting to adopt this

model of amoral technical training for a variety of reasons, each of which has a grain of truth but does not provide an excuse for inaction. Let me survey four of the most commonly heard reasons for not including business or professional ethics in the curriculum.

The “no effect” contention

Some academics argue that by the time a student arrives at the university his or her moral character is already formed and there is nothing we can do about it. While I agree that the study of business or professional ethics will not reform scoundrels, it will help others. It will encourage the morally weak and strengthen the morally strong.

The “too controversial” contention

Another common claim is that ethics is controversial. We should keep controversy out of the classroom or seminar by sticking to the facts. Singh writes that among the reasons for not teaching ethics in Canadian business schools is:

... the perception by some that it is by its nature non-empirical and consequently non-scientific. For those who share this perception, business decisions are seen as being made in an objective manner and ethical decisions in a subjective manner. They, therefore, see no place for ethics in the curriculum of business schools.⁸

Here, there is a triple error. First, not all ethical matters are controversial. Do any of us believe that it is right to kill or injure those who have done us no harm simply to increase our standard of living? Second, classrooms are full of controversy; one only has to look at the serious and intellectually important controversies that occur in the natural and applied sciences. Why should it be any different in the human sciences, where ethics makes its home? The third error is in thinking that beliefs about facts can be verified while value claims cannot. This is the ghost of logical positivism's sharp separation of facts and values. But positivism's fundamental tenet — that factual claims are in principle verifiable — is itself unverifiable; that is, positivism as an epistemo-

logical doctrine cannot pass its own test for knowledge.

The "too easy" contention

Another view is that applied ethics is simply too easy to be a serious subject for an institution of higher learning. To be sure, such critics go on to say, there is room for the study of theoretical ethics by philosophers; but there is no need to look at questions of applications of principles to everyday life (Ryle, 1957).⁹ One author suggests that there is the perception that "ethical issues are . . . dichotomous, with a 'yes' choice and a 'no' choice and with very explicit financial benefits and social costs associated with each of the two alternatives" (Singh, p. 107).¹⁰ But this, I believe, seriously underestimates the intellectual complexity of many moral problems. Moral life can be extremely complicated: we may face conflicting obligations or be in situations in which our responsibilities are unclear and ambiguous. Business and professional people deal with issues like product liability and employment equity, in which prior training in understanding and analyzing moral difficulties can help them determine their moral responsibilities.

The invisible hand contention

Lastly, I would mention those who like Milton Friedman seem to believe that in a free market economy one can safely put moral considerations aside and simply maximize one's own profits. The belief is then that the market will correct for each participant's greed and produce the morally optimal results (Singh, p. 107). A similar invisible hand rationale is often appealed to by professionals in adversarial circumstances; for example, lawyers will claim that their only obligation is to their clients and that the operations of the legal system as a whole will correct for their partisanship (Luban, 1984). I would offer two counterarguments. First, the invisible hand contention unrealistically assumes a perfect market. But none of us lives or ever will live in the perfect market system that economic theorists model. Second and even more damagingly, the view is self-defeating in that it confuses *constrained* with

unconstrained maximization. Even assuming a perfect market, the pursuit of self-interest in a *laissez-faire* system is subject to two basic moral constraints: no force and no fraud. That is, the market itself is fundamentally a moral, not an economic, construct.

Now to my second question about who should teach business and professional ethics and how they should teach it. Part of the answer here lies in getting cross-fertilization between those teaching in business and professional faculties and schools and those involved in ethics from the human sciences. How can those teaching in business schools make the necessary contact with the humanistic side of ethics and vice-versa? Here we have to meet the twin demands of academic integrity and academic credibility. As a humanist teaching business and professional ethics courses, I would like to develop better contacts with those teaching in business and professional faculties because I want my teaching to be relevant to the real life situations they will face in their careers. Over-simple and inaccurate "philosophical" examples will not do the job; I need good case studies from my colleagues in business and professional faculties. But my colleagues in business and professional faculties also need the help of philosophers and other humanists in identifying and analyzing moral issues. One law professor writes about the way to teach courses in legal ethics:

The reality is that we need to infuse the field of legal ethics with moral theory and reasoning and get away from arid legalism, yet most law professors teaching the course are not formally trained in ethics, even as "competent amateurs." I am certainly not, and law schools are not particularly into promoting release time for re-training in different disciplines (Esau, 1988, p. 441).

In gathering information for our study of applied ethics in Canada, we often heard concerns expressed about the lack of suitable curriculum materials, especially case studies and articles that address features specific to Canadian businesses and professions.¹¹ While Canada is geographically a very large country, it is in terms of population, wealth, and the size of its educational establishments small compared to the United States. Moreover, Canadian business and professional life is conducted in either English or French. We tend then to import many of our teaching materials in ethics from that country —

which are often unsuitable both in content and linguistically. Beyond this, the biggest single demand was for contact with others teaching in professional and business ethics. While in total numbers Canadian business and professional ethics courses are impressive, it must be remembered that they are scattered across many different disciplines, schools, and professions and are not concentrated as courses in bioethics are in relatively close knit health science faculties. It is not infrequent that instructors in business and professional ethics are working solo with no contacts either within their home institutions to those teaching in other sectors of applied ethics or outside the institution to those teaching in the same sector of applied ethics. My conclusion is that there is a long way to go before ethics appears generally as part of the basic curriculum in Canada's business and professional schools. In many respects, teaching in business and professional ethics is in its embryonic stages — facing the same problems and challenges that teaching in bioethics faced 10 or 15 years ago in Canada's medical and nursing schools. By comparison, we have fairly well developed regional and national networks among those teaching biomedical ethics, including now a national learned society, the Canadian Society for Bioethics.

II. Business and professional ethics consulting

In each of the three areas of applied ethics, we could identify a particular client or specialist group served by research in the area:

- [1] those served by biomedical ethics, which includes providers as well as users of health care;
- [2] *business and professional ethics, which serves business people, their customers, employees, and stockholders, as well as professional people, their professional organizations, and clients;* and
- [3] environmental ethics, which addresses environmental regulators, activists, and, ultimately, those concerned with the survival and welfare of human, sentient and even non-sentient beings.

Hence in each area, service to a natural constituency or consulting is a natural way of disseminating and generating research.

We observed that consulting in business and professional ethics is also in its early stages compared to bioethics. In bioethics, ethicists make rounds in hospitals, serve on hospital and health research ethics committees, and draft policy documents at national and provincial levels on central moral problems, such as the treatment of AIDS victims, reproductive technologies, and discontinuance of life-sustaining treatments. We found only a few ethicists in business and professional ethics were active. These included some private sector consultants especially in the area of ethical investments. While some individuals in the private sector were in touch with academic ethicists, others reported that academics in general failed to communicate their work in easy to find and useful forms. Some academic ethicists have been active in working with various professions through offering talks and consultations and also serving on professional ethics committees.¹² While there might be some hesitation on the part of some professionals to seek help from ethicists (especially, if they are from outside the profession), we saw important opportunities. Thus, the Association of British Columbia Professional Foresters, which is a legally recognized professional association, said that in the wake of widespread controversies over the use of forests in that province, it would welcome the help of ethicists in rethinking its whole code of ethics "from first principles."

In other parts of the non-academic community, we also found significant indications of interest in business and professional ethics. The newly formed Canadian Centre for Ethics and Corporate Policy, established by business people and supported by a number of corporate sponsors, has had a number of forums on business ethics and recently a conference entitled "Business and the Environment: An Ethical Solution" (Olive, 1990). Yet the Centre's founder had initially to get advice and materials from the Chicago Centre for Ethics and Corporate Policy since there were no readily available Canadian sources.¹³

So we believe that there are significant opportunities for mutually beneficial consultative contacts that have yet to be exploited. As in bioethics consulting, the first steps are to establish credibility and trust. As to credibility, we were told by a representative of a prominent crown (government owned) corporation that it will not do to send in ethical

theorists who “talk over the heads of their audience,” especially if they lack any knowledge of the real business world. As to trust, we sensed concern on the part of the private sector that academics outside management programmes were likely to be “business-bashers” and “ethics cops.”¹⁴ Interestingly, often the same people registered their concerns about a pervasive “quarterly report mentality” in many corporations, that is, a tendency to focus exclusively on short-term profitability. They felt such tendencies could only be reversed by reaching those at the CEO level as well as at the entry level; only then would there be a real change in the particular corporation’s “culture.” One essential point made was that bringing about such a change was not just a matter of publishing a corporate code of ethics that “would just sit on the shelf.” Indeed, this was the focus of my remarks when I addressed the aforementioned Conference on “Business and the Environment:” how can a corporation or trade association devise and implement an effective code of ethics that addresses legitimate public concerns about the environment and still faces a corporation’s manifest obligations to its owners, employees, and creditors (Olive, 1990).

In the business community, we found a great deal of concern about private sector ethics. This was evidenced not only in recent business books and articles like David Olive’s *Just Rewards: The Case for Ethical Reform in Business* and Brian Grosman’s *Corporate Loyalty: A Trust Betrayed*, but also in candid conversations. Leading business people expressed worries about a decline in ethical standards that was alarming on its own but also in terms of its cost to particular companies and the economy as a whole.

Clearly, consultative relations in business and professional ethics have not yet developed to the extent as in bioethics, yet there is a great deal of potential. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that there are important structural differences between bioethics and this area of ethics. In business and professional ethics, there is no equivalent to the teaching hospital situation, which has been so important in the development of bioethics consulting. While in bioethics, ethics consults and ethics rounds take place in a context in which the focus is often a single patient, the context in business ethics is likely to be much wider — the corporate culture.¹⁵ Structurally too, the situations of professionals in the health care area may well be different than those of

professionals in areas, like engineering, accounting, or forestry, where responsibilities are much less likely to be as highly individualized as they can be in a clinical ethics setting. Thus, most Canadian professional engineers wind up working for others, often in major companies on large-scale projects, rather than setting up in private practice as consultants, with a higher degree of professional autonomy. All this suggests that unlike bioethics business and professional ethics will have to take more into account the big picture and focus more on macro, than on micro, ethics. Consequently, alternative models for consulting in business and professional ethics have to be examined and, if necessary, invented including, for example, intensive workshops for senior and middle management or members of professional associations.

III. Business and professional ethics research

Unsurprisingly, one of the primary research concerns is the development of curriculum materials, in particular case studies, and the development of a significant *core literature* for specific areas of business and professional ethics. We took a core literature for a given academic area to include the generally accepted books and articles which serve as reference points for current teaching and research; very often, these can be crudely identified by sampling the major anthologies used in teaching for the particular area or by a citation index. Only when there is a core literature, can we have a unified area of intellectual enquiry. Hence, having a core literature is essential for making progress in both teaching and research in a given area.

We found there to be also a great need for research on topics in business and professional ethics specific to the Canadian context. Professor Brooks (Administration, Toronto) said that in accounting ethics he no longer relies on American materials and has developed on extensive set of Canadian materials, including his *Canadian Corporate Social Performance*. The same was reported by Professor Stevenson (Philosophy, Toronto) for engineering ethics. Yet the earlier dearth of Canadian materials, before the publication of Stevenson’s *Engineering Ethics*, meant that researchers had to go to the U.S. for materials.¹⁶

In this area as in bioethics, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the research aspects of both teaching and consultations. Professor Racine (Faculté des sciences appliquées, Université de Sherbrooke) who teaches engineering ethics, put the matter nicely when he said:

Pedagogical material is not and will not be developed in one's office, but on the occasion of developing a course or engaging in consultations. Theoretical research will take place in the context of pedagogical research and it will involve collaborative or team research in which there will be the participation of those from the human sciences (McDonald *et al.*, 1989, p. 54).

An important related point about the connection between research and teaching was made by Prof. Prichard, then Dean of Law at the University of Toronto and Chairperson of the Committee of Canadian Law Deans (and just named President of the University of Toronto): namely, that encouraging research in legal ethics would lead to improved teaching in the classroom and ultimately in higher standards amongst legal practitioners.¹⁷ The same point in regard to consultations was made by two Business Professors, Professor Brooks (Administration, Toronto) and Professor Gandz (Business, Western), in regard to business schools in Canada. The connection between teaching and research is nicely presented by Esau in his 1985 article on Canadian courses in legal ethics:

Despite the proliferation of courses on professional responsibility and the legal profession in Canada, there is still no formally published textbook or materials book for the course and Canadian scholarship in the field is almost non-existent. We thus have a long way to go before the course is placed on a solid base of scholarship. It is partly the lack of critical Canadian scholarship that is to blame for the narrow approach taken to teaching of the subject (Esau, 1985, p. 147).

Esau then goes on to remark on the American experience:

Particularly after the course was made mandatory for accreditation, scholarship in the field exploded in the United States. There are at least 17 formally published course/casebooks available for the course in the United States, and scholarly articles and books on the legal

profession and ethics are pouring off the press. There is thus a dynamic normative and empirical scholarly debate going on in the field. . . . A great deal of the American material can of course be utilized in our courses, but we need to critically study our own patterns of legal services, our own governance and disciplinary systems, our own conventional ethical practices and our own ideological assumptions (Esau, 1985, p. 147).

Another similarity with bioethics research is the need for inter or multi disciplinary connections between researchers in business and professional schools and those in the humanities. We found that there was a great deal of interest in interdisciplinary research, but few signs of it especially in comparison with the extensive efforts in bioethics. The main problem was a lack of opportunities to meet to establish such relations. We did see some hopeful signs in this area. The Manitoba Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics has sponsored seminars and workshops for professional groups. In Québec, the research group Ethos in Rimouski has mounted an impressive number of seminars and workshops for professional groups. The University of Waterloo and University of Toronto programmes in science, technology, and values recently held a joint conference on professional ethics that attracted individuals with a wide variety of academic backgrounds as well as practicing professionals. At York, a term-length public seminar on 'Practical and Professional Ethics' has led to the publication of the book, *Moral Expertise* (MacNiven, 1990). One of the useful by-products of our research project on applied ethics was the facilitation of local contacts between humanists and those in business and professional schools as well as between academics and non-academics. The publication of our *Report* has provided through its many appendices the first comprehensive list of Canadian researchers and research projects.

One academic society which has been active in bringing researchers together is the now national Canadian Society for Practical Ethics and its Toronto-based predecessor, the Occupational Ethics Group. It has a newsletter and holds annual meetings in conjunction with the Canadian Philosophical Association. While it has brought in a number of individuals from diverse areas, from library sciences to psychoanalysts, its main membership is philosophers teaching and researching in the area. It is also

an organization running on a shoestring budget — completely dependent on membership dues. However, in comparison with its counterpart in Bioethics, the Canadian Bioethics Society, this is a smaller and less representative organization. Along the same lines, there is also lacking an equivalent in business and professional ethics to the quarterly *Synapse* which contains news and articles on Canadian and international work in bioethics.¹⁸ Also unlike bioethics, neither business nor professional ethics appears in Canadian bibliographic data bases (McDonald *et al.*, 1989, pp. 42–43). Nonetheless, we should mention the Canadian edited *Journal of Business Ethics*, which is one of the most widely read journals in the area.

There are only a few existing or planned centres or research groups in this sector of ethics, especially in comparison with existing and planned biomedical ethics groups and centres (McDonald *et al.*, 1989, pp. 240–260). There is the aforementioned centre at the University of Manitoba. There is also the research group Ethos de Rimouski in the Université du Québec à Rimouski. The Université du Québec à Chicoutimi has just initiated a Graduate Programme in Ethics and Professional Morality; it is a two-year part-time studies programme. As to new centres, we heard that Professor Clarkson (Administration, Toronto) has received a substantial grant from a major corporation towards establishing a centre on corporate ethics. Some interest has been expressed at Brock in establishing a centre on applied and professional ethics. The Centre for Applied Ethics at the University of British Columbia, which is now being developed by my colleagues and me from several faculties, has as one of its main concerns business and professional ethics. We would note that Canadian investment in these vital areas of ethics is small compared to the \$30 million recently given to the Harvard Business School for a centre in business ethics or even the \$5 million dedicated by Arthur Andersen & Co. to the teaching of business ethics!¹⁹

Research subjects are suitably diverse given the variety of professions and businesses active in Canada. We have already mentioned that in business ethics efforts are going into the production of case studies. One common thread of concern across the area is with codes of ethics — whether professional or corporate. Interestingly, there is no Canadian source book for either professional or business codes

though there are source books for American codes at least in the professional area. The Canadian Society for Practical Ethics indicated its interest in conducting a latitudinal study of professional codes, as did researchers in business schools on corporate codes. One final item here is that we received frequent reminders of the vast amount of research work that remains to be done. Not only has little research been done on many Canadian professions or areas of business, but also related work needs to be done on ethics in public sector occupations (Kernaghan and Langford, 1990) and in the vital, but often neglected, not-for-profit sector.

Lastly, we should mention two other serious deficits of research in this area compared to research in bioethics. The first is that there is a lack of a research network whereby researchers can identify each other and relevant research. This is unsurprising given that both research and researchers are scattered over many disciplines, where publications and research communications tend to be highly specialized. Thus, those writing on accounting ethics tend to publish only in journals for accountants or in accounting association house organs. Although their work and even their methodologies might prove to be very helpful to a researcher in, say, legal ethics, it is very unlikely that the latter will ever become aware of, let alone read, the former's work. The second major deficiency is in graduate programmes in business and professional ethics.²⁰

IV. General observations

In teaching, consulting, and research, our general conclusion was that business and professional ethics is not as well developed in Canada as bioethics, but is more developed than environmental ethics. The one striking respect in which environmental ethics is further along than business ethics is in the number — nearly 1500 — of Canadian environmental groups, from Friends of the Earth, Pollution Probe to organizations like Greenpeace (McDonald *et al.*, 1989, p. 60).

We identified opportunities for advancing business and professional ethics research (and so also teaching and consulting) that were not open to either bioethics or environmental ethics. This in-

volves building establishing linkages with individuals and organizations in business and the professions:

The challenge is to develop *creative partnerships with the business community and the professions, including public, private, and not-for-profit sectors*. We emphasize the need for a *partnership relation* because these communities for the most part have the resources and structures, particularly in professional associations and professional education, to enter partnership relations with applied ethicists (McDonald *et al.*, 1989, p. 72).

Compare this to the situation in environmental ethics where, "the clientele for research in environmental ethics is wider, more diffuse, and less structured than is the clientele for business and professional ethics" (McDonald *et al.*, 1989, p. 72). To put this into investment terms, the best prospects for short and medium term growth lie in business and professional ethics. Bioethics is by comparison relatively well-developed. Environmental ethics is the area for long-term growth and requires the greatest development.

I would now offer some general observations on future endeavours in business and professional ethics.

Observation No. 1: work in business and professional ethics should serve the needs of business and professional people and organizations as well as the general public

By needs, I mean *ethical* needs, and not needs in a purely prudential sense. Business and professional people bear heavy moral responsibilities in mixed and free market economies. The choices they face can be difficult in two distinct regards: one is that there can be powerful pressures to do the wrong thing, for example, to put profits or a career ahead of the health or lives of employees; another is that the right choice is not always obvious, say, to release a possibly life-saving drug against AIDS, prior to the completion of normal testing. My suggestion is that academics who are concerned with business and professional ethics can (a) be of assistance here and (b) further their research efforts by learning from business and professional people. I mention both (a) and (b) because the research relationship is a symbiotic, two-way relationship in which there must be mutual trust and respect. It is particularly important

that our research be readily available and accessible to potential users; my own sense is that so far we have not done a sufficiently good job of preparing *user-friendly research*. At the same time, our research will if communicated properly also help our students prepare for careers in business and the professions.

Observation No. 2: work in business and professional ethics should be interdisciplinary

In Canadian institutions of higher learning, we face formidable obstacles to such interdisciplinary efforts. Research and teaching has become more and more specialized and discipline-oriented. Our universities are labyrinths of departments, faculties, centres, schools, and institutes. Even interdisciplinary groups soon establish their own specialized language, methodology, and means for the dissemination of research. Our reward structures favour the researcher who stays within disciplinary boundaries. In the *Report*, I said:

Given the compartmentalization of Canadian higher education, strong centripetal forces are needed to counter the almost overwhelming centrifugal forces generated by academic disciplines and faculties. These centripetal forces are needed at both the national and local levels (McDonald *et al.*, 1989, p. 78).

Observation No. 3: as researchers, teachers, and consultants in business and professional ethics we need to develop effective national and international networks

In this connection, note should be taken of the European Business Ethics Network and the U.S. based Society for Business Ethics; there are currently no Canadian equivalents. As suggested in the first two observations, such networks should build bridges to business and professional communities and should include in their academic components a wide range of disciplines.

As to the balance between work centring on the international context as opposed to work centring on national contexts, I take it there is general agreement that business life has become increasingly affected by international developments. Europe is moving toward much closer economic and political integration in 1992; we in Canada and the United States have

just concluded a major Free Trade Agreement which may be expanded to include Mexico. Many major ethical issues do not stop at national boundaries. In international trade, banking, and other areas, what happens in one country affects others. The hardwoods — indeed, the very symbol of Canada, the maple tree — are dying in Ontario and Québec mainly because of acid rain from the United States.

Still those of us who are researchers in smaller countries must also tend our own gardens; in ethics, as in other areas of life, there are situations that are specific to particular regions and countries. I would mention three factors that specially affect Canadian business and professional life. First, while in economic and political terms Canada is a middle power, Canada is extremely dependent on the United States. Second, politically and legally Canada is a country with two languages and two founding peoples.²¹ Third, we have extraordinarily complex governmental arrangements which divide powers between the federal government and the provinces; by most measures, we are one of the most decentralized countries in the world. One cannot understand Canadian businesses and professional associations without taking into account these realities.

But how, one might ask, can we assemble networks of researchers in ethics given all the obstacles I have mentioned? Here, I would suggest what I call *the four C's*:

Contact, collaboration, consultation, and communication. Contact leads to collaboration with other researchers and consultation with user groups and to the effective communication of research (McDonald et al., 1989, p. 82).

The networking I envision begins inside the university amongst its own researchers and extends to user groups in the region. The next level of linkages is to researchers in other institutions and to public, private, and not-for-profit institutions and groups outside the immediate region up to and including both national and international groups and associations.

V. Implementation

I now turn to implementation. Our main objective in writing the *Report* was to get the Social Sciences

and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) to recognize applied ethics as a strategic theme or area for research funding. Such recognition would involve setting aside a significant amount of money over the next five years for funding research specifically in applied ethics. The allocation of funds in the Applied Ethics Theme would be determined by a peer-review process. Most importantly, peers would be drawn from researchers and lay people active in applied ethics. By recruiting individuals from a variety of disciplines, the interdisciplinary character of applied ethics research would be suitably recognized. This would overcome problems that applied ethics researchers had previously complained about in regard to making research proposals evaluated by single discipline committees of SSHRC and other federal research funding agencies.

Just as important as the actual research funding which we were asking SSHRC to provide was the academic recognition which would be created by having a strategic theme dedicated to applied ethics. Previously, a principal problem faced by applied ethics researchers was that they tended to be regarded as illegitimate children in their home disciplines and intruders in the disciplines they visited (McDonald *et al.*, 1989, pp. 14–16, 80–81). In business and professional faculties their work was sometimes not regarded as “scientific” enough. In humanities departments, especially philosophy departments, applied ethics was often seen as derivative and too empirical: not theoretical enough and then consisting only in the simple application of general ethical principles to particular cases, which Caplan has described as the engineering approach to applied ethics. Some individuals reported that in their departments applied ethics research was not regarded as an academic activity but as a leisure time hobby. One prominent researcher said that the message from his colleagues was that “real philosophers don’t do applied ethics.” In other cases, the popularity of applied ethics courses was regarded as evidence of its low academic status; the maxim seemed to be that if students want to take a course in subject X from professor A, then both the subject and the teacher are suspect. So SSHRC’s recognition would be extremely important in terms of its legitimating function.

We were successful in getting SSHRC to get up a Thematic Applied Ethics Program for the five years commencing in 1990–1991, with a possible three-

year extension. SSHRC also accepted our suggestion that it actively solicits funding from other national agencies, including its two sister research-granting agencies, the Medical Research Council of Canada and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada. In addition, SSHRC agreed to a number of specific funding initiatives.²² Each of these initiatives as well as others that were recommended in the *Report*, but not adopted by SSHRC, provide interesting models for national research councils and research funding agencies in other countries.

At the time of writing, two competitions for research grants have been held in SSHRC's Applied Ethics Strategic Theme, one in 1990 and the other in 1991. In both there were a number of successful applicants in the area of business and professional ethics. One thing which pleased me about both competitions was the number of interdisciplinary research teams.

In the 1990 competition, the following funded projects seemed to fall most clearly into business and professional ethics:²³

Bendickson, Jamie (Law, University of Ottawa) Forest Management and Environmental Values.

Findeli, Alain (Ecole de Design industriel, Université de Montréal) Prométhée éclairé: technoéthique et responsabilité professionnelle.

Hendler, Susan (Urban and Regional Policy, Queen's) How planners choose: a model of ethical decision-making.

Levan, Christopher (Queen's Theological College, Kingston, Ontario) Perceptions of short and long-term interests: ethical decision-making in the work place.

Martin, Claude (Communication, Université de Montréal) L'éthique de la publicité et des relations publiques.

Racine, Louis (Théologie, Université de Sherbrooke) Éthique de l'ingénierie et contexte industriel.

Riding, Allan (Business Administration, Carleton University) Managerial ethics: insider trading and management buyouts.

A number of other funded projects were likely to have important implications for business and professional ethics. Among these were a number of projects in environmental ethics, including one on

global warming with partnership funding from Shell Oil,²⁴ another on risk assessment;²⁵ several projects in bioethics will deal with issues in professional ethics for health-care professions.²⁶ A project in biomedical ethics that seems to me important for applied ethics generally is one by the *Report's* co-author, Marie-Hélène Parizeau: Clarification et appréciation des activités décisionnelles des comités d'éthiques québécois. In this project, there is a long-range study of the decision-making of hospital ethics committees. A key question being asked is whether the decisions they make are genuinely ethical rather than administrative or legal. This sort of study is important to our understanding and assessment of organized or bureaucratized ethical decision-making mechanisms in all areas of life.

In the Spring 1991 competition, the following projects were funded in business and professional ethics:²⁷

Bird, Frederick (Philosophy, Concordia University) A comparative study of the corporate management of ethical issues.

Long, Bonita (Psychology, University of British Columbia) Survey of professional ethics training among psychologists.

McDonald, Michael (Centre for Applied Ethics, University of British Columbia) Canadian business and professional ethics network.

McDonald, Michael (Centre for Applied Ethics, University of British Columbia) Area Research Institute for business and professional ethics.

Pearce, Frank (Queen's University) Understanding corporate crime: ethics, law, and the state.

I should say a bit about the two projects in which I am listed as Principal Investigator since both are national in scope and involve the organization of business and professional ethics research in Canada. The projects are closely linked. The Area Research Institute is a workshop in which leading Canadian researchers in business and professional ethics will gather to discuss the state of the art in these fields and ways of advancing research in the future. This Institute is meant also to introduce researchers to the Canadian Business and Professional Ethics Network, known as CBPENET. CBPENET is an electronic and hard print network for researchers and research-

users. The idea is to provide an inexpensive and user-friendly network for the generation and dissemination of research.²⁸ The network will be based at the Centre for Applied Ethics at the University of British Columbia. A part-time moderator will provide assistance to those using CBPENET. There will be an occasional papers series, the production of short essays for popular and specialized print media, data bases, and anything else the participants in the network want to try. My main hope for the two projects, the Institute and the Network, is that they will fulfill the four C's object — contact, collaboration, consultation and communication — described earlier. I would hope that researchers outside Canada will avail themselves of CBPENET as well.²⁹

Since our *Report* was published, there have been a number of other developments in Canadian business and professional ethics. At the University of British Columbia, we are working toward the establishment of a centre for applied ethics which will have a major focus on business and professional ethics. Two endowed chairs have been created: the Maurice Young Chair in Applied Ethics, which I occupy, and the Patricia F. Rodgers Chair in Business Ethics, which is not yet filled. The University of Waterloo has just received a major grant from the Alberta-based Auditing and Accounting Development Fund to establish a Centre for Ethics which will focus on ethics in accounting and involve academics from Waterloo, McMaster, Wilfrid Laurier Universities and the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales at the Université de Montréal.

In January 1990, I was invited to Norway as a consultant to the Norwegian Research Council (NAVF). At that time NAVF had formed a special committee to look into the possibility of special research funding in ethics.³⁰ Through Prof. Tore Lindholm of the Norwegian Institute of Human Rights, NAVF had learned of my report to SSHRC. The NAVF committee studied my report to SSHRC and discussed with me the possibility of making an even wider effort — embracing theoretical as well as applied ethics — in Norway. The NAVF committee produced a report, *Forskning om etiske normer og verdier* (Moxnes, 1990), recommending the creation of strategic research funding for ethics; this recommendation I understand has been acted on favourably by NAVF.

Let me close by saying that I have been extremely

pleased by the way in which our *Report* was implemented by SSHRC and also by the role the *Report* played in helping the drafters of the Norwegian report in their work (Moxnes, 1990, p. 4). Both the Canadian and Norwegian Research Council's creation of special programmes in applied ethics should give real impetus to work in applied ethics generally and in business and professional ethics specifically. It is now up to researchers in both countries to take advantage of these new opportunities: not only by doing new and important research in applied ethics, but also by developing an effective and lasting research network. Such efforts should have important international as well as national results, particularly through generating new research and offering new opportunities for collaboration between researchers in various countries. Over the next several years in both Canada and Norway, one should be able to observe the effects of determined national efforts to advance research in applied ethics generally and business and professional ethics particularly.

Notes

¹ My co-researchers were Professor Marie-Hélène Parizeau (Philosophy, Laval University), who served as Senior Researcher, and Mr. Daryl Pullman (Philosophy, University of Waterloo), who acted as Research Assistant. Copies of the *Report* are available at a cost of ten dollars Canadian from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities (CFH), 151 Slater, Suite 407, Ottawa K1P 5H3, Canada.

The *Report* contains the following appendices. *Appendix A* contains the Project Summary and list of Learned Societies that were sent the summary. *Appendix B* includes the questionnaire sent to Presidents of Canadian colleges and GEGEP's and an analysis of their responses concerning applied ethics teaching at the college level. *Appendix C* provides parallel information from Canadian universities about courses and suggestions. *Appendix D* contains the questionnaire sent to researchers, their responses, and lists of those doing teaching and research in bioethics, business and professional ethics, and environmental ethics in Canadian universities, colleges, and CEGEP's. *Appendix E* provides a survey of research publications in the three areas under investigation. *Appendix F* contains a list of current and past research projects. *Appendix G* provides basic information about Applied ethics Research Centres. *Appendix H* lists over 200 individuals interviewed. *Appendix I* contains the Project's bibliography. Finally, *Appendix J* provides profiles of over 60 leading Canadian applied ethics researchers.

² For the historical background of the *Report*, see 'Canadian Research Strategy for Applied Ethics', *Canadian Federation for the Humanities Bulletin* (Spring 1989) vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 17–19.

³ Material in the next two paragraphs is drawn from page 17 of the *Report*.

⁴ The notion of "work" here is reasonably elastic. It does not require that work be for pay, so it could include volunteer work and work in a familial setting.

⁵ Part of the following text is from the *Report*, pp. 46–58.

⁶ See Appendices B, C, and D. However, Québec was an exception here with far more courses and students in bioethics than in business and professional ethics.

⁷ In a similar study of Canadian law schools published by Esau, it was reported that in 1987 five of Canada's nineteen law schools did not have courses in legal ethics. These five included some of the most prominent in Canada: Toronto, McGill, Western Ontario, Ottawa [Civil Law], and New Brunswick (Esau, 1988, p. 460).

⁸ Singh, pp. 107–108.

⁹ A useful series of philosophical articles on this topic forms the contents of the final section of Wesley Cragg's anthology, *Contemporary Moral Issues*. In the First Edition there is the Ryle article, as well as articles by Peter Singer, 'Moral Experts'; Béla Szabados, 'On Moral Expertise'; Kai Nielsen, 'Moral Expertise – A Reply', and me, Michael McDonald, 'Ideology and Morality for Hard Times'. All the above articles, with the exception of the Ryle article, also appear in the Second Edition, which also contains an article by Terrence Pennelhum, 'Our Technology and Our Moral Resources'.

¹⁰ Singh, p. 107.

¹¹ Two important exceptions here are anthologies compiled by Canadian philosophers: David Braybrooke's *Ethics and the World of Business* which contains some Canadian materials in addition to American ones, and Wilfrid Waluchow and Deborah Poff's *Business Ethics in Canada*, which has just been revised as a second edition.

¹² For example, from 1988–1991, I served as a lay member of the disciplinary committee of the 14 000 member Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario.

¹³ We also found activist church groups in this area, particularly the Inter-Church Task Force on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility, which is an interdenominational group that monitors and aggressively promotes, most visibly through minority stock-holder actions, corporate social responsibility in Canada and abroad. See their *Annual Report: 1986–1987*, Toronto.

¹⁴ Academics experienced in business ethics consulting said that it helps to provide a realistic picture of business ethics – one that points out the good along with the bad, rather than only emphasizing the latter. A nice example here is the case book compiled by Jeffrey Gandz.

¹⁵ One sign of this is that many case studies in bioethics can be put in a 500 word essay, the standard maximum length for case studies in the widely read American publication *The Hastings Center Report*. Business cases studies often run to chapter or even book-length.

¹⁶ Three specialists in engineering ethics – Racine (Sherbrooke); Cunningham (Toronto); and Brunk (Waterloo) – reported that they had begun their research into Canadian engineering ethics by going to major American centres, such as Rensselaer in New York and Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. There they found books and articles unavailable in Canada. They found the files of course outlines, including outlines of courses offered at Canadian universities, kept at those centres to be particularly useful.

¹⁷ On behalf of the Committee of Canadian Law Deans, its Executive Director, Prof. Bendickson (Law, Ottawa) wrote: "With respect to professional and business ethics, scholarly activity is much less well developed and the research foundations are comparatively limited. Perhaps as a consequence, legal education – although it may take a variety of forms – receives little emphasis." See the articles by Cotter and Esau (1985).

¹⁸ Unfortunately, Synapse is no longer being published.

¹⁹ Arthur Andersen & Co. has set up a five-year programme operating out of Florida for faculty members teaching courses in business ethics. They expect to have over 2 000 faculty members participate in the next five years. All expenses are paid by Arthur Andersen. They are also producing extensive curriculum materials.

²⁰ As noted, the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi now has an M.A. programme in Ethics and Professional Morality. York University is considering a proposal to establish a one-year diploma programme in Practical and Professional Ethics that would be based in the Philosophy Department.

²¹ This is not to deny the importance of Canada's first peoples, the Indians and Innu, or its large multicultural population of non-French and non-English heritage.

²² These measures include the following six initiatives. (i) Research Partnerships between academic researchers and public and private sector organizations. (ii) Strategic Research Grants: priority for multidisciplinary projects. (iii) Research Networks "to bring together and sustain multidisciplinary networks of researchers engaged in collaborative activities, which can include non-university-based researchers." (iv) Research Workshops to "provide a forum for the dissemination of the results of research, the examination of specific research topics, the delineation of research questions and needs, the elaboration of methodologies." (v) Partnership Development Grants to "allow researchers to seek out and formalize links with potential partners." (vi) Initiatives specific to Applied Ethics theme only: (a) Four Post-doctoral fellowships; and (b) an annual Area Research Institute "to support a special type of workshop." The Institute's "purpose

is to explore, within the context of intensive seminars, key areas of applied ethics and to bring together researchers, teachers, and practitioners in a particular sector to establish collaborative links and upgrade research skills." "Thematic Research Grants," Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, December 1989, pp. 3–4.

²³ I have listed alphabetically the name of the project's principal investigator and the title of the project.

²⁴ Harold Coward (Institute for the Humanities, University of Calgary) Ethics and climate change: the greenhouse effect.

²⁵ Lawrence Haworth (Philosophy, University of Waterloo) Value assumptions in risk assessment.

²⁶ Pierre Fortin (Groupe de recherche Ethos, Université de Québec à Rimouski) Guide déontologique à l'intention des intervenants et intervenant auprès des personnes âgées hébergées en centre d'accueil; Guy Rocher (Centre de recherche en droit public, Université de Montréal) Ethique différentielle des professions de la santé face à la vie et à la mort; and Raymond Yong (Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law, McGill University) Decision-making and the environment: hospital waste management as a test case.

²⁷ Some projects were more difficult to classify including one on political ethics, another on an ethical framework for agriculture, and another on environmental values and technological innovation.

²⁸ For example, my colleague Peter Danielson will use CBPENET to carry out an experiment in applied ethics to see how knowledge of the personal and other particular circumstance of a discussant's background affects ethical discussion. The project is called "computer ethics through thick and thin." Here, the terms "thick" and "thin" refer to thick and thin veils of ignorance keeping discussants from knowledge of their circumstance in the various versions of the Original Position described in John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*.

²⁹ Our electronic mail address is ethics@unixg.ubc.ca.

³⁰ This committee was chaired by Halvor Moxnes (Theology, University of Oslo).

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