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FALL 1991

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

by Robert P. Lawry

The year's programming is not yet set in stone, but we have decided on two themes upon which to build. The first is ethics and religious traditions. It is clear that the Judaeo-Christian heritage is still one of the major ethical orientations in our society. Indeed it might be said that what is often referred to as "ordinary morality" in our culture is the religiously based teachings of the ancient Israelites and early Christians, however mediated by churches or secularized by a variety of groups throughout modern history. We thought it might be fruitful to explore current ethical issues directly through this heritage, and also to expand the scope of our investigation to include some eastern religious traditions as well. The recent and very controversial Special Committee Report on Human Sexuality, prepared for (and then rejected by) the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church may be the focus of at least one of our sessions. Emeritus Director, Bob Clarke, has agreed to give some of his retirement time to this enterprise.

Bill Deal, Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion, and already a noted expert in Japanese ethical traditions, has agreed to talk to us about rights and duties in different religious and cultural traditions. Stay tuned for particulars.

The second theme will focus on ethics and commercialism. We want to pay some attention to the way in which advertising and entertainment "sell" their products. Last spring I was asked by Katherine

Clark, a graduate student, to be part of a panel of speakers to address the subject Ethics and Evil. My position on the subject is rooted in the idea that evil is the privation of good. In other words, if we are not actively seeking the good, trying to bring something to perfection, we are prone to evil, or subject to be engulfed by it. In the course of my remarks, I off-handedly said that I thought the image and message of the rock star, Madonna, was therefore "evil." She seems to me to be selling materialism, selfishness and sexual manipulation. Indeed, she is as clever in advertising her image and message as any Madison Avenue executive could hope to be. A storm of invective met my remark. I was told I didn't understand her sense of humor. I was told she was simply a feminist, trying to even the score. I was told she is just doing what everybody else does in America, "selling" by whatever means works. Although I have what I think are reasonable arguments on the first two points, it is the third point that intrigues me. Philosophically, Albert Carr put the argument in graphic form in the *Harvard Business Review* over twenty years ago. It goes something like this: in the competitive world of business, the ordinary ethical rules about truth-telling and manipulation are set aside by the nature of the practice. If you don't do what everybody else does, you will be severely disadvantaged. Therefore, it is permissible to deceive and manipulate to "sell" your product. This argument is based on the larger premise that moral behavior is differentiated by role. This larger position is partially right, I believe, so

the question becomes one of determining the limits to role-differentiated behavior for any group. Does this sound like the stuff of professional ethics? It should. It is exactly this form of argument that fuels debates in all fields. However, it is one thing to offer the form of argument in general. It is another to put substantive

flesh on that form for particular professions and specific issues. Katherine Clark and her group, "Personal Politics," have agreed to fight with me and to put something useful together.

Did I say "stay tuned" before? Stay tuned

HOLLY BROOKS JOINS CPE STAFF

by Robert P. Lawry

It is with a great deal of pleasure I announce that Holly Myers Brooks, a 1981 dual-degree graduate from CWRU in Law and Social Work., has joined our CPE staff as Associate Director - Special Projects. Holly was deeply involved in CPE work as a student, and after a hiatus out-of-state to practice law and to start a family, Holly returned to volunteer her considerable skills to us. Some time ago, Dean Peter Gerhart of the Law School asked me to head up a project, which will be highlighted by a major, national conference in the fall of 1992 on the problem of ethics and professionalism in the practice of law in the twenty-first century. Peter also asked that the CPE be a partner in the enterprise. I agreed on both counts, and we then asked Holly to assume a major role in furthering the project. She consented; and we are delighted she is with us. Holly will be hanging her hat in the CPE office in Yost Hall.

Below is this issue's "Ethics Case" for you to solve. In a following issue of the Newsletter the "best" answer will be published along with a new case. Please send your responses to: The Center for Professional Ethics, 23 Yost Hall, CWRU, 10900 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44106-7057. Good Luck!

"DOING ETHICS" COMPETING FOR A JOB

You and another person (whom you know fairly well without being friends) have both applied for a promising job in the local office of Universal Turning Machines. You are finalists among the applicants — the only two people on the final short list. Jobs are scarce and this is a good job, but only one of you is going to get it. During your interview, the President of the company seems very concerned to know whether you ever "smoke grass." It turns out that he is an uncompromising opponent of the use of drugs, hard or soft. You truthfully deny anything of the sort. However, you know your rival has "smoked grass" in the past. You do not know how she handled the interview question on the subject. Would you attempt to get the information about your rival's conduct to the President?

Adapted From Ethic's in the World of Business by David Braybrooke



News & Notes

In the Cleveland Area:

A symposium on HOME HEALTH CARE AND ELDERES: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES will be held in Cleveland, Ohio on **October 24-25, 1991**. The program features fourteen internationally known specialists. Continuing Education Credits are available. For further information contact May L. Wykle, Director, University Center on Aging and Health, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio 44106. Telephone (216) 368-2692.

Around the Country:

The society for Bioethics Consultation will sponsor its fifth annual conference on **September 5-8, 1991**. The conference will be held at the Delta Chelsea Inn in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Direct inquiries to Abbyann Lynch, Director, Bioethics Department, The Hospital for Sick Children, 555 University Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5G 1x8; 9416) 597-1500.

The Josephson Institute will be holding three of its ongoing series of training sessions for ethics educators, THE ETHICS CORPS. Two of the courses will be general, with dates set for **September 11-14, 1991** and **February 5-8, 1992**. Both will be held in Marina del Ray, California. The third course will take place **December 4-7, 1991** on the East Coast, and will focus on ethics in government. The Ethics Corps is a four-day intensive course which prepares participants to immediately begin teaching ethics or develop their own class or presentation. For more information, contact Tiffany Jackson, Ethics Training Coordinator, at (213) 306-1868.

The Shore Memorial Hospital Bioethics Committee, in cooperation with the Citizens Committee on Biomedical Ethics, is sponsoring a conference entitled "WHO LIVES, WHO DIES, WHO DECIDES...FOR THOSE WHO CARE." The conference will held on **September 13, 1991**, at the Flander Hotel in Ocean City, New Jersey. For more information call Sally Nunn, Conference Coordinator, (609) 653-3728.

The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses and the Society of Critical Care Medicine are co-sponsoring the ETHICS IN CRITICAL CARE CONFERENCE AND CRITICAL CARE EXHIBITION on **October 6-8, 1991**, in Chicago. For further information contact: Jan Boller or Sarah Clark, AACN, 101 Columbia, Aliso Viejo, California 92656-1458; (714) 362-2000, (714) 363-2020 (fax).

The University of Florida at Gainseville is hosting a Conference on ETHICS AND THE PROFESSIONS, **January 30-February 1, 1992**. Attendance is open to all. For further information, call (904) 392-2084 or write to the Center for Applied Philosophy, 243 Daver Hall, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611.

Cleveland, Ohio 44106-7057

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