Applied Ethics: An Interdisciplinary Approach

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Assuming applied ethics is more than moral reasoning, the authors look to their experiences as instructors and students. Comprised of moral reasoning, intuitionist ethics and organizational ethics, this approach is truly inter-disciplinary. Moral reasoning in the social sciences tends to concentrate on teleology and deontology. This approach also incorporates virtues ethics. Rooted in social psychology, intuitionist ethics examines the powerful role of emotion in our applied ethics. Using some of the best practices or organizational behavior, the article describes how the enlightened leader can prevent inappropriate behavior and facilitate more ethical behavior.

INTRODUCTION

This article is a summary of 15 years of teaching applied ethics in public administration. It is also a journey through three (3) academic disciplines: philosophy, social psychology and organizational behavior.

Our discussion begins with philosophy stemming from the Greeks, particularly Aristotle, since nearly all ethical considerations are derived from this foundation. Using a triangle as a visual teaching aid, Deontology, Teleology and virtue ethics are described. Consistent with the philosophical tradition, the emphasis is on the individual and rational reasoning.

We then explore an exciting new approach to ethics from social psychology: intuitionist ethics. Instead of rational reasoning, intuitionist ethics examines ethics from an emotional point of view. Rather than the solitary self-making of an ethical decision, intuitionist ethics is interactive and subconscious.

Third, we shift our discussion from the individual to the organization. Using organizational management literature, we develop a line of thinking that has not been explored adequately in applied ethics. We ask what can the organization due to facilitate more ethical behavior *and* prevent inappropriate behavior? Using a circle as a teaching aid, we examine four aspects of organizational life: membership, leadership, organizational culture, and organizational structure.

Finally, we hint at the possible future of applied ethics, specifically neuroscience. Using brain scans and other devices, neuroscience is beginning to expand our understand decision-making, which has exciting implications for applied ethics.
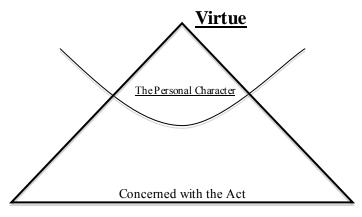
RATIONAL MORAL REASONING

Foundational to this approach of moral reasoning is the nature of the ethical dilemma. Instead of a choice between right and wrong or moral and immoral, the learners are confronted with a choice between what seems to be two right acts. Borrowing from Kidder, the "Right vs. Right Dilemma" is described with the following example:

> Is it right to take the family on a much needed vacation or is it right to save the money for the children's education? Right vs. Right is at the heart of our toughest choices. The world faces plenty of Right vs. Wrong choices but the most difficult may be the choice between two right acts (Kidder, 2009, p.4).

In order to introduce students to the idea of rational moral reasoning, a triangle is utilized. This shape showcases the differences and the commonalities between the three main ideas presented under this section on personal moral reasoning: Consequences (Teleology), Rules/Principles (Deontology), and Virtue (character). Each of these categories represents a different point of view when looking at or deciding personal moral reasoning.

This representation is unique in that virtue ethics is at the top since it is somewhat discontinuous from the dynamics of moral reasoning between the Teleological and Deontological. It is important to point out that in utilizing the triangle, it is not simply a matter of choosing one polarity over another. Rather, moral decision-making is much more about accessing an amalgamation of the three poles.

FIGURE 1
MORAL REASONING

Virtue

The Personal Character

Concerned with the Act

Consequences
- Teleological
- Situational Ethics
- Utilitarianism

Rules/Principles
- Deontological (Duty Based)
- Kant
- Bok

The Telelogical

The Teleological pole of the triangle is further separated into two distinct philosophies: situational ethics and utilitarianism. Historically, situational ethics was a theological category, reflecting the idea that "the ends justify the means" (Fletcher, 1965). This concept resonates with students as it is seen as an easy way to "scientifically" judge any circumstances and justify actions that otherwise may be a major moral dilemma. It is important to note that this brand of moral reasoning can be easily perverted. In nearly any situation, one could find a way to justify their actions; potentially leading down a slippery slope of unethical choices consequentially justified using a form of ethical moral reasoning.

On the other hand, utilitarianism is a reflection of the notion of "greatest good for the greatest number." Conceptually, Utilitarianism is a straightforward concept, and many people will wholeheartedly agree with it. Those hailing from the Western world are especially drawn to this notion, likely due to their exposure to democratized systems of "majority rules." However, this concept is often widely misunderstood by students, possibly because it is an arduous ethical position. If one considers the work of Peter Singer, it is easy to see why this position is a much more difficult locus. In his book *Practical Ethics,* he draws upon the genuine idea of Utilitarianism, giving examples of the redistribution of wealth to ameliorate absolute poverty and the relocation of refugees on a large scale to industrialized countries (Singer, 1979). These concepts are much more difficult for people to grasp, causing many students to struggle with (and ultimately turn away from) Utilitarianism.

It is interesting to note that in classes, most students align themselves with the Teleological pole. It is unclear whether they identify with consequentialist thinking mainly because they, as 21st century citizens, are all empiricists or because moral relativity resonates with them (Rachels, 2006). Teleology is generally the less rigorous (and arguably more flexible) than Deontology, so it is an attractive choice during the development of moral reasoning stances.

The Dentological

Moving across the footing of the triangle, we come to Deontology. This pole focuses on rules and principles, drawing on one's inner need to conform to law and duty. In contrast to Teleology, duty-based ethical decision-making does not necessarily produce the greatest good for the greatest number nor the best consequences given the circumstances. Rather, it is more concerned with one following rules and principles.

In order to enhance the understanding of Deontology, we use the ideas of two Deontological philosophers, Emmanuel Kant and Sissela Bok. Kant argues that it was not consequences that determined the morality of a decision but the motives of the person carrying out the action. In his exploration of Deontology, he developed the idea of the Categorical Imperative. Broken down, the categorical imperative can be explained using two main ideas:

1.) Universal Law
2.) End-in-itself

Kant argues that when utilizing Deontology to make a decision, one should act only according to the maxim that one can at the same time resolve that it should become a universal law and simultaneously always act such that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and *never* as a means only. These concepts, especially the Universal Law, are extremely rigorous and difficult to apply to contemporary problems, ignoring details and context. Given the historical perspective of when Kant was developing his ideas, this is to be expected. However, we cannot dismiss his efforts as he sets out a sphere of rights/protections and warns of the danger of ethical rationalization.

While both Kant and Bok contribute greatly to foundational concepts of Deontology, Bok is often better accepted by students due to her more "modern" (or less rigorous) interpretation of duty-based ethics. In her classic work *Lying*, Bok, like Kant, believes that lying causes problems, but she diverges from Kant in her proposition that there are times when lies are justified. She uses the typology below to illustrate those rare times when a lie is justified.

1.) Harm can be averted
2.) Duty to protect colleagues
3.) Duty to protect peers/clients
4.) Noble lies

She starts her argument with the notion of the white lie. This is something we are all guilty of: we lie to our friends and partners to safeguard their self-esteem; we lie to our children to safeguard their innocence, etc. Bok contends that these lies are necessary in order to keep the peace and ultimately harm no one (in fact, they usually comfort and support people).

Next, Bok explores the idea of avoiding actual harm by utilizing a lie. The best conceptualization of this idea is the example of the inquiring murderer. Consider a friend running to you for shelter from an attempted murderer and the murder shows up at your doorstep, looking for information. Under Kantianism, you would be duty-bound to expose your friend. Bok believes this to be preposterous and holds that you instead have a duty to avert harm by lying.

The next two exceptions to lying also center on a duty to protect. These are easily explained through the examples of a person whistle blowing about a sexual-harassing boss to protect a meek coworker and a physician protecting the privacy of a patient. Finally, there is the noble lie. Bok contends that this is the most difficult type of lie to tell due to its implications. A great example of this would be the President of the United States lying to assuage the public to avoid mass hysteria (Bok, 1999). It can be argued that in today's world, Bok's conceptualizations of justified lies make her a more attractive voice for Deontology.

Virtue Ethics

Moving away from moral reasoning concerned with the act, we come to virtue ethics. While all of moral reasoning is focused on individual ethics, virtue ethics is inherently more focused on the actor vs. the act. Espoused by Aristotle, virtue ethics is an important part of personal moral reasoning. Aristotle calls virtue ethics a "habituated action" and a state of being (Annas, 1993). This is a vital piece of virtue ethics—most people misinterpret this by thinking acting virtuously in one dilemma or simply wanting to be more pious makes them a virtuous actor. However, this is simply not the case.
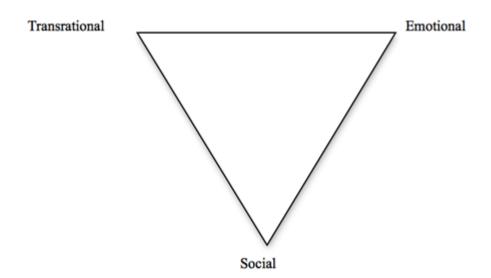
It is difficult to teach Aristotle to 21st century students, but they seem to understand "character." Utilizing the work of Martin Seligman and others, Paul Tough published a New York Times article, *Character*, that resonates with today's students. The article seems to articulate some 21st century virtues (Tough, 2011).

Utilizing a triangle as a teaching tool can help students conceptualize the connections between the three moral reasoning poles without constraining them to previously held ethical attitudes. Teleology and Deontology are concerned with the act; therefore they provide the base of the triangle to showcase their interconnectedness. Virtue ethics is primarily concerned with the actor's moral DNA. Given this divorce from the action, this pole is disjointed from the other two at the peak of the triangle, without being completely detached. This visual aid helps students understand that each pole is separate but also interwoven in the grand idea of personal moral reasoning.

Intuitionist Ethics

One of the most exciting new domains of the social sciences is intuitionist ethics. Pioneered by a small group of social psychologists, intuitionist ethics examines our actions from a non-rational basis. Scholars such Jonathan Haidt and others challenge the basic assumption of moral reasoning, rational decision-making (Haidt, 2001).

FIGURE 2
INSTITUTIONIST ETHICS

Transrational   Emotional

Social

The Worship of Reason

Perhaps the most foundational contribution to intuitive thinking is Kahneman's "Thinking Fast and Slow." As the phrase indicates, Kahneman breaks down thinking into 2 modes/systems. Referred by Kahneman as System 2, slow thinking is the system that we normally think of as thought. It is deliberate, conscious, and we naturally feel as though we are in control of it. System 2 is in play when we actively make everyday decisions or when we perform a mathematical calculation (Kahneman, 2011). In Applied Ethics, Moral Reasoning is System 2 thinking. In contrast, System 1 is automatic and natural without active deliberation and operates within intuitive ethics.

In order to fully examine intuitionist ethics, we are in need of another metaphor for thinking that is non-rational. Borrowing from philosopher Tom Arnold, we use the term "transrational" instead of non-rational. According to Arnold, "Transrational Thinking is a combination of the rational-analytical power of thinking and the intuitive creative side of our mind that is not analytical but rather synthetic in character" (2003). Transrational Thinking directly taps into reality, which is termed "Hyponoesis" by Arnold. He surmises that it can access the totality of information in Hyponoesis (reality) directly, without the need to acquire knowledge or information first (Arnold, 2003). In order to fully understand this abstract concept, one can turn to other intuitive ethics scholars for further examination.

The leading scholar in intuitive ethics, Haidt, best explains the trans-rational dynamic in his article "The Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment,"

> But in recent years, the importance of moral reasoning has been questioned as social psychologists have increasingly embraced a version of the "affective primacy" principle, articulated in the 1890s by Wilhelm Wundt and greatly expanded in 1980 by Robert Zajonc (2). Zajonc reviewed evidence that the human mind is composed of an ancient, automatic, and very fast affective system and a phylogenetically newer, slower, and motivationally weaker cognitive system. Zajonc's basic point was that the brain is continuously and automatically evaluating everything perceived, and that higher-level human thinking is preceded, permeated, and influenced by affective reactions (simple feelings of like and dislike). These push us gently, or not so gently, toward approach or avoidance (Haidt, 2007, p.998).

The journalist David Brooks further explains the "trans-rational,"

> [There are] several problems with the rationalist folks theory of morality. In the first place, most of our moral judgments… are not cool, reasoned judgments, they are deep and often hot responses. We go through our days making instant moral evaluations about behavior, without really having to think about why. We see injustice and we're furious. We see charity and are warmed" (Brooks, 2011, p.280).

Emotional

The second foundation of intuitionist ethics is the element of emotion. Rational moral reasoning assumes a non-emotional stance. For instance, utilitarianism assumes an impartial rational actor. With non-emotion, the utilitarian would decide what is, " the greatest good for the greatest number" (Haidt, 2001). If that calculation collides with someone close to you, likely we would allow emotion to intercede. In Jonathan Haidt's notable metaphor, it is the rational tail that wags the emotional dog. He explains:

> Research on moral judgment has been dominated by rationalist models, in which moral judgment is thought to be caused by moral reasoning. Four reasons are given for considering the hypothesis that moral reasoning does not cause moral judgment; rather, moral reasoning is usually a post-hoc construction, generated after a judgment has been reached. The social intuitionist model is presented as an alternative to rationalist models. The model is a social model in that it de-emphasizes the private reasoning done by individuals, emphasizing instead the importance of social and cultural influences. The model is an intuitionist model as it states that moral judgment is generally the result of quick, automatic evaluations (intuitions). The model is more consistent than rationalist models with recent findings in social, cultural, evolutionary, and biological psychology, as well as anthropology and primatology (Haidt, 2007, p.1).

Social

The social intuitionist model posits that moral reasoning is usually done interpersonally rather than privately. As Haidt explains, "The social part of the social intuitionist model proposes that moral judgment should be studied as an interpersonal process" (2007).
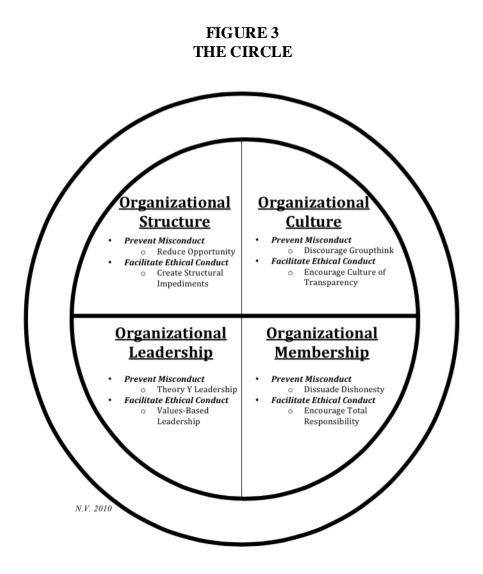
The social intuitionist model presents people as intensely social creatures whose moral judgments are strongly shaped by the judgments of those around them. But whose judgments have the strongest effects on children? Harris (1995) points out that a child's task in late childhood and adolescence is not to become like their parents but to fit into their peer group, for it is among peers that alliances must be formed and prestige garnered. She therefore proposes a group socialization theory in which children acquire their culture – including moral values – from their peers, just as they acquire their phonology (i.e., children of immigrants copy the accent of their peers, not their parents). Concerning right and wrong in adulthood, it is primarily through participation in custom complexes (Shweder, et al., 1998) involving sensory, motor, and other forms of implicit knowledge (Fiske, 1999; Lieberman, 2000; Shore, 1996), that are shared with one's peers during the sensitive period of late childhood and adolescence (Harris, 1995; Huttenlocher, 1994; Minoura, 1992) that one comes to understand physical and emotional feelings (Damasio, 1994). Whether the social aspect of intuitionist ethics is due to immediate family, peer groups or the broader culture is an open and debated question.

Organizational Ethics

All organizations are susceptible to unethical action. This behavior can be traced not only back to the individual, but also to the organization itself. Two different theories and four different processes can be utilized to examine factors that play a key role in this type of behavior.

Agency Theory suggests that an individual person is solely responsible for his or her actions, both ethical and unethical, and the company has no influence on these actions. Structural Theory focuses on the organization and its effect on individual behavior in the work place. The four themes discussed are

leadership, membership, structure, and culture and their effect on misconduct in the work place and how this can be remedied. These concepts are demonstrated using the shape of a circle, to illustrate the equal importance of each theme.

FIGURE 3
THE CIRCLE

Organizational Structure

- *Prevent Misconduct*
  - Reduce Opportunity
- *Facilitate Ethical Conduct*
  - Create Structural Impediments

Organizational Culture

- *Prevent Misconduct*
  - Discourage Groupthink
- *Facilitate Ethical Conduct*
  - Encourage Culture of Transparency

Organizational Leadership

- *Prevent Misconduct*
  - Theory Y Leadership
- *Facilitate Ethical Conduct*
  - Values-Based Leadership

Organizational Membership

- *Prevent Misconduct*
  - Dissuade Dishonesty
- *Facilitate Ethical Conduct*
  - Encourage Total Responsibility

N.V. 2010

Traditional Assumptions

Agency Theory is a more traditional way of explaining poor ethics and morality in the work place. It presumes that any negative actions can be contributed to the individual alone for personal gain. M. David Ermann and Gary A. Rabe wrote that this theory is the "result from deliberate decisions made by corporate personnel to increase or maintain organizational resources or profits" (Ermann, et.al., 1997). In contrast, Structural Theory concentrates on the organization and its affect on individuals. The four themes of leadership, membership, structure, and culture will help illustrate this idea of the organization influencing behavior.

Many times, organizations respond to ethical issues in a knee-jerk fashion. These actions often include making sweeping changes to leadership, updating the company code of ethics, mission and vision statements, or hosting "ethics seminars" that employees must participate in. Since all of these focus on

changing the individual, Structural Theory indicates that these resolutions will not really change anything—they are simply actions that make people feel good.

Change In Leadership

In many instances, companies believe the best solution to a breach in ethics is to remove the current leadership and bring in someone new who is known for his/her morality. This leadership overhaul is done so that the company looks as though substantial changes have been made to remedy the wrongdoing under the previous leader. However, reality is that a new leader will not solve all of the organization's problems. As ethical issues tend to stem from a multitude of issues, a simple change in leadership will not remedy the situation since the previous issues will continue to plague the organization. More significant, meaningful changes must be made throughout the company in order for to avoid making the same mistakes as the past.

Code Of Ethics/Vision/Mission

Many believe that a good way to ensure ethical behavior within an organization is to have an across-the-board, unifying code of conduct. The thought process is that if the organization lays out a set of rules, no one will act against that code. However, this is not always the case. There have been numerous examples of misconduct in a company that has advertised just how ethical and moral their employees behave.

Ethics Officer

Organizations are not always naïve to the fact that some of their employees' actions are unethical. In order to deal with ethical conundrums, an ethics officer (typically a lawyer) is brought in to remedy problems that may have resulted from this case of misconduct. However, because this legal advisor is hired to deal solely with legal situations, there may be other areas where an action or behavior is legal, but may not be ethical. The line between legality and morality is often ambiguous. Sometimes illegal actions can be morally just and other times legal actions can be immoral. A simple, but moving, example of this ambiguity can be seen in the case of Rosa Parks. When she sat at the front of the bus and refused to move, it was illegal for African Americans to sit anywhere but the back of the bus. Hence, what is legal may not always be ethical.

Re-Training

There have been numerous studies that aim to understand where moral reasoning comes from. One study points towards family life over actual moral teachings in school as the main source of ethics in a person's life (Mahdavi, 2008). In cases of ethical misconduct, many companies present lectures or seminars in an effort to "retrain" their employees to be more ethical. However, this type of instruction does not usually have the desired effect. Realistically, a person's moral compass will not change—it is set far before they enter the workforce. Therefore, this training primarily shows employees why they think the way they do and what kind of moral reasoning they use in their everyday lives—an endeavor that can be enlightening, but it is not effective in changing behavior.

Discussion

In order to realize legitimate change in organizational ethics, people's thinking, and subsequently, their behavior, must be altered. To achieve a positive change in the ethical climate of an organization, the four themes of membership, leadership, structure, and culture can be employed as ways to understand why people misbehave in an organization in the first place, how to fix this behavior, and how to prevent it from happening again.

Membership

The term "member" specifies that a person is an active part of an organization. They are not there against their will. It is a mutually beneficial arrangement between an organization and its employees and that all parties succeed and fail together, as one.

Facilitators for Misconduct

The organizational structure itself has the capacity to create unethical behavior. A rigid chain of command has the ability to do this. With rigid rules and standards, it is possible for employees to rebel against such harsh conditions, much like rebellious teenagers.

With this strict structure, where leaders hold all the cards and decision-making capabilities, members often feel apathetic to anything that goes on within the organization. Without being allowed any say in the day to day running of the organization, members care less and less about what happens to the company, which can lead to unethical behavior.

Strategies to Address Membership Challenges

Members must see their contributions to the organization as important and appreciated. There is nothing worse than not being recognized for hard work. The more the members feel like an integral part of an organization, the more likely they are to feel a sense of belonging and responsibility and the less likely they are to turn towards ethical misconduct.

Members not only need to believe their work is being valued; they also need to feel as if their opinions (both negative and positive) will be respected and considered. An atmosphere that makes an employee feel uncomfortable standing up for what he/she knows to be right does not make for a productive or ethical work environment.

Individual Leadership

In the context of this paper, a leader takes on many facets. However, the leader of an organization often specifically takes main responsibility for his/her organization's scandals and has a responsibility to mend broken areas.

Facilitators for Misconduct

According to Craig E. Johnson's book *Ethics in the Workplace*, facilitators for misconduct from a leadership perspective come from different arenas: power, privilege, information management, and consistency (2007). Privilege and power, which usually go hand in hand, can be very seductive motivators in the work place that can lead down a dangerous path. Leaders are drawn to both, which creates a divide between them and their employees. The larger this separation of power and privilege becomes, the more likely leaders are pulled towards unethical behavior.

Information management is a difficult task for leaders to master. With leadership comes access to information not readily available to most other employees. It is vital that a leader manages and takes care of this information. They must be held accountable for the information that they do know and the information that they may not know, but should.

Inconsistency is also an important gateway towards poor behavior. Leaders must treat their employees fairly and not play favorites with anyone. Consistency is crucial for a healthy, stable work environment.

Strategies to Address Leadership Challenges

A leader of an organization has a distinctive role within the organization. Ethical behavior starts and ends with a leader. By leading an ethical life themselves, leaders set the example for all other employees. Leaders also need to not have a bias while dealing with other employees. Everyone must be treated fairly and justly to promote ethical behavior among every person in the organization.

The principles of transformational leadership illustrate strategies to avoid misconduct. A leader is seen as transformational if they give their employees a bigger role in the organization. Employees are more likely to be accountable and ethical if they feel like they have a stake in the company.

An important way to encourage employees to take an active role in the organization is to open lines of communication. When an employee feels comfortable coming to a leader with any thoughts, questions, or

concerns, that employee feels like a valuable asset to the organization. It is vital that employees do not feel as if their ideas are unheard or unwanted. This will lead to a negative perception of the company, which promotes unethical behavior.

A leader also has a crucial role in keeping all employees motivated. There is nothing that can bring down productivity like unmotivated employees. Leaders can motivate their staff through encouraging innovation and creativity. Employees must be able to think outside the box and not feel confined and unable to share their new ideas.

Organizational Structure

The structure of an organization is an important place to start when promoting ethical behavior. The basics of ethics begin with the basics of an organization, which is its construction.

Facilitators for Misconduct

Many organizations are structured in a traditionally hierarchical fashion. This structure can often be a facilitator for misconduct, as it usually impedes communications. A hierarchy does not promote these open lines of communication as its rigid structure prevents openness not only in communication, but also in innovation.

Strategies to Address Structural Challenges

One solution to the problem of structural hierarchy is to create ways in which it is more difficult to be unethical. A system of checks and balances will reduce those opportunities and promote more ethical behavior.

Companies also need to have effective methods for inspecting and dealing with possible misconduct. Instead of relying on one person appointed to undertake the entire task, a committee of people could be a very successful approach. A group of one's peers in charge of investigating ethical breaches has the ability to reduce ethical misconduct among other employees, in lieu of an outside singular entity.

Another resolution to the hierarchy problem is to flatten the organizational structure. Doing away with the strict lines of a hierarchical structure and opening up positions and communications would increase transparency and accountability and decrease unethical behavior.

Organizations also need to ensure that there are mechanisms in place that allow employees to voice their concerns about possible misconduct before it develops into a large scale scandal and reaches the public's eye. An organization can increase transparency by admitting that it is not perfect and adverse situations can happen. This also shows that the company is taking the necessary steps to eradicate the matter, resulting in the public having more trust in the organization and employees having more faith in their company. This would decrease cover-ups and increase trust in the organization not only by members, but also by the public and other businesses as well.

All of these changes do not have be massive shifts in the structure of an organization. A simple change, such as an open-door policy, can help move the organization towards a brighter and more ethical future.

Culture

The culture of an organization is also a vital aspect of member perception and behavior. Much of an organization's values are not clearly seen. It is more embodied through the work of the organization as a whole as well as each individual member. Culture is a big part of what makes a company operate. It can help or hinder the ethical behavior within the organization. It is important for a culture to be open and transparent to avoid any breaches in ethics or morality.

Facilitators for Misconduct

Changing a culture is a difficult task as it is the lifeblood of any organization. However, if organizational culture is toxic, something must be done. An example of a negative aspect of a company's culture is "groupthink". This occurs when people who tend to think the same way all make decisions as

one (Bennis, et.al., 2008). This can take a turn for the worse when everyone is apathetic towards a situation and one person believes that if everyone thinks the same way, he or she should as well. Additionally, if someone were to go against the group, it could damage him or her socially; thus, the decision to continue to acquiesce to the group, even when one knew the group was wrong. This type of attitude discourages whistle blowers and individual thinking. Innovation is lost and people feel their ideas will not be heard.

Strategies to Address Cultural Challenges

Surprising to some, the culture of an organization is an easier fix than its membership. It is healthier and easier to change the way a company operates and thinks in order to become more ethical than it is to bring in entirely new people with the same old problems. This is not to say that cultural change is easy. It is a difficult process that starts with leadership. An organization's leaders must embody the changes and demonstrate that these cultural changes are for the better. They set the example for everyone else. These changes must also occur in every aspect of the organization, from meetings to emails to progress reports. Everything must reflect a change in culture towards improved ethics.

CONCLUSION

Applied ethics is an area of study that is always developing. While this article demonstrates exciting new advances in applied ethics, intimations of the future might even be more exciting. One area that is advancing every day is neuroscience. This field may soon discover how our brain truly functions, how and why we make everyday decisions, and even how we make moral decisions. One such example is the groundbreaking work of Michael S. Gazzaniga, documented in his 2005 book *The Ethical Brain*. He demonstrates that "not just low-level mechanical functions such as memory and pattern recognition are instantiated in the brain but also our highest and most distinctively human mental activities, including the emotions, social life, conscience and morality, consciousness, and the self of self" (Pinker, 2010). One thing is certain; that the future of applied ethics will be an interdisciplinary venture.

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