EBEN-UK: A Brief History

The UK chapter of the European Business Ethics Network (EBEN-UK) was launched in September 1994 at an inaugural conference, Implementing Ethical Business, held at Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education (now the University of Gloucestershire). It shares the mission of its parent organization, the European Business Ethics Network founded a few years earlier in 1987, which is “to promote ethics and excellence in business, to increase awareness about ethical challenges in the global marketplace and to enable dialogue on the role of business in society” (www.eben-net.org).

That first conference was attended by 50 delegates and the proceedings of which was reported in Business Ethics: A European Review (Raven 1995), a journal that EBEN-UK has had close links with ever since. Key issues up for debate at that time included computing ethics, control of technological development and the governance of the UK health service (NHS). Subsequently, the annual conference has always been the centrepiece of EBEN-UK’s year and has often been held in conjunction with similarly themed conferences held by other groups. For instance, over a number of years the Conference has merged with a series of conferences on IBM and business ethics, and in 2008 the Conference was convened in association with the British Academy of Management (BAM) CSR Special Interest Group.

EBEN-UK has developed close connections with many similar organizations. For instance, when Geoff Moore of the University of Durham was chairman, he established a student essay prize in conjunction with the London based Institute of Business Ethics (IBE - which is largely made up of business people) and the ‘Teaching and Learning Business Ethics’ website hosted by the IBE (www.tlobe.org.uk). Other important associations include the various other national chapters of EBEN, the Society of Business Ethics in North America, and ISBEE.


For further information, please contact Ian Ashman, EBENUK’s Information Officer, at: iashman@uclan.ac.uk or info@ebenuk.org. More information can also be found on the EBEN-UK website: www.eben-net.org

Visit our ISBEE website at www.isbee.org

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As this Newsletter was going to press, we learned with great sadness of the sudden passing of
Tom Dunfee,
ISBEE Executive Committee Member 2005-2008 and the Kolodny Chair of Social Responsibility in Business at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.
We mourn his passing now, and will honour him in our next issue.
Xiaohua Lu

Currently, I am a professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Executive Director of the Center for Business Ethics at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS), China. As well as serving on the Council of the China Association of Ethics (CAE) (present) and on ISBEE’s Executive Committee (2001-2008), I am Vice-President of the China Association of Business Ethics (SABE) and director of its committee on business ethics. My academic speciality is in philosophy. I completed studies at the Graduate Institute of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) in 1987 with a dissertation entitled “On G. B. Vico’s Philosophy of History.” As Vico plays a significant role in the development of Chinese philosophy, I explored his thought for some time, translating Genealogists’ Vico’s Social Worlds (Commercial Press, 1997), and wrote several papers, including “G. B. Vico and Contemporary Civil World” (New Vico Studies) and “G. B. Vico and the Reconstruction of Chinese Philosophy.”

I have great interest in ethics, particularly consequentialism, well before I began reading Vico. In this context I wrote a paper on “G. B. Vico’s Moral Philosophy” and translated Mary Warnock’s Ethics Since 1900, which for the first time since China’s opening up to the world made Western ethical thought available to Chinese readers.

I received the final push towards business ethics when, in preparation of the 1994 international forum “Philosophy and Economic Development,” jointly organized by the Institute of Philosophy and the UK Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, I was asked to comment on Georges Endo’s paper on “Corporate Responsibility and Economic Development in China.” Intrigued with such confidence, I not only studied the paper casually but sound pleasure in it, too. I immediately realized the great potential of Western business ethics for the development of a Chinese market economy, and explored this further in my subsequent presentation. I also offered a Chinese translation and provided a detailed justification for my suggestion, which subsequently gained wide acceptance. My interest in business ethics was further stimulated during a four-month visit to the University of Notre Dame in 1995 on Professor Endo’s invitation, when I had the opportunity to attend academic courses and to participate in conferences on business ethics in Chicago, New York, and Columbus, Ohio. In 1996 and upon an invitation from ISBEE, I wrote a research report entitled “Business Ethics in China” for the society’s First World Congress in Tokyo. Though I was unable to attend the conference as my visa did not arrive in time, my report was published in the Journal of Business Ethics in 1997.

I was particularly fascinated by the idea that Western ethics could play a constructive role in the development of a specifically Chinese business ethics at a time when Chinese society and economy were undergoing fundamental changes. A first result of this research interest was a book entitled Out of the Jungle—Free Talks on Business Ethics published in English by Palgrave Macmillan in 2000. In the meantime I had numerous opportunities to enhance my understanding of Western business ethics and to present the Chinese view on the subject in various venues including Germany (1998), Hong Kong (1999, 2000, 2001), Brazil (2000), Australia (2004), Norway (2005), USA (2001, 2007), and Korea (2007). Publications from these activities include “On Economic Globalization and Value Orientation of Corporations in China” (published in Germany), “Ethical Issues in the Globalization of the Knowledge Economy” (originally presented at the Second World Congress of ISBEE, 2000), and later published in An Economic Business Ethics Review, and On P2P File-Sharing: A Major Problem—A Chinese Perspective.”

My research has greatly been stimulated by its recognition and support from SASS, by the establishment in 1999 of the Centre for Business Ethics, and by the implementation of business ethics as a core subject. The development of business ethics in China has been hindered by the government’s reform policy, the interest of the public, the active participation of communities from around the world and the flow of ideas across borders.

In conclusion, my research interests in business ethics are related to four major areas:

1. Firstly, I try to pay equal attention to Western developments in business ethics and its responses to major challenges as well as to my country’s efforts to optimize its socialist market economy. I gained deeper insight into the moral resources as well as the limitations of Western business ethics in exchanges with various colleagues including Richard De George, Kenneth Cap, Norma Pivetta, and Martin Prozesky who discussed with me the lessons from cases such as Enron and other financial scandals. I am convinced that the future of Chinese economic development requires managing the West’s experience with capitalism with a Marxist economics and ethics, particularly with Marx’s theory of capital.

2. Secondly, as I have great confidence in the potential of potential business ethics with Chinese characteristics, I believe that colleagues from around the world would benefit from its deeper understanding. Examples of my efforts are publications such as “The Objectives of Business Ethics and its Basic Framework,” “Business Ethics at the Asian Century,” and “Business Ethics at the Turn of the Century: Review and Outlook.”

3. Thirdly, one of my major tasks is to facilitate the mutual discourse between business leaders, economists, and ethicists so as to implement moral theory into daily business practice. For this purpose, I have put forward more than 300 theses (both in English and in Chinese) that can stimulate such implementation.

4. Lastly, in my research as well as in my role as executive director of the center I always focus on the practical need to improve my country’s economy through the ethical conduct of business leaders, government officials, and practitioners (e.g., labor unions). My practical concern is to integrate business ethics into law and politics, and to contribute to the moral integration of corporate structure and the development of ethics standards both nationally and internationally.

I have dedicated myself wholeheartedly to the study of business ethics and am more than willing to extend my service in this area into the foreseeable future.

March 15, 2008
Xiaohua Lu
Day 4: Friday 18 July 2008: Governance and Leadership

09:00
PLENARY SESSION
THE ETHICS OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE: GLOBAL CONVERGENCE OR DIVERSITY?
Prof. Deon Rossouw (moderator), Phillip Armittong, Prof. Martin King, Prof. Peter Kusalasek, Dr. YKR Raddy

10:40 to 11:40
CONCURRENT SESSIONS
Corporate governance in IDOM: An example of a corporate policy
- Alepio Sinon, Jean Fomterodon

In governance we trust? Evaluating the extent to which governance policies instil trust in corporate relations between shareholder and stakeholder groups
- Minka Vibo

Corporate governance for SMEs in developing countries: challenges and way forward
- Shahnaz Mahmood

Trade in indigenous arts and crafts: labels of authenticity as a starting point for protecting indigenous cultural expression
- Barbara Andoilem

Cultural values, economic growth and development
- Nilagizirwa Symphorion

Reflections on Western values in South Africa: Contestualising local beliefs
- Werner Soontiens, Carolyn Dickie

Organizational character
- Vasantha Sinivesan, L. S Murty

Entrepreneurial Social Responsibility: Scoping the territory
- Laura J. Spencer, Richard Blundell, Stefania Zerbinati

Advancing ethics and responsible leadership: theoretical models and empirical evidence
- Joseph A. Petrick

CSR as governmentality
- Sten Vallentin, David Murillo

Corporate as as governments
- Dirk Mannet, Andy Crane, Jeremy Moon

Why can neither the shareholder nor the stakeholder approach continue?
- Richard W. Zeidler

Panel discussion
How green was the ISBEE 2008 Cape Town Conference, and why is it important for business ethics?
Johan Hattingh (moderator), Minka Vibo, Robert Thoburn

11:00 to 12:00
LUNCH AND ISBEE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Day 2: Wednesday 16 July 2008: Global Perspectives

09:00
PLENARY SESSION
THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTARY CODES OF CONDUCT ON MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS
Prof. Prakash Sethi (moderator), Ms. Emelianiola Olga, Rev. David Lawry, Prof. Oliver Williams, Mr. Peter Beaven

11:00 to 13:00
PARALLEL PLENARY SESSION
GLOBAL REPORT ON FAIRNESS IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT
Prof. Geoff Moore (moderator) (Europe), Prof. Piet Naude (Africa), Prof. Taka Iwao (Japan), Prof. Elio Ferrato (Latin America), Prof. Fred Bird & Peter Woolscroft (North America)

GLOBAL REPORT ON ETHICS IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES
Dr. Laura Spence (moderator), Prof. Mollie Painter-Morland & Kih Debbe (Africa) Dr. Vasantha Sinivesan (Asia-Pacific), Francesco Perrini (Europe)
Prof. Maria Cecilia Coutinho de Arruda (Latin America), Prof. Melissa Baucus (North America)

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Conformity as reciprocity: Ethical implications of the dynamics of Sino-African relations
- Stephen Roblin

Global illicit financial flows and the philosophical underpinning of corruption
- Raymond W. Baker

The issue of the fairness and justice of the primary distribution
- YuHua Yu

Sustainability and ethics in Nihombashi Shinagawa Shitsui
- Rio Enido

Ethics at small and medium-sized enterprises: Two Brazilian cases of struggle for survival
- Mariana de Souza Lima, Raulina Feitosa, Maria Cecilia Coutinho de Arruda, Luciana Tchelitcheva, Luciana Bittencourt

Fostering corporate social responsibility in small and medium size enterprises: Recent experiences in the Netherlands
- Henk van Luijk, Lubke Vlamming

Whistle blowing and ethics helpfulness in the modes of Managing Morality model
- Leon van Vuuren

Challenges in the sociology of business ethics researching whistle blowing
- Tina Uysoretti Verdu

The ethics of whistle blowing: an evaluation of a South African case
- Tobias Lawe

Prof. Deon Rossouw (moderator), Phillip Armittong, Prof. Martin King, Prof. Peter Kusalasek, Dr. YKR Raddy