Omie Walls
February 19, 14
INFOST 230
Schmidt Article Outline

Control Statement: Ethics is a matter of vision or discernment, not decision making about a particular dilemma.

I. The traditional approach to business ethics uses normative theory to guide decisions.
    A. Ethics as a discernment is more suitable for rapid changes in computer technologies.
    B. Metaphors and images shape our understanding of knowledge management and the ethical issues that arise in its practice.
    C. There is a call for an ongoing process of critical inquiry among knowledge managers, ethicists, consumers, and citizens to advance ethics in knowledge management.
II. Metaphors and images are for cognition, interpretation, and communication.
    A. This is especially the case over issues of disputed values and ethical judgments.
    B. Knowledge managers have to do more than make the right decisions.
        1. Knowledge managers tackle complex issues.
        2. Knowledge managers encounter difficulties of communication that impede achieving a goal.
        3. Knowledge managers possess state-of-the-art technology.
        4. Knowledge managers must make quick decisions that may have far-ranging consequences for others.
    C. The fundamental issue is discerning what is happening in rapidly changing, challenging, and complex situations.
        1. Technology alone cannot provide solutions to problems that call for normative or ethical judgment.
        2. What matters is content over technology.
        3. There is a tendency to blame information technology for the failure to effectively deal with tough issues.
            a. An attempt to apply a solution before adequately defining a problem may actually cause problems supposedly caused by technology.
            b. Knowledge managers need a better grasp on the purpose and meaning of their technological tools.
    D. Traditionally, professionals look to ethics for theories to help them make decisions about particular problems.
        1. The capacity to see the ethical dimensions of professional and business practices is more important than decision-making.
        2. Knowledge managers must first have imaginative capacity to interpret their circumstances in an illuminating way

3. Knowledge managers must develop defensible judgments on particular issues, and justify particular actions.
    a. Judgments and actions will only be as sound as the initial perception.
    b. Perception may decisively shape everything that follows in terms of judgment, decision, and action.
E. Without acknowledging the priority of discernment, the dominant account of ethics as normative theory will remain mired in interminable disputes.

III. Normative ethical theory is used as a decisional tool.
A. Normative ethical theory helps us decide what to do when faced with an ethical decision.
    1. Teleological theories reference end results or consequences of choices or decisions.
        a. Utilitarianism states that we should choose the course of action that benefits the most people overall.
        b. Egoism supports choosing the course of action that only benefits *me*.
B. Deontological theories refer to duties or rights that are morally binding and independent of particular consequences.
    1. We should not consider the outcomes of our ethical decisions.
    2. Kantian ethics is a highly complex and original thought that states: "We should never treat other persons as a means to an end. We should treat them only as ends in themselves."
        a. There is a basic duty not to harm others in Kantian ethics.
C. Teleological and deontological theories are useful for managers because they provide different frameworks for making decisions.
    1. Both theories help managers take into account a wide range of factors pertaining to a particular dilemma.
        a. This prevents a hasty reductionism to a narrow set of considerations.
        b. Textbooks claim they help the manager achieve an analytical clarity that common sense alone does not provide.
        c. These theories help managers make finer, more nuanced discriminations among various facts.
        d. They enable the manager to make articulate, defensible positions.
D. A common objective is that theory is too abstract for the concrete situations and concerns facing people at work.
    1. It is a challenge to make a meaningful connection between normative theories and case studies.
    2. It depends in part on how the theoretical material is presented and related to more practical concerns.
E. An important objection is that ethical theories generally do not clarify issues in a way that leads to more effective decisions.
    1. Ethical theories only help to clarify the points over which managers disagree.

2. The theories do not show managers how to settle finely tuned disagreements.
    a. Disputes between opposing normative perspectives will not reconcile due to clashing conclusions.
    b. Battling normative perspectives lack what is necessary to compel agreement, a shared vision of what morally is really at stake.
3. As a result, discernment must be logically prior to decisions about particular cases.

IV. To characterize ethics as discernment is to put description before decision and vision before action.
  A. Ethical issues require us to make decisions, act, and justify with carefully argued reasons.
  B. Before we decide, we must give a description of what is happening that helpfully illumines what is at stake.
  C. It is a mistake to think that issues are simply "given" to us as an objective state of affairs, for we do not see objectively.
    1. We interpret what passes before us, and our interpretations are shaped by many factors.
    2. We are shaped by who we are, our relationships to others, and how we may be affected by outcomes of our interpretations.
  D. Ethics as discernment places great emphasis on the qualities of the person who must describe and respond to an ethical issue.
    1. Normative theory tends to discount the features of the person who needs to make the decision.
    2. The modern approach stipulates only that this person be rational and capable of maintaining an objective distance from the ethical issue.
    3. Ethics as discernment emphasizes the importance of all aspects of one's moral character.
  E. The chief obstacles to ethical perception and action character flaws like egoism, insecurity, and self-deception (Iris Murdoch).
    1. These qualities tend to distort our vision of ourselves, of others, and of the issues we encounter.
    2. Traditional ethical theory over-emphasizes the freedom and agency of the moral actor.
    3. We should focus on the way quiet habits of action and virtue encourage appropriate action through perceptive discernment.
  F. Metaphors are an important part of interpretation and discernment.
    1. Metaphors we live by play an implicit but crucial role in shaping our experience and judgment.
    2. Metaphors are tools we use to portray and understand one thing in terms of another.
    3. They typically use a familiar idea or experience to make intelligible an unfamiliar or complex concept or phenomenon.
    4. The choice of metaphor is crucially important to experience and understanding.

<ol start="5" type="1">
Metaphors are tools for interpreting and evaluating complex issues that require good descriptions.

G. Metaphors that shape our thinking and perception are rarely acknowledged.
1. Typically this is an oversight that can lead to an ethically misguided decision.
2. Complete justification of our decisions should include identifying and justifying those metaphors that guide our perception.
3. Our perception and thought are only as rich as the ideas that are available to us.
   a. By paying more attention to the metaphors that underlie most of our thinking, we are likely to develop a richer and more sophisticated understanding of complicated developments, like computer technologies.
      i. Solomon argues, how we look at what we do, has a lot to do with how we do.
      ii. Many casualties of corporate competition can be laid at the feet of the malevolent images that we impose on businesses and ourselves.
   b. Metaphors that shape business perception and action have demonstrable bottom-line and moral consequences.
      i. Business executives will remain mired in perennial difficulties until they develop a critical awareness of the metaphors they tacitly use.
      ii. This will lead to a discovery of better metaphors upon which to organize business activity.

V. The Internet is often the basis for a knowledge management technology infrastructure.
A. We always need to test the adequacy of previous metaphors that describe computer innovations, and when necessary, we may need to invent new ones.
B. Metaphors other than information superhighway are not only possible, but also perhaps warranted by new directions in technology.
1. Stone urges us to move beyond utilitarian images as well as prosthesis-based metaphors, which focus our attention on the instrumental character of computers.
2. Stone advocates thinking of computers in terms of recreation and play.
C. Stories are a rich source of metaphors that teach new ways to look at life.
1. Agre argues that all technologies are based on a grand story or narrative.
2. The rise of the Internet is a grand story with heroes and villains.
3. Agre identifies the good hacker, the rebel hacker, and the cyber utopian.
4. These roles are not adequately covered under normative guidance for the rapidly evolving web.

VI.   Different metaphorical renderings of technology open our eyes to particular ethical issues and close our eyes to others.
   A. It is important to be aware of basic metaphors and images used to make sense of technology.
   B. Ethics issues we encounter are in large measure a function of the metaphors we use to describe computers and related technologies.
      1. Moral life is only as vibrant and fully dimensional as the images we possess for our descriptions.
      2. People who work closely with technology must develop a robust vocabulary for describing the tools of their trade.
   C. It is not sufficient merely to possess a rich metaphorical vocabulary; we also need to be aware of the images that shape our vision.
      1. Seemingly "natural" and basic metaphors need to be explicitly recognized and brought to our critical attention
      2. People can operate on the basis of a tactic metaphor which legitimizes negative behaviors.
      3. Solomon argues that it is important to be aware that metaphors widely shape perception, judgment, and action.
      4. Knowledge managers need to be aware of the tactic metaphors that shape the way they discern in terms of ethics and values.
VII.   Knowledge managers tacitly rely upon basic metaphors or images.
   A. Knowledge management is a field that requires professionals to discern the significance of pertinent technological developments due to the rapid-changing of technologies.
   B. Container metaphors imply that there is knowledge to be captured and managed.
      1. It is an implication that suggests that knowledge is something that needs to be contained. (i.e.: "repository of knowledge")
      2. There are different structured forms in which to put knowledge.
         a. Static information is a paper document.
         b. It can be put in the form of evolving information like a discussion database where people contribute ideas and responses.
         c. The form may consist only of pointers to other places or persons where the knowledge resides.
      3. Metaphors situate knowledge in this manner.
         a. These metaphors evoke a physical entity into which knowledge can be put.
         b. Metaphors give vocabulary for manipulating knowledge that emphasizes words like "obtain," "organize," "restructure," "warehouse," and "distribute."
         c. Container metaphors suggest specific responsibilities.
            i. Container metaphors infer guarding against the contamination, spilling, travel, and retrieval of information.

          ii.   Containers prompt ethical issues regarding access, control, regulation, and maintenance.

C. Transfer metaphors help us visualize the movement of knowledge.
1. Transfer presupposes the knowledge containment (metaphor within a metaphor).
2. The metaphor emphasizes the dynamic quality of knowledge as it travels and is put to different uses.
3. Images that correspond to this matter include "getting," "moving," "shipping," or "dumping" information.
   a. Transfer metaphors infer the responsibility of supporting communication,
   b. There is also a responsibility of collaborating and mediating among suppliers and demanders of knowledge.
   c. Lastly, knowledge managers must explore or search for elusive knowledge.

D. Political metaphors call attention of issues of power and control.
1. This brings forth the phrase, "knowledge is power."
2. Political metaphors underscore the political ramifications of technology that makes knowledge available to an organization.
3. Traditional business models focus on autocracy and bureaucracy, while recent emergences of participatory democracy are being introduced.
   a. Pervasive and rapid growth are challenging conventional models.
   b. Political metaphors suggest the political role and authority that knowledge managers must exercise.
   c. Often the role of "gate-keeper" is executed in this sense with stopping or slowing down the knowledge process while creating patterns of dependency.

E. Community metaphors alert us to the ways in which successful knowledge management is dependent upon a certain kind of environment or context.
1. Positive communities display traits of culture and workers of such intellectual curiosity.
2. These metaphors sharply contrast with the political metaphors due to their knowledge-friendly approach.
3. These images emphasize importance on organizational context, broadening communities, and concerning support.
4. Community metaphors help organizations with their take long term perspective on organizational dynamics.
5. These metaphors focus on incentives and rewards appropriate for the position of knowledge management.
   a. Business today is pressured to take a short term perspective when assessing bottom-line impact, emphasizing quick financial benefits.
   b. Because of this, there is an ongoing tension between short and long term perspectives for knowledge managers.