"Ethics Around the World: Part 3"
Michael Davis, Editor, CSEP, Illinois Institute of Technology

One day an editor has an idea. He sends off a few letters. Recipients respond. Before long, the editor no longer controls the journal. The idea does.

That is not true here. But it's not so far from the truth. When I conceived of an issue on ethics around the world, I had no idea that there would be two sequels, or that I might consider a third. Yet, here I am.

For some, I know, that's good. Many of those interested in practical ethics have found these reports on ethics in other countries rewarding, both when the other country resembles their own and when it differs. Similarities across continents and cultures help to confirm us in our sense that, basically, "ethics" is not a local fad. The variety of the world helps to keep us from becoming too smug about what we happen to be doing.

Yet, even for those interested in ethics, there is such a thing as enough. (Even I have begun to feel Perspectives has done enough ethics around the world-for a while.) And, for anyone more interested in professions than in ethics, the moment when enough became too much probably passed some time ago.

Yet, I have done it again: Part 3. Why? One reason is purely practical. Letters written long ago yielded late fruit. How could I refuse, citing "time;' that least respected technicality in the academic lexicon?

The other reason I have done one more issue is that these later excursions are not mere visits to the same place under a different name. Consider:

Carl Mitcham's comparison of professional standards for engineers in China. India, and Japan is as much about engineering in those three countries as about ethics. You need not be interested in ethics to see a whole research program in his brief sketch.

Nakagawa's description of business ethics in Japan contrasts strikingly with Mitcham's description of the ethics of engineers (and scientists) there. Comparing the two pieces suggests another research program: determining how much conflict there is between "business Japan" and "professional Japan."

The distance between Japan and Albania is enormous, in circumstances even more than in miles. Until two years ago, Albania was a blank on the map of Europe. Barjaba fills in some details, discussing as "ethics" what most Americans and Japanese would call "political culture." While Japanese politicians like to stress how much Japan differs from the US, Barjaba's piece reminds us of the vast similarities against which a few differences stand out.

Kaczmarcyzk's Poland is instructive as well. Kaczmarcyzk is a professor of electrical engineering, with many of the same problems of teaching ethics that professors of electrical engineering have in the West. But he also shares certain problems with Barjaba, problems created by a sudden void in the intellectual landscape. The importance Kaczmarcyzk assigns his profession's code of ethics reminds us of the importance such codes have for us too.

Olaso, an Argentine, is, like Kaczmarcyzk, concerned with problems of teaching ethics. But his concern is teaching business, rather than professional, ethics. Can one teach business ethics in a corrupt business environment? Dare one not teach business ethics in such an environment? How does one teach business ethics in such an environment?

If Olaso's Argentina is a purgatory for teachers of business ethics,

then Hermoza's Peru is the first circle of hell for the professions. Here even the minimums of normal professional ethics become heroism.

The interest of these pieces thus seems to transcend their ethical interest. That is my defense for this third issue of Ethics Around the World. Nonetheless, I here promise to do no more-for a while. To Cesar Cuello, I apologize and promise to find a place for his piece on the Dominican Republic in a later issue.

I hope this arrangement will satisfy everyone.

"Engineering Ethics in Asia"
Carl Mitcham, Pennsylvania State University

Excluding Russia, the dominant countries of Asia are China, India, and Japan. Using a variety of sources, I have estimated populations and numbers of engineers as of 1985: (*Table*)

These estimates are only very approximate. They nevertheless indicate that density of engineers in China and India may be about the same, but greater by a factor of ten in the US and twenty in Japan. The development of professional engineering will be influenced by such different densities, as well as by educational traditions and the ability of engineers to form free associations. Consider, then, the following notes on particular cases.

China. Given the relatively low density of engineers in China and the authoritarian character of the Chinese political system, it is not surprising that no Chinese technical society yet has an explicit code of ethics. What is surprising, is that the regulations of the Chinese Mechanical Engineering Society imply something like such a code.

The regulations are divided into nine chapters. Chapter One consists of general rules, the third of which states that the Society "encourages dialectical materialism" along with "mechanical industry, rising technological service," and the "acceleration of new technological research," as well as the production of more scientists and the "speeding up of modernization." The chapter also gives the Society the duty to promote technological exchange, to pursue scientific research, to be worthy of the trust of companies and agencies by offering accurate technical information, to expand technical training, to advance technological and scientific management, to control technological information, to honor the scientist and technical reporter, to contribute to society, and to protect the rights of technicians, listening to their suggestions, ideas, and criticism.

Hong Kong's engineers differ from others in China. Located in a British Crown Colony, the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE) originally developed not just on the British model but as a branch of British professional organization. With the realization that Hong Kong would be returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, local engineers in the 1970s began to provide Hong Kong with a truly independent engineering association. That has involved some intense discussion of professional ethics, with a special conference in 1980 on "Professional Ethics in the Modern World."

In 1984 the HKIE formally adopted "Rules of Conduct" that differed in important respects from those of its British parent organization. For example, although the primary rule remained responsibility to the profession, it was modified by the following statement: "When working in a country other than Hong Kong [the Hong Kong engineer should] order his conduct according to the existing recognized standards of conduct in that country, except that he should abide by these rules as applicable in the presence of local standards."

The reason for this modification was spelled out at an interprofessional symposium in December, 1985. F.Y. Kan of the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors identified the role of his professional association as the promotion of the status of surveyors and the usefulness of the profession. "So far," he said, "the role has not changed but, with the Sino-British agreement in operation [to return Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty], there might be far-reaching effects on the professions. There is, therefore, a need to break away from UK qualifications. However, professional competence must be maintained and this could bring institutions into the political field."

India. India provides another example of the influence of British professional engineering organizations, but the result has not been the same as in Hong Kong.

The Indian National Academy of Engineering requires all members to sign the following statement: "As a Fellow of the Indian National Academy of Engineering, I shall follow the code of ethics, maintain integrity in research and publications, uphold the cause of Engineering and the dignity of the Academy, endeavor to be objective in judgement, and strive for the enrichment of human values and thoughts."

The idea of a personally signed pledge to uphold an ethics code seems much stronger than anything that exists in China-or in the US, for that matter. On the other hand, "code of ethics" does not refer to any explicit formulation but simply to general principles. It is not felt necessary to spell out exactly what "the code of ethics" includes.

Japan. Engineering ethics in Japan exhibits a different character. Engineering professionally organized only after World War II and did so in much closer association with science. In Japan, science and engineering are not separate enterprises as they are in the US.

The first and most influential code-like document is the "Statement of Atomic Research in Japan." Issued in 1954 by the Japanese Science Council QSC)- which includes both scientists and engineers-this statement sets forth what have become known as "The Three Principles for the Peaceful Use of Atomic Energy": All research shall be conducted with full openness, democratically administered, and carried out under the autonomous control of the Japanese themselves.

These principles reflect the desire of Japanese during the 1950s to distance themselves from American interests and policy. Immediately after World War II, the US prohibited all Japanese research in aviation, atomic energy, and other war-related fields. But by 1951, following the Communist victory in China and the outbreak of the Korean War, US policy began encouraging militaryrelated science and engineering and the incorporation of Japan into the Western alliance. (The Allied occupation ended in 1952.)

Japanese scientists and engineers recognized that the Three Principles were in opposition to, for example, the US policy of secrecy in atomic research. Indeed, in order to avoid possible opposition, the JSC initially did not translate the Principles into English. Though formulated by scientists and engineers themselves, the Principles were readily adopted by the government, suggesting the greater social prestige and political influence of the Japanese technical community in comparison with the American.

Recently, new interest in ethics has developed among scientists and engineers, an interest exhibiting more of the characteristics found in the US since the 1970s. This is illustrated, for instance, by the "Charter for Scientists" of 1980, which proclaims a responsibility on the part of scientists and engineers to promote sound scientific development and to help educate the public about important issues related to scientific and technological development.

Conclusion. This piece is based on research conducted under a recent Ethics and Values Studies Program grant from the US National Science Foundation (NDIR8721980). The codes and other materials referred to can be found in *Engineering Ethics Throughout the World* (STS Program, University Park, PA: STS Press, 1992).

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**"The Japan That Mammon Rules:
Where Has Our Business Ethics Gone?"**
Seishi Nakagawa, Faculty of Commerce, Fukuoka University

1991 should be remembered as a year when the gilt of business ethics came off Japanese firms. In June alone, the news media reported: Nomura Securities Co. (ranked first in Japan in 1987 in terms of ordinary profits) had provided funds for the head of the Inagawa-kai crime syndicate to buy up the stocks of Tokyo Electric Rain Co. Nomura also gave him lucrative golf club memberships. The Big Four securities companies (including Nomura) paid secret compensation (128.3 billion yen) to big clients for stock market losses. Nomura chairman, Setsuya Tabuchi, who took the blame by resigning, had been the vice-president of Keidanren (the Federation of Economic Organizations) which is responsible for business ethics. Among 229 paid secret compensation, many were large corporations such as Toyota Motors, Hitachi, and Matsushita Electric Co.

These scandals did not shock the

politicians of "Economic Power" Japan out of their arrogance. By January 1992, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Yoshio Sakurauchi, and the Prime Minister, Kiichi Miyazawa, were confidently expressing prejudiced views about Americans. Their confidence was based only on Japan's economic success. As many have pointed out, they misunderstood the strength brought about by ethnic diversity in America.

After the 1988-1991 boom-and-bust faded, the Japanese began to notice that Mammon had driven the old deities out of the mountains, rivers, and forests of Japan. The Japanese now work under Mammon's whip. The number of "Karoshi" (death from overwork) is still increasing. Annual working hours in Japan averaged 2159 in 1989; 200-500 hours more than in advanced industrial countries such as the US or Germany. An average company employee cannot build his own house until retirement. To buy a lot for a residence in the Tokyo Metropolis, one needs more than 26 times the average family's annual income. Management scholar Tadashi Mito compared the Japanese management system, which forces employees to work overtime without any restriction and to swear allegiance unconditionally, to that of an army.

Many Japanese firms have traditionally treated their employees according to corporate paternalism. Life-time employment, ranking by seniority, and the enterprise union are the institutionalization of corporate paternalism. Recently, however, new management policies have appeared. For example, Toyota Motors decided on a policy that

changed the just-in-time (JIT) production system, wringing water out of a dry towel, into the "friendlier" system. Konika, which had adopted the JIT production system, is also trying to ensure that workers control the production lines by allowing them to change the speed of the lines at their discretion. Toshiba and Kobe Steel, responding to ethnocenterism in Japanese firms, tried to raise non-Japanese men of ability to higher positions. NEC and Nissan Motors are trying corporate philanthropy. NEC seeks to assist young and unknown artists, while Nissan hopes to foster creative activities by artists who have yet to establish reputations. Mitsubishi (which caused the "Art Scandal" in 1989 by violating the Antique Dealing Law) tried to recover its lost reputation by showing interest in ecology. It has opened a global environment bureau.

Are these new policies sincere steps toward a new business ethics or only camouflage for profit seeking? To know which, we must wait to see what Japanese firms do over the next decade.

But I am not hopeful. Japan is now under the cultural influence of big business. What has big business shown us other than that "respectable" business ethics is camouflage? Big business has only worshipped money and technology, which are not ends but mere means for obtaining human ends. Most statesman and scholars, who should show us the ends of life, have only followed business. The President of SBS Associates, Stephen Schlosstein, said that there are values such as duty, hierarchical organization, and loyalty in Japanese society but that these cannot be sublimated into the more

universal values of democracy, liberty, and justice. Although we have boasted of Japanese diligence, aimless diligence is no better than the diligence of slaves. The arrogance of Japanese politicians might be the flipside of anxieties stemming from the impossibility of finding any purpose in life. As political scientist Susumu Nishibe tells us, the time when we should reconsider Japanese culture is here.

"Albania: Intelligentsia and the New Ethics of Society"
Kosta Barjaba, Tirana University

Albania's transition from totalitarianism to pluralism is a moral renaissance. Every Albanian has to contribute to a new social consciousness, a new ethics. What is the intelligentsia's role? That is my subject.

As a result of the so-called "people's character" of education, one out of every forty-two Albanians has received higher education. But that statistic shows nothing about the role of the intelligentsia in "socialist" society. Its role doesn't depend on numbers.

In Albania, the communist regime treated the intelligentsia as "a loyal auxiliary" of the Party. The Labor Party (the communists) used the intelligentsia as agitators of Marxist Leninist ideology, Albanian science, and "socialist progress." The intelligentsia, more than any other social stratum, worked under the pressure of the Party. Party pressure did not

stimulate; it restricted. This, in part, explains the limited impact of the intelligentsia on our society during the communist period.

There is another cause as well: the intellectuals had continuously been prevented from directing the most important fields of social life. The regime had most oppressed professional groups such as writers, artists, researchers, social scientists, teachers, and lawyers. For a long time this merely caused dissatisfaction among them. But, when the opportunity came, lawyers, writers, artists, and physicians were among the first groups to abandon the Party (and communism). This was one factor in the rapid decline of the one party system.

Is political pluralism possible in Albania? Albanian intellectuals started discussing that question some time ago. In the summer of 7990, the Albanian leader, Ramis Alia, organized a meeting with representatives of the intelligentsia. The most distinguished of the intelligentsia asked for more freedom, democracy, and human rights. According to them, political pluralism should be allowed in Albania.

This helped Ramis Alia against the conservatives. But it helped the intellectuals, too What was happening in Albania did not depend any more on the old regime. A dozen thoughtful articles attacking the dictatorship soon appeared in the Albanian press. In the vanguard of dissidents were several famous journalists, writers, physicians, lawyers, and scholars. By December 1990, when political pluralism was legalized in Albania, most intellectuals were

in the forefront of the struggle for democracy, not only because they were intellectually and economically oppressed, but because they were conscious that well-educated people have more to gain from a democratic system than do workers or farmers.

December's movement led by the students and professors of Tirana University was at first intellectual and non-populist. But participants soon realized that a merely intellectual movement could not give Albania what a broader people's movement eventually gave it. In Albania back then, the government controlled the press, the chief means of intellectual struggle. Intimidation was widespread. Communist myths and dogmas were still untouched. Only a people's rebellion could overthrow them.

The further development of democracy made the role of the intelligentsia more important, but more difficult. Political parties here try to claim different groups of intellectuals as their own. This has led to the foundation of the Independent Intellectuals Forum and the Liberal Party, both of which claim to be a party of intellectuals. But intellectual tolerance is not yet part of Albanian political habits. Populism sometimes overrules it. Intellectuals have distanced themselves from the populist tendencies of the democratic process and the calls of extreme sides for using violence. They have insisted on peaceful transition to a democratic society.

Albanians move towards national reconciliation is a result of the vision of intellectuals. They have often had to reconstruct or rectify what the parties' blind passions, old quarrels about the division of

land or plundering of cultural institutions, have destroyed. The intellectuals have also had to clarify the perspective of small businessmen for whom an hour's income is much more than what an intellectual earns in a day. The hard economic situation of intellectuals is not only a big disadvantage to pluralism and democracy, it also stimulates anarchy and the moral decomposition of society.

The new ethics of social relations is jeopardized by the inertia of traditional dogmas of the former official communist morality and too strict an interpretation of Albanian customs. For example, when Albanian intellectuals started opposition parties, the official propaganda appealed to the Albanian institution of "the promised word:' According to traditional Albanian morality, everyone must keep his promise. (An Albanian myth tells of a dead brother who in order to keep his promise to his mother, got out of the grave and brought her the sister married and living in Bohemia, many mountains and valleys away.)

Communist propaganda exaggerated that institution, hoping to persuade public opinion that leaving one party and joining another one means not to respect, but to abandon, a promise. According to communist propaganda, the national morality is political. That interpretation was strongly criticized not only by intellectuals of the opposition but by several former communist intellectuals who are now members of the Socialist Party.

Despite the majestic victory of the Democratic Party in elections of 22 March, the fruits of democracy cannot be seen yet. The

intellectuals seem to be idealists in their efforts for democracy and prosperity. Even the political parties sometimes try to destroy what intellectuals are trying to create. The parties have, for example, resisted the intellectual initiative of national reconciliation. That resistance caused a group of famous Albanian intellectuals to call upon the political parties to judge and act according to a national morality and not a political one.

Insofar as political pluralism has not caused serious conflict at work, in social relations, or within the family, it is because of the intellectuals. A survey carried out in summer 1991, shows that professional groups are the ones least divided by political differences. The deformation of work relations was confirmed by 30% of interviewed intellectuals, the deformation of family life by 7.5%, and the deformation of social behavior only by 3.5% of them. These percentages in the case of workers were 80%, 29% and 25%.

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"Why Professional Ethics is Important for an East-European Engineer Now?"
Andrzej Kaczmarcyzk,
Bialystok Technical University

I am a technical professional, researcher, and academic instructor. I had no contact with professional ethics associations, or with ethics as a discipline, until one day I read an advertisement that said Illinois Institute of Technology "is interested in collecting material from anyone who has experimented with developing a curriculum which includes ethics in a technical course in engineering." I answered, writing about my previous spontaneous action: during my regular technical course, *Introduction to Robotics and Automation*, I had told my students about the importance of professional ethics and about the IEEE ethical code. I received a reply from IIT encouraging me to write an article for *Perspectives*.

This has forced me to think why I had told my students about professional ethics. Why did it seem important in a course on robots and automation? My tentative answer follows.

Ethical problems have gained significance in post communist Poland, as in other Eastern European countries. One can observe the growing influence of religion in the place of Marxist doctrine. Ethical problems occupy a central position in religious systems. At my university, in the eastern region of Poland, two religions, Catholicism and the Orthodox rite, are dominant. We have two nonobligatory academic courses explaining ethical problems-Catholic and Orthodox. But religious systems focus on general problems of ethics. Professionals, engineers among them, need more detailed advice for solving the everyday problems of professional life. In addition, we engineers, who are in the habit of building our machines our own way, while respecting general laws, feel the need to build our professional code in the same way. Precedent based, living conclusions of professional ethics seem to be particularly attractive for someone from Eastern Europe, subject to various doctrinal influences and stresses.

The integrating aspect of professional ethics is also a matter of great moment. The professional activity of engineers has an international, and even inter-cultural, character, especially in developed, technologically advanced countries. It is not unusual for people of different cultural backgrounds-from Africa, America, Europe, India, Japan-to take part in a team working on an advanced engineering project. Often one can find such a team authoring technical papers. This suggests that there are some common ideas and values, which create a common base for common activity. Professional ethics can be a significant component of this base.

In Eastern Europe, separatist trends are distinctly perceptible. They are, among other things, a response to the "decreed internationalism" of the communist period. In such an environment, professional ethics can serve engineers both as a tool and as a condition of joining the West with its integrating trends.

Professional ethics can serve as a tool because the international activity of engineers really exists in the West; the base of such activity with its ethical component must be effective; so it's necessary for us to use such a tool for building this kind of activity here.

The existence of a common ethical component is also a condition for us to join the Western professional community. I am convinced that we can join it bringing our own ethical values and ideas. What might these be?

An earlier issue of *Perspectives* was organized around two important questions: "What is Good Science?" and "What is Good Engineering?" The Polish

philosopher Tadeusz Kotarbinski(1886-1981) gave these a more general formulation: "What is Good Work?" and made answering that question the central object of the philosophical system he named *praxiology*.

Praxiology, or the general theory of efficient activity, or rational activity logic, descends from the idea of "Technologie Generale," formulated by the French philosopher Alfred Espinas in 1890. Kotarbinski and his disciples have developed a full system of praxiology that deals with two main problems: (a) description and analysis of elements and forms of activity; and (b) formulation of praxological principles of conduct, valid in every area of rational human activity. *Tract on Good Work*, "Traktat o dobrej robocie" in Polish, originally published 1955 by Lodz Scientific Society, is Kotarbinski's principal work. Kotarbinski's praxiology approximates ethics. His focal ethical concept is being trustworthy or reliable for others.

The problem of the sociological analysis of scientific activity with its ethical implications was attacked by another Polish philosopher (and sociologist) Florian Znaniecki (1882-1958). Znaniecki divided his lifetime between Poland and the USA, working at Poznan University and at Columbia University. His important work, *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge*, was first published in 1940 by Columbia University Press.

Znaniecki emphasizes that a wise person understands that his own tasks are only a part of human tasks as a whole, and that his tasks can be fulfilled only if others

fulfill their concurrent tasks; everyone's activities can be significant and fertile only in connection with the activities of others.

I have come to believe that the importance which professional ethics has for me results also-maybe first and foremost-from the vividness of its problems in real life, from the possibility that an ethical choice of a professional can produce enormous effects on other people. It is important to me that I can bring elements of the cultural heritage of my nation to professional ethics, and that one day this contribution may have such a positive effect.

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"Professional Ethics in a Country in Crisis: The Peruvian Experience"

Luis A. Piscoya Hermoza, San Marcos University of Lima

The professions with the highest social recognition in Peru-lawyers, doctors, journalists, engineers in all fields, architects, psychologists, economists, and CPA's-demand as a pre-requisite for their practice membership in a professional organization. Peruvian law makes the professional degree given by the universities a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for practice for most professions.

Each professional organization must have a professional ethics code approved by its Associates General Assembly. The writing of the code is normally assigned to a special committee of the organization. Today's codes are of

an eminently practical orientation, avoiding theoretical definitions or preciseness. The Peruvian philosophical community normally does not advise on the preparation of these codes. Recently, however, there have been signs that some professions recognize that the services of philosophy professors could be of help in writing better codes of professional ethics.

It's not possible, in a brief note like this, to explain in detail the problems of professional ethics worrying Peruvian professionals today. It is possible only to consider the most central. Because of the way they have affected professional practice in Peru during the last ten years, the most central problems seem to be: 1) what stance to take toward political groups in armed struggle; 2) how to deal with narco-traffic and its power to bribe functionaries and authorities; 3) how to respond to violation of legality and of human rights by the military and para-military groups; and 4) how to respond to corruption in important sectors of public administration.

Let's look at some examples of how these problems affect two of the most ancient professions, medicine and law, and one of the newer but in fluential professions, journalism.

Lawyers must decide with some frequency courses of action which escape the reaches of positive law. For example: Legally a lawyer is neither forced to defend a narco-dealer nor barred from it. However, because of the economic power of narcodollars to bribe judges and tribunals, some Peruvian lawyers' associations consider it unethical

for a member to assume the legal defense of narcodealers. Yet, some of the best known, and best paid, lawyers of Lima defend people accused as narco-dealers. The ethical controversy roused by these facts is not simple. The right to a defense is one of the fundamental rights of the citizen.

The ethical legitimacy of the defense of those accused of terrorism is different. The strongest obstacle is practical. Some defenders of those accused of terrorism have been mutilated, murdered, or "disappeared." Until now, the Peruvian police have not disclosed the identity of those responsible. Indeed, the police have sometimes been accused of terrorism or of terrorizing troublesome witnesses, causing the intervention of the United Nations, Amnesty International, and American Watch. That may explain why a group of lawyers in Lima assume the defense of those accused of terrorism on the doctrinaire theory that accused terrorists shouldn't be judged as common criminals but as war prisoners.

Today the chief ethical problem of Peruvian physicians concerns public health. Since January 1991, public health has been severely affected by an epidemic of cholera. The Peruvian Medical Association has held that its members have a moral duty to inform the public about the epidemic's causes, about its transmitting agents-actual and potential -and about the gravity of the situation. However, representatives of the government, and of business, dedicated to the export of sea products, have advised doctors not to be too explicit because information about the seriousness of the situation

could frighten foreign customers, thus harming Peruvian exports and deepening Peru's severe economical crisis. An example of the conflict between duties and interests was given by the previous Minister of Public Health, who had to choose between continuing in a government interested primarily in increasing exports and fulfilling a physician's duty to tell the truth, the whole truth, about cholera. The Minister resigned his position. He decided to leave the government in order to be a physician who does his duty.

Peruvian journalists find themselves exhausted by trying to inform in such a way that news about the earnings of narco-dealers does not engender enthusiasm for easy wealth and that news about the armed insurrection doesn't become publicity for it. Their freedom to report is restricted because, often, they are forbidden to enter emergency zones. Then too, with some frequency, they are pressured to ignore corruption in the public administration. How great such pressure can be will be clear if one recalls that Peru has a relatively large public sector. The government is the richest client of journalism, radio, and television and of advertising agencies. Enterprises have to be cautious if they are to obtain the profitable preference of the State. That is why it isnt uncommon for a journalist who fulfills his duty with great zeal to pay with his job for "spilling the beans:" But when a journalist does his duty by informing about subversive violence, or about the actions of the armed forces, he may pay with his life. According with the United Nation's calculations, the risk of losing one's life or

disappearing in Peru is one of the highest in the world.

Translated by Manuel Blanco-Gonzalez, University of Illinois at Chicago.

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"Business Ethics in Argentina"
Ezequiel de Olaso, Colgate University, Professor of Humanities

Unlike North Americans and almost all Europeans, the Argentine does not identify himself with the state. That can be explained by the fact that, in this country, the governments are usually exceedingly bad, or the state is an inconceivable abstraction; the truth is that the Argentine is an individual, not a citizen. Aphorisms like Hegel's- "The State is the reality of the moral idea"-seem like a vicious joke.

Jorge Luis Borges
*Our Poor Individualis*m (1949).

Wherever there is business, there will be immoral acts. To study such acts, whatever they might be, invariably produces the impression that one is struggling to discover the cause. This type of study is sometimes useful, but it will not support a discipline of business ethics. For a discipline like business ethics to flourish in a society, there must be sufficient motivation for university instruction. I want to concentrate on one motive for teaching business ethics at the university that might be effective. That is the

possibility of discussing, in public, real and concrete aspects of real and concrete businesses. For me, the question is: is it possible to discuss the real life of business in Argentina? My answer is: No (even though university life in Argentina is free and teaching isn't conditional upon extra-academic factors).

This answer suggests a question: Isn't there a tradition, as minimal as it may be, of studies of business ethics in Argentina? Again, the answer is no. Let me explain.

For most of the last fifty years, Argentina has been a society closed both politically and economically. Only with the advent of democracy in 1983 and an intense practice of republican life, has ethics within business become something society demands. Now academics have to transform this demand into something that they can teach and business can practice.

Many Argentines have long felt that "business ethics" is an oxymoron, something like "a black sun:' To speak of "business ethics" seems to these Argentines a hypocrisy that is also ingenuous because nobody would believe it. With few exceptions, business in Argentina has been serenely illegal.

There has also long been a suspicion that corruption is born within the government. That suspicion has grown into a certainty. At the beginning of last year, Terence Todman, the cautious and flexible US ambassador to Argentina, announced that various North American firms had been "pressured" to establish investments. Everyone understood that this meant bribery. The public officials involved defended themselves, arguing that the rules of economics are not clear and that the government lacks adequate organization and precise legislation to combat corruption.

The pressure on Argentina to put an end to corruption is growing. This is reflected in many angry debates, more unorganized than academic, about corruption bleeding the country. Instead of well-known politicians, leading religious organizations, or famous people, common people are publicly protesting with great courage. This is something new in Argentina.

Of course, protests are not studies. Indeed, this climate of passion may impede academic study. Still, it could be a step forward if the intellectuals are to get the message and proceed to transform it into a consistent and well-grounded discourse. Thoughtful essays have already begun to appear in private groups, private universities, and in newspaper columns. An impartial examination of business ethics in Argentina must include corruption in Argentina. That isn't done now.

The usual method of teaching business administration everywhere is through case studies. In the US, a business executive may present a case of his or her own to a class with the purpose of obtaining advice. This practice benefits academic life because it puts both students and professors in direct contact with business realities. It also benefits business by giving business people the opportunity to discuss their problems with highly qualified academics without paying a fee.

This basic model of teaching is not now applicable in Argentina. Only with great difficulty can I even imagine an Argentine businessman truthfully describing to academics what he does to make a living. Although some positive changes have occurred in Argentina's economic organization since March 1991, the general disorder of economic life does not invite honesty.

If, for example, taxes are not collected, the State is responsible. But the State is a corrupt agent in Argentina. Since it intervenes profusely in the economy, it actually increases the probability that, instead of paying taxes, businesses will pay bribes which are less than the taxes.

It is time to ask how teaching business ethics in Argentina could be effective. The best texts are produced in the US. These are widely used in Argentina, especially in what is referred to as "the theoretical level:" But studying ethics as applied to Argentine business requires taking into account the real ethical problems of business in Argentina. This is a virgin field.

The ethics of the study of business ethics remains seriously compromised if one insists exclusively on the study of ethical theories or anachronistic problems. Yet, for many decades, the immorality of usury has been debated in some universities, though this is clearly a problem for another epoch. If one teaches business ethics in this way, students will quickly conclude that the university is determined to evade the hard questions. But what is most grave is that the

students may conclude as well that the university only pretends to be seriously occupied with business ethics; even in the university, business ethics is treated as a hypocritical game. The index of immorality of excellent people sets the tone for the society those students will enter.

Since the end of the 19th century, the Argentine socialist party has reacted against the excesses of capitalism by promoting social laws, establishing cooperative forms of production and consumption, and denouncing business dealings in which the state is directly or indirectly involved. I doubt it is possible to find in the history of this political party any good example of reflection about business ethics.

On the other hand, the Catholic Church, historically an important force in Argentina, often deals with themes of business ethics. But the Church arrived late to these themes, principally because its opposition to socialism had long forced it to defend private ownership, postponing other matters. Though modernized by guidelines of the Vatican, in economic matters the Church even today maintains that the crisis in Argentina comes from the abandonment of religious values. The justification of this view (which sustains people very enlightened in other respects) is a certain fundamentalism during which morality lacks sense or at least effectiveness if not based on religion. The recent experience of Argentina, during which many believers did incredibly immoral acts while many atheists and agnostics proved very virtuous, has finally cracked the base of this fundamentalism.

The coming of democracy in 1983 has brought with it a change in the rules of the social game that Argentines increasingly value. The essence of republican life, the fact that everything is made public, though old hat in North America, is new in Argentina. The experience initiated in 1983 is teaching basic lessons, for example, that a democratic society develops much better if controlled by the feeling of decency the common citizens possess than by the command of moral bosses. Jefferson said, "It does me no injury for my neighbor to say that there are twenty Gods or no God:' The democratic society of Argentina is finding the road to privatization of religion.

The day when our students can examine real cases of real businesses in Argentina will give us the day when business ethics can be studied seriously and have practical and positive consequences. I trust that this day will come but, until it does, reflections on the state of academic study of business ethics in Argentina are, I think, strictly pre-historic.

Translated by Sue Pechter.

The Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions at the Illinois Institute of Technology was established in 1976 for the purpose of promoting education and scholarship relating to ethical and policy issues of the professions.