

## **Conscience Project Meeting 7-30-11**

The meeting was conducted at Ethna's home. Present were Ethna, John, Jere, Meg, Matt, Susan D and Joe. Regrets: Deb, Sue L, Sister Mary.

While Deb G. could not be present, she had shown Matt and Meg her own wonderful artistic rendering of "Polishing the Mirror" which she had been inspired to do during the last meeting. Deb hoped her work hours, often on weekends, would permit her to attend the next meeting of the Conscience Project. She promised to bring her latest work to show everyone, especially John and Susan who had encouraged her in her project. Beulah was engaged in working on her thesis on the Gospel According to Mark. While Sue L could not be present, she conveyed that she would be on hand at the annual meeting of the Indiana Association for Infant and Toddler Mental Health (IAITMH) equipped to project the images of conscience rendered by participants in Jere's and Meg's morning break-out session for Meg's commentary on the composite conscience in her afternoon presentation.

The minutes from the previous meeting 4/30/11 were reviewed and accepted.

Matt presented an update on Conference Planning.

He again announced the thirteenth annual meeting of the IAITMH was to be conducted at the Riley Outpatient Center on Friday, August 12th, 2011. The title was "Ethics in Early Childhood Fields: A Moral Psychological Approach." Keynote speakers were to be Darcia Narvaez, PhD and Daniel Lapsley, PhD.

On 6/21/11 participants from the Conscience Project Matt, Meg, Joe, Susan, Jere and John joined Angie from Riley as well as Jennifer and Liz from the Indiana School for The Blind and Visually Impaired for a 3 1/2 hour pre-conference practice session focusing on how to conduct the break-out sessions, each of which would be organized around one conscience sensitive task. Joe, Susan and John all were positive about the practicum.

Some aspects of the break-out sessions were further clarified at today's meeting. There was to be a limit of eight to ten persons per group (except for Matt's which could accommodate a larger number in case of an especially large subscription to the conference). Joe and Susan were to conduct a group utilizing the Value Matrix in order to generate relevant moral dilemmas for further consideration by the expert panel which would convene near the end of the conference. As mentioned above, Jere was to conduct a group generating conscience drawings with Meg helping to characterize the composite conscience for the group. Liz was to conduct a group concerning Moral Emotional Responsiveness organized around the task of composing letters of apology and gratitude while Jennifer was to conduct a group concerned with Moral Attachment organized around moralized genograms. Matt was to conduct a group of any remaining attendees concerned with harm prevention planning. All the conference faculty would be recognized in a power point slide during the introductions made by Angie and Matt. Matt said he would soon send around the listings. In that e-mail, he would ask conference faculty to indicate any changes they wanted made in the presentation of their credentials.

There followed discussion on ways to promote the conference. Continuing medical as well as other educational credit units (CME and CEU's) had been arranged. Jere had already ensured that the conference had been announced in **Conscience Chronicles** and in **Scope**, the Indiana University School of Medicine newsletter. Apparently Sue (and/or Jere) had put up an announcement on **Conscience Works** as well. Angie was sending out announcements via IAITMH and its affiliates. The Mental Health Association was making the conference known to its membership. Matt had contacted the Indiana Psychiatric Society and the Indiana Council of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry to make known the conference to their memberships. Ethna declared her intention of coming and encouraging persons she thought would be interested to attend as well. A meet and greet session with refreshments was to be held for the keynote speakers immediately after the conference. Conscience Project participants were invited. Matt said that 2 psychobiological researchers on campus were interested in meeting the keynote speakers, as were medical educational researchers. He said he would ensure they along with other interested parties would also be invited by e-mail (sent 7/31/11) to the reception.

#### Research Initiatives.

Meg and Matt reported upon some research ideas that might involve the Conscience Project. Leslie Hulvershorn MD had collaborated as a co-author on a review article on psychobiology of conscience which appears on **Conscience Works**:

Galvin M, Stilwell B, Gaffney M, Hulvershorn L (2009): The psychobiology of conscience; signatures in brain regions of interest. **Conscience Works**, An On line Periodical, *Theory, Research and Clinical Applications*, 3(1): 1-36.  
<http://shaw.medlib.iupui.edu/>

Also check your files for the summary "Conscience Project Teleconference 10-14-09" which was distributed to Conscience Project participants around that time. Leslie had earlier this year returned to IU as faculty in the Department of Psychiatry. Leslie recently re-established contact with us to discuss how the Conscience Project might be involved in work she first conceived of doing while in New York. She and her colleagues have continued to be engaged in functional magnetic resonance imaging in persons across the life span with Attention Deficit and Mood Dysregulatory Disorders. They have continued to be interested in including a measure of moral functionality of their research participants.

We (Matt and Meg) met with Leslie and Tom H (whose PhD is in psychology) on 6/14/11 and renewed the offer to assist in their project in whatever way we could, along the lines of what had previously been discussed in 2009 or perhaps in some other way pertaining to conscience.

At this juncture Susan revisited a topic which had formerly emerged in our meetings, that is: the topic of ethics and neuroimaging. As Susan framed her inquiries, she wondered about how neuroimaging might be used ill-- for example, findings from studies distorted for purposes of discrimination. This very issue had been raised by A Popma and A Raine in an article (2006) entitled *Will future forensic assessment be neurobiologic?* It appeared in an issue of **Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America** devoted to Juvenile Justice 15(2): 429-444.

Matt said during the preparation of the review article on psychobiology of conscience, he and Meg had started a file on ethics and neuroimaging. One article in the file had appeared in the **Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics** (2007) entitled *Pediatric neuroimaging ethics* by J Downie and J Marshall; another in the file is *No child left without a brain scan?* by J Illes and T Raffin (2005) which had appeared in a publication of the DANA Foundation (both articles are available to interested persons upon request-MG).

We (Meg and Matt) also met with Deb L and Ann on 7/19/11 to discuss conducting medical educational research into the outcomes of conscience sensitive medical education versus 'teaching as usual' in **Introduction to Clinical Medicine I** (ICM I). We had previously collaborated with Deb and Ann in projects such as Teaching Caring Attitudes and the use of OSCE's in medical education.

In our meeting we first reviewed the process which begins with the ICM I learner's (structural) examination of personal conscience and makes an approach to ethics and professionalism from that foundation by progressing through specific conscience sensitive tasks (the very same tasks we plan to use in our breakout sessions for the IAITMH conference). One of Deb's and Ann's ideas was to conduct semi-structured *qualitative interviewing* of medical students (in their clinical years), as well as interns, residents and physicians in practice to determine whether the conscience sensitive approach to medical education in retrospect appears to the former learners any more valuable than the traditional introductory course with respect to preparation for ethical sensitivity, conduct, involvement, use of consultation, making ethical inquiry and sustaining a virtuous practice. They suggested the construction of evaluative measures suitable for each level beyond the learner's ICM I experience and to also examine 'dose effects' (since Meg maintained contacts with learners over the entire four year period and reintroduced conscience sensitive techniques during formal and informal educational encounters). Of interest would be any 'sleeper effects' over time and the accumulation of experiences. Of problematic interest would be how to identify possible effects (or the signatures) of conscience sensitive medical education upon former learners that might escape appropriate attribution and conversely how to allow for developments misattributed to the conscience sensitive educational encounters under study. Matt suggested that although bias arising from retrospective studies is usually considered a weakness, the retrospective nature of this study would nonetheless be essential, addressing the issue of how former learners value an aspect of their education in the light of subsequent professional experience. Matt also suggested that since Meg and he would be subject to 'program loyalty bias,' Deb and Ann or someone else might be in a better position to provide more objectivity in directing the study. Deb and Ann thought making a grant application should receive high priority. However, in building a foundation for proceeding with a future grant application, Deb and Ann also advised we first summarize our techniques in a submission to the AAMC peer reviewed electronic journal **MedEd Portal**. Subsequent to the meeting with Deb and Ann, we asked Maria P. MD for her help. Maria is Co-director (with Meg) of ICM I. Like Deb and Ann, Maria indicated a very strong interest in this research proposal and agreed to be involved as it is designed and developed.

Matt remarked circumspectly that it seemed good to document what had been achieved in ICM I before the course underwent major alterations or was allowed to go away altogether according to the exigencies of curricular reform.

Matt announced that our **Conscience Centered Psychiatric Ethics** (CCPE) course for residents had finally come to an end. It had been offered every year from 1997-2011 and had generally received positive ratings from participants. Restructuring of the didactics curriculum in the psychiatry residency was not conducive to the small group format (upon which CCPE depended) and a shift of the teaching time from Wednesdays to Fridays conflicted with duties well established elsewhere for each of the preceptors. Matt had been in contact with Dr C, the psychiatry residency training director. While declining her kind offer to have him and Meg continue ethics teaching in a very different format, he offered to help in an advisory capacity as the new ethics course was developed. Dr. C was made aware of the resources that had been archived on **Conscience Works**, including the course book that was originally developed for CCPE by participants of the Conscience Project with help from many other colleagues.

During the foregoing discussion of neuroimaging in disruptive behavior disorder, Ethna had been put in mind of things she had read and seen about the so-called “warrior gene.” She inquired about what might be known about the actual evidence for such a gene. Joe responded that lots of genes had been studied and many more needed to be in order to make sense of gene-environment interaction that would produce what might (at least in some quarters) be considered a desirable trait. Matt added psychobiological studies of positively framed traits, say of adventurousness tempered by discipline, obedience and courage under fire might require methods similar to those used in studies of persons with negatively framed traits, say of being prone to sociopathy, sensation seeking, having diminished capacity for empathic responsiveness or having characteristics of being unemotional and callous. Methods aim at different levels: genetic, gene x environment, and neuro-anatomic or functional. Some present were put in mind of films such as the **Parallax View** [which **Wikipedia** informs us ... is a 1974 American thriller film directed by Alan J. Pakula and starring Warren Beatty, Paula Prentiss, Hume Cronyn and William Daniels. The film was adapted by David Giler, Lorenzo Semple Jr and an uncredited Robert Towne from the 1970 novel by Loren Singer. The story concerns a reporter's dangerous investigation into an obscure organization, the Parallax Corporation, whose primary, but not ostensible, enterprise is political assassination. *The Parallax View* is the second installment of Pakula's Political Paranoia trilogy, along with *Klute* (1971) and *All the President's Men* (1976)....]

In his turn, John, who had participated in the practicum on 6/21/11 said he was impressed with how the conscience sensitive tasks went quickly to the hearts of persons. In a similar vein, he conveyed he had had occasion to share his responses to the IU Health Professional Conscience Autobiography [See The conscience autobiography completed with commentary pertinent to Islam. In: Conscience Works *Conscience and Ethics*, Vol. II, no. 2, pp 24-63, 2007. <http://shaw.medlib.iupui.edu/>] with his sister-in-law's daughter who appreciated the very personal responses elicited by those questions, as well.

Attending to Deb's and Ann's aforementioned idea to conduct semi-structured *qualitative interviewing*, Susan was put in mind of the body of work on career counseling and vocational interviewing techniques that might be helpful. She said she would share some of the material she had acquired. She appeared wary, however, when it was suggested her direct involvement might

be invaluable to the proposed study. Matt attributed her wariness to being protective of her retirement years, so recently begun and likely perceived as susceptible to the encumbrance of commitment to all-consuming projects. He offered Susan no reassurances to the contrary.

Jere had been carefully listening to the foregoing, in spite of—it was universally agreed—being entirely justified had he been less attentive and otherwise preoccupied with moving, remodeling and being obliged (along with the rest of his family) to sleep in the backyard of their new home in tents. Jere had attended a meeting just the day before on computerized patient control of electronic medical records. Apropos retrospective evaluative accounts of ethics courses, Jere told how, in the course of that meeting, someone who had taken ethics classes at the time assessed as useless and esoteric, became much more appreciative after an early clinical encounter. The patient was a person with schizophrenia and a gangrenous extremity and had refused the recommended treatment. Jere also remarked on how curricular reform had become more susceptible of influence from learners cast in the roles of consumers or customers. This phenomenon was recognized by others present as well and generated further discussion of curricular reforms being made in the light of faculty and course evaluations or unstudied educational agendas which lack the perspective of seasoned clinical experience. Along these lines, Ethna remarked that she had the impression from a family member who has taught in Peru for five years that teachers there were accorded great respect by even adolescent students. Ethna and Susan carried the conversation over into recent decisions not to teach cursive in schools. Some present wondered if that could not be attributed to the competing demand to master the skill of keyboarding, more essential for the times. Susan then informed us that even keyboarding was disappearing from the curriculum because the notion had widely taken hold that it was a skill naturally acquired outside the learning environment. Ethna concluded this exchange by declaring it would be a shame not to learn cursive.

John had recently spoken with Midtown Mental Health professionals about cultural diversity re: Muslim patients. He gave suggestions about appreciating the differences among first and second generation Muslim Americans. His presentation was well received. In this meeting, John passed around a book by Joseph Telashkin entitled **Hillel- If Not Now, When**. John highlighted a lesson from the book that the ability to learn from anyone was connected to the ability to teach anyone. [Rabbi Hillel was known to some present for one formulation of the golden rule, sometimes rendered: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor; that is the whole of Torah; all the rest is commentary; go and learn.” In the ensuing discussion, Matt was mistaken in also attributing to Rabbi Hillel the quote, “Although you are not expected to complete the task, you are not excused from engaging in the work” which should instead be attributed to Rabbi Tarfin.] Another book John recommended was an encyclopedic history of the world **The Muggaddimah** which he liked for its historical perspective on visions, dreams and the forms taken by the question of truth. John had been thinking more about the hierarchy of intentions especially in terms of the difference between understanding The Creator and what is attributed to the Creator, again with consideration of if and how the relative importance might be different among different cultural groups.

Ethna agreed to give a summary at our next meeting of a paper John had given her on dreams. Ethna also mentioned a group in which she participated at Marian University. She referred to it as “Rosalee’s Salon” and they had been discussing myths.

In wake of the recent tragedy in Norway and the xenophobia that targets Muslims, Joe was concerned about a website that had been lent prestige by someone with scientific credentials (not otherwise specified). The web site conveyed anti-Muslim sentiments claiming justification from interpretations of the Quran. The website organized the argument under the rubric: “Seven Things about the Koran” one of which seemed to grant permission to a Muslim to lie to a non-Muslim. The general gist was that the golden rule could be left in abeyance when Muslims were threatened by non-Muslims.

John responded thoughtfully and followed up by providing a perspective on different aspects of revelations to the Prophet. John described the period in Mecca being more tumultuous and his period in Medina more peaceful, such that passages from Quran taken out of context could be and were distorted along the lines of what Joe was describing.

Apropos distortions, Joe was reminded of evidence supported theories (with which he tended to agree) that human beings are neuro-biologically prepared to make interpretations according to what they already believe, making open-minded truth seeking an exceedingly difficult enterprise. Joe had earlier in this meeting revisited the subject of cheating in medical school, being held accountable, and accepting responsibility for the harm done as a precondition for remediation. Meg and Joe led the ensuing discussion of techniques in the process of remediation.

At this point, Ethna brought up the Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Enda Kenny’s 7/20/11 speech to the Dail in which he declared:

It’s fair to say that after the Ryan and Murphy Reports Ireland is, perhaps, unshockable when it comes to the abuse of children. But Cloyne has proved to be of a different order. Because for the first time in Ireland, a report into child sexual-abuse exposes an attempt by the Holy See, to frustrate an Inquiry in a sovereign, democratic republic...as little as three years ago, not three decades ago. And in doing so, the Cloyne Report excavates the dysfunction, disconnection, elitism...the narcissism .....that dominate the culture of the Vatican to this day. The rape and torture of children were downplayed or ‘managed’ to uphold instead, the primacy of the institution, its power, standing and ‘reputation’

Far from listening to evidence of humiliation and betrayal with St Benedict’s “ear of the heart”.....the Vatican’s reaction was to parse and analyse it with the gimlet eye of a canon lawyer. This calculated, withering position being the polar opposite of the radicalism, humility and compassion upon which the Roman Church was founded. The radicalism, humility and compassion which are the very essence of its foundation and purpose....The behaviour being a case of Roma locuta est: causa finita est. Except in this instance, nothing could be further from the truth....

Ethna indicated the full text of the Taoiseach’s speech could be found on **Bock the Robber**: <http://bocktherobber.com/2011/07/enda-kennys-speech-criticising-vatican>

Susan indicated her interest in a book profiled on the Colbert Report entitled **Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?** by Michael Sandel. Susan promised to read the book and provide a report.

The next meeting of the **IU Conscience Project** will be hosted by Ethna at her home, on Saturday 10/29/2011 at 10:00 AM to noon. RSVP.

Respectfully submitted,  
9-11-11  
Matthew R. Galvin