

# Frontier Wars in Ethics

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# Outline



1. Chisholm Health Ethics
2. Frontier Wars
  - A. Frontier Wars in Australia
  - B. Frontier Wars in Ethics
    - i. Strengths & Limitations of Traditional Ethics
    - ii. The Enlightenment and the New Morality
    - iii. Deficiencies of the New Morality
  - C. Implications



1. Caroline Chisholm Centre for Health Ethics (CCCHE)

# Sponsors of CCCHE



- all the Catholic hospitals of Victoria:
  - St Vincent's Health Australia
  - Cabrini Health
  - St John of God Health Care
  - Mercy Health
  - Little Company of Mary Health Care
    - Calvary Health Care Bethlehem

# CCCHE Strategic Plan



1. Policy and Program Development
  - policies and procedures, clinical ethics committees, HRECs, case consultation and advisement, CHA Bioethics Forum
2. Education and Public Awareness
  - education and formation within health systems, ACU Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Catholic Culture (GCLACC), annual conference
3. Research
  - *Chisholm Health Ethics Bulletin, Health Matters*
4. Links and Networks
  - within our health systems, with CHA, with other Catholic institutions (including ACU), with church hierarchy



# Wider Strategic Planning

- **within hospital systems**
  - e.g. Little Company of Mary Health Care
- **Catholic Health Australia**
  - *Striving for Excellence in Ethics* (Second Edition, 2014), by Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHAUSA)



## 2. Frontier Wars

### A. Frontier Wars in Australia

# Analogy between the frontier wars in Australia and in ethics



- ongoing conflict
- many defeats
- not legitimate
- irreversible
- survival against the odds
- feeling pride in the tradition
- finding a new place in a different world





- B. Frontier Wars in Ethics
  - i. Strengths & Limitations of Traditional Ethics

# Traditional Ethics



- Responsibility with exceptions
- Based on reason and revelation
- Human dignity based on *imago Dei*
- Teleological
- Doing and Being
- Virtues
- Common Good
- Activist Government
- Applied ethics – social ethics, bioethics, marriage and family, environmental ethics
- Authoritarian
- Slow to change
- Some say, some reappraisal about sex and sexuality



## B. Frontier Wars in Ethics

### ii. The Enlightenment and the New Morality

# The Enlightenment and the New Morality



- **David Hume** (1711–1776)
  - sought the basis of morality in the emotions (e.g. “moral sentiment,” “sympathy”)
  - BUT why should we follow these ‘moral’ emotions rather than our ‘immoral’ ones?
- **Immanuel Kant** (1724–1804)
  - sought the basis of ethics in reason and duty (e.g. the Categorical Imperative)
  - BUT why should we follow the Categorical Imperative?
- **Jeremy Bentham** (1748-1832), **John Stuart Mill** (1806-1873)
  - sought the basis of morality in consequences (“utilitarianism”)
  - BUT incommensurability of goods

# The Enlightenment and the New Morality (cont'd)



- **Frederick Nietzsche** (1844-1900)
  - efforts so far had presupposed traditional moral content
  - Nietzsche rejected traditional moral content!
- **Immanuel Kant** (1724–1804)
  - moral values do not come from outside – either from God or from nature
  - instead, “each man his own moralist”
  - pure autonomy became the only basis and the only content of ethics
  - “moral relativism”



## B. Frontier Wars in Ethics

### iii. Deficiencies of the New Morality

# Deficiencies of the New Morality



## Traditional Morality

- Responsibility with exceptions
- Based on reason and revelation
- Human dignity based on *imago Dei*
- Teleological
- Doing and Being
- Virtues

## The New Morality

- Autonomy with exceptions
- Basis is unclear
- Human dignity based on actual capacity for reason
- Not teleological
- Little emphasis on Being or the Virtues

# Deficiencies of the New Morality (cont'd)



## Traditional Morality

- **Common Good**
- **Activist Government**
- **Applied ethics – social ethics, bioethics, marriage and family, environmental ethics**

## The New Morality

- **Individualistic, with little sense of the common good**
- **Limited Government**
- **Applied ethics – social ethics, bioethics, marriage and family, sex and sexuality, environmental ethics**





## c. Implications



# Implications

- 1) Tell the story of the frontier wars in Australia
- 2) Recognise the special place of the Indigenous Peoples in this land
- 3) Feel proud of traditional morality
- 4) Work for appropriate reappraisals within traditional morality



# Implications

- 5) Multiculturalism
- 6) Conscientious objection
- 7) Promote the common good
- 8) Promote the virtues
  - ‘being for others’
  - hospitality, healing, stewardship, respect
  - Imitate Mary Potter
  - Imitate Jesus