

TRANSCENDENT DEVELOPMENT

The Ethics of Universal Dignity

Edited by Dr Andani Thakhathi

RESEARCH IN ETHICAL
ISSUES IN ORGANIZATIONS

VOLUME 25

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TRANSCENDENT DEVELOPMENT

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RESEARCH IN ETHICAL ISSUES IN
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TRANSCENDENT DEVELOPMENT: THE ETHICS OF UNIVERSAL DIGNITY

EDITED BY

DR ANDANI THAKHATHI
University of Pretoria, South Africa



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

This special volume of *Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations* (REIO) is dedicated to Africans from all walks of life (regardless of location, status, or subcultural identity) who are no longer willing to suffer at the hands of their so-called 'leaders' – be they designated officials, traditional authorities, politicians, or social influencers. These power-mongering charlatans lack the courage to be of genuine service to their constituencies for the good of all. Well, be glad fellow African! The *Transcendent Development* message has come to remind you that your dignity and well-being are yours to reclaim at your discretion. This book is dedicated to your joyful fulfilment!

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CONTENTS

<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>About the Contributors</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Prologue: Special Volume Preface</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xvii</i>

PART I: PARADIGMS

Chapter One Bantu Wisdom as Transcendent Development: Establishing African Philosophical Bedrock <i>Andani Thakhathi</i>	<i>3</i>
Chapter Two The Storytelling Science Paradigm: Evoking the Transformative Power of Indigenous Ontological Antenarratives in Curious Conversation <i>David M. Boje and Grace Ann Rosile</i>	<i>15</i>
Chapter Three Towards a Constructor Theory Conception for Wicked Social Externalities: Delineating the Limits and Possibilities of Impactful Pathways to a Better World <i>Sherman Indhul</i>	<i>43</i>

PART II: EMPIRICS

Chapter Four Preserving State-owned Enterprises in South Africa: Views and Insights from Business Rescue Practitioners in the Commercial Field of Action <i>Brandon Sej Kesieman and Andani Thakhathi</i>	<i>55</i>
Chapter Five Exploring the People Versus Profit Paradox: Business Leadership for Equitable and Inclusive Sustainable Development in Developing Contexts <i>Gideon L. Storm, Sebastien Desvaux De Marigny and Andani Thakhathi</i>	<i>79</i>

PART III: COMMUNITIES**Chapter Six Walking South Africa's Business Ethics Talk: How Higher Education and Commercial Enterprises Can Co-create a Thriving Cohesive Society***Alex Antonites and Jameo Calvert* 137**Chapter Seven The Ramifications of Jewish Immigration to South Africa, 1930–1939: Dr D. F. Malan and the Perversion of Ethics on the Altar of Political Expediency***Michael Cohen* 145

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 4.1.	Details of Participant Characteristics and Interview Duration	68
Table A1.	The Link between the Codes, Subthemes and Main Themes Identified in This Study	131
Table 7.1.	Number of Eastern European Jews Entering South Africa, 1925–1928	165
Table 7.2a.	South Africa’s Immigration From ‘Quota Countries’, 1931–1936	166
Table 7.2b.	South Africa’s Immigration From ‘Non-quota Countries’, 1931–1936	166
Table 7.3.	Percentage Increase of Jews as a Proportion of South Africa’s European Population, in Six of the Years Between 1904 and 1936	166
Table 7.4.	German Immigration to South Africa, 1933–1936.	177
Fig. 2.1.	The Storytelling Paradigm	17
Fig. 2.2.	Self-correcting Storytelling Science	18
Fig. 2.3.	Antenarrative Abstracting, Grounding, Futuring, and Rehistoricising	19
Fig. 2.4.	WWOKer’s Western and IWOKer’s Indigenous Storytelling Science Imbalance	30
Fig. 5.1.	Sustainable Development and the TBL	84
Fig. 5.2.	A Summary of the RQs, Themes and Subthemes	106

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ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Alex Antonites is the current Head of Department of Business Management within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the University of Pretoria (UP) where he also serves as a UP member of council amid other leadership roles. His research interests lie in the fields of entrepreneurship, creativity, innovation, incubation and social ‘BoP’ enterprising. He is dedicated to using his influence and leadership in both business and academia to transform South African society for the better. He believes in empowering the youth and driving the shift towards a more ethical curriculum at the Department of Business Management through the expansion of innovative responsible leadership modules, from the undergraduate level upwards.

David M. Boje is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Management and Former Chair of the Sustainability Council at New Mexico State University. He is Founder and President of the Standing Conference for Management and Organisational Inquiry, Founder and past Editor in chief of the *Tamara Journal* and was awarded an honorary doctorate from Denmark’s Aalborg University in 2011. He created the field of Antenarrative Research and ‘True Storytelling Science’.

Jameo Calvert is a Teacher and Activist whose outstanding levels of engagement in society have resulted in her occupation of critical business education roles. She was recruited as a Class Representative for Business Management even though she is a student of education from a separate faculty altogether which is outstanding. She currently serves as a Transformation Officer in House Education and is the JTSAS Deputy Head of Operations and Transformation at the University of Pretoria’s Groenkloof campus. She is also the holder of the prestigious Jakes Gerwell Fellowship in Education.

Michael Cohen served as Vice-Principal of Bialik College, Melbourne, and is the former Director of Community Relations and Research at Melbourne’s Jewish Holocaust Centre. He holds a PhD from Monash University, Melbourne. He has been involved in Jewish education and Jewish communal life for several decades and has held senior positions with a number of Jewish organisations and at Jewish day schools in Cape Town and Melbourne. During the 1980s, he served as Executive Director of the former Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs and Asia-Pacific Jewish Association.

Sebastien Desvaux De Marigny is a Researcher in Business Ethics who is passionate about the role of business leadership in making the world a better place. He has produced distinguished research on the role of business in advancing social equity in developing contexts while growing its profits thereby enabling sustainable development. He is currently starting out his career in business in the Gauteng Province and is dedicated to finding meaning and helping others do the same.

Sherman Indhul was Executive Manager in Corporate Sustainability at Transnet and is now the Head of the European Climate Foundation Africa operations. He advises government on sustainability policy imperatives and serves on the board of Just Share, a responsible investment non-profit firm. Presently, he is a PhD candidate at the University of Pretoria studying the interplay between sustainability, technological disruption and social inequality from constructor theory conception point of view. He is pioneering the field of 'Deep Leverage' and is advocate of the 'Infinity'.

Brandon Sej Kesieman is a Parts Logistics and Inventory Planning Support Analyst at Mercedes-Benz South Africa. He is passionate about elucidating the role of organisational ethics in enhancing the capacities of the public sector in pursuit of creating a better society, particularly with regard to state-owned enterprises. He has produced distinguished research focussing on state-led business ethics and is an entrepreneur at heart with a vision to transform South African communities for the immediate and greater good of all.

Grace Ann Rosile is a Professor Emeritus of Management at New Mexico State University. She is a Co-founder of the True Storytelling Paradigm and is still an active leader in the growing field. Her research advancements include ethics, indigenous storytelling, restorying for social justice, ensemble leadership and 'true Storytelling Science'.

Gideon L. Storm is a Researcher in Business Ethics who is passionate about the role of business leadership in making the world a better place. He has produced distinguished research on the role of business in advancing social equity in developing contexts while growing its profits thereby enabling sustainable development. He is currently a Master of Commerce student at the University of South Africa specialising in sustainable development from a leverage point's perspective.

Andani Thakhathi is a Senior Lecturer in Business Ethics, Responsible Management and Strategic Business Management at the Department of Business Management within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the University of Pretoria. He holds a PhD in Ethics and Responsible Leadership in Business and is the pioneer of 'Transcendent Development' and 'Bantu Wisdom'.

PROLOGUE: SPECIAL VOLUME PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

The advent of *Transcendent Development* has arrived; the epochal ethos of *Universal Dignity* is dawning, and it is so. ‘Transcendent Development’ is a philosophical paradigm introduced and developed in this special volume of *Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations* (REIO) with the view to ‘provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners’ referred to collectively as *Transcendent Developers*. ‘Transcendent Developers’ are individuals and/or collectives who are both capable of and committed to advancing *Universal Dignity*. Sentiment alone – while socially useful in some respects – is insufficient; only pragmatic advancement characterised by ever-greater degrees of dignity will suffice. We have reached a milestone of concerning proportions; one that requires decisiveness as we tumble down the slippery slope of existential threats. Humanity at large must throw its weight behind our tumbling civilisation in hopes of bringing it to a screeching halt before it snowballs into oblivion. Avoiding this dystopian end requires moral courage and the willingness to articulate bold new ideas that lead to substantive transformation in peoples lived experiences. This requires freeing scholars from the shackles of deference to authority and ideological subordination in order to create an organisational ethic suitable for addressing salient concerns extant in the African context. The seven chapters contained in this special volume were selected for this timely anthology because of the enactment of this ethos in their prose. They are divided into three parts according to their major contributions, namely, *Part I: Paradigms*, *Part II: Empirics* and *Part III: Communities*.

PART I: PARADIGMS, AS IN, ‘PARADIGM SHIFTS’

Part I comprises the first three chapters of the special volume, all of which are focussed on the development of new paradigms required to shift Southern Africa towards a more mutually beneficial ethical state. Chapter One is titled ‘Bantu Wisdom as Transcendent Development: Establishing African Philosophical Bedrock’ wherein Andani Thakhathi outlines the underpinnings of an authentic African philosophical point of departure for sound transformative organisational ethics drawing on the musings of Anton Muziwakhe Lembede, Frantz Fanon and Stephen bantu Biko. In Chapter Two, David M. Boje and Grace Ann Rosile outline an apt paradigm shift that may prove useful for the enhancement of Southern African qualitative epistemology centred around storytelling. As

their title suggests, 'The Storytelling Science Paradigm' fast-tracks 'Evoking the Transformative Power of Indigenous Ontological Antenarratives in Curious Conversation'. This second chapter reveals how the social practice of storytelling should be embraced to align local transformation with the heartfelt aspirations of Africans. The two scholars reveal a hitherto undetected fallacy implicit in 'grounded theory' and the all-popular semi-structured interview method thereby pushing the boundaries of how to develop new knowledge in the contemporary African context. Chapter Three offers a radical new paradigm shift catalysed by *Constructor Theory* wherein Sherman Indhul decides to delve into the realm of quantum physical ontology. In his cosmic sojourn titled 'Towards a Constructor Theory Conception for Wicked Social Externalities: Delineating the Limits and Possibilities of Impactful Pathways to A Better World', Indhul reflects on the possibilities that this new ontological constructor theory paradigm offers African change-makers seeking to inhibit the burgeoning social externalities plaguing the Mother continent by bringing them to a screeching halt. The manifold social externalities presently plaguing African society abound and are expressed in their worst form in South Africa, the most unequal society in the world with extremely high poverty, crime and corruption rates. This new perspective about the range of possibilities available to us is paramount to the expansion of an authentic Southern African Transcendent Development. Thus, the four authors in the first part of the special volume lay the groundwork for future modes of creative knowledge generation and pragmatic problem-solving through critically empowered ontological paradigm shifts.

PART II: EMPIRICS, AS IN, 'EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE'

Part II contains Chapters Four and Five because these chapters are both concerned with insights developed from critical engagement with the field of practice by inquiring into empirical business ethics phenomena in South Africa. In Chapter Four, Brandon Sej Kesieman and Andani Thakhathi question the seemingly obvious causes of the unethical mess of 'state capture' that has devastated the South African economy, specifically the commercial state-owned sector. Their chapter titled 'Preserving State-owned Enterprises in South Africa: Views and Insights from Business Rescue Practitioners in the Commercial Field of Action' seeks to get to the bottom of the prospects of saving corporations that were once South Africa's flagship engines of economic growth and societal prosperity. The normative premise underlying this fourth chapter is encapsulated in the words 'we can do better' as Kesieman would say. Chapter Five then follows with a critical and much-needed exploration of the ethical dilemma brought about by the paradoxical conflicting interests that arise when businesses attempt to practice sustainable development. In this fifth chapter, Gideon L. Storm, Sebastien Desvaux De Marigny and Andani Thakhathi question the role of business leadership in developing contexts with respect to creating more equitable and inclusive business-led sustainable development. Chapter Five is titled 'Exploring the People Versus

Profit Paradox: Business Leadership for Equitable and Inclusive Sustainable Development in Developing Contexts', because this paradox puts businesses and their leaders in an ethical dilemma in so far as sustainable development is concerned. As a developing nation, South Africa is plagued by the legacy of unequal opportunity and the ethnic exploitation of labour. Yet, solving this problem comes at a cost, one which business leaders and executives in developing countries can seldom afford to incur given the constant pressure they face to increase financial performance year on year. Meaningful insights that may help business leaders reconcile or resolve this paradox pragmatically are thereby offered in this fifth chapter bringing the second empirical part of the special volume to a close.

PART III: COMMUNITIES, AS IN, SOCIETY'S 'MELTING POT'

Part III of this special volume on the ethics of Transcendent Development in the African context is also comprised of two chapters, Chapters Six and Seven. They constitute the final chapters of the special volume. Chapter Six is unconventional in that it is a slightly manicured transcript of a critical conversation between two successive South African generations. Alex Antonites, the executive head of the University of Pretoria's Department of Business Management within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, sits down with Jameo Calvert, a first-year student of Education and Management to discuss the ethical landscape of South African business enterprising and higher education. As is evident in their title, 'Walking South Africa's Business Ethics Talk, Alex Antonites and Jameo Calvert discuss 'How Higher Education and Commercial Enterprises can Co-create a Thriving Cohesive Society'. Unity in diversity must be accomplished if South Africa is to move beyond the quagmire of identity-based polarisation. Business can no longer seek to exploit the vulnerable, and education must empower young scholars and keen minds of all life stages to become impactful agents of change for good rather than being a mere ticket to a job interview. In this open-handed dialogue, the professorial departmental manager has a down-to-earth chat with the curious first-year undergraduate student about the prospects that business offers South Africa as a force for progress and prosperity. The seventh and final chapter of Part III ends the special volume off by excavating South Africa's historical archives. In an otherwise colourful would-be rainbow nation that has been reduced to two colours, 'black' and 'white', Michael Cohen's chapter is a breath of fresh air. Chapter Seven uncovers 'The Ramifications of Jewish Immigration to South Africa, 1930–1939'. As the chapter's subtitle suggests, Michael Cohen puts the apartheid system's lifeless feet to the fire by revealing the relationship between 'Dr D. F. Malan and the Perversion of Ethics on the Altar of Political Expediency'. He adds a new 'lesser white' shade to the monotony of South Africa's 'black and white' imagery by questioning the ethnic racism targeted at Jews who sought to flee Nazi Germany by immigrating to South Africa. These refugee immigrants were met with the buffetings of immoral Afrikaner nationalism which confabulated immoral rules to restrict their immigration.

OUTLOOK

Overall, this special volume offers a much-needed first-move towards an authentic African philosophy. It offers an ethos bearing the causal power required to make a difference in the lives of even the most desolate and vulnerable who are stuck in poverty and suffering. The special formalises *Bantu Wisdom*, a form of African philosophical thought which advances the meaningful pursuit of personal fulfilment and greater well-being. Transcendent Development, unlike conventional development approaches, aims for the mutual benefit of all contrary to the present development ethos whose side effects is the advancement of some at the expense of many others. This volume asserts that the dogma of this side effect being intractable is fallacious. Rigid identity-based antagonism is ready to be relegated to the annals of mythology as an erroneous nightmare born of survivalist insecurity masquerading as conquest. The African of the present day need not be an indiscriminate path-dependant automaton. Social conditioning can be transcended; prejudice, indignity, hatred and strife may all be transcended using the philosophical bedrock offered by this special volume as springboard for diving towards a better world for all who desire it. At the very least, the vision advanced by this Transcendent Development anthology is that of a world where all are afforded the opportunity to self-actualise at will, should they wish to do so. As a primer, this volume leaves much room for improvement and implores scholars who resonate to enter the fray in order to fulfil Steve Bantu Biko's prophecy: 'In time, we shall be in a position to bestow on South Africa [and the world] the greatest possible gift – a more human face'. So it is!

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Gratitude to Prof. Michael Schwartz and Prof. Howard Harris, the *Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations* (REIO) series editors, for indulging the idea of advancing a South African perspective of organisational ethics through this special volume of REIO. In an age where academic publishers are chasing citations at the expense of vital content; you are refreshing beacons of light to the organisational ethics field and I thank you for being true to the cause. I also wish to acknowledge Ms Jameo Calvert, my dedicated editorial assistant without whom this anthology would be non-existent: you have rendered a profound service to education in helping make this special volume a reality, and this is only the beginning because you are extremely talented and are no doubt going extremely far! To my guardian mentors overseas Prof. David M. Boje and Prof. Grace Ann Rosile: I thank you for exemplifying what it means to be a true storyteller in pursuit of wisdom and in the service of humanity, even if it means being misunderstood. I dedicate this special volume to you and your life's work pioneering 'Antenarrative True Storytelling Science'. To Prof. Stella Nkomo, my guardian mentor ashore, thank you for shielding my fragile little light from the stormy winds of academic performativity by helping me navigate my way towards a fulfilling career doing what I love! To all three of you guardian mentors collectively: Thank you for never doubting me nor limiting my potential, and for modelling every step of the way for me through your embodiment of moral courage in the spiritual, intellectual, professional, and personal spheres of your lives. What baffles me most about the three of you is that you have little to gain from the seeds you are sowing. You are all retired and highly distinguished scholars with nothing left to prove. Yet, you continue to publish quality research in astonishing quantities, travel, teach and mentor as if you're only getting started. Your *true living story* is deeply inspiring! To my wife Lebogang and my daughter Tshirunzi 'tsha Afurika' Thakhathi; you're heaven-sent.