

Anyone for Ethics?

Written by Klaas

This year there have been repeated calls from various VIPs for an **ethics and morals renaissance in our society**. There have even been warnings that we are at a 'tipping point'. It is a vital issue, because ethics impact in so many ways on our daily lives. So, how bad is it?

When the **dentist** repeatedly overcharges you (cash patient) for injection not given, when the **Citroen service advisor** wants to solve your problem by emergency replacing a 100% healthy water pump, when a **VW service provider** charges you for new spark plug leads not fitted, when the **petrol attendant** puts in petrol for 50 Rand instead of for the 100 Rand requested and paid, when the **super** **market cash change** is wrong, when the **cardiologist** charges a normal fee after zero help and then retracts the bill, when many **golfers** cheat routinely to inflate their handicap or improve their score to win prizes, when **Lancet Lab** charges you for services not rendered or not asked for but legal in the fine print, when the **regulators** increase the petrol price in line with foreign factors even though 30 - 40% comes from Sasol, when **any stranger's and some acquaintances' promises** are taken with an automatic pinch of salt, when **family television** is full of deceit, when so many families copy the soapies, when every official corruption happening has a **willing civil society partner**..... - then one must say 'Yes, our society is in poor shape with regard to ethics'.

It is fascinating to reflect on the influence of bad ethics on society. One result must be that the country's competitiveness is reduced, **lowering the overall standard of living**; this while a few rich get richer, and the poor poorer. Another result must be that there is extra excitement for the people directly involved and depression for many others who are losing out. There must be a general reduction in feel-good vibes in society when **work ethic and moral rectitude are greatly down-graded**. Increased stress levels and **depression** are wonderful for the pharmaceutical industry, **and a big minus for individual health**. I wonder if any research has been done about this.

There are more and more initiatives to improve matters (eg. Lead SA, Biosphere Ethics Initiative of SAN Parks). They are important for raising public awareness and influencing behaviour, but may also help to nudge our ANC leadership to align more closely with the excellent values the party originally stood for. The example of Brazil and President Lula has shown that in 10 years a whole society can be made significantly more ethical

if the push comes from

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the top. </p> <p>Letter to The Star♦ in
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