Foreword

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It was with considerable pleasure that I accepted the kind invitation from the editors of this book to write its preface. My pleasure was doubled by the fact that I had delivered the keynote address at the opening session of the Leuven conference on 'Ethics and integrity of governance: perspectives across frontiers', from which this volume springs.

The chapters in this book are always instructive and at times profound. Despite their many merits, however, they cannot recreate the authentic spirit of international enthusiasm that permeated the conference itself, with its host of scholars from no less than a dozen nations.

The Leuven conference was one of those all-too-rare 'magic moments' in academic life when staid, somber, serious professors set aside their normal reserve and reveal their expertise in a subject with passion to people who really care about what they are thinking.

It would be unfair to ask the fine contributors to this volume to recreate that magic moment in early June 2005. All the props are gone, from the chatty coffee breaks, to the remarkably efficient support staff, to the lovely, old city of Leuven itself.

And yet *Scriptum manet* – the written words remain, as the old Romans told us. This is true, of course, but its obvious truth misses a subtler and more interesting one. To assert that the written word, including the words written in this book, simply remain ignores the dynamic character of writing. The written word does not remain in the flat sense that it simply exists for a long time. Such a pedestrian interpretation of the old Roman adage would rob it of the very richness of its meaning, which, in turn, explains its long-lived relevance. In the context of the Leuven conference, such an interpretation would shortchange the entire enterprise. The essays in this book refresh the faltering memories of those of us who participated in the conference and stimulate the imaginations of those who did not participate. Thus, the written word not only remains frozen in time, but it also projects that moment into the future as it refreshes and stimulates.

I dwell on these points primarily for the sake of those participants in the conference whose papers were not selected by the editors for inclusion

in this volume. Time, cost and editorial thematic imperatives demanded that many fine papers presented at the conference could not be included herein. No doubt the authors of the omitted papers are disappointed, as are the editors because they could not include them, but the authors should by no means consider their work as unworthy. They are just as much revered as those whose essays we shall soon be reading because they are vital participants in the same happy, academic event that these printed essays embody.

In examining the essays that follow, the careful reader will surely ponder certain themes and patterns that deserve close attention. For example, the word *governance* appears time and again in this volume, starting with its very title. What does this word add to our analytic tools? Is there a difference between *governance* and *governing*? If so, what is it? Does the same distinction exist in other languages?

Is the discussion of ethics and globalism a bit premature? After all, we still live in an international order based on the nation state. Or, conversely, are we hopelessly late in addressing the ethical aftermath of globalism? The United Nations, for all its warts and wrinkles, has been a significant actor in this international arena for over half a century.

Considerable attention is given to values in this book. Some authors even mention 'main' values, thereby implying some sort of pecking order, with some values more valued than others. How do we make sense of this, objectively?

Taking the argument beyond values, one of the more creative essays addresses the question of 'administrative evil'. Does administrative evil allow for redemption? Is there an administrative equivalent to St Paul's assertion that where sin did once abound now grace does more abound? Does this conceptualization of evil bring administration to the threshold of metaphysical analysis? Recall the medieval distinction between something that was *prohibitum quia malum* (forbidden because it is evil) and *malum quia prohibitum* (evil because it is prohibited).

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of a value-based ethic is its relationship to the rule of law. Values are subjective, whereas law is objective; consequently, the two approaches to ethical decision-making pull in opposite directions. Those who would save the rule of law must explain which law they have in mind – natural law or positive law. If positive law, do they mean constitutional law, statutory law, administrative law, common law, or civil law? And what of the myriad of legal systems and value hierarchies evident from country to country? Although implicitly postulated, is an Aristotelian ethic possible in today's society?

These questions just scratch the surface of the momentous issues that await the reader of this excellent volume. These are issues that will frame the debate for decades to come. Enough of prefaces, introductions, and all the other bookish preliminaries. The main event is now at hand. Let us read, study, and learn.