

# A Validation of Māori Social Principles and the Global Fresh Water Crisis

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**Abstract:** The world is facing a water crisis brought on by insufficient resource, poor management, corporate greed, political timidity and human ignorance. Indigenous peoples all around the world find themselves outraged by the profiteering of transnational corporations as they gain control over precious fresh water reserves and move to commodify the resource. Many statements have been issued pleading for restraint and recognition of the vital nature of fresh water not only for humanity, but for all life on the planet. This essay addresses issues surrounding fresh water such as ownership, and why neither privatisation nor government control are ideal. The major difficulties in the sustainable management of fresh water reserves at one level are technological, and at another philosophical – and neither private nor government sectors appear capable of resolving such issues of morality and ethics. The relevance of Māori social principles, such as whanaungatanga (a form of social capital that arises from human relationships) and manaakitanga (preservation of mana or respect), have been examined in relation to charges of moral turpitude made against transnational corporations offering insight into the social imbalances that result from ruthless business practices. Traditional Māori social principles evolved for the regulation of individual and group behaviours thus promoting various degrees of social harmony; the value of those principles, in a modern context, have been examined against a background of international water shortages as a means of providing insight into what has become an ideological war between neoliberals and humanitarian-centred activists. This approach allows for a Māori voice and a Māori perspective and at the same time helps validate an important foundation of Māori culture.

**Keywords:** commodification of water; environmental performance; fresh water crisis; manaakitanga; Māori social principles; Māori values; Papatūānuku; privatisation; social capital; whanaungatanga

## Introduction

New Zealanders have always experienced the supply of fresh water as infinite. We have abundant rivers and lakes and our population is small, so we have never had to face the possibility of being without water; an occasional dry spell has never resulted in true hardship. It is difficult for us to imagine the struggle of people caught in drought who are without access to clean water. The supply of fresh water is finite and its capacity to meet the needs of people around the world is reaching a critical juncture. The world's population is now so large that the demand for clean fresh water has almost exceeded its supply especially in parts of the world where the annual rainfall is small (Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development, 2005). Trade in water is inevitable as those who have water rise to meet the demands of those who do not.

Traditionally water distribution and control have resided with governments either at the national and/or local levels; however, pressured by transnational corporations, governments around the world have moved or are moving to privatise and commodify water (Barlow, 2001, 2002; Diamond, 2008). Proponents of the system claim that this is the only way that the needs of the thirsty can be met with mass diversions taking water to where it is needed the most. This is, in fact, the great fear of Canadians that their rivers will be bled to feed the

insatiable thirst of its southern neighbour (Barlow, 2001). Thus it appears that the management of public water systems, especially in developing countries, is being taken over by a handful of transnational corporations backed by the World Bank (Barlow, 2001). Unfortunately, mass diversions of water risk ending up not with the poor and thirsty, but with those who pay the most including agriculture and high tech industries. The market for water does not consider the inconsistency of human need, nor the cries of those who live with drought.

In opposition to the privatisation of water are those who raise their voices against what they perceive to be a great evil, who are convinced that free market principles contribute to human misery, and who rail against the indifference of rampant capitalism in the face of human suffering. The privatisation of water is an emotional issue and one in which indigenous people all over the world find themselves entwined (Bargh, 2007). These last 25 years of neoliberal government policies in New Zealand and the world over have resulted in increased hardship for indigenous peoples mainly because of the assumption by post-colonial governments that theirs is the right to apportion resources regardless of whether those resources are land, water, minerals or forest (Bargh, 2007). The indigenous are often too poor, powerless, disconnected and least educated in terms of Western methodologies of government, policy and economics to prevent the takeover. Small wonder that the indigenous are vulnerable to the greed and corruption of transnational corporate enterprise.

Who owns the water and who has the right to say how it should be apportioned? Theoretically one could argue that the water that falls upon the land belongs to those who own the land, and even if that land was stolen from the original owners the right to that which falls, or fell, should not be extinguished by that illegal act. Surely a debt is owed, for example, to the Aboriginal people of Australia for the use of groundwater taken by the mining giant BHP Billiton to the tune of around 37 million litres of water per day from the Great Artesian Basin which lies under Queensland, NSW, the Northern Territory and South Australia and for which BHP Billiton pays nothing (Owen, 2009).

The usual government response is that water is owned by all the people, which, of course, in this time of globalisation is simply not true; major decisions worldwide regarding water disbursement lies with a handful of multinational corporations, including Suez, Veolia Environnement, Macquarie/RWE/Thames Water, Biwater, Saur and Bechtel assisted by global institutions like the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Shiva, 2002). To suggest that multinationals have conspired to take over the world's water supply would be worthy of the outrageous but humorous schemes dreamed up by "Pinky and the Brain" (Wikipedia, 2010a) were it not so serious.

This is a time of great confusion, a time where great powers are locked in a struggle for the control of a vital resource and where conflicting ideologies will, one way or another, determine the future of most people on this planet. The way forward is difficult to know, and unlikely to be revealed within the scope of mainstream methodologies. Perhaps it is time to look for other ways of viewing the problem. In this essay, Māori social principles have been used to provide a perspective on the global water crisis, a unique approach that comes not from the experience of those who consider themselves cultural experts which the authors do not, but from two who have found insight into te ao mārama (the world of light) refreshing, and the traditions and knowledge of their own people sublime.

## **A Māori perspective?**

In nearly everything that New Zealanders do today the Pākehā perspective predominates to the exclusion of all else, an approach that brings with it its own set of biases and distortions.

In this essay we have tried to build a Māori perspective based on values that are fundamental to Māori culture and social structure. While Pākehā strive to accommodate Māori cultural values the results are essentially Pākehā structures decorated with Māori influences. For example, the most recent report released by the Land and Water Forum in September of 2010 on the use of land and water in New Zealand (Land and Water Forum, 2010) is valuable, accommodating of Māori, and well-meaning, but fails to approach the problem of fresh water ownership from a Māori perspective. For Pākehā ownership of water resides with the Crown, for Māori the water that falls on the land belongs to Papatūānuku, the earth mother.

The monoperspective of the predominating Pākehā culture in New Zealand tends to overlook and indeed dismiss the possibility of alternative ways of seeing the world, especially when confusion exists as to exactly what a Māori perspective might be. In this paper we have tried to construct a Māori perspective of the world's fresh water crisis by using Māori social values as a benchmark for the eventual establishment of a genuine Māori approach towards resource management. This approach allows for a Māori perspective while at the same time validating the foundations upon which Māori culture stands.

### **The morality of fresh water**

Over the last 10 years many declarations have been made concerning the spiritual significance, ownership and central importance of water in the lives of all creatures. The purpose of these declarations has been to remind humanity of the vital importance of fresh water, and to solicit support for the public opposition to its privatisation. These declarations of the indigenous state unequivocally that all human beings have the right of access to fresh water and a few even convey that right to wildlife and ecosystems; however, they uniformly oppose the privatisation and commodification of fresh water (Hook & White, 2010).

To a degree, many of the declarations made over these last 10 years by indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples alike fail to recognise the reality of the world to which they apply; for example, to declare that water per se should not be sold is an exercise in futility because the reality is that water is sold, water is part of the marketplace, and blanket statements regarding the spirituality of fresh water when applied to water for sewage, from a Māori perspective, may be difficult to assess. While the transnational grab for water has led to near disaster in many parts of the world, the expressed desire for government control of water in most of these declarations is also a mismatch with reality because even governments cannot always be trusted to act in the best interests of their citizens. For example, natural assets in New Zealand, such as minerals and petroleum were “nationalised” (confiscated) from the indigenous people without compensation, and the privatisation of public assets in recent years, even in New Zealand, has been driven by neo-liberal ideologies embraced by governments and encouraged by loan agencies such as the World Bank.

Thus there is an urgent need to find a way that recognises the innate value of water to all life that is not subject to the desires and weaknesses of vested interests and which permits the markets to function. In the past, societies have turned to their religious or spiritual leaders for moral guidance, but as recent times have shown many of our civil and spiritual leaders are not immune to corruption (Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, 2006; Cray, 2006). The immorality associated with the privatisation of water is in fact the immorality of uncontrolled rampant capitalism. Basically, it is the “greed” factor that has to be controlled and not so much the act of selling. Only governments have the power to control the markets just as they have throughout most of the modern era, but unfortunately today, in many cases, governments have abrogated that responsibility and some governments no longer appear to serve the best interests of their people (Stiglitz, 2006). This was certainly true during the period of intense privatisation of the Reagan/Thatcher era when major public holdings all

over the world were sold to private enterprise with little thought as to what this might mean for future generations (Wikipedia, 2010b).

## **The case against the privatisation of water**

The three largest water companies in the world are RWE, Suez and Veolia/Vivendi. In 2002, Suez and RWE together captured nearly 40% of the existing water market shares with their combined revenues being over \$70 billion. Transnational corporations wield enormous power and influence, and they are individually far wealthier than most countries in the developing world (Stiglitz, 2006, p. 187). According to Public Citizen, RWE is a German transnational energy company with subsidiary water company interests all around the world:

Fortune listed RWE's revenue as \$50.9 billion, with an annual profit of \$2.657 billion. Or, in other words, a revenue equal to the combined gross national income of Armenia, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Croatia, Eritrea, Guinea, Haiti, People's Republic of Lao, Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritania, Moldova, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, Niger, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan and Togo! RWE's annual revenue is equal to the combined income of the 153.2 million people in these countries. (Public Citizen, 2005c, p. 1)

Other major water corporations include Bechtel, Biwater, Bouygues/Saur, U.S. Water, Severn Trent, Anglian Water and the Keida Group (Public Citizen, 2010).

Transnational corporations claim that they are the answer for nations desperate to increase their supply and improve their delivery of fresh water. However, as has been noted, private corporations are "in the water business not the rescue business" (Public Citizen, 2005a, p. 1). Many complaints have been levelled at transnational corporations all around the world, not only in under-developed countries but in the developed ones as well. What exactly are these complaints and how serious are they? Are they legitimate or are they simply part of an ideological war that pits private enterprise against humanitarian and public interests? Unfortunately, objective discussion of the issues is often difficult because of their innate emotional content, and yet it is only through objective analysis that realistic solutions to the complexities surrounding water distribution around the world will be found.

## **The complaints**

The major transnational corporations involved in fresh water distribution stand accused of many things, amongst which are those listed in Table 1. This litany of complaints is compiled from a series of corporate profiles published by Public Citizen, a Washington DC-based not-for-profit research, lobbying and litigation organisation (Public Citizen, 2003a). Although the table lists only accusations, the published profiles also contain references to supporting documentation verifying the charges made. For the purpose of this essay greater concern has been given to the nature of the accusations than the details of their verification because those accusations provide insight into the reasons why transnational corporations are opposed with such vigour by the very people they claim to serve. These complaints point to the nature of transnational corporate business methods as well as the changes needed if private enterprise is to be of any value in the pursuit of human happiness and a future devoid of unnecessary human suffering.

The accusations against transnational corporations can be roughly categorised into those which breach various levels of morality including humanitarian ideals, moral ethics, business

ethics, the law and contractual expectations. It is clear from Table 1 that the issues surrounding privatisation of fresh water are primarily of a moral nature that verges on the edge of legality. Leaving people without water might not be recognised as a criminal offence in some countries, but it is most certainly a moral one. Price-gouging, cronyism and non-delivery may be hard to prove in a court of law, but ruthless business practices earn reputations that soon spread around the world resulting in mistrust, fear, and loathing. In reality the transnationals considered in Table 1 are accused of moral turpitude which in the United States “refers to conduct that is considered contrary to community standards of justice, honesty or just good morals” (Wikipedia, 2010c).

However, it must also be said that it makes little sense for governments to contract with private corporations for the delivery and distribution of water, and then to act surprised and outraged when that enterprise cuts off delivery to those who cannot pay. Nor should we point the finger at private enterprise for “profiteering”, “price-gouging”, “cronyism” and “secrecy” when we knew in the first place that this is the nature of their business. Is it reasonable to expect anything else but self-serving from enterprises built around self-service? Let us not then act disappointed when the merchant tries to take everything he can, although perhaps we in our naiveté might have expected fairness and justice.

**Table 1. Breaches of Māori social principles by transnationals engaged in fresh water delivery around the world.**

| Accusations against transnationals<br>Involved in water delivery | BW <sup>1</sup> | BL <sup>2</sup> | SE <sup>3</sup> | VE <sup>4</sup> | TW <sup>5</sup> | SA <sup>6</sup> |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Breaches in whanaungatanga</b>                                |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Non-delivery of services to poor areas                           | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               |
| Cost cutting by reducing the number of jobs                      |                 |                 | √               |                 |                 |                 |
| People without water   | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               |
| Racism   | √               |                 |                 |                 |                 | √               |
| <b>Breaches in manaakitanga</b>                                  |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Cutting off delivery to those that cannot pay                    | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               |
| Frequent rate increases  | √               |                 | √               | √               | √               | √               |
| Threats of discontinuing service                                 | √               |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Lying to consumers   | √               |                 |                 | √               |                 |                 |
| Threats against public health                                    |                 | √               | √               | √               |                 |                 |
| <b>Breaches in kotahitanga</b>                                   |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Cronyism   | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               |                 |
| Intimidation   | √               |                 | √               |                 |                 |                 |
| Secrecy  | √               | √               |                 | √               |                 | √               |
| Profiteering   | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               |
| <b>Breaches in rangatiratanga</b>                                |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Poor service   | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               |                 |
| Corruption   | √               |                 |                 | √               | √               | √               |
| Dishonesty   | √               |                 |                 | √               | √               | √               |
| Theft  |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Circumventing government regulations                             |                 |                 |                 | √               | √               |                 |
| Obfuscation  |                 |                 | √               | √               | √               |                 |
| Non-delivery to the poor   | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               |                 |
| <b>Breaches in aroha</b>   |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| High connection charges  |                 | √               | √               |                 |                 | √               |
| Price gouging  | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               |
| High consumer rates  | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               |
| Profiteering   | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               | √               |
| <b>Breaches in awhinatanga</b>                                   |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |

|                                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Misdirection                          | √ |   |   | √ | √ |   |
| Discontinuation of services           | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Non-delivery of services              | √ | √ |   |   |   |   |
| Intermittent services                 | √ | √ | √ |   | √ |   |
| Inadequate maintenance                | √ |   | √ | √ | √ |   |
| Slow to non-existent repairs          | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |   |
| Inaccurate billing                    | √ |   |   | √ | √ |   |
| <b>Breaches in kaitiakitanga</b>      |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Pollution                             |   | √ | √ | √ | √ |   |
| Environmental degradation             |   | √ | √ | √ | √ |   |
| Not living up to terms of contract    | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Operational deficits                  |   |   |   | √ |   |   |
| No improvements to service            | √ |   | √ |   |   |   |
| Neglecting community responsibilities |   |   |   |   | √ |   |
| <b>Breaches in wairuatanga</b>        |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Broken promises                       | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Poor administration                   |   |   | √ | √ | √ |   |
| Cutting corners                       |   |   |   |   | √ |   |
| Poor reporting practices              |   |   |   | √ |   |   |

<sup>1</sup> BW = Biwater (Public Citizen, 2005a)

<sup>2</sup> BL = Bechtel (Public Citizen, 2003a)

<sup>3</sup> SE = Suez Environnement (Public Citizen, 2005b)

<sup>4</sup> VE = Veolia/Vivendi Environnement (Public Citizen, 2005d)

<sup>5</sup> TW = Macquarie/RWE/Thames Water (Public Citizen, 2005c)

<sup>6</sup> SA = Saur (Public Citizen, 2003b)

## Māori social principles

While the categorisation of complaints according to various degrees of Western morality establishes the nature of transnational corporate business in relationship to community standards the world over, this is not the only perspective available to us. Transnational corporate enterprises also breach every aspect of Māori social principles, principles that have been the foundation of Māori society since ancient times, although arguably less so today with the advent of the rule of law and the intrusion of other Pākehā customs.

Māori social principles are highly evolved guides to social behaviour with a meaning and force that is often absolute for those raised to traditional standards. Social behaviours are governed today to a large degree by western law, but for Māori this has not always been the case. There was a time when the concept of Western law did not exist and indeed for many societies around the world, including Māori, the regulation of social behaviours took a different form. For Māori, a net of social principles served to guide and regulate both individual and group behaviours, although that is not to say that rules did not also exist; however, it is fair to say that the most important regulatory influences on behaviour were those relating to the ideals of various social principles. In addition to the social principles were the rules of tapu and noa that served to fine tune individual behaviours; however, such rules varied from tribe to tribe although the social principles remained consistent. Tapu and noa to a large degree define the manner in which we give respect to each other recognising the connection of all people to Ngā Atua (the gods), to each other, and to the land. The rules of tapu and noa will not be discussed here.

The days of principle and tikanga (customs) have faded, and although traditions remain they are often diluted by the colonising influences of the mainstream, especially those of the Crown and the Christian Church (Mead, 2003). The morality upon which current law is based

is western European and while widespread in today's world offers little guidance to those whose lives and practices are strongly outcome-focused; that is, in Western society whenever social principles have gotten in the way of outcomes those principles have usually been set aside. Transnational corporations are constructed around outcomes, and any moral principles that might exist within that corporate structure lies buried beneath the urgencies of outcome. For transnationals involved in the water business the most urgent of outcomes is satisfying their investors and not necessarily conforming to any principles of social behaviour.

The most important Māori social principles are listed in Table 2 and although each of these principles are themselves significant, in the context of this essay, some are more significant than others and not all of those listed will be discussed in detail. None of these principles exist in isolation and the invocation of one unavoidably brings with it aspects of the others; they are overlapping in their intent and meaning. For example, one cannot invoke manaakitanga (the preservation of mana or respect) without invoking, at the same time, the principles of whanaungatanga (a form of social capital that arises from human relationships), aroha (love for one's fellow man, dignity), awihinatanga (support for one's fellow man) and wairuatanga (spiritual embodiment). The true implications of these social principles cannot be understood simply from a cursory glance because they exist as a complex mesh of interlocking ideals. They are like a net that encloses all people whose nodes consist of social principles; when one node is invoked many others are activated also.

In ancient times the regulation of Māori social behaviours relied heavily on these principles to guide both individuals and groups towards a state of social harmony or at least balance between contrasting interests. However, as with all social principles they are an ideal that lies beyond most people (Mead, 2003). The chiefs achieved leadership positions primarily because of their ability to regulate their own behaviours and to manufacture social harmony for the benefit of whanau (family) and hapū (extended family) and some of that may have been due to their genetic inheritance (whakapapa) although much arose from their natural abilities and training. The evolution of Māori social principles have been millennia in the making; those behaviours that contributed towards social harmony or balance between individuals and groups survived, while those that resulted in social dysfunction diminishing survival of individual or group were discarded. Thus Māori social principles evolved in the absence of the rule of law, but nevertheless were highly effective in the regulation of both group and individual behaviours (for a detailed discussion of Māori social principles as well as other aspects of Māori traditions see Mead, 2003).

**Table 2. Māori social principles.**

| Māori Social Principle | Approximate Pākehā equivalent   |
|------------------------|---|
| Whanaungatanga         | A form of social capital that arises from human relationships (Hook, 2007). Principles of relatedness, and as its name implies entirely dependent upon the coming together of other important principles (McNathy & Roa, 2001; Mead, 2003). |
| Manaakitanga           | Principles associated with duties and expectations of care and reciprocity (Barlow, 1991; McNathy & Roa, 2001). Preservation of mana or respect (Hook, Waaka, & Raumati, 2007; Mead, 2003).   |
| Kotahitanga            | Interconnected and interdependence. Principles associated with a collective unity (McNathy & Roa, 2001). Unity of purpose (Mead, 2003; Ritchie, 1992).  |

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Rangatiratanga | Principles associated with governance, leadership, and the hierarchical nature of traditional Māori society (McNathy & Roa, 2001; Ritchie, 1992). Also refers to the social values of the chief including leadership, honesty, courage, and the uplifting of the downtrodden (Hook et al., 2007). |
| Aroha          | Love for one's fellow man, charity, dignity (Durie, 2005; Marsden, 2003; Mead, 2003).   |
| Awhinatanga    | Support for one's fellow man (Hook et al., 2007).   |
| Mahakitanga    | Humility (Hook et al., 2007).   |
| Katiakitanga   | Guardianship of land, water, and other resources (Marsden, 2003; Mead, 2003; Ritchie, 1992).  |
| Wairuatanga    | Principles associated with spiritual embodiment (Hook et al., 2007; McNathy, 2001; Mead, 2003).   |
| Utu/muru/ea    | Balance/satisfaction/reciprocity (Mead, 2003; Salmond, 1975).   |

The accusations against transnational corporations listed in Table 1 have been categorised according to their apparent breaches of several very basic Māori social principles. These principles have been defined and discussed previously by Hook (Hook, 2007; Hook et al., 2007), and by many other researchers both Māori and non-Māori (see in particular Marsden, 2003; Mead, 2003; Metge, 1995; Ritchie, 1992; Salmond, 1975). Their translated meanings approximate to those listed in Table 2. Many definitions of Māori social principles have been offered over the years that reflect the circumstances of the times, although there are always those who lay claim to greater or lesser degrees of correctness especially amongst those Māori who are precious in their claims to culture and traditions. In addition, all of these social principles rest upon a spiritual foundation that must be recognised for that principle to be understood and to be effective.

Māori social principles are not invariant adapting as they do to changing circumstances and find application in all social circumstances. Manaakitanga, for example, concerns the preservation of mana and in ancient times was considered accordingly whereas today much manaakitanga centres around hospitality because hospitality is an important manifestation of respect. Explorations of whanaungatanga by McNathy and Roa (2001) support the contention that social principles are to a degree shaped by context and they synthesised an amalgamated definition of whanaungatanga that embraced all of those previously debated; however, their definition of whanaungatanga as a “default set of value processes invoked in interrelationship considerations dependent on an issue” is difficult to understand and equally difficult to apply without their particular educational background.

In general terms whanaungatanga equates quite well with the Western concept of social capital (Fukuyama, 1999) excepting for the dislocation of social capital from the spiritual aspects of human relationships. While social capital is thought to be a modern construct in the western sense it was in fact discovered and refined by Māori in ancient times and to a large degree is the foundation of Māori social evolution. Unfortunately, the theory of social capital in the Western world is incomplete, lacking as it does, the bevy of related principles that speak to mana, balance, dignity, satisfaction, unity, reciprocity, hospitality, ritual and culture. In addition, there is a lack of appreciation of taonga tuku iho, or the recognition of the connection and obligation between generations, between tipuna, self and future generations. Hook has discussed social capital previously in the context of technological developments for this nation.

Social capital speaks to the capital resource that arises from the net-working of technology workers, the principles by which they do business and the manner in which they treat each other, communicate with each other, and collaborate with each other in order to achieve common purpose. (Hook, 2007, p. 2)

For the purposes of this essay whanaungatanga has been taken outside of its tribal boundaries referring instead to the complex relationships that exist between and bind all people. Whanaungatanga in this context recognises the innate relatedness of all people including the relationship between vendor and client in the context of this essay. That relationship is coloured by genealogy (whakapapa), history, power, wealth, openness, biases, attitudes, knowledge, experience, education, frequency of interaction and purpose. Whanaungatanga speaks to the very nature of human relationships while other interrelated social principles decorate and promote its richness. Whanaungatanga is not static but requires the evolution of relationships under the direction of other social principles such as manaakitanga and aroha. The interrelatedness of Māori social principles prevents the identity of any single breach with any single principle although as shown in Table 2 a particular social principle might be identified as that which has most meaning in the context of the breach.

Leaving people without fresh water is a breach of whanaungatanga as well as manaakitanga because the act fails to recognise the humanity of the victims and their relationship to all people including those who perpetrate the abuse. Racism denigrates and denies the relatedness of all people. Recognition of the principle demands change, improvement, and the setting aside of all behaviours that perpetuate racial denigration. The principles of manaakitanga, aroha, and awhinatanga, can overcome negative behaviours that led to the offense in the first place moving to the reestablishment of balance. Manaakitanga, is one of the most important of Māori social principles. According to Mead (2003, p. 345):

Manaakitanga focuses on positive human behaviour and encourages people to rise above their personal attitudes and feelings towards others. The aim is to nurture relationships and to respect the mana of other people no matter what their standing in society may be.

Any action on the part of transnational corporations that resulted in loss of mana or loss of respect to either group or individual would be considered by Māori to be a serious breach of manaakitanga. Denigration of people by cutting off delivery of water is an assault on their mana because the act of withholding water presupposes their innate unworthiness. Threats against the public health, price gouging, and threats to discontinue service also result in the diminishing of those affected and are thus viewed as breaches of manaakitanga. Price gouging assumes victimhood and is a serious breach of manaakitanga and in these acts of corporate hostility there has been no hospitality or observations of respect.

Delivery of fresh water requires unity of purpose and it is important that all who are engaged in that activity, both the deliverers and the delivered to, behave accordingly. Cronyism, lying, intimidation and secrecy threaten unity of purpose leading to dissension and eventually rebellion against those so engaged. Rangatiratanga include all of those principles essential to the making of a chief, including self-reliance, honesty, leadership, courage, humility and the ability to support and sustain one's people. Transnational corporations have uniformly demonstrated poor leadership, questionable honesty, corrupt behaviours and little tendency to help those in need. Their breaches of rangatiratanga make transnational corporations ill-suited for any kind of leadership especially in the service industries; after all, chieftainship is itself a service function.

In the maximisation of profit the balance between corporations and those served is heavily tilted in favour of the corporations, and by Māori history and by Māori principles that balance must eventually be restored. In the days of the ancient Māori this might take the form of a

punitive raid or even war, but those days are gone and only the principles remain; nevertheless, hostility will remain until balance has been restored. Take for example, the case against Bechtel Corporation.

Bechtel is one of the top 10 companies in the world involved in the privatisation of water (Public Citizen, 2003a). Their worldwide interests include over 200 water and wastewater treatment plants through its many subsidiaries. In the 1990s Bolivia sought to refinance Cochabamba's water system through the World Bank. The bank insisted that before proceeding with refinancing that the system must be privatised and the Bechtel Corporation of California, through its subsidiary Aguas del Tunari, in 1999 thus gained control over all of Cochabamba's water (Public Citizen, 2003a). Bechtel was also granted the power to seize the homes of delinquent customers. Overnight, families earning \$60 per month faced water bills of \$20 per month. Increases of 100% were common but increases as high as 300% were also reported from around the city. The people took to the streets to protest and a general strike was called. The Bolivian Government responded with anti-riot police defending Bechtel's right to raise prices (Public Citizen, 2003a); hundreds were injured in the rioting. The people did not retreat and the government was forced to cancel Bechtel's contract. Bechtel then sought compensation to the tune of \$25 million from Bolivia through the World Bank for loss of profits (Chattergee, 2003). The system is now run by a board consisting of both community and government representatives although the problems of water delivery have not been solved (Forero, 2005). Here the right of the people to protest prevailed and a degree of balance was restored, but only through acts of civil disobedience and under the threat of extreme violence.

Price gouging and profiteering also speak to an absence of *aroha*, or love of humanity. *Awhinatanga* requires the offering of support especially to those in need and in this area transnationals have been sorely lacking. Protection of the environment and community are sacred trusts under the social principle of *kaitiakitanga* and in this regard transnational corporations have much to learn.

RWE AG is a German energy company that owns over 600 subsidiaries in the worldwide water industry. RWE was the parent company of Thames Water, a British Company that served as the operational manager of RWE's international water business (Public Citizen, 2005c). Thames Water was sold in 2006 to Macquarie Bank, an Australian enterprise that is the world's largest manager of infrastructure (Foley & Moullakis, 2006). Thames Water stands accused of "cutting corners, gouging customers, and neglecting its responsibilities to the communities it serves, all to pad the bottom line for its shareholders" (Public Citizen, 2005c, p. 3). In addition Thames Water has "topped the U.K. Environment Agency list of the worst polluters for years." According to Public Citizen (2005c, p. 3):

Dating back to 1999, Thames Water, the largest water and waste water company in England, has repeatedly been found to have committed environmental and public health violations and paid over \$1 million in fines. These fines are a result of Thames Water allowing raw sewage to flow into open waterways, over streets, onto people's lawns and over children's toys – even flooding homes, damaging houses to the point that families could no longer live in them.

The most recent incident of Thames Water polluting the Thames River was in August (S & B Media, 2010). Other major problems regarding the water services of Thames Water and their partners have been reported in Puerto Rico, Australia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Hungary and the USA.

Underlying all of the principles listed in Table 2 is a spiritual component in whose absence Māori social principles become less meaningful, because for Māori all things originate in the spiritual realm (Marsden, 2003); physical values are the embodiment of spiritual values. Perhaps it is the apparent absence of spiritual values why so many people, especially the

indigenous, view the marketplace with trepidation and why the marketplace is coming under attack from so many people the world over. Certainly, the absence of spiritual values, or wairua as Māori call it, might help explain the anti-people behaviour of transnational corporations. An absence of aroha for one's fellow man by Māori reckoning could exist only in the absence of wairua or spiritual values.

Incidentally, Māori social principles are not against private enterprise or even against the commodification of resources, but they are opposed to business practices that result in the oppression and impoverishment of the helpless. Thus, Māori social principles are adept at preserving human relationships through the identification of specific behaviours that lead to imbalances and pathways that lead to the restoration of social and environmental harmony. Unfortunately, the recommendations that arise from the application of Māori social principles to global challenges are unlikely to be taken seriously in today's world, unless it is understood that the framework upon which Māori relationships are constructed is a more advanced framework than anything currently available in the western world. As mentioned above the concept of social capital in the Western sense of the term is but a small part of a greater theory already put to the test by the survival of countless generations of Māori.

There is little to be gained by belabouring the points surrounding Māori social principles; however, the obvious unsuitability of private enterprise in the management of fresh water reserves raises the question as to what should be done and whether or not Māori have a role to play.

### **A case against government ownership of water**

An alternative to privatisation is government control of fresh water. Most of the water declarations view this as the most realistic and preferred alternative. However, government control might not always be the most effective way of eliminating the corrupting influence of big money. With governments the motivation moves from individual desires to one of group power. National security issues, both real and imagined, provide opportunities that can lead to or help maintain that power. Many wars, skirmishes, and deaths have occurred throughout human history over access to fresh water (Gleick, 2008), and there is little doubt that much of the same lies in our future. In 1995, Ismail Serageldin, Vice President of the World Bank was quoted as saying, "If the wars of this century were fought over oil, the wars of the next century will be fought over water" (Shiva, 2002).

Although open war directed at the control of water has in recent times been averted, situations have arisen that beneath the surface could well be motivated by the desire to secure water reserves. For example, the Chinese invasion of Tibet, while touted as being about politics and history, is more likely to be strategic whereby China has been able to secure its most important source of fresh water, the Tibetan Plateau. The Tibetan Plateau is the source of 10 of the largest rivers in Asia including the Yellow, Yangtze, Mekong, Sutlej, Hindus, Brahmaputra, and Salween. The Tibetan Plateau is the source of fresh water for approximately a quarter of the world's population (Gleick, 2008).

Governments have been known to use water as a bargaining chip to assert their influences over other nations. Consider, for example, the case in 2000 where Kyrgyzstan cut off water to Kazakhstan until coal was delivered and Uzbekistan cut off water to Kazakhstan for non-payment of debt. (Gleick, 2008). In addition, regardless of who owns the water there will always be those who try to use water to gain political and military objectives. Over the last 10 years terrorists have targeted water sources in order to gain advantage or destabilise nations; for example, the poisoning of the Meuse River by workers at the Cellatex Chemical plant in northern France. When workers were denied worker's benefits they dumped 5000 litres of

sulphuric acid into the river (Gleick, 2008) hoping that the threat would gain them what they wanted. Consider also the destruction of pipelines supplying water to Khalanga in western Nepal by Maoist rebels in 2002 (Gleick, 2008).

These examples of government misuse of fresh water resources and their vulnerability to ruthless extremists are not exhaustive by any means; however, they serve to point out a general principle that even governments to whom most people look for water management cannot always be trusted to guard the resource effectively, or to act in the best interests of humanity. Without belabouring the point, from a Māori perspective, governments frequently act against the common good and as such breach Māori social principles. Perhaps the reality is that neither government nor private corporations can be trusted with such a valuable and important resource.

### **A third option**

A third option is where the public is able to provide oversight of what are essentially government controlled fresh water reserves. The Okavango River Delta in Botswana is an example wherein water reserves have been stabilised through this kind of approach, an approach of cooperation and sharing. In the late 1990s when Namibia was in the middle of a serious drought it considered drawing water off the Okavango and piping it to its capital Windhoek hundreds of kilometres away; a threat that almost led to war between Botswana and Namibia. The following example of where cooperation between indigenous peoples of Africa has led to the peaceful sharing of fresh water reserves draws mainly from Siphambili (2010).

The Okavango River Delta in Botswana is a swamp rich in biodiversity. The river begins its 1100 km journey in Angola passing through Namibia ending up in the Kalahari Desert of Botswana. Each January the summer rains that fall over the south of Angola drain into the Okavango and through June to August the Okavango Delta expands approximately three-fold over its normal size (Siphambili, 2010), thus supporting a tremendous plant and animal diversity within one of the largest river deltas in the world. Until recently very little water was drawn from the Okavango River for human consumption.

Thus people in three different countries have claims on the Okavango River, and as each population expands needing water and food, three governments are looking to the river for help. Angola wants to draw water from the headwaters for rural development (Siphambili, 2010). Namibia is contemplating building a hydroelectric dam on the Okavango at Popa Falls, 50 km upstream from its border with Botswana. Namibia has built a 300-km long water canal and has proposed to divert water into Namibia to help relieve the current drought (Siphambili, 2010). Botswana is afraid that the lowering of water levels will disturb the delicate ecosystem of the Okavango River Delta, resulting in loss of wildlife and destruction of the tourist industry. The potential for armed conflict in this region is enormous and it is all about the ownership and disbursement of water.

Conflict over water has been avoided primarily because of efforts by the Okavango River Basin Commission whose job it is to oversee and to identify environmental impacts of water usage. The Commission was established in 1994 by Namibia and Botswana in an agreement to share the river, which must be managed carefully otherwise everyone and indeed every living entity in the delta stands to lose. Pollution of the river must be avoided, wildlife diversity must be maintained, and strategic plans for dealing with fluctuations in river volume that occur in times of drought must be completed. Nothing of major impact is taken from the river without the Commission's knowledge or approval. Negotiation by the Commission has averted several potential conflicts and clearly, this is a model of water management that could

be used elsewhere. In addition, this is an example of kaitiakitanga that clearly results in the common good.

## Summary and conclusions

Quite clearly, the water industry is suffering from a malaise that penetrates transnationals from the top down. It seems unlikely that any kind of transformation sufficiently profound could be imposed on these behemoths to change their culture of rage, to mitigate their corporate arrogance and lack of business ethics. Nor can their insensitivity be blamed on a few rogue employees whose removal would erase a blight from an otherwise perfect tree. Transnational malfeasance descends from the very highest levels of corporate structure and it is only through the replacement of the top level management and governance with people who have strong personal ethics and values can the industry save itself from either loss of business, or from a potentially violent anti-capitalistic backlash from desperate nations and unhappy consumers as has already been demonstrated in countries like Bolivia (Chattergee, 2003). Winning the hearts and minds of the underdeveloped nations cannot be done through exploitation of their most basic needs, but then transnationals are not in the hearts and minds industry.

In 2004, Donald L. Evans, the then United States Secretary of Commerce said:

A fundamental ingredient of any successful market economy is respect for basic human values, honesty, trust, and fairness. These values must become an integral part of business culture and practice for markets to remain free and to work effectively. Private business is at the strategic center of any civil society. It's where people go for a job or to invest savings to realize the aspirations of their families. (Abramov & Johnson, 2004, p. iii)

Also along these lines is the statement of Abramov and Johnson (2004) in their excellent book on business ethics:

Though the profit motive of business is understood and accepted, people do not accept it as an excuse for ignoring the basic norms, values, and standards of being a good citizen. Modern businesses are expected to be responsible stewards of community resources working toward the growth and success of both their companies and their communities. (p. ix)

The principles by which transnationals stand or fall begins and ends in their board rooms, and quite clearly for the companies considered, major changes are overdue.

Māori tikanga, or customs, has been under colonial attack for over the last 150 years, and to some the protection of Māori culture means to surround it with high walls keeping it only for the initiated, but this self-centredness may be itself a breach of the very principles that one might wish to protect. Māori are not the isolated community they once were, and as pointed out by Mead (2003) in his seminal work on tikanga Māori, the walls surrounding Māori culture have already begun to crumble with the nation becoming more and more accepting of Māori ideas and ways. However, this essay goes beyond national identity suggesting the possibility that tikanga Māori has relevance even at the highest levels of international affairs.

The purpose of this essay has been to examine the fresh water crisis that the world is facing today and to address the pertinence of Māori social principles in relation to those events. This has been done not to impress on the world that Māori have value today, but to impress upon Māori that their perspectives of the world remain highly relevant even under critical

circumstances, and to not abandon or weaken those core values that were handed down from tīpuna (ancestors). In addition, the relevance of those core values in the greater world in fact impresses even more emphatically their value in this, their own land of Aotearoa New Zealand.

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### **Author Notes**

Our appreciation is owed to Haumoana White of Ngāti Tama/Ngāti Mutunga for his review of the manuscript. This research was funded by the Institute for Māori Research and Development, Hamilton, New Zealand.

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