Special Issue on Ethics Featuring:

“Learning to Fly”
Clayton M. Christensen

“Master Class in Business Ethics: Alcoa”
Bill O’Rourke

“Reflections on Ethics, Integrity & Honor”
Brad Oates
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The mission of the Wheatley Institution is to enhance the academic climate and scholarly reputation of BYU, and to enrich faculty and student experiences, by contributing recognized scholarship that lifts society by preserving and strengthening its core institutions.
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If you are really anxious about always being able to make the ethical choice, especially in a moment of intense difficulty—if you cultivate an altruistic nature, I am convinced it will be your greatest defense in ethical dilemmas.
I have several things I would like to say about responsible leadership. First, it is important for those of us who have any kind of responsibility to be a leader, and that includes pretty much everybody, because I believe in leadership with a small “l.” That is, leadership exists in every level of society, all the way down to individuals and families, in organizations, in project teams, in divisions, in any kind of group, all the way to CEOs and even people who lead large parts of societies. In every position of leadership, leadership is always and everywhere a moral act, because every leader takes the lives of other people in her or his hands, and in various ways takes action that affects other people. It is either for their wellbeing to improve their lives and help them become more effective and better off, or it hurts them. So the first observation is that it is always a moral act.
The second observation is that all of us, whether you’re in a school or not, will teach other people about responsible leadership. It doesn’t matter what you do, all of you will teach responsible leadership whether you intend to or not. This is what we came to at HBS (Harvard Business School). We thought hard about what we should do as an institution to develop leaders who go out and really make the world a better place. Not rhetorically, but actually make the world a better place.

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*Whether you choose to or not, you will teach people about responsibility.*

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You can talk about it, but will it have any effect? We decided that whether you choose to or not, you will teach people about responsibility. If you choose not to do it with intent, you will do it inadvertently and haphazardly, and they will learn about responsibility from you, but it won’t be a happy lesson. You will teach them you do not care about it, and that it is not an important part of being a leader. They will take that and it will get into their hearts, because responsibility is always about the heart and the mind.

So we chose at HBS to educate for responsibility. And it is not easy. It is challenging. It is full of paradoxes. So how do you teach it? Well, one way is you try to help the faculty understand something about these principles. I want you to picture in your mind the Harvard Business School faculty arrayed in a room. There are two hundred and something of them. It is the most prestigious business school in the world, populated by faculty of great international renown. I’m there and I’m talking to these people, all of whom got to where they are by single-minded pursuit of their own interests. Do you have the picture now? I told them about this paradox about responsibility. I said, “Alright, this is what I believe. If we work together in such a way that we are willing to invest in each other, even if it causes us individually to sacrifice our own interests, then we will end up creating an
organization that is so powerful in its influence and in its culture, that individually we will end up better off than if we selfishly pursue our own interests.”

It is a paradox because you have to believe that if I’m working on a paper and trying to write and Peter appears in my office door and wants to talk to me, I have to set that aside. I have to believe that by setting this aside and spending time with Peter rather than my own work, it will eventually create a culture that’s very powerful, and I will be better off some day, only not this day. That is exactly what you do. I believed that very strongly at HBS and I believe that very strongly now. We saw it begin to happen.

One of the sweetest things that happened to me in my time at HBS was a letter I got; it was a letter from one of my colleagues who is an absolutely brilliant economist, internationally renowned. This was a brilliant person who grew up in a country where he saw people pursuing their own interests to the max and he saw the consequences of it. He learned that only the people who are ruthless and cynical survive. So when I started talking about investing in other people and being better off as a result, he thought it was complete nonsense. I got this very sweet letter from him when I left. He wrote me this long letter and he said, “You know, when you first talked about this stuff, I thought, ‘this is nonsense, this is crazy,’ but as time went on, I decided that I would begin to experiment with it, so I began to behave the way you taught us. I have to tell you, I am a convert. I now believe what you believe because I’ve practiced it and I’ve watched the change it’s made in my life.”

Responsibility the way we’re talking about here is very powerful, but, while it’s powerful, it is not easy. It is not only about the heart, what you stand for, who you are, and your identity and your principles, but it is also about the mind because you cannot be a responsible leader if you don’t know how to take powerful and effective action or organize and motivate people so that they do the things that bring about responsibility. What does it take to get three hundred companies to sign up to play a game that is not in their interest? It takes more than heart; it takes skill, it takes knowledge, it takes expertise, it takes the kinds of things we teach about. In fact, I think you can argue that the real power is to get people who have responsible hearts and very powerful minds. William James developed a concept
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which has been deeply engrained at HBS for a long time. He taught that what you want in leaders is someone who’s tough-minded but not hard-hearted. So, you want responsible hearts and strong, powerful minds.

There’s another issue that I’d like to share with you. I’ll give you one example. A leader that I have a lot of respect for is a man named Paul O’Neil. He was the CEO of Alcoa, a big aluminum company. Very nasty business to make that metal: a lot of mining, a lot of smelting, a lot of metal working; it is very, very dangerous. When Paul O’Neil became CEO of Alcoa, Alcoa was killing its own people and injuring them on a regular basis, but its safety and health record was superior to the industry’s as a whole. So given that aluminum is dangerous, they were less dangerous than most aluminum companies. This had consequences beyond the boundaries of the firm. If you kill this worker, what does that do to his family or to the community? It’s devastating. Occasionally throughout the year, somebody would die. That was standard, accepted practice in the industry. Well, Paul came in and he said, I don’t think that’s right. The only standard that has any standing is zero. So we are going to seek to have zero fatalities and zero injuries—incredibly difficult to do.

The idea is to say, can we find not only ways to ameliorate the situation, but find ways to increase value actually in both segments, for the firm and for society? What happened in the O’Neil case is they went after zero, and he was dogged, and he got a bunch of people convinced. He said, “How can you accept anything other than zero? How can you ask a family to come work for us, and your probability of dying is only .04%?”

Today, it is unacceptable. As they pursued zero, they began to discover things about their processes, systems, information, communication, and all sorts of things, and over time the safety record got lower and lower and lower. Fewer and fewer people died, and significantly fewer people were injured. Alcoa’s processes got better because they began to discover things about their processes they didn’t know.

One last thought about systems. There’s a recent paper by Rebecca Henderson and one of her colleagues, Karthik Ramanna, which argues that leaders who are embedded in the kind of economic system where you have private enterprise
and governments, have a responsibility for the system. There are times when it is justified for private individuals to take action to preserve the integrity and therefore the legitimacy of the system, even if it causes some short term cost to their companies. An example they use is accounting standards. If accounting standards are manipulated by the participants and the participants actually are involved in setting the standards, and because of their knowledge of the standards they can manipulate them to their advantage, that will eventually cause the system to collapse because no one will have any faith in it. And therefore, there will be regulation, and you know what happens when you have regulation. You get corruption, you get costs imposed on the system, and eventually it just starts collapsing on itself.

I want to use an example that’s not currently a huge problem, but it is going to get a lot bigger. I want to describe to you an episode that happened at a university. A student comes in to see a teacher; the teacher has in front of her a paper that the student wrote. The paper is covered with blue highlights because the professor has run the paper through a software program that searches the internet for plagiarism. The paper is littered with whole paragraphs lifted from sources on the internet. The teacher shows the paper to the student and says, “What do you have to say?” The student looks at her and says, “I know! I tried to get that blue ink out of the thing. I couldn’t figure out how to do it. I know, isn’t that tough? Look, I don’t know what to do.” And the teacher says, “No, you’re missing the point. All this stuff is taken from other places; it’s not your work.” The student looks at her with a blank stare and says, “So what?” And she says, “Well, it’s plagiarism,” and the student says, “So what? You gave me an assignment, I gave you a paper, what else do you want?” and the student was serious. The student, about 18 or 19 years old,
turned in a paper basically lifted from the internet, and thought that was fine. The student had a moral code that basically said, “What’s right for me is right.”

I want you to think about that for a minute: What’s right for me, so whatever makes my life better, according to me, is right, morally right. There’s a whole generation of young people out there who have this code. They are flooded with information. Their view is, “Well, you have requirements and I have to meet them, but I’m going to meet them in a way that’s best for me. And all your rules, I don’t really care about your rules, because they don’t really apply to me. So that’s how I’m going to be.” Now you think about what that would be like if that moral code is in a lot of the rising generation in the world. That’s the code that starts getting into the people who run organizations. I guarantee that if that happens, the economy that you saw recently in the 2007, 2008, 2009 period, will feel like a cakewalk compared to what will happen if that code takes over. So that’s my prediction.

That means everybody, every leader, every person with any interest in a healthy, functioning, growing economy, has a responsibility to counteract that moral code. In whatever way you can, whether you’re a teacher, a leader, in a firm, in a home, in families, in organizations, wherever you are, you need to recognize this code when it pops up and you need to teach. You can start by helping them see that by having that point of view and moral code they are headed to sure personal disaster, because no one will trust them. No one will believe anything they say, including the people they want to believe them. That code destroys human relationships, destroys organizations, and destroys families. It’s a sure recipe for disaster, because it is very short-sighted. You can start by teaching them that it is in their interest to learn to tell the truth, it is in their interest to care about how other people feel, it is in their interest to think about the consequences of their behavior two or three steps down. All of us have that responsibility.
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This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture originally sponsored by the W. Bealton Institution and delivered at the Said Business School at Oxford University on September 6, 2013. Click here to watch the full lecture.
Let me describe the dilemma that academia has imposed on responsibility and leadership. A good friend of mine was chosen to be the dean of the graduate schools at one of the most prestigious universities in America—a world class scientist. As they were testing her credentials to be sure that there was nothing hidden, it became known that she taught Sunday School in the Episcopalian Church in their community. The fact that it was known that she taught Sunday School almost scuttled the deal. Ultimately she got the job and did a wonderful job.

When I learned of that, I thought, what has happened to academia that it is so narrow-minded that you couldn’t have that kind of diversity in the faculty? In defense of academia, does that mean you have to embrace discussion about any topic on any issue? Deciding what fits in and what does not fit makes academia very difficult when you are faced with the challenge of teaching people to be
required leaders. As long as you keep the discussion at the level of values, then everybody can buy into values, but if you start to get any deeper about types of values, then you just get in all kinds of discussions and arguments: we can teach this, we can’t teach that.

In my own thinking, I have decided that maybe a better way to frame values in leadership in academia is to teach our students how to think rather than teach them specific values that they should follow.

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them specific values that they should follow. In fact, if we teach ourselves what theory is about, what theory is, and how it applies, we might give our graduates—as tomorrow’s future leaders—a better way to work their way through all of the pitfalls that might arise than if we tried to teach that certain values always ought or ought not to be applied. Theory might be really important in teaching tomorrow’s leaders how to be responsible.

The word theory gets a bum rap with managers because the word theory is associated with the word theoretical which denotes impractical, but a theory is a statement of what causes what, why, and under what conditions. When you think of theory in those terms, it turns out that managers are voracious consumers of theory because every time they make a decision to take an action, it is predicated upon a theory in their minds: if I do this, I will get the result I need. Every time a manager puts together a plan, it’s predicated upon one or more theories that if we do these things, we will be successful. The problem is a lot of times managers don’t know the theories they are using and they sometimes use crummy theories.

Let me describe how a theory is developed to get a sense for why being a good theorist might be useful for leaders, making them flexible enough to deal with some of the problems that otherwise we get killed by. If you go back to the Middle Ages, there was a long effort that lasted hundreds of years to research
flight, and the question was, is it possible that mankind ever might be able to fly? In the Middle Ages they approached it by collecting a lot of data and observing that almost everything that could fly had wings and feathers. There were a few exceptions: ostriches had wings and feathers and couldn’t fly; bats had wings with no feathers and they flew very well; flying squirrels had neither and they got by. The correlation between the attributes of wings and feathers and the propensity to fly, the “r-squared,” was so high that researchers of the day would fabricate wings, stick feathers on them, strap them on, bulk up, go up to cathedral spires, jump off, and flap real hard. It just didn’t ever seem to work.

For centuries they would criticize those who killed themselves by saying, “Well, they just had bad wing designs or they didn’t bulk up enough or didn’t flap hard enough,” but they kept killing themselves. Then Bacon in 1285 published a very important theory, where he essentially said, “You guys got the categories wrong. It’s not wings and feathers and no-wings and feathers that decide the outcome—it is solid versus hollow bones.” It turns out that those who can fly all have hollow bones and those that have solid bones can’t. Bad news for humanity: you have solid bones, therefore you can’t. Then Bacon proposed a bunch of machines that could flap their wings. Maybe there was hope for man after all.

Daniel Bernoulli came along in the 1500s or 1600s and he observed, through his understanding of mechanical physics, that it isn’t wings or feathers but there is a particular shape that we call today an air foil and if wind runs against that shape it pushes it up. Bernoulli’s principle helped us understand what causes flight, not what is correlated with flight. For a while it still didn’t help us much because you had this force pushing up, but people would try to build airplanes that harnessed that principle, and sometimes they would be successful and sometimes they would fail.

When research would fail, the researchers would look up and ask, “What is it about this situation that caused Bernoulli’s principle not to result in successful flight?” So, little by little, the researchers articulated the different circumstances in which this mechanism would fail, which then allowed them to say, “Alright, so if you are in this situation, this is the way you need to fly the plane, but if you find yourself in this situation, don’t fly it that way because you will fail. You will have
to follow these rules instead and if you are in this situation, don’t even try because it is impossible.” Bernoulli figured out what caused successful flight, but then understanding the different situations caused flight to be predictable. Today we are the beneficiaries of a wonderful theory that is very safe because we understand the different situations that we might find ourselves in.

So wouldn’t it be interesting if there were theories about leadership and management that would allow the next generation of leaders to say, “Oh, so this is the situation I’m in and therefore these are the principles I need to follow as I lead, but if I find myself in this situation I shouldn’t follow those rules”? It’s possible that if we arm the leaders of the future with good theories, they might actually provide better leadership to us than otherwise.

I think America has been horribly led over the last twelve years. Let me frame what has happened in America’s experience in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Egypt—and now possibly what we might do with Syria. I think our leaders did good correlation analysis and they observed that there is a very high correlation between prosperity and having a government based on democracy. Our leaders have then concluded that everybody ought to be governed by democratic governments. As we had the opportunity, we intervened in Iraq and knocked out the old leader and then announced on Monday morning, “Let’s have democracy, shall we?” Then we did the same thing in Afghanistan, run by really bad people (the Taliban). We did our best to get rid of them and then announced, “Why don’t we have democracy here starting on Monday?”

It turns out, if you are really guided by a solid theory then yes, democracy is a wonderful institution and there are some circumstances in which democracy works quite well, but there are other circumstances in which democracy actually doesn’t work. And it turns out there is no apparent evidence that our leaders considered that possibility. Rather, we saw a correlation and tried to impose democracy, but the circumstances in which you might find yourself in democracy, are actually designed so that you can’t catch most criminals. It’s predicated upon people under democracy stepping forward and voluntarily choosing to obey all of the laws, even unenforceable laws. Because we voluntarily choose to obey the laws, democracy works; however, if you look in situations where people actually don’t believe that
they will be held accountable for following unenforceable laws, democracy actually doesn't work very well at all.

Look at the situations in which America tried to impose a type of government: we tried to impose it in a situation where democracy won't work. Qaddafi had been a bad actor for a long time, and as momentum built up through the Middle East and CNN (which really dictates our foreign policy) built enough momentum around Qaddafi for us to take him out, we killed him. We never asked what happens if you take the leader out when there is nobody behind that person to take charge. It turns out that people who have been in power for a very long time get their power by killing all the people underneath them. So you take out Qaddafi and then the Americans say, “Oh sorry, we have got to watch our children’s football games and I’m sure there is somebody in Libya that can take charge.” We never thought about that.

There are two different situations. There is one situation where there is a leader and then there is another cadre of people who are ready and willing and capable to take charge, but there is another situation where if the leader goes, there is actually nobody to take charge. America essentially plunged Libya, and before that Haiti, into chaos because there wasn’t anybody in charge.

I worry that we have leaders who don’t know how to think. I just wanted to offer this as an academic who has some responsibility to teach the next generation of leaders. If we try to teach them the details of all of the values, then we need to keep those values at all times in order to be a good leader. Maybe we would give them better tools to wield if we were to teach them what good theories are, because any time they try to act in one way or another, they are using a theory. Maybe that’s the way we need to influence them.

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This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture originally sponsored by the Wheatley Institution and delivered at the Said Business School at Oxford University on September 6, 2013. Click here to watch the full lecture.
Basic Frameworks in Business Ethics

Thomas Donaldson
University of Pennsylvania

I’ve been asked to talk about basic frameworks in business ethics. I should back up and explain that I had an earlier career as a philosophy professor. My PhD is in philosophy and I spent eleven years in philosophy before I moved to business school. So I can talk about things like the definitions of values until you’re really sick, which you know, I don’t want to do. But I thought this might be a good place to begin.

Loyalty to the company has been shown to be more strongly correlated with employee’s perception of the fairness of the process by which salaries are set than the absolute level of the employee’s own salary. So Carter Heskett’s work shows that—at least for strong culture, high performance companies—they could find only two characteristics in common, one of which is a strong reputation for
integrity, internally and externally. So these intrinsic values play an important role in business, especially these motivators. I begin here because if we don’t define ethics as having something to do with those things that have intrinsic worth—integrity, fairness and so on—we aren’t talking about ethics. You can put lipstick on a pig, your consultants can come in and sell you the billing goods about your credo statement and respect for the individual, [but] if it’s just a clever way to get more productivity out of people, they see through it right away. It’s going to have to have something to do with values that are intrinsic.

So when we’re thinking about business ethics, we’re looking at the intersection of a couple of crucial concepts in management. This intersection obviously includes traditional business objectives, but also values and ethics. So I like to think in terms of teaching a hierarchy of concepts. We have ethical theory at the very top. We have mid-level theory that gives us insights about how organizations should behave, how parts of society should behave and relate to the economy. Then we have specific business issues, questions of how men and women treat one another in the workplace, client obligations, whether if in two sides of a transaction we should let one side post the mortgage properties in it—we have all these very specific questions, and then of course at the final level, we make a judgment and we make a call. Ethics always has to do with action and choice, as Aristotle said a long time ago.

I want to talk about frameworks as they relate to these different levels. I want to begin with ethical theory. A set of principles that have to do with empirical research is, to some extent, dominating the business school research methodology. They’re enormously important. This is the reflection of something that happened.
historically, almost 500 years ago. As we begin to realize that we need data, we need to ask hard questions about what we see, and we can’t accept bad answers.

One of the most famous ways of articulating this is done by Carl Popper, a philosopher and scientist, on falsifiable criterion. In other words, the only propositions which can be said to be true are those subject to falsification through observation or experiment. In other words, if I have any hypothesis, I at least have to be able to imagine that somehow, through observation or experiment, there could be a different outcome. If I make the hypothesis that was once made, “Love moves the planet,” what would constitute, even hypothetically, the falsification of that? That’s a nonsense statement. The stuff we have to hang onto, says Popper, is the stuff that can be falsified.

Now unfortunately, I think this messes with a lot of ethical thinking in our business schools, and to some extent other parts of the academy. Our students sometimes come into classes a little confused about this. Falsifiability factor—what was that?

The reason philosophers gave [the falsifiability factor] up about half a century ago is that ethical theory is not a falsifiable proposition. It’s an enormously important proposition; it’s very important normatively in guiding what we do, but it is not falsifiable. You will not determine the truth of that proposition by going into the laboratory or making a series of observations, and that’s true of so much of what’s important. This is important! It’s certainly not falsifiable.

All kinds of goals that we presume as we undertake research, as we do medical studies, etc., fight infection in the human body, find true north in a metal boat (that was the first assignment that Lincoln gave the Academy of Sciences, by the way), lower reputational risk for corporations—these all imply non-falsifiable propositions, important propositions. I’m not trying to do dirt to them at all.

People who study theoretical ethics have a way of talking about this. They say, you really want to be careful in moving from “is” to “ought.” And moving from something that’s empirically based—this is very important, it’s important for ethics too—you can’t just move straightforwardly from that to something else. So we’ve got to have some non-empirical methodology if we’re going to
make sense for our students in business ethics other than to say, “Hey, I feel this way and you feel that way, and there’s one possibility.”

So what is rational about ethics? It’s clearly not a matter of luck. It isn’t all relatives, and here’s a framework for you. Somehow, you need to let students go through the process of thinking through how they feel. Most will come into class, undergraduate students especially, believing they’re pretty tolerant. The irony, of course, about tolerance, as it has often been noted by moral philosophers, is that it’s not a relativistic value at all; if you’re intolerant, you’re wrong. Tolerance is important, up to a certain extent. Obviously we want to hold our cherished values dear. But we need to have some tolerance.

And so as you get them to think through this, students are helped to see that no, not everything is relative, that torturing children for fun is not a good thing objectively, no matter who believes it. Cultural relativism can be true to a point, but clearly, if we’re talking about persecuting people with genocide, as has happened too often in the world, almost everybody will agree that there’s something wrong about it. I try to let students play with this a little bit and see where they stand, but the real reason they will eventually give it up is because when you hand them a case study, they’ll have views about it. They will see a right and a wrong, and they’ll think other people are wrong. So, as Socrates said a long time ago, through the case study you help them overcome relativism and become clear about values that they think are true.

So we require a non-empirical methodology; is one possible? Let’s stay at the level of ethical theory and talk about orchids. If you were to sum up all of the ethical theories in the world—I mean from Socrates, Aristotle, Saint Thomas, Sidgewick, Mill, Rawls, all of them—they’d fall pretty neatly into two basic piles. These piles have been studied, but it also turns out that from sociological testing, each of us tends to lean more towards one approach than the other, and it seems not even to be culturally influenced. In other words, we will ask questions that will force people to go to one side or the other.

I thought you might want to find out which of these basic kinds you are. And it’s very easy. I’m going to tell you a story, and I’m going to ask you a question at
the end of the story, and then you will be able to determine what kind of thinker you are. This is almost as if there were two very distinct forms of moral logic.

Here’s the story: you leave Salt Lake City, Provo, for a wonderful cruise in the South Pacific, and it’s really great. You’ve been looking forward to this for a long time, but unfortunately a horrible storm comes up and your ship is tossed about for days, to a point where the captain says, “We don’t even know where we are. We’ve lost all our locating devices; we’re probably way off the sea lanes. Let’s hope this storm doesn’t continue.”

The storm does continue. It continues, and the ship breaks up. You are thrown into the water, you know you’re going to die, but you hang on to a milk carton or something, and all of a sudden—boom! You find yourself on sand somewhere, you don’t know where. You wake up groggy the next morning and you look around and you’re on a beautiful island. The sun is out, it looks pretty nice, lots of palm trees, and way down the beach, there’s somebody else, and you go down to them and you say, “I’m from the ship too! Oh, my gosh! We must be the only survivors from this ship. What are we going to do?” And you look around, and well, it’s not so bad. There’s fresh water, you’ve got some matches that are still dry, you’re able to get a fire going, the bread fruit falls from the trees, there’s plenty to eat. It’s not bad.

And a week goes by, and a month goes by, and many months go by, and a year goes by. And it looks like you’re going to be stuck. No ships are coming by; this is way off the regular shipping lanes. But you get to know your new friend pretty well. I mean, you sit around the campfire at night, you talk with your friend about that fascinating lecture you heard at Brigham Young University on ethics, your friend shares with you the fact that he or she has a passion for orchids.

You need to let students go through the process of thinking through how they feel.
Now, he doesn’t have a prize-winning collection. He also shares with you the fact that if somehow he were to be saved, that the tubers of that orchid collection could be revived, and they could bloom up again. And often at night, he’ll talk about it as if it’s his babies, you know, this one and this one and this one. And after a lot of this, you’re getting to know him pretty well, one night, the fire’s crackling, it’s about time to go to bed, and he leans in to the fire and he looks you in the eye and he says, “I want you to promise me something. I want you to promise me that if somehow you’re rescued and I’m not, you’ll revive my orchid collection and take care of them.” Now I don’t know what you’re supposed to say in that situation, but we could debate that. Maybe you should say, “Well, I need to be real careful about this; what’s involved?”

Suppose you do say that. And he says, “Well, you should know what you’re getting into. This would take you about half an hour every day. Not a lot of time, but it would take half an hour for the rest of your life. And oh, by the way, if you do this, I want you to promise me that you won’t just hire somebody to do it, you’ll do it yourself; these are my babies.” Again, I don’t know what you should say there, but I also know that sometimes we make commitments that later we wish we hadn’t. Sometimes people say “I do,” when they [shouldn’t have].

So I want you to make believe—your heart goes out to your friend that night, and you say, “Nothing’s going to happen to you, but sure, I promise.” And you can almost fill in the rest of the story, right? In other words, a couple weeks pass before he gets a bad cough. It’s a tragedy; you end up having to bury your friend on the island. No sooner have you buried him than your grief is partly overcome by the fact that there’s a puff of smoke on the horizon: a tramp steamer off course is coming to your island. You’re rescued and you’re back to civilization, with an orchid collection. He was right, you can revive these things. And he was right, it takes about a half an hour every day. This is half an hour that you would much rather be spending on other things. You could be spending it at the church, involved in charitable endeavors, power boating, going to the opera, be with your family—almost anything you’d prefer to doing this.

So your question is this: do you keep your promise?
What you see here is a divide that goes to the very heart of how we think in ethics, and it is absolutely fundamental. It’s as if there were two logics. Now on one side, people are almost looking at the other saying, I can’t believe you’d do that, and that’s important because we tend to gravitate towards one way of thinking. This is designed by Ron Green, by the way, the Audrey professor at Dartmouth, and it’s designed to put you on the fence between deontology and consequentialism. In other words, putting you on the fence between a situation where the consequences are going to clearly be better for everybody, probably, if you break a promise, the breaking of which violates a deontological value that is a principle value.

In a crisis, when you can’t see the consequences very well, it’s really nice to have principles to hang on to, and it’s nice to interact and do business with people who adhere to them. But if that’s a strength of the deontological approach, what’s a weakness? And what would be a strength to the consequentialist? I think the answer here is not so much that one of these ways of thinking has a role over the other, but rather that each of us tends to think in both ways. We may have emphases in one direction, but it helps to see things from the other side as well.
BYU has a reputation in the business world for producing ethical students. It typically ranks very high each year in the official rankings, but I hope as we have this conversation tonight, each of us will hold up the mirror and ask, “What difference does it make if I have integrity in my life?” You see plenty of examples of people who don’t have the highest ethical behavior, and they seem to win. You see examples of people who do the right thing, and you think, “It doesn’t really pay to be a good guy.” So the question is, what difference does it make?

Let’s start with the definition of integrity. It comes from the Latin integers, whole or complete. The Greek would be teleos, and that is perfect. So if we start with Mathew 5:48 it says, “Be ye therefore perfect” or, “Be ye therefore teleos, even as your Father in heaven is teleos,” or whole or complete. We can substitute, “Be
ye therefore integrity, even as your Father in Heaven is integrity.” This is a pretty sobering thought that gives a spiritual context.

Let me share three personal stories. The first story goes back to 1982. I was privileged to be a two-time captain of a football team, the Kansas City Chiefs. So I was with the Kansas City Chiefs, and I was about halfway through law school. At that time, I had transferred to BYU and was going as a visiting student. I had a good year with the Kansas City Chiefs. I was playing and they made a decision; I made it to the last cut and got cut loose. It was pretty devastating. In one way it was kind of a blessing because I would be able to take the classes that I was always missing because I was always playing in the fall. So I went to law school for maybe four weeks. At the end of September, I got a call from the Cincinnati Bengals saying, “Brad, we have had an injury and we need somebody to come in.” I remember talking to Mike Brown who was the general manager, and I said, “I would love to come but I would need to work out one class: Civil Procedure.” He said to me on the phone, “You are going to have to decide whether you go to law school or play football.” So I went to my Civil Procedure teacher and said, “Here is my situation. I could really use the money. I have a family here and have this chance to go play. Can I come back and challenge the exam?” He said, “Sure, if you think you are good enough. I just ask that you don’t talk to anybody about the exam after they’ve taken it.” So I walked out and I said, “Okay. If he will let me do it, I am going to go to my other professors.” So I went to every one of my other professors and they all said, “Okay. Just don’t talk to anybody who has taken the final exam.”
I ended up playing in Cincinnati for the rest of the year. I would go to the University of Cincinnati law school library to read law nutshells. I remember being in the law library on New Year’s Day, and instead of watching games I was studying for my exams. I took them before the next semester started, and things worked out well. As it turned out, it was that experience that really paid dividends when the Utah Bar Foundation thought about which law student would receive the Professional Responsibility award. I can say that at that time, having a degree of ethical behavior made a difference in my life. I was allowed to come back to school; I will be forever grateful for being able to get through law school in five years, thanks to the professors that worked with me. That was one of my first opportunities to really test and believe in ethics.

Second, after I retired from football in 1984, I had two knee surgeries. I had a wife and three kids, and I was tired of moving around. I had been out of law school for a couple of years and knew I needed to settle down. So I took a job as general counsel with a bank in Dallas, Texas. We moved to Dallas in 1984, and promptly that bank got into trouble. There was even fraud with many of the other banks. So when I got there, I didn’t have a clue what banking was, but it pretty well dawned on me after a while that “the way these deals are done doesn’t make a lot of sense.” What happened was the owner had a title insurance company and asked me to go shut it down. So I did. A lot of the bank’s loans had been booked through this title company. When the bank failed, the regulators came in and looked at reasons why it had failed and held people responsible and accountable. In this case, because there had been so much fraud in Texas, the FBI set up a bank fraud task force: very notorious, very active. There were many, many criminal indictments, prosecutions and incarcerations in federal penitentiaries for bankers during those days.

The FBI came into the bank I was with, and by that time everybody had been kicked out and I was the only guy left. They honestly looked at me and wondered if I had anything to do with the bank failure. I had heard that they had some questions about my role at that failed bank. I did, as an intern, what I would never advise a client to do: I went to see the FBI by myself without counsel. I just felt like I needed to go. So I went in and visited with the FBI and explained that the source of their concern was records that had been changed and altered—and I
had changed some of those records, but I had changed them to reflect what had actually happened because it was part of the cleanup. So finally they were fine about that and understood that I was really trying to come in and clean up a mess.

Here is what happened: Two FBI agents were in the room. We talked about the title company and my role in shutting it down. The last question, they asked was, “Brad, you didn’t receive any money from shutting down the title company, did you?” I did. At that moment, I could have said, “Gosh, no.” I said, “Yes I did. I received $10,000.” I saw them look at each other. They had already known the answer to the question. They looked at each other and said, “Okay Brad. We don’t have any further questions.” I had my answer been, “No, I didn’t receive any money,” I would not be in the position I ended up being in with the bank regulators. I had a great relationship with them. One of my principle regulators became my business partner later in life. So these inflection points in your life do make a difference.

Now let me tell you a third story. In 1976, I played in the first NFL game outside the United States in Tokyo, Japan. As these cases typically turn out, one of the players had a friend of a friend in Ginza that sold electronic equipment, and so all of the players got a car to go down to a certain friend of a friend to buy some of the best Sony, JVC, and Panasonic, TVs and radios. There was so much equipment bought that the baggage compartment of a 747 was so full of electronic equipment that they had to put it inside the cabin. Part of the deal was that the receipts we received for the electronic equipment showed a price of half of what we really paid for it. We were totally getting good deals. As we went through customs back to the United States, player after player would go through and show what they owed for customs duties, and you could see that the customs officials knew. They saw the electronic equipment that came in and they knew what the prices were. As I was walking through, I thought, “What do I do? I don’t want to get my teammates in trouble.” The fact is that I didn’t pay what was due to the government. I did like everyone else. Roughly 40 years later, I have this regret. It probably would have made a difference in my life today if I did not have that regret. But it is a regret that I have.

For an example of ethics, we can look no further than to the history of the United States. Every time I go to Philadelphia and get a chance to go to the
Constitutional Hall, I stand in that Independence Hall and think about the things that happened. I come to the end of The Declaration of Independence and read the words, “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

What is the difference between honor and sacred honor? I have come to understand that honor helps bad men and women become good and sacred honor helps good men and women become great. I think the important point here is that the founders had an ethical model. One, they thought in terms of ethical outcomes. Thomas Paine said, “We have it in our power to begin the world over again.” This was a radical experience of self-government. We sit here today and take for granted the freedoms we enjoy. The [founders] had a linkage to the past. They understood the past, but they were thinking of the future. Thomas Paine again said, “If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my children may have peace.” There was a national religion that was embedded in the founding fathers. There was not a particular brand of faith, but it was identified with this creed, “We will sacrifice our today so that someone else’s tomorrow will be better.” The older I get, the more I am convinced that that is the national religion. I find that in a

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i  U.S. Declaration of Independence, Paragraph 6 (1776).
particular religion that is shared by many here, but you can find that in many other
religions, both Christian and non-Christian.

When I think about BYU, it is not just honor; it is sacred honor. It goes
beyond theology itself. This is more than just “religion.” It is more than that. It is
interdependency. It is a connection of the past, the present, and the future. There
are great men and women who have come before you and there are great men
and women who are going to come after you. I represent you just as much as you
represent me in what ideals we stand for at this great university. What binds us
together regardless of what we studied and where we come from is this concept
of sacred honor, this interdependency that says we are better together. It was Ben
Franklin who said with a degree of morbid humor, “We must hang together...else,
we shall most assuredly hang separately.”iv Whenever I have seen people get into
ethical dilemmas, they are very narrowly focused. It is not about a cause greater
than themselves. It is not that reminder that they really represent the past and the
future. It is that sense of linkage that creates the most ethical companies in the
world and the models are right there for us to follow.

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iv Franklin, Benjamin. Quoted at the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Retrieved at
http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h663.html
Now a successful “business turnaround” executive, Brad Oates once had a distinguished professional football career in the National Football League (“NFL”) with the St. Louis Cardinals, Detroit Lions, and Green Bay Packers. This followed a noted athletic career at Brigham Young University (“BYU”) where Brad was a two-time captain of the football team and was named to the 1975 Associated Press All-American team. After obtaining his undergraduate degree from BYU in 1976, he augmented his off-seasons in the NFL by attending law school at BYU’s J. Reuben Clark Law School and was awarded the Professional Responsibility Award by the Utah Bar Association.

Brad currently serves as Chairman of Stone Advisors, LP (“Stone”), a Dallas-based buyout and turnaround firm co-founded in 2002 by Brad and his business partner, Kevin Fox, under Bluebonnet’s bank holding company—Stone Holdings. Brad is the co-author of the Seven Disciplines Model.

This article is an abbreviated version of the Wheatley Distinguished Lecture in Ethics given on February 11, 2015. Click here to watch the full lecture.
I have had a lot of different, diverse experiences in corporations. I started as a patent attorney, I’ve been a patent counsel, I’ve been a general attorney, I’ve been general counsel, I’ve been the chief procurement officer, the corporate auditor, and the president of Alcoa Russia. I’ve had a stint as the chief information officer at a company, I founded business services in the organization, and right now I’m the Vice President of Environmental Health and Safety. So I have had some broad experiences in the corporation. What I started to do, early in my career, was to document some of the ethical situations that I’ve been in in some of these different positions.

I’d also like to describe my corporation, which is Alcoa. It’s a big corporation, and I try to give the idea that I do work for a large, global organization. Alcoa’s one of 61 corporations on the Fortune 500 list that have been on that list since
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its inception in 1956. We are a survivor. It doesn’t mean you’re good; it means we can survive these ups and downs we have in the economy. We’re an integrated aluminum company. We start with mining bauxite, we work through refining and smelting, and then we have end products (sheet, forgings, plate, extrusions) and then we sell that to customers who will then build airplanes and cars and packages for beverages.

We have three locations in Russia: Moscow, Samara and Belaya Kalitva. They are about 1,000 kilometers from each other in an equilateral triangle. Alcoa was founded in 1888 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, so we’ve survived for quite some time. We’re a leading producer of the integrated aluminum supply. We have strong values in Alcoa. One is environment health and safety. It’s great to have the job I have in Alcoa, because everybody believes they’re the safety manager. So to get the support of people in a function like that is pretty easy; it’s almost automatic. It’s interesting how that grew.

We try to say that we live by our values every day. You can look at our safety record—that’s continuous and proven through a long time. There’s a lot of more erratic movement on our charts. But they show continuous improvement over a long period of time, through three generations of CEOs, and I think that says that we do have a culture, a strong culture. And we get recognized periodically by external outfits. We don’t seek that, but it’s nice to have it to confirm that what you’re doing is in the right direction. For example, we’ve been on the Dow Jones sustainability index for nine years since its inception. That’s pretty good for a company that’s involved in the kind of industry we’re involved in, and we’re proud of those recognitions.

Alcoa has a vision. In our company, we aspire to be the best company in the world. We’re not, but we aspire to be. And it’s interesting; you can write whatever
you want on a piece of paper, we all know that. But I have found that this vision has actually driven some behavior. We’ve all been in meetings where you have that difficult decision ahead of you. In Alcoa, somebody will invariably raise their hand and say, “What would the best company in the world do in this case?” And that drives some pretty good behavior. So if we can even get that discussion going, whenever you have some of those difficult cases, that’s pretty good.

We also have our articulated values. We start with integrity. The only thing that’s different than most corporations is probably the articulated value of environment health and safety. Many companies don’t have that articulated as a corporate value, but we do in Alcoa. The other [values] you would typically find in other corporations. In fact, does anyone know whose values they are? Respect, integrity, communication and excellence? Enron. You can write anything on a piece of paper. It’s the behaviors behind that. When you go to work for your next employer and you pull out their annual report and you read their values, that’s not enough. Start to ask questions about behavior, how they act with regard to those values, and ask them to give you a few examples.

Some leadership concepts: I recommend that you have a vision for yourself, and you aspire to be the best person in the world, and just having that aspiration of what you want to be will drive your behavior. And then define personal success. Define it beyond personal ethics, beyond ethics, and actually write down and articulate it: what is success to me? And I believe if you articulate that, you will change it. It will change every few years.

I started this when I graduated from college. I was an industrial engineer, and I wrote down that I wanted to be a fantastic industrial engineer. I even articulated how much money I wanted to make in annual compensation, and it’s interesting how that has changed. Then I became a lawyer and I wanted to be the best patent lawyer in the world and I wanted to make this much money. Now my statement is not specific at all. It’s positions of increasing responsibility and authority and the opportunity to make an impact. There are not compensation numbers in there; compensation becomes more than that. But I’d urge you to think about that, and then look at it periodically. It just might change, and that could be good. I think it is.
Another concept that I urge classes to think about is the concept of true north. To me, the concept of true north is thinking and setting goals and objectives that are the ultimate, the best you can possibly have, and then if you can, thinking a little further. For example, in health and safety, what would be the best goal in health and safety? How many accidents per year? Zero, right? That’s the best you could have? Right? Wrong! Think further. That’s the concept of true north. You think as far as you can, then think further. Could we send employees home healthier than they were when they came to work, how about that? Well yes, you can. How about dietary programs, exercise programs? Even mentally healthier than when they came to work? You can do that.

How about in inventory? What’s the lowest inventory you can have in a corporation? Zero? How about negative inventory? Your customers pay you for your product before you pay your suppliers so that the difference offsets the inventory balance that you have. That’s the concept of true north: procurement with the least you can pay for something. Your supplier pays you for the privilege of doing business with Alcoa.

It’s a thought-provoking process to think as far as you can. Think that way in the ethical area as well. What kind of goal or objective can you set for yourself, for your organization, for your co-workers; think about that.

Now some leadership concepts to think about. You hear about these concepts pretty regularly. Leaders venture out of their comfort zones. They question the rules. If you haven’t asked why five times, you don’t know why. Leaders challenge the status quo. We have to challenge the status quo. When a situation’s better than ever, that might be the time to make a change because the world’s changing around us and leaders drive for change. Ask yourself: do you have a license to drive for change in your corporation the way I expect you to do it?

I think it is better to seek forgiveness rather than ask for permission. I believe that you have as much authority in this responsibility as you’re willing to take. I look at organization charts, and I see those little boxes on organization charts, and I think they’re coffins. If you go in there you will die. Don’t put yourself inside a box. Yeah, release that box and write in organization charts together that allow you to go into other functions and reach into other areas and express your
opinions. I urge you to go until someone tells you to stop. The biggest challenge you can have is to challenge yourself. Your challenge of yourself I believe will be more than your bosses expect of you, and more than your organizations expect of you, because you’ll set your highest standards for yourself.

If you think about these leadership concepts, there’s a foundation behind that that says when you drive for change, question the rules, and step outside of the box, that doesn’t mean you violate the rules or violate your own personal code of integrity. That has to be a given in everything you do. And you keep that in mind. You read too many of the management books today, which are saying make all these changes without necessarily articulating that you have to make it very, very clear that the rules are still in place, the ethics are still in place. I know that when I chat with some of the leaders in Alcoa, [I ask them] “Why didn’t you mention the

When I chat with some of the leaders in Alcoa, [I ask them] “Why didn’t you mention the foundation of integrity?” They say, “That goes without saying.”

Nope, it doesn’t. It must be said.

There’s a lot of good qualities of leaders and we can think of the best leaders we’ve worked for in our lives. We can also think of some of the worst we’ve worked for in our lives. When you work through a bad leader, they’re teaching you lessons: lessons of what not to do. Whenever you get into a position like that. So take every one of those situations you get as an opportunity to learn. I’ve gone through that exercise with a lot of the students, and I generally believe that there’s first a strong foundation for belief. It’s integrity, honesty, fairness, and treating others with dignity and respect. If you think of the people that didn’t have that
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foundation, they may have been successful, but not for long. I don’t believe it’s sustainable unless you have that strong foundation.

I think you have to act and act fast. Remember, not acting is acting. And some of my thoughts that I have: if it looks wrong, don’t do it. Let other people know the rules, let them know up front. I remember when the internet policy came out at first. We found some people that were passing bad stuff on the internet, and the then auditor of our company wanted to terminate all involved. We had not posted the speed limit and we were going to hand out speeding tickets. I thought that was absolutely wrong, and we went into a fight about that. Then we went out and put out what the rules are. Once the rules are known, then I think you can put the sanctions in place.

Be outspoken and quick when you spot an ethical violation. Don’t walk past them. Others will see you do that, especially when you are in a leadership position. By the way, when you’re a leader, you don’t need to make all the decisions. Wouldn’t it be nice to allow your employees to wrestle with some of those decisions? Let them; make them. Maybe you can carry a veto if you’re really not comfortable with it, but allow the others to make decisions. And if it’s not the one you would make, but it’s still okay, isn’t that even better? Isn’t that a learning experience? Tell the truth.

Be fair to all concerned, and walk the talk. The leaders establish the culture. Number one factor for establishing a culture in any area is, “How does the leader act?” And if you’re in doubt, you have classmates. You’re going to run into a problem. Often talking about a problem with a classmate will help you just in the talking process, but you have some other classmates that are going to help you when you run into some of these dilemmas in the future. Seek that advice.

It’s not easy. When you’re a manager of an organization, you’re expected to know everything and do everything, and it’s so hard. Appreciate that. If you’re the business union president, you’re supposed to know what’s going on at procurement. You’re supposed to be the HR director, the cheerleader for safety, the chief compliance officer of the company, and also return a profit, invest the capital the right way, be a good neighbor in the community, and that’s just the business issues. How about your family? You’ve got to take your kids to school,
and then you’ve got to entertain your spouse’s parents whenever they visit for a while, things like that. Think of all the things that that business leader has to do, and at the same time, be ethical.

It really does all fit together. You’ll find out there’s no substitute for good management. If you go to a plant and you find out the housekeeping’s good, the safety record’s good, the employees are engaged, the customers are satisfied, the quality’s high, you’re returning a profit, then you’ll find out that good, ethical managers create the right environment.

Bill O’Rourke is a Fellow at the Wheatley Institution and currently serves on the Board of the Alcoa Foundation teaching “Values” at the Alcoa Executive Development Programs. O’Rourke recently retired as the Vice President of Alcoa in September 2011. Prior to joining Alcoa, he served as an officer in the U.S. Army. O’Rourke graduated from John Carroll University and received a law degree from Duquesne University’s School of Law in Pittsburgh.

Bill is now the Executive Director of the Beard Institute in the Palumbo-Donahue School of Business at Duquesne University. He lectures on business ethics at the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs and at Universities including BYU, Duquesne, Nebraska, Notre Dame and the University of Pittsburgh. He is the current Board Chair of Sustainable Pittsburgh, and serves on a number of other civic, charitable and religious organizations.

This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture given at the Wheatley Institution’s 2011 Teaching Ethics at Universities.
I want to talk about altruism, which seems like an unrelated topic in some ways to business ethics, but the reason I want to talk about it is because I have an obligation as an ethics instructor to prepare you for the challenges in your career that you are going to face ethically. There are a lot of traps and dangers and all kinds of unexpected things and as much as we as ethics faculty try to prepare you for these things, there are always going to be unexpected dangers that we wouldn’t have contemplated. You are going to come across a dilemma where if we came back to visit we would say, “Wow, that was really hard.” So what I am going to talk about is the absolute best defense you could develop to make sure you can make ethical choices. That is the goal. I am giving you what I think is the best resource you could have to make ethical choices in your career and in your lives: the concept of altruism.

There are positive side-effects to giving. Arthur Brooks wrote a book called *Who Really Cares*. In his research he found that charitable giving makes you
[happy]. He doesn’t prove the causative relationship here, but he makes pretty good arguments as to why he thinks it is a causative relationship. So I am going with him. Charitable giving makes you happier, 43% more likely to be very happy.\textsuperscript{i} Charitable giving makes you healthier, 25% more likely to have good to excellent health.\textsuperscript{ii} This is a cool and kind of crazy assertion. Charitable giving makes people wealthier, which is counterintuitive because you are actually writing checks out of your bank account and not receiving them into your bank account. He says it makes people on average $14,000/year wealthier.\textsuperscript{iii} In fact, he estimates that every dollar in charitable giving creates a financial return of $4.35 to the giver.\textsuperscript{iv}

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**Students sometimes equate self-interest with selfishness and they are not equivalent**

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Now I won’t get into the statistical tools he used, but he makes a grander argument. It basically goes along these lines: we trust charitable people more than less generous people and if you are trustworthy, you are going to get job promotions and business opportunities and there are all kinds of ways where you cast that bread upon the water and it comes back to you in a real, practical way. There are real ways that you can see that happen. In fact, there was a study done in the UK where they had people engage in what is called a “dictator game.”\textsuperscript{v} You give them a bunch of money and you say, “Hey, do you want to donate any of it?” They made their donations known to the group and then they had the group engage in a group activity like a puzzle solving problem. The puzzle required them to choose a leader, and it was more likely than not that the most

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\textsuperscript{ii} Ibid
\textsuperscript{iii} Ibid, p. 145
\textsuperscript{iv} Ibid, p. 147
generous person in the group was the one chosen to be the leader. It is just how that generally works.

I think the problem we have is students sometimes equate self-interest with selfishness and they are not equivalent. Let me just describe to you how I think they are not equivalent. Most of us, when we think of self, we think of our immediate selves, Me. So we draw a very narrow circle around what it is that is me. The reality is that is not how we define ourselves in practice. We might pause and think about it that way philosophically, but when we think about it in practice, the way we define ourselves is more expansive than just our immediate selves.

If I was asked to talk about myself, I would tell you a few things. One of the things that I would say is that I teach. Why is it that I can call myself a teacher? There are students for me to teach. I am a father. What makes me a father? My kids. I am a husband. What makes me a husband? My wife. If those magically disappear, I am less of a person in an actual way. I am less of a person. I can’t call myself a father anymore without that. I can’t call myself a friend if I don’t have friends, or a neighbor if I don’t have neighbors. I define myself by these other people. In a sense, I am encapsulating them in my definition of self. So for me to help them in a way that is self-interested, it feels like I am helping myself right?

An analogy I like to use from Mormon culture is everybody my age has a responsibility of helping people move. That is just how it works. Within the congregation, all the able bodied men have this responsibility to help people move, to pack and unpack moving trucks. Here is the thing. I moved a lot as a kid. I added it up and I lived in 15 different houses for various reasons. My dad was in commercial real estate and it took him around a lot and all that. Anyway, I grew to hate moving and I still don’t love it, but I do it. I would do it for myself and what I learned is that I don’t have to like moving, I don’t have to love it. I just have to love the person I am helping move in the way a good neighbor would, in the way a good friend would. I do it because I love the person. That was an important realization for me.

Historically, there are people who took their definition of self and made it incredibly expansive where they defined their version of self to include all kinds of people beyond their friends and family. Mahatma Gandhi wrote an
autobiography, and in it he says that the success and happiness and sorrow and suffering of others were his and he basically bound his fate up with the people around him.\textsuperscript{vi} He drew his circle very expansively. We could say the same for Martin Luther King Jr. and all those who fought for civil rights for this country. They essentially drew their definition of self to be so expansive that doing that for others felt the same as doing it for themselves. When you think about the golden rule, do unto others as you would have others do unto you, it is the exact same idea. This idea of drawing others into your definition of self and being expansive in the way you define yourself and tying yourself to other people. If we do that, then self-interest is a lot less problematic. I am just as keen to maximize a friend’s utility as my own and that would explain why I sacrificed value for that person.

Joseph Smith said this, and I love the way he phrased it: “Love is one of the chief characteristics of Deity, and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons”—and I would add the daughters—“of God. A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race.”\textsuperscript{vii} I think that is the way we as people ought to be defining our self. We ought to be more expansive and inclusive.

Karen Armstrong is a religious historian. She wrote this thing called A Charter for Compassion to produce more compassion. She won a TED prize in 2008. She said this:

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the center or our world and put another there, and to honor the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.\textsuperscript{viii}

\textsuperscript{vi} Mahatma Gandhi, Gandhi: An Autobiography (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).
I am going to move this into the Christian concept of charity. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul makes a really interesting, but seemingly non-sequitur observation. First Corinthians 13 is a discussion of charity. In verses 1-8, his discussion about charity ends this way, “Charity never faileth, but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.” There are all these sort of spiritual manifestations of faith. All those eventually go away because they are not needed anymore is what he seems to say. Then here comes the non-sequitur of the discussion. He says, “We know in part and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” Perfect here means whole or complete. So we have these partial manifestations of things and then we will have the whole thing that is somehow better and we won’t need the partial thing anymore.

Within every religious belief, every spiritual belief is this fundamental concept that the ability for compassion, the ability for loving others is the fullest and complete manifestation of us as people.

Then he changes topics again. He says, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” He is describing something immature versus something mature and comparing them. So we have the part and the whole. We have the immature versus the mature. Then in verse 11 he says, “Now we see through a glass darkly, then face to face.” Now, there is discussion about whether or not it is supposed to be a mirror and that he means glass is a mirror or glass is a window, but the basic point is you are seeing a foggy window or a foggy mirror and he is comparing that to seeing something face to face. Again, it’s kind of a non-sequitur, but you catch the theme, right? He is saying, “Here is the part, here is the whole. You want
the whole instead. Here is the immature version, here is the mature version; you want the mature version instead. Here is the blurry encounter versus the face to face encounter. You want the face to face encounter instead.” Again, this seems very non-sequitur relative to this discussion he is having about charity, but then he comes back and he says, “Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity.” Within every religious belief, every spiritual belief, is this fundamental concept that the ability for compassion, the ability for loving others, is the fullest and complete manifestation of us as people. For Christians, it is the way we become most Christ-like.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, who was a leader in the LDS church, said this, “At the final day the Savior will not ask about the nature of our callings. He will not inquire about our material possessions or fame. He will ask if we ministered to the sick, gave food and drink to the hungry, visited those in prison, or gave succor to the weak.”ix In that same address he said that, “Love is the greatest of all the commandments—all others hang upon it. It is our focus as followers of the living Christ. It is the one trait that, if developed, will most improve our lives.”x Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said something similar. He said, “I believe we have all been created for greater things than we can comprehend. But such accomplishments are not achieved by fierce competitiveness, calculated one-upmanship, or cold indifference to others. True greatness will always be predicated upon love, respect, compassion, dignity, prayer, hard work and God.”xi

If you are really anxious about always being able to make the ethical choice, if you are really nervous about having the wisdom, especially having it in a moment of intense difficulty or conflict and not knowing what to do—if you cultivate an altruistic nature, if you cultivate charity, I am convinced it will be your greatest defense in ethical dilemmas. I am convinced it will guide you; it will be your shining light. It will be this thing to always follow and pay attention to. It will make you more thoughtful about other people, more sensitive to them and their situations and circumstances. It will help you appreciate the other side of every

x  Ibid
issue; it will instruct you and guide you and help you make better choices and, most importantly, it will help you make more ethical choices.

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