Applying Lonergan’s Method
(Part 2)

BE REASONABLE

1. Hone critical thinking skills
2. Apply ethical principles and values
3. Overlay moral content

BE RESPONSIBLE

1. Correct for bias
2. Attend to common good
3. Choose to act
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost

Chapter 5
Strategies for Decision Making

During the past twenty years, the popular culture has spawned a movement known as the human potential movement. Replete with self-help books and seminars, the promise has been that as we learn to take responsibility for ourselves and the way that we live in this world, we can gain control over our lives and find meaning and happiness. Many have speculated about the reason for this surge of interest in pop psychology, however, whatever the cause, many have spend thousands of dollars to learn more about themselves and how they can be effective at work and at play.

Bernard Lonergan describes this drive to understand ourselves and our world as the core desire of all humans, the “detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know.” Lonergan asserts that this characteristic of people drives us not only to understand the physical world but also to seek the good, the
good for ourselves and other people as well as the good of our institutions such as the economy and the family.

The desire to know manifests first as relentless questioning. As we gather information about the world, we ask more questions. One set of questions is about the material world itself. How do markets work? What processes will help me make my product and services better? How can I develop a product which will solve a particular problem? Another set of questions concerns what Lonergan calls the spiritual, those questions which ask about the ordering of values in our community.

The gift and curse of being human is the ability to choose freely how to live. Part of questioning includes inquiry about the probable outcomes of our choices, our motives and the values which will be upheld. Theologians and philosophers call this ability to choose the gift of free-will. Thus, we can ask questions, contemplate results, and still choose to either do that which will create greater good or that which will not. Because developing rational self-consciousness is an ongoing process, we have the opportunity over and over again to choose to act in light of our best understanding of the world and consequences or to choose to act in a way that actually causes harm to ourselves, others and the environment.

Psychologists call embracing the privilege and responsibility of choosing how to live self-efficacy. Albert Bandera defines self-efficacy as “a judgment of one’s ability to organize and execute given types of performances.” Bandera distinguishes between “perceived self-efficacy,” where we believe that we can produce certain outcomes and “locus of control,” whether we believe that our actions will affect the outcomes. Bandera’s research further demonstrates that those who have a strong belief in their own self-efficacy will be more motivated and proactive in the choices that they make about life than those who do not believe that they are effective. People who have high self-efficacy and high outcome expectancies will tend to be productive and satisfied with their lives. Those with high self-efficacy and low outcome expectancies will protest and engage in social activism. However, those who have low-self efficacy will be despondent, if they think they have some power over their circumstances, or resigned if they feel powerless. Bandera’s research also shows that the more accurate our self-assessments and our assessment of the world around us, the more likely we are to have
a high self-efficacy. As we combine Lonergan’s method of learning about ourselves and our community with our knowledge and experience of the business world we will become more effective ethical agents and also be able to find meaning and satisfaction in our work. By asking questions, making sure we continually look for data that doesn’t match our expectations in the world around us while we subject our own motives and desires to the same grilling, we will increase our self-efficacy, our ability to believe that we have control over our lives and our work. Ironically, as our self-efficacy increases we also increase the actual control we have over what we believe about ourselves and others and what happens in our professional and personal life.

William Greider asserts that most of us find our work situations create apathy and cynicism rather than the meaning that we all crave, thus many of us have low self-efficacy when it comes to our professional lives. Whether we are on the floor of a manufacturing plant where we have power over a little tiny part of the process or we are part of a system where we don’t know who we are serving and thus are not connected to our customers, even in a time of great surplus we have managed to have little control over our economic lives. In our relentless quest for efficiency and wealth we have replicated a feudal economic system where the power is actually in the hands of a few and most of us believe that we are powerless to affect either our personal work situation or the firms which employ us.

The conversation about how to be an ethical person in business presumes that we believe that what we do makes a difference. If we believe that we have no control over the people or the systems in which we find ourselves, we stop questioning and resign ourselves to the little tiny piece of our world. Much like the government workers in Nazi Germany who only took responsibility for their tasks, we seldom ask what our actions do to help or hinder the greater good. The way that officials in Nazi Germany managed to get good people to buy into the horrors of the holocaust was by asking them only to do their small, bureaucratic part. Thus, when members of the Jewish community were sent to the concentration camps, all of the bills of lading (a legal document which lets people know what cargo is being shipped) were properly filled out, the fees for transporting “goods” were paid, and no-one asked what impact those small bureaucratic acts had on the fabric of the community and the lives of millions.

Over and over again in the lives of American business good people find
themselves part of a system which does not create good for many people. While we may not think that the evil we create is on the scale of the holocaust, when we actually look at the wealth that has been lost through unethical practices causing the collapse of major American corporations or the lives disrupted through employment practices, we have to place the responsibility somewhere. An unexpected consequence of the self-help movement may be that people will have the tools as well as the desire to no longer unknowingly participate in systems which deaden their souls and lead to the destruction of the fabric of our community. As we learn to be as responsible and choose to be as proactive at work as we are in our personal lives, the shape of business can be transformed.

After being attentive in identifying the problem and intelligent in exploring options, the next phase of the decision making process shows us how to be reasonable in solving the dilemmas and then responsible in our decisions. By focusing on the perennial questions, we learn to see that which we otherwise would ignore. By subjecting difficult questions to multiple ethical frameworks, we can get a much more complete picture of not only the problems but the strength and weaknesses of potential options for acting. The last phase of the decision making process also reminds us that we must act, and that not acting is in fact an act.

As we decide to move our focus from narrowly considering only our own well being to the wider look at those around us and finally to systems, the institutions which provide the structure for our lives, we also may become ethically mature and wise. Often these choices involve taking the road less traveled, the road that asks us to give to others out of our abundance, cheerfully subordinating personal interest to support the common good. Many who have taken the other road find, as in the words of Robert Frost, that it has made all the difference.

**STEP 3 BE REASONABLE: EVALUATE THE OPTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Be Reasonable:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Hone critical thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Apply ethical content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Overlay moral content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethics and morality are not just about determining the “right” course of action but also about choosing the best course of action and persuading others that the
action is right. Each of us must determine for ourselves how best to live, which exchange happens in our own community, with our friends and co-workers. We are shaped by our own dreams as well as the community’s expectations of us as others either embrace or critique our world-view. The dialogue forms us and our community as we listen and strive to understand each other.

As we intentionally engage in conversations about the balance between autonomy, doing what we believe is best, and equality, assuring that everyone else gets the same options, the boundaries between appropriate self care and selfishness are provisionally set. Many vigorous exchanges explore when our individual prerogatives need to be curtailed in favor of the company’s financial well-being, or security. These dialogues determine both the content of what is ethical and its application in specific situations.

After exploring the context and determining the options for action, we evaluate the options. Even though an ethical decision is ultimately subjective, we want to be as objective as possible: we want to reach controlled subjectivity. Being a responsible ethical agent requires three intersecting bodies of knowledge. First, what are the analytical rules which will give the best result. Second, what is the ethical content which provides the basis of the decision. Third, what are the moral considerations which provide an essential filter. These steps help us fairly evaluate the options and determine the ethical and moral criteria by which we to judge the “rightness” of a course of action.

A. **Hone critical thinking skills:**

As we begin to identify values in conflict and work toward a resolution, a host of skills are available which assist us in the process. After we experience the situation and become aware of the problem and our own response, the next step becomes to understand and judge the situation and come up with the best response possible. The disciplines of philosophy and law have specific tools which help in both framing and analyzing problems. Time tested tools of critical thinking can help us hone our analytical skills. Manuel Velasquez in his text *Business Ethics: Concepts and Cases, 5th ed.* summarizes the skills necessary for ethical decision making. Meticulously attending to these rules helps us find the best possible answer.\(^7\)
1. The logic of the argument needs to be rigorously examined; all of the unspoken moral and factual assumptions in the claims need to be displayed and critiqued.

Each section of an author’s outline will contain an assertion which supports the primary thesis. Sometimes the author has made an assumption in the writing which is veiled. In economics the underlying assumption might be that capitalism or socialism is the preferred system. In theology the assumption might be that Christianity is superior to all other world religions. Both of the above assumptions and assertions are contested, meaning that people do disagree with them. Be sensitive to the assumptions, both individual and cultural, behind the assertions as you work the problem. The assertions that we make might lose their appeal if others find the underlying assumptions are flawed.

Many times we mask flawed assumptions by failing to clarify ambiguity in the problem. The most common problem with ambiguity is difference in definition. Many times we avoid clarifying definitions because we don’t want conflict. However, as all of communication depends on assuring that people receive the same message, if we want to resolve the problem, identifying the similarities and differences in definition is critical.

We can clearly see an example of this process by examining the conversation of a group exploring the morality of abortion. If one person in the group assumes that a fetus is a human being (or even potential human being) upon the first division of cells, the preferred ethical act (and underlying analysis) will be very different than if the person assumes that a fetus does not become a human being until some later point in the maturation process.
However, very few people engage in this difficult issue by listening to each other carefully enough to identify the underlying core assumptions about what makes us human. Often as we identify differences in assumptions, the resolution of the problem becomes more clear. Sometimes clarity means that we respectfully disagree on the core definitions. As we return to our studies to get better information, we note that which doesn’t fit, informed by the beliefs and experiences of those with whom we have talked.

2. *The factual information cited in support of a person’s judgment must be accurate, relevant, and complete.*

Doing complete research to test our facts is time consuming; we usually prefer to go with our biases or with data that seems to support our ideas. Whether we are looking at data about salaries, job mobility, discrimination in the workforce, or a myriad of other topics, we need to carefully check the sources of the data and ask how it was compiled. We also need to be careful about our own use of data as we move forward with our closely held opinions. Carefully looking to see if our cherished notions can be supported rather than putting a spin on data to support our preferred vision of the world requires intellectual maturity.

Each author will use many different sources of evidence to support his assertions. The following are sources which are traditionally used to establish credibility.

- *Statistics:* Many authors use numbers to support their ideas. As we look at statistics, we must be aware of the underlying data sets and the questions which were asked in sorting the results. Some statistics are descriptive and tell us “what is,” such as census data. Other statistics are predictive and tell us what is forecasted, such as what the economy will do in the upcoming months. The difference between the two approaches radically affects decision making.

- *Other authorities:* Other authors or works can be used to support the ideas of the author. Two questions are important. First we ascertain the expertise of the author. Next we asks whether the author is speaking in his or her area of expertise or whether the writing is really just opinion.
Anecdotes: The author gives examples of their point. People often will use a “poster child” for an argument, which often depicts the worst possible case of the point being made. This “poster child” may represent a small percentage of those in a particular category, the statistical outlier rather than one whose case falls within an or expected range of results. We need to notice and avoid false generalizations.

Author’s expertise: Sometimes an author will rely on the persuasiveness of the argument and/or the author’s own reputation as an authority in the field as evidence for the arguments. Careful evaluation requires that we identify the credentials, assumptions and commitments of the author.

As each of us evaluates the premises which support a claim, we judge it as credible or not credible. As we evaluate the evidence, we determine whether we tend to believe it as presented or whether we are skeptical and want further proof before we buy the argument. One professor calls this process “being careful whose voices I allow to get into my head.” The evaluation and belief continuum might look like this:

Very skeptical - Skeptical - Neutral - Accepting - Very accepting

False - Not credible - Neutral - Credible - True

Some of us will accept information without challenge if our own knowledge is sparse. Others want to have multiple sources of verification. Some of us have favorite authorities – we always trust the writing of certain authors while distrusting others. Some of us have favorite viewpoints – we always trust someone who basically agrees with them while distrusting someone who disagrees. We are neutral if the evidence has no impact on us at all.

Through the process of careful evaluation, we begin identifying our own strengths and weaknesses in a subject area as well as our own inclinations. As each of us learns how we evaluate evidence, we can begin to see where we are gullible and/or hypercritical. Through evaluation we also can learn how to better structure our own writing and thinking in order to be clear and persuasive.
3. **The ethical and moral standards involved in our reasoning must be internally consistent as well as consistent over time.**

The hardest task of ethical decision making is to be consistent in applying the principles and values which form our belief system and rationale for action. For example, a student wrote a set of papers evaluating whether non-documented workers should receive free health care. She was adamant that every human being is entitled to health care, regardless of ability to pay and regardless of citizenship and thus kept getting low scores because her position didn’t seem tenable. Finally the teacher told her that he would revise her grade if she assured him that any homeless person who showed up at her doorstep would be welcome no matter how long she wanted to stay or what kind of resources she might need. The student had a shocked look on her face as she told her prof, “I can’t afford that.” The professor then rejoined that maybe the United States couldn’t afford to pay for health care for everyone in the world. The issue of access to health care wasn’t resolved. However, she became clear that her reasoning would not be considered consistent while she advocated one set of behavior for the “government” without being willing to embrace that behavior herself.

Whether we are evaluating someone else’s work or constructing an argument, the quality of our ethical analysis depends on the rigor with which we use our analytical tools. As we become more skilled in critical thinking, we become more effective participants in the business world as well as more persuasive as leaders.

**B. Reasonably evaluating core ethical principles and values:**

Once our critical thinking skills are polished, we are ready to evaluate the problem against our core principles and values. One definition of ethics is disciplining the mind, using the tools of reason, to determine the rules of life. Using reason, we apply ethical principles and criteria to a problem helps us choose the most ethical act.

Over the course of history, ethicists have tried to determine whether we have a set of principles from which we live (deontology) or whether the goals of
our lives determine our choices (teleology). The two approaches to ethics have been in conversation for thousands of years with no resolution in sight. The theories will be explained more fully in Part 2, illustrating that those who engage in the field of applied ethics – taking abstract principles and goals and applying them to concrete situations – find that the criteria of either tradition can give a good result.

Each of us has a preferred tradition, our favorite framework, which we use when making decisions. You will recognize that template because the process will feel intuitive and be easy. The frame you least prefer will be the one with which you struggle; you will not believe that anyone could possibly use that tradition for making decisions. In particularly difficult situations, we should use the tools of the other traditions, so that we can check ourselves for bias or blind spots. Further, as we become skilled in the language of both traditions, we are able to speak with those whose primary tradition is not our own and avoid confusion while moving toward agreement or consensus.

To become skilled in decision making, we can practice evaluating ethical problems using all four lenses. Two of the frameworks come from the duty based – deontological – tradition. The first is the individual/reflective frame which focuses on the question ‘what should I do’ and whose representative theorist is Immanuel Kant. The second is the community/action frame which asks the question ‘how do I fit into the community’ and whose representative theorist is John Rawls. If used in tandem, these approaches are self-correcting as we balance individual rights and responsibilities against the community’s claim for justice and fairness.

Two of the frameworks come from the goal based – teleological – tradition. The first, the community/action frame, asks the question ‘what do I want’ and is represented by John Stuart Mill. The second, the community/reflective frame, asks the question ‘who am I’ and is represented by Alasdair MacIntyre. Again, if used in tandem, these approaches are self-correcting as we learn to balance individual goals against the virtues we embody and our reputation, how we are seen and judged by the community.

Another easy way to remember the theorists is to think of four “R’s.” The individual/reflective lens focuses on the rights and responsibilities of individuals, thus is called Rights Focused Ethics. The individual/action lens focuses on the appropriate action, one that brings happiness, and thus is
called *Results Focused Ethics*. The community/action lens focuses on the larger community and justice, thus it is called *Relationship Focused Ethics*. The final framework, the community/reflective lens, focuses on our name and standing in the community, and thus is called the *Reputation Focused Ethics*.

The difficulty in any problem is clearly articulating what principles or goals are in conflict and then determining which should be given priority in any given situation. Our ideas about the proper balance among the elements of the four core values will determine what we finally decide is the appropriate ethical action given a particular problem – controlled subjectivity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four Core Ethics Templates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reputation Ethics (MacIntyre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Ethics (Rawls)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights/Responsibility Ethics (Kant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results Ethics (Mill)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**C. Reasonably applying moral principles and values:**

As stated earlier, while ethics focuses on principles and rules, morality looks at emotion and the role of empathy to provide essential information about how best to act in community. Three threads connect those who write about morality. The first is *method*. While we can know the right thing to do, the way in which we carry out the ethical act is as important as the act itself. Thus, we can fire a person, terminate their employment, in a way that respects the other and preserves the relationship. The second thread is *responsibility*. All theorists who study how we behave in a complex world assert that ethics is a matter of the head and morality is a matter of the heart – and both must be responsibly used for us to be an effective ethical agent. The third thread is *imagination*. As we cannot find the answers to how best to live through science, we must use our imaginations to envision a world which best balances the perennial tensions. Then we can work toward our imagined utopia, knowing that we may never reach it but we can get ever closer.

For these authors, self-awareness and self-management are key to being moral. Self-awareness includes being sensitive to our weak points, blind
spots, or proclivities for deception. Self-management involves characteristics such as emotional self-control, transparency and adaptability. The assertion is that the more we develop these skills the more effective we are as leaders, whatever our positions may be in an organization. Thus as we consider how to be moral, we discipline our emotions through empathy to nourish relationships. An ethically mature person will use both the rational considerations as well as the emotional implications for the key relationships before adopting any course of action.

**STEP 4 BE RESPONSIBLE: ACT WITH COURAGE**

Having completed the first three steps, being attentive, intelligent and responsible, we are ready for the final step, being responsible. To act responsibly, we must have two final filters before we take action. First we need to be aware of our own personal bias, the way in which we engage the problem and what we bring to the table in terms of skills and expectations. Second, because the stakes are so high for any action given our technological prowess, our ability to profoundly affect the quality of the environment and community, we need to attend to the common good. As stated before, each of us is a person in community, so the crux of being ethical is balancing the rights and responsibilities of the individual against the claims and prerogatives of the community.

### A. Responsibly correcting for bias by becoming ethically mature:

Many assert that all we need to know about ethics we learned in kindergarten – thus, trying to teach any of us to make better ethical decisions is foolhardy. However, current research indicates that we can all grow in ethical, moral, and spiritual maturity. In the final analysis, we evidence maturity by responsibly evaluating courses of action, making choices and carrying out our decisions.

As various researchers have mapped the path of human development, different stages have been named and categorized. While the details differ, the writers agree that as we embrace habits of growth, we have the potential...
to grow and develop into fully functioning, responsible, adult humans. The theorists also agree that our maturity can be determined by listening carefully to the meaning that is given to the events of our lives and the choices that we make. As we become ethically mature, we notice that both people and the community are multifaceted and complex. Thus, while the decisions that are made may be the same for people at different ethical levels, the reasons given will be very different.

1. Ethical maturity through the four lenses

The goal of life is to become a fully functioning adult, living responsibly while nurturing and being nurtured by the larger community. Researchers who study the criteria which mark adults, they have identified benchmarks and defined the stages of ethical maturity. Intriguingly, a theoretical school of thought parallels the key lesson of each of the four ethical lenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maturity in the Four Lenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attend to wholeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leibert)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend to proper use of reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kohlberg)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we use the conceptual tools of the lens, we can also use criteria of maturity to move from acting only to protect ourselves to considering a wider view of the community as well as look toward systemic solutions to the problems. The research about why people in business do unethical things indicates that often individuals have high ethical standards but find that the system either encourages or rewards unethical behavior.\(^9\) If a person is rewarded for padding sales, the personal value of transparency in recording sales may lose out in the question about whether to be squeaky clean in recording transactions. Thus, personal values may be subordinated to company values, resulting in unethical behavior.

- **Rights focused ethics: learning to use reason effectively.**

The theorist who studied our ability to effectively use reason is Lawrence Kohlberg.\(^11\) The most often cited theorist in ethics textbooks, Kohlberg’s
research focuses on identifying the strategies we use for ethical decisions. He identified the stages of maturity which enhance our ability to find the principles of life through ever more sophisticated reasoning ability and careful use of the universal ethical principles.

- **Results focused ethics: striving to nourish relationships.**

  Morality uses the tools of empathy to build relationships. A careful theorist in this arena is Norma Haan who charts the motivations and choices of those for whom maintaining relationships is key.\(^\text{12}\) Haan asserts that as we focus on relationships that strengthen the reciprocity between the individual and the community we can be effective actors in the community.

- **Relationship focused ethics: assuring a proper use of power.**

  As we look at both doing the ethical act (ethics) and becoming an ethical person (morality), we use personal power. When the conversation turns to what acts are not only ethical but just, the way that people use their personal and organizational power is important. Janet Hagberg traces the steps of personal power which parallel the steps of ethical and moral maturity and gives us insight in our own use of power as we seek justice and fundamental fairness.\(^\text{13}\)

- **Reputation focused lens: attending to wholeness.**

  Spirituality is a term which has many different meanings. Elizabeth Liebert who traces the development of persons in terms of spiritual development, defines spirituality as that which drives us to wholeness. Her approach to wholeness includes the notion of a “pacer,” one who models ethical behavior and thus encourages others toward maturity.\(^\text{14}\)

Contemporary examples include Martin Luther King, Jr. who challenged the United States to fully live out the ideals present in the Declaration of Independence that all persons have a right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness as well as Mother Theresa who modeled selfless care for the least advantaged members of a community. As we consider the virtues which we wish to embody and think about how we want to be known in the world, we attend to ourselves as whole, not partitioned into work, family and friends. A mark of maturity is the ability to exhibit the same personality and

Chapter 5 Pg. 144
characteristics in all settings, thus the reputation lens encourages us to know all of our self, both the public side and the private, shadow side.

2. Benchmarking ethical maturity

Given the above definitions, the answers given in the simulation will be evaluated against the developmental stages mapped by Jane Loevenger who harmonized many of the traditions.\(^5\) We will begin with the stage of most high school students and that of most college freshmen when they enter the university – the pre-conformist stage and move through the highest stage to which most adults in our culture ascend.

- **Characteristics of the Pre-Conformist Stage:**

The pre-conformist stage is marked by allegiance to our peer group. At this stage, we are just beginning to differentiate between ourselves and others. A key task of young adults is to evaluate the belief systems – the world view – of their family and friends and then decide for themselves which pieces of that system to either reaffirm or reject. Clearly, moving through this stage can be disquieting both for teens and their parents.

   - **Attending to Reason:** Kohlberg finds that people at this stage find that the right action is literal obedience to rules and authority. People want to avoid punishment and not do physical harm to others.

   - **Attending to Relationships:** Haan finds that people at this level of maturity will interpret experiences to validate their own self-interests. In terms of action, people will vacillate between compliance and thwarting, believing that others force them and they, can force others to their will.

   - **Attending to Power:** Hagberg finds that people in this stage get their power from powerlessness, as they get others to take care of them. These people are dependent with low self-esteem. They are uninformed, helpless but not hopeless.

   - **Attending to Wholeness:** Liebert finds that people in this stage are impulsive with a fear of retaliation and exploitative.
Trajectory for change: As people begin to develop self-esteem and manage their fear of change and the world in general, they are ready to move to the conformist stage.

Characteristics of the Conformist Stage

We enter the conformist stage when we accept personal responsibility for our own actions. However, the responsibility will be still be grounded in and affirmed by an external authority and will be supported by the approval of our significant others.

- **Attending to Reason**: Kohlberg finds that people at this stage find that the right action is serving their own or other’s needs and making fair deals in terms of concrete exchange.

- **Attending to Relationships**: Haan finds that people at this level of maturity will accommodate the interests of others when forced. They will trade to get what they want while they recognize that sometimes others must get what they want. The basic orientation is that others get what they want and individuals get what they deserve.

- **Attending to Power**: Hagberg finds that people in this stage get their personal power by association. They find another person and “learn the ropes” as they figure out the culture. They are dependent on the leader or mentor as they begin to experience a new self-awareness.

- **Attending to Wholeness**: Liebert finds that people in this stage have a fear of being caught and externalize blame. They are wary, manipulative, and exploitative.

- Trajectory for change: As we begin to develop confidence, we can move beyond worrying about the approval of others and the need for security and begin to develop our own ethical compass. We begin taking responsibility for our self and move into the conscientious-conformist stage.

Characteristics of the Conscientious-Conformist Stage
According to all of our theorists, this is the stage of most adults. As we begin to take responsibility for ourselves, we realize that because of unthinking adherence to an inherited worldview we have abdicated personal responsibility. Thus, we will begin to consider the source of our beliefs and form our own ideas about what is or is not ethical. However, even with attending to our own beliefs, most of us will adopt the community norms and not seriously challenge the status-quo.

- **Attending to Reason:** Kohlberg finds that people at this stage believe that the right action is playing a good (nice) role, being concerned about other people and their feelings. Keeping loyalty and trust with others is key. People follow the rules but don’t consider the “system” perspective.

- **Attending to Relationships:** Haan finds that people at this level of maturity will assimilate their self-interest to others’ interest as common interest. The emphasis is on exchanges based on sustaining good faith. People will compromise to include “good” other persons and reject “bad” other persons. Thus, a person at this stage of development will try to be good so they deserve to receive good from others.

- **Attending to Power:** Hagberg finds that people in this stage get their personal power by the symbols in their lives, such as degrees, cars, money, or position. People at this level are egocentric, realistic and competitive. As experts, they are ambitious and charismatic.

- **Attending to Wholeness:** Liebert finds that people in this stage conform to external rules. They will feel shame or guilt for breaking the rules. As they mature, they will differentiate norms and goals that are imposed by the community and those that are self-imposed. These people are aware of themselves as “persons in community” and want to belong.

- **Trajectory for change:** The crisis for most people at this stage is one of personal integrity. Most people in America operate at this stage because they don’t know they are stuck. At some point they have a personal or professional crisis which leads them to restructure their life according to their own understanding of the world and move to
the conscientious stage.

- **Characteristics of the Conscientious Stage**

The crises which propels us into the conscientious stage are never fun. Often we are abandoned by the very family and friends whom we expected to provide validation for our worldview. At this point we begin to take responsibility for ourselves and our world rather than have unbending commitment to our previously considered principles. A persistent question (which is unsettling) is whether we are just being rebellious in making our own way or in fact we have moved to a higher level of maturity by taking a more systemic approach to the problem, even if it means going against the norms of the community. Finding a mentor at this point can help us sort through that question.

- **Attending to Reason:** Kohlberg finds that people at this stage find that the right action is doing their duty in society, upholding the social order, and maintaining the welfare of the society. Persons at this stage consider their individual relationships in terms of their own place in the system.

- **Attending to Relationships:** Haan finds that people at this level of maturity will accommodate their self-interest to common interests. People will attend to a systematized, structure exchange based on the understanding that all persons can fall from grace. The balances are conscious compromises where a person commits himself to the common structured exchange and believes that he should have the same considerations and privileges as others.

- **Attending to Power:** Hagberg finds that people in this stage get their power from reflection and are competent, reflective, and strong. They are comfortable with their personal style, are skilled at mentoring and show true leadership.

- **Attending to Wholeness:** Liebert finds that people in this stage live by self-evaluated standards and monitor their own behavior by self-criticism and measuring action against long term goals and ideals. People respect the community and are concerned about maintaining the community, justice and care for others.
Trajectory for change: As people begin to mellow and learn to let go of one’s own ego, they become ready to make the final move to the compassionate inter-individual stage.

Characteristics of the Compassionate Inter-Individual Stage

Driven to find purpose to our life, when we move to this stage we become willing to expand our belief systems beyond ourselves to find ultimate meaning. We are willing to embrace the world view of others and see that the world is gloriously pluralistic in outlook and opportunities. When we reach this stage we will still have intense commitments, but the actions we take to support those commitments will be more realistic and more tempered. We become more gentle with ourselves and with others as we accept inner conflict and the complexity of reality.

Attending to Reason: Kohlberg finds that people at this stage find that the right action is upholding the basic rights, values and legal contracts of a society, even when they conflict with the concrete rules and laws of the group.

Attending to Relationship: Haan finds that people at this level of maturity will assimilate their self-interests with others’ mutual interests to achieve personally and situationally specific balances. The belief is that one is a moral agent among other moral agents. Thus, people are responsible to themselves, others, and to the mutual interests. People realize that every person is part of each other’s existence.

Attending to Power: Hagberg finds that people in this stage get their power from their purpose in life. People accept themselves and are calm and humble. As visionaries, they are confident of their life purpose and generously empower other people.

Attending to Wholeness: Liebert finds that people in this stage are tolerant and able to cope with conflicting inner needs. They respect autonomy and interdependence.

Trajectory for change: Most theorists who look at personal development assert that one more level of development is possible. However,
none are able to find examples of this next stage except perhaps the very greatest of moral leaders such as Jesus the Christ, Mohammad and the Buddha. Thus the final stage is called the cosmic stage.

As we mature and begin to make sense of the world around us, we move through the various stages of ethical maturity. The theorists seem to agree that to move from the conscientious-conformist stage requires great intentionality because the Western culture hands out most of the rewards to people at that stage. We also must remember that rather than predictably moving lockstep through the stages, when we are threatened, frightened or confused, we may operate at a lower stage of ethical maturity. Because we have free will, we can either choose to make decisions at our highest level of ethical maturity or a lower stage to protect our self or others.

B. Attending to the common good

Mid-twentieth century, two images seared the consciousness of the Western World. The first was the mushroom cloud which filled the sky after the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima. That image starkly underscored the realization that we could destroy our earth. The second image was captured by the astronauts in outer space, a luminous blue globe, our earth, with land, clouds and water – but nary a national border or delineation. Leonard Shlain in The Alphabet and the Goddess: The Conflict Between Word and Image asserts that those images changed the trajectory of human existence.\(^\text{16}\) For the first time our actions were not local and restricted in time. The actions of any one of us could have implications for generations, consequences that we could not foresee. As the full impact of the technological revolution was felt in the last half of the century, many from all disciplines and walks of life began to question whether the commitment that the Western community has to individualism could in fact result in a sustainable economy or community.

Voices from every discipline – including economics, philosophy, theology, sociology, and ecology – asked whether we need to expand our horizons to ask what impact individual action has on the community good. The move towards considering the whole community, not just individuals, is gaining ever more acceptance in our community. As Hans Jonas reminds us, we cannot look only to our own desires and preferences, because our acts have the potential of affecting people and generations far removed from us.\(^\text{17}\)
The most insistent examples of our interconnectedness are the global economy and the environmental movement. First, as goods and jobs move seamlessly across the globe, we are called to pay attention to economic and social conditions in second and third world countries. Second, all of us are affected by issues such as global warming, scarce water, and air pollution. Traditional ethical notions of the firm attending only to its own bottom line will not meet the firm’s responsibility to the larger community.

Attending to the common good falls broadly under the rubric Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Proponents of CSR offer new criteria for determining the ethical behavior of a company, such as attending to the “triple bottom line” framework which measures and reports “corporate performance against economic, social and environmental parameters.” A telling feature of the value of socially-aware companies is that during the recent economic downturn, those companies which were identified as socially conscious kept their value much better than those which were not identified as being concerned with the common good.

Theorists predict that in the very near future, companies will not be judged only on how much profit they returned to their stockholders, but they will be expected to assure that the interests of all stakeholders are considered in their choices. We are each asked then to give from our abundance, to notice that we have resources and personal power. As we give of ourselves we can work to assure that others without resources and power can themselves become fully functioning adults in a safe and clean world.

C. Acting with courage.

No one ever has enough information. No one ever knows all the ramifications of action. Yet, each of us must make choices. Acting with courage requires being as thoughtful as possible in evaluating the situation and then acting, knowing that more information will come forward and the results will be imperfect. As stated before, choosing not to act is acting. Thus, each of us is called upon to make the best decision that we can in the situation at hand, knowing that we are fallible human beings operating in an ever changing world.

STEP 1 RETURNING TO AWARENESS: A REPRISE
After we act, we begin again with the process of reflection and awareness. As we intentionally engage in the cycle, the promise is that change – growth – is possible.

A. Continuous Improvement

Lonergan asserts that every new action brings another set of questions. As we move from reflection to action and back again, we can see what results were good and which ones we want to avoid. Thus, we correct ourselves as we become ever more effective as ethical agents as well as better humans. We see this approach in the contemporary management theories of continuous quality improvement, as pioneered by Edmund Deming. Working through hypothetical problems helps facilitate the same sort of process in ethical maturity by helping us develop the habit of reflection and action.

1. Be Aware: appreciate the existing context.

As we face difficult situations, we first need to discipline ourselves to see clearly what is happening. As we are honest in self-assessment, we can determine our current preferred level of ethical maturity. As we pay attention to our actions, we can begin to more accurately assess how we behave in this world.

2. Become Intelligent: consider a new possibility.

As we carefully explore the world, we see that other ways of thinking and being are possible. The gift of diversity and experiencing the way that others think and believe is that we can become aware of different ways of thinking and seeing the world. New possibilities for growth and maturity provide needed impetus.


Before adopting a new context, we can imagine what the implications are for our actions and what kind of persons we would become – in other words, we can judge soundly. We have the opportunity to consider whether this new context, this new world view, would be consistent with the rest of
our belief systems (or whether we need to change our belief systems) and whether this possibility supports our life projects.

4. \textit{Become Responsible: try on the new behavior, a new way of acting in the world.}

Having envisioned other opportunities, we choose whether or not to act in a particular way. In the process, we can rearticulate and refine our core values and commitments, thus becoming principled persons who can be counted on to be thoughtful and appropriate in difficult situations. After reflection, we can always choose to keep the same world view. Having chosen, the next step is to create and implement an action plan for bringing the new context, the new opportunities, into reality.

B. \textit{The Crucible of Spirit}

During the past decade, the interest in spirituality at work and in every other facet of our lives has dramatically increased. Robert Wuthnow, writing about spirituality in America states that “[a]t its core, spirituality consists of all the beliefs and activities by which individuals attempt to relate their lives to God or to a divine being or some other conception of a transcendent reality.” Wuthnow finds that spirituality is both an individual quest for meaning as well as shaped by the larger community context. Thus the current times where ideas about ethics and morality are in flux, ideas about spirituality are also contested. Just as no one philosophical approach fits all, no single religious or spiritual framework meets all needs.

Daniel Helminiak, a Lonergan scholar, says that spirituality is that drive to become a whole human being, marked by four characteristics. The first is accepting that the human spirit has an intrinsic drive which will take us beyond ourselves and our preferences into a search for values which include other persons and ultimately society and the sacred, however defined. The second quality is being open to moving beyond considering only ourselves in decisions. A third characteristic is movement toward personal integrity and wholeness. The final quality is that spirituality is a move to adulthood –
thinking and weighing evidence for ourselves, judging and deciding for ourselves what we will do and so become.20 Thus, spirituality is not tied to any one particular religious tradition and for some may be independent of any formal religious tradition or practice.

As we go through life, we need to periodically stop and see whether or not we are moving toward wholeness. Are we in fact attending to our mind, nurturing our heart and cultivating our spirit. Lonergan’s method helps us correct for error and reinforce success. Increasing in self-efficacy, we have the potential to find meaning in our lives and joy in our work. As we continue to pay attention, explore our own response intelligently, judge soundly among competing understandings of ourselves and the world, and act responsibly, we can be ever more effective persons in community. If something doesn’t work well, we can correct the action. If we get more information, we can change course. Honoring the innate drive within us which desires the good and seeks knowledge, we can become authentic human beings who are not just drifting through life. In the process we can also help create an ethical and effective organizational culture.

Michael Stebbins, a business ethicist at Gonzaga University, asserts that as we engage in the process of ethical attention, we will be able to embrace and achieve the virtues of the authentic person.21

- **Attentiveness**: As we learn to pay attention in framing the context and identifying the ethical agent:
  - We will discipline ourselves not to wear blinders;
  - We will be alert to all relevant data, no matter what the source;
  - We will consider both the forest – our long term goals and objects – as well as the trees – the short term implications of what we are seeing;
  - We will expect change; and
  - We will step away from the noise to notice what is happening rather than getting distracted by the chatter around us.

- **Understanding**: As we seek to explore intelligently the interests of the stakeholders and the complexities of the issue:
  - We will look for connections that explain the data;
We will probe what we are seeing for root causes;
We will consider new ideas, even those from unexpected or non-traditional sources;
We will keep asking “why?” when we see information or data that we don’t understand; and
We will be patient.

Discernment: As we learn to judge soundly while identifying options for action, explore the conflicts, and prioritize the values:

- We will test our explanations to see if they are correct;
- We will not jump to conclusions;
- We will not withhold judgment when the evidence is in; and
- We will be dissatisfied with anything less than the best available answer.

Responsibility: As we act responsibly through becoming ethically mature and applying the tests of the various lenses:

- We will choose the greater good;
- We will be actively concerned for those who are affected by our actions;
- We will follow through with courage and intelligence, and
- We will be willing to admit and correct our mistakes.

Conclusion

As you work through either real or hypothetical situations, attend not only to the choices that you make but also your internal responses – your gut reactions – and your reaction to colleagues. The process of self-knowledge as one acts bravely marks the one who is an effective ethical agent and the one who chooses the other road. The good news is that as we learn to habitually act reflectively, the decisions become easier. As we practice a variety of decision making techniques and strive for ethical maturity, we become more effective leaders in our community.
Continuing the Conversation

1. As you reflect on your own ethical decision making, how do you balance among ethical, moral and spiritual concerns? How do you adjust for imbalance between rationalism and emotionalism? On which side do you tend to fall in a difficult situation?

2. Find an article or an op ed piece in your local paper or a news magazine which deals with a current ethical situation. See if you can identify the reasons which were given for the decisions. What did the author use to justify the position that was taken? Were you persuaded? Why or why not?

3. Identify an ethical dilemma that faced and resolved. Following the steps of this chapter, in a page or less, describe the criteria you used to resolve the problem. What did you use to justify the position which you took? Now, what do you notice about both what you chose to include and what information you decided were not relevant? Was the process easy or hard? What did you learn about yourself in the process?

Notes

2. Lonergan, Insight, 619.
10. Ermann and Lundman, eds., Corporate Deviance.
15. Loevinger, Ego Development.
19. Wuthnow, After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s, viii.