Part 2
Making Hard Choices in a Complex World

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Path to Maturity

**CRUCIBLE OF SPIRIT**

**Sacred Essence**
“*I am special...just like everyone else!*”

**Sacred Creation**
“*I am part of all that is.*”

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**WORLD OF MORALITY**

**Ethics of the Heart**
*What is a compassionate person?*
“*I am moral.*”

**Ethics of Community**
*What is a connected person?*
“*I am part of the community.*”

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**WORLD OF ETHICS**

**Virtue Ethics**
*What is good character?*
“*I am ethical.*”

**Justice Ethics**
*What is a fair system?*
“*I am part of the system.*”

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**CULTURAL CONTEXT**

**Who am I?**

**How do I fit?**

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**MIND**

**Deontology**
*What are my rights and responsibilities?*
“*I am responsible.*”

**Teleology**
*What are good results?*
“*I have choices.*”

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**EMOTIONS**

**Ethics of Care**
*What is a caring person?*
“*I am caring.*”

**Ethics of Mutuality**
*What achieves moral balance?*
“*I am consistent.*”

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**Soul**

**Sacred Will**
“*I delight in my work.*”

**Sacred Imagination**
“*I am co-creator of what is.*”
Chapter 6
The Path to Maturity

After completing an ethics class and considering the approaches of the various theorists, students often ask “which ethical theory is right?”

The answer is all of them and none of them. Just as Heisenberg demonstrated that looking for particles means that we find particles, each ethical theorist has a question which focuses his attention and shapes what he sees. Because theorists are both situated within their own historical context and respond to perennial questions, their writing is best understood as the next chapter in an ongoing conversation about how best to live in particular time.

Philosophers and theologians who write about ethics and justice respond to the prevalent world view of their time. In addition, each broad historical period has a primary spokesman from both of the major ethical traditions. Thus, each theorist responds to the inadequacies of the prevailing world view (and those in the other primary school of thought), addresses challenges.
presented by excesses and abuses of the current leaders and power structures and incorporates new information about our world and humans which comes through science and technology.4

Thus, the first task of each of the philosophers is to answer the critiques and expose the weaknesses of currently accepted theories. Because historically the theorists tend to swing between traditions, a primary task is to show how all or part of that worldview is flawed. In the process, a theorist might accept part of the writing of a colleague and reject other portions of the scholarship or tradition.

Although each generation of philosophers writes during a particular historical time which means that the specific circumstances of time and place color their work, they each tend to place themselves within a larger tradition based on their core beliefs. In the process of situating themselves in the conversation, the theorists reappropriate the themes of their preferred tradition in light of the problems and emerging knowledge of their generation. Thus, John Rawls places himself in the tradition of Kant and asserts that his work is supplementing Kant’s categorical imperatives by adding a process by which those imperatives can be used in today’s society. MacIntyre claims that he is rearticulating the work of Aristotle by recovering a theory of virtue which is needed to make sense of ethics today.

The difficulty is that we each need to determine what overall approach makes the most sense for us and then live consistently within that tradition at the same time that we work with people who embrace a different ethical tradition. A central thesis of this text is that if we continue to try to determine which of the core beliefs are “the truth,” we will never get to perfect unity. Further, we will believe that the only solution to the diverse ethical beliefs is relativism where no particular statement about what is the right thing to do can trump another understanding of what is right. However, most of us understand that some answers to ethical dilemmas are better than others. The question is how to get to the “better” and “best” solutions. One approach is to learn to harmonize the theories rather than
holding them in opposition. The claim is that we can learn to consider all of the theories and work from a position of meta-ethics, the structure that holds the theories together, then we can reach better decisions.

To be able to hold the theories in a “both/and” context, we need to look at how the two traditional ethical conversations complement each other rather than see only how they are in opposition to each other. Ken Wilbur, a Buddhist postmodern writer provided a key. In his seminal work *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*, Wilbur traces the evolution of individual and collective beliefs. He laid out broad patterns in a matrix which clearly shows the interrelationship of reflection and action in individual and collective community development. Wilbur asserts that for the past several centuries the Western world in particular has focused on the exterior side of development. The result is what he calls a purely Descended world view where the “Spirit, is simply identified with the Sum Total of exteriors, the Sum Total of the shadows in the Cave. So intent are we on proving that the shadows are one great interlocking order that we never move from these exteriors to the real interior, and thus we never find the genuine superior.” He claims that we need to include the “Ascended world view” where the self-transcending nature of Spirit is added to the mix.

Two insights emerged from this matrix. The first is that as we consider the world and then act, we move between action and reflection. The essence of critical thinking (a staple in our educational system) is learning to use the tools of reason to reflect on the authority and, tradition of our culture as well as our own experiences after we choose to act. Then when the action creates new information, new data, we consider our total world view again, modulating our beliefs as needed. Thus, Wilbur’s first continua matches
nicely with our current best understanding about how to become mature ethical agents.

The second continua moves between the individual and the community. Ethics is traditionally defined as an individual's moral standards. This definition masks the observation that unless we live in a community we don't have to worry about ethics. A way to put the conversation into sharper focus is to adopt the language of another set of constructive postmodern theorists, Herman Daly (an economist) and John Cobb (a theologian) who coined the phrase “person in community.” Daly and Cobb assert that “[t]he self that is to be understood is not a bundle of separate aspects, and it has no existence at all apart from its relations to its human and non-human environments.” They note further that “[i]n reality political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of human existence are indissolubly interconnected” and so rather than seeking learning where we continue to abstract knowledge into ever tinier boxes, we need to focus on holistic synthesizing of our knowledge, impelled by the human desire to know.

If in fact we are persons-in-community, then the discipline of applied ethics should not just focus on the principles that individuals choose to adopt as they navigate their path through this world. Rather, the discipline needs to explore the synergy created between individuals and their communities through ongoing conversations which inform and moderate beliefs and actions. Wilbur’s second continua between the individual and collective helps us understand the balancing act that many have instinctively employed in sorting out for themselves how best to live. To be ethically mature, we need to both attend to our internal development and external reality, spirit and reason. We also need to attend to our lives as individuals while considering and enhancing the common good. In the process we have the possibility of moving from an egocentric viewpoint to, in Wilbur’s words, a world-centric, more holistic viewpoint which embraces both historic ethical traditions.

Seemingly independent of the above theorists, Joseph A. Petrick and John F. Quinn organized traditional ethics into a similar matrix while asking the
same question as Wilbur but from a management perspective. Petrick and Quinn mirror the continua between individual reflection and action. However, they identify the points of the other continua “control” and “flexibility.” As these notions are unpacked, Petrick and Quinn note that deontology and teleology locate the control for action within the individual. These two theories focus on what each of us believe is right action for us. As individuals we cherish flexibility as we nimbly move in community. However, control is needed if the community is going to have any stability. Thus, individuals learn to follow the rules of the community as they accommodate to the interests of others. Like Daly, Cobb, and Wilbur, Petrick and Quinn argue for a richer understanding of ethics. They encourage business leaders to use the tools and insights of all of the theories to move against “ethical relativism in favor of an enriched but bounded tradition of moral pluralism.”

Interestingly, when the ethical theories are placed in the grid, the self-correcting nature of each tradition emerges. The traditional teleological theories of utilitarianism (seeking the greatest good for the greatest number) and egoism (seeking happiness for oneself) which can lead to acting from expedience are moderated by virtue ethics (developing a good character). As one chooses to act to gain the goods of the community which can lead to expedience, one must reflect on how that action will affect one’s reputation in the community and
seek excellence. Traditional deontological theories (asserting individual rights and responsibilities) are moderated by theories of justice (disciplining desire for the common good). As one considers the personal entitlements which can lead to selfishness, one must assure that all have some ability to exercise the same rights which leads to procedural justice as well as sharing and generosity.

As each tradition has evolved over our history, it appears that the excess of one generation is moderated by turning the theoretical coin over to see the other face. Thus, we can place the theorists in an evolving spiral around the matrix. The grand sweep of history appears to mimic the balance that many instinctively seek. Plato and Aristotle laid the foundation for modern ethics by focusing on the place of individuals in society. As Augustine and Aquinas rearticulated classical thought in light of Christian doctrine, they emphasized the prerogatives of community, the Church. The perceived excesses of the Holy Roman Empire were moderated by Kant and Mill in the emerging Age of Enlightenment with a reassertion of the rights of individuals to choose how to live. The excesses of individualism are tempered by the voices of Rawls who made a claim for procedural justice and MacIntyre who reclaimed the tradition of virtue ethics.

Wuthnow suggests that these shifts can be seen as the difference between a “spirituality of wandering” and a “spirituality of dwelling.” When ideas and institutions are challenged or in flux, we must rely on our own resources to sort out what is true and thus we tend to be more pessimistic about the human condition as we see ourselves as pilgrims in an unfriendly land. During settled times when institutions are strong and the community holds beliefs in common, we tend to be more optimistic and are willing to put down roots as we see ourselves connected to the larger community, thus the metaphor of “a place of our own.”

Again, the work of each of these theorists not only addressed the elements of their preferred lens but also included elements of the other face of the larger tradition. So Mill, while focusing on the importance of individuals
choosing what makes them happy spends considerable time talking about character and virtues, the balancing lens. Kant, while focusing on the rights and responsibilities, foreshadows the work of Rawls as he talks about our responsibility to the larger whole. In addition, each theorist responded to the strengths and critiques of the others. However, as each theorist is placed in the context for which they are best known, the rhythm of the evolving thought comes into relief. As we become skilled in moral pluralism, we see the gift of each theory and learn to use the organizing question of each to become more effective ethical actors.

To see our personal trajectory of growth and to find our own preferred tradition, we need to go back to our cultural roots. This journey helps us understand both our own world views and the way that we move through our communities. If we are going to make effective ethical decisions while living in a pluralistic community with contested core assumptions, we must determine where we stand and then where we want to go. As we embrace a holistic approach to ethics, we will have the opportunity to claim our own truth which will guide us as we face difficult questions in a complex world. In the process we can become fully functioning adults as we nourish our reason, our emotions, and our spirit.

**Core Contextual Questions**

As we begin the process of moving from childhood to adulthood, we come to the table with a set of inherited assumptions. As discussed earlier, our world view is informed by the authorities we find persuasive, the traditions which we embrace and our personal experiences, which are mediated by reason and emotion and harmonized by the world of the spirit. These core assumptions shape our world view, setting the course for our activities in the world. The center of the chart which opens this chapter posits four threshold questions that each of us must answer, first as children and then as adults, as we begin to find our place in our community.
As youngsters we begin life enmeshed in our family with no separate sense of self. The “terrible twos” represent the move from immersion in this community to the recognition of ourselves as a separate person with desires and the ability to reason. Thus, children anticipate the larger questions asked by our representative theorists. At each stage of our development and when faced with difficult situations, we ask the questions over and over again, hopefully maturing into a richer understanding of the answers.

> Why this choice?

This question focuses our attention on our motives and reasons for acting. Children are born into the matrix of family. As annoying as it is for parents, the primary developmental task of children is to differentiate themselves from their parents. This transition is signaled by the words “mine” and “no.” One of my children has the “Rules of Toddlers” on her refrigerator. A core precept is that “everything that is mine is mine and everything that is yours is mine.” Parents help children sort out concepts such as sharing and autonomy by helping them figure out their motive for acting. If parents reinforce the claim that prior rights to a truck can be claimed because the toy does belong to the child, they plant the seeds of rights, in this case the right to private property. As parents teach their children to pick up after themselves, say “please” and “thank-you,” and share with others, they plant the seeds of responsibility.

We then learn as adults to examine our own motives for acting. Kant provides a key restraint on selfishness by asking us to consider whether the reasons we are using for acting would be equally persuasive if those reasons were used by others in relation to us. Many writers assert that we cannot be
held morally accountable for an act that turns out badly but which was done with good intentions. Of course, what counts as “good intentions” is also contested. Is a good intention to act to maximize shareholder value ethically acceptable if this policy results in many of the employees not having sufficient resources (salary, health care, leisure) to live marginally good lives?

*What do I want?*

This question forces us to choose among competing goods. One of the most frustrating characteristics of being human is that we can’t have it all: every choice precludes other choices. Robert Frost’s poignant poem “The Road Not Taken” which opened Chapter 4, tells of a person making choices along life’s way, promising to come back while somehow knowing that the path will never be traveled again. By asking this question, each of us has the opportunity to follow our heart’s desire.

John Stuart Mill’s articulation of utilitarianism which invites us to choose for ourselves how to live is compelling because he asserted that we should not be locked into certain vocations or life circumstances because of our family history, birth order or the family business. The lack of mobility and the promise of the New World accelerated the crumbling of the feudal age where the first born got all the property and the business (or, if a woman, married off to someone with property to manage the family fortunes), the second son was sent into the service, and the third son (and sometimes daughters) was sent into the service of the church.

This notion of self-determination was intoxicating. When in England, licenses to do business were inherited, the promise of a market economy, where people could make their own choices about what services they wanted and what price they wanted to pay, was heady stuff indeed. While clearly some unintended consequences flowed from the move to a market economy, on the whole the founding fathers of America found the trade-off worthy.

*How do I fit?*
This question reminds us, in the words of John Donne, that “No man is an island. All are part of the promontory.”

As we are person’s in community, determining how we fit is critical. While the image of the tenacious entrepreneur or independent pioneer fashioning a living in the wilderness is a compelling part of the American mythology, those both in the new economy and on the frontier depended on each other in myriads of ways. The trappers needed customers for their pelts and suppliers of goods. Those on farms and in the towns needed goods as well as security from those who would threaten. Wuthnow notes that as settlers and immigrants came to the United States, they recreated in their communities churches and institutions which provided a place for them to be, familiar rituals and celebrations which gave them a sense of belonging.

Bill Convery, an historian who did a stint as a guide in one of Colorado’s Ghost Towns states that the most persistent question visitors asked him (after inquiring at what altitude elk become deer – really!) was to inquire as to where the gun fights were held. Convery patiently explained that the frontier towns didn’t see much action as “guns are bad for business.” The first thing the good founding fathers did was to pass laws, elect a sheriff, put up a jail, and prosecute those who didn’t fit into the community.

The story portrays businesses’ persistent ambivalence towards government. While many in business prefer to be free from government regulation, they also depend on a legal system to assure that contracts are enforced, debts paid and that their goods get to market without being stolen. Thus business and government have always had an interesting relationship: business asks government to protect it while asking that entrepreneurs be left to run their affairs at will.

Determining how and where we fit into the workplace is also an interesting question. Our parents settled into their jobs with the expectation was that they would keep the same job for a lifetime. The rhetoric often masked the reality of changing economic needs. My father worked for Boeing as a chemist. Noting the pattern of layoffs during economic downturns, the
family sardonically affirms that Dad retired after 25 years – it only took him 30 plus years to get there. Students are currently told that they should expect to change jobs 5-7 times; clearly the expectation for finding a community at work is different. As not only blue-collar but whit-collar professional jobs which used to be filled by Americans are outsourced to other lands, a result of developing a global economy, answering the question of what exactly creates a community becomes ever more important. Looking through the glasses of business owners, investors and consumers, a global economy sounds pretty nifty. Looking through the glasses of an employee or a citizen, the picture is not quite as rosy. We forget that, depending on our particular role at a given time, all of us look through both sets of glasses which makes determining where we fit even more problematic.

Who am I?

The final question is one of identity. As children we take our identity from our families: “Daddy’s little girl” or “Mommie’s muffin.” We learn that members of our families do certain things – we chew with our mouths closed, say ‘please’ and ‘thank-you,’ and do not terrorize our younger siblings. We learn that we are expected to do well in school or excel in sports. While we usually think of identity as being positive, our families and community also can create a negative self-image. Children who are the scapegoats for all that is wrong for the family or who belong to an ethnic group which is not fully accepted have different issues surrounding their identity than those who are raised in a loving, accepting family.

One of the most disturbing cases I ever had as a juvenile defense attorney was representing three high-school students who happened to live in my upper-middle class professional neighborhood. Two of the students found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time breaking into the local elementary school and stealing the computers. The third, the master-mind if you will, had a father who fenced the stolen goods for the boys. The notion of a upper-middle class white parent encouraging his child to engage in illegal behavior which would jeopardize that child’s life and well being was
incredibly discouraging. That child received praise from his father for stealing; the twig was bent.

Another example of the power of identity comes from a colleague who was raised in segregated Kansas City. He tells of discovering at the age of six the world of those who were not able to be part of his life. He was at a BBQ joint and needed to use the restroom. To get there he had to go through the “colored only” section of the restaurant. Even at six, the child knew that all humans were worthy of respect. The realization that some people were not free to go wherever they desired based only on race profoundly shaped his sense of justice and deeply influenced his work to make sure that, in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., “all little boys, and all little girls will be judged not on the color of their skin, but on the content of their character.”

As intimated by the examples above, each of these four questions leads to an ethical framework where we can explore the implications for being effective persons in community. Each question has intrigued successive generations of theorists and activists who have worked to find just the right balance among the competing values. The opportunity is for each of us to learn to be responsible ethical agents by intentionally engaging in the questions and then carefully choosing a course of action.

THE ETHICAL MAP

The world of ethics: Disciplining the mind through reason to find the rules of life.

It may seem to some artificial to separating reason and emotion as we explore first the world of ethics (which uses the mind to find the rules of life) and then the world of morality (where we explore how we use our emotions to develop empathy). The reason for the separation is historical. As the Protestant Reformation and the Age of Enlightenment unfolded, the key impetus for individual rights emerged as ordinary people learned how to read and to reason. As people were expected to determine
for themselves first their religious views and then their political views, the
ability to read the Bible and discern its truth was viewed as critical. However,
because the notion of Divine Right of Kings was still in play, the religion of
the leader determined the religion of all in the community. The 100 years war
(roughly 1400-1500) was fought in community after community as the battle
between Protestantism and Catholicism raged. 17

As the Protestant Reformation took hold during the 1500s, the politics of a
given city depended on the religious persuasion of the leadership. If the
leaders were Catholic, the established religion was Catholic and all in the
town were expected to be Catholic; likewise if the leaders were Protestant. 18
The political changes, while fueled by the religious convictions, were
accompanied with much bloodshed. To help end the carnage, the
Enlightenment philosophers posited that through reason alone one could
determine the rules for living. The authority of a church father or political
leader could not a substitute for careful thought and reasoning in a situation.
As much of the fighting was fueled by religious zealots fanning the emotions
of the people, for Kant, in particular, the passions were suspect.

Thus, most traditional ethics texts as they explicate the writings of various
theorists, focus on critical thinking to help us discipline our minds, as we use
the tools of reason to determine the rules of life which we will follow. Using
reason, we apply ethical principles and criteria to a problem which helps us
choose the most ethical act.

As we explore the traditions further, patterns emerge and we see how the
theorists approach the four core questions. One side of each tradition
focuses on individual action; the other side highlights our responsibility to
the community. Because we are complex individuals who live in community,
and because we are often like the “little girl with the curl” from nursery
rhyme days – “when she was good, she was very, very good, and when she
was bad she was horrid” – we need both sides of each tradition. To make an
ethically mature decision, we must consider the problem from all angles to
balance the tendency to excess which is present if one ignores the
complementary and corresponding parts of the ethical traditions.

Deontology (the study of duty), inspired by idealism, directs our attention to the perfection to which we should aspire. This strand of ethics focuses on our duty to ourselves and our community. Immanuel Kant, who is commonly associated with this school of thought asks the question, “why this choice?” Another primary author is John Rawls who explores the question, “how do I fit?”

The tension between the individual and community is explored through the lenses of personal rights and responsibility and our obligation to assure that the least advantaged are considered in the distribution of power and privilege. Kant and others who emphasize personal responsibility, call us to consider our own obligations rather than blindly following the dictates of tradition, whether religious or political. Rawls and others who focus on themes of justice invite us to see how with the roll of a dice we could be unable to care for ourselves and become disadvantaged. So we need to know what limits the community should place on individuals.

As discussed earlier, the second tradition, teleology (the study of results), is grounded in realism which directs our attention to the here and now. This strand of ethics focuses on goals and outcomes. John Stuart Mill, a seminal author, asserts that the answer to the question, “what do I want” is for individuals to be happy. A second voice is that of Alasdair MacIntyre who asserts that the key to knowing which outcomes to choose is to find out “who I am” in relationship to others in community. The tension between the individual and community is explored through the
process of selecting actions that result in happiness and the development of good character. Mill and others who invite us to consider the consequences of our actions exhort us to do what makes us, not someone else, happy. MacIntyre and others who explore the role of character encourage us to pursue the virtues such as integrity, justice and courage so we are not seduced by expedience and forget excellence.

In addition to the assumptions behind each tradition being contested, another question is which theory is prior to the others – the set of principles from which we live (deontology) or the goals we choose which determine our choices (teleology). As the theorists grappled with the two traditions, they gave their theory priority based on what comes first. In making the case for deontology trumping teleology, Kant notes that we need to consider the consequences, but he considers them secondary to doing our duty. John Stuart Mill and other consequentialists argue that we can only determine our duty by considering our goals and what makes us happy. The question becomes a version of the classic “chicken and egg” conundrum: do we begin by figuring out our responsibilities and let the consequences fall as they might or do we consider the consequences and from there determine duty. That conversation will also probably never be definitively resolved. Again, in a practical sense, we tend to get a better result if we consider both sides of the coin before acting.

The four ethical templates we will use for the simulation help us identify answers to the four key questions which form the context of our world view. Each framework has a particular set of theorists and traditions which informs the process. Thus, each frame has a particular content – principles or goals – which help people determine the right answer.

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for ethical dilemmas. Each template also has a process which helps us hone our analytic skills. Intriguingly, the frameworks opposite each other correct for the bias which may be present in the other part of the ethical tradition.

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. The key is to use at least two of the four lenses in any analysis to compensate for the inherent distortion embedded in each lens.

**THE MORAL MAP**

The marginalizing of emotion which was a legacy of the Age of Enlightenment began to shift mid-twentieth century. Many different strands of research led to a reassertion of the importance of our emotions. Biologists began doing research on the physical effects of emotions on our bodies as well as on our thought processes. Sociologists and historians noted that the atrocities of the Holocaust in Europe and slavery in the United States which treated people as property and separated families were possible by a strict attending to reason without seeing the others as fully human. As we dampened our feelings of empathy for other humans by not seeing them as fully human, we cruelly imposed rules which destroyed relationships and deeply wounded human lives. The difficulty is that a well disciplined mind does not necessarily have a clue about how to build satisfying relationships.

Another strand of research during the last half of the twentieth century focused on how individuals make ethical decisions. Lawrence Kohlberg, who studied the ethical development of humans, demonstrated that through learning how to reason more effectively, people could make better ethical decisions. One of Kohlberg’s important insights is the notion that ethical development continues over the course of a lifetime and is not finished at

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the knees of our mothers. As Kohlberg’s research continued, his evidence seemed to indicate that women were less ethical than men: when faced with a difficult decision, women tended to try to preserve relationships rather than choosing actions dictated by rules which might damage rapport. According to Kohlberg’s scheme where reason was king, this tendency showed a lack of ethical maturity.22

Naturally, women scholars took a bit of exception to the notion that women are ethically inferior to men. As research continued, Norma Haan demonstrated that while men tended to be taught to discipline their mind through the tool of reason, women tended to be encouraged to discipline their emotions using the tool of empathy.23 Haan constructed a model of ethical development where preservation of relationship was key. The steps to ethical maturity paralleled Kohlberg’s in moving people from considering only the implications of the individual to including systemic consequences in the thought.24 The two strands of thought were brought together by the work of psychologist Albert Bandera who taught that to be a fully functioning adult in this world, one needs both rational and emotional maturity.25 Ethical decision making is like playing a beautiful fugue: the melody line, our mind, is made whole by the counterpoint, our emotions. Effective decision makers need both skill sets.

Carol Gilligan’s work In a Different Voice put forward the notion that an ethic of relationship as historically exercised primarily by women is as valid as an ethic of rules which tends to be embraced by men.26 Another seminal writer, Nel Noddings, calls the ethic that emerges from relationship an ethic of care. Noddings invites us to augment Kant’s notion of the ethical act as the one where we do our “duty” with empathy and commitment. The counterpoint to “why this choice” is “as you exercise your rights and responsibilities, respond to the other with care and commitment.”27

Just as an ethic of care which comes from emotional maturity tempers the
What should I choose?
As you choose that which makes you happy
respond to the other in mutuality
so that they too may pursue their dreams.

As you create just (fair) systems
respond to the other cooperatively
as an integral part of your community

excesses of individualism, an ethics of compassion and mutuality tempers excesses in the teleological tradition where people are tempted to operate from an ethic of expedience rather than embracing an ethic of excellence. Norma Haan asserts that while happiness is important, one must also pay attention to the moral balance between people so that all may have a chance to achieve their goals. For this framework, the key is to choose goals which will support others in also reaching their goals. Lonergan reflects this approach by asking us to always seek the highest good, that good which addresses the complex, interdependent goals of many in the community. Thus we are invited to think systemically about the ways we support others in achieving their dreams as well as how best to reach our own.

Therists concerned with emotional maturity also explored the question of “how do I fit.” The claims of justice articulated by Rawls expanded from concern about an individual’s ability to fairly negotiate a complex system to an awareness of how we are all profoundly connected to all people and nature. The study of ecosystems revealed that healthy natural systems require cooperation in addition to competition according to the rule of survival of the fittest. Management theorists began speaking of an ethic of cooperation to nourish and sustain the ecosystems of the workplace. The ethic of relationship expanded into exploring the ways that we are all connected which underscores our obligation to care for the community as a whole. So, the counterpoint to “how do I fit” is “as you create just and fair systems, respond to the other cooperatively as an integral part of the community.

The final question of “who am I” focuses on what constitutes a good
character. Psychologist Charles Shelton states that the answer can be found as we each assert that “I am a moral person” and explore what that identity means for us. While developing virtues is important, for Shelton being moral which includes emotional maturity is the critical characteristic of being human. Shelton asserts that we become moral by exercising our conscience and developing empathy, the ability to “walk with” another in life.\(^\text{31}\) Shelton and other developmental psychologists maintain that self-regulating our emotions is essential for ethical and moral behavior because reason does not attend to the feeling side of life.

Emotions have the potential to give valuable information to our minds as we reason through problems or to cast us into emotional chaos. Through disciplining our emotions, we can heed their wisdom and not be overwhelmed by them. We can then become morally mature and have the tools to maintain moral balance. So the answer to the question “who am I” includes “I am an ethical person with a good character and a moral person with a well developed conscience.”

While an ethic of the heart complements an ethic of the head, the picture is not complete. Neither of these frameworks alone or together provides a sufficient answer to the conundrum of how to find and navigate a path leading to “success” with no hard and fast guidelines for determining the rules to follow or clear teaching on how to build satisfying relationships with difficult people. The world of ethics and the world of morality helps us live a satisfying external life, moving effectively in our professional and personal life. However, neither of these world views addresses our internal life, the place where we find meaning. To address our interior life, we must turn to the third level, the spiritual realm. The third strand of questions asks whether it is it possible to intentionally blend the interior world of spiritual maturity with the exterior world of emotional and intellectual maturity as one seeks the answer to the question “Who am I?”

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Who am I?

As a virtuous person of good character respond to the other with empathy and a well developed conscience.
to be ethical and effective in our professional lives. The answer turns out to be yes.

THE CRUCIBLE OF SPIRIT

Including a section on spirituality may seem a bit odd in a book designed to be a mainstream ethics text. However, as bookstores are rearranging shelves to make room for whole new sections about spirituality at work, and courses are designed in major universities which explore the gifts that our personal spiritual traditions as well as those of others bring to the table, the time is clearly ripe for the conversation. As the whole realm of business ethics is about how we treat ourselves and others in the workplace, exploring the realm of our deepest desires makes some sense. A careful review of the literature shows that each core question has caught the attention of different authors. Thus, looking at the world through a spiritual lens reveals intriguing answers to the core questions with the added twist of how to tend to our souls as we embrace the worlds of reason and emotion.

The reason that conversations about spirituality are independent of conversations about theology have to do with the same postmodern shift that changed the face of ethics and morality. As Wuthnow noted, ‘At the start the twentieth century, virtually all Americans practiced their faith within a Christian or Jewish framework...Now, at the end of the twentieth century, growing numbers of Americans piece together their faith like a patchwork quilt. Spirituality has become a vastly complex quest in which each person seeks in his or her own way.’

This quest has two different implications for the world of business ethics. First, given that the two primary needs for human beings are to work and to love, our spirituality, the meaning we give to the whole of our lives,
profoundly affects both what we see as our role in the business world and how we then fit into the whirlwind of commerce. Second, spirituality has a moral component in that our spirituality determines what we find as morally binding, what rules constrain our behavior. So, the content of our ethical beliefs is determined in large part by the shape of our spiritual beliefs and practices. Spirituality reflection is the process by which we both take a stand for what we believe as well as search our own soul to find our biases and interests.

Thus spirituality becomes “a discovery of the true ‘self’ precisely in encountering the divine and the human other – who allow one neither to rest in a reassuring self-image nor to languish in the prison of a false social construction of oneself.” In this definition, theologian Mark McIntosh reminds us that through the blend of theory and practice one is transformed. Our work life, no more than our personal life, can become the crucible for growth and change, and can be more than just an inconvenient interlude where we get the resources we need to live, but can become instrumental in discovering what it means to be fully human.

Spiritual maturity requires that we reason with skill, relate to others with care, and that we integrate the two through love – loving all of creation as we love ourselves. Every spiritual tradition teaches that as we explore “why this choice,” we can become “aware” and learn to love and serve others with delight. Then, as we go to our work, we can go with a spirit of joy rather than with grumbling or discouragement. The world of imagination helps us answer the question “what do I want.” Much of the literature on the spirituality of work invites us to envision a world where all are able to thrive
as full human persons and then act to make that world a reality. As we take responsibility for, if not creating our own work life, at least creating our response to it, we can find meaning in even difficult situations.

For example, a woman who works to teach young men and women who have just been released from detention facilities how to read finds much that is discouraging. The skills of the students are far below par, their lives hold little hope, and their circumstances are grim. Yet, she finds comfort in the fact that maybe one of them, as he or she is treated with dignity and respect, will find the way out of the box and acquire the skills to be a participating member of our community. That possibility keeps her going to work even as her students move in and out of the “system.”

As we consider “how do I fit,” spiritual teachers encourage us to notice that we are not separate from each other but are part of the whole. This question has interesting and complex implications as we consider whether we should focus on local or global concerns. And finally, in response to the question “who am I,” the spiritual literature entreats us to consider that we are part of the Sacred, the Divine, just like every other person.

In each case the spiritual lens provides a nuance – not a replacement – for the answers to the core questions revealed through the world of ethics and morality. Refining the individual answers while living in community and working toward wholeness, one finds a very different way to interact in the world.

The spiritual map also calls us to accountability for what Carl Jung calls our shadow side, that part of us which, according to many spiritual traditions, is driven by fear rather than by love. Each of the ethical, moral and spiritual frameworks has a challenge and risk which are subtle variations on a theme: I don’t have to account to anyone for my actions. This hubris, arrogance which often comes from pride, has led to the downfall of many an executive.

Those whose ethical home is in the Rights and Responsibility tradition are
especially prone to believing that they can make a go of this alone. Isolating themselves from the discipline of a community, they can become self-righteous and judgmental, finding excuses why they don’t have to play by the same self-imposed rules as everyone else. Those whose home is in the Results tradition begin to believe that their way is the only way, their goals are the only goals. They begin to make inconsistent choices between long and short term goals, reducing everything to a cost/benefit analysis. In the process they live by expediency rather than excellence, doing whatever is required to meet their self-directed goals.

Those whose ethical home is in the Relationship tradition may over-identify with their group and begin to believe that they have “the truth.” As a member of the group they can become authoritarian while believing that they are exempt from the community norms. Those whose home is in the Reputation tradition often believe that they are special and thereby entitled to special treatment.

The headlines of the business pages trumpet stories of highly respected business executives and those in the lower ranks who did not temper their preferred ethical tradition with awareness and moderation. Blinded by their own weaknesses, they ended up being the antithesis of what they desired while becoming that which they feared: unreflective, unfulfilled, isolated, and broken. As we use the disciplines of the spirit, noting where we are not whole and complete, we can avoid or at least mitigate against disaster.

At its core, spirituality is the drive to wholeness. Employing a wide range of practices which are primarily found in our religious traditions, we each need to ultimately find meaning for our lives. The difficulty is that while work is
one of the two essential functions of being human, many of us find that, in the words of Lynch, our employers only want our “technical selves,” that part of us which does our work carefully and well. Our employers really don’t want our whole selves, that part of us which has families, worries about our children, lives in a community, and values clean air and water. Thus, we must each be ever mindful of the tensions which call us to park our minds, emotions and spirits at the entrance of our offices. Those of us in positions of power must also be mindful of the choices we are giving our employees and suppliers who may not have the bargaining power that we do. As we consider fully what it means to find meaning in our work, we will create business environments where all can not only survive, but thrive.

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR MATURITY

The spiritual journey requires that we all walk an individual path and do our own work. Paradoxically, the claim of many spiritual teachers is that as we do our work we will move beyond a focus on ourselves to a larger picture, one that includes all and compels us to compassionate action. Shaped by our response to central questions about the nature of the world and the people in it, our core beliefs give our lives meaning and provide the rationale for our actions. Because our core beliefs are those ideas which we hold with affection, we often respond to the circumstances of our lives based on whether or not the events match our preferred world view and whether or not we believe that we can make a difference – our perceived personal power, or self-efficacy.

Those who believe that they have power in a given situation can work to strengthen those institutions and situations with which they agree. Thus, if we believe that we are employed by an ethical company and we believe that what we do shapes that company, we can proactively work to strengthen the core values and assure that the choices made mirror those values. If we are in a situation with which we don’t agree, with perceived self-efficacy we can begin to implement strategies to change the situation. Sometimes the change
can be as simple as our personal power to change our perception of an event. Other times we are moved to actively work to change the beliefs and actions of people in an organization or community.

Those who do not believe they have any personal power to make a difference (or choose not to exercise the power they have) can become apathetic or tacit participants in a system with which they basically agree. We see this tendency when Boards of Director’s offer CEO’s very high wages and stock options stating that the market demands this level of compensation to get the “brightest and the best.” Rather that making an independent determination that the salaries are out of line with those in the rest of the organization, CEO’s accept the pay with a modern version of “the devil made me do it.” In situations we don’t like where we believe we have no power, we become passive-aggressive participants giving lip service to the existing structures while doing our best to undermine them. We also can see ourselves as “victims,” powerless to do anything and demanding that others make our circumstances better.

Clearly, commitment to our core beliefs both define us and have the potential to energize and transform the self and community. The quest for self-knowledge has at its center the task of identifying core beliefs, determining whether those beliefs are in fact accurate and worthy of shaping us as persons, and then identifying the opportunities and barriers before us as we try to make consistent choices based on our beliefs about the right treatment of people, the right use of property and the appropriate use of power. Theorists in both traditions provide their understandings of the key
assumptions which drive our core values. These assumptions drive not only our ethical beliefs, but also our preferences for political arrangements (conservative or liberal) and economic preferences (capitalism or communitarian).

None of these positions are black and white: they are tendencies on a continua. However, the hardest questions are those which require that we choose between two competing actions, each of which will have a different bad result. In these situations, our core values will determine the outcome. We know that people who abuse alcohol may injure themselves or others at work. On one hand, we may value autonomy, the right of each person to choose how to live. Thus, the action taken would be to not intervene in the situation even if the person might cause damage to the company. On the other hand, we may value the well being of the community, and demand that all persons be subject to strict rules about drinking (limits of alcohol at lunch and company gatherings), even though the vast majority of people don’t abuse alcohol. Unfortunately, rather than carefully looking at the underlying assumptions which drive the decisions, many people choose actions based solely on perceived threats of possible legal liability.

Ironically, giving our power to corporate counsel (or any other external party) does not absolve us from responsibility for making an unethical decision or going against our core values. Rather, as we explore our own core beliefs, see how they square with the prevailing beliefs in our community and then act in consonance with our best understanding of what will reach our desired goals, we become responsible ethical participants in our community.

As we take our desires and values – our ethics, morality, and spirituality – to the workplace, we soon learn that no one path is “the only” way to mastery. In this day of ethical and religious pluralism, no one tradition has a prior or privileged claim on truth. Each tradition offers a theory or belief which guides those in that tradition to wholeness. Each tradition has a corresponding moral content, an emotional response to the reasoning of the
mind. And each tradition has a set of spiritual practices which assist us in becoming integrated human beings. The multitude of approaches are variations on a theme: we are all part of the sacred fabric called life and participate in weaving the next segments of the cloth, our civilization. However, ethical and religious pluralism does not absolve us from the responsibility of living morally aware and spiritually enhanced lives. Through digesting the theories underlying each of the three different domains and developing the skills needed to master each in our business and professional lives, we can embrace life as a process with a series of practices which lead to integration rather than an answer to be found with a set of rules to be followed. With practice and a dollop of grace, we can become comfortable and skilled in moving between the immanent world, where all is profoundly connected, and the transcendent world where ideas are forms are first conceived.

The promise is that as mature individuals who have mastered the tools of reason, empathy and love, we can give joyously back to the community and fashion a world where all can thrive. This promise does not just apply to our family and friends. This promise does not apply only to our social and community lives. This promise also applies to the cloth of commerce, the world of work where we earn our living and make our contributions to the whole. The question we each get to explore is whether we will contribute to the fulfillment of the promise of achieving integration and integrity in the office and shops in which we work.

As we engage in practices which make us more effective ethical agents, more aware moral persons, and seek wholeness in the crucible of spirit, we change as a person. We take that changed person, that enlarged world view, back to the workplace and see the problems and opportunities of the day through a more complete lens. The world where goods and services are bought and sold is the world of reason and is governed by ethics. The world of customers and co-workers is the world of emotion and is governed by morality. And as we seek to balance the two and let joy, compassion and gratitude permeate our soul, we find that the business world turns out to be
not quite so frenzied. Doing the right thing becomes just a bit easier, and we become ever more the person we are.

By using the same tools for our common professional life that we use for our personal journey, we can learn to respect the path of each person and walk together towards integrity and wholeness. Seeing our professional life as a process which can lead to ethical, moral, and spiritual maturity, we can see what questions arise as we create a healthier business community.

Continuing the Conversation

1. As you reflection on your own ethical belief system, how would you answer each of the four core contextual questions? What decisions about your self or experiences have shaped your answers to those questions.

2. Do the distinctions between ethics as a discipline of reason and morality as a discipline of emotions make sense to you? Do you agree or disagree with that distinction? Why or why not.

3. As commentators were evaluating the recent high profile case of Martha Stewart, one made the comment that Ms. Stewart could not accept the fact that she made a mistake. Thus, instead of settling for a civil penalty to the SEC, she went to trial and was convicted of perjury. As you look at other high-profile cases dealing with breaches of business ethics, what was the hubris of those executives; where did they believe that they would not be held accountable to the community.

Notes:

2. Philosophy seeks to identify the principles that underlie conduct, thought and human behavior using the tools of the mind. Theology seeks to identify the same through studying God and the relationships between God and humans. Many philosophers have a deep theological faith but confine their arguments to those which can be supported through reason and logic.
3. For a more detailed description of these theorists, please see Appendix C.
6. Wilbur, 525.
7. Daly and Cobb, For the Common Good, 125.
8. Daly and Cobb, For the Common Good, 127.
10. Petrick and Quinn, Management Ethics: Integrity at Work, 98.
12. Donne, Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, Meditation 17.
14. Personal interview with William C. Convery, III.
15. Personal interview with Fr. Michael Sheenan, S.J., President of Regis University.
17. Find cite for 100 year war.
18. The same policy governed in the early colonies. Each of the colonies came to be free from established religion and persecution and then promptly established their own faith. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution was to bring an end to the practice of seizing the property of those churches who lost the political leadership battle.
19. Insert cite.
20.xxx, Corporate Deviance.
21. One such chronicle of the suppression of women as full participants in the political and economic structure of America is recorded by Kerber in No Constitutional Right to be Ladies. For example, the perceived tendencies of women to be overly emotional was used as a reason to exclude them from juries. Of course, in the words of one jurist, women were also needed to assure that the fabric of our society was kept intact by being home to cook dinner. 217-218.
22. As cited in Velasquez.
24. Appendix D compares the findings of Kohlberg and Haan. One of the most interesting comparisons is what is required for change. Again, both approaches used together get a better result than either individually.
25. Bandera, Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control xx
26. Gilligan, In a Different Voice, xxx
27. Noddings, Caring.
28. Haan, p. xx
29. Longergan, Insight, p. xx
32. Wuthnow, After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s, 2.
33. Wuthnow, 184.
34. Wuthnow, 185.
35. MacIntosh, Mystical Theology, 6.
36. Jung, xxxx
37. Bandera, Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control, 45-60.