Gibson Boats, a boat company located in Atlanta, is looking to expand its operation by opening up a second factory. The site first considered is outside of Atlanta. However, a proposal has been brought to build the next factory south of the border in Mexico, where land, labor, and production will be much cheaper. Objections are raised to this proposal though, citing the damage to the environment caused by lax environmental controls in Mexico (which allow companies to pollute much more than they would in the states) and that even though they are creating jobs, the jobs created get paid much less than those in similar positions in America. As a result of these low wages, the towns supported by the factory are virtual slums (M&C, 214).

How will Gibson be able to decide on a proper course of action? This essay will offer two possible courses: The first based upon Walter Wink's 3rd Way, and the second based on the Revised Story of the Good Samaritan. Following these are applications of each to theoretical situations, as a way to exhibit both the positive and the negative traits within each. For the finale, there will be a brief discussion of the most important characteristic of solving moral or ethical dilemmas: creativity.

Walter Wink's Third Way

Portions of Walter Wink's essay on the Third Way of Christ offer avenues for Gibson Boats to pursue. In this methodology, the basic thrust is to both seize the moral initiative and to move past the typical reactions (fight or flight) to a way in which one is able to actually cause one's opponents to dishonor or shame themselves, thereby aiding one's victory as one's opponents will seek repentance and be more compliant to demands.

There are several more specific steps to the third way though. First, one must assert their own humanity. For Gibson Boats, this means to have a human face, not one of a soulless company, and to recognize others as human beings, not just things. Next, one must break the cycle of humiliation; one must stop the exploitation of cheap labor, who are used in order to turn a larger profit. By doing these things, one accomplishes the following step: to expose the injustice of the system. One can further delve into these things by starting to ask the truly difficult questions which will only breed more questions and those whose answers one may not like.

Once one has found said answers, one must stand their ground. There is an older country song by Aaron Tippin which contains this line: "You've got to stand for something or you'll fall for anything." If one does take a stand, they seize the power dynamic through their sheer momentum, which essentially puts one into control of the entire situation; their actions will drive the situation, while their opponents will be forced to react, often by making decisions that they have not prepared for. In boxing, when one's opponent is off-balance, it is then they make themselves most vulnerable; in these situations, the same notion applies. Then, by recognizing their power, they force their opponent to see them in a new light, trying to shame their opponents into repentance and possibly even a transformation. For Gibson Boats, this move could entail them choosing to build within the United States, pointing out in the process the horrible living conditions imposed upon Mexican workers by other companies, hopefully causing their opponents to feel shame and ultimately seek repentance by changing their policies.
The importance of creativity cannot be emphasized enough in the practical application of the third way. If one uses the same tactics over and over again, one's opponent will eventually catch on and be prepared the next time. By continuously coming up with new solutions, one stays "on their toes" so to speak, and keeps their opponent reeling and trying to play catch up.

The Revised Story of the Good Samaritan and the Notion of Justice

In the Revised Story of the Good Samaritan (C&M, 54-55), several other notions for the treatment of ethical questions are illustrated by the story itself First and foremost among these is to not only treat the symptoms, but also to treat the disease. For Gibson Boats, if it does in fact move to Mexico, it should adhere to environmental and pay standards that it would follow in the states, but it should also bring to the public eye the plight of those marginalized by exploitation by American companies. Following this, they should propose solutions so as to help the root cause of this exploitation, that which makes it possible: poverty.

The second notion presented by C&M is to pay attention to those on the margins of society, particularly the poor who resort to undesirable methods in order to survive and to provide for their families. However, in order for anything to get done on these two fronts, one must first realize that all humans are interrelated; the answer to "Who is my neighbor" is that every living human being is.

The notion of justice is tightly interwoven into these two methodologies; particularly the concepts that all men are our brothers, and that something must be done to help those marginalized by the world. The Hebrew notion of justice does not measure a society based upon its judicial system; instead, it looks to see how the least members of a society are treated in order to judge how just the people are (C&M, 68). Gibson Boats must also bear this in mind when making their decision.

The Theories Put to Test

Since we are a "storied people" according to C&M (78), the best way to illustrate points are through scenarios. One could argue that the parables of Jesus are scenarios, so as to better convey his point to his audience. Following are three scenarios, all of which have their own positive and negative consequences resulting from their usage (or non-usage) of the aforementioned avenues for dealing with ethical issues.

Scenario One: Flight

In light of the objections brought, Gibson Boats decides to proceed building their new facility outside of Atlanta, in order to avoid the quagmire of ethical issues that would be involved in moving to Mexico. By doing this, they avoid raising any uncomfortable questions, and while it will be more expensive, they could spin their decision as one of national pride, of keeping jobs in America. They could then point the finger at their opponents who outsource, claiming the moral high ground even though they avoided the question.

This cannot be considered to be any use of the third way, as it did not get past the second way: flight. Additionally, while they are not adding to the problems in Mexico, they are also not doing anything to help. To stand idly by is almost a greater sin than to be the persecutor: if one is apathetic to another's
suffering, they are denying the relevance of the victim, whereas the persecutor sees the victim as relevant enough to warrant persecution. If Gibson Boats were to stand by and do nothing, they would be the equivalent of the apathetic white moderates whom King accuses of being one of the primary constraining factors upon the civil rights movement.

Scenario 2: Is Justice delayed Justice denied?

Despite the objections, Gibson Boats decides to place their new facility in Mexico. They do not initially pay the workers the premium American labor rate, but eventually get up there. They also do not spend that much initially on environmental controls, but plan to work on that when they can afford it.

The implications of this scenario put a twist into the argument: even if solutions are proposed, is it acceptable for them to be put off until they can reasonably (as soon as it is feasible) be put into place? There is a legal adage in the American Judicial System that justice delayed is justice denied; this is the reason for the Right to a Quick and Speedy Trial exists within the Bill of Rights. By delaying their actions, Gibson Boats does not seize the moral initiative as they must according to Wink, and instead have a plan to implemented incrementally, thus taking the pressure off of the other companies with facilities in Mexico that are mistreating their employees. This flies in the face of the reasoning of the Revised Story of the Good Samaritan, as even though it acknowledges those on the margins, it only treats a particular segment of the group, not the group as a whole; it does not treat our entire neighborhood, but only a few selected neighbors. For after all, in the Revised Story, the Samaritan and his community find a solution for all of those forced into robbery, not just those who belonged to certain subsets within the marginalized.

There is still the possibility that Gibson Boats could force their opponents to see the Mexican workers in a new light and seek repentance for their treatment of them. However, this is unlikely because in our world, one must make a splash in order to be noticed.

Scenario 3: Neglecting the Larger Problem

The final scenario entails Gibson Boats moving to Mexico, but acting immediately as if it were in the United States, paying their workers well and strictly self-regulating their byproduct waste. This would make the necessary splash in order to enable Wink's third way, but it misses some important points. First, Gibson Boats is acting as an individual; one of the problems with individualism is that it will typically offer a personal solution to a social problem; while Gibson's workers may be doing well, others are not, and we are back to the argument that one must aim to help all the marginalized, something that one must do in order to follow the reasoning of the Revised Story of the Good Samaritan. While one can argue that due to the interrelatedness of the American economy, Gibson Boats could affect the entire American (and therefore, the world) economic system by altering its own practices, this is a fallacy. Due to the prevailing capitalistic nature of the system, Gibson Boats will be lauded for its humanitarian efforts, and then these efforts will be set aside for methods which are more profitable.

In addition to individualism, one must also avoid the pratfall of reductionism (taking a complex problem and turning it into a simple one, sacrificing details along the way, so that one is just left with one particular dimension of a multi-faceted problem), as this will tend to only exacerbate the problem,
Additionally, one must adhere to the concept of subsidiarity (that which is a problem at a certain level must be handled at that level, and while other levels can help, they cannot solve); Gibson Boats is but one company, albeit a well off one, and the problem of poverty is a world-wide issue, and is probably best dealt with at the systemic or nation-state level.

Basicly, Gibson Boats is the guy walking on the beach throwing starfish back into the ocean- their efforts to save starfish will aide those that get thrown back into the ocean, but those which do not receive such aide will have to fend for themselves.

In all of these scenarios, the symptoms have been dealt with, but the Revised Story of the Good Samaritan tells us to treat the disease as well. However, what is the cause of the disease (typically identified as poverty)? How can one find the means to enact the methods of Christ as explained by Wink the best?

The Importance of Creativity

Yet again, we are left with only questions, as is typically the case when one starts to ask difficult questions with answers that can span across all of humanity, however the most important overall characteristic in Wink's argument is the same for the search for solutions: creativity is important, as the answers and solutions do not and will not fit into any boxes that are currently in existence. The reason that no such boxes exist is due to the self-interested nature of humans. At the most basic level, we are all primarily concerned with our own self preservation and promotion, with even the religious citing 'their eternal reward' for keeping the faith while on Earth. In order for a world to come about in which it would be possible for the radical social change necessary for the equal redistribution of wealth and opportunity to eliminate poverty, there would have to be an extraordinarily extraordinary event, such as the Second Coming of Christ, which would provide the impetus for Christian Civilization to change itself and therefore the world.

Works Cited:
