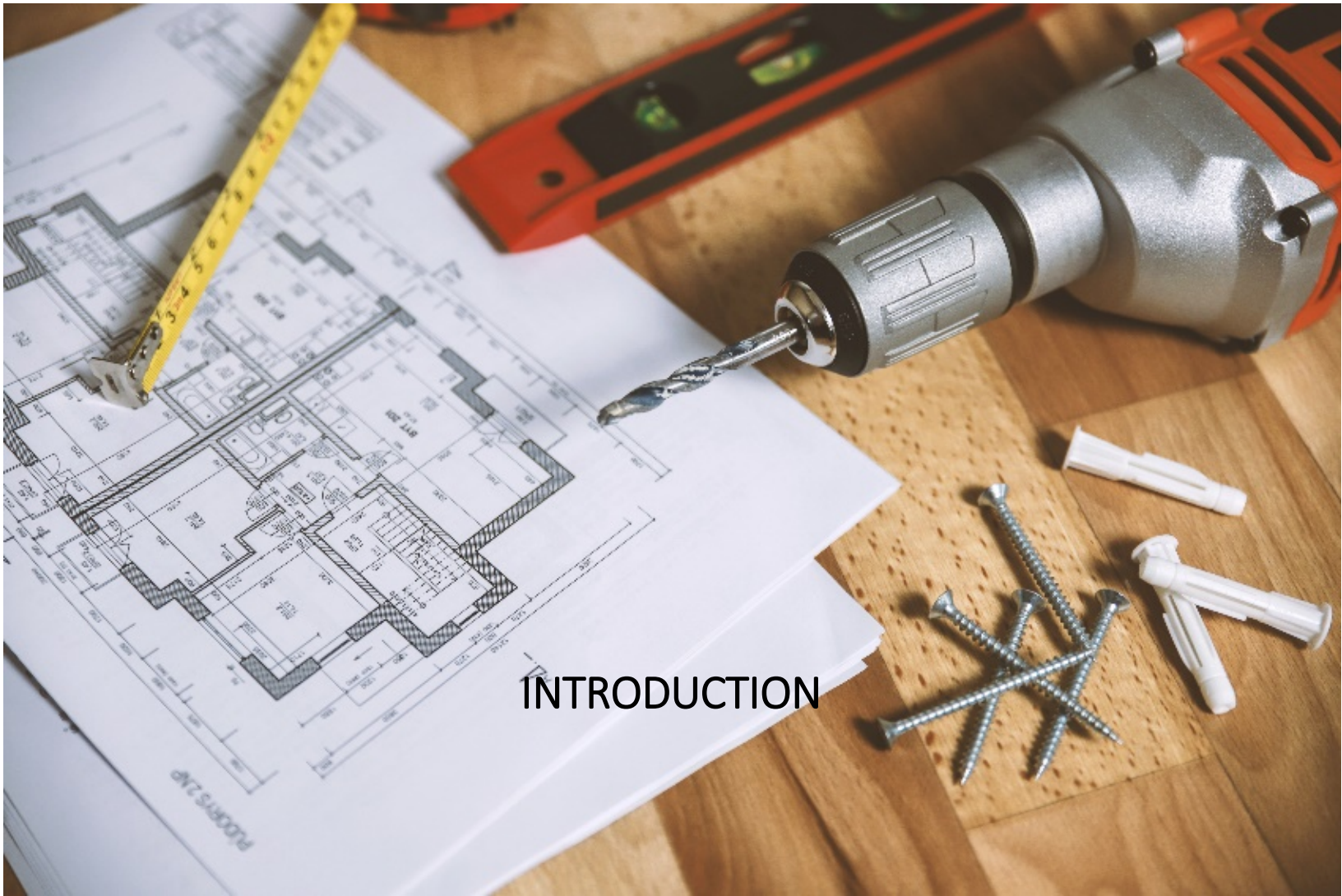


EE-T INTRODUCTION

ENTREPRENEURIAL ETHICS - TOPICS

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INTRODUCTION

Having studied and learned about numerous moral theories, principles, and perspectives in *Entrepreneurial Ethics - Perspectives*, we are now ready to turn to the work of evaluating some specific and complex moral issues arising in the world of business. The moral issues and topics contained in *Entrepreneurial Ethics – Topics* are structured to create specific opportunities to use the conceptual and practical ethical tools you learned about in *Entrepreneurial Ethics – Perspectives*. Those tools are used to clarify, analyze and make judgments regarding the moral issues and problematic moral topics presented in this text.

The ethical topics presented here are meant to activate and enhance your consciousness of your own unique moral value orientation and responsiveness. These exercises that call for a moral response from you will help you to see your moral value orientation more clearly and distinctly. You can then make adjustments to your moral value configuration as you see fit, as if tailoring a garment or sculpting a work of art. The topics are meant to highlight the way in which moral values and perspectives guide our thinking, judgment, and actions regarding everyday moral situations which you are likely to encounter in the world of business.

We will be reading numerous articles by various authors that assert positions on moral issues. Often, the moral values that guide an author's thinking are not clearly specified since moral principles are commonly intuited affectively and unconsciously in the expression of our moral

judgments, as we have seen. I may feel strongly that something is wrong and be convinced that I am right to feel that way, without knowing why, exactly, I feel that way or what moral principle or moral value is generating that strong feeling. The topics herein are exercises aimed at closing that knowledge gap. **You should work to become aware of the moral values and principles we learned about in the previous text that are guiding the moral judgments you make in relation to the issues presented here.** You can then sift through your responsiveness and reflect on whether you agree with the author's principles, prefer your own moral principles, or think there are other principles that should be considered to arrive at a just and caring solution.



The topics presented in this text are structured differently than the chapters of the previous volume. Each topic presents a specific moral value issue or dilemma arising within the context of business at various levels of everyday practical engagement, always looking at the issue or dilemma pluralistically from two or more opposing points of view. *Thus, the topics call for your reflection, deliberation and discernment in the service of an evaluation, judgment and clear, coherent articulation of your moral reasoning, moral feelings and moral position in relation to the issue.* You will be asked to take definitive moral stands on the topical issues using the cognitive and affective tools at your disposal.

After a consideration of the nature and purpose of business in general at the outset, the topics are organized beginning with moral issues that arise within the specific context of particular businesses, such as questions concerning gender diversity, women on boards, codes of ethics, whistleblowing, etc. From there, the topics move out to more general business contexts like those impacted by self-learning algorithms and Big Data. Finally, the topics move to broad moral issues arising in the international and global business arenas, such as whether multinational corporations have any moral responsibility to workers in their supply chains.

Overall, the topics aim to zero in on the kind of moral challenges that you will most certainly encounter, one way or another, in the business world, if you haven't already. They are intentionally geared toward challenging you to articulate and justify your moral position in your own voice—which is not always easy to do.

Thus, the specific subject matter of individual topics seems less important to me, practically speaking, than your cognitive, affective and reflective engagement with the moral value challenges raised by the topics. What is important, I think, are the insights or enlightenments produced by your actively working to determine and articulate your moral values in regard to the topic, and

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what you are able to learn about your moral self from your reflection on your experience of this engagement.

The various topics, then, can be thought of as your personal ethics laboratory. You can use this lab for the exploration and possible upgrade of your personal moral value orientation. Make an effort to determine where you stand in regard to these issues, or where you think you should stand.



Topics 1, 2, and 3 are concerned with various reflections on the nature of business within a capitalist framework and the demands of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The neoliberal perspective is presented along with a critique of neoliberalism. A socialist economic view is presented along with an argument for why we should give socialism a fair hearing. A shareholder view of capitalism is contrasted with the stakeholder model.

The neoliberal capitalist view argues that social justice issues are primarily, if not exclusively, the responsibility of government, not business. The stakeholder view takes a broader view of the firm which includes all those persons who are in any way affected by the activity of the firm. The socialist view argues that it is capitalism itself that causes the social justice problems, and so it is capitalism itself that must be replaced with a socialist framework.

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In order to avoid black or white judgments, you should think of these perspectives—neoliberal capitalism, shareholder and stakeholder theory, and socialism—as forming a continuum of many possible capitalist/socialist economic organizational patterns in reference to questions of social justice and corporate social responsibility. Which is best? Where is the right balance of justice and care to be found?



Following from the questions about corporate social responsibility (CSR) raised in Topic 1, Topic 2 presents an alternative view of business within a capitalist framework that is growing in popularity these days called “Shared Value.” The shared value approach argues that it is possible to solve social justice issues while simultaneously making a profit through the critical restructuring of the company’s supply chain and value proposition, looking for ways to solve social justice issues, especially in untapped markets among the poorest of the poor, and make a profit doing it. Yet the people at the bottom of the global economic pyramid—a huge, potential market, to be sure—are also the most vulnerable to exploitation. Are safeguards needed? Is Shared Value just a new way of talking about business-as-usual while avoiding the demands of CSR? Should you be skeptical of this idea? Or is this the way business in the 21st century should be heading?

As if responding to these questions and looking more to the *person* of the business owner or manager rather than merely tweaking the supply chain, Topic 3 presents the approach to business called Conscious Capitalism (CC). CC is an approach to enlightened business practice guided by a commitment to a higher purpose, stakeholder equity, and a genuine concern for people and community. From the practice of these values, it is argued, profits will inevitably flow, perhaps even greater profits than if you focused on profit-making directly. Sounds good, but can this model work for all businesses? Can any single business model be *the* universally correct

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business model? Is CC really a “business model” at all? Or, is it, in fact, a description of the moral values that the most enlightened and fully conscious business person would naturally embody, especially a business person aiming to live the best possible life? What do *you* think?

The text then turns to a consideration of various specific moral issues arising in the workplace.

I sincerely hope you enjoy learning about and wrangling with these important moral topics.

RDW – April 2019

