BUSINESS ETHICS THROUGH MOVIES

A CASE STUDY APPROACH

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To Ruth and To Birgit

I celebrate your insight,
Your creative spirit

As for me,

"Yes, there were times
when I forgot not only who I was,
but that I was, forgot to be.
Then I was no longer that sealed jar
to which I owed my being so well preserved,
but a wall gave way
and I filled with roots and tame stems for example,
stakes long since dead and ready for burning,
the recess of night and the imminence of dawn…"
—Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*

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Introduction to the Text

Nelson Mandela: How do you inspire your team to do their best?
Francois Pienaar: By example. I've always thought to lead by example, sir.
Nelson Mandela: Well, that is right. That is exactly right. But how do we get them to be better then they think they can be? That is very difficult, I find. Inspiration, perhaps…

—Invictus

Movies are a powerful medium, maybe *the* most powerful one of all. They show us what it means to be courageous, honorable, and generous. They also show us how people can fall short of those goals. From those who live with integrity to those who are up to their necks in moral sludge, from heroes who are moral exemplars to villains with ice in their veins. The host of characters portrayed on the screen run the ethical gamut.

On the level of the individual, movies help us see the vital role ethics plays in our lives. Choices and decisions come at us like potholes in the road: some we see ahead, others appear without warning. In both cases, we are called to assess the situation, weigh the options, factor in relevant values and principles, and make a decision. Movies provide an excellent platform for developing techniques of analysis and sharpening our moral reasoning skills.

Movies bring ethics to life and draw us in, so we identify with the characters and picture ourselves in their shoes. We feel their pain, their fears, and desires and understand the basis of their hopes. Movies can motivate us to take the moral high road and find the best in ourselves. Thanks to the engaging ways ethical dilemmas are presented, they can stimulate us to delve deeper. We then take more seriously the opportunities that come our

way. By showing us examples of nobility and inner strength, we are encouraged to nurture it in ourselves.

All of these qualities make them perfect vehicles for studying *and* doing Business Ethics. As we will see in this book, a movie can be as useful as a case study in highlighting moral problems, clarifying why one course of action is superior to another, and helping us grasp the personal and professional repercussions of the decisions we make. A movie can also give us insight into the ways we are defined or bounded by our work (paid and unpaid). We face pressures, expectations, written or unwritten rules, regulations, codes of conduct, and norms that are meant to guide us. It gives us instruments to help navigate moral territory.

A Case Study Approach

Case studies help us set out the parameters of ethical reflection and problem-solving. Evaluating moral conflicts and balancing competing interests is more understandable in the form of a case, a narrative, a story, a TV show, or a movie. By bringing it to life, we can tackle the issues more quickly, efficiently, and with more dedication than those presented in dry, sterile packages.

The case study approach takes what is abstract, general, and remote and redirects our attention to the trenches where the action takes place. The specifics of *this* case at *tha*t time and place call for clarification, analysis, and moral assessment. Even if the issues are not *our* issues, particular cases that reveal the human dimension tend to be much more instructive (and interesting!) than a discourse on the concepts, theories, and principles. Using both case studies and movies can be a gold mine for doing Business Ethics.

Movies put us face-to-face with characters stuck on the horns of a dilemma and trying to avoid sinking into moral quicksand. They help us think through a difficult situation as the story unfolds on the screen. We follow along as the protagonist faces ethical hurdles, confronts moral quandaries, and tries to find a clear path to a satisfactory resolution.

Movies are as strong a pedagogical tool as real-world cases; together they constitute two powerful components. We can get a better grasp of abstract concepts and moral principles when ethical theories are brought to life. That is one of the values of *applied* ethics, including Business Ethics.

A third component of our study is the inclusion of ethics codes in this text. They reveal the values that guide the policies and decision-making of

a business. As a result, they are a key part of our exploration. These codes are not filler on a company's website. They set out the moral base of the corporation and provide guidance for its policies, procedures, and ethical decision-making. Examining these codes is most instructive.

The Focus of this Text

In the various movies we examine here we see protagonists who go the extra step and those who lack the moral fiber to do what's right. We see character traits that are inspiring and a few that are downright repugnant. We see those who rise to the occasion—such as whistleblower Jeffrey Wigand (*The Insider*), union organizer Rita O'Grady (*Made in Dagenham*), and South African president Nelson Mandela (*Invictus*). We see everyday people who find the inner strength to fight injustice and bring about change. They show how very important is the ethical core of businesses, institutions, and governing bodies.

You and I both know that not all protagonists are worth writing home about. Some are morally flawed and lose their way. Stephen Glass from *Shattered Glass*, Phil Connors from *Groundhog Day*, Karen Crowder from *Michael Clayton*, and Gordon Gekko from *Wall Street* all demonstrate where the path of inauthenticity can lead.

Being able to contemplate issues and ideas via movies, cases, and ethics codes is priceless for doing Business Ethics. The specifics of *this* set of players; *those* issues; *that* time and place clarify what's at stake and what principles are (or should be) brought to bear on the decision-making. In this way case studies spotlight the components of a moral quandary and give us a way to factor in theoretical constructs or models. The benefits of this process should not be underestimated.

Another thing about the case study approach is that we gain a set of tools for assessing a person's moral character—as well as corporate decision-making. We have the luxury of being one step removed from the action while still able to survey the situation and draw conclusions about the moral reasoning being put to use. What a great learning tool. That we have a range of great cases—from local to national and from national to international—means we have much to gain. The truth is that Business Ethics is global in scope.

Both real-world (traditional business) cases and those from movies are effective ways to put our analytical skills to work. They provide an opportunity to analyze the issues, ponder the choices, evaluate the options from diverse perspectives, and reflect on the action taken. Along with ethics

codes and ethical theories factored into the decision-making, we have some powerful means for investigating the field.

The territory spans ethics in the workplace, corporate decision-making, conflicts between employees and employers, concerns of customers, and controversies regarding product safety, interpersonal relations, the environment, human rights, global justice—and more.

The Structure of this Text

There are three units to this text. The first, "Moral Navigation: Business Ethics and Society" gives an overview of the territory and some tools for the journey. The second, "Moral Leadership: Ethical Theory," sets out the major frameworks for moral reasoning. The third, "Moral Reflection: Thorny Questions," presents some challenges that put our moral reasoning skills to work.

Unit 1. Moral Navigation: Business Ethics and Society

In this unit, we look at the territory of Business Ethics. The four chapters of this unit provide key tools to help us on our way. This includes checklists and techniques for analyzing arguments, dismantling cases, and weighing the various components. The first chapter, "Tools for the Journey," sets the foundation. In Chapter 1.2 we look at moral integrity in Business Ethics, as shown in Johnson & Johnson's handling of the Tylenol crisis.

Chapter 1.3 tackles the issue of profits and how greed can lead us astray. Political theorists Karl Marx and John Rawls offer some guidance so justice can prevail. The last chapter of Unit 1 looks at the impact of technology. Drawing from movies *Her*, *The Net*, and *Disconnect* and the case of the NSA surveillance and Target's data breach, Chapter 1.4 shows how much technology has touched our lives.

Unit 2. Moral Leadership: Ethical Theories

We start with an overview ("Aerial Surveillance") of the concepts and theories and apply them to films and cases in the rest of the unit. The first is in Chapter 2.2, where we look at Teleological Ethics, which focuses on end goals, rather than the means.

In Chapter 2.3 we see what happens when the emphasis shifts from goals to intentions and moral obligations. This is Deontological Ethics.

Its duty-based approach has been very influential. The next chapter, 2.4, brings us to Virtue Ethics, which focuses on moral character and the virtues needed for a life of purpose. Our focus here is Aristotle, but we briefly look at Confucius, who continues to have impact. The last chapter of Unit 2 is on Feminist Ethics. All too often, ethics books and classes marginalize or eliminate this field of ethics. Doing so is unwise, however, as this theoretical model and its expanded notion of moral agency and the role of relationships in moral reasoning deserve our consideration.

Unit 3. Moral Reflection: Thorny Questions

In the third unit we turn to some thorny questions of Business Ethics and zero in on five that are especially troubling. We start with environmental disasters and, through the movies and cases, see how vital it is to have measures in place. Chapter 3.2 tackles workplace violence. It's just about everywhere these days—post offices, airports, schools, day care centers, shopping malls, and more. Lives depend on us giving this matter our attention so the current realities can be addressed. In the next chapter (3.3), we look at workplace inequities such as unequal pay scales (e.g., with gender discrimination, ageism, or the like), sweatshops, and different pay tiers. Another thorny issue is workplace harassment, which we examine in Chapter 3.4. This can take the form of sexual harassment, assault, rape, stalking, or bullying. That nowhere seems safe from harassment—even the armed forces—tells us why we need to work for change.

In Chapter 3.5 we look at global justice and human rights. Of course we like bargain-priced clothes, food, and electronics. But we can't shield ourselves from the costs of outsourcing, importing cheap labor, and taking other countries' resources for *our* use. Our last chapter of the unit and of the book—Chapter 3.6—underscores the value and importance of personal transformation. We have to take responsibility for our own moral development—and for the values we hold dear and live by (or fail to live by).

Throughout the Chapters

The three aspects touched on throughout the book are: movies, cases, and ethics codes. Each one presents dilemmas, conflicts, and challenges facing individuals, businesses, institutions, and communities. And each one calls us to examine the moral basis for the decisions we make and actions we take.

This is not some abstract mind-game or thought experiment meant to entertain us. The moral engagement on the screen has prescriptive and descriptive components, so we are called to contemplate what *we* would do in like circumstances. Think about the movie *Contagion,* a film about a global pandemic. When an official of the Centers for Disease Control tips off his wife about a quarantine, the *&%@ hits the fan. His dilemma and conflicting values would be *ours* as well, if we were in his shoes.

Similarly, what would *you* do if you discovered your co-worker was fabricating stories—lies upon lies put together in the form of news reports? We may not be the one committing egregious acts, but are witnesses to the moral lapses of others. What should we do? *Shattered Glass* raises such issues.

Just as the movies highlight key issues in Business Ethics, the cases help us see how actual corporations are put to the moral test. Some pass with flying colors; some fall short; some are a disgrace. Using real-world cases along with movies makes for a dynamite combination in the classroom, in professional development workshops, in film clubs, and more. And we can all benefit from that.

A Note for Students

I hope you enjoy this book and it helps develop your skills in Business Ethics. This text has three levels:

1   *Movies* (of which there are 36 discussed in the book)
2   *Actual, real-world case studies* (of which there are 30)
3   *Ethics codes* (of which there are 17)

Each one shows us different aspects of moral reasoning and gives us food for thought.

Throughout the book are also *exercises.* Even if your instructor doesn't assign them, think them through on your own. They help you stand back, get an overview of the issues, and sharpen your problem-solving skills. If you write down your answers that is also helpful.

In Chapter 1.1 you'll find a Case Study Checklist. This is put to use several times to show how it works as a tool for breaking down the movie or the case study. This has the side effect of strengthening your observation and critical thinking skills—clearly something of use.

A Word for Instructors

This book is the very picture of *flexibility*. You can proceed from Unit 1 directly, ending with Chapter 3.6 of Unit 3. Or, if you prefer to emphasize theory and its value as a framework, start with Unit 2 and then move to Units 1 and 3. All but two introductory chapters present movies, cases *and* ethics codes. This makes it clear that the ethical dilemmas presented on screen have real-life correlates. Note also:

- *The movies*—yes, they are powerful vehicles and I wholeheartedly endorse using them. But you don't have to use all or any of the movies discussed here. They illustrate how protagonists face ethical dilemmas. There are 36 movies that serve as a spotlight in this book. They provide an engaging way to do ethics and to develop a variety of skills that no one should be without (analytical skills, reflective skills, writing skills, the ability to generate ideas in problem-solving, and so on).
- *The case studies* work with the movies to highlight the moral quandaries that reside at the core of Business Ethics. There are 30 case studies in this book. They range from classics like the Ford Pinto, Tylenol, Film Recovery Systems, Inc., Exxon Valdez, and Eveleth Mines to recent cases like the Fast Food workers' strike, the Bangladesh sweatshop collapse, the case of Costco and the tainted berries, and salmonella in Foster Farms' chickens.
- *Ethical theories* form the basis of Unit 2. It includes the major theories (from Teleological Ethics to Deontological Ethics to Virtue Ethics and Feminist Ethics). The key theorists are there too—and a few elsewhere (Marx and Rawls are in Chapter 1.3 on greed and Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh is in Chapter 3.6 on Personal Transformation). Confucius is mentioned in Chapter 2.4 on Virtue Ethics to indicate that Aristotle isn't the only Virtue Ethicist.
- *Ethics codes* are rarely a part of Business Ethics books, which seems rather odd if you think about it. Don't skip the ethics codes. At least do a cross-section, so students understand that the values lying at the base of decisions and actions are not incidental. Many, if not most, were the work of dedicated people working hard to distill the moral core of the business or corporation.
- *The chapters* present a range of moral issues and methods for tackling those problems. The focus includes global issues (a global justice chapter, international cases, and movies and documentaries on crises around the world)—which we ought not overlook in doing Business

Ethics. You and your class can use the book as a sort of illustration, an ethical deconstruction manual—and look at entirely different movies. That's one of the strengths of this book—you are not tied to any of these films. Pick your own if you prefer! This liberates you in ways not all books that bring in films care as much to do (as they are studying the movies rather than using them as a springboard, as I do).

- *Exercises:* In addition to what this book provides students (see above note), the book has *exercises* throughout. These can be used for class discussion, on-line chat topics, short (or longer) essay questions, or group projects. You pick! Many ask the students to reflect on the issues and go from there. Some, like the exercise on GM's massive recall in 2014, ask students to do some investigation to learn more. My goal is to stimulate students to think about the ethical dilemmas, the concepts, values, and theories, the repercussions for business and for the society, and issues of accountability.

Thank you for joining me on this journey and using this text!

Unit 1

Moral Navigation: Business Ethics and Society

1.1

Tools for the Journey

Spotlight: *A Hijacking*
Ethics codes: Apple; Google

> **Connor Julian:** *We can't rush these people. Time is a Western thing. It means nothing to them.*
>
> —A Hijacking

Sometimes we surprise ourselves by our ability to roll with the punches. And this much is clear: we don't always know when disaster will strike and are not always prepared when it does. Movies are full of protagonists whose lives change overnight because of one unforeseen event or another. It could be zombies (*World War Z, 28 Days (or Weeks) Later)* or possessed spirits (*The Conjuring*, *The Possession*). It could be acts of God (*The Impossible*, *All is Lost*) or human-caused accidents (*Gravity*, *Arbitrage*). It could be morally suspect characters in your face (*Captain Phillips*, *The Grandmaster*) or out to get someone you seek to protect (*Taken, Olympus Has Fallen*).

You may simply be in the wrong place at the wrong time. But there you are. You can't run; you can't hide. You have to do something. And you know this much: All decisions have consequences, unavoidably so. This fact adds to the weight of the circumstances. So there you are.

It could be a terrorist takeover of an elite mall in Nairobi, a rampage in Maryland close to home, or a student armed with a gun in a Massachusetts classroom. It could be a mountain lion roaming a neighborhood in Glendale or a gang rape on a bus in India. All are terrifying to contemplate, and all are real-world cases. None of the victims were likely prepared for the events that transpired even though similar adversities occupy the evening news. We've seen it a hundred times, but always at a distance, until now.

So there you are. Picture yourself at work, a typical day, nothing new really. You are performing the same old tasks with the same old crew. You

may be the one in charge or just a cog in the wheel. You may not want power, but are thrust into a position of leadership. The rules of the game may be yours to set or are set by others, perhaps complete strangers, who have assigned you the moral status of a gnat.

So there you are. You didn't ask for your world to be turned upside down and you may have no say whatsoever in what follows. But you are present, with your faculties as sharp as ever. You have to pay close attention or what little control you have may slip like a wet fish out of your hands.

So here we are. We watch ourselves with new eyes, knowing that our priorities and values may need a major overhaul, and that the assumptions we're operating with warrant a closer look. And, yes, we may surprise ourselves at our resilience, our problem-solving skills, or our ability to respond to the unexpected. We may be pleased to discover our compassion for others or disturbed to realize that we are not as generous or altruistic as we once thought.

Being able to transport ourselves so we can contemplate issues and ideas via case studies and ethical dilemmas presented on screen is priceless for doing Business Ethics. The particulars of a case—that situation, those issues—help clarify what counts when assessing a person's moral character, the values of a corporation, or the actions and policies taken. Similarly, the particulars of a film allow us the luxury of being one step removed from the action without losing its immediacy, importance, and ability to convey lessons to be learned. Movies are a great learning tool.

As we will see throughout this book, these two forms of case studies—those based on actual events and those from movies—put our analytical skills to work. They give us the opportunity to examine the issues, ponder the choices, evaluate the decisions from diverse perspectives, and reflect on the consequences that follow. Along with ethics codes and ethical theories, we have some powerful means for investigating the field.

Let's start by looking at the benefits of using movies for studying Business Ethics.

Using Movies in Business Ethics

There's a seductive quality to movies that pulls us in. Each action, each character is bigger than life. It's a dynamic medium; one capable of imprinting images and dialogue on our skulls until the end of time. Who can forget *The Godfather*'s "offer you can't refuse," with the sight of a

bloody horsehead driving the point home? Who wasn't struck by Gordon Gekko's "greed is good" speech or Lou Mannheim's warning to Bud Fox, "Kid, you're on a roll. Enjoy it while it lasts, 'cause it never does"? As Plato's Allegory of the Cave attests, the images on the screen can take on a life of their own. They often captivate us and even transport us by lifting us out of this reality into another dimension. They are vehicles for presenting ideas, setting out ethical dilemmas, and portraying characters and events. Thanks to movies, we have a way to develop our moral reasoning skills that is imaginative, vivid, thought-provoking, and often memorable.

Some movies transcend the level of fiction by giving us insight into our lives and into the world around us. That is the *reflective dimension* of film. For example, looking back at the Vietnam War—distant history for some, a daily presence for others—it may not be easy to grasp how dark a time it was. Because of movies like *Apocalypse Now* and *Casualties of War*, however, we get a sense of the madness of that conflict and a way to better grasp the horrors of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Similarly, movies like *The Insider*, *Food, Inc.* and *Up in the Air* give us insight into unsavory business practices. Whether it is duplicitous behavior in the tobacco business (*The Insider*), unsanitary conditions in agribusiness (*Food, Inc.*) or corporate downsizing (*Up in the Air*), business policies can change the social and economic landscape.

In this chapter we will look at key tools for analysis. These include the two approaches to ethics (Metaethics and Normative Ethics), handy checklists for dismantling arguments or setting out case studies, and tips for examining policies, guidelines, and corporate ethics codes. The movie *A Hijacking* is useful for illustrating the issues.

The Value of Film in Business Ethics

A good movie can leave a lasting impression on us. It can change how we see the world by playing a *descriptive role* offering insight into the problems we confront and the inferences we draw. It also has a *prescriptive component* in shaping how we think about the issue in question, and what factors should count in the equation. Among the considerations are the interrelationships and the moral status assigned to the various players.

Movies are a powerful vehicle for examining social, political, and ethical issues. They bring ethical dilemmas into focus so we can do a close analysis of the issues. There's something about the story being told large, bigger than life. It helps to be able to watch at a distance and with some detachment, so that we are not tied in knots by the threads of the story. Being engaged

while being one step removed allows for clarity of moral reasoning. Basically, if we are in the audience and not the ones on the hot seat, we can stand back and evaluate both the dilemmas and the decisions. Even those that cut close to home, that are also *our* issues, can be examined without the weight of responsibility hanging over our heads.

Moral reasoning is often at center stage in the movies we watch. The ethical theories and conceptual frameworks we use shape our analysis. All of the chapters in Unit 2 demonstrate that. There we see how theories can play a vital role in unpacking the ethical dilemmas in movies and in helping us understand movies as a form of case study. They can be as effective in exploring issues as real-world case studies drawn from business in developing our own moral reasoning.

Two avenues will be pursued to meet that goal. One is to use case studies (actual cases in Business Ethics) to illustrate the range of issues and the sorts of reasoning involved in ethical problem solving. The second avenue is to use movies as another kind of case study. It is useful to start with an overview of the plot, focusing on the protagonist(s) and the ethical issue(s) that drive the action, a scene, or a specific decision. We will then go into that in enough detail to give us some tools and insight for developing our own skills at Business Ethics.

Overview of the Ethical Territory

There are two main branches of Ethics. One provides a bird's eye view of ethical concepts and theory and the interrelations between one theory and another. It is called Metaethics. The other branch focuses on the practical, the experiential, the level of ethical actions and moral judgments. It is called Normative Ethics. Let's get a sense of each of these two areas.

Metaethics

It is in Metaethics where we examine the theoretical frameworks, the models of moral reasoning, ethical rules, moral principles and the concepts that are used. Metaethics focuses on the structure behind moral reasoning. We are doing Metaethics when we compare and contrast ethical theories or examine concepts like "good," "bad," "virtuous," "vicious,"—as well as terms like "moral agency," "autonomy," "intentions," "culpability," and so on.

Language shapes the discourse. We know from advertising, the power that words like "winners" or "losers" can have on what we think, what we want, and how much we are willing to spend to accomplish that goal.

Think of ad slogans like "Coke is life," "We are driven," and "Just do it." A pithy slogan, as those in marketing know all too well, can stick in the brain for eons. And in just three words too!

In addition, the labels we use can affect our way of thinking. We see this with the terms "student" and "customer." Referring to someone enrolled in a university class as a "customer" or "consumer" rather than a "student" has significant repercussions. Think about it. We say, "The customer is always right." We would not normally say that of students, at least not in terms of academic matters. However, when it comes to *financial* affairs, students are often seen as consumers with bargaining power. The terminology shapes the boundaries of the policies and attitudes that follow.

Ethicist Douglas Birsch examines one of the key functions of Metaethics, that of evaluating ethical theories. He sets out four useful recommendations that we can draw from (2002, p. 6). They are:

Key Functions of Metaethics

1   *Establish guidelines:* Ethical theories should have some specific guidelines.
2   *Evaluate guidelines:* Ethical theories should be able to prioritize guidelines.
3   *Limit self-interest:* Ethical theories should have guidelines limiting self-interest.
4   *Solve ethical dilemmas:* Ethical theories should have guidelines that help us solve ethical problems.

Normative Ethics

Normative Ethics focuses on the practical dimension, not abstract concepts. Here we look at the ways in which ethics and ethical-decision-making take place in the world and in our lives (including the workplace!). As a result, Normative Ethics encompasses moral judgments about people, actions, and values. We try to figure out if an action is right or wrong, or if a person or group is virtuous or vicious (good or evil, morally upstanding or morally deficient), or apply a set of criteria in making a moral claim or judgment (e.g., "It was generous of the Board to give the workers a bonus this year," or "The FDA ought to play a stronger role around antibiotic-resistant salmonella").

In a work or institutional setting, decisions and policies are often bound by guidelines, regulations, or an ethical code. Throughout this book, we

will look at a diverse collection of ethical codes ranging from small businesses to mega-corporations, from food production to high tech, and more. In Unit 2 we will see how ethical theories can be used as models for interpreting or assessing business ethical dilemmas that we find in movies and in real-world cases. As a result, we will see how both Metaethics and Normative Ethics are fundamentally important.

Tackling Cases in Business Ethics

Whether we are looking at cases from the business world or ones portrayed on the screen, the approach we take and the tools we use make all the difference. Keep in mind what we want to achieve: We want to pull out the key elements, look at the ethical dilemma, weigh the relevant factors, and arrive at a right decision. This means knowing what should be done and what rules, values, and principles should guide our assessment.

With ethical tools, we can go to the various cases in this book, and beyond. We can then dismantle them to see what's at issue, what values and goals should be factored in, and what to avoid by way of mistakes or sloppy thinking. With that in mind, let's consider how to approach a case and subject it to a moral analysis. Seven steps are key, as we can see in this checklist:

Case Study Checklist
A Guide to Ethical Decision Making

1   *Define the Problem.* Note the general issue(s), the ethical dilemma to be resolved, major players and decision-maker(s), competing perspectives, and who stands to gain or lose.
2   *Set out the Key Players.* Note whose interests are at stake and who or what counts in the equation. If there are allies and/or adversaries, state who they are.
3   *State the Facts.* "Where?" and "When?" are right behind "What?" when trying to nail down the specifics of the situation. Make note of the general context, details of the case, including the time and place, and what boundaries should be kept in mind. Note any relevant restrictions or guidelines that ought to be brought into the decision-making.
4   *Clarify Key Concepts and Values.* Terms and concepts shape the way problems are defined and evaluated—along with the values, they are at the heart of moral reasoning. Factor in as well any ethical codes,

regulations, legal constrictions, and relevant cultural or religious beliefs that bear upon the case. Keep those values in mind as you proceed.

5 *Settle on the Criteria of Assessment.* Set out the criteria and process for weighing options and evaluating evidence. Be aware of the ways in which criteria broaden or narrow the territory and inform the decision-making process.

6 *Get Some Perspective.* Turn over the problem and examine it from different points of view—and anticipate criticism. Solicit input and listen to the different voices with an open mind. Consider potential consequences in light of the ethical and legal parameters. Assess opposing positions with the openness needed to see any pitfalls of your tentative decision or plan. Make adjustments as needed.

7 *Make A Plan—Decide!* Ask if it is the best choice in light of the moral principles guiding the decision-making. Amend your decision as needed.

Applying the Checklist: *A Hijacking*

Let's put it to work with the movie *A Hijacking* (2013). It centers on a Danish cargo ship that has been taken over by Somali pirates. Their demands are both straightforward and unsurprising: They want money, lots of money. They have brought along a translator who plays a pivotal role, communicating by phone and fax the pirates' ransom demands and the CEO's response. The lives of the seven hostages (the ship's crew) hang in the balance as negotiations go on and the situation grows more tense.

The story moves between the polished executive dressed to perfection, cuff links and all, and the sweaty, scruffy cook. The one is in corporate headquarters in Copenhagen, invested in staying in control and heading his side of the negotiations. The other is held captive on the ship on the Indian Ocean and is thrust in a leadership role by the pirate's translator. The movie goes back and forth between these two protagonists. We open with Mikkel, the cook, making omelets for the crew, oblivious to the fact that pirates are about to take over the ship. Cut to Denmark, where Peter, the tightly wound CEO, is berating his assistant for his inferior skills at deal making. It's downhill from there.

We can see how the checklist helps us unpack the ethical base by going through each step. Let's see how it can help gives us insight into the movie.

1.   *The Dilemma*

At issue: The ship has been taken over by pirates demanding a $12 million ransom.

- The objectives facing CEO Peter Ludvigsen are: (1) to engineer the return of the crew (seven of them) without anyone being harmed; (2) to minimize the ransom to keep the costs down; and (3) to try to prevent more Danish ships being seized by pirates.
- The objectives facing the ship's cook Mikkel Hartmann are: (1) to try to avoid antagonizing the Somali pirates; (2) to do what he can to work with middle man and translator Omar; and (3) try to get the corporation to pay whatever it takes to get the crew released unharmed.

   Interests at stake: There are three parties in the conflict—the pirates, the crew, and the corporation. The repercussions of any decisions made affect a wider audience, including other corporations (fearful of piracy involving *their* ships, aircraft, production centers, etc.), society in general, groups associated with the pirates (e.g., a terrorist group or political advocacy group), and so on.

2.   *The Players*

The movie centers on two key players—the CEO and the ship's cook. Others play a supporting role. We see the differences of perspective; the one far removed from the scene of the crime, the other right in the thick of it. We see this in the hardships inflicted upon the crew-members, such as restricted access to the toilet. This is but one of many indignities they will suffer before the ordeal is over.

- *The CEO:* Back at the corporate headquarters are Peter, his assistant Lars and hostage expert Connor Julian assisting with the negotiations. They are gathered together around a table staring at the telephone, waiting for calls from the pirates, with Julian keeping track of the shifting dollar amounts as the haggling over the ransom continues.
- *The Hostages:* The hostages are the pawns in a battle over money. We see how the capital is distributed in the bargaining process: the company has the money and the pirates have the time (and are willing to extend the hostage situation from days to weeks and then to months). The crew's patience and mental and physical health are stretched to the limit.