

Woodstock Business Conference Moral Decision Making

PART TWO

Part Two Index:

I. Introduction

II. Topics--Moral Decision-Making

- * Topic 1: Corporate Culture and How it Works*
- * Topic 2: World View or "Horizon" and the Role it Plays in Business Decisions*
- * Topic 3: Deciding "Is it Worthwhile?" and the Motives That Promote Business*

Decisions

- * Topic 4: Pursuing Value in Business Decisions*
- * Topic 5: How Do We Bring the Gospel Message Back to the Workplace?*
- * Topic 6: What Happens When the Organization's Horizon and Our Personal*

Horizons Meet?

- * Topic 7: The Role of Forgiveness in the Workplace*
- * Topic 8: Moral Decision-Making: Striving to Operate at Our Best*
- * Topic 9: Exploring Resistance to Operating at Our Best*
- * Topic 10: Overcoming Resistance to Operating at Our Best and Consensus*

Statement

I. Introduction

The pages that follow contain ten topics for WBC Chapter members to consider as they pursue the course on Moral Decision-Making. The topics come with Scripture passages, background articles, focus questions, and exercises. The actual articles, summarized here, can be found in the Woodstock Business Conference Process Book used by chapter coordinators. The topics appear in an order that allows progressive and cumulative reflection as described in Part I. They lead to the development of a Chapter's consensus statement on moral decision-making at the end of the year.

Experience has demonstrated that chapter members may find more current articles germane to the topic and share these with other chapter members. This is always encouraged. Often chapters identify additional topics as they bubble up in discussion. This kind of selection usually occurs during the period of reflection at the end of the WBC chapter meeting. These ten topics, in the order recommended here, are offered as an aid to members seeking to understand moral decision-making. Each person brings a wealth of experience. These particular topics are designed to enable WBC members to help each other draw upon that experience in the workplace.

In some instances a discussion might prove so rich and provocative that a chapter will decide to return for additional sessions on the topic in order to probe the issues more deeply. This, too, is valuable and to be encouraged.

At the end of the course we ask that the chapter draft a consensus statement on moral decision-making and send it to the national Woodstock Business Conference office so that all the statements can be collected, combined, and distilled for general distribution.

II. Topics--Moral Decision-Making

Topic 1. Corporate Culture and How it Works

Experiencing and understanding one's corporate culture. A corporate culture that promotes awareness and putting moral concerns on the table is seen as fundamental to making good moral decisions.

Scripture: Phil 2: 1-11 Let that same mind [perspective, nest of meanings and values, culture, world view, horizon, frame of reference,] be in you that was in Christ Jesus...

Background reading:

What is Culture?

Selected Citations:

A culture is a set of meanings and values informing [giving form to] a common way of life, and there are as many cultures as there are distinct sets of such meanings and values. (Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, University of Toronto Press, p. 301.)

...culture provides the link between what men are intrinsically capable of becoming and what they actually, one by one, in fact become. Becoming human is becoming individual, and we become individual under the guidance of cultural patterns, historically created systems of meaning in terms of which we give form, order, point, and direction to our lives.

Culture is simply the way we do things around here. (Archbishop Derek Worlock of Liverpool, England, quote at pp. 12-13 in Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, Paulist Press, 1998.)

Everyone needs an approach to reality. Some paradigm, some model, of the way reality unfolds in the life of any person is necessary for the person to have any coherent, intelligible experience. By "paradigm," [William F. Lynch, S.J.] means a pattern for understanding the experiences one has or the facts one encounters. A person cannot observe a fact without an expectation or without some hypothesis, in terms of which it makes sense.

This paradigm, which structures and contextualizes experience, is produced by the imagination. For some, the world is a "jungle" that demands an aggressive posture in order to survive. For others, the technological age suggests a more logical, mechanical approach to life. Still others see life as most meaningfully portrayed in economic terms where people market their wares in an attempt to show a profit in terms of the maximization of pleasure and the minimization of pain.

Each of those paradigms suggests an operating image of reality. Each responds to certain questions, ignores others, and gives some idea of what is to be expected. Each carries a "promise" of sorts. According to Lynch, faith also constitutes a paradigm, a model, a way of inserting a person into reality. For Lynch, faith is most adequately seen as the Christic imagination characterized by its ironic qualities. (Gerald J. Bednar, *Faith as Imagination: The Contribution of William F. Lynch, S.J.*, Sheed & Ward, 1996.

Woodstock Theological Center, *Creating and Maintaining an Ethical Corporate Climate*, Georgetown University Press, (1990) pp.3-5 & 12-14. These sections set out the challenge to the business community for moral and ethical leadership and the dynamic of an ethical corporate climate.

Reflection Questions:

1. How would you describe the shared meanings and values that prevail in your present workplace?
2. Recall concrete instances where you were limited or opposed by your workplace culture. Do you remember the feelings that accompanied that experience? What did you do about it?
3. What are the ways in which we can promote Gospel values within our workplace culture?

Topic 2. World View or "Horizon" and the Role it Plays in Business Decisions

Understanding that we are limited in what we can know and what we care about at any particular time. That limit is our world view or "horizon."

Scripture: 1 Cor 13: 1-13. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways...

Background reading:

What is One's Horizon?

Selected Citations:

- The scope of our knowledge and the range of our interests are bounded. As fields of vision vary with one's standpoint, so too the scope of one's knowledge and the range of one's interests vary with the period in which one lives, one's social background and milieu, one's education and personal development.... What lies beyond one's horizon is simply outside the range of one's knowledge and interests: one neither knows nor cares. But what lies within one's horizon is in some measure, great or small, an object of interest and of knowledge. [Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p.236.]

- All human knowing occurs within a context, a horizon, a total view, an all encompassing framework, a Weltanschauung, and apart from that context it loses sense, significance, meaning. [Lonergan, *Second Collection*, University of Toronto Press (1996 ed.) p.162]

John S. Hammond, Ralph L. Keeney, Howard Raiffa, "The Hidden Traps in Decision Making," *Harvard Business Review*, September-October, 1998, pp. 47-58 and a summary of the article that identifies six traps that block good decision making. They suggest ways we can compensate in order to neutralize or defend against bad decisions caused by inadvertently falling into these traps. Awareness is the best defense.

Reflection Questions:

1. Think about a situation in your business life where one or a combination of the invisible traps mentioned in the article led you and/or your organization to a bad business decision. Describe the situation, players, circumstances, decisions, and action. Identify the better decision and action and describe the trap(s) that prevented it. What role did your world view or horizon play in overlooking the trap(s)?
2. Over time, have you experienced changes in the limits of your horizon? Recall one or more specific occasions where you can say that a change occurred. What accounts for the change? Did others or your community play a role? Was your faith a factor in the change?

Topic 3. Deciding "Is it Worthwhile?" and the Motives That Promote Business Decisions

Beside our mental mindset and thinking process, our feelings also enter into and influence our decision making. Our thinking/understanding side and our affective/feeling side come together when we confront the question "Is it worthwhile?" Understanding and fulfilling our needs and desires.

Scripture: Psalm 37: 1-9, 23-27 "Trust in the Lord and do good:...Commit your way to the Lord, trust in him, and he will act..."

Background reading:

Stratford Sherman, "Levi's: As Ye Sew, So Shall Ye Reap," Fortune, May 12, 1997, pp. 104-116. This article explores a corporate vision at Levi's that called for the company to be responsive to employees' sense of values, justice, fairness, ethics, and appreciation in the context of two different corporate actions affecting employees.

Exercise: Motives Awareness Quiz:

1. Each of us and all groups of people work to fulfill needs and desires of various sorts. List six needs and desires that regularly motivate you and your firm.
2. Organize and classify the needs and desires you have listed according to the following series of types. Examples for each are in parenthesis: Physical (food, clothing, shelter), Social (free and lawful society), Cultural (meaning in life), Personal (loving), Religious (loving and being loved by God).
3. Rank in order your needs and desires— with the most important at the top and the least important at the bottom. One way to find the rank order is to imagine yourself on your deathbed and answer the question, "Which one(s) would I absolutely and non-negotiably want to have achieved in my lifetime?"
4. Review your list and ask, "Are some of the needs and desires evil and some good?" Which ones? By what criteria did you make this choice?
5. Recall and record one business decision where you consciously identified the values that guided your decision.

Topic 4. Pursuing Value in Business Decisions

Experiencing and understanding the quest for value and what drives that pursuit. What is the criteria of choice among values.

Scripture: Mark 12: 28-34: The Great Commandment. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength....You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Background reading:

Phyllis Berman, "Throwing Away The Book," Forbes, November 2, 1998, pp. 174-181. AES illustrates the pursuit of values. It was founded to be: "Always a fun place to work...; putting social responsibility ahead of making money; always acting with integrity; and treating all people with whom it dealt with fairness."

What is the dynamic drive within us that drives us toward the good and worthwhile?
Some quotable quotes from Bernard Lonergan's *Method in Theology* on the dynamic of this spontaneous drive. He calls this "feelings that are intentional responses to value:"

- Intentional responses...answer to what is intended, apprehended, represented. The feeling relates us, not just to a cause or an end, but to an object. Such feeling gives intentional consciousness its mass, momentum, drive, power. (p.30).

- Because of our feelings, our desires and our fears, our hope or despair, our joys and sorrows, our enthusiasm and indignation, our esteem and contempt, our trust and distrust, our love and hatred, our tenderness and wrath, our admiration, veneration, reverence, our dread, horror, terror, we are oriented massively and dynamically in a world mediated by meaning. (p.31).

- Feelings that are intentional responses regard two main classes of objects...[the second is] values, whether the ontic value of persons or the qualitative value of beauty, understanding, truth, virtuous acts, noble deeds. In general, response to value both carries us toward self-transcendence and selects an object for the sake of whom or of which we transcend ourselves. (p.31).

- Not only do feelings respond to values. They do so in accord with some scale of preference. So we may distinguish vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values... (p.31).

Reflection Questions:

1. Recall and record the one business decision in which you consciously identified the values that guided your decision. [From exercise in Topic 3]
2. List and rank each of the values considered.
3. Describe the role that awareness of values played in the decision itself and in its implementation.

Topic 5. How Do We Bring the Gospel Message Back to the Workplace?

Religious values play a significant roll in how we decide what "really counts" in our business decisions. Exploring business practices informed by gospel values.

Scripture: Luke 24: 13-35 Disciples on the road to Emmanus.

Background reading:

James L. Connor, S.J., "The Role of Scripture in a WBC Chapter Meeting" [In the Appendix]. We read, we hear, we ponder, we share the Scriptures in the hope that these experiences will awaken and bring freshly alive the saint within us,...

Woodstock Theological Center, *Creating and Maintaining an Ethical Corporate Climate*, Section IV, pp. 15-18. Ethics must be integral to all the operations of the firm. A checklist of questions that probes whether the message about ethical values is being embedded into the organization's norms, expectations, and requirements.

Reflection Questions:

1. List 5 of the most important actions you would advise a business or professional organization to take in order to build and sustain a healthy corporate climate.
2. What concrete steps will you take in your firm or organization to improve its ethical climate.

Topic 6. What Happens When the Organization's Horizon and Our Personal Horizons Meet?

Understanding the relationship between the world view of one's business or industry or particular and business organization and one's own "horizon." Exploring instances of clash and congruence.

Scripture: John 13: 1-15 Jesus washes the feet of his disciples

Background reading:

Leonard A. Hadley, "Business the Old Fashioned Way," speech given in Des Moines, Iowa, January 1999.

James L. Nolan, "Response to Leonard Hadley's Business the Old Fashioned Way."

Exercises:

1. The Personal Horizon

Leonard Hadley of Maytag spoke of honesty, integrity, and candor as values he held dear. On the display below place from 5 -10 business goals, objectives, values that you hold. The more important to you should be closer and those less crucial should be more distant.

2. Taking Stock of Goals and Objectives

What has been your contribution to the horizon of our own organization, big or small? How has the relationship between the company horizon and your personal horizon been built, sustained, relied upon, revised?

What has been your contribution to the drafting or revision of the Company's mission statement ("mission statement" here includes any publically announced, tangible manifestation of the purpose, goals, values, standards, or ethical environment of the organization)?

Who do you manage with the company and how do values, ethics, and the "climate" (the cluster of values, norms, standards, expectations, hopes, and meanings) enter into your conversations, evaluations, directions and orders, counseling and advice?

In your relations with your superior(s), how do values, culture, ideals, standards, come up in conversation, in direction, in what is expected?

With peers within the organization do you express your moral and ethical concerns when you feel them surface in the course of a conversation? Or are they repressed? Note, there maybe good reasons for not expressing them explicitly on some occasions. But if you do not bring them up using "secular" human potential, corporate development, or other such language, why?

When you have raised moral or ethical concerns, how has it gone? Think of a concrete experience and tell the story. Was is a disaster, or did it really contribute to the corporate culture?

How do you evaluate concretely whether you have had any influence on your corporate culture — for better or worse?

Topic 7. The Role of Forgiveness in the Workplace

Understanding the need for forgiveness within our own organizations and our circles of business relationships. Experiencing the dynamic that promotes forgiveness and healing.

Scripture:

Luke 6: 31-43 Jesus' sayings on forgiveness. "Forgive, and you will be forgiven." "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not see the log in your own eye?"

Reading:

Rev. William J. Byron, S.J., *Answers From Within: Spiritual Guidelines for Managing Setbacks in Work and Life*, Macmillan, New York, 1998. Chapters 23 & 30. These chapters address the question of broken promises and the healing role of forgiveness.

Reflection Questions: Recall a workplace situation where forgiveness was needed and extended.

You can be the forgiver, the forgiven, or both in the case at hand.

1. What were the details and your role in the case?
2. What were the especially important questions or issues forgiveness had to address?
3. Was it difficult? For you, for others? If so, why?
4. How did you know when you had reached the point where the forgiveness could be offered or received?
5. What conditions, if any, preceded the offering of forgiveness? Was it in fact received?
6. Did dealing with this situation require you to change in any way?
7. Who contributed significantly (either formally or informally) to the process of analyzing the situation, identifying options, determining which of the options was most likely to work best, and carrying out the decision?

Topic 8. Moral Decision-Making: Striving to Operate at Our Best

Understanding the dynamic of striving to operate at our best, toward personal authenticity, within a horizon formed of religious faith. We notice what is happening in our lives. We seek to understand it. We affirm consciously what is true or false. We act on it appropriately and responsibly. The vitality of this spontaneous unfolding process is the Spirit of God within our human spirit.

Scripture: Deut 30: 1-2, 9-14 "The Law is very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts, you have only to carry it out."

Background Reading:

St. Ignatius of Loyola, "The First Principle and Foundation," Spiritual Exercises. "Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord,..."

J. Michael Stebbins, "Personal Authenticity," Faith & Values at Work, Woodstock Theological Center, Washington, D.C. 1998. To identify and become familiar with the four fundamental capacities people use whenever they are doing their best to make sense of things and act morally.

Exercise:

After reading "The First Principle and Foundation" from St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises and Mike Stebbins' chapter on "Personal Authenticity," complete the following self-assessment:

1. To what degree is your life, especially your role at work or in your profession, marked by a sustained spirit of authentic thought and action? Circle one of the following answers, or write your own answer if none of these fit:

For me, striving for authenticity is a way of life, a habit.

I have a strong commitment to living authentically.

My drive towards authenticity is alive, but easily derailed, especially during difficult times.

My thinking, choices, and actions tend to be inauthentic rather than authentic.

Topic 9. Exploring Resistance to Operating at Our Best

Understanding the sources and blockages to operating at our best, personally and organizationally.

Scripture: John 3: 16-21. "For God so loved the world...."

Background Reading:

Bernard Lonergan, Method in Theology

(1) Self-Transcendence. pp. 104-105. Here Lonergan recognizes "the trivialization of human life arising from pursuit of fun," "the harshness of human life arising from the ruthless exercise of power," and "the despair about human welfare springing from the conviction that the universe is absurd." He suggests that the necessary antidote to these conditions begins with the human capacity for self-transcendence marked by our urge to raise questions. He delineates different kinds of questions: for intelligence, for knowing, and for moral self-transcendence. He says that the capacity for self-transcendence becomes an actuality only when one falls in love. Here is the key! "As the question of God is implicit in all our questioning, so being in love with God is the basic fulfillment of our conscious intentionality." With that orientation we turn the corner.

(2) Faith. pp. 116-118. Lonergan adds that our authenticity consists in being like God, i.e., in self-transcending, in being origins of value, in true love." Faith has the power of undoing decline. But, as people of faith, we have to acknowledge our real guilt and amend our ways. "The task of repentance and conversion is life-long." He affirms that our questioning here is well worth the effort, a noble and holy task.

Reflection Questions:

1. Name the kinds of resistance or rebellion you have observed in yourself and others.
2. Suggest sources for this resistance and darkness. [anxiety, fear, laziness, selfishness, narrow vision or horizon, lovelessness of others, self-gratification, a sense of impotence to change anything, discouragement, weak self-image, lack of faith and hope, disparity of values, what else?]
3. What can be done to reduce resistance and arouse openness and enthusiasm in others? in oneself? What can we do, collectively, to ameliorate the situation? How?

Topic 10. Overcoming Resistance to Operating at Our Best and Consensus Statement

- 1) Understanding the Woodstock process of "theological reflection."
- 2) Promoting operating at our best and reducing the areas of resistance to full human fulfillment in ourselves and our organizations.
- 3) Completing a consensus statement on moral decision-making

Scripture: Mark 6: 45-52 Jesus walks on the sea and tells the disciples to take heart; "Do not be afraid."

Background Reading:

James L. Connor, S.J., "Theological Reflection" [In the Appendix]

Nina Munk, "How Levi's Trashed a Great American Brand," Fortune, April 12, 1999, pp. 83-90. It takes courage and much more. Benevolent concerns without accountability kept Levi's from operating at its best.

Reflection Questions:

1. What can we do to promote openness and enthusiasm for operating at our best and to reduce resistance, in others? In ourselves?
2. What can we do, collectively, to ameliorate the situation? How?
3. How did our exploration of the dynamics of moral decision making go during the past year?

Exercise:

Draft a chapter Consensus Statement on Moral Decision-Making, including:

- (1) A brief description of what participants learned as they explored their acts of moral decision-making,
- (2) A list of the valuable questions to ask,
- (3) An itemization of the traps and pit-falls to good moral decisions, and
- (4) Recommendations as to what might help individuals and organizations locate a reliable moral guidance system.

APPENDIX

1. James L. Connor, S.J. "The Role of Scripture in a WBC Chapter Meeting"
2. James L. Connor, S.J. "Theological Reflection "
3. J. Michael Stebbins Faith and Values at Work
4. Woodstock Theological Center "Questions to Guide Ethical Decision Making"

1. The Role of Scripture in a WBC Chapter Meeting — James L. Connor S.J.

There's a saint and sinner in each one of us. St. Paul, in his epistles, calls all Christians who have died and risen with Christ in baptism, "saints." While in the Hail Mary we ask, "Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen." We can say, safely, of ourselves that we are saints fundamentally and at the very heart of our conscious desires and choice.

Moral theologians talk about one's "fundamental option" — which is the choice for or against God. We have stood at that fork in the road and have clearly chosen God, not the "world, the flesh, and the devil." But it is still true to say that there is both a saint and sinner in each one of us.

We experience the sinner in ourselves when we feel the tendencies — quite spontaneously — to vengeance when someone hurts us, to jealousy when we feel resentful, to hostility when we desire power and praise, to lust when gripped with sexual desires, to fear and timidity when we feel powerless and threatened. We are very familiar with these different feelings or desires or appetites that lurk within us and can be awakened and aroused by someone or something that enters our lives.

When people are ruthless in business, exploiting their employees, cheating customers, cutting corners on product safety or environmental preservation, they are choosing to act out of and be motivated by these sinful desires: greed, ambition, egoism and pride. When people in business give in to the pressures of peers or competitors to cut ethical corners and behave underhandedly they are giving into the feelings of fear and timidity that are expressions of the sinner within us.

At the WBC meetings I've been at, I have seen the saint and the sinner struggle for dominance in the various participants. Or, at least, I've heard the sinner within saying to the saint: "You know, you really can't succeed in business by being a saint. It's unrealistic. It's not the real world. Grow up!"

The saint in us needs constant encouragement. So we need to nourish the saint within us, making it strong, knowledgeable, inventive, wise, persistent, confident, clear-eyed, generous and self-sacrificing, loving and constructive.

We need to feed the saint, and the ideal food for the saint within is the Word of God. The Bread of Life. We feed the saint within with the Bread of Life principally in the Eucharist and in the reading of Scripture. At Mass we have both Scripture and Eucharist. At a WBC meeting, we read Scripture to be nourished by the Bread of Life.

We read, we hear, we ponder, we share the Scriptures in the hope that these experiences will awaken and bring freshly alive the saint within us, stir up those desires which are characteristic of the saint because of the characteristic of Jesus: concern, not for self, but others; coming, not to be served, but to serve; giving one's life that others may live more fully; friend of all, especially those most in need (the poor, the socially outcast, the legally defenseless).

We read the Word to awaken our imagination, to refresh our memories, to transport us into the world of Jesus — the world of his relationships with people and his viewpoint on situations, his desires and hopes, his mind and heart. "Put on Christ Jesus," St. Paul says, and we do so by allowing ourselves to be drawn into his story — which is his life as it unfolds concretely — , to be drenched anew in his Spirit. So when we read and ponder Scripture — any passage — we cross a threshold into a world, a kind of Christian Camelot, an "Alice in Wonderland" world, which is the world of Jesus. And in that world our eyes and ears see and hear new things freshly, our hearts are stirred to new longings, hopes, and desires, and our minds understand things from an altogether new perspective. We are renewed in our Christian identity: mind, heart, selves.

This world is not foreign to us because the "saint within us" — and this is who we are at heart — is already living with Christ, alive with Christ's perspective and desires. But reading and praying and sharing Scripture re-sensitizes, brings more fully alive in us, this Christ perspective and desire, such that, when we look at the topic or case at hand during the subsequent discussion period we see it, evaluate it, with the perspective and the feelings of the Christ-like "saint" within us rather than those of the "sinner within." We evaluate, not from the perspective and feelings of timidity, greed, ambition, pride, fear for self, etc., but from concern for others, even at great personal cost.

Scripture does not answer the complex dilemmas directly; it situates the context, the true and good context, within which the complex dilemma should be considered. "In his Light see light." The Scriptural context — the mind and heart of Christ (the "saint") within us — leads us to ask the right questions. It also makes us dissatisfied with the wrong

answers. The lively saint within us is like a metal detector or a Geiger counter. When we start verging toward a solution or proposed course of action that is contrary to the mind and heart of Christ, our feelings go off with an alarm signal. For instance, we might feel ashamed, we might feel angry, depressed, anxious or troubled, whatever. As sour milk gets our stomachs in an uproar, so also an unworthy, self-interested solution to a business dilemma gets the "saint" feelings in an uproar. It won't "go down" and "stay down." It will come back to haunt and hurt us. This "discernment of spirits" is the litmus test of good Christian diagnosis and decision making. That's why it is important to arouse and sensitize our Christian sensibilities (the mind and heart of Christ in the saint within us) as we approach a business deliberation or decision.

For a wonderful example of how Scripture sets a context for revising one's understanding and evaluation of an event — guided by feelings — read the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35. The event is the brutal murder of Jesus. The contexts are (a) an initial hope for earthly empire and high position, and (b) the ultimate recognition of supremacy of love of others — utterly life-giving.

2. Theological Reflection — James L. Connor, S.J.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION is working to understand and evaluate an issue or situation from a perspective informed and enlightened by religious faith in order to do what seems best for the improvement of our living together as a human family.

This is a working definition. We can "break it open" for a better understanding of it by pondering each of the words which have been used. After moving through each word or expression in the order they are used in the sentence, it will also help to "double back" and play the words against each other in a more random fashion. Each of the words -- wherever they occur in the sentence -- qualifies the others in order to give the full meaning of "theological reflection."

Theological reflection is an activity that takes work. There are, as we will see, various operations or phases to this work. We say "working" rather than "a work" or "an effort" because it is something that goes on and on, and all the time. It is repetitive or cumulative. We humans are always trying to figure something out in order to understand what's going on, so that we can "manage" it better, and do what we think is best.

• *understand ... an issue or situation.*

Something comes to our attention, like the murder of 12 students and a teacher at a suburban high school and we ask, "What is going on here?" "What is the explanation?" "Why did it happen?" "What are we to make of this?" All of these are questions for understanding. Take another example that is in the news these days. We look at the NATO bombing in Yugoslavia and the Serb slaughter of Albanians, and we ask "What is going on here?" "How do we explain this?" "How do we make sense of it?" "Which is cause and which is effect?" "What is the history behind it, and what are the political forces driving it, and what is the motivation behind each side's action?" All of this is an

effort to understand. The issue may not be as dramatic or as urgent as the slaying in Littleton, Colorado or the bombing in Yugoslavia. It might be that we can't find our wallet or car keys, and so we ask "What is going on here? Where are they?" And we retrace our steps to figure it out.

There are three interrelated phases or movements in understanding: (1) noticing and collecting the data, (2) creating or imagining and proposing the various possible explanations for the data behind the issue or situation, (3) and finally picking -- on the basis of the data or evidence -- which from among the possible explanations is most accurate. The probability of accuracy can range from tentative to certain, depending on various factors. But there is an urge in us to "get it right," and that's what we are invariably aiming for.

- *evaluate*

Once we have made our judgment about the issue or situation, i.e., once we are satisfied that we have understood what is going on, then the question arises, "What are we to do about it?" Once we understand that we must have left our keys in the bar on the way home, we call the bartender or we drop by for another drink! Once we explain why the students were killed, we start laying out proposals to prevent such tragedies in the future. The proposal will, of course, depend on what you deem the basic cause to be: gun control, banning violence on TV, video-games, and television, preventing the media from publicizing violence, charging parents with the children's crimes, working to improve the general culture in the U.S. -- or some or all of the above. We want to know what to do about things, and the action chosen is meant to promote certain values or to prevent certain ills.

The phases or movements in "evaluation" are: (1) recalling the understanding or judgment of "What is really going on here", (2) proposing the various ways in which we might remedy the situation, (3) weighing the relative merits of the various proposed courses of action, (4) deciding which is the best or the better.

- *issue or situation.*

The issue or situation could be in any sphere of life: personal, family, work related, political, economic, social, cultural, church or religious. In every sphere of our lives questions arise spontaneously: "What's going on here" and "Does something need improvement -- and, if so, what?" Depending upon a person's occupation or profession, loyalties and commitments, some issues or situations will emerge as more pressing than others. Issues that look trivial or non-existent to some people are quite urgent and very important to other people. This variation is often in function of one's perspective. This needs explanation.

- *from a perspective informed and enlightened by religious faith.*

Each of us has a particular perspective from within which we view life, rank order important things, pass judgments on issues and people, make sense of our world, and even know who we are as individuals. These are some of the various ways our perspective "works" for us. But the perspective itself is hard to grab hold of because it is made up of often unnoticed and unexamined suppositions, presumptions, beliefs, values, and opinions that we have mostly inherited from our families, peers, teachers, or churches. Perspective is the product of many things: experience, nationality, religious affiliation, education, profession or line of work, siblings, political affiliation, economic class, neighborhood and social milieu, date of birth and historical era, current age, and a host of other things. Within and as part of our perspective are the meanings which are our key to explaining what's going on and the values which motivate the actions we choose to take.

Your perspective grows and expands over the course of a life time. As you move from job to job and accumulate more work experience, you see things from a richer and broader perspective and can make wiser and more accurate business judgments. If you travel abroad and come to experience other cultures, languages, ways of doing things, your perspective gets richer and broader. You are less parochial and more cosmopolitan. As your newspaper reading moves beyond the comics and the sports section to national and international news your "world" literally gets "bigger." And as your concern and compassion for people in that "bigger world" get "deeper" and more sensitive – especially for women and children who bear the brunt of poverty, starvation, illiteracy, and squalor – your broader perspective enables you to understand and evaluate situations and issues more realistically and accurately.

- *informed and enlightened by religious faith.*

Our perspective is informed and enlightened by many life-experiences. You may be a plumber who lives in the Midwest and loves basketball. If so, three important life-experiences mesh together to make up your one perspective. You can add another life-experience to those three -- religious faith -- and the perspective becomes still richer, broader, differently informed and enlightened. The point is that "religious" is a feature in one's overall perspective; it is not the whole of one's perspective. But since it is concerned with life's ultimate meanings and values, it has a profoundly transforming influence on all the other features of a person's perspective. It becomes a "bottom line" influence in one's understanding and evaluations toward decisions for action.

We say "religious faith" in the definition rather than "Catholic" or even "Christian" faith in order to keep the exercise of theological reflection broader than it would otherwise be. What are the assumptions, beliefs, and operative dynamics of religious faith that deeply influence our understanding of issues and situations, our evaluation of them, and consequently our choice of actions that we deem "good"? Most world religions share several beliefs in common. They are identified by Friedrich Heiler in his classic article entitled, "The History of Religions as a Preparation for the Cooperation of Religions,"

The History of Religions, ed. M. Eliade and J. Kitagawa, Chicago University Press, 1959 pp. 142-153.

According to Heiler, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Zoroastrian Mazdaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism all hold that:

- * there is a transcendent reality;
 - * he is immanent in human hearts;
 - * he is supreme beauty, truth, righteousness, and goodness;
 - * he is love, mercy, compassion;
 - * the way to him is repentance, self-denial, prayer;
 - * the way is love of one's neighbor, even of one's enemies; and
 - * the way is love of God,
- * so that bliss is conceived as knowledge of God, union with him, or dissolution into him.

To these beliefs, understandings, values, or "working assumptions" of one's life-perspective, Christianity adds that the transcendent reality has become a human and has forever more made human history his own with us. As "God with us" (Immanuel) he is personally present and active as a dynamic force in human persons, communities, and history. Christians believe that Jesus lives and acts in each of us and in the world at large. Living in us as the Holy Spirit, Jesus guides us to recognize him acting in the world and empowers us to join him in his work of building up the Kingdom of God in our midst.

- *in order to do what seems best.*

Understanding the situation or issue and evaluating the possible courses of action to remedy the situation are all geared to deciding what to do -- which is essential if the remedy is to come about and be actually effective. Theological reflection culminates in action. It is not simply to gain a better understanding or appreciation (evaluation) of an issue or situation; it aims ultimately to do something about it. In that sense it is activist, even though the phases of understanding and evaluation often entail very scholarly work and theoretical analysis. The action may be setting up a soup kitchen; it may be advocating for a new or different piece of legislation; it may be opening a school or a training program. Or it may be issuing a publication and offering recommendations for others to pursue and promote. But to be complete, theological reflection needs to end up with some form of action to improve the situation.

- *for the improvement of our living together as a human family.*

This is the aim and goal of the whole process of theological reflection, just as it is the aim and goal of Christ's Gospel and the Church's mission. That aim and goal of life is summed up by Jesus in the "Lord's Prayer" that he left us, "Thy Kingdom come" [which is to say] "Thy will be done." It was his first sermon: "The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news." Another summary is in Jesus' "Priestly Prayer" at the

Last Supper according to St. John, "That all may be one, as Thou, Father in me, and I in Thee, that they may be one in us."

Vatican II puts it this way:

*God did not create the human race for life in isolation, but for the formation of social unity. So also, `it has pleased God to make human beings holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people.... There everyone, as members one of the other, would render mutual service according to the different gifts bestowed on each. This solidarity must be constantly increased until that day on which it will be brought to perfection. Then, saved by grace, all of us will offer flawless glory to God as a family beloved of God and of Christ our Brother. (**The Church in the Modern World, #32**).*

For the Kingdom of justice and peace, truth and love, to flourish and reach fulfilment many institutions and organizations must work smoothly and harmoniously together, each pursuing its particular goals, but all pursuing together the goals that are common to all of us. These common goals aim to secure what is required that all of us members of the human family, members of Christ's body, may be able to participate and share in life's necessities – material, intellectual, psychological, and religious – in order to develop our God-given potential. Even to describe, let alone achieve, what is required economically, politically, commercially, religiously, educationally, and in the family is well beyond this short description of theological reflection. But it is not beyond the work of theological reflection. In fact, it is what theological reflection must work on. In view of the variety of issues and the complexity of the systems, it is clear that theological reflection must be communal, interdisciplinary, and involve the contributions of many experts and practitioners.

It is motivation that "moves" us to action. And theological reflection for the betterment of our human living together is driven principally by compassion for those of our human brothers and sisters who have been left out, or are suffering, or are neglected and overlooked. This motivation of compassion is helped by having a few stark reminders at hand. For instance,

- almost three-fifths of the world's 4.4 billion people in developing countries live without basic sanitation;
- almost one-third are without safe drinking water;
- a quarter lack adequate housing;
- a fifth are malnourished; and,
- 1.3 billion live on less than \$1.00 a day.

These are figures provided by James Gustav Seth, chief of the United Nations Development Program in a story in the New York Times, April 30, 1999. He concludes, "Most Americans have no sense of how desperate the lot of one half of humanity is."

3. Faith and Values At Work, A Seminar in Ethical and Spiritual Integration for Managers and Executives,

Woodstock Theological Center, Washington, D.C. (1998)
— J. Michael Stebbins

The mission of the Faith & Values at Work seminar is to help business managers and executives develop their ability to promote the pursuit of truly human values by their organizations. This mission has both a personal and an organizational aspect. On the personal side, it involves helping business leaders become better acquainted with their inbuilt capacity to make decisions that are grounded in accurate knowledge and authentic discernment of the good. On the organizational side, it calls for business leaders to appreciate more fully and exploit more effectively their organization's capacity to add value of all kinds to human living. Both aspects are crucial.

The broader context of the mission is religious. It is founded on the conviction that business – as is the case with every human undertaking – has to be assessed in terms of the ways in which it cooperates with or sets itself in opposition to God's creative and redemptive intentions for the world.

The Faith and Values at Work seminar in its primary form consists of eight two-hour sessions with the following structure:

- * Session 1: The Horizon of Christian Faith
- * Session 2: Personal Authenticity
- * Session 3: Fostering Authenticity in Yourself
- * Session 4: What Is Business for?
- * Session 5: Business and the Service of the Common Good
- * Session 6: Organizational Authenticity
- * Session 7: Toward a More Authentic Organization
- * Session 8: Vocation and Organizational Leadership

Perhaps the most important thing to note here is that Faith and Values at Work is addressed to people who have a question. Most of the participants say they were attracted to the seminar because they had experienced some kind of "gap" or "split" between their faith-values and the values that dominated their life in the workplace. They sensed that their faith ought to make a difference in every part of their lives, but just what kind of difference it ought to make at work was not clear to them. They felt uneasy, discontented, fragmented. In short, the participants in the seminar have mostly been people who are already wondering about the meaning and value of their lives. This active sense of wonder is a precondition for growth in understanding. In its absence, the seminar would fall on deaf ears.

The seminar invites the participants to enlarge their view of the world and of their place in it. The participants are told at the outset, and reminded regularly thereafter, that the only way they can expect to get any significant benefit from the seminar is to become

personally engaged in it. Their own work experience – their struggles, successes, hopes, fears, joys, and dissatisfactions – are the "casebook" upon which the seminar draws. The participants complete reading and reflection assignments between meetings. Each session begins and ends with prayer and includes not only the presentation of content by the facilitator, but also discussion and exercises designed to help the participants explore key issues. As the course draws to a close, the participants engage in a series of reflective exercises in which they summarize what they have learned, discover how they themselves have changed, and identify practical steps they are willing to take in order to promote authenticity in themselves and in their organizations.

The seminar itself as well as a new program that trains facilitators to offer the Faith and Values at Work seminars to groups of people in their own locations are being offered by the Woodstock Theological Center. For further information, please contact J. Michael Stebbins at (202) 687-3556 or via e-mail at jmstebbins@compuserve.com.

4. Questions to Guide Ethical Decision Making

from Ethical Issues in Managed Health Care Organizations— Woodstock Theological Center, 1999

1. What is the mission statement of your organization? Read it.
2. What is the nature of the conflict at hand? State it in one paragraph. And which stakeholders (including yourself) will be affected by your decision? List them.
3. For each stakeholder you have listed, write down what you believe to be his or her: a) needs; b) desires; c) preferred outcomes in this case.

As a check on your own biases, how do you know what each stakeholder needs or wants? What is the source of your knowledge or insight?
4. Compare the values and goals of the different stakeholders, as outlined in 3 above, with your mission statement; rank-order the values for the decision to be reached.
5. List all the courses of action you can think of that would fulfill most, or at least the highest-ranking, values from your list in 4; try to develop some course of action that would fulfill all or most of the values.
6. From the course of action you have identified, choose the one that best fulfills the most important and, hopefully, all or most of the values, in light of your mission statement.
7. Before informing affected parties of your decision, ask a wise confidant for his or her reaction to the way you have done the first five steps above.

8. When communicating your decision, state which values were the most persuasive, and why and how values which may have been compromised in this particular decision continue to be important values in other contexts.

The Conference welcomes believers who are open to and respectful of one another's religious traditions. Grounded in the Roman Catholic tradition, the WBC is committed to the conviction that ethics and values grow out of one's religious heritage.

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