Introduction: troubling times

Joanne B. Ciulla and Tobey K. Scharding

These are troubling times on both sides of the Atlantic. Immigration, Brexit, terrorism, the financial crisis, the election of Donald Trump, and the emergence of nationalism in the US and Europe have created ethical challenges for business leaders as well as most others. Populist political leaders have tapped into the feelings of voters who have been ignored by leaders, left behind during globalization, replaced at work by new technologies, and disheartened by social legislation in areas such as gay marriage and abortion. While some citizens in the US and Europe believed that the world was getting better, others silently watched in dismay. Meanwhile, we also see an increase in xenophobia, racism, antisemitism, and Islamophobia. The increasingly polarized political environment has made it difficult for leaders to reach a consensus about how to best tackle pressing questions about immigration, human rights, the environment, and the regulation of business and new technologies. This is a challenging environment, one where business leaders may sometimes be called upon to decide where they stand.

In a speech, Apple CEO Tim Cook said, “The reality is that government, for a long period of time, has for whatever set of reasons become less functional and isn’t working at the speed that it once was. And so it does fall, I think, not just on business but on all other areas of society to step up” (Sorkin, 2017). His comment raises a cluster of foundational questions about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the role of business in turbulent times: Who should be responsible for what in a society? What are the responsibilities of businesses and business leadership to society? Moreover, do the responsibilities of businesses increase when there are social and political problems? And finally, what does it mean for a business to “step up”?

This book brings together the work of twelve CSR and business ethics scholars from the UK and Europe and eight from North America to explore various facets of these questions. They offer a variety of cultural perspectives as they write about problems in their own countries and the broader questions about the role of business in society. The first chapter challenges the very idea that businesses should “step up.” Maybe

businesses are the problem and not the solution because they have had undue influence on the elected officials and the policies of government that currently don't seem to work. Some of the authors in this volume consider the moral agency of businesses and what they can and cannot do, while others begin with the assumption that CSR begins at home with how organizations treat their employees and other stakeholders and govern their organizations. Several authors examine the various ways in which businesses decide what their responsibilities are to society in areas ranging from human rights and the treatment of immigrants. In the last part of the book, contributors explore the role of business in ethical problems involving technology and climate change. These are both areas where businesses have created problems and they have the ability to help solve them.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into four parts: "Business and Politics," "Agency and Responsibility," "Models for Decision Making," and "Applied Topics: Technology and the Environment." In the part on "Business and Politics," contributors address the extent that businesses should "step up," in Tim Cook's phrase, to address social and political challenges, such as those present in our troubling times. Donna Ladkin begins the volume with her chapter challenging what is perhaps the dominant view within theories of CSR: that when governments fail to respond adequately to social and political challenges businesses should assume responsibility for doing so in their stead. To the contrary, Ladkin argues that businesses should, ethically speaking, take a position on social and political challenges at an equal status to other democratic actors. To fulfill their ethical mission, businesses should focus on ensuring that their internal management is ethical and that employees have adequate time (and other resources) to engage in social and political activism, among other activities, in their personal lives.

Dirk Matten and Jeremy Moon, in turn, detail the ways in which expectations that business should serve the public good have been normalized over the past 40 years. The authors christened these expectations "explicit CSR" in their previously published research (Matten and Moon, 2008). They contrast explicit CSR with "implicit CSR," which captures businesses' efforts to act in socially responsible ways without an expectation that such social responsibility will contribute to their overall profit maximization (Matten and Moon, 2008). In the present chapter, Matten and Moon revisit these concepts in light of new empirical research, suggesting that explicit CSR is more closely aligned with implicit CSR than they had previously acknowledged.

In his contribution, Zsolt Boda also offers an alternative paradigm to CSR, this time focused on the limits of business ethics to effect meaningful responses to fundamental social, political, and environmental problems. Whereas business ethics has proved effective in describing how to build ethical organizations and include stakeholders in ethical decision making, it has not done enough to make the case for why businesses should be ethical in the first place. This means that few businesses actually enact business ethics prescriptions: because few are motivated to put ethical concerns over the profit motive. For this reason, Boda argues that addressing many of the social, political, and environmental challenges that we currently face will require legal, institutional, and/or political treatments beyond mere ethics.

In the final contribution to this part, Laura J. Spence and Steen Vallentin focus on internal politics within the corporation. They offer a view of CSR in which corporations become responsible only as a result of an internal, political process that acknowledges and engages conflicts brought about by power hierarchies within the organization. The authors bring Foucault's view of "governmentality" to bear on corporate organization, arguing that corporate "responsibilization" is a nuanced process that deserves to be understood in its own respect. They illustrate their ideas through BP's response to the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

Next, in the part on "Agency and Responsibility," authors address organizational issues related to ensuring that corporations behave ethically in troubling times such as "who in the organization is acting when things go wrong, ethically?" and "who is responsible?" In his contribution, Wim Dubbink advances a strategy for overcoming a common objection to the idea that corporations should act ethically. Whereas some scholars have argued that corporations lack moral agency and, as such, cannot be held to an ethical standard, Dubbink shows that no one – corporation, human being, other apparent agent – has agency by the standards the objectors require. Moreover, all that is needed to hold corporations to an ethical standard is a demonstration that corporations have the capacity to constrain their actions to serve an ethical principle. In order to achieve this capacity, Dubbink argues that corporations should encourage their members to act as though the organization possesses moral personhood. Improving corporate ethics begins, in this sense, with the understanding that the corporation is able to act ethically.

Daryl Koehn, in the next contribution, discusses the importance of apologies in assuming and maintaining responsibility. She distinguishes between personal apologies (in which the apologizer takes responsibility for a past act of the apologizer's), corporate apologies (in which the apologizer takes responsibility for a past act of the apologizer's organization), and collective apologies (in which the apologizer takes responsibility for

a past act of the apologizer's nation). Keeping these categories straight will allow communities to demand only those apologies – and forms of responsibility – that are appropriate to particular forms of wrongdoing, thus avoiding confusion between corporate and political wrongdoing (and the responsibility thereafter).

In her contribution, Cynthia E. Clark investigates the role of corporate boards and corporate directors in value creation and accountability. Drawing upon synergies between stakeholder and shareholder conceptions of corporate accountability, she sets forth a view of proper roles and responsibilities within the firm. According to this view, accountability enhances value creation and value creation enhances accountability to both shareholders and stakeholders. She concludes by explaining how corporate values contribute to this process.

Finally, in this part, Georges Enderle offers an extended case study focused on the efforts of his own university, Notre Dame, to secure ethical supply chains in the production of goods bearing the university's logo. Investigating well-known problems in supply chains – forced labor, air and water pollution, environmental degradation – Enderle argues that Notre Dame's policy from 2001–15 was inadequate to the task of securing ethical supply chains. Although it highlighted the importance of freedom of association and collective bargaining rights for the workers who manufactured goods branded with the Notre Dame logo, the policy's implementation did not produce significant results for workers. A pilot program that was in effect in 2015 brought important improvements for workers' rights but neglected broader social, political, and environmental concerns. Subsequently, Notre Dame partnered with a third-party surveying and auditing organization to focus on its specific needs with respect to ethical supply chain management. The third-party organization, which included a large number of social, political, and environmental concerns in its decision making and supplemented by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, proved effective for producing the results for which Notre Dame held itself responsible.

In the part on “Models for Decision Making,” five contributors offer novel models for ethical decision making in corporations. In the first chapter, Patricia H. Werhane sets forth a new model for 21st-century ethical decision making: embedded leadership. Embedded leadership is neither hierarchical nor dependent on antiquated notions of “authority” (what she calls the “Boss” or “Master” point of view). Rather, Werhane reconceives Miller and Page's (2007) notion of complex adaptive systems (CAS) as complex adaptive *social* systems (CASS) or sets of embedded systems. The systems thinking encouraged by this model offers a novel model of leadership focused on “adaptive” work whereby leaders permit employees

to self-organize (or “emerge” within an organization, as she says). Werhane argues that organizations employing such embedded leadership will be more successful – in both the short and the long term – than those employing hierarchical management structures.

Next, Sandra Waddock also advocates a systems approach. She explains that what characterizes contemporary ethical challenges is their systemic nature, something that business ethics (and ethics generally) has not yet learned how to address. To do so, she argues that business leaders should adopt a holistic approach in which they prioritize systemic interests – the well-being of the whole system – over individual interests.

In his contribution, Alejo José G. Sison offers an alternative model for evaluating businesses’ relationships with social and political struggles, specifically as regards the protection of human rights. Whereas most CSR programs are individualistic and focus on satisfying the preferences of various stakeholders, Sison recommends Francisco de Vitoria’s teachings on *ius gentium*, which focuses on the equality of human beings and securing a common good for human communities. The *ius gentium* is particularly promising for determining businesses’ appropriate responsibilities when addressing contemporary social and political struggles to the extent that it regards businesses as forces for the common good (especially insofar as they further price discovery, the free market, and entrepreneurship). Our current troubling times reflect the negligence of the *ius gentium*, generally. Although businesses cannot and should not try to single-handedly address social and political challenges, following the *ius gentium* in their business decision making is a promising way to begin addressing them.

Next, Johannes Brinkmann argues that business ethicists’ distinctive skills in critical reflection, including inviting critical self-reflection in others, suggest a strategy for addressing social problems such as those that currently afflict communities worldwide. In particular, Brinkmann argues that modeling dialogues between conflicting parties can help to overcome mutual prejudice. By listening to one another’s different viewpoints parties are more likely to find consensus and resolve common problems.

In the final chapter in this part, Mahmut Arslan and Mustafa K. Yilmaz study how local managers of medium-sized companies in Gaziantep (a Turkish city near the Syrian border) make ethical decisions about how to treat Syrian refugees. A series of interviews reveal some confusion in the managers’ decision-making processes, especially when there are economic and social conflicts. These conflicts tended to undermine managers’ abilities to reach decisions that they found acceptable. Interestingly, these decision-making problems were most acute in the initial phase of the crisis.

Finally, in the part on “Applied Topics: Technology and the Environment,” three contributors explain how corporations should address technological

and environmental troubles. Chris MacDonald begins this part by discussing how corporations should respond when social media users demand that they fire employees for actions that some people on social media condemn. MacDonald argues that decision makers should hesitate to accede to social media users' demands concerning actions that employees take when they are not on the job, even when those actions are egregious. Corporations should take particular caution, according to MacDonald's argument, when the corporations can easily carry out the demands and/or when it is in the corporations' self-interest to carry out social media users' demands.

In the next contribution, Christoph Lütge addresses a more general issue concerning corporate responses to technology: the lack of clear ethical rules for corporate uses of technology. He addresses topics as varied as data protection, data security, artificial intelligence (AI), internet of things, and autonomous vehicles. All of these new technologies raise pressing, unresolved ethical concerns; Lütge calls upon business ethicists to provide rules to resolve them. Devising clear ethical rules for corporate uses of technology is especially important because the parties making decisions about technology that have great ethical importance are huge corporations. As such, the principles they follow will have outsized importance.

In the final chapter in this part, Eleanor O'Higgins and Laszlo Zsolnai recommend that corporations focus on whole entities rather than mere parts of them; they emphasize, in particular, the importance of the whole *Earth*. Following Hans Jonas's account of ethics for the Anthropocene, O'Higgins and Zsolnai argue that business leaders' primary ethical concerns should be preserving life on Earth: including human, non-human, and future lives. Extending their argument via cases studies, O'Higgins and Zsolnai argue that Unilever and Patagonia offer models for this kind of ethical leadership.

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