ABOUT THE WORK OF ETHICS: JOINING
BUSINESS AND LIBERAL EDUCATION

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How business educators “teach ethics” is a question resurfacing at a
time of increasing diversity in student profile, a shift toward aligning edu-
cational goals to learning assessment outcomes and challenging pedagog-
ical models based on the traditional teacher-student relationship. Add to
this the historical shifts of environmentalism and globalization calling
into question all institutional structures, policies and ethics, of which the
wave of corporate scandals are symptomatic, serves to heighten the busi-
ness educator’s role in “teaching” ethics. Teaching an MBA core course
on Management and the Social Environment has provoked this question quite
intimately on not only “how” but also “whether” one can teach ethics.
The course, by virtue of its focus on the business-to-society relationship,
initiates the student into the complexities and ambiguities inherent in
ethical situations requiring ethical decision-making (Piper, Gentile and
Parks 1993).

Recently, the Harvard Business School has introduced “the most
comprehensive revamping of its ethics instruction in the school’s 95-year
history” (Weisman 2004). The new course provides an interdisciplinary
focus designed “to give people a framework for working through the
issues, not propose a set of right answers” (Paine 2004). Those in liberal
education have always understood “working through the issues” and the
challenge of teaching ethics did not escape Socrates when querying how
one teaches virtue. If one goal in a liberal arts education is to “surface the
truth” (Perry 2003), perhaps it is not about teaching ethics but creating
space for truth to emerge (Palmer 1983).

Utilizing Palmer's insights and introducing a heutagological frame-
work, this paper identifies the relationship between liberal education and
teaching business ethics as applied to the MBA course. Part I describes
the role of liberal education as key to framing how to go about the work of ethics. Part II presents the heutagogical model that guides MBA course philosophy and design.¹

**PART I: THE ROLE OF LIBERAL EDUCATION**

A central component of a liberal education is the intentional exploring of vocation, one’s calling in life. Vocation situates one’s “identity formation within the context of a particular society at a particular time” (Lagemann 2003, 11). This focus fosters self-knowledge, a sense of direction and cultivates the type of leadership that leads to civic responsibility. Therefore, a liberal education not only provides a deeper sense of connection through calling but also addresses what it means to be a citizen “ready to participate in the defining issues of our times” (Lagemann, 13).

Liberal education, then, informs notions of citizenship and justice, concepts central to understanding the business-to-society relationship and sustainable development.

Citizenship is tied to one’s national state, which provides the forum for one to exercise powers of voice, religion and due process, to name a few. It is not a “unitary condition,” but rather an “incomplete institution” responsive to new conditions, times and ideas (Sasson 2003, 14). This responsiveness signals the dynamic aspects of citizenship which is not only an “embedded” institution, as Sasson notes, but ubiquitous like justice.

Justice is defined as right action, equity, fairness, and good reason. Yet there are many aspects to justice: distributive, restorative, social, retributive, “rough justice and easy justice, dumb justice and cheap justice” (Steinfels 2000, 139). Questions of morality and ethics quite naturally emerge in discussions on citizenship and justice. Herein lies the value of engaging the liberal arts perspective, which explores the moral foundation of institutions. Given the complexities of a pluralistic world, the skills of critical thought and argumentation enhance understanding beyond information and facts to knowledge and wisdom.

Teaching from a liberal arts perspective is about “shaping, energizing and refining the mind” (Lagemann 2003, 11). The teacher engages meta-cognition: helping the student realize that self-learning always accompanies any endeavor related to the course content itself. A liberal education gives room to connect the student to something bigger. It is also about *doing* without action “thought can never ripen into truth” (Emerson 1837, 4).
At the heart of a liberal education are the tenets of vocation and calling; knowing oneself in an effort to understand and know the human condition. Liberal education employs meta-cognition as one way to connect student contribution to society as citizens. From this, one’s ethical obligation and civic responsibility emerge. Perhaps most importantly, a liberal education knows the power of questions as a teaching and learning tool, and as a framework in which to work through the issues.

Such liberal education precepts compliment management theories. Argyris (1998) has expanded single-loop learning (with focus on operational components) and double-loop learning (which broadens to include culture and norms) to triple-loop learning which incorporates personal responsibility, confronting one’s own views and assumptions and challenging one’s own mental models. Schon’s (1987) work on the reflective practitioner utilizes an epistemology of practice based on reflection-in-action between the person and society and the person and group. Senge’s (1990) learning organizations are fundamentally about knowledge capacity, feedback and action where new ideas and thinking are aligned with organizational strategy. Vaill (1996), one of the first in management to engage the language of spirituality, notes systems thinking “asks its practitioners to embrace complexity, contingency, dynamism, and perhaps even mystery” (109). From a management perspective systems thinking facilitates managerial decision-making to bring the totality of a situation into some type of coherent whole that brings value. Finally, Scheins’ (1988) work on process consultation provides a way to study organizations by understanding the “who” and the “why” not just the “what” and the “how”; it is a management philosophy toward, and an attitude about, integrating process dynamics to help people, groups and organizations.

Corporate trends toward sustainability — ensuring a better quality of life for everyone now and for future generations through environmental protection, social equity and economic growth — has a distinct link to corporate citizenship and leadership. Sustainability incorporates the ethics and practice of doing well and doing good. The concept of sustainable development in business not only asks what role business serves in society but leaves open the question of what the objective of business is in the first place. The shifting trends in business from corporate social responsibility to strategic philanthropy to sustainable environments are also embedded concepts like citizenship and justice. Such concepts are invisible structures, all of which require the work of illumination a liberal arts perspective brings (Simms 2004).
How does one set the stage to do the work? How can liberal education meet management theory in a course on Management and the Social Environment? Palmer (1983) provides seven practices that integrate the two. From this integration, a heutagogical model provides the philosophical design of the class.

Parker Palmer: Linking spirituality and liberal education

On relationship:

“The most expansive adaequatio between ourselves and the world — one that does not narrow and impoverish reality — is found in our capacity for relationship” (53). Palmer identifies relationship as a fourth dimension, which includes capacities of intuition, empathy, emotion and faith that serve to validate experience. He does not view the capacity of relationship as an ethic, or approach to living but rather as an epistemology, an approach to knowing. Knowledge restricted to facts and logic results in a one-way reality; it limits rather than expands self-understanding of both the human and non-human world. Knowledge open to relationship introduces a reciprocal process that reveals reality as “organic, interrelated, and mutually responsive” (53).

Mutual understanding that leads to mutual knowing “in which we are transformed and as we transform” (54) requires rigorous self-examination. Specific to the MBA course, synthesizing the concepts of immersion, sustenance, intent, trust, choice, freedom, values and ownership throughout the semester are intentional ways to engage the student to experience their human dignity and humanity.

On encounter:

“When events are studied in ways that study the students themselves the whole truth comes clear” (62). As relational aspects are incorporated, the question not only becomes “what is out there” to be studied (i.e., business cases) but also “what does the encounter (itself) reveal about me?” (60). Drucker (1999) similarly presents the role of encounter by prompting managers in the 21st Century to consider events by asking: “What do these issues, these challenges MEAN for our organization and for me as a knowledge worker, a professional, an executive?” (xi). Badaracco (1998) frames encounter as part of defining moments, “situations created by circumstance that challenge us in a deeper way (to) form, reveal and test ourselves” (40) as distinct from making tough ethical decisions. It is to the discipline of this encounter that character results.
Through encounter “the student has been discovered and plumbed by the subject of the research itself” (62). Like relationship, encounter is a deeply personal dialectical process. “People think you have only to “tell” a person that he “ought” to do something in order to put him on the right track. But whether he can or will do it is another matter” (Jung 1990, 43). Encounter is not about the teacher telling, admonishing, persuading or giving good advice (Palmer, 4) but rather having course content presented and analyzed from the perspective of a student’s own life experiences. The practice of encounter leads to authentic knowledge.

On creating space:

“To teach is to create space in which obedience to truth is practiced” (69). Palmer outlines three caveats in creating a psychologically safe place — space — where truth can emerge. First, recognizing the anxiety that comes from not knowing and the temptation to fill the space with quick answers that serve as distractions to the anxiety felt. “True knowing comes at a point when we face our illusions — discomfort and pain are signals from students this is occurring.” Second, understanding the simultaneous nature that as “we seek truth, truth seeks us” (70). Finally, creating space requires the teacher to establish parameters and time limits. This vigilance to space is balancing student need for specific answers and structure while allowing the questions to remain open-ended and unanswered.

On hospitality:

“To be inhospitable to strangers or strange ideas, however unsettling they may be, is to be hostile to the possibility of truth” (74). Hospitality is not a means to an end but rather allows the “strange” to be heard and welcomed — whether that comes in the form of a person, an idea or a concept. A hospitable learning environment creates a climate that “encourages and yields” (74) to others’ opinions rather than intimidates and judges. The teacher creates the entree by establishing an atmosphere and climate that invites the “strange”.

On teaching by questioning:

“I have learned in the silence that it is often better to speak a question than an answer” (82). The art of teaching by questioning is at the heart of the Socratic method. Its very practice is risky because questioning surfaces the complexity of a situation. “Scared of this risk (one) pre-
fers to avoid the complex by asking ever simpler questions” (Jung 1990, 28). Thus, the movement into complexity requires a commitment to seeking and posing the deeper questions knowing the accompanying risk. Because the process of questioning renders one vulnerable, it evokes a paradox: “the fear of feeling, the feeling of fear” (84).

Rather than allowing this paradox to stifle any movement toward dialogue and discussion, teaching by questioning is an opportunity for the teacher to address students’ fears while confronting their own. Ultimately, teaching by questioning is about finding voice in organizational structures, like a classroom, that often prefer answers to questions.

On obedience to the truth:

“... knowing truth in obedience connects obedience to freedom” (65). The root word ob-audiere means to listen attentively. Attentive listening allows for connections to cohere between events, people, time and place. Listening is a central aspect of dialogue: confronting one’s own and others’ assumptions, revealing feelings and building common ground. Dialogue achieves a state of knowing as it is happening, the surprise that corresponds with entertaining the “strange”. Listening for truth through dialogue invites conversation as a way to connection and deeper knowledge.

“The idea that freedom is achieved through obedience to truth is at the heart of liberal education whose aim is to liberate us through knowledge” (65). A teaching focus on class conversation and dialogue, as distinct from pure lecture and discussion, fosters connections between the individual student and others. “An important goal of dialogue is to enable the group to reach a higher level of consciousness and creativity through the gradual creation of a shared set of meanings and a common thinking process” (Schein 1993, 43).

On fidelity:

“Truth is a fidelity rather than a conformity” (90). Whereas conformity initiates from an external obligation, fidelity comes from within. The process of dialogue is integral to the practice of fidelity because it asks each person to speak an inner truth, which then connects to a truth that can emerge between people. Obedience to the truth moves one to right ordering; fidelity moves one to right relationship.

A liberal arts perspective is embedded in these seven tenets and when applied, create an environment for the work of ethics to ensue. The role of liberal education is paramount to this work. Class design, how-
ever, emerges from the experience and philosophy of the person teaching the class. A fundamental challenge to one’s philosophy concerns the traditional educational model based on the pedagogic relationship between teacher and student — an expert imparting knowledge to a subordinate. How one “teaches” ethics is tied to how one views this relationship.

**PART II: HEUTAGOGY AND CLASS DESIGN**

Pedagogical models of education are based on the teacher deciding what the student needs to know and how content and skills are taught. Research on how people learn, which subsequently challenges how people teach, has emerged in the past thirty years (Hase and Kenyon 2000). Most notably, Knowles’ (1970) distinction between how children and adults learn comprise the principles of adult learning: focusing on pragmatic content with a low tolerance for busy work; willingness to challenge the “professor”; commitment to invest one’s own time and money; and applying personal experience. (Parenthetically, these principles provided support for distance learning recognizing adult learners as self-directed). Although andragogy tailors teaching practice and philosophy to its audience, the method remains largely focused on the teacher-as-expert/student relationship.

The accelerated rate of change with information transfer and accessibility, globalization and a shrinking world, the need for flexible and adaptable organizational structures, and shifting definitions of what constitutes workplaces and communities has placed the focus on learning as a life-long, sustainable practice. Today’s environment signals a need to entertain changing teaching methods — or how teaching is defined in the first place. At a minimum, there are “deficiencies of the pedagogical and andragogical methods” (Hase and Kenyon 2000, 2) of which heutagogy seeks to address.

**Heutagogy Defined**

Providing the right environment for learning and self-direction to occur is a long-standing humanistic concept. Heutagogy as a teaching method redefines the teacher-student relationship with its focus on self-direction and learning. Hase and Kenyon (2000) trace heutagogy through the philosopher Heider (Emery 1974), phenomenology (Rogers 1951), systems thinking (Emery & Trist 1965), double-loop and triple-loop learning, organizational learning and reflective practitioner (Argyris and Shoen 1996), andragogy (Knowles 1984), learner managed learning
(Graves 1993; Long 1990), action learning (Kemmis and McTaggert 1998), capability (Stephenson 1994) and work based learning (Hase 1998).

Specific to this paper, the value of employing a heutagological methodology is that it incorporates both the liberal arts and management philosophies. The focus on learning between “teacher”/learner and “student”/learner transcends skill acquisition and knowledge enhancement. Its method emphasizes a holistic development of the learner and incorporates approaches toward independent capability (Stephenson 1994); questioning one’s values and assumptions (Argyris and Shoen 1996) and understanding the critical role of the system-environmental interface (Emery & Trist 1965). The holistic paradigm with focus on self-determined learning is futures-oriented. The fundamental aim is on ‘knowing how to learn’ in a world where innovation and change is pervasive and on going.

Heutagogy draws its principles from Rogers’ (1969) belief that people want and are inclined to learn as a life-long pursuit. A student-centered approach is implicit in his five hypotheses. First, and perhaps foremost, the learning process is facilitated; one cannot teach another person directly. Second, significant learning occurs when the content is perceived as necessary to self-enhancement. The third and fourth hypotheses are related to one’s assimilation of experience: learning requires personal change and occurs only when one’s had the type of self-knowledge that allows and integrates inconsistencies and ambiguities. The fifth hypothesis rests on the role of the educational system itself: learning occurs best in physically and psychologically safe environments.

Three features of heutagogy emerge, the first being the practice of reflection as a natural outgrowth of self-direction.\(^2\) Roger’s Theory Y management approach, where learning, like work, is as natural as breathing, supports learning as an “internal process controlled by the learner” (Hase and Kenyon 2000, 2).

Integrating action learning (Kemmis & McTaggert 1988), a second feature of heutagogy, places the teacher in the role of learner and student. Action learning creates an environment where peers challenge peers as a way to learn. The teacher is not the focus but rather brings parity into the classroom. This requires a tremendous amount of respect and deep regard for the person, which is at the core of any work on sustainability and ethics. Further, this regard for the person presents a framework to understanding a “stakeholder” focus in business ethics. To this end, solutions can and do emerge but through a learner-to-learner practice.
A third feature of heutagogy is building capability. The concept of capability emerges as an organizational response to globalization in the 1980s. Ulrich (1997) defines organizations as “bundles of capabilities” (41) that integrate strategy, organization theory, quality, organization development and human resources. Implicit in Quinn’s (1990, 1996) work on deep change and managing paradox, capability involves a shift from manager as novice, viewing corporate environments as structured and analytic, to manager as master, recognizing environments as replete with contradictions and complexity. The ability to apply competencies in innovative as well as familiar situations, working well with others, knowing how to learn, and possessing a high degree of self-efficacy and creativity are characteristics of capable people. Such capability “necessitates new approaches to management” (Hase and Kenyon 2000, 3).

Models and theories that support a heutagogical method change the way one thinks and the way one thinks about learning. A key component that results from this teaching practice is creating an environment — space — for the student to make sense of his/her world rather than “make sense of the world of the teacher” (Hase and Kenyon 2000, 4). The teacher as learner is challenged to move beyond the comfort of his/her discipline and be open to learning new theories.

Therefore, heutagogical practice challenges one’s teaching paradigm. At the heart of one’s teaching philosophy is how one views his/her role and relationship to others, most critically to students. Heutagogy is based on Heider’s notions that people make sense of their world through their perceptions and experiences, which are viewed as valid knowledge. People can and do learn continuously by interacting with their environment, which is always based in real time. To this end, learning is life-long and creativity and wisdom are born from the student’s own ideas and conceptions not just from a force feed from the experts. It is this environment that situates the work of ethics.

Moving from Philosophy to Practice: course format explicated

Any course that involves ethics is work because ethical dilemmas that present opportunities for ethical decision-making are complex and ambiguous (Piper, Gentile and Parks 1993). The following four practices integrate liberal education, Palmer’s seven tenets and heutagogy as applied in the MBA course as ways to initiate learners into complexity and ambiguity as a method to create space and engage ethics.
Use of a praxis cycle:

Praxis is “the exercise or practicing of an art, science, or skill” with the literal definition “to pass through, to experience” (Pence 2003, 45). The cycle focuses on one’s experience, in the context of social analysis, followed by a “faith” reflection, which results in committed action. Class design applies social analysis to each case with opening activities focused on personal experience. Individual student papers are integrative think pieces/reflections and the final project is committed action applied.

The combination of the praxis with depth psychology (Simms 2004) helps produce “common knowing, collective foresight and combined action as a response to current social and ecological challenges” (Gates 2002, 286), a critical aspect in connecting business-to-society. Utilizing the praxis to structure and manage course process and content introduces the student to an alternate approach to management.

Role of narrative & meta-narrative to engage student imagination and critical faculties:

Through oral storytelling and written journal reflections, as two forms of narrative, one begins to articulate, and subsequently validate, one’s own experiences. Narrative fosters self-knowledge and underscores the heutagogical view of learning as an “internal process controlled by the learner” (Hase and Kenyon 2000, 2). Meta-narrative, the process of reflecting on the ‘experience of one’s experience’, offers “substance, that will give (the student a) sense of who they are and (the) kind of world they live in” (Bellah 2003, 44). Meta-narrative provides a context in which to apply critical thinking skills.

At the opening of each class students, working in small groups, engage in oral narrative: a personal activity that parallels course content and theme for that class. For example, the class period defining sustainability begins with students identifying what they do to sustain themselves and what they need for sustenance. At the close of the class, after a case and/or video is utilized to engage discussion on the topic, the debrief engages the practice of meta-narrative as a form of group class reflection. The movement between narrative and meta-narrative fosters and develops imagination, curiosity and critical faculties. The two forms together enhance what are studied and known theoretically about business and business models, and what is actually lived.
Role of philosophy:

Philosophy courses teach “us to learn how to think, to think critically, to think about the big question and the questions that make us know that our own experience is not the whole world” (Steinfels 2000, 142). Students are initially challenged with identifying their philosophy of business. Many have not considered this fundamental question, which serves to then direct how they approach management, policy and ultimately the relationship between business and society. The role of philosophy in the management classroom yields one’s ethical philosophy (i.e., deontological; consequentialist), what informs their ethical understanding and analysis (i.e., experience; education) and how one ultimately works through the issues. Palmer’s seven tenets are the philosophical premise behind course design, which permeates all assignments, activities and cases including professional participation.

Focus on right relationship and internal alignment with a teleological frame to generate new models and new thinking:

Ethical cases often present as a right versus right dilemma that requires critical thinking skill and a listening posture not just a problem-solving approach.5 Focusing on right relationship and internal alignment shifts thinking away from attack and solve to interpreting complexity and ambiguity. The focus on internal alignment broadens the scope in which one considers a case situation. The concepts of right relationship and internal alignment are reminders that “ethics is not an inoculation, it’s a process” (Kidder 2003, 31). Presenting cases and class activities as moral dilemma invites the quest to discover.

Herein lies the work of ethics. Utilizing a teleological frame (Wishloff 2003) begins with the end in mind where the intent of moral reflection is to identify the right or proper ends that ought be pursued on behalf of humanity (38). A teleological premise seeks to define business in relationship to its role in achieving the common good. This frames the business-to-society discussion around the *summum bonum*, the greatest good or ultimate end with central focus on “why am I here?” and “guided by a sound vision of human flourishing” (38). Middelberg and Sechrest (2003) introduced the RFDA Model (Recognize-Frame-Diagnose-Act) as a “practical technique” to assist students in this very endeavor. The key is the focus on right relationship, which yields new business models: a movement from decision-making to internal alignment and ultimately to a systemic understanding of relationship.
The applied praxis cycle and the role of narrative and meta-narrative are attempts to internal alignment by integrating faith and reason, to affirm student values and see growth in virtue that are related to “developing a just society as one function of education” (Engh 2003, 16). Intellect illuminates ethical implications of faith and connectedness and looks at how the past informs the present and future. The role of philosophy and a teleological frame are ways to introduce the concepts of proper ordering of human institutions (Simms 2004) and manifests the dialectic that exists between business and society. “Who is the client?” and “whom do you serve?” are critical aspects that get at the heart of ethics that are not “taught” but rather emerge.

The role of the teacher is to create encounters for truth and “ethics” to emerge, much like the Samaritan story connects the lawyer with the covenant. The management and social environment class connects business to covenantal relationships; establishes a community of learning among a community of persons; and ignites the imagination and futuring (Lippitt 1998) through active learning (Matovina 2000). Each component adheres into a philosophy of teaching that displays itself in class design.

Lessons Learned/Challenges and Opportunities

Intentional design that focuses on “creating space for truth to emerge” rather than on “teaching ethics” has surfaced several challenges and opportunities.

Challenge: Letting go of personal expectations of how class periods ‘should’ unfold, and what a final project or paper ‘should’ comprise. The challenge is being faithful to the course design and the process set forward as part of the learning environment. This involves reading papers more than one time and “allowing the students’ own work to determine categories rather than imposing my own” (Schenk and Takas 2002, 3).

Opportunity: This openness to the student’s direction provides ways to foster their integration of sustainability and civic awareness. With personal expectations in check, richness in quality results with an opportunity to dialogue in class or within the context of their paper/project with written comments that identify theories and concepts the student is articulating without even knowing.

Challenge: Getting out of the way. One example is leaving the classroom when students are engaged in a group activity. Student temptation to ask endless questions of clarity is often met with personal temptation to answer the endless questions definitively.
Opportunity: Leaving is a way to create space for student growth and confidence. It also reinforces that the goal is not always about answers and “how to” but rather to create, innovate, and dialogue.

Challenge: Helping students unlearn the pedagogical model of education. Often, students simultaneously welcome and shun self-direction making the process of unlearning tedious. Student trust of the teacher and teacher reputation are vital aspects to overcoming this challenge.

Opportunity: Introducing and incorporating a heutagogical model allows the student-as-learner to design and participate in establishing personal learning objectives. It is liberating for the teacher who is relinquishing power dynamics that accompany a traditional pedagogic role and relationship. For both teacher and student, this results in the sustainable practice of life-long learning.

Challenge: Identifying up-to-date texts and articles on ethics and sustainability. In the business discipline alone the sheer volume of materials is overwhelming. Add to this number the use of a cross-disciplinary approach, and the task becomes daunting.

Opportunity: Not only does the task of identifying texts enrich personal and professional learning, it presents a way to see how the topic of sustainability is being addressed in all disciplines. The goal is to generate a list of reading materials that themselves “create space”, that raise as many questions as they answer.

Challenge: Answering the “so what?” question every class. “What practical difference does any of this make in our attempts to understand, whether normatively or descriptively, the nature of modern business organizations?” (McCann 2002, 181). And, what does this have to do with ethics? The question creates a personal sense of vulnerability.

Opportunity: The “so what?” question reinforces relationship, hospitality and is, in the end, about fidelity. It also creates a certain boundary and containment to the class period.

Challenge: Communicating willingly personal accounts as part of the commitment to narrative. One cannot ask of the student what one is not willing to do him/herself.

Opportunity: Self-growth and deeper self-knowledge are the result of this risk-taking. Participating as one with the class keeps the work honest, a clear pathway to integrity, which is about the work of ethics.

Challenge: Assessing regularly one’s personal philosophy “regarding the purpose of education and the role of justice in education” (Graf 2000, 155). This requires a support network of colleagues.
Opportunity: This becomes the touchstone of remembering one’s own history and experience that has led to a deep regard for the relationship between business and society, and the theology of work and corporations (Novak 1981).

Implications

“So what?” to this paper? Why does a liberal education bring value to a business ethics class on management and the social environment? Can one teach ethics?

Getting to Right Relationship:

Certainly not to dismiss the valuable contribution of negotiation mantras of “Getting to Yes” (Fisher and Ury 1991) and “Getting Past No” (Ury 1993) which have their respective roles in conflict/dispute situations. But this misses the mark; it is about getting to right relationship.

The firm is a community of persons who work together. A business is part of a larger community, comprised of a web of interconnected relationships (Werhane 1995; Valasquez 2001; Mele 2002; Mele and Sison 1993; Phillips 1992; Simms 2004). This does not preclude profitability and efficiency as foundational goods but only suggests that these need not be, nor should they be, the exclusive focus of business. “Organizational common good is the promotion of all the goods necessary for integral human development in the organization, in such ways as to respect the proper ordering of these goods” (Alford and Naughton 2002, 38). This shift to a common good model includes foundational with excellent (or inherent) goods “those internal qualities which develop between human persons and within communities such as friendship, personal cultivation and moral self-possession” (Alford and Naughton, 36). These goods are often discussed as virtues, most predominately justice. Justice is “not a program or a project; justice is a way of seeing oneself rightly in creation and in relation to others way of life and a way of being” (Steinfels 2000, 140).

Justice becomes a verb — it is about participation and committed action. The concept of subsidiarity is valuable as it reveals a distinct understanding of society, the right ordering of relationships among institutions. This is articulated in the papacy’s notion of “sustained attention to the social question” (McCann 2002, 172). If work is at the heart of the social question (Verstraeten, Naughton, and Beretta 2001; Simms 2004), then by extension, business does have a responsibility to society. What is called for is a sustained attention to this social question. Liberal educa-
tion provides the tools for such attention that, in turn, are sustaining in themselves. Bringing liberal education tenets into the business classroom is the gateway to the work of ethics without necessarily engaging the presumptive language of “teaching ethics”.

**Sustainable Educational Practice:**

Integrating a liberal arts perspective with a heutagogical teaching model allows for continual integration of practice to theory that serves the learner. At a local level, for the teacher, this process refines the focus of what it means to be an educator at this time and place. Built into this model is a form of accountability, a daily examen of whether one practices what they preach.

At a global level, implicit in the renewed interest on teaching ethics in business from which new teaching modalities emerge, are questions about the role of university-level business education. Education is more than developing “competent people” (Hase and Kenyon 2000, 4) or, to the particulars, developing managers. The classroom provides a forum for people to understand their lives beyond the marketplace.

Saul (1997) discusses the role of economic rationalism and market forces and how this construct permeates one’s view of their life and in relationship to others:

“There is an almost childlike way, in which society avoids the reality of its situation, choosing instead to believe a fantasy perpetuated by a corporatist ideology. Legitimacy lies with conformist specialist groups who negotiate between themselves, supposedly for the common good. Corporatism places us in the grip of self-interest, or perhaps more accurately, makes us unable to make disinterested decisions at either a conscious or unconscious level. In either case, consciously or unconsciously, a person is striving, at worst for power or personal gain, or at best for continued survival in a competitive and corporate environment.” (As quoted in Hase and Kenyon, 4).

Although this may be a dire view, a liberal education platform offers the tools to work through these issues while developing the whole person, who in turn, becomes a more involved citizen. This will only occur by changing the way educators help people learn.

Today’s focus on assessment challenges a liberal arts education. The process “discourages benefits for students that are less easily measured”
Attention given to understanding society and improving critical reasoning skills are essential practices to incorporate in today’s global business environment. The tenets of a liberal education present the broader whole in which all members of society operate. Such focus saves educators from being put in narrow specialties or singular disciplines. The unity comes in the breadth of what the liberal arts education offers. To this end, merging liberal education with business is creating sustainable practice, for education in general, for business educators, in particular. Perhaps more importantly is what bringing the two together yields for future ethical business practice.

CONCLUSION

This paper addresses what the language implies when asking, “how do we teach ethics?” and how the phrasing of the question itself ultimately directs action. A shift in focus may be on how the educator encounters this question: Is “teaching ethics” a fix-it response to corporate scandals and social ills or is it deeper? Rightly so, technology, distance learning, different modes of information transfer and identifying one’s competitors are the focus of attention when addressing curricula changes. Yet, despite acknowledgement of a changing environment, classroom teaching often continues in a traditional teaching paradigm of pedagogy. Presented is an alternative approach, grounded in liberal education philosophy and enacted in a heutagogical teaching model.

Beyond this critical and personal assessment on teaching ethics is what today’s resurgent interest in teaching business ethics offers: an opportunity to examine more broadly the role of university education. In an MBA class where the focus is on sustainability and citizenship when considering the management to social environment interface, how and what are we doing, as a university community, to create and support sustainable learning environments through our teaching methodologies?

Invoking the liberal education perspective continues to provide direction to these questions. Perhaps it is not about teaching ethics but rather about creating space. ‘Space’ allows relationship to unfold between self-to-self, other, world; from management and the social environment...
to business and society. Always circular, untidy and unfinished — much like the discipline of ethics.

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NOTES

1 This paper is part of an ongoing work: “How Do We Live The Questions: On Sustainability, Management and Liberal Education” (Simms, 2004). The role of depth psychology to sustainable change is outlined as complimentary to liberal education objectives.

2 Piper, Gentile and Parks (1993) in *Can Ethics Be Taught?* note the absence of making connections between different social categories. For example, students assume a privileged personal lifestyle yet express concern for a growing underclass without connecting how the two are related. “As a consequence, the connections often were not made between espoused political-social-philosophical values and the actual conditions of the experience leading to further contradictions in a manner that did not suggest an appreciation of complexity so much as an absence of reflection. (p. 34, Italics added).

3 Applying the heutagogical method in the management course introduces management practice that can be replicated in the workplace. See Ghoshal article: “B-Schools Share the Blame for Enron”.

4 Course format is designed from a philosophical base. A progression of weekly watchwords, quotes and corresponding seminal cases frame course content. Watchwords include immersion; sustenance and sustainability; intent; trust; choice; values; freedom; and ownership. Examples of cases include Wal-Mart (on displacement of rural communities), Nestle Infant Formula, Love Canal and Merek and Cost Rica (biodiversity and pharmaceutical ownership). Videos have included The White Mile, Karen Silkwood and Roger and Me. The cornerstone of each class is the use of questions as provocations to deeper analysis. The opening activity with narrative is posed as a question. Questions guide the in-class small group work on the cases. Large class debrief concludes with identifying a “new” or different question(s) not as it only relates to the specific case but how it extends forward into other areas. For example, the case *Samuel K. Skinner v Railway Labor Executives’ Association* (1989) which focuses on the use of workplace drug testing extends into discussions on the ramifications of genetic screening, employer need to know, privacy in the context of the Patriot Act, and diminishing boundaries due to technology. The final debrief constitutes the meta-narrative: we talk about we talked about that class period. Three integration papers on linking business-to-society require a question the student poses on a topic of choice that guides their analysis. The final project is intended as a point of action through a service learning project; a concept piece, business plan or model; or consciousness-raising.

5 Farson (1996) provides a useful distinction between a dilemma (as predicaments of choice between equally unsatisfactory options) and a problem (as mistake, defect or bad experience.) “Predicaments require interpretative think-
Dealing with a predicament demands the ability to put a larger frame around a situation, to understand its many contexts, to appreciate its deeper and often paradoxical causes and consequences” (p. 43).

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