



# PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

## Journal of the APPA

Volume 4 Number 1 March 2009

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ISSN 1742-8181

**Nemo Veritatem Regit**

**Nobody Governs Truth**

## Philosophy in the Business Arena

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### Abstract

Here we explore a deep ambivalence concerning money and the world of business felt not only by philosophers but anyone who aspires to values other than the materialistic. Money is only a tool like the wheel. However, human beings have invested money with a power which transforms the very meaning of our lives. Business people are not especially greedy. They aspire to excellence and virtue, no less than the philosopher. Yet the arena in which they practice their profession is defined by the principle of maximization of profit—the principle of greed. In the business arena, the ethics of altruism is suspended in order to allow for competition and the possibility of winning or losing. There is no room for saints, only heroes. The desire to excel in a world defined by the profit motive, combined with the ever-present risk and fear of failure, presents a particular challenge to the philosophical consultant, all the more so because the quest for philosophical understanding is in its very nature opposed to materialist values and the profit motive. In responding to the challenge of the business arena, we do not have the option to repudiate money and take refuge in dreams of a socialist utopia. Nor can we accept the dominant capitalist ideology which identifies the business arena with the world. Nor indeed is it acceptable to split the ‘good’ world of ethics from the ‘bad’ world of business; grudgingly recognizing the necessity of the business arena while at the same time stigmatizing it as a necessary evil. Accepting that a degree of tension between the two worlds is unavoidable, an enlightened philosophy of business offers positive celebration of the business arena alongside recognition that we are not merely players in the business arena but ethical beings at one and the same time.

**Keywords:** *Business ethics, Metaphysics, Philosophy of business, Money, Capitalism, Karl Marx, Ayn Rand, John Macmurray, Melanie Klein*

### Introduction

Writing this essay has been difficult and painful. Seeking to obey the Socratic maxim, ‘Know thyself’ has inevitably led me to grapple with my own shortcomings as a would-be practical philosopher. How did I get here? How did I come to be doing this? Led initially by intellectual curiosity, I found myself increasingly fascinated by the world of business, which simultaneously attracts and repels me. I am uncomfortable in the role of ‘philosopher of business’. I would prefer the label, ‘metaphysician’, were not the idea of metaphysics so widely misunderstood.

I also have a case to make, although it is not one that would be very popular in today’s climate. I am not a quietist. I believe that change is needed, but I also reject the simplistic view of the philosopher ‘offering ethical advice’ which many subscribe to. The many don’t appreciate the difficulties in the way of applying philosophy to the business world. Companies seek the advice of consultants because they want answers and solutions. They are driven mainly by the needs of the moment, the need to compete and survive. If you tell your clients that the ethical dilemmas they face have no answers, you will quickly be shown the door.

This essay is therefore written against a background of what I perceive as a deep difficulty with the very idea that decisions made by business people—in particular, decisions which have ethical consequences—can be argued out and rationalized, as if all one had to do was obey the injunction to ‘think clearly’ and everything will become clear. That is one of the main faults of philosophers

when they try to be helpful and offer practical advice. Not everything can be ‘understood’, not every action can be justified or explained.

For example, a piece of practical wisdom which many business people take for granted is that you can’t always do the ethical thing, when the cost is too high. Even ethics has a price. In a good year, you can afford to budget a bit more for ethics, in a bad year less. Before ethics comes survival. Ethics aside, we really do not understand what drives us at the deepest level. We make theories about our motivations and test them—or at least we think we do—but the result is more often than not a foregone conclusion. We love material things for no other reason than that they are lovable.

The only certain truth is that we do business because we *can*. Like philosophy itself, trade and exchange is one of the fundamental manifestations of human freedom. Like philosophy, commerce is an activity which human beings invented. Today, we live with the consequences—good or bad—of that invention. As a consequence, we inhabit two irreconcilable worlds. We are assailed by dilemmas which we cannot solve because we ourselves created the conditions which gave rise to those dilemmas in the first place—far too long ago in the past to do anything about it now. We have no alternative but to live with ambivalence and uncertainty. But we can do more than just make the best of it. We can rediscover the fundamental maxim that drives philosophy; that respect for truth is more important than the practical need for certainty; that it is better to be ignorant and know that you are, than it is to think you have the answers when you do not.

### **Philosophy for Business**

Five years ago I decided to branch out and discover something about the business world. Many of my distance learning students are in business, and I was curious to find out what makes them tick. What do business people *really* want? How can someone spend their working life wheeling and dealing? Don’t they ever get bored with doing the same thing, over and over? What’s the great attraction about wearing a suit? So in November 2003 I launched the *Philosophy for Business* e-journal, under the umbrella of the International Society for Philosophers. The list of subscribers is diverse, including students and lecturers of both philosophy and business studies, CEOs, board directors and managers, public servants and members of the professions.

The week before I started this essay, the Sheffield University list server sent out issue 47 of *Philosophy for Business* with articles, ‘The Business Virtues’, ‘Homosexuality and Business’ and ‘Permission to Steal’. No subject is taboo, so long as it treats issues in business from a broadly philosophical perspective. Considering that the last time I taught at the University of Sheffield was over a decade ago, I am fortunate to get this extra support. I don’t need the university’s approval for what I publish.

For the last dozen or so years I have been running my own e-learning business in competition with the universities: the Pathways School of Philosophy. On the Internet search engines, Pathways is neck and neck with the Open University and the Oxford University Department of Continuing Education. Our courses are good value for money, considering that Pathways does not receive any grant funding or money from the taxpayer’s purse. Google is a great leveller.

In my piece for *Practical Philosophy*, ‘Pathways to Philosophy Seven Years On’ (Geoffrey Klempner 2004a) I go so far as to describe myself as a businessman. But the truth is I am not, and never will be. I realize that now, having had the chance to go out into the world and engage with the genuine article. I have met business people who are dedicated and talented. They could have excelled in any number of fields, but they chose business. I’ve met many more who were good enough—the indispensable small part players who know their place in the scheme of things. Either way, I don’t measure up. So I am writing as an anthropologist of the business world, rather than as a native

interpreter; what I say has to be treated with the same scepticism and caution that one treats any foray into anthropology, especially when it is done by a philosopher.

My father Paul Klemptner, a mining engineer who wrote a column on gold shares for the *Financial Times*, acquired a small company manufacturing spares for earth moving equipment in his middle years which became our main source of income. In his youth in Austria he had dreamed of training as an architect, but Adolf Hitler put paid to that plan. In 1936 he emigrated to South Africa where he completed his apprenticeship in the gold mines, then set up his consultancy in Johannesburg. Finally he left South Africa in 1949 when the National Party won the general election.

Though I perceive my father as having been a somewhat reluctant businessman, as a result of his efforts our family lived comfortably. We rode around in a red Jaguar and enjoyed holidays in San Tropez. I learned my first lessons in business from my dad; the most important lesson of all is that *work is hard*. This said to his adolescent son who entertained absurd notions about making a living as a creative photographer taking photos of clouds and trees; then, later, equally unrealistic ideas about being a philosopher pondering the meaning of life.

I also learned from my dad the value of being meticulous and keeping a good filing system—advice which has stood me in very good stead. Academics can be notoriously messy and disorganized. It's a waste of effort if you're always losing stuff. You need to conserve your energy for the important things.

Wittgenstein used to tell his students that 'philosophy is hard'. It takes an effort to go deep, just as it takes an effort to swim under water. I imagine that most of those reading this article would agree. But then again, philosophers would, wouldn't they? What do they know about the *real* world? Philosophy isn't *work*, something you do in order to live and make a decent life for yourself and your family. 'Wittgenstein gave all his wealth away. He never had to pay private school fees,' my father would have said.

### **The Inverted World**

I want to talk about practical matters. But I also need to say something about the crazy philosophy of money; because we are so brainwashed, we have lost the capacity to see its craziness. In its various incarnations, the market place seems to me an elaborate fairy tale, facades behind facades, the opposite of reality. Yet that is the world that one meets up with every day. It is in your face, there's no escape. For all practical purposes, a dream from which you never wake up is no different from reality. Or is it?

Money not only talks, it philosophizes. Money makes ugliness beautiful and the giftless talented. Marx said that, in his essay on Money in *1844 Manuscripts* (Marx, 1964). It doesn't matter how stupid you are; with enough money, you can have the IQ of a genius. Money *is* a genius. Money is the genie let out of the bottle. Money is the first and last explanation, the ultimate justification for every action. Nothing is as rational as money. Nothing is rational except money. In line after searing line, the young Marx pours out his anger and scorn on the institution of money and all that it stands for. In the world of money, every value is reversed. Not since Diogenes philosophized from a barrel has materialism been subjected to such withering critique.

To the more cynical observer, Marx's essay reeks of envy and *ressentiment*. Yet, allowing for the hyperbole, I believe he *saw* something real and terrifying: a vision of what the world is, or could yet become. Grant the institution of money and you grant everything. You grant all *this*. The world of money is a world turned upside down. But if everything is 'down' then there is no difference between down and up. To us today, a world without money is simply—unthinkable.

Economic thinking is one of the primary manifestations of the philosophy of money; even charities can't escape it. No director of a national charity would dare stand up and defend wasting hard won donations on projects that are not fully *worth* the money spent on them. There's no room

for hurt feelings. Professional philosophers are so-called because they practice their vocation—for money.

Despite my own personal reservations about entering into the fray, I would like this article to serve as a guide for the would-be philosophical practitioner who is looking to find gainful employment in the business arena. There are rich pickings to be had, for the philosopher who has the right attitude and temperament. (I am not being ironic or tongue in cheek when I say this.) If you are one of the lucky few with the right combination of talents, you can indeed have your soul *and* sell it.

### Importance of Praxis

I am not writing this out of any mere desire to be *useful*—as if philosophers need to apply their intellects once in a while to practical matters in order to justify their existence. Most business readers will not ‘get’ this, but these words are not for them. I am assuming a reader somewhat like myself, curious to know, to understand—as I was, when I started out on this strange trek. Nor indeed do I feel any particularly strong urge to actively go out and help people. My experiences have confirmed what I always suspected: that I would not make a very good philosophical counselor. As I remark in my 2004 article, I engage my students in vigorous philosophical dialogue; I am not there to listen to their personal problems.

What I have come to believe in my bones, and despite my diffidence, is that philosophical understanding does not occur in a vacuum. It has a point, a purpose. Philosophical inquiry whose primary focus is not in its very core and essence practical is not merely an idle game or waste of time: it fails by its own rigorous criterion of truth. In other words, truth is *praxis*, or it is nothing.

You may think you’ve heard this before. Marx said something similar in his 11th Thesis on Feuerbach (Marx 1969). And before Marx, Epicurus. Unlike both these worthy philosophers, however, my primary focus is not altruistic. I believe that the lives of business people could be better than they are in lots of ways, but that’s something they will have to discover for themselves—or not, as the case may be. At least most of them are not suffering desperate living conditions or going hungry.

Perhaps closer than Marx is the British philosopher John Macmurray, in his philosophy of ‘the self as agent’, expounded in his Gifford Lectures 1952–53 (Macmurray 1957, 1961). According to Macmurray, understanding the grand concepts of metaphysics—space, time, causality, substance—depends on grasping the fundamental truth that the standpoint of the self is primarily that of an agent, and only secondarily that of a subject of experience. What is most significant about Macmurray’s approach is what he *avoids*: the Neo-Marxist idea that you have to act *before* you can understand, in order to ‘change your state of consciousness’, or the Hegelian notion of the self as related to society as an organ is to the body, which receives poignant expression in Bradley’s ‘My Station and Its Duties’ (Bradley, 1927).

My primary motive is to advance my own understanding. I am a seeker rather than a helper. But I also accept Macmurray’s dictum, in the Introduction to *The Self as Agent*: ‘All meaningful knowledge is for the sake of action, and all meaningful action for the sake of friendship’ (Macmurray, 1957, p.15).

### Metaphysics of Business

Human beings are world creators. One of the worlds that human beings have created is the world of money, commodities, trade, exchange. To me, it’s a world full of beauty and ugliness in equal proportions, messy, flashy, exotic, scary. No-one who

has made their home in this world would see this the way an outsider—and being a philosopher makes me by definition an outsider—can see this.

I regard the business arena—the world of buyers and sellers, bosses and workers, producers and consumers, the world of money—as nothing less than an ontological category, a way of Being. It is not accidental to who we are. It defines the way we relate to each other and to the world around us. But it is not the only way of Being. There are other ways, and the most fundamental of these is ethics. (Klemptner 2006)

I suspect that not a few practical philosophers harbour a natural hostility towards metaphysics. That is understandable. The metaphysician doesn't aim for practical consequences. Metaphysical theories are not evaluated in terms of their utility. Despite that, I would strongly endorse Iris Murdoch's view that ethics needs to be rooted in metaphysics (Murdoch, 1970, 1992). This, for the sake of understanding which is for the sake of action. In *Naive Metaphysics* (Klemptner 1994) I offer a defence of an objective view of moral judgement. My argument for the *necessity* of a defence would be the same as the one Plato gives in *Meno*: beliefs which lack rational grounding have a treacherous tendency to 'run away' (Plato, 97e-98a).

Metaphysics is the science of truth. If truth is *praxis* then metaphysics is the science of *praxis*. But no-one is saying that it is necessary to *understand* in order to *do*. You don't learn to ride a bicycle by studying the physics and mechanics of bicycles. If there is, as I believe, a metaphysics of the business world it doesn't follow that business people need to be taught metaphysics in order to do business, or in order to do it better. Yet, all the same, metaphysics is necessary—for those, like myself, who discover that they need it.

Philosophers are the experts in unmasking, at revealing the reality behind deceptive appearances. Generally speaking, however—at least, from my experience—people like to keep at least some of their illusions. After all, believing that it is worthwhile getting out of bed is itself a kind of illusion. (A somewhat irreverent aside: I am reminded that Descartes did his most productive thinking snuggled up in bed. That would be a difficult way to run an office.) Clinically depressed people are not wrong in their conviction that they see the bare truth about things. The world is various shades of grey before we human beings actively go out and paint it in the colours of our desires. It is cruel, one of the less attractive manifestations of the philosopher's will to power, to want to force people's eyelids open, so they see our actual world as it *really* is.

What I have come to realize is that grasping the nature of the business arena—something which is very far from being apparent despite the fact that we live and breathe it—is fundamental to understanding what we human beings essentially are, our very existence. The business arena is the *a priori* possibility of a certain kind of being which stands in stark contrast to our ethical being. But more of that later.

### **Prospects for a Philosophical Consultancy**

In my travels, I was lucky enough to have my own informant, a business person with whom I was originally hoping to set up a philosophical consultancy. We had many discussions about what it was that business people 'really need', without ever coming to a definite conclusion. It is difficult to tell someone that they need to change while they continue to insist that they are perfectly happy as they are. Tell a business person that they are 'in denial' or protecting themselves behind a shield of self-deception and they will laugh in your face. In the end, it comes down to the power of money and the illusion that you must be *doing well*, if you make a good income from what you do.

The most important lesson I learned concerns confidentiality. In the business world, anything resembling personal information about a business person is potential dynamite. Knowledge is power, and as a business person any slip that you make, any information you intentionally or unintentionally let out, is ammunition for your competitors. When information is released—and you will find plenty in the business magazines or business sections of newspapers—you can be assured that it is carefully vetted PR. Even so, it is evidence of a kind, if you know how to read it: testimony to the ideology and often distorted self-image of business people.

The worry about confidentiality is a source of very considerable resistance that any philosophical practitioner will encounter in taking on business people as clients. As a rule, the higher you go, the more resistance you will encounter and the greater effort you will have to make to establish trust. If you follow the practice of some philosophical practitioners and liberally season your published articles with case histories, you will quickly find yourself out in the cold. Discretion is paramount.

Yet business people are prepared to seek help, and at various meetings and conferences I talked to a number of individuals who showed a genuine interest in the idea of dialogue with a philosopher. As I learned, the business person's weakest spot is the fear that they will fall off their horse; that they will make a bad judgement call and lose their job or their business will go bankrupt. Hand in hand with success in the business world goes a nagging doubt: in order to succeed, you have to *dream of failure*. You have to remind yourself over and over again of all the different ways in which things could still go wrong despite all your careful preparations, and yet find the courage to go forward and face whatever comes.

As you might expect, many business people project an image of toughness and you will have to persuade them to put down the mask. When they do, you will find there is much to admire. All the intellectual skills that we value in the sciences or the arts—analytical ability, the ability to communicate face to face or in writing, resourcefulness and creativity—are sharpened and honed to perfection. This wouldn't need saying, were it not for the considerable prejudice within the academic world against the world of business.

In the end, our optimistic plans for a consultancy didn't work out. In retrospect, I think I was temperamentally unsuited to getting down in the trenches and dodging the missiles and bullets. Yet I am grateful for the chance to get an insider's view of the business world and the opportunity to try out all my well-rehearsed philosophical gambits on the most challenging subjects I am ever likely to meet.

### **Business People**

Without a doubt, the biggest hurdle for any would be philosophical consultant is grasping how the world appears from the business perspective. I would say that it is harder for a philosopher than for any other professional. I have tried to give some indication of the reasons why. It has to do with the issue of money and the intensive focus on profit; the world as a market place. Once you are in the market place, the money game takes over. You are no longer in control.

Yet there are philosophical practitioners today working with business people. At a conference in Amsterdam, I got to know one redoubtable woman in her 60s who offers intensive coaching to CEOs. This particular lady is highly regarded amongst those in the know, but you won't find her on the Internet or in the Yellow Pages. At this level—and indeed to a significant extent in business generally—personal recommendation and reputation are the only things that are taken seriously. Web pages and publicity handouts are for the *hoi polloi*.

How to get inside the mind of a business person? The first thing that needs to be said, by the philosopher, or the historian, looking at human conflict over the centuries, is that *men like war*.



Business is exciting because it takes on the aspect of war. Gordon Gekko played by Michael Douglas in the 1987 film *Wall Street* (Stone, 1987) tells his wide-eyed protégé: ‘I don’t throw darts at a board. I bet on sure things. Read Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*. Every battle is won before it is ever fought.’ Whether you are selling, negotiating or directing you are engaged in a battle of wits, you are looking for an edge. That is the essence of contest.

Calling contest in the business arena ‘war’ also highlights the fact that no-one has agreed what the rules are: for example, what counts as hitting below the belt. Trying to make others respect *your* rules is just one more aspect of the contest, just another stratagem. The worst thing for a philosophical practitioner to be—the thing that no-one wants, even if they say they do—is to be the one who comes in from the outside and tries to be a rule maker (a warning to would-be ‘business ethicists’).

But things are changing. As the big corporations increasingly realize the value of co-operation—even while they compete to sell their goods side by side in the market place—the proponents of the traditional warlike virtues are beginning to look more and more out of touch with reality. Tactics and strategy of today’s global marketplace dictate a more subtle approach, one where the traditionally feminine virtues of empathy and conciliation come into their own.

All business people are motivated by the desire to compete and excel; but when all is said and done the final arbiter of success or failure is money. Greed is the fundamental guiding principle. You want to maximize profit. This isn’t about survival, or having as much as you can use, or even getting what you want. The principle of greed is excess and abundance—much like the principle of life itself. We are shocked when Gordon Gekko in *Wall Street* shouts to his audience of excited shareholders, ‘Greed is good! Greed works! Greed is right!’ because we were always taught that greed is a sin. But that is precisely the proposition that Gekko is denying.

### Seeking Self-understanding

Human beings have an urge to rationalize their actions after the event; and no-one more so than business people. And for sound practical reasons. Every decision has to be justified and defended in the boardroom or to your superiors. In any well-run company today, performance of managers, executives and sales staff is continually monitored and put under the microscope. The dead wood is thrown overboard, the high performers rewarded. The focus on results—the bottom line—is unremitting.

However, there is a big difference between coming to a philosophical counsellor as a business person seeking to improve the way they *live* through rational reflection, or as someone merely seeking to improve their performance in the business arena. It no more follows that you will live better if you succeed in the business arena, than it follows that you will improve the quality of your life if you become a champion on the sporting field or a pop star.

The urgent question a philosophical counsellor will ask you is why you want to succeed, why indeed, are you prepared to sacrifice so much for the sake of success. It is worth reminding ourselves that this is a vice (if one can presume to call it that) from which professional philosophers themselves are not immune; witness reports of the growing use by academics of all disciplines of medications developed for patients with neurological disease or impaired brain functions, in order to improve their intellectual sharpness and performance in the publishing race or in the seminar room (Academy of Medical Sciences, 2008).

We admire the Olympic athlete for their single-minded pursuit of *arete*, because we value outstanding performance in any field of human endeavour. Surely, we ought, consistently, to adopt the same attitude to the talented business person who overcomes every obstacle in order to get to the top? But then again, what is the big deal if in the end it is all about money? What is so admirable about that?



In striving to answer these questions, the philosophical practitioner is entering into a moral miasma, where nothing is what it seems. What is it that the ambitious business executive really wants? What is the primary motivation? Is it excellence? Fame? Power? Wealth? Do they know? It might be all of these things and more. A heady cocktail indeed.

### The Business Arena

I hope that the reader is beginning to feel a sense of confusion and disorientation similar to my own when I first set out. We admire what business people are able to do yet at the same time feel repelled by their narrow world. We accept that there is something worth striving for—in striving to be good at business—yet recoil at the blinkered materialism of the market place.

The breakthrough for me came when I formulated the theory of the business arena (Klempner 2004b). I realized that attempting to adapt ethics to business is futile. Ethics—I mean real ethics, the ethics of *I and Thou*—in a sense breaks down in the business arena. The ethical obligations of players in the business arena are not non-existent but they are *limited*, in order to allow for competition and the possibility of winning and losing.

The metaphor I used was that of a boxing ring. If you see that your competitor is on the ropes, you don't bend forward and stretch out your hand. That is the time to move in for the kill:

I have chosen boxing because of the pungency of the metaphor of the boxing ring. It is not an accident that sport takes place in an arena. The architecture of the boxing ring or the sporting arena is not merely utilitarian, but is symbolic of the frame which we choose to place around this area of human endeavour. Sport would not be sport, were it not for that frame.

Sport was an invention, like the wheel. It is possible that there is a planet somewhere whose inhabitants have never competed in athletics, or a game, or a martial art. It seems to me far less likely that in our future interstellar travels we shall ever find a planet where trade or *quid pro quo* had not been invented. The very first act of deliberate trade created the frame within which business activity takes place.

It would be possible—and this was the young Marx's vision of a communist society where everyone lives by the rule of brotherly and sisterly love, just as Christ preached—to abolish business, trade and money altogether. Just because an activity is natural, inevitable does not mean that human cultural creativity and ingenuity cannot find a way to eliminate it. Should we wish to? To me, that's a meaningless question. Because (contrary to what the older Marx of *Capital* thought and generations of Socialist governments have taken on trust) we have not the slightest clue how that end state would be achieved. We have no conception of the price that would have to be paid in permanently altering human culture and behaviour in order to reach that idyllic end state. (Klempner, 2004b)

Reading these words now, written when I was just starting out on my adventure into the business world, I get a strong sense that I was trying *too hard*. There is a name for this kind of discourse: apologetics. I was defending a belief, held by a large class of people with the same ferocity and determination as any religion: the religion of money.

What I would do now—what a philosophical counsellor offering guidance to business people can do—is challenge in every way and at every opportunity the ideological belief that the business

arena *is* the world. That was the terrifying vision that the young Marx saw. It is not. It is an artificial creation intended to serve our purposes which human beings have become enthralled by.

That is all well and good. But there is a down side to the arena metaphor. Psychologists have a name for the tendency to take something which has good and bad aspects and artificially separate out the two sides, in order that we can fantasize about a good which is unpolluted by anything bad. The term is 'splitting'. The seminal work derives from Melanie Klein and her theory of 'part objects' — the 'good breast' and the 'bad breast'—but it is not necessary to embrace Kleinianism or the idea of depth psychology in order to perceive the point. It is all-too apparent.

You can see it, for example, in the traditional view of business and money taken by Christianity, in its peculiar reading of the 4th Commandment handed down to the children of Israel, 'Remember the Sabbath to keep it Holy'. The Sabbath day is the day of purity; the rest of the week we scabble down in the dirt. You earn your filthy lucre six days of the week, and on the seventh you repent. From my experience, there are many business people who have little or no religious convictions who still carry the sense of guilt that this splitting implies. Defiantly asserting that the business arena *is* the world—there is no 'seventh day'—is merely one way to deny the guilt. That is the gospel of the Gordon Gekkos of this world. Ultimately, it doesn't succeed.

What I would offer as an alternative is a positive celebration of the business arena alongside recognition that we are not merely players in the business arena but ethical beings *at one and the same time*. In order to play the game, we mutually agree to the principle, 'To the winner the spoils, and the best of luck to you!' The evils of materialism are not the responsibility of money or big business or consumerism. That's just another attempt at denying our own responsibility, our own guilt. We can be better than we are, if we recognize that money is after all just a tool—like the wheel—and, as we have always been taught, there are many things, like friendship, which money cannot buy.

What does this mean in *practice*? It would be too facile to say that business people must become philosophers. And also arrogant. It is the height of arrogance for the philosopher to think that a business person will be improved by becoming more like they are; why not the other way round? Wouldn't philosophers too be improved by the exchange? It is also facile, because many business people are philosophers already; that is the source of their sense of guilt. They see through themselves all too clearly. Giving your millions away when you retire doesn't make up for all the ethically dubious things you had to do to make your millions in the first place.

If we are players in the business arena and ethical beings at one and the same time, then that is a conviction which cannot be adequately expressed in words but can only be *shown*. Pursuit of profit is what the game requires, but we are more than just 'players of the game'. In that case, show it. Don't promote a corporate culture where loyalty to the company is the number one ethical rule. Loyalty is a virtue, to be sure; but it is only one consideration amongst others. Take practical steps to foster ethical debate at every level of the company, from the boardroom down to the shop floor. Recognize your finely crafted 'ethical codes' for what they are: a mere PR fig-leaf.

Despite everything I have said, I would love, just once, to be employed as a philosophical consultant—on my terms. I would tell my clients all that I have said here. I would refuse to offer advice, do my best to make everyone thoroughly upset, and thoroughly enjoy every minute while I feigned my 'dissatisfaction'. That is the Socratic way. Once the debate is started, things can only get better. There will be no sacred cows. The sanctity of the environment, racial and gender equality, disability provision, third world exploitation are all up for grabs. As J.S. Mill would have observed, there's no point in believing these fine things if you don't have arguments to defend your beliefs. Unlike Mill, however, I don't put my faith in rational argument alone leading to the best outcome.

My faith is in our human capacity to relate to one another as ethical beings, in every situation and wherever we may find ourselves; at work and at play.

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International Society for Philosophers  
<http://www.isfp.co.uk>

*Philosophy for Business* e-journal  
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*Philosophy Pathways* e-journal  
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# PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

## Journal of the APPA

Volume 4 Number 1 March 2009

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*Philosophical Practice* is a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the growing field of applied philosophy. The journal covers substantive issues in the areas of client counseling, group facilitation, and organizational consulting. It provides a forum for discussing professional, ethical, legal, sociological, and political aspects of philosophical practice, as well as juxtapositions of philosophical practice with other professions. Articles may address theories or methodologies of philosophical practice; present or critique case-studies; assess developmental frameworks or research programs; and offer commentary on previous publications. The journal also has an active book review and correspondence section.

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