

MAXIMS



A collection for work

Muel Kaptein

Maxims

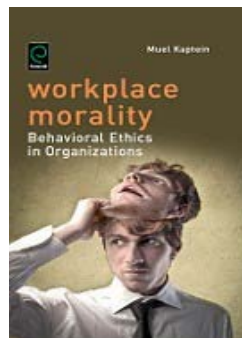
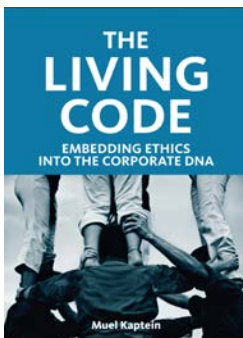
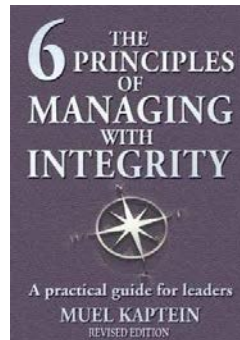
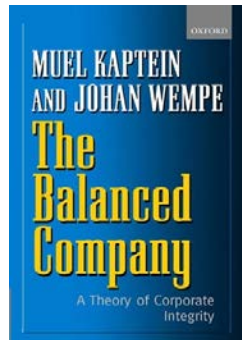
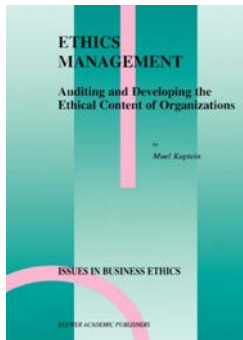
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Cover picture: Maxims are food for thought

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Introduction

This book contains a collection of 255 maxims about work ethics. Each maxim comes with an explanation and a picture.

Why maxims?

A maxim is a short expression of a general truth, a principle, or a rule of conduct. Maxims are general rules and precepts for life; they are proverbs and aphorisms, puns and propositions. They are, as the philosopher Immanuel Kant once said, the principles of our behavior, the practical basic rules from which we act.

Maxims are important for work ethics because they tell us what ethics at work is and advise us what we should (not) do at work. Because maxims are short, we can easily remember them when needed, for example when one is facing dilemmas, nasty questions, or strong temptations. At the same time, good maxims are rich because they contain much experience and evidence, and therefore they give food for thought, discussion, and inspiration.

Why 255 maxims?

The book contains 255 maxims. This makes it possible to read one new maxim every workday for a year (given a five-day work week and two weeks of holiday in a year). If you will use the book in this way, it might be useful to keep it in a place that you can readily access every day, such as next to your

bed or computer or on your desk. Of course, this book can also be used in other ways. For instance, you can start every team meeting with a reading of one of the maxims.

Why these maxims?

I have selected these maxims because I believe that they are important expressions of what work ethics means and what is needed to behave at work in an ethical way. Some of these maxims are new, and some I have already presented in my earlier publications. Based on my experience (conversations with others and lectures and trainings I gave), I can say that (most) people like (most of) the maxims presented here. People consider the maxims as useful: they make them think, motivate them, and they trigger discussions. To make the maxims as useful as possible, I briefly explain each.

Why in this sequence?

The maxims are independent of each other and do not form a whole. However, I grouped together maxims that are (roughly) on the same subject so that the differences between them are easier to see. I also put the groups in a certain order. The first groups of maxims are about what ethics is and why it matters. The subsequent groups each concern some ethical value. Each group consists of a multiple of five maxims, so that there is always a new group

at the start of the working week. For those who read one (different) maxim per day, the numbers of the week (W) and day (D) are displayed at the bottom of each page. Obviously, you can read the maxims in random order and pencil-mark them once you have studied them.

Why with pictures?

To strengthen the maxims, each one is illustrated with a picture. After all, a picture can say or paint at least or even more than a thousand words. A picture can convey the meaning or essence of a maxim more effectively than the text can because compared to the latter, a picture contains more information, activates our imagination, experiences, and emotions more readily, and it can also be remembered more easily. By combining text and picture, I hope that the maxims will be able to say or paint even more clearly.

Why specifically these maxims?

The combination of maxim, picture, and explanation will hopefully give you enough inspiration for reflection.

The following are questions that you can pose for each maxim:

1. Do I understand what this maxim means and what the relationship is between the maxim and the accompanying picture?
2. Do I agree with the maxim? If not, what maxim would I make from it for myself?
3. Is the maxim useful for me and should I apply it? For example, does the maxim imply that I need to change things, and if so, when and how? Or shall I keep this particular maxim in mind for future events?
4. Should I share or discuss this maxim with someone for whom it might also be relevant?

For ease of distribution and sharing, each maxim is freely available on the Internet.

Why this book?

I wrote this book and put considerable time on it because I hope these maxims will inspire every reader towards reflection (which is the nature ethics) and application (the aim of ethics). I wish you much reflection and application.

1.

What is ethics



Integrity is doing the right thing right
even when everyone or no one is watching.

Integrity is doing the right thing right
regardless of whether no one is watching
(one can thus do wrong and no one will
know) or everyone is watching (there is
the pressure to do what everyone expects,
even if it is the wrong thing). So ethical
behavior is not guided by whether and
how many people know about it.



Integrity is not only about
being the right person at the right place and time,
but also about doing the right things right.

When it is said that one is the right person
at the right place and time, it does not
really say much. Doing the right thing in
the right way shows whether one is the
right person. The person, place,
and behavior must coincide.



What is ethical depends on the context,
but the context does not determine what is ethical.

In determining what is right and wrong, it is desirable to take the context into account, such as the country, the period, and the society's level of social development. Morality is partly dependent on this. However, this claim does not imply that the context determines what is right and wrong, because then ethics would follow the context and the latter would be good by definition. Ethics would then have no function. Therefore, it is ethical to take the context into account while at the same time using cogent, independent, and objective ways of thinking to arrive at conclusions about right and wrong.



Right is right even when everyone dislikes it.
Wrong is wrong even when everyone likes it.

What is ethically right or wrong does not depend on whether others approve of it or not. After all, others may hold the ethically wrong view. Something is ethically right or wrong because it is right or wrong in itself and on objective grounds. Ethics is not a matter of voting and counting.



What is unethical remains unethical
even if everyone is doing it.

How others behave can never determine what is ethical or unethical. Everyone doing or not doing it does not make the behavior ethical or unethical. It is not possible to deduce what ought to be from what is precisely because ethics is normative (it prescribes what is (un)desirable in practice) rather than descriptive (practice describes what is (un)desirable).



Ethics begins
where the law ends.

Adhering to laws and rules is in a sense not ethics because it is “only” compliance with something that is externally imposed. People are thus not expected to ponder whether they should comply with the laws and rules or interpret them according to their own understanding. In situations where there are no rules and laws and where people have the freedom and autonomy to determine things for themselves, ethics is all the more important. In such situations, there are no laws and rules to tell us what is right and wrong; but ethics, which is the reflection on what is right and wrong, helps to determine what is right and wrong.



Ethics is not about what is *or* what can be
but what should *and* what can be.

Practice cannot justify what is ethically right and wrong. What is right and wrong is independent of practice. This would otherwise mean that the practice (what is or is possible) is always ethical. On the contrary. Ethics sets the norms about what is fitting, about what “should”. These standards are then the guidelines for assessing and possibly improving practice. In addition, ethics does not demand the impossible, because that would be unreasonable, irresponsible, and unethical. Ethics demands what is possible, what is realistic and feasible.



Every tool, technique, and technology can be used for good or bad.
It's our ethics that determines which it will be.

Tools are instrumental and do not have ethics or morality in themselves; they are amoral. Whether instruments are used for good or bad depends on the ethics of the makers and users. The latter influences whether, when, and how tools are used; the tools themselves do not do this. Even smart robots are still made and deployed by people.



If ethics were easy, everyone would do it.
If ethics were impossible, no one would expect it.

Ethics is not easy. If it were, then everyone would be ethical and ethics would not be necessary anymore. At the same time, ethics does not demand the impossible. If it did, then nobody could be ethical or behave ethically; it would not be feasible for anyone and thus ethics would not be necessary.



Business ethics is the anatomy
of the corporate conscience.

Business ethics, both as science and practice, studies what values and norms organizations ought to have. To this end, it is necessary to first analyze the organization's current values and norms (their conscience) to have proper insight into what these are and why the organization has these particular values and norms and not others. When we have established these, then we can ask about the moral desirability of these norms and values. The analysis of the organization's current values and norms is complex because the real values and norms of an organization can be deeply hidden, quite diverse, and multidimensional. Thus to do this analysis well is an art.

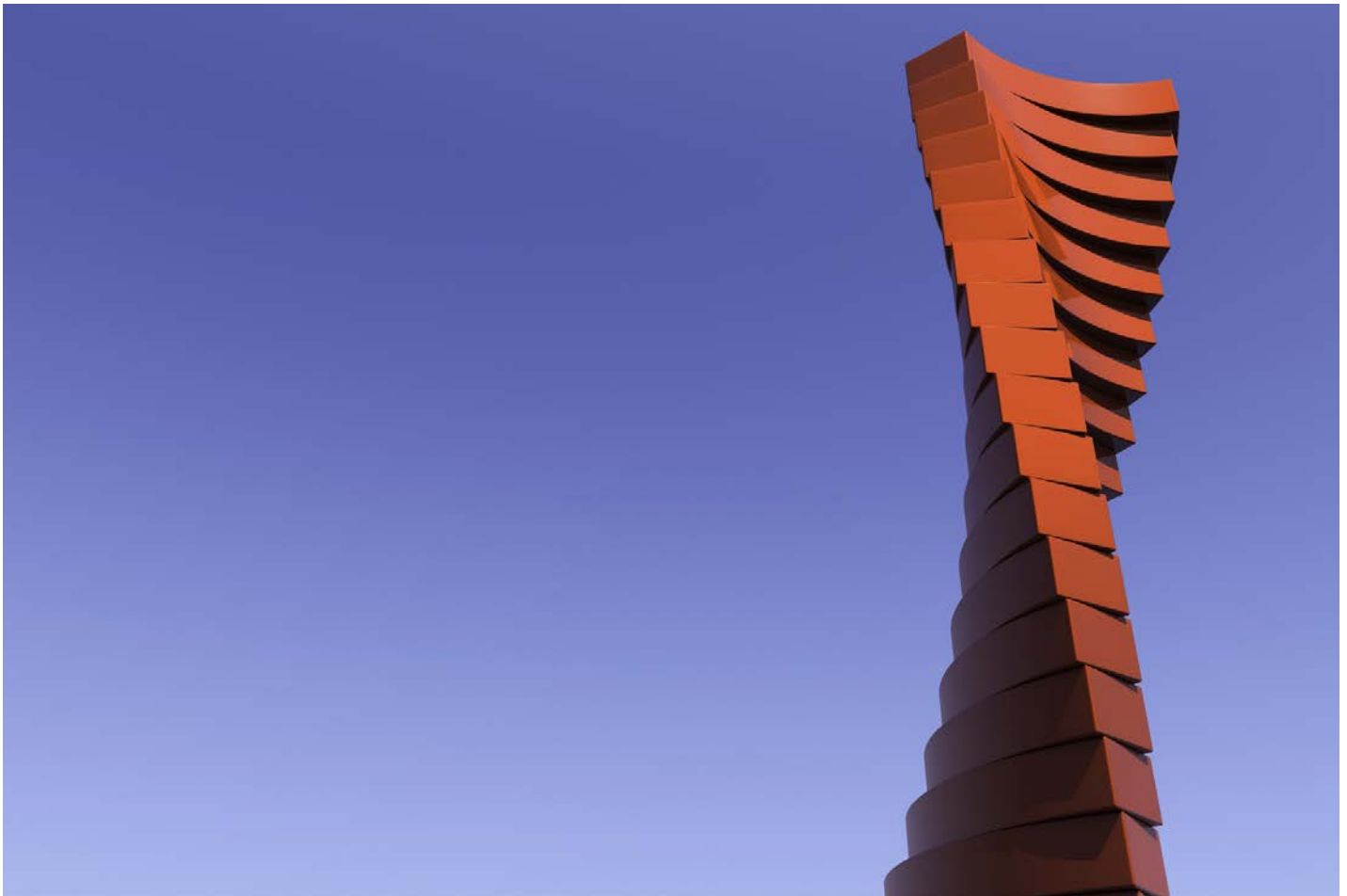
2.

The importance of ethics



The paradox of integrity:
you are only fully aware of its value
after you have lost it.

The value of many things only becomes obvious when the thing is gone. These are mainly things and affairs that people think are self-evident because they are always there or take hardly any effort to be achieved and maintained. Take for example peace, health, and friendships. Integrity is also such a thing. If you have always had integrity and it comes naturally to you, then it's hard to imagine and appreciate how valuable it is. It is tragic that the value of integrity is only recognized once it is absent. By then the harm has already been done and much effort will be needed to restore integrity, if that would even be possible.



Ethics limits and liberates.

It limits because you should not do whatever you can and want to.

It liberates because you can do what you ought to.

Ethics, as the desired values and norms that individuals should adhere to, have two related functions. On the one hand, ethics restricts behavior because not all possible behaviors are permitted; ethics sets limits to behavior. On the other hand, ethics broadens behavior because the limits it sets also apply to others, and thus we have to respect each other's limits. Within these limits, privacy, freedoms of choice and of movement arise.



Integrity is the paramount virtue
in society, at work, and at home.

Integrity is the most important virtue in society, at work,
and in the private sphere because it is the overarching virtue
that reflects all virtues. It is the virtue of all virtues. As an
overarching virtue, integrity directs the other virtues:
it ensures cohesion and connection among the virtues,
thus integrating them to become united and whole.



$$\text{Integrity} \times \text{Ability} = \text{Trust}$$

$$\text{Trust} \div \text{Integrity} = 0$$

Trust is the product, the multiplication, of the will to do good (integrity) and the ability to do good. The more there is of both, the greater the relative trust. Both integrity and ability are necessary to create trust. This means that trust cannot exist without (something of) integrity; if there is no integrity then there is no trust. Hence trust without integrity is nothing, nil, unthinkable, and impossible.



Integrity is an investment,
not a cost.

Integrity can be seen as something that only has costs: acting with integrity costs time, money, advancement and pleasure. This view, however, fails to recognize the advantages and benefits of integrity. Integrity also has many returns, such as satisfaction, peace of mind, appreciation, and trust. That integrity pays must be foremost so that the associated efforts and sacrifices are not seen on their own but as means for something valuable. This makes the efforts and sacrifices easier to bear.



Never underestimate
the power of integrity.

Integrity gives people the power to do the right thing. It gives the motivation and determination to do the right thing. However, integrity is also powerful if people do not do the right thing. People who violate integrity are criticized, brought to justice, prosecuted, and punished by appealing to integrity. Integrity is not to be messed with; it strikes back hard or even harder than it was hit.



Integrity wins
if you lose it.

The power of integrity is that people and organizations that violate integrity are discredited, and they lose their reputation, their credibility, and reliability. Integrity is not to be trifled with.
It triumphs when people and organizations lose it.



A clean conscience gives you peace and quiet
because you have nothing to hide and fear.

A reason not to do wrong is to have a clear conscience.
A clear conscience provides peace and tranquility: no gnawing
feelings inside, no fear of the truth, and one will certainly be
able to face oneself and others without any hesitation.



The gains of bad conduct
fade with the pains
of a bad conscience.

While the benefits of wrongdoing often do not last long (the quick wins), the conscience can continue to gnaw long and intensely. For example, stealing something from work once or intimately touching a colleague once is pleasure for a brief moment but misery for a long time.



Compromising your integrity is like
shredding a winning jackpot lottery ticket.

If possessing integrity is precious or even
the most valuable, then it is unwise and even
downright foolish to squander it. It would
purely be a destruction of value.



The three important yardsticks of work are
effectiveness, efficiency, and ethics.
The most important of these is ethics.

The three important yardsticks of work are the three Es of effectiveness (the extent to which the goals are achieved), efficiency (the extent to which the goals are achieved with the least possible effort), and ethics (the extent to which the goals and means are morally good). Ethics is the most important of these three criteria. Effectiveness and efficiency are only relevant if the goals and means used are morally good. Otherwise every goal achieved is meaningless and every effort wasted.



Business purely for profit is poor business,
both ethically and economically.

Fixation on profit is unethical because it does not care about the welfare and prosperity of stakeholders. As a result, such fixation is also economically bad because the business is less attractive to stakeholders. In the stakeholders' experience, they are not really what's important, and so they will give less to the business, become disappointed, and withdraw. Thus profitability will decline.



Doing good is good business,
but doing even better is bad business.

Doing good is not disconnected from doing business;
it is business and even good business because doing
good serves the business and thus the latter becomes
good. But doing more than what is good is not good for
business, both ethically and economically. This is over
the top and the good then becomes too much.
Too much of anything is never good.



To do business without ethics
is the fastest way to go
out of business.

By doing business without
ethics people and
organizations become
unreliable and unattractive.

As a consequence,
doing business becomes
harder or even impossible.



Organizations that are obsessed with the bottom line
will hit rock bottom.

Organizations that only pay attention to their end results do not pay attention to how these results are obtained, thus they miss out on the opportunities to improve the results. Moreover, if organizations only pay attention to their financial end results, then this is even a bigger threat to their continuity because they neglect such matters as quality, integrity, and sustainability.



There exists no company without ethics
simply because a company cannot exist without ethics.

If ethics is a necessary condition for the
viability of a company, then without
ethics no company can be viable.
This also means that there are no existing
companies that are without ethics.



The business of business ethics
is business and ethics.

The original message of the slogan “The business of business is business” is that companies should focus on profit optimization or even profit maximization.

However, it can also be said that the business of business ethics is interesting, both commercially and ethically. Commercially because it is good for the company, and ethically because it is good for ethics.



Being ethical because it is profitable is not ethical.
Being ethical because it is ethical is profitable.

Acting ethically because it is profitable is not ethical because there is no pure intention to act ethically. Ethics is simply being used as an instrument for one's own gain. However, behaving purely ethically is rewarding because there is an intrinsic motivation to do the right thing. This intrinsic motivation attracts others, gives others more confidence, makes them more positive, and increases their loyalty.



Trust is the basis of a contract,
whereas distrust is the reason to have one.

A contract cannot work without the trust that the contract is substantively correct, that parties want to and will adhere to it, and that if the contract is breached, there will be compensation for the damage. So without trust there can be no contract. However, the lack of trust is the reason for drawing up a contract. If everything and everyone could unequivocally be trusted, then contracts would be superfluous because verbal agreements would suffice.



Compliance is like a brake pedal:
the better it works, the faster you can drive
without spinning out of control.

One can take more risks if one adheres strictly to the regulations. Strict compliance enables one to handle more dangerous, complex, and challenging situations because there is no worry that one will collapse under the pressure of these situations and abuse them. However, if one is weak in complying with regulations, it will be impossible to cope with complex and challenging situations and one would need a broader safety margin to avoid breaking any regulations. Hence, through good compliance one can take more risks and be more economically successful.



It is better to die standing
than to live crawling.

If integrity is the principles and values that people stand for and that make up who they are, then people are nothing without integrity. If one has to choose between integrity and the preservation of life, choosing integrity means that at least one preserves one's integrity. Choosing to preserve life would mean one has nothing: one has no integrity and thus no life; one has become insubstantial and at the mercy of others.



If you go for glitter and glamor in your career,
don't expect your integrity to glorify you.

Integrity cannot be reconciled with glory and splendor or even facades. Integrity stands for rectitude, modesty, and unity between inside and outside. Integrity will be difficult for someone who aspires to a career that is all about status, pleasure, and entertainment.



Your integrity is best
even when you are worse off.

Sticking to principles is important because doing so binds you to who you are and what you stand for. It is even more important than one's prosperity and well-being. If a person is nothing due to a lack of integrity, then there is nothing else because one cannot value anything and nothing, not even prosperity or well-being, can then be of value for the person.



Integrity is like glass:
if it shatters,
it can never be made whole again.

Even if one can repair a shattered integrity, traces of the damage remain visible or noticeable so that it will never be the way it was. For example, the next violation of integrity will be associated with the first time and therefore will be more heavily charged. People will also remain vulnerable on the matter for which integrity was violated: this shows their weak and vulnerable spot.

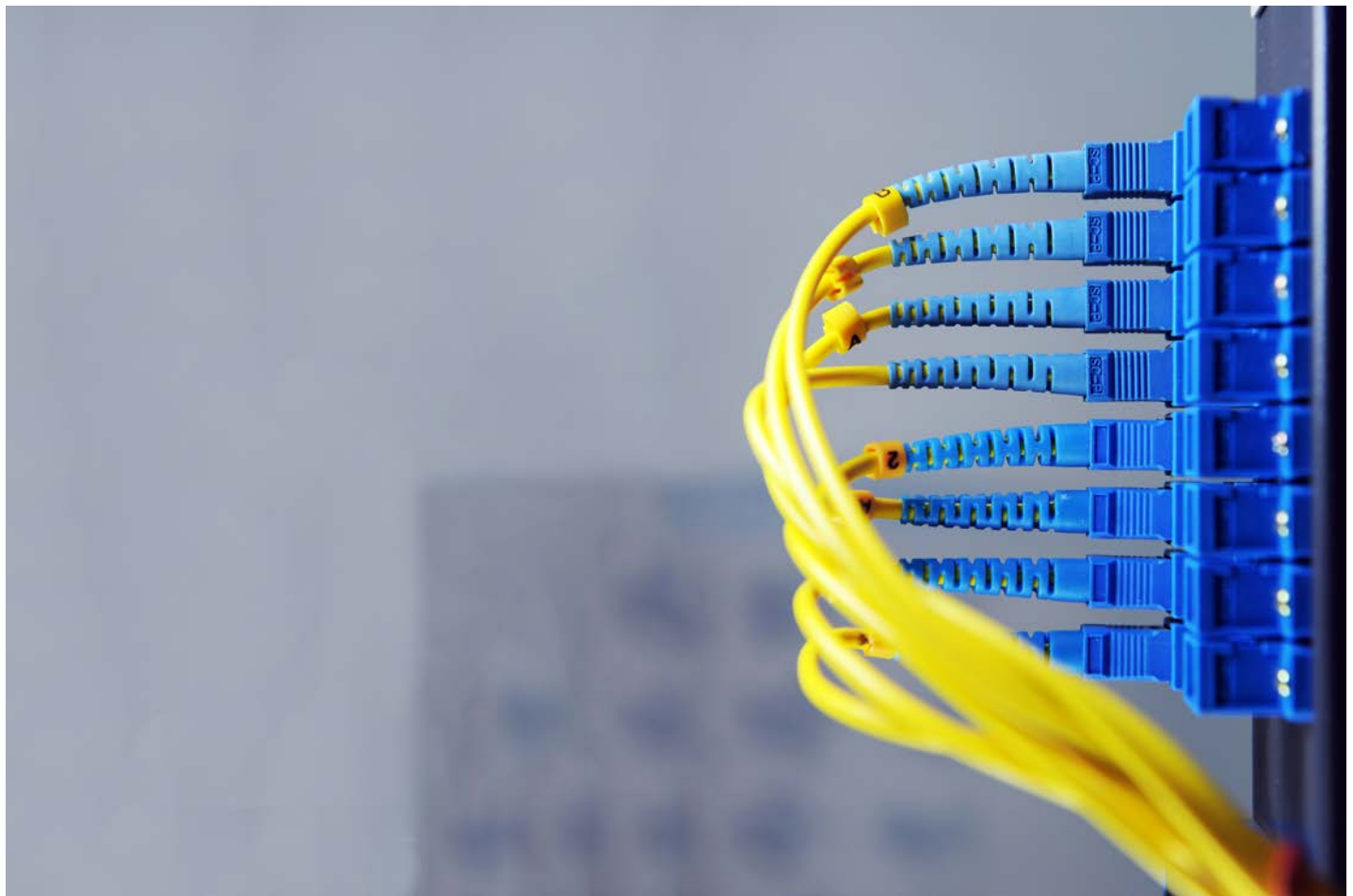


The beauty of integrity is its
multiiformity, multifacetedness, and multicoloredness.

The beauty of integrity is that it is multiform
(integrity is fundamental in many issues),
multifaceted (an integrity issue usually has many
aspects), and multicolored (there are usually
several different views on an integrity issue).

3.1

The development of ethics:
Improving ethics



Frequently upgrading your integrity
will make you
the most ethical version of yourself.

With constant changes in society and in one's work environment and activities, new moral issues, moral norms, and moral competences and skills are needed. Integrity necessitates keeping up with these developments so that one can continue to meet expectations. Thus it is desirable to regularly devote time and attention to the development of one's own integrity.



If you do not have time for ethics now,
then it will not have time for you later.

Postponing paying attention to ethics can lead to its abandonment. Deferring ethics always begs the question when people will pay attention to it and whether they will be able to. One could suddenly be forced to stop working (maybe due to reorganization or illness), and there will then no longer be any time and opportunity to engage with ethics at work. Due to the absence of ethics, one can be fired or the company can go bankrupt, and it would then be too late as far as ethics is concerned. Moreover, if one ignores ethics for some time and then pick it up suddenly, others will likely find it implausible and be reluctant to cooperate.



Integrity can only be improved
when it is perceived as utopia.

No person is completely honorable. Every person has a bad side, vulnerabilities, and shortcomings.

If this is not made very clear, the idea can arise that everyone can and must be completely honorable. This idea can encourage a lack of integrity because people will feel compelled to present themselves as being better than they actually are. However, making it clear that integrity is a utopia and that no one is completely honorable creates a disarming and relaxing situation wherein moral doubts, fears, shortcomings, and dilemmas may be shown and discussed. These situations, where there is little to lose and more to gain, are beneficial for improving integrity.



If integrity is like pregnancy,
then we are the last generation.

Integrity is sometimes compared to pregnancy to stress that integrity is absolute: either one is or is not. However, this is a dangerous analogy because it assumes that, just like pregnancy, there are no degrees of integrity, that it is all or nothing. It also suggests that people can be absolutely or completely integer. On the contrary, no one is completely honorable, and everyone has a weakness. Extending the pregnancy metaphor to integrity and to how things are in reality would mean that humankind will quickly go extinct: no one can possess absolute integrity, and thus no one can become “pregnant” either.



During my career, I lost my innocence.
What remains is my nocence.

At work, one can end up sacrificing one's principles,
making painful blunders, or being abused by others.
Where at the beginning people felt naive, carefree, and
unharmd, in the course of their career they start
feeling frustrated, dishonored and unworthy.
Innocence is replaced by nocence (guilt).



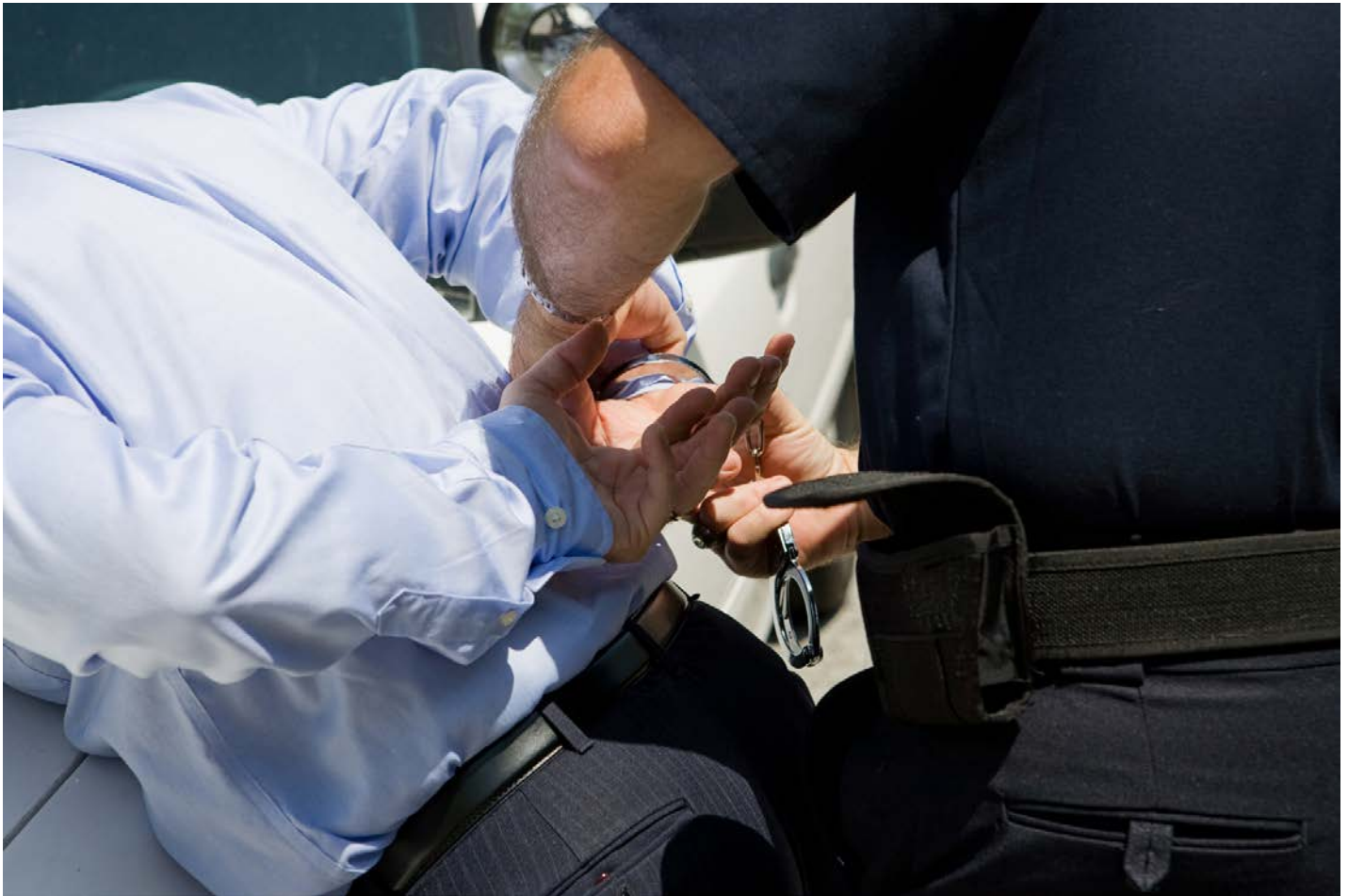
Train your mind to know, your muscles to do, and your heart to enjoy
doing the right thing in every situation.

Practice makes perfect, says the philosopher Aristotle. This also true for integrity. By practicing, people improve their knowledge (brain), skills (muscles), and will (heart) to do the right thing. It is only when you are well trained that you can do the right thing in every situation.



If you believe that you are the best,
you will not become better.

It is neither possible nor necessary to improve a perfect thing because by definition it is already perfect and could not be made better. So people who consider themselves to be perfect do not have the need to improve themselves. Self-improvement will be both impossible and unnecessary. So to be able to improve, one needs to think that one can do better.



Integrity cannot be bought,
only sold.

One can violate or give up one's integrity for monetary gains (e.g., bribery). However, one cannot regain or acquire one's integrity with money. Integrity is not a thing with which one buys goodness or an extravagance with which one pays off badness. Integrity can only be achieved by continuously and consistently doing good and better with good intentions.



When you excuse yourself because evil is everywhere,
you need to start inside yourself to eradicate it.

It is a poor excuse that one cannot do anything good because everything and everyone is bad. This is saying that one is also bad. On the contrary, this should be a catalyst for self-improvement. If one chooses not to, then this shows not only bad character but also weakness to do something about it.



Teaching ethics is not about giving the right answers
but all about asking the right questions.

Ethics is the reflection or contemplation on morality, on what is right and wrong. Asking questions - such as “What do I think myself?”, “Why do I think this?”, and “Is what I find sustainable and defensible?” - triggers reflections on one’s own morality. Announcing, preaching, and even imposing morality brings about the opposite: people stop thinking, they protest or oppose, and they only ask questions about the teacher or introducer of the morality.



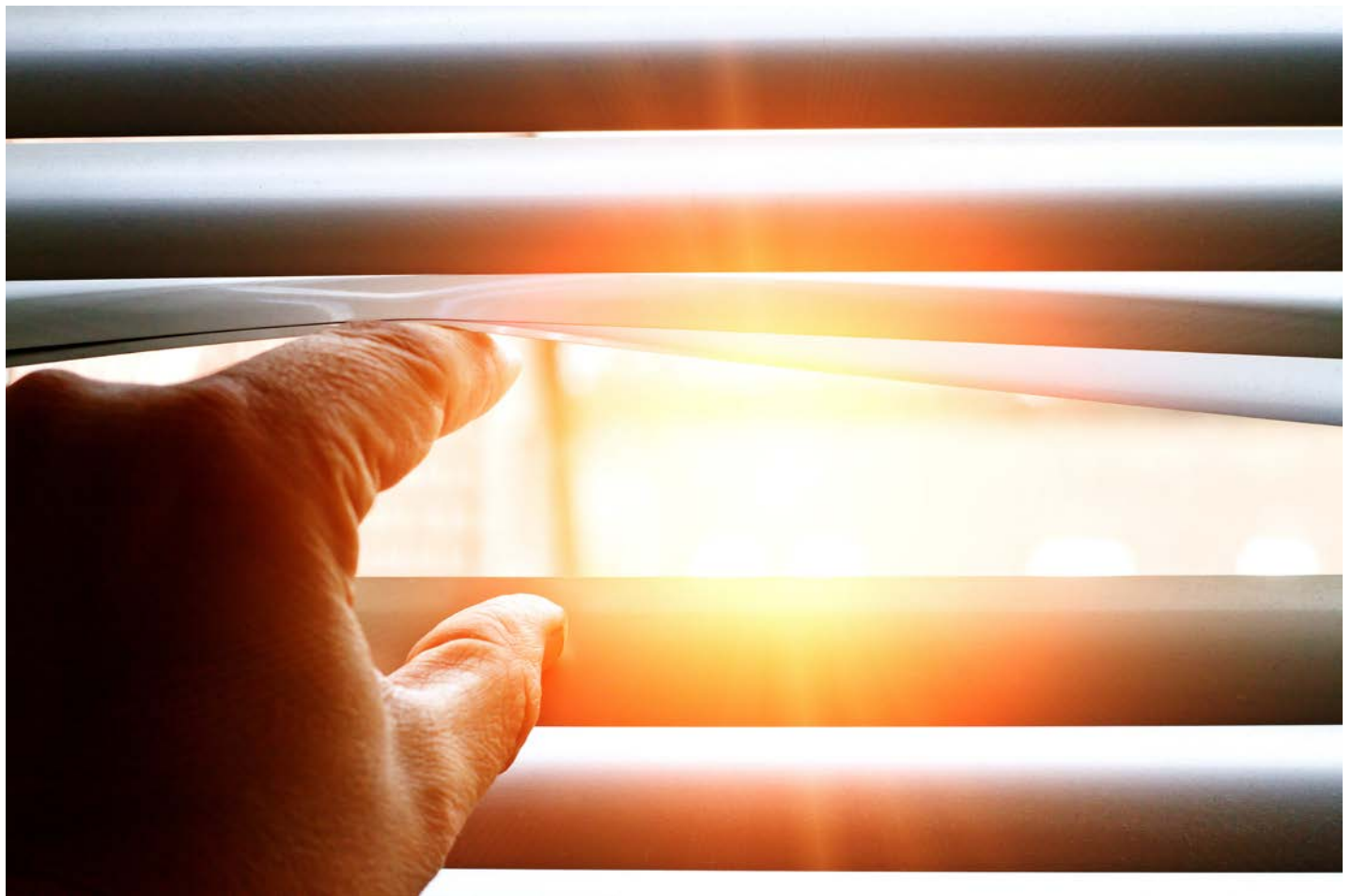
If on your deathbed you will regret what you have done in your career,
then you still have time to prevent that.

People who have gone into retirement and have left their work may regret what they have or have not done during their career. They may regret that they worked too much, focused too much on the money, or have disappointed too many people. Regretting at this point is too late because their career could not be redone. For as long as one is still working, it is important to regularly ask oneself how one's present behavior would look to one's future self; then necessary adjustments and changes are still possible.



Even when you have lost your integrity
you are not yet lost.

Having lost one's integrity, one can still try to restore and regain it, partly or fully, for as long as one lives and works. It is precisely when people have lost their integrity that the will and desire to restore it show the value they attach to integrity or how much they care about it. So whether or not you have integrity, integrity is valuable. Thus even if one has lost one's integrity, if one hasn't given up, there is still some prospect.



Let your bad behavior not make you bitter
but better.

Your bad behavior can lead to your own disappointment, frustration, and despondency. Such negative reactions can cause even more bad behavior (such as “I give up the fight; it’s an impossible task anyway”), and so they must be avoided and prevented. It is an art to use one’s bad behavior as an incentive to improve oneself, even though one might realize that one will never be completely good.



That work is unfair is not an excuse
but a motivation to make it less unfair.

Injustice at work can be many, for instance that some individuals and organizations are systematically favored, subordinated, and sabotaged. Even if this is true, this is not a reason to be passive and apathetic. The more unfair one's work and the world are, all the more reason to stop this unfairness. There is then more injustice to be eliminated and more people are needed to do this.



No matter how dirty your past is,
your future is still clean.

Even though one may have committed many wrongdoings in the past, the future is still free of them. After all, the future is by definition unwritten and still open. This thought can give people hope and strength to improve themselves and to do better in the future than they did in the past.

3.2

The development of ethics:
Dealing with ethical dilemmas



Questions like, “When does intimacy become intimidation, bravery recklessness, and friendliness nepotism?” are as difficult to answer as the question, “How many stones make a heap?”

The juncture between what is good and praiseworthy and what is bad and reprehensible is difficult or even impossible to determine in both general and specific situations. Where this juncture is depends on many factors. Hence it is all the more important to be aware of where this critical juncture is and to stay alert that the good (even with all good intentions) does not slide into the wrong.



Dilemmas of right and wrong are easy;
dilemmas of right and right are difficult;
and those of wrong and wrong are a sleepless night.

Having to choose between two evils is one of the hardest dilemmas because any choice would violate a fundamental interest, principle, or value. Either of the two choices would disappoint, possibly even deeply, others. Numerous nagging questions may arise, such as whether one is making the right choice; how to best explain the choice to those who are disappointed, disadvantaged or even damaged by the choice; and what one could have done to prevent the dilemmatic situation in the first place.



Our work ethics are the priority rules we apply
at the crossroads in our work.

In any profession, all kinds of issues arise on which a decisive choice must be made, such as whether to apply for a new position, invest in sustainability, or to sell one's company. In such crucial moments, one's actual ethics are revealed by how the various interests, values, and principles are weighed and by those considerations that not only play some role but also have priority and make a difference.



An ethical dilemma is always a choice between breaking down integrity or building it up.

One builds one's integrity on the basis of an ethical dilemma if, for example, one deals carefully with the dilemma, makes a good analysis of the current and desired situations, chooses a new principle, finds a new application of an existing principle, and makes it clear to those involved which arguments are decisive. To not do all these is to degrade one's integrity. One's integrity is then damaged. An ethical dilemma either improves and strengthens or deteriorates and weakens integrity.



Between the broad and the narrow ways
often lies the middle way.

There are usually two schools of thought concerning ethical issues. On the one hand, there are the proponents of the narrow road (the sticklers, where very little is allowed), and on the other, the proponents of the broad road (the enlightened ones, where much is allowed). The middle road offers the possibility of uniting both schools of thought: with clear boundaries on the one hand (and therefore no licentiousness) and on the other, room for personal responsibility (and therefore no narrow-mindedness).



It is better to do the right thing wrongly
than do the wrong thing rightly.

If integrity means “doing the right thing rightly”, then this implies that there are three kinds of wrong behavior: doing the right thing wrongly, doing the wrong thing rightly, and doing the wrong thing wrongly. The last (doing the wrong thing wrongly) is the worst kind because one does everything wrongly. Doing the right thing wrongly is less bad than doing the wrong thing rightly. In the former, the behavior is basically good - the right thing - but then one makes a wrong choice on how to carry it out.

In doing the wrong thing rightly, the basic behavior is already wrong; it is the wrong thing. That one does the wrong thing in the way that it should be done ultimately does not make the wrong behavior any less wrong because it is still the wrong thing that’s done.



The more fundamental a right,
the greater the benefits should be
to justify its violation.

A moral right is never absolute but
may be violated if there are benefits to
doing so. However, the more
fundamental a right, the greater these
benefits would have to be to justify the
infringement. Otherwise the violation
is disproportionate to the benefits.



Stakeholders are not only living beings,
but can also be those who are
already dead or are yet to be born.

Stakeholders are the people who depend on an organization and towards whom an organization has some responsibility. These can be people who are no longer living (for example, a customer who died because of a defective product is entitled to compensation) and who are yet to be born (for example, future generations are entitled to a livable environment).



If ethics is regarded only as the icing on the cake,
then don't eat the cake.

When ethics is considered as something extra that's been added only at the end, as a kind of afterthought, something only for the finishing and the facade, this suggests that the rest and major part of the thing (such as an activity, project, product, or organization) is not infused with ethics. If one wants to be ethical, then it is better not be involved, or at least not too much, with people who think this way about ethics.



When ethics is far away
evil is close by.

Ethics keeps evil at bay because ethics makes people resistant to temptations and pressures to do wrong. However, if ethics were absent, then evil has free rein. It will only be a matter of time till one succumbs to evil.

3.3

The development of ethics:
Dealing with temptations and pressures



If Adam and Eve in paradise could not stay away from the one tree with the forbidden fruits, how then can people stay away from the many forbidden trees in their work?

According to the Bible, there was one tree in paradise, namely the tree of good and evil, whose fruits were forbidden for the first couple, Adam and Eve, to eat. In comparison, in present work environments, there are many proverbial trees whose fruits employees may not use for their own advantage: there are the trees of company money, company equipments, company information, and company stakeholders. So at work, one must be strong enough not to yield to any of the many temptations.



Opportunity never knocks twice at any man's door,
but temptation thumps many times.

The saying “Opportunity never knocks twice at any man's door” means that certain opportunities to obtain something desirable (such as a highly sought-after position or assignment) only occurs once for someone. It can be added that temptations to do wrong occur much more often; work life is full of it. Moreover, these temptations are more forceful than opportunities: they are persistent and more seductive.



Virtuousness is a virus,
but viciousness is even more so.

The good and the bad have their own appeal. For example, while moral heroes incite others to behave in a similar exemplary way, immoral individuals tempt others to engage in wrongdoings. That which is bad can be even more contagious than that which is good because the former usually yields more short-term gains than the latter (otherwise everyone would do good). If more people would do evil, then punishment becomes weak (evil becomes ordinary); while if more people do good, then its appreciation for it declines (the good becomes less exceptional).



If you enter into discussion with temptation,
you are on the verge of getting knocked-out.

Just entertaining the thought of doing something reprehensible, like accepting a bribe, already puts one in the danger zone, because the temptation is not resolutely rejected and the associated reprehensible behavior is not considered unthinkable and absurd. Giving such behavior more than a passing thought shows that one is open to temptation and is considering such reprehensible behavior. Once such thoughts are entertained and not dismissed, it becomes difficult to stop thinking about them.



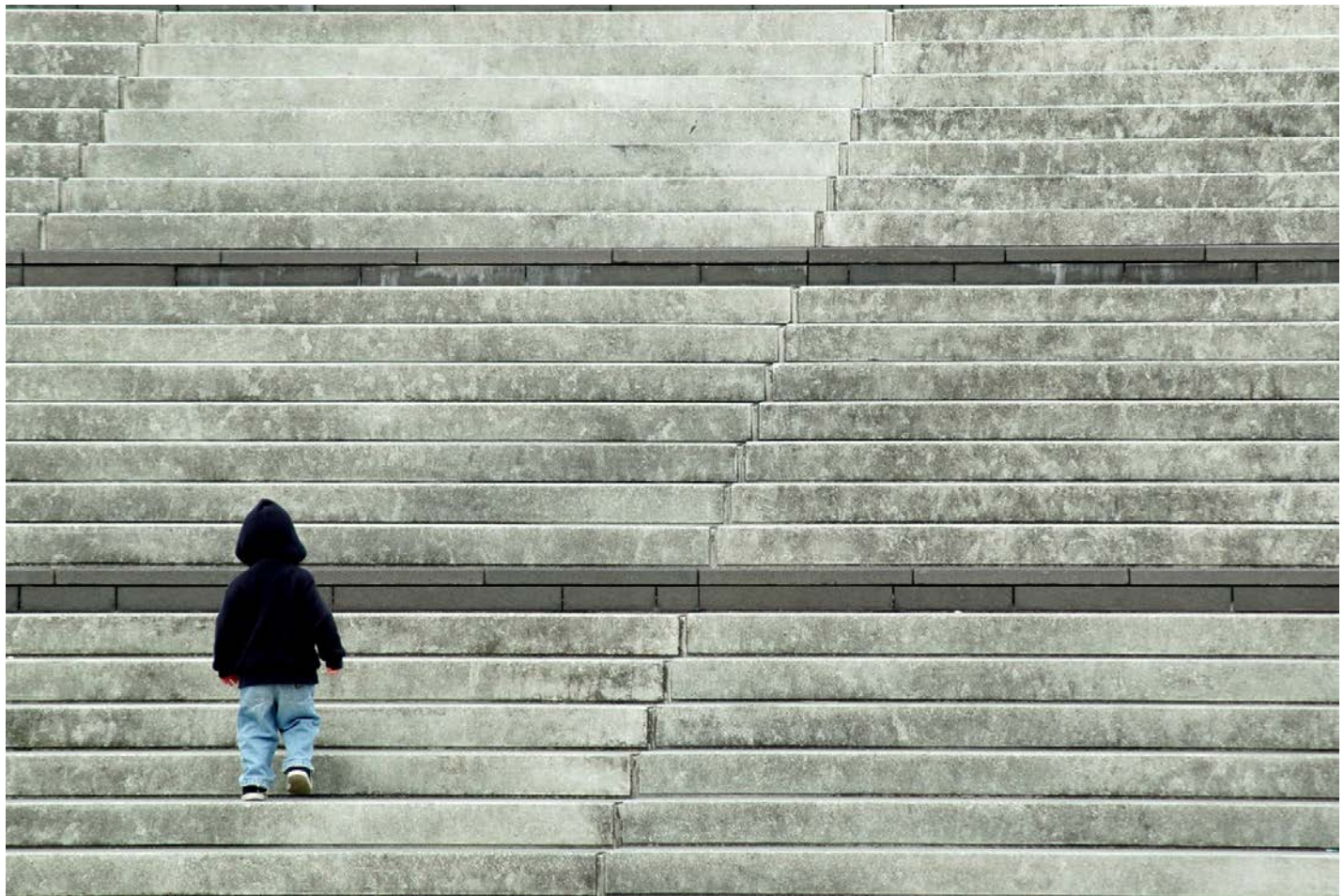
A single offence can turn someone
from hero to zero.

No matter how celebrated and
highly praised one may be, a single
misstep can knock one off the
pedestal and be scorned and
mocked. Particularly if trust is high
and others rely on it, then trust can
plummet if deliberately abused.



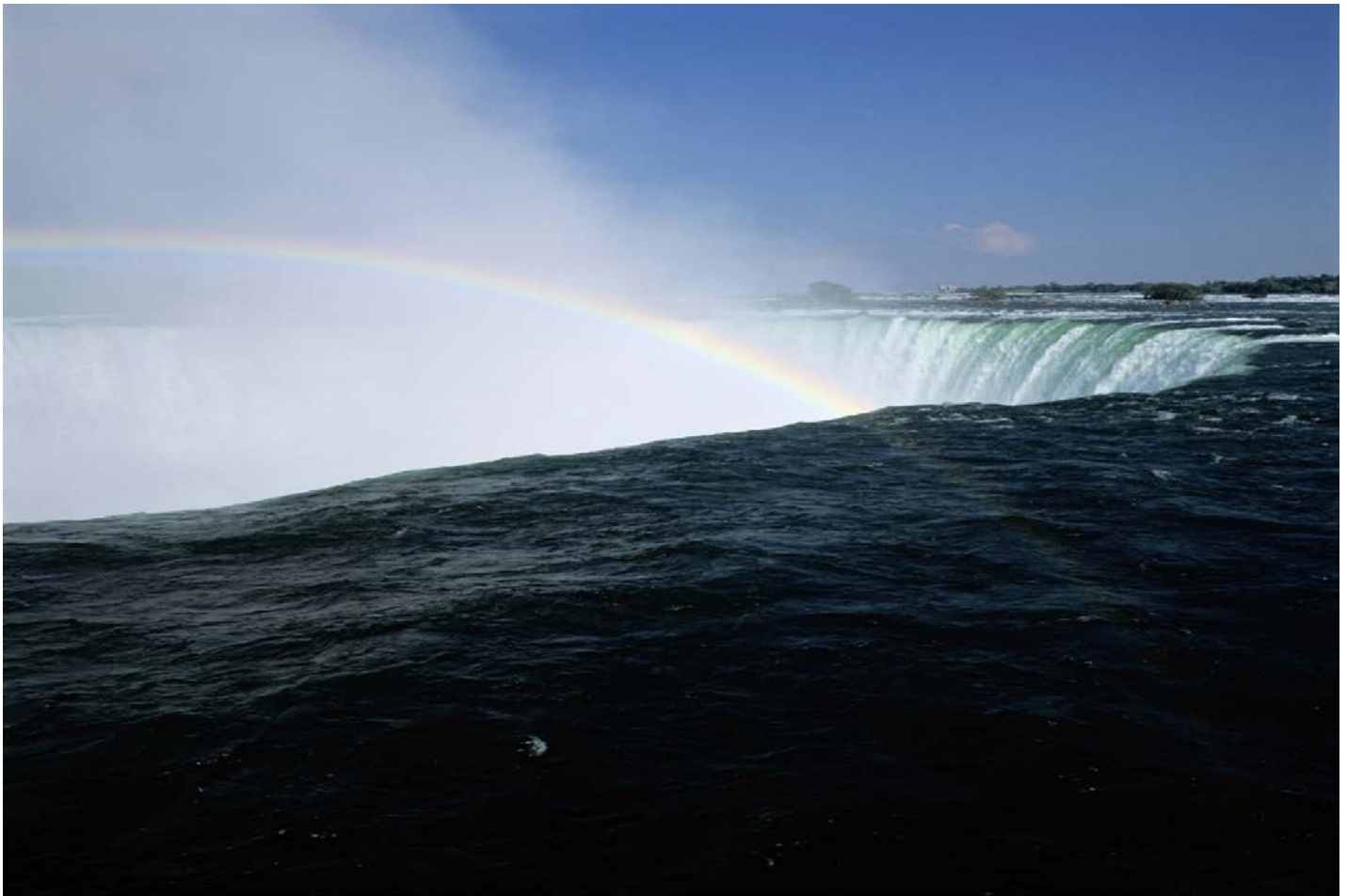
One trips over a hump
not a wall.

It is precisely over petty matters that one can go wrong and thus come into dispute: not returning or securing something, not paying careful attention or not taking the time to think. These can all lead to serious problems while, or maybe precisely because, people deal with the big matters, interests, and issues with the utmost care.



Every criminal
starts out as a petty thief.

Major offenses often do not happen suddenly. They are usually preceded by offenses that start out small and get bigger. Because one is not corrected, one gets the taste and skill for it. It then becomes a habit, and one commits ever bigger offences.



The law of moral decay:
people push the moral boundaries
until they cross it.

People tend to stretch the standards when things are going well and there are no accidents or damages. After all, since things are going well, why not make it more fun, efficient, and profitable? The reins can be loosened so the morale can be a little relaxed and more flexible. However, this process of stretching and moral decline continues until morality is overstretched to the point of accidents and damages.



If your boss forces you to kneel before him,
you are probably the next victim of #metoo.

The #metoo movement is a global movement that called for awareness about the problem of sexual harassment and assault in the workplace and for the perpetrators to be legally tried. The perpetrators were usually men in positions of power who forced subordinates to perform sexual acts in exchange for favorable treatment (such as a role in a film or job retention). One of those forced sexual acts was literally kneeling before the boss. So people who are asked to literally kneel before their boss must be on their guard.



Disbelief
is a blessing for deceivers.

Despite many and strong indications of a scam, a swindler can continue undisturbed with his deception if bystanders believe that such things are impossible or that the deceiver is incapable of deception. For example, the more amicable, loyal, and hard-working the scammer is, the greater the disbelief. The usual thought is, “Such a good person cannot possibly do such bad things.” Also, the disbelief increases when the scam is bigger, making the scam even more unlikely: “It is too bad to be true, so it is not true”).



Fraud is like a hard drug:
once tasted addiction is easy.

Fraud has an addictive effect. A fraud whets the appetite for more because it relaxes (it takes away the pressure and solves problems), extends (the benefits from the fraud can be used to do desired things), and it gives a kick (like the feeling of tension and euphoria during and after the act). It also becomes more difficult for people to stop committing fraud the longer they have been doing it. They get used to it and live with it. Confessing also becomes more difficult the more there is to confess and the bigger the punishments are.



The further ethics goes down the slippery-slope,
the higher the risk of slip-ups
and the harder to reverse the downslide.

Unethical behavior can be caused by morality being stretched out in small steps. In this way, habituation develops, thus making further stretches easier. However, the further morality is stretched, the greater the chance for reprehensible behavior to arise because they will no longer be considered objectionable. It also becomes all the more difficult to undo the stretching because the decline is bigger, lasted longer, and more things will need to be rectified.



People who are caught with their hands in the cookie jar
all thought they could run away with the cookies.

Theft depends on the estimated chance of being caught. If it is 100% and people always think they will be caught, then they will be much less inclined to steal (assuming sanctions follow if caught) than if that chance is 0% and they will never be caught (and there are no sanctions). Thieves usually ignore the chance of being caught, or they estimate it to be too low, or think that they can control it. However, that there are thieves caught proves that the chance is there.



Monopolists tend to misuse their position,
whereas nonmonopolists tend to misbehave to become a monopolist.

A monopolist tends to abuse this dominant position because it is profitable to do so and there are insufficient oppositions and corrections (for instance, customers have no choice but to buy the monopolist's exorbitantly priced or bad quality product).

However, those who do not have a position of monopoly also tend to behave improperly: they want to have monopoly (to benefit from it). To achieve this, the nonmonopolists will have to eliminate others who have the same intention because there can only be one monopolist; and they will do this by hook or by crook.



All that is new becomes obsolete.
All that is clean becomes dirty.
All that is whole becomes broken.

People are exposed to temptations
and pressures to become corrupt.
As time goes on, the chance increases
that people will give in because they
become weaker, more complacent,
and less alert. This likelihood
increases until one collapses,
breaks down, and becomes corrupt.



When you turn a deaf ear to warning signs,
you become blind.

By not listening to warning signals - such as criticism, complaints and negative feedback - you risk not seeing the important things. Moreover, others are discouraged from giving out such signals because they see that these are not taken seriously. This leads to a negative spiral: the less you listen the less others are inclined to give out signals and the less you hear and see.



The more money talks,
the more and louder
your conscience should shout.

“Money talks” means that behavior is influenced by who has the money, where there is money, and by what money produces. The more money is influential, the greater the chance that selfishness, materialism, and greed will dominate and thereby principles and values will be neglected. To prevent this, our conscience must render sufficient counterweight and set the tone and direction.



The bigger the temptation,
the bigger the chance to show off your integrity.

The greater the temptation, the greater the risk of yielding to it. However, the greater the temptation, the more one can demonstrate that one can resist these temptations. So big temptations offer a big threat but also a big opportunity for integrity.



The integrity of an employee is his ability to resist pressures and temptations.
The integrity of an employer is the ability to remove these pressures and temptations.

The integrity of an employer and that of an employee is founded on different things. Where an employee's integrity lies in how he deals with temptations and pressures, the employer's integrity lies in the extent to which the organization prevents the employees from being exposed to temptations and pressures. Although employees might have a high level of integrity, an employer falls short if the organization does nothing to protect the employees from the many and big temptations and pressures in their work.



Without knowing the root cause of an incident
you cannot create the breeding ground for improvements.

Fighting incidents without knowing their causes is
just combating symptoms so that the incidents will
continue to occur unabated. After all, nothing
changes with regard to the causes of the incidents.
Precisely because the causes of incidents can differ,
knowledge of the specific causes is necessary
before one can properly combat incidents.

4.1

Authenticity:
Self-awareness



Lying to yourself
is the beginning of all wrongdoings.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle said, “Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.” The opposite is also true: lying to yourself is the beginning of all wrongdoings. A wrongdoing is preceded by rationalizations and neutralizations by which people are convinced that the wrongdoing is not wrong or even that it is good. By convincing oneself, one can then do the wrong thing and at the same time still keep the self-image of a good and honorable person. After all, one can believe that people do nothing wrong. Thus lying to oneself makes wrong behavior possible.



“No, unless”
is the beginning
of every rationalization.

Any rationalization or neutralization that justifies wrong behavior starts with the realization that the wrongdoing is not acceptable because a standard is being violated. If one were not aware of this, then there would be no need to rationalize and neutralize. To remain faithful to the standard, one thinks of a reason why the standard does not apply in this specific case (the “unless”). The standard is negated so one can remain faithful to it and yet commit the wrongdoing.



If you think you can get away with misconduct
because you think you are invisible,
take a look in the mirror.

People who do wrong things can do them
because they think nobody sees them and
therefore they cannot be caught. Awareness of
one's own visibility prevents this illusion of
invisibility. A mirror helps. Scientific research
shows that fewer people engage in theft when
they have to look at themselves in a mirror
shortly before the opportunity presents itself.



“Just *do* it”
contradicts
“*Just*, do it.”

In the slogan, “Just do it” the emphasis is on “do”.
It is a call to do something without deliberating:
simply do it. This is very different from the slogan,
“Just, do it”, where the emphasis is on “just”. This is a
call to do something just and to do justice. “Just” has
two completely different meanings in these slogans.



If you only use the mirror test,
then you only see yourself.

The mirror test is used to determine whether an action is ethical. According to this test, as long as one can look at oneself in the mirror - and sees an honest person and not feels ashamed about one's behavior - then one's behavior is justified. It is indeed an important criterion that the behavior corresponds to what one wants, who one wants to be, and whether one remains true to self. However, if one uses the mirror test as the sole criterion, then one wrongly ignores what others think of the behavior and what is actually ethically right and wrong.

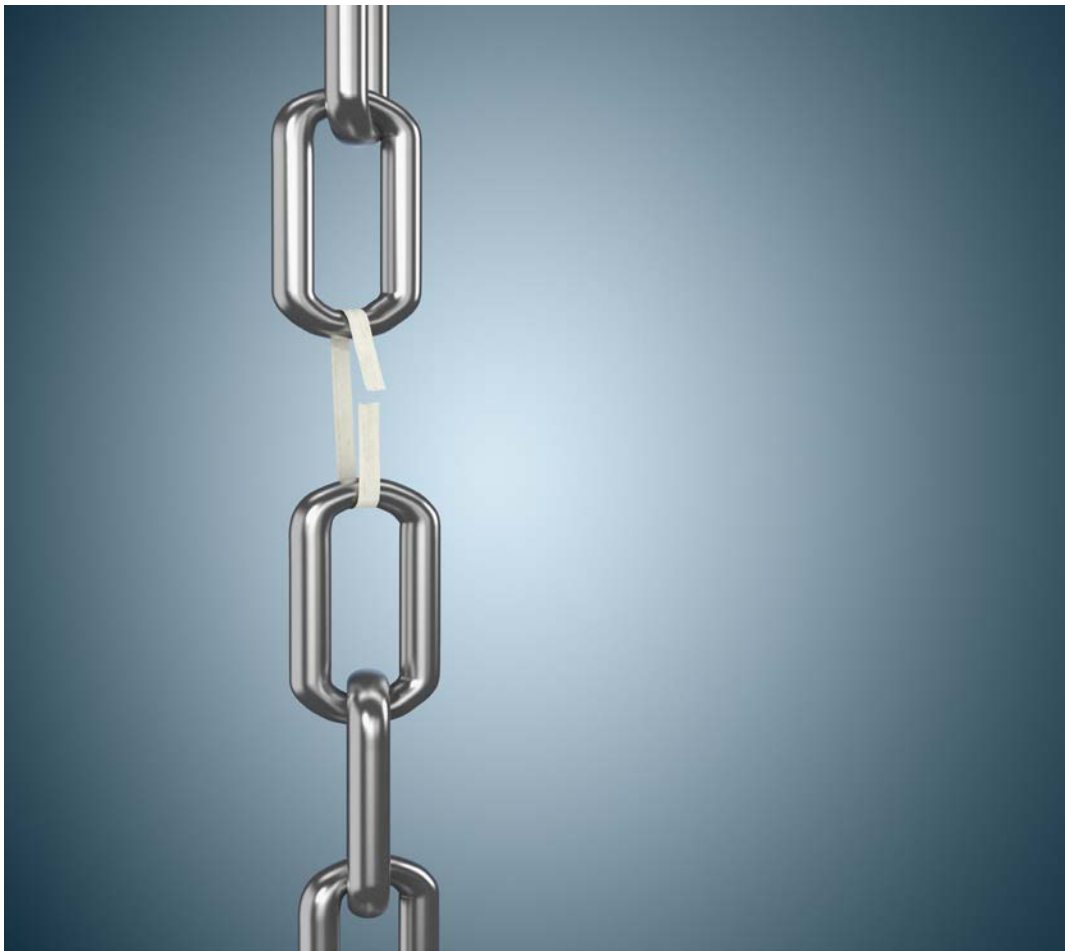
4.2

Authenticity:
Self-knowledge



To improve your integrity,
you need to first acknowledge that you lack it.

One can only improve oneself if one
realizes that change within oneself
is desirable. This also applies to
integrity. If one wants to improve
one's integrity, it is necessary to first
acknowledge that one's integrity
falls short and is insufficient.



You cannot know how good you are if you have never behaved badly.
You cannot know how bad you are if you can only behave well.

If one always and only does what is good, then one would not know the extent of one's goodness because one has not experienced where one's own turning point from good to evil lies. In the same manner, we do not know how bad a person is if that person can only do what is good because there is no option at all to behave badly. If one can have a real choice and then actually pick one or the other, then this shows how good or bad one is.



Arrogance and integrity
mix like
oil and water.

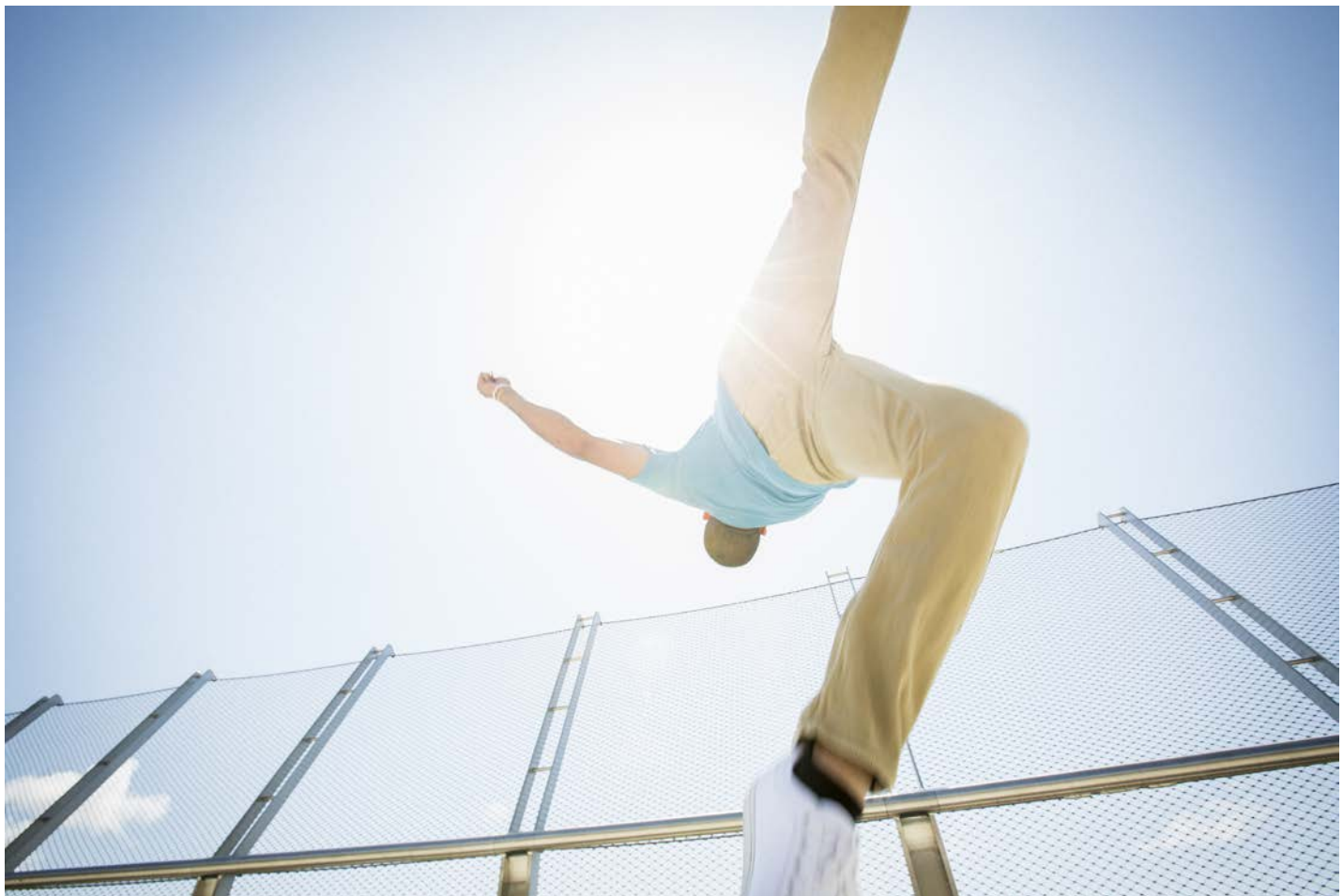
Self-righteousness and integrity are incompatible;
they do not mix. An honest person always realizes
that his integrity is vulnerable and could be improved.

If someone thinks he is honorable, then this is by
definition not. Moreover, like oil, which always floats to
the surface, the truth, the arrogance will become visible.



Fill a manager with incompetence, ignorance, and intolerance, mix these ingredients together and you have a poisonous cocktail.

A manager who does not have all the required competencies is not a problem as long as he/she realizes this and is then open to the inputs and support from others. In this way, the shortcomings can be overcome, fixed, and improved upon. Being unaware of or unconcerned about one's shortcomings and not being receptive to inputs and reinforcements will give incompetency free rein and will lead to inept and harmful behavior.



If you think you are a beacon of light,
then you can never see your own shadow.

There are no shadows under a bright light, at least if there is
no other stronger light source nearby, because everything
that can be seen with the bright light is irradiated with light.

People who see themselves as the light and consider
themselves brilliant and amazing see no shadow
and thus not their own dark sides and shortcomings.

4.3

Authenticity:
Self-reflection



Ethics out of habit is not ethics.
It is just habit.

One can be doing the right out of habit because one is used to it and does it naturally. Although this is good and there is nothing against it, this is not yet ethics. Ethics is about intentionally doing the right thing, having deliberated beforehand why it is the right thing, and being able to explaining this well.



A maxim is effective
only if there is time to be reflective.

Maxims are simply words. They strike a chord only when one takes enough time to think about them: where they come from, what they want to say, and what they are saying to me? In this manner it becomes ethics - the contemplation, the reflection, on what one gets confronted with.



Ethics tastes unpleasant
because it is collective ruminating.

Ethics is reflecting about what one is confronted with. Such reflection requires time and thus cannot be done hurriedly. Examples of taking extra time are postponing the consultation, taking a walk, consulting with someone, sleeping on it for a night or two. By reflecting properly, the decision is better; and when done with others, there is more support for it. However, this reflection is not an analytical or impersonal process that proceeds in a precise and formulated manner. The process is chaotic and possibly with visible and audible emotions, tensions, and conflicts.



A code is nothing;
coding is everything.

A code of conduct as pure text is in a certain sense nothing; it is merely a collection of letters. A code only lives if it is a process - the coding - such that the target group is involved in its creation (through joint consideration of what is desirable and undesirable behavior) and implementation (through periodic joint reading of the code and thinking through its meaning for people's behavior).

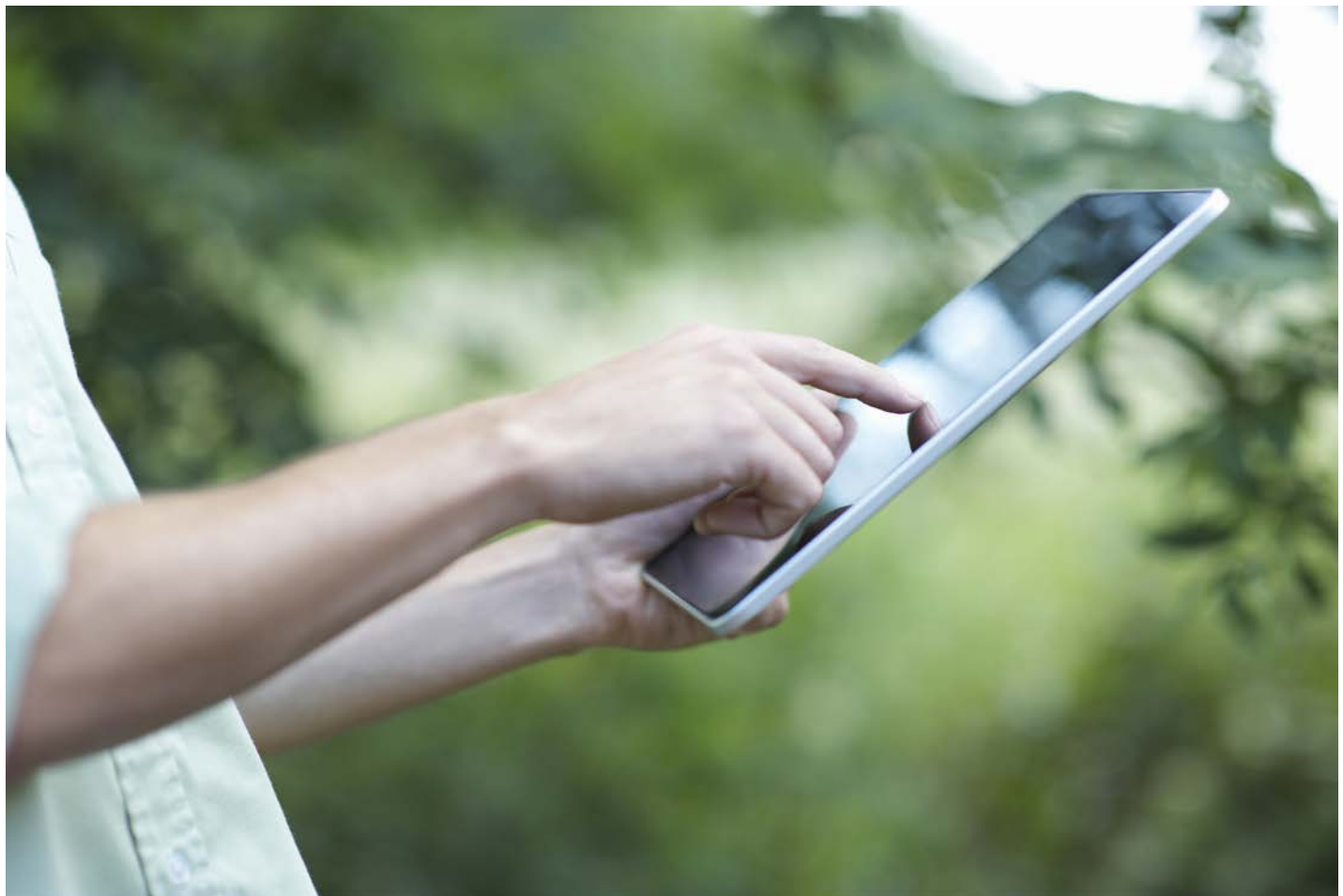


Before calling each other to account for bad behavior,
first speak with each other about what counts as good behavior.

Without first discussing with each other what counts as good behavior within the work context, it will not be possible to hold each other accountable for bad behavior. There would be no common positive framework within which individuals can confront each other. Confrontations would be considered negative, demotivating, and reactionary and therefore more difficult to carry out and to listen to: people will be confronted with what they do badly instead of how they can do better.

4.4

Authenticity:
Self-regulation



The password to your integrity
is your code.

A person's moral code consists of one's own unique principles, values, and norms; it consists of one's vision, opinions, and standpoints about what is good and bad. Integrity is thus acting according to one's own code. Identifying and determining one's own code is therefore a necessary condition for acting with integrity. In this way, one's code gives access to one's integrity.



Using your moral compass is only useful
when you know your destination.

In science and practice people are called upon to use their moral compass. This metaphorical moral compass is the sense of direction that a person has in dealing with ethical dilemmas. However, an actual magnetic compass only indicates the general directions and not the direction that one has to take. So it is useless if one knows where north is but does not know if one has to go there. A moral compass is therefore only helpful if you first know which direction you want to go.



Moral reasoning is difficult,
that's why many are upset
when their moral opinion is misunderstood.

Anger can be a sign of powerlessness, frustration, and hopelessness. When one is unable to properly expressing one's moral standpoint or properly convey them to others, then one may feel helpless. Articulating one's moral point of view is difficult because one cannot hide behind the habits, rules, feelings, and opinions of others; one has to come up with one's own valid and comprehensible arguments.



You cannot create value
if you do not know your own values.

Values define what is precious.
These values, like sustainability, freedom,
and fairness can differ for each person.
If one does not know what one's own
values are, then one does not know what
for and how one must create value; one
lacks the motivation and direction.



The Magician's Stick Test:
What you wish for when you can use a magician's stick only once
reflects your most important value.

What people wish for when they can have that one wish that will come true (of course, except the wish that all wishes will come true) reveals what they most care about and what they consider to be the ultimate and highest value at that time. Someone who wishes to stay healthy chooses the value health, someone who chooses to be rich chooses the value wealth, and someone who chooses to be happy chooses the value happiness.



The 3 Ps of a principled person are purpose, passion, and persistence.

Principled persons have at least three attributes in common: they have a higher purpose (from which their principles are derived and which the principles serve); they are passionate (they are strongly motivated to adhere to their principles); and they are persistent (they persevere in adhering to the principles even in difficult situations).



Integrity is not the commitment to do the right thing right.
It is the unconditional commitment to do so.

An absolute and unconditional commitment is characteristic of integrity. This means that one remains committed regardless of the circumstances: whether others approve or disapprove the behavior, whether the behavior becomes public or remains secret, or whether the behavior pays off or loses. Integrity shows precisely when one remains committed under all conditions and circumstances.



Standing for nothing is falling for everything.
Standing for everything is also falling for everything.

Someone who stands for nothing will succumb to every pressure and temptation. However, if one stands for everything, one actually does not stand for anything because it is not possible to find everything to be important and to uphold everything. The point is to be selective about what one stands for so that one can focus all of one's energy on achieving it.



Without integrity
there is no self to respect.

Integrity is about what one commits to and stands for, who one is and what kind of person one wants to be. Without integrity there is no self because then one is nothing: one is fragmented, incoherent, and stands for nothing. Therefore, there is also nothing to respect and honor in oneself.



Power does not corrupt;
the need to gain and maintain power does.

The lofty phrase “power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely” suggests that the cause of corruption lies outside the individual: power causes people to be corrupt. However, this is untrue. Power as such does not corrupt; the desire to gain and retain power does. What drives people to corruption is the desire to have at any costs that influential function, to become more important, and to be in charge.



The more power you have,
the more powerful the principles you should have.

There is the phrase that “power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” However, whether power corrupts depends on one’s principles. The more power one has, the more one can resist the growing temptations if one has equally strong or even stronger principles. Principles are after all the things that people stand for. So the stronger one stands, the more temptations one can resist. With absolute principles one can even resist the temptations of absolute power.



The straighter you keep your back,
the more responsibilities your shoulders can bear.

One can bear more responsibilities by being more principled. As one's responsibilities increase, so do the pressure, burden, and seriousness to handle them responsibly. Having clear principles is necessary because they ensure that one stays on course, remains steadfast, and does not succumb or kowtow to evil.



If you justify your illegal conduct by claiming that you are just following orders, then you should also follow the order to go to jail.

It is hypocritical and suspicious to follow orders to act illegally but not follow the order to accept its consequences. In the first case, one appears small and docile, and in the latter, large and stubborn. One should be consistent and appear the same in both cases: either small and docile or, better still, large and stubborn and refusing the order to act illegally.



Negotiating on your integrity
is selling your heart, soul, and conscience
for the price of one.

People who violate their own integrity upset not only their own affections (heart) and essence (soul) but also their own sense of right and wrong (conscience). These three elements are inextricably linked with each other; you cannot give up the one without giving up the other two as well. An individual's identity consists of what that person loves and stands for. So putting a price on integrity costs a lot.

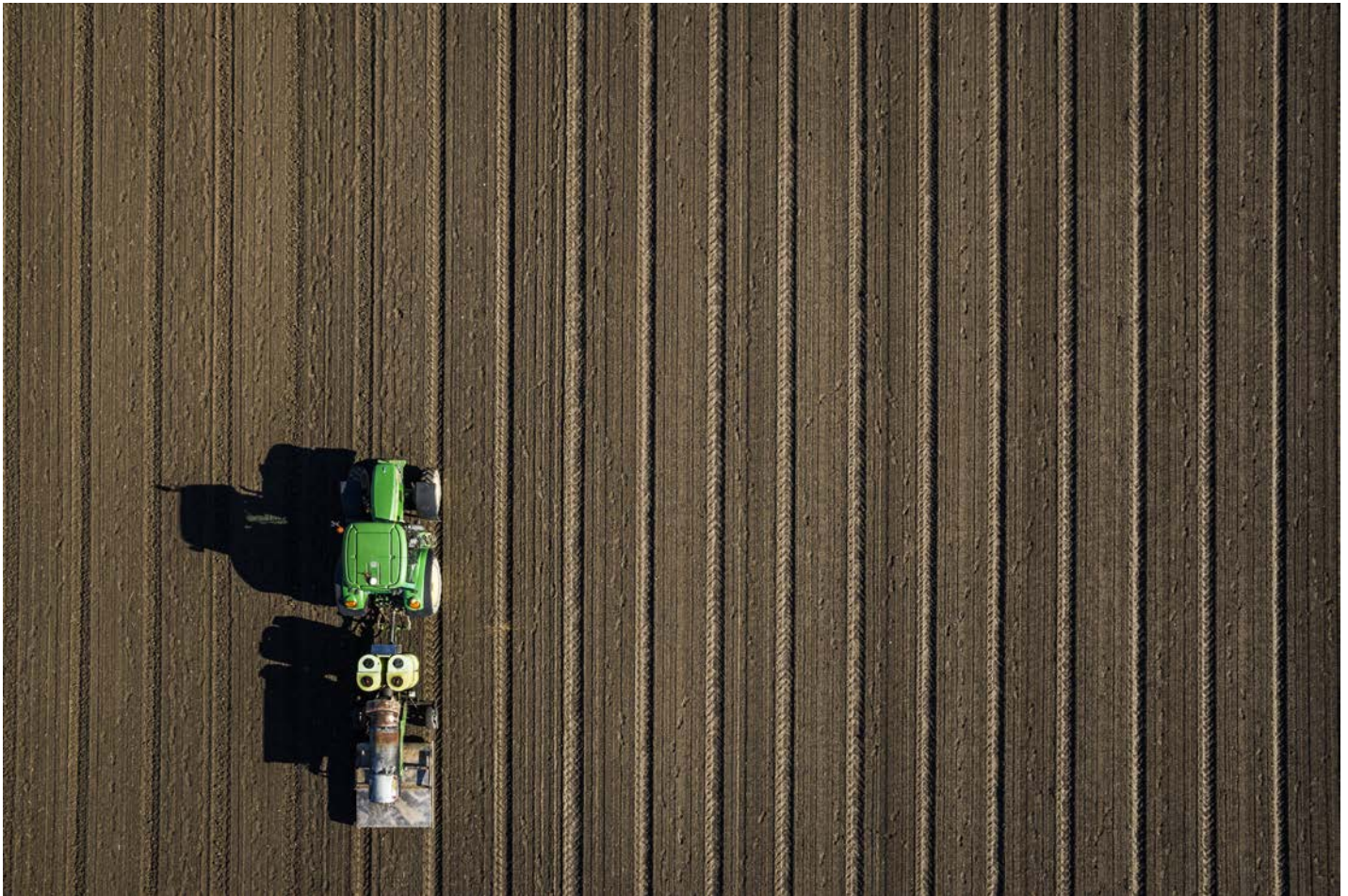


Under pressure everything becomes fluid,
except real integrity.

The saying, “under pressure everything becomes fluid” does not apply to integrity. True integrity is revealed precisely under pressure: that despite heavy pressure, one remains standing, faithful, and committed to one’s values and principles.

5.1

Trustworthiness:
Compliance



The number one rule:
one should obey all rules.

The fundamental or basic rule for all rules is that they must be upheld. If this were not the case, then compliance would be arbitrary, which would be contrary to the very idea that rules lead to regularity.



Every rule has an exception,
except this rule.

Rules do not have the pretense of applying and being followed in every situation. For every rule there is a conceivable situation in which not following it is better, for example, if there's a major social interest at stake or there are conflicting rules. As long as there is always an exception, there will be no exception to this.



When rules generate trust,
trust rules.

Rules can generate trust by ensuring security, predictability, and stability in the decision making and behavior of people and organizations. In these cases, trust rules dominate and not the rules themselves.



Before complaining about compliance,
know that it is a blessing that there are rules
and a privilege to comply with them.

Even though there may be many justified criticisms on existing or proposed laws and rules, it is desirable to first recognize that rules and laws are a blessing (because without laws and rules life and work would not be possible) and a privilege (because laws and rules contain the expectation that the target group has the will and the capacity to adhere to them, otherwise laws and rules would be useless). From this regard for laws and rules, criticisms of them become more constructive, both in giving and receiving.



Not always following the law
is as dangerous as not always using a rope
when bungee jumping.

Selectively following laws is dangerous because not only do you violate other laws and risk damage and punishment, but you also assume an attitude whose consequences are more far-reaching. You take the law into your own hands and thereby disrespecting not only the law but the whole legal system, including the legislator and those who have chosen the legislator. Once you take this attitude, you are more likely to violate more often more laws, more important laws, and even laws that are vital to you or others.

5.2

Trustworthiness:
Consistency



Integrity means consistently being the same person publicly, professionally, privately, and personally.

People function in many different domains, such as the public, professional, private, and personal domains. Integrity is not about being a completely different person in each domain; it means being a whole and integrated person across and in all the domains. This however does not mean that one must always behave in the same way in all the domains. Variety is acceptable as long as unity is maintained.



You cannot expect others to be ethical
if you do not expect the same of yourself.

An important principle of ethics is the appeal to general consent whereby the same standard applies in the same situations and cases. Therefore it is a misunderstanding about ethics if people expect ethical behavior from others but not of themselves. Moreover, it is implausible, hypocritical, and risky to expect this because others will be less or not motivated at all to do that which does not hold for everyone.



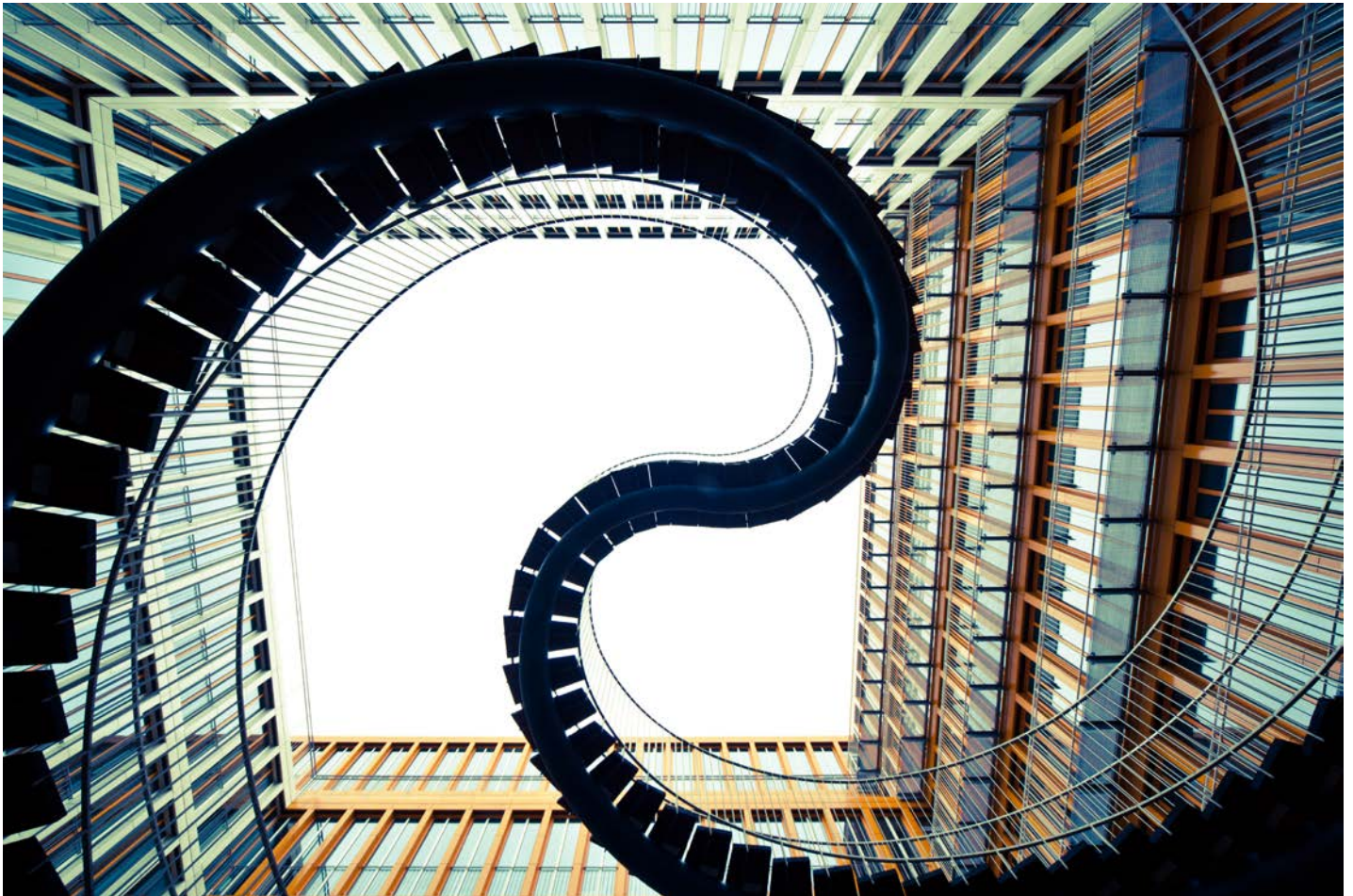
Integrity is consistency between
what you think, say, and do.

Integrity means, among other things,
consistency: consistency in what one thinks,
says, and does. A person's thoughts, words, and
actions should not contradict each other and
must be one: whole and coherent. Otherwise
one is simply a hypocrite and an impostor.



Moral wisdom
also comes with
moral obstinacy.

As we go through life, we accumulate knowledge and experience on various ethical issues and how to deal with them. However, in addition to growing in moral wisdom, one can also become stubborn because one sees new issues as simply repeating the old ones (thus one proposes same old solutions), one can no longer keep up with new issues (therefore one holds on to what one already knows), and one becomes disappointed in others' lack of integrity (therefore one no longer seriously considers any advice).



People who believe that they are above the law
are morally under par.

People may think that they are above the law or that the law does not apply to them because, for example, they think they are too good for the law, they themselves made the law, or they enforce the law. However, the law is for everyone and applies to everyone for whom it was made. People who think that they are above the law therefore fail to meet the moral norm.

5.3

Trustworthiness:
Courage



Moral courage is demonstrated
when one is afraid to do the right thing
but does the right thing anyway.

The moral courage to do good does not mean
that people are never afraid of doing good. It is
precisely when one is afraid to do good that
moral courage appears: if one is afraid then one
needs the moral courage to do good, and if one
does good then one shows moral courage.



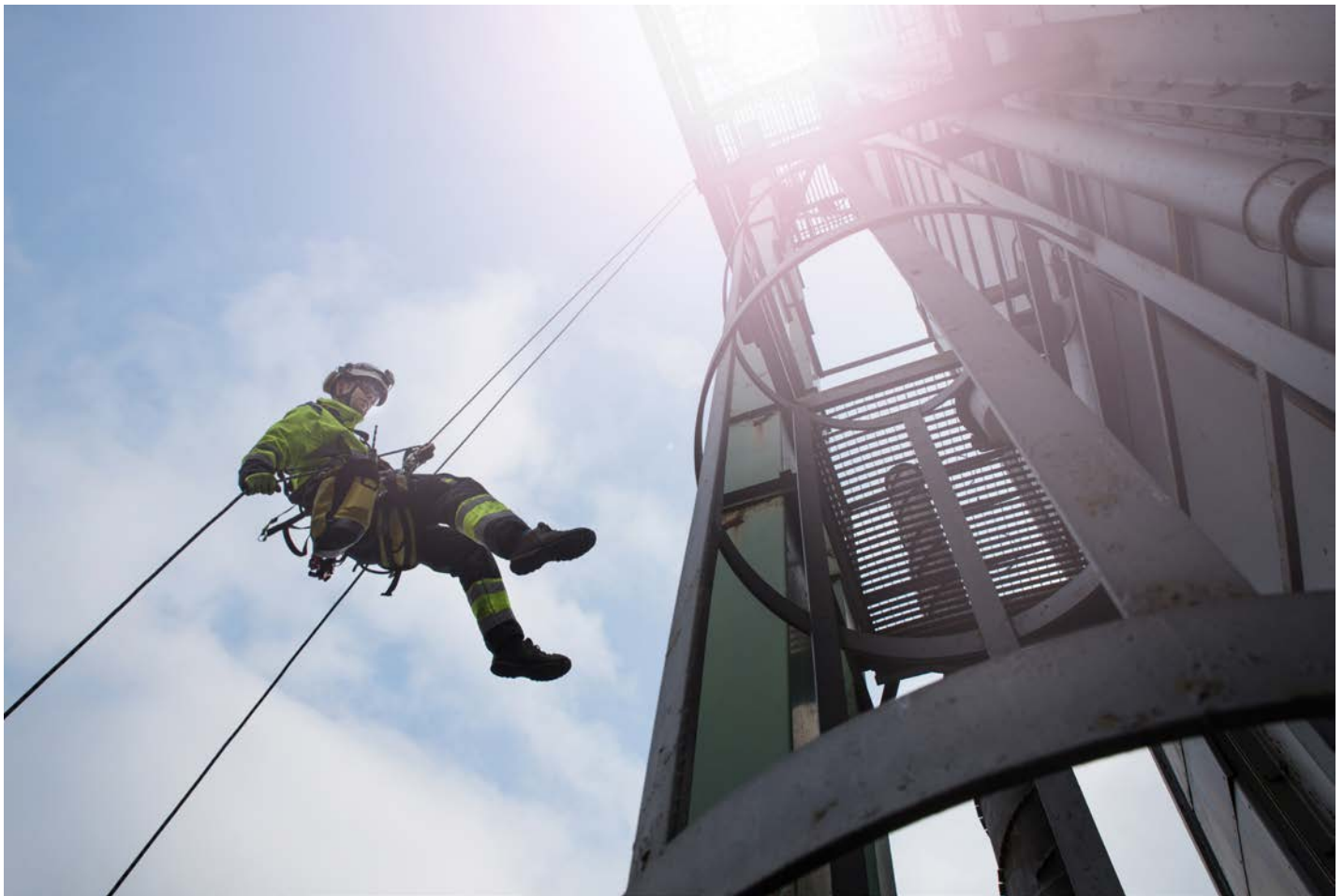
Everyone's integrity has a price.
The only question is, what is yours?

It is common to not always behave with integrity. Even the most virtuous individuals will give up their integrity in extreme circumstances (for example, when the lives of loved ones are at stake). The circumstances under which people would surrender their integrity differ for each person. Therefore, one's integrity is not determined by whether one is always and everywhere behaving honorably but by the circumstances in which one gives up one's integrity.



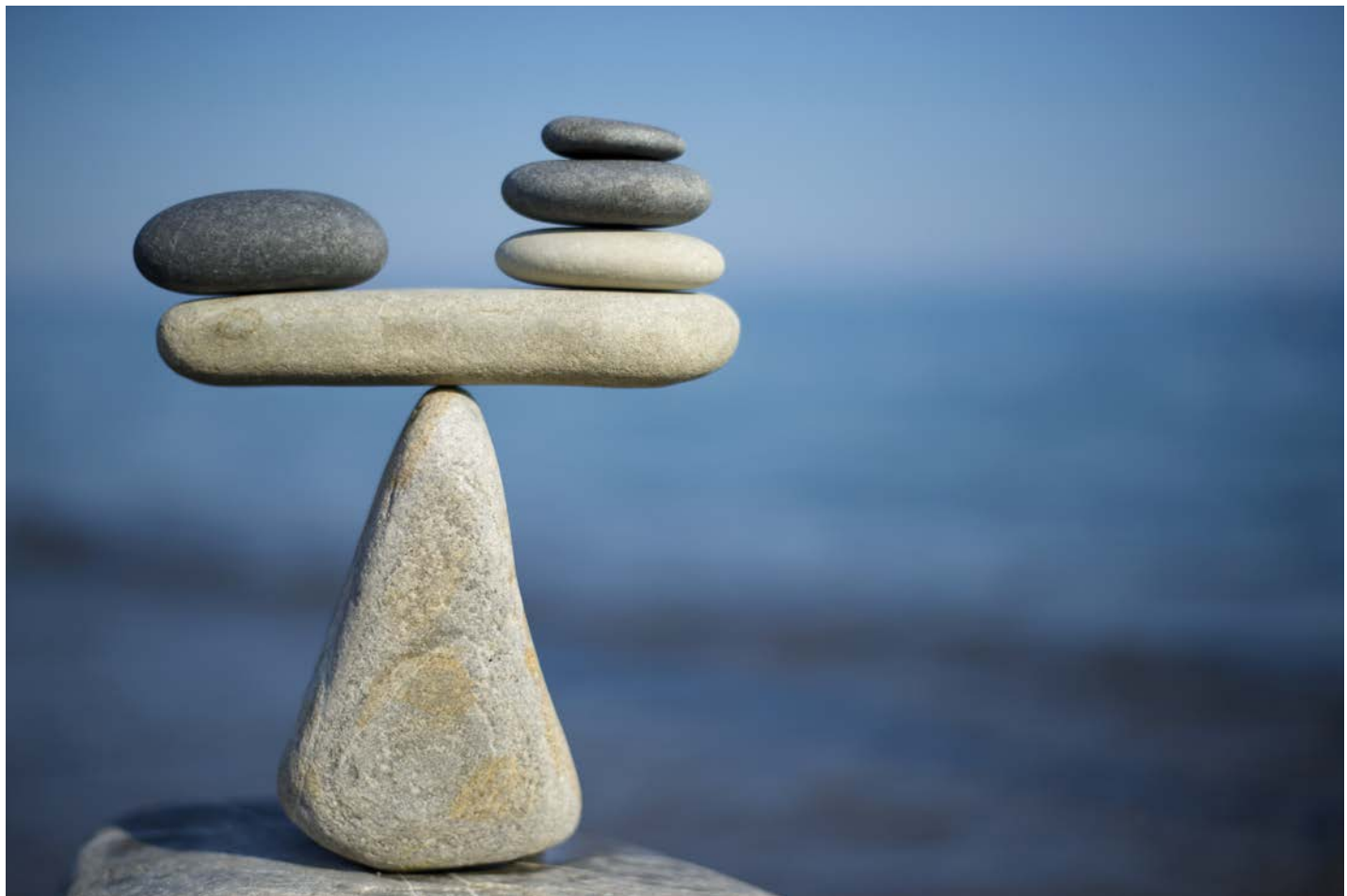
To give up your integrity for a minor offence is worse than giving it up for a bigger one:
it shows that your integrity is worth less to you.

Giving up one's integrity in return for huge benefits (for example, a theft with a revenue of millions) is bad. However, it is worse to give up one's integrity for a smaller offence (for example, stealing something cheap from the warehouse) even though the damage is less. Integrity is being given up for almost nothing, which shows that one wants to sacrifice almost nothing to preserve one's own integrity and that one's integrity is of little value.



When you are afraid to do the right thing just imagine that you have just 5% more courage than you now have. You'll be amazed by what imagination can do.

People can be afraid to do the right thing because they fear opposition, backlash, and loss. It then all comes down to whether one can have enough courage to do the right thing. To be more courageous than one is, imagine being more courageous and what one would do then. This imagination may give one the necessary courage to do what needs to be done.



If you quit your job due to a lack of ethics
be sure that it is not because you lack ethics.

People who resign due to a lack of ethics in their work or organization suggest that their own ethics is better than their employer's. However, this is not necessarily the case because it could be that their own ethics is actually worse than their employer's and so they wanted or maybe even had to leave. Moreover, even if one's own ethics is better, it does not necessarily mean that it is an excellent ethics. When people resign for this reason, it seems that they did not try to improve their employer's ethics, maybe because they did not care about it, or they were just not competent enough to be able to improve it.



Work is war:
you need to fight
for what is right.

At work, there are all sorts of temptations and pressures that encourage people to not do that which is good and to let the bad dominate. To do the right thing, it is necessary to fight against and resist these temptations and pressures by, for example, making them harmless and eliminating them.



The biggest curse for a better world
is when people believe they are cursed
and thus unable do any good.

If people think that they cannot do any good because they are inclined towards evil or are cursed and evil, then there is no basis for doing anything good. To believe that the individual is and will remain bad is to regard every bad behavior as self-evident and inevitable. The individual simply cannot do or become anything else. Thus the perpetrator, no matter how evil, is not to be blamed. If people think that way, then the world will never get better.



When in doubt whether to do good or evil,
remember that in the end
good always triumphs over evil.

Doing bad is often attractive because it can give quick and visible benefits (such as money, goods, pleasure and popularity). To withstand this temptation, look past the short-term benefits and focus on the long-term disadvantages of bad behavior and on the long-term benefits of good behavior (such as dignity and respect). Remember, in the end, unethical behavior is a quick win with long-term losses.



Wasting time at work is a cardinal sin:
it steals time, money, and trust.

Working time is a precious asset. Employees are paid for their time performing duties for their employer. Not spending this time properly means that one is wasting and thus stealing not only time (because it is misappropriation) but also the money paid for the time (salary) and that the employer as a result misses (due to lost production and sales). Misuse of working time is also squandering and pilfering the trust of the employer, lenders, and customers, among others, because their expectations are not met.



Patience is a virtue,
except when you have lost a virtue.

Patience is a virtue in the sense that it is a good quality to be able to wait for something that takes some time without becoming frustrated. However, if one has lost a virtue, then it is not just a matter of long waiting to restore and recover it; one must do this as quickly as possible. For as long as one is missing a virtue there is an increased risk of wrong behavior. In which case, it is good to be impatient.



If you can't stand the heat,
don't leave the kitchen;
open a window.

The well-known saying, “If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen” means that if one does not like it when a situation becomes too busy, too intense, or too difficult, then one should leave. However, leaving can be undesirable (for example, if there is no good replacement or people are betrayed) or self-indulgent (because no effort is made to stay). By staying, one can work at reducing the pressure and gravity by addressing its cause (figuratively, lowering the stove's temperature).

If this fails, then check whether the pressure and load can be alleviated and attenuated (figuratively, opening a kitchen window).



If doing right were easy,
wrongdoing would be left behind.

If good behavior were easy (or wrong
behavior difficult) then there would be
no or fewer wrong behavior. All wrong
behaviors show that good behavior is
not easy (and wrong behavior is easier).
It is therefore a misconception to think
that good behavior is easy to do.



If you do not completely drain the poison cup,
you have to start over again.

Something or someone who is discredited due to some wrongdoing can be put through rigorous investigations, inspections, punishments, and interventions. One must then drink the proverbial poison cup by acquiescing to the investigations, inspections, etc. If one fails to see this to the end, then one denies one's guilt and penance only partially and thus will again be discredited and must again cooperate in a new round of penance.



Without a struggle,
ethics will lose.

To act ethically and to continue to act
ethically, one needs to struggle - against
temptation and pressure, against
complacency and laziness - and to deal
well with new developments and issues.
If one does not fight this fight, one would
lose ethics and it would vanish.



Ethics consists of: **E**quality
Trustworthiness
Honesty
Integrity
Compassion
Sustainability

Each letter of the word “ethics” stands for the first letter of an important and distinctive virtue for work, and it is thus a mnemonic. Ethics is about what drives you (compassion), who you are (integrity), how you appear (honesty), how you act (trustworthiness), how you treat others (equality) and what you achieve (sustainability).

5.4

Trustworthiness:
Collegiality



If you have never been betrayed by others,
then you have never trusted others enough.

Trusting others implies, by definition, that this trust can be betrayed. There is no need for trust if there is complete certainty that the other will do what is expected because the result is a foregone conclusion. Thus it seems that the only way to prevent trust betrayal is to never trust others. However, this is undesirable because cooperation and thus, society are not possible without trusting each other. If trust has never been betrayed, then this means that people are too safe and reluctant to trust others and they have scarcely utilized the possibilities of cooperation and society.



People who never trust anyone
cannot themselves be trusted.

People who are suspicious of everyone and everything,
and therefore trust no one and nothing, are more concerned
with the untrustworthiness of others than with their own.
By letting their lives be dominated by the untrustworthiness
of others, such individuals become paranoid and their
behavior more erratic and unpredictable.



Be aware that the competition *within* organizations can be fiercer and more unfair than *between* organizations.

In the struggle for scarce resources within an organization, competition between departments and employees can be fierce and even fiercer than between organizations. The internal struggle for limited budgets, resources, and key positions can be so fierce that people treat each other unfairly, uncollegially, and misguidedly.



There is no greater injustice
than corrupting others through injustice.

People who have no influence but want it can still attract others by behaving unjustly, by for example showing favoritism, arbitrariness, and intimidation. Through this kind of manipulation and corruption, one creates dependence and influence. Such unjust behaviors undermine ethics because morally detrimental influences rule, they are difficult to stop, and they encourage others to also act unjustly.

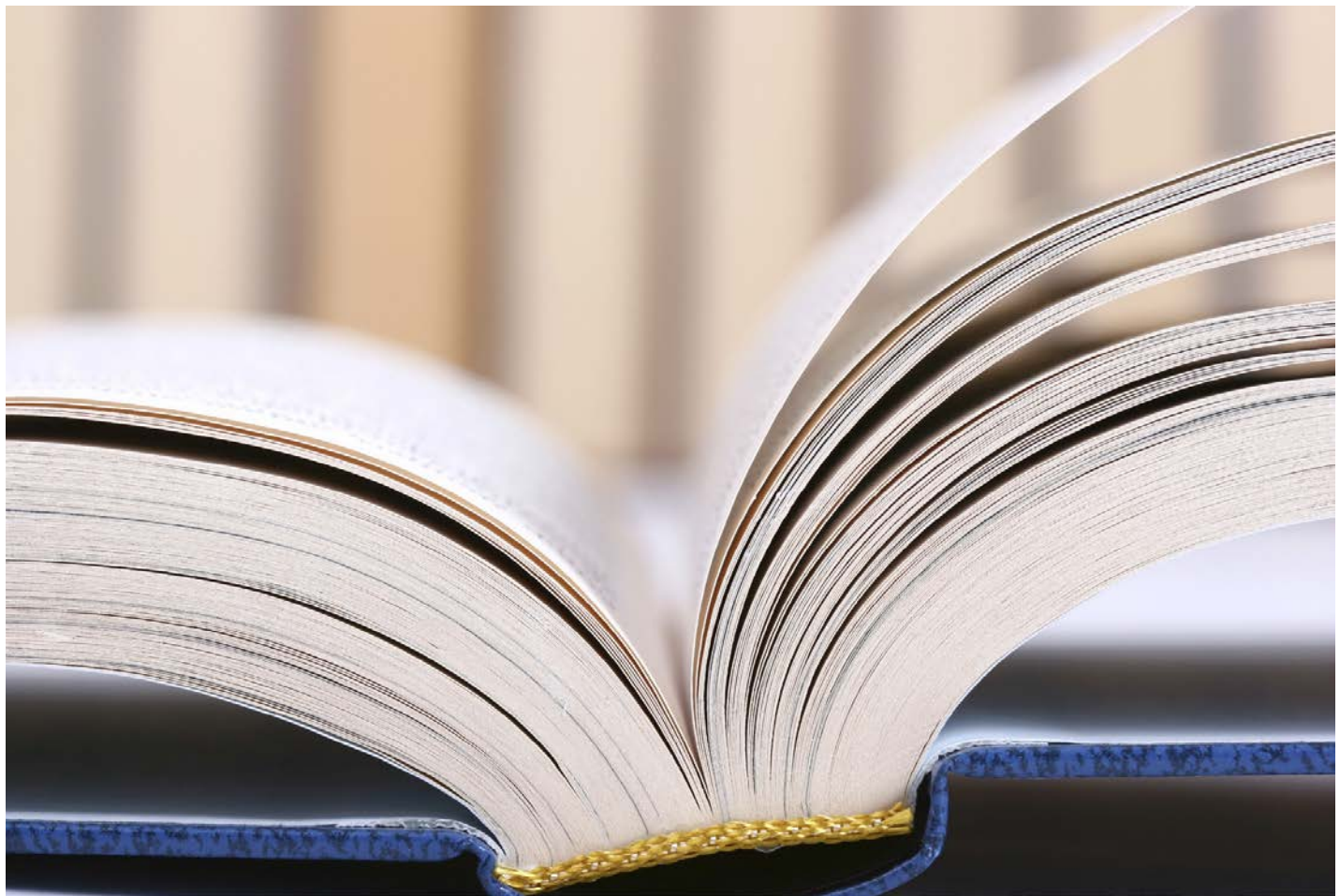


You might get a kick in the head
if you wear too many hats.

The more roles and functions one takes on (i.e., the more hats one wears), the greater the risk that these roles and functions will conflict and undermine each other. One's credibility and reliability as a person and official will thus be questioned and, as a consequence, one will be forced to relinquish those roles and functions (i.e., one gets a kick in the head).

5.5

Trustworthiness:
Conduct



If integrity is the thread we weave through the fabric of our life story,
then we ought not to skip a single stitch.

Integrity is a norm for someone's entire life. An honorable life is about the common threads in a life story: are these compatible, coherent, and unified? This means that just like a book, people cannot skip a day or a page of their life. As long as one lives, a day without integrity means a gap in one's life story. So integrity cannot be eschewed, not even for a day.



Life is too short
to take moral shortcuts.

It is a shame and a waste to
squander and abuse one's
integrity. After all, our life
is not eternal or renewable.

If integrity is vitally
important, then it is
imperative to give it
importance in this life.



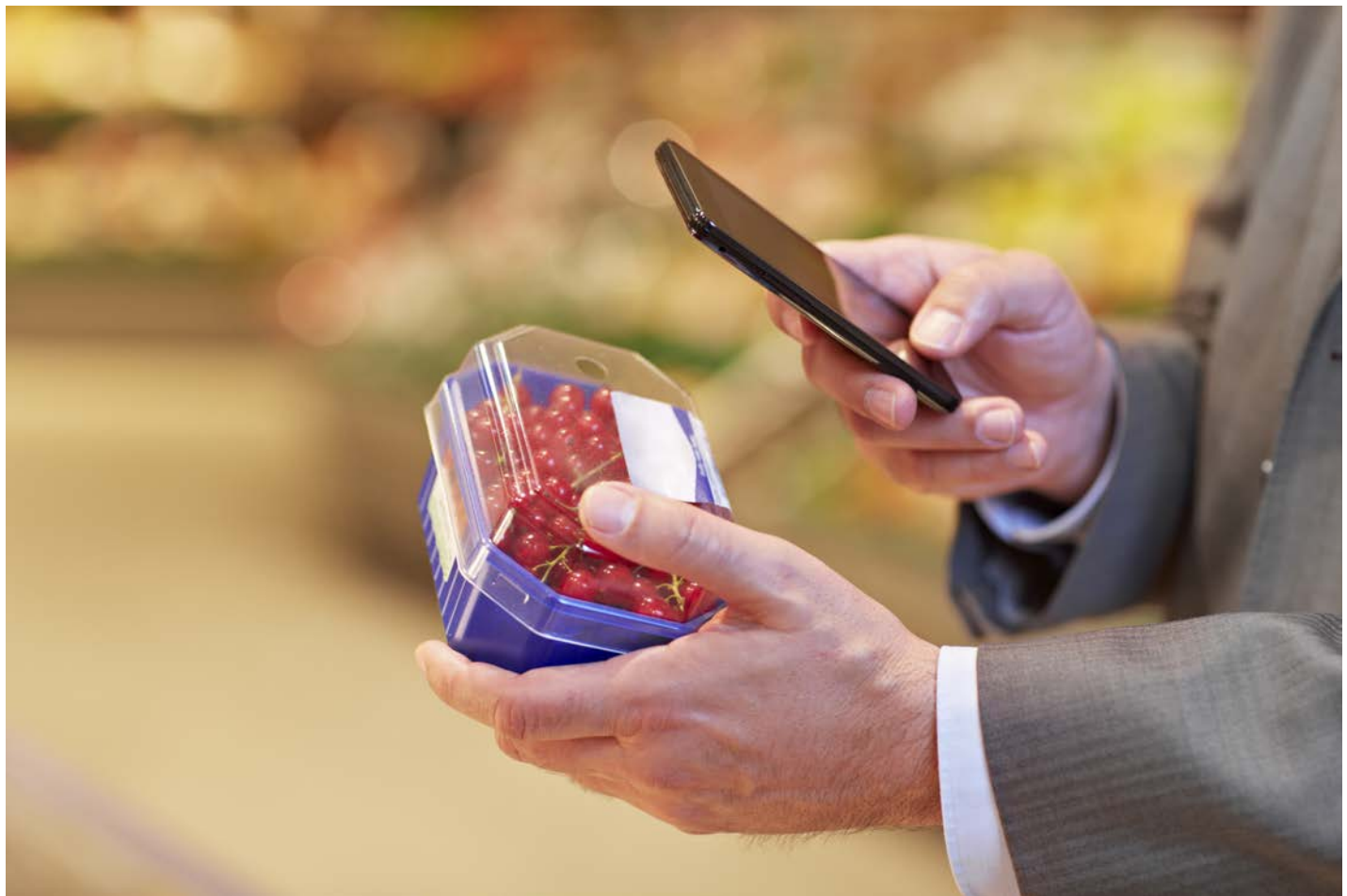
Leave your work today
as if someone else will take over it tomorrow.

Long-term focus is morally desirable because it promotes continuity and sustainability and limits future damage and misery. However, it does not justify careless and negligent behavior in the short term. Every working day must be an honest one, in the sense of complete and without any loose ends. The person who takes over the work the next day or later should not be confronted with a mess, such as poor administration, outstanding conflicts, and empty promises.



Let your integrity make a difference
in your work daily.

Integrity is not a passive asset or something needed only in exceptional and extreme situations. The value of integrity is precisely in its application in everyday activities; the difference it makes is not just marginal but substantial. It is substantially positive when what one does is better compared to what was done before, to what one would do otherwise, and to what others do. It is only when integrity makes a difference that its value becomes apparent.



An integrity vitamin a day
keeps the decay away.

To keep one's integrity in good condition, frequent maintenance is essential. Otherwise, one becomes weaker and less resilient, and the likelihood of moral decline increases. One maintains one's integrity by, for example, periodically reflecting on the choices one makes and deliberating whether these choices are consistent with the desired values and norms. This exercise can even be done at the end of every working day, meeting, project, or task. Some concrete examples of activities are reading the appropriate literature, having conversations with others, and visiting places that strengthen one's integrity.



One bad deed can never be justified
by many good deeds.

Doing good deeds can build goodwill such that it may offset a bad deed; that is, the bad deed would be seen as an exception. However, deliberately doing something bad because one has done a lot of good is never justified. A bad deed is not made better because it was preceded by good deeds. For example, victims do not care that others previously benefited from a good behavior that now disadvantages them. Moreover, this smells of opportunism: first consciously do good to be able to do something bad later. In this way, good deeds are put in a bad light: the sincerity of one's good deeds become suspect.



Punishing moral behavior
is as demoralizing as
rewarding immoral behavior.

It undermines morality (the support and commitment to act well and not to act badly) to reward immoral behavior and to punish good ones. It is precisely good behavior that must be rewarded with approval and encouragement and bad behavior that must be punished with disapproval and discouragement.



The more ethical conduct is rewarded,
the less it says when displayed.

The more ethical behavior is rewarded, the less the displayed behavior says about the motivation behind it (or maybe the more it says nothing). It is unclear whether the behavior is being displayed because people want to (thus it is ethics) or because it pays (thus it is opportunism). Likewise, ethical behavior that is rewarded says little or nothing about the ethical behavior that is not being rewarded. Individuals who only behave ethically if it is rewarded will not behave ethically. Moreover, it is likely that ethical people will not behave ethically if it is being rewarded because they do not want to give the impression that the motivation behind their action is the reward.



The more you are forced to do good,
the less you do it when you are free.

If one is forced to do the right thing, then one does it because one has been told to do so and not because one wants to. The more often people are forced to do good, the more they learn an extrinsic motivation: to do good only when they have to. The risk here is that the intrinsic motivation diminishes, so that people will not do the good or the right out of their own free will but only when forced. And even then, they might even do the wrong thing.



Punishing misconduct too severely
leads to more severe misconduct.

The risks of severe sanctions are that both the punished and the observers take revenge (the one who punishes must himself be punished), nothing is learned (only by criticizing the sanction), the focus is only on preventing new sanctions (instead of on not doing what is not punishable), the willingness to report new abuses decreases (out of pity for the punished), and less display of vulnerabilities (out of fear of condemnation and repercussions). As a result, the chance of new and more serious misconduct increases.



If you want many offences,
you have to put up many fences.

The more people's behavior are being restricted, for instance with rules and procedures, the more they can do wrong because there are more rules that they can possibly violate. Also, the likelihood of wrongdoings increases because people become passive and anxious in the face of many and excessive restrictions, and they become irritated and frustrated and will even resist and obstruct. Thus, engendering wrongdoings and wrongdoers is not difficult. In the case of wrongdoings, it is the question whether the wrongdoer or the situation is to blame.



“Everything in moderation” applies
neither to integrity nor corruption.

Moderation is desirable for many things, also for moral matters. For example, one should not be too generous (then it becomes profligacy) or too nice (then it becomes flattery). This however does not apply to integrity. A moderate integrity is not entirely honorable and therefore it is below par. The opposite applies to corruption: no amount or degree of it is acceptable.



Your integrity only has value
when you are ready to sacrifice something for it.

If people will not spare anything for integrity, then integrity is nothing. It is precisely what people would do for integrity that makes apparent how much value they give to it and how important it is. The value of one's own integrity is discernible from, for example, the number of customers and lucrative assignments, and level of job satisfaction people leave behind because of their principles.



You cannot improve the world with your thoughts,
only with your good actions.

Having a vision about why, what for, and how the world can be improved is important to be able to identify opportunities for improvement. However, the world will not improve with ideas, thoughts, and intentions. We need concrete (and good) interventions, actions, and behaviors.



Trust is good;
proven trust is even better.

Trusting something or someone is good. But trust can easily turn into blind trust, which is naïve and makes abuse quite likely. Therefore it is better if there is evidence for the trust, if it is substantiated or, even better, if it is proven. Trust by itself is nothing. Trust is about the expectations that someone will (not) do something or that something will (not) happen. So the most important proof of trust is when what is expected is done or delivered; the trust is thus proven and justified.

6.1

Sustainability:
Accountability



You cannot duck
when the buck stops with you.

The phrase “The buck stops here” refers to the notion that someone bears the ultimate responsibility for decisions that are taken under their command.

In this case, no one else bears the final responsibility.

Hence one cannot hide or flee from the responsibility. The only thing one could and should do is to accept and bear this responsibility fully.



Many hands make light work
and many long pointer fingers.

People working with others on a task or assignment can do it easier, faster, and better than someone who does it alone. However, in the latter situation, it is clear who is responsible for the execution: the one doing it. The more people involved in the process, the more difficult it is to determine who is responsible, for what, and the extent of their responsibility. This blurring of responsibilities increases the likelihood of confusion about responsibilities, that no one will feel responsible for the whole, and that everyone will shift the responsibility to someone else (i.e., point the finger at each other) when there are mistakes.



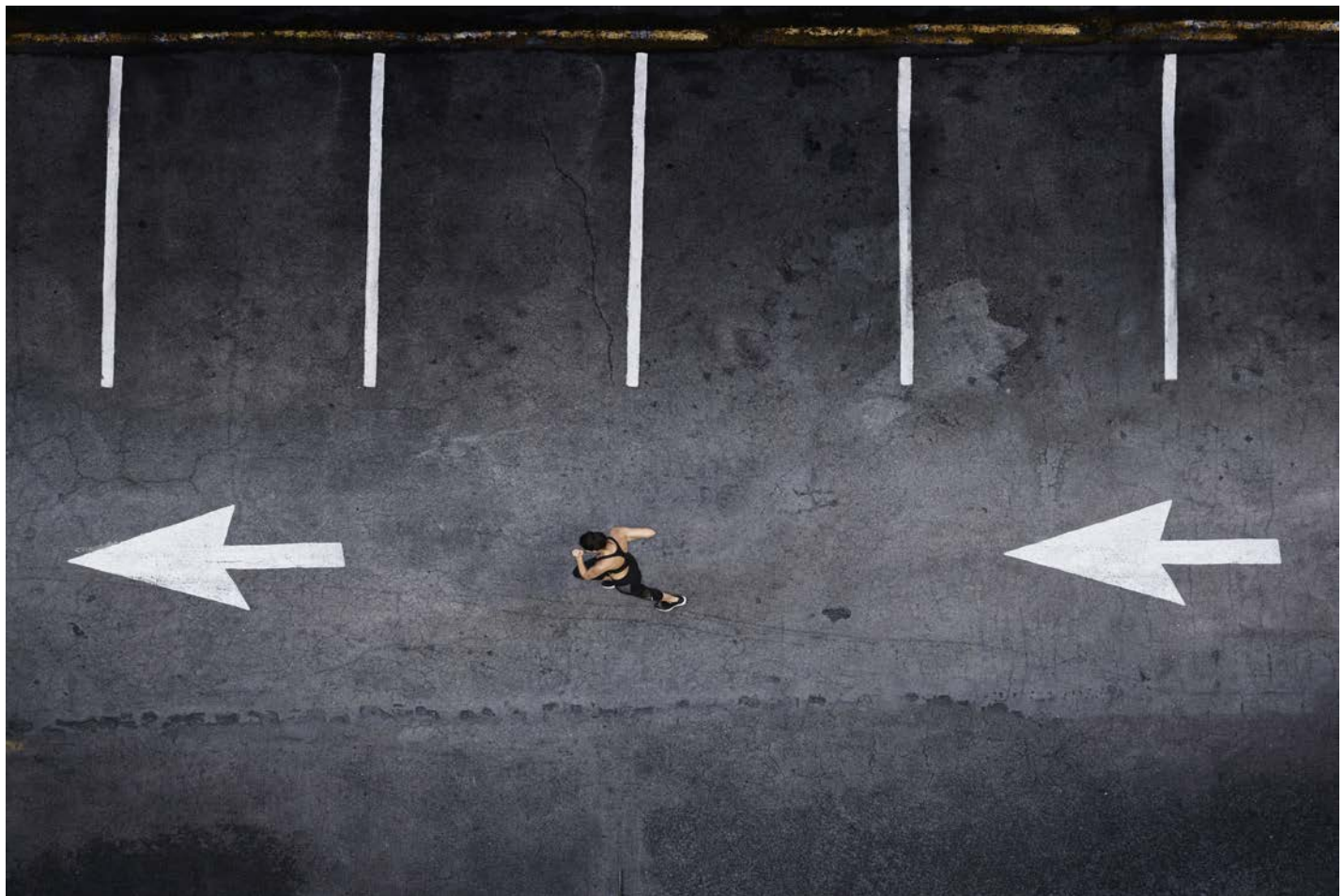
The tragedy of common responsibility:
the more people are responsible for something,
the less each feels responsible for it.

The greater the number of people made responsible for one thing, the less they feel responsible for it. They become more passive because they think that someone else takes responsibility (first) or that they don't have to take responsibility as long as others don't. If everyone thinks this way, nobody will act even if it is badly needed. This effect is tragic because it seems positive when the number of people bearing responsibility increases, but the result is negative because the sense of collective responsibility decreases.



Responsibility and responsiveness
are the two legs
on which ethics stands.

Ethics consists of responsibility and responsiveness. These two are inextricably linked: people should be responsive about the responsibility they bear, and they bear the responsibility to be responsive in a responsible way. For example, if people are responsible for carefully handling the assets, they should be able to account for how carefully they use the assets by registering use, reporting defects, and answering questions about use. And in addition, all these must be done in a fair and reliable manner.



You cannot judge someone for his choice
when you do not know his options.

Taking responsibility is only possible and relevant if there are alternatives. If there are no alternatives, then nothing else can be done but to pick the only option available. The choice does not say anything because there is no choice. Anyone would have done the same in that situation. Therefore, judging someone's choice and holding that person accountable for it only makes sense if there were several real options and these were known to the ones judging. Otherwise it cannot be determined whether someone actually has several options and whether the best or least worst one was chosen.

6.2

Sustainability:
Empathy



Ethics begins
when apathy ends.

Empathy, being sensitive to the other, is a necessary condition for ethics. After all, ethics is about taking the other into account. One can only do this if one first sees and knows this other. To be able to act ethically, apathy, which is the opposite of empathy, must therefore be avoided.



There is no room for others
when you are full of yourself.

Ethics requires that we pay careful attention to others, our fellow human beings, and that we take their interests, needs, and feelings into account.

To be able to do this, one must have the necessary mental and moral space. If one is egotistic (full of oneself) and can only think of oneself, then, literally and figuratively, one does not have the space to think of others. So if you are full of oneself, you must first clean yourself up.



Technocratic managers are bad,
narcissistic ones are worse,
and those who are both are a nightmare.

Technocratic managers are a threat to ethics because they act impersonally and without a sense of morality and human feelings. Narcissistic managers are even more of a threat to ethics because they don't want to be good for their fellow human beings at all, and they focus on their own power and success. Managers who are both technocratic and narcissistic are an even greater threat to ethics because they cannot and will not take into account ethical values and other people, and they would even unfeelingly take advantage of those around them.



You can only thank people
when you first think of them.

Showing appreciation to people for who they are and what they do is important to demonstrate what you find important, that you are involved with people and which behavior you expect from others in the future. However, showing appreciation is only possible if you first think of others and really know what they are doing, because otherwise you would not know who, when, and for what to appreciate.



The litmus test of moral excellence is
how well you treat those
who treat you badly.

Personal goodness is not about treating properly those who treat us well. There is nothing wrong with doing so but it is not distinctive of goodness because this is mere reciprocity, a matter of decency, or in one's interest. It is a different matter when one is being treated badly by others. The tendency in this case is to respond in kind, to return evil with evil. But it is precisely in this situation where one can demonstrate one's goodness: by treating others well and continuing to treat them well regardless of how one is treated. Such situations clearly show how much one really cares about ethics and others.

6.3

Sustainability:
Fairness



Ethics requires more than egoism
and less than altruism.

Ethics requires more than just being egotistic and egocentric because it is not only one's self-interest but also the interests of others that are involved and must be taken into consideration. However, ethics requires less than being altruistic and philanthropic because self-interest must not be excluded beforehand. Ethics requires that all interests be taken into account, including one's self-interest.



Love for ethics and love as ethics
are two sides of the same coin.

Ethical values and norms are based on love for fellow human beings and society. Because we care about others, we want to respect and help them.

Without love, affection, and sympathy for others and the environment there is no inherent basis for ethics. Hence, love for the other feeds the love for ethics so that one does the good thing not because it is mandated or it pays but because one wants it wholeheartedly.



People who depict their work as war to justify its lack of ethics
forget that in war ethics abound.

Some may think that by portraying work as being like war they have found a justification for unethical behavior at work. This is based on the misunderstanding that because war is a matter of life and death, where the end justifies the means, where there are victims, and horrible practices are permitted, so this is the case at work, too.

However, even in war there is ethics: e.g., orders from superiors must always be obeyed, one must be loyal to one's comrades, collateral damage must be prevented, and opponents who surrender or caught must be treated properly and given a fair trial.



Greed is good,
but only for a bad life.

The notion that “greed is good” suggests that selfishness, self-centeredness, and self-enrichment are good for the economy. However, pure greed is disruptive for the economy and society because it leads to short-term focus, abuses by the strongest, and the exploitation and exclusion of vulnerable groups. In this respect, greed is good only for a bad life, both of the greedy and their victims.



Fear is a bad counselor,
but greed is a worse one.

It is a popular expression that fear is a bad counselor. However, to a certain extent, fear is a good counselor: fear prevents people from becoming overconfident and reckless. Nevertheless, greed is a much worse counselor because behavior is guided by own interests (instead of others'), the short term (instead of the long term), and by material things (instead of intangible matters).



If your ethics never hurt you,
it likely hurts others.

Ethics is like muscles. By hurting the fibers, the muscles grow. Ethics grows by hurting one's own principles: by searching for the principles' pain threshold and making weighty and demanding ethical decisions. The more often one does this, the more pain one can tolerate, and the greater the sacrifices and responsibilities one can make and bear. However, with weak ethics one makes unprincipled decisions that harm others.



Conscientious capitalism is not an oxymoron
but a pleonasm.

Capitalism is seen as an immoral system where the strongest survive (and the weak are ruined), selfishness triumphs (thus everyone must stand up for their own interests), and there is serious injustice (because the weak are treated unfairly). But this picture is incorrect. The capitalist system actually has ethical principles, such as the open and honest provision of information, equal opportunities for all, and compliance with agreements.

Without these principles, markets, and thus capitalism, will not be able to function.

Conscientious capitalism is therefore not a contradiction but a pleonasm.



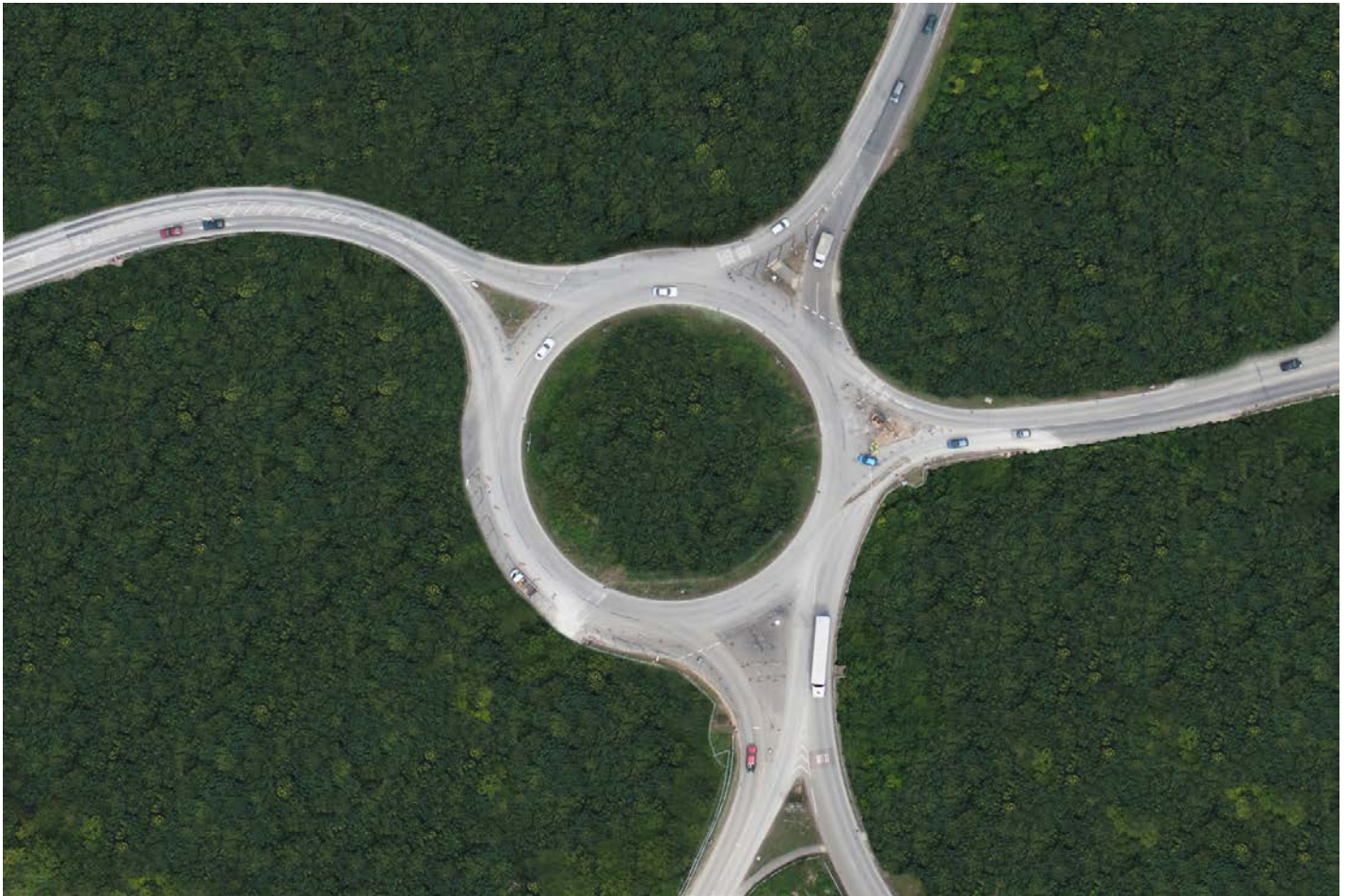
The firm's goal of sustainable advantage for stakeholders means that the ultimate responsibility of a firm is to create value over the long term for all those who have an interest in the firm.

From an ethical perspective, the ultimate goal of a company is not to create maximum value for shareholders but to create maximum value for all stakeholders. The stakeholders are those who influence and are affected by the company. This value creation is not only over the short term or only over the long term; it is over a long term, thus both over the short and the long term.



The true value of an organization
is not what it possesses
but what it gives.

The assets of an organization - e.g., buildings, machines, and finances - list the organization's value. However, an organization's real value is what it does with these assets. To what extent do these assets pay off: what do they deliver and offer to others, to the stakeholders? In other words, this is the value that an organization creates for them.



An organization is a traffic circle of stakeholders
where ethics prevents accidents among conflicting interests.

Different parties (such as the capital providers, owners, employees, suppliers and customers) come together in an organization. The organization is the means for realizing the interests of each of these stakeholders. Ethics, which are the moral values and norms, provides the tools for identifying, acknowledging, and harmonizing these interests. When these interests collide with each other (for example, if returns are at odds with employment), then ethics provides the instruments to properly balance the conflicting interests and prevent unnecessary damage and casualties.



A right
does not make you right.

A moral right does not mean that it always has priority and that it is good to always follow it to the letter. Rights can conflict with each other, for instance, the right to free expression and the right to respectful treatment. A higher purpose can also justify right infringement, as when the continued existence of a business depends entirely on its polluting the environment thus violating everyone's right to a clean environment.

Hence a right does not make it right.



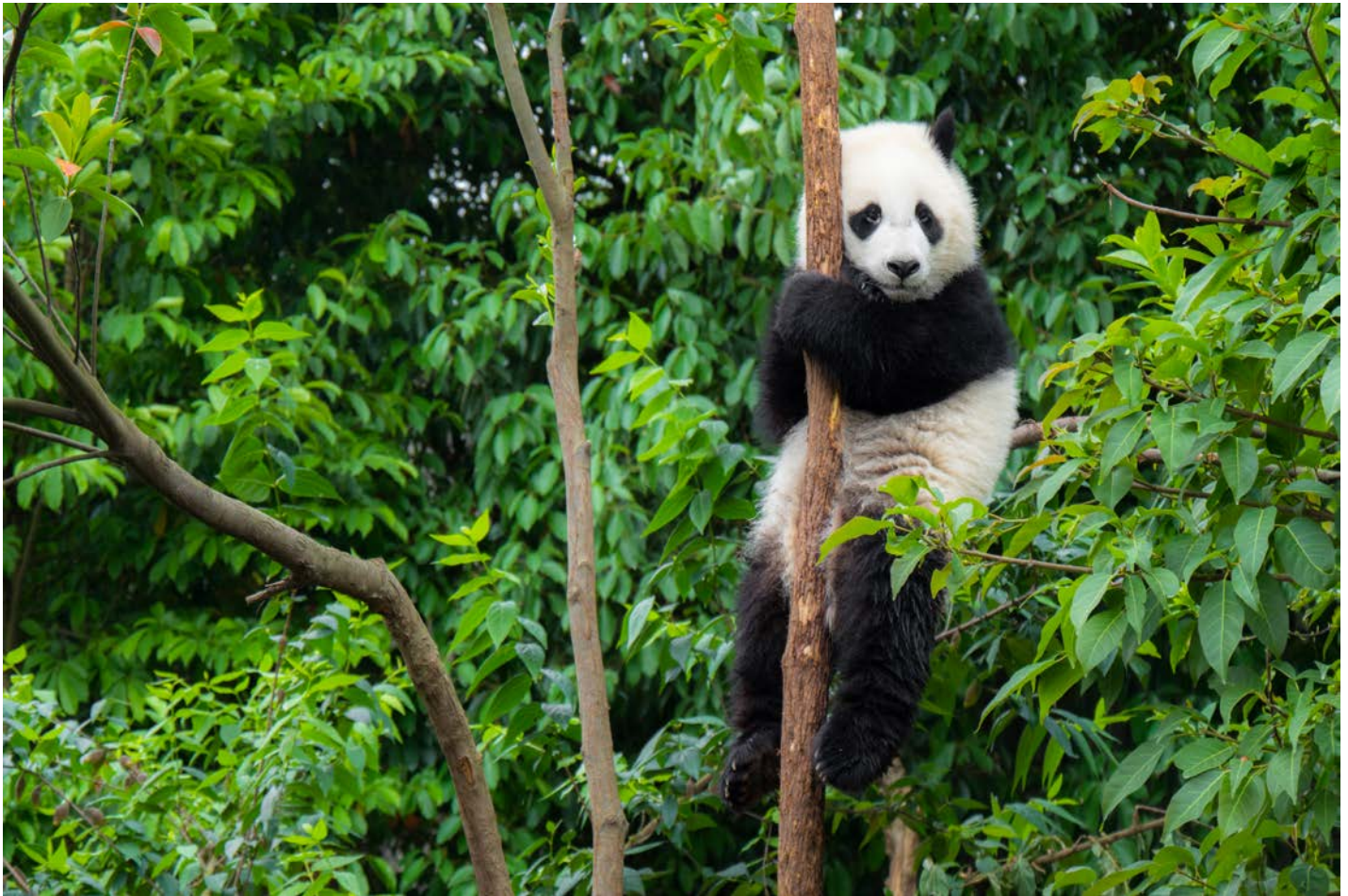
Without human rights
there will be no humans left.

Human rights protect
and foster people's lives.
Without human rights,
living would be
impossible, and that
would be the death of
humanity.



An institution's quality
should be its contribution to the reduction of inequality.

Inequality is one of the most serious abuses in society. Reducing inequality is therefore a major social challenge and responsibility for organizations because they are part of society. An important indicator of the goodness of organizations, such as governments and companies, is therefore the contribution they each make to the decline of inequality in society. An organization that increases inequality is, in this respect, unsound.



Those who treat animals in a bestial manner
deserve to be treated in the same way.

Like humans, animals are living beings with rights and therefore should be treated with respect. Precisely because animals are less able to defend themselves compared to humans that it is all the more important to treat them with respect. For this reason is animal abuse a gross violation of ethical work standards. Organizations and employees that abuse animals are asking to be treated no differently from how they treat animals. They suggest an ethics that allows treating living beings in a bestial manner and being treated in the same manner. Ethics is, after all, based on the idea that how one treats others is also how one likes to be treated oneself.



It is stealing to intentionally delay payments to suppliers who have promptly and properly delivered their products.

Someone who sold and properly delivered a product in accordance with the terms of agreement has a moral right to immediate payment if no other payment conditions have been agreed upon. After all, the product is now owned and used by the customer (buyer), while the money is the compensation and now rightfully belongs to the supplier (seller). Deliberately delaying the payment and thereby depriving the supplier of his money is therefore theft on the customer's part.



Earning a lot of money is not difficult,
but earning it in an ethically acceptable way is.

Making money, and even making a lot of money, is in a sense quite simple: by doing this unethically, like by violating laws, defrauding others, and by lying and cheating. It is more difficult to make money in an ethical way. After all, the possibilities of doing this are by definition more limited because all the unethical ways are excluded. Moreover, one must be able to distinguish oneself from those who work unethically. This is also by definition more difficult because otherwise those who work unethically would have already opted for this.



Laundering dirty money
makes it dirtier.

Money laundering is a legal violation in three ways.
The first offense is that the money was obtained improperly, usually from criminal activities.
The second violation is that money meant for the authorities, such as the tax authorities, is not disclosed. The third offense is that activities, like gambling, are used to conceal the first two offenses.
This makes dirty money all the dirtier.



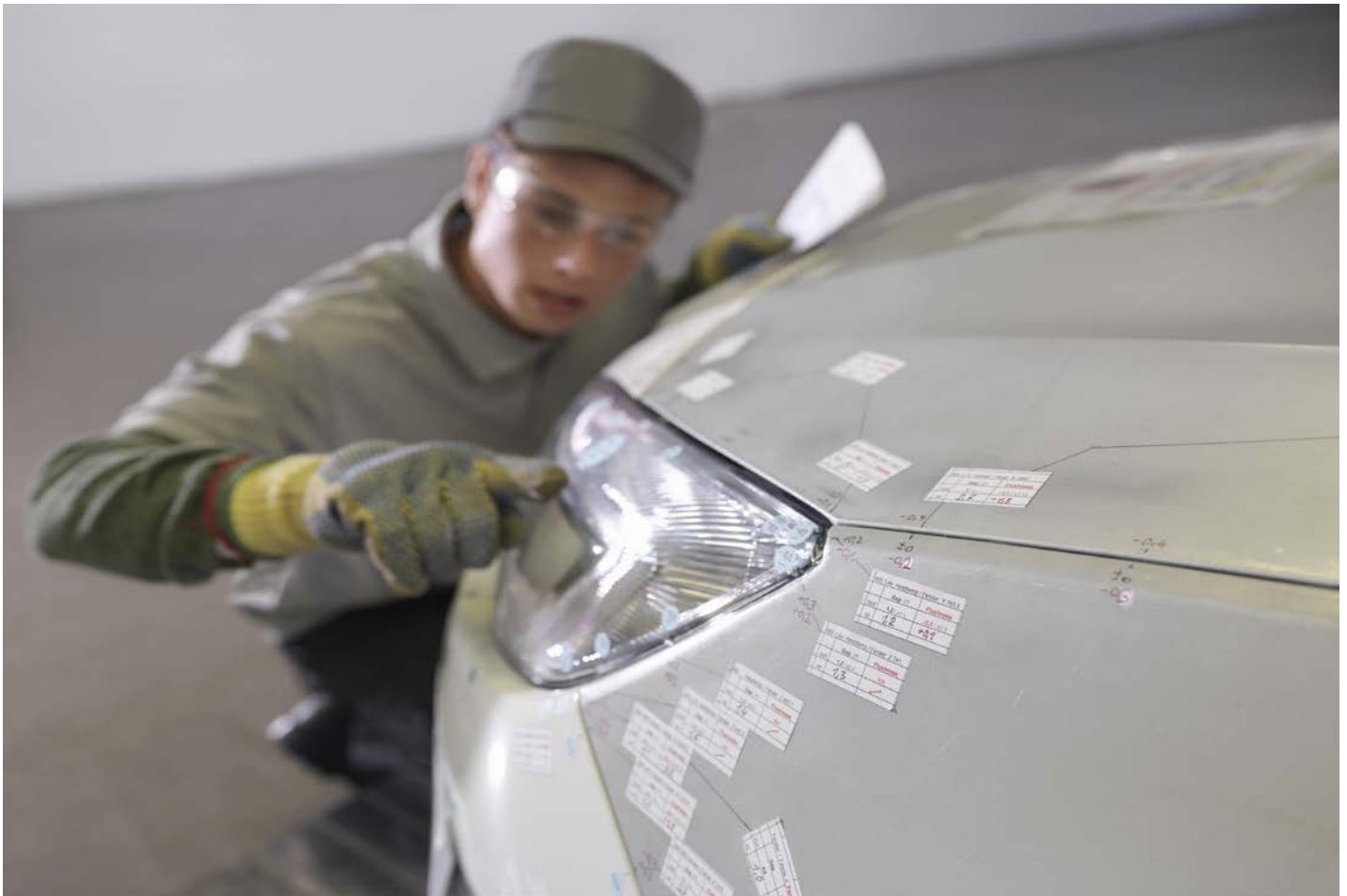
Serving shareholders is
serving ethics.

It is a misunderstanding to think that a company serving the interests of shareholders is amoral and non-ethical. On the contrary, companies bear a considerable ethical responsibility towards its shareholders because the latter are the owners of the company and are therefore dependent on the good functioning of the company. For example, two important applicable ethical principles are: companies should prudently spend the money invested by shareholders, and companies should honestly and promptly inform shareholders about matters relevant to shareholders.



Shareholders are
responsibility holders.

It is wrong to think that the company's executive board is responsible for all stakeholders, while the shareholders only represent their own economic interests. As owners of the company, shareholders are not simply stakeholders, the one who benefits; they are also the stakeholders who are responsible for all stakeholders. They own the company and are therefore fully responsible for the welfare and well-being of all its stakeholders. The fact that the shareholders leave the daily management of the company to the executive board does not change the fact that the shareholders remain responsible for the company.



One should not work for a bonus
but see work as the bonus.

Working purely for a bonus denies the intrinsic value of work. Work offers satisfaction, self-realization and development. In fact, work is a privilege and a reward. The fact that people work means that they are healthy enough to be able to work, have the necessary skills for the work, and to gain the employer's trust to get the work. The work that one does is also a reward for the apparently successful completion of the required preliminary training, previous functions, and accumulated work experience.

6.4

Sustainability:
Product integrity



The law of destructive creation:
Every new product can be misused
and will be misused.

According to the economist Joseph Schumpeter, there is an issue of creative destruction in the economy: through a process of continuous innovation, successful new techniques always destroy the existing techniques. However, there can also be destructive creation: new techniques cannot only be used incorrectly, but they can also actually be used incorrectly. After all, it is rewarding for companies to undermine the quality of a product or service and test the moral limits of its use.

This erosion of quality and testing of boundaries always take place in a market, pressured by competitors who do the same, until the quality becomes unacceptable and boundaries are violated.



Compromising a product
is breaking a promise.

A product is a promise because after all customers purchase a product because they expect that what the product professes will be fulfilled. A salesperson who raises expectations about the product and these expectations are not fulfilled thus breaks a promise and violates the ethical norms “a promise creates obligation” and “an agreement is binding”.



Those who win through corruption
are losers.

Winning a contract through bribery is a violation of the principles of fair competition and transparent decision-making. Those who are guilty of this violation partly lose their integrity, and they are losers because apparently they did not manage to win the contract on their own economic strength. Thus, they are both moral and economic losers.



Giving away ill-gotten money to a good cause
makes the money even more illicit.

Money obtained unethically, for instance through illegal trade, remains unethical even if it is given to charity. After all, the money could not have been given to charity if the transaction was ethical: there would not have been any money earned. Giving ill-gotten money to charity even becomes more unethical because the charity is infected by and contaminated with the unethically obtained money.



When a clean hand washes a dirty hand,
they both become dirty.

When something bad is combined with something good,
then the good thing is no longer purely good for now it also
contains evil. The good that infiltrates the bad becomes
contaminated or is damaged by it. Take for instance, hiring a
criminal employee, collaborating with corrupt companies,
or engaging with the wrong people. If good could purge
all evil, then there would no longer be any evil.

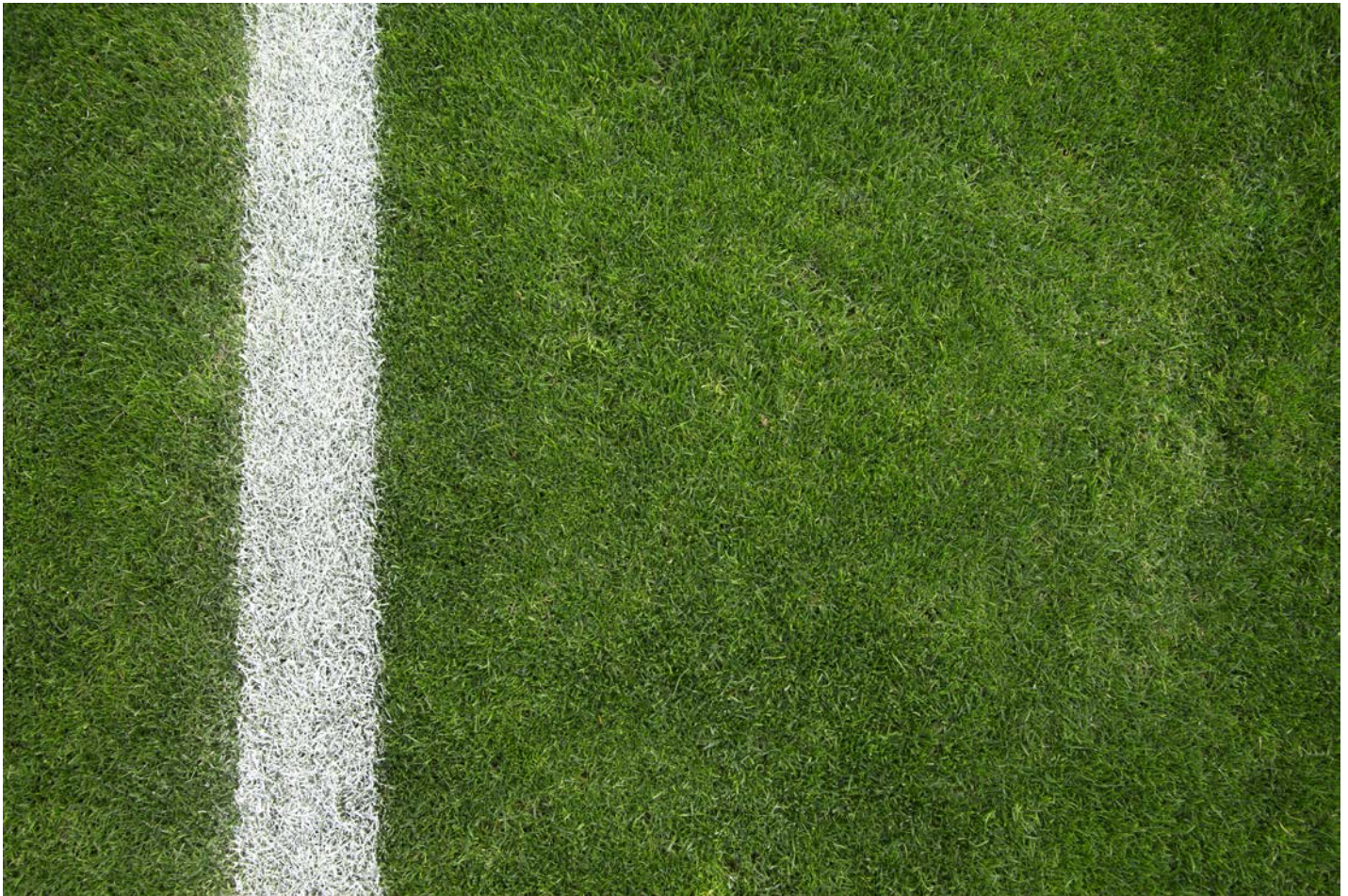
6.5

Sustainability:
Prudence



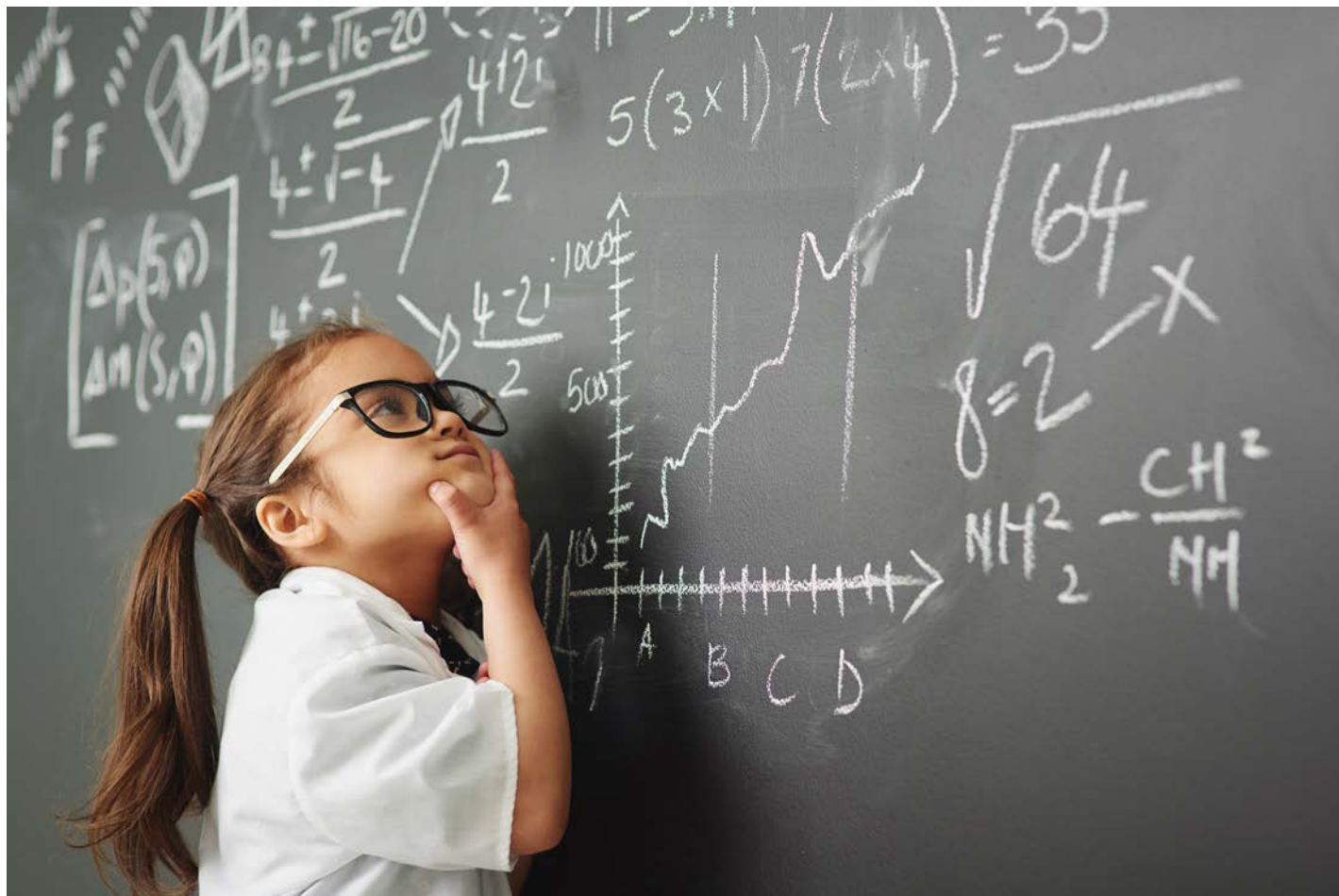
The most beautiful flowers growing on the edge of the abyss
are no parachutes.

To justify seeking the boundaries of the law, it is said that the most beautiful flowers bloom on the edge of the abyss. This means that most profit can be gained by picking these proverbial flowers, for example, by making a product that meets only the minimum of legal requirements. Even though the boundaries of the law are just within the law, it is quite likely that with just a small misstep or miscalculation, one would no longer be complying with the law. This is inexcusable. Deliberately seeking the boundaries of the law consequently leads to a free fall.



Everyone has the right to make a mistake,
but no one has the right to misuse this right.

It is inhumane and thus undesirable to expect people not to make mistakes. Making mistakes is inextricably linked to living and working. Barring people from making mistakes will lead to distress and tension. However, allowing the possibility of mistakes does not mean allowing making intentional, or numerous, or repeatedly the same mistakes. People still have the moral duty to do their best to prevent mistakes.



Making mistakes is not itself wrong; it is wrong not to learn from them.
But it is an even bigger wrong not to let others learn from them.

Learning from one's mistakes is good because it helps reduce the likelihood of repeating them. Letting others learn from their own mistakes is even better because the learning effect multiplies: the chance of the same mistakes happening among those learning from them decreases.



How poor are you when to save costs
you wait with going to the lavatory
until you arrive at work?

At the workplace, employees have access to all kinds of facilities with which they do their work (such as tools and equipments) and that enable them to do their work (such as lavatories). Unless the employer has explicitly authorized it, employees are not supposed to unnecessarily use these facilities for their own personal purposes (like charging personal telephones or gadgets at work though these are not used for work). Someone who does this is poor in either of two senses: financially (they are trying to save their pennies) or morally (they are exploiting the employer).



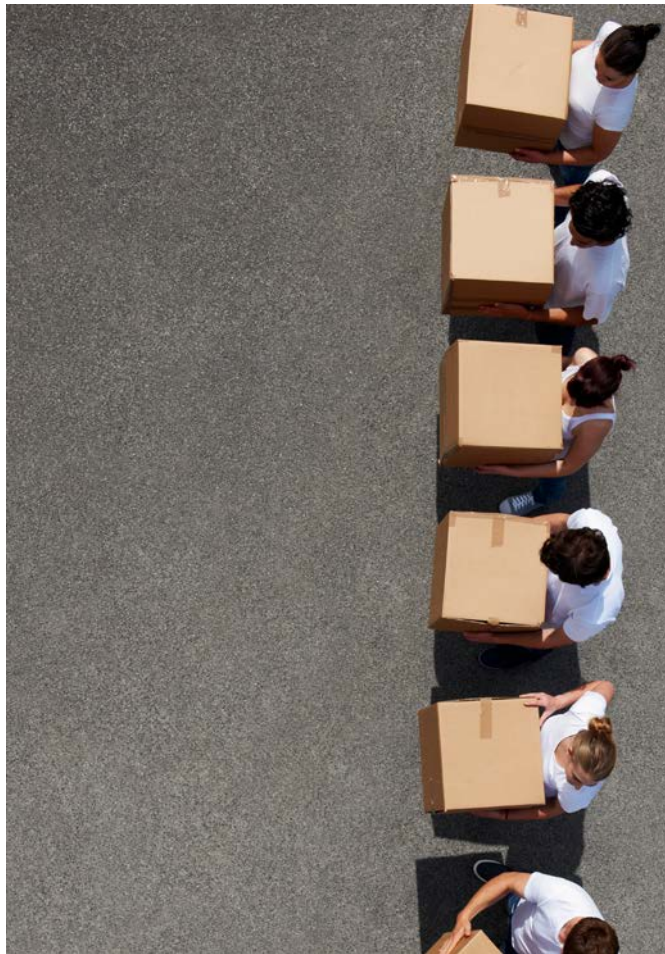
From among “up or out”, “grow or go”, and “excel or exit”,
the last career perspective is the least objectionable.

There are different perspectives on the desirable career path of employees and therefore also when they have to leave the organization: “up or out”, “grow or go”, or “excel or exit”. The first two perspectives assume that employees must always change (i.e., make a career and grow) to stay on, while the third perspective does not require this (one can stay if one excels and continues to do so). Therefore the third perspective is morally preferable because staying on is not dependent on circumstances (such as whether there are sufficient promotion slots and growth opportunities) but on the employee her/himself.



Before acting on the adage “After me comes the flood”,
remember that places in Noah’s Ark were limited.

“After me, the flood” is an adage used to not feel responsible for the problems in the aftermath of one’s departure. However, although people have left, they can still be called to account in various ways (for instance, through court cases or allegations made in public and in the media). People who don’t care that the flood follows their departure should realize that if the flood comes, they are not automatically or always safe. Even in the biblical great flood, only a small group of people - Noah’s family - could go and live in the Ark while the rest of the world drowned.



The ethics you demonstrate in your job
is your moral testament for your successor.

The values and norms that people cultivate in their work will adhere to the position they hold. The ethics displayed will become part of the position and will confront the successor who takes over the job. The successor then has the choice to either continue with the inherited ethics (if the position was properly vacated) or to improve it (if the position was not properly vacated).



Watch out for those who repeatedly talk of the value of ethical behavior in the long term; they might be hiding the damage of their unethical behavior in the short term.

People may think that they can make up for their current unethical behavior with some future ethical behavior. They may also think that they must act unethically now in order to do or achieve something ethical in the future. In both cases, the future is used to justify the present unethical behavior. This is morally risky because delay can lead to cancellation and so the ethical behavior will never happen. In addition, it is misleading to talk about long-term ethics while being silent about the lack of ethics at present and the damage it can cause in the short term.



The question is not what today's morality is
but what tomorrow's will be
and what we are going to do about it today.

When trying to figure out what the current morality is, one will
be quickly overtaken by events because what the current
morality is may have already changed by the time one has
properly understood it. Knowing that morality is changing, it is
therefore better to proactively ask what the morality will be
in the future so as to have time now to reflect on it and properly
and promptly implement the results of that reflection.



Morality, like water, starts to stink
when it stagnates.

Moral values and norms transform due to social changes, new possibilities, and more knowledge and insight. Some things that were possible in the past are no longer possible in the present, and what is possible now may not be possible later. Morality that ignores this fact will lag behind. Completely standing still, in this respect, means decline, decay, and deterioration. However, this does not mean that all changes are good and that everything that has not changed is wrong.

7.1

Openness:
Transparency



Walls have ears, smartphones eyes, and the Internet memory.
So be aware of everything that you say and do:
they may remain public forever.

Today's open and transparent society not only makes visible what people do, but it also ensures that these remain visible. Messages on the Internet that are not deleted, or not quickly enough, remain accessible for years, if not permanently. The Internet is one large collective and infinite memory. Therefore, it is important that what we say and do is publicly defensible now and in the future.



A lie has short legs
but large wings.

A lie has a short lifespan because it is quickly discovered and unmasked. One cannot go far with a lie (it has short legs). However, within a short time, a lie can spread far and wide (it has large wings) in the sense that it quickly causes serious damage to anyone who believes it.



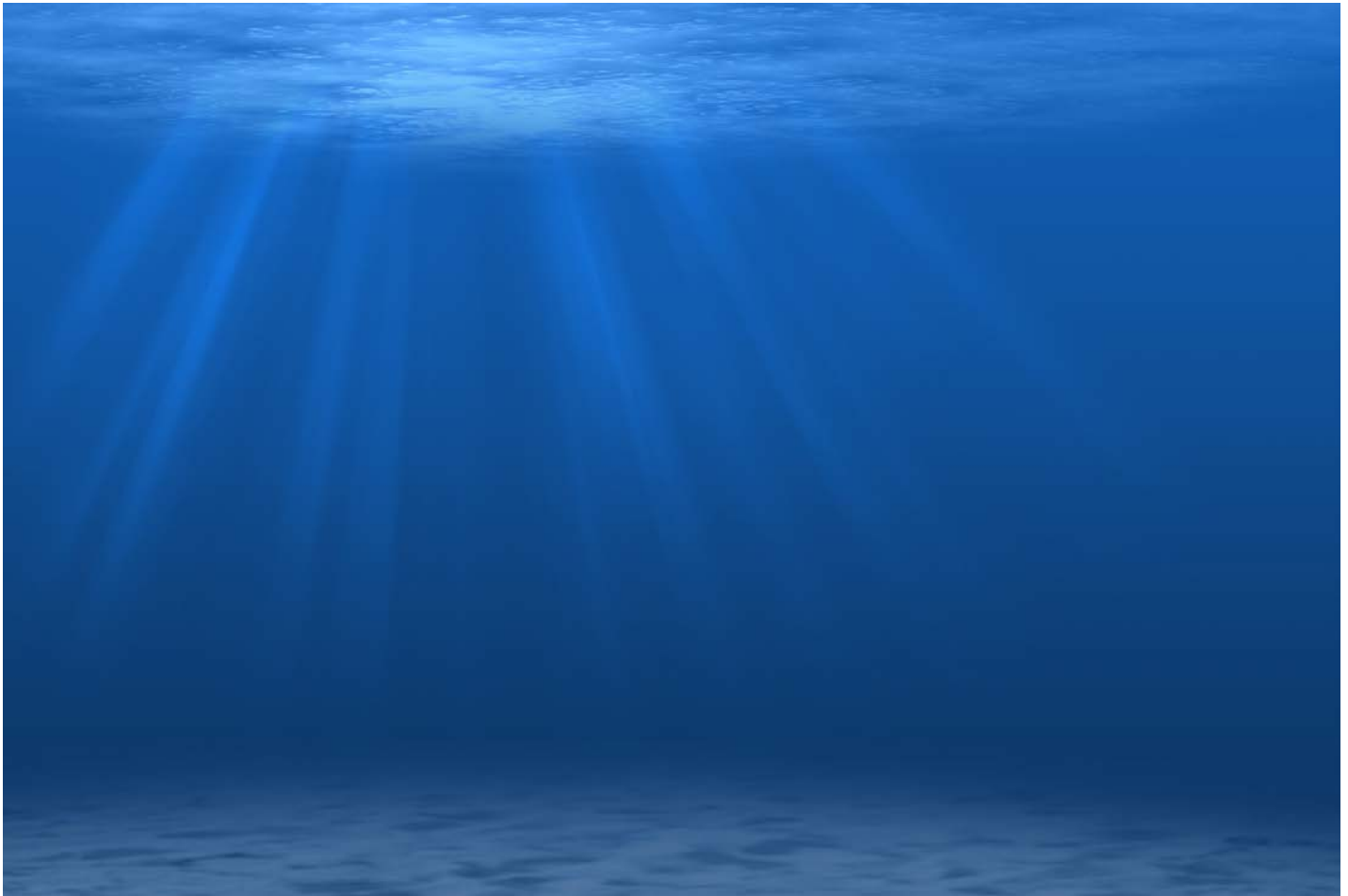
Don't do those things today
that you don't want to become public tomorrow.

It is risky to do or not do something based on the assumption that one's secret is safe. After all, it is questionable whether something actually remains a real secret. Even if it is very unlikely that it will become known, the secret can still come out and then it can no longer be undone. Moreover, something that must not be known is suspect and often wrong. This is why, when determining how one should act, it is better to assume that nothing remains a secret and that everything becomes public in the end.



The front-page test is misleading because today's paper will be used to wrap tomorrow's fish.

The front page test means that to determine whether something is ethical, one must ask what the reactions would be if the intended behavior appears on the front page of the newspaper. However, this test is misleading because a newspaper has a short lifespan. With ethical issues, the long-term consequences are often crucial and therefore also the reactions in the future.



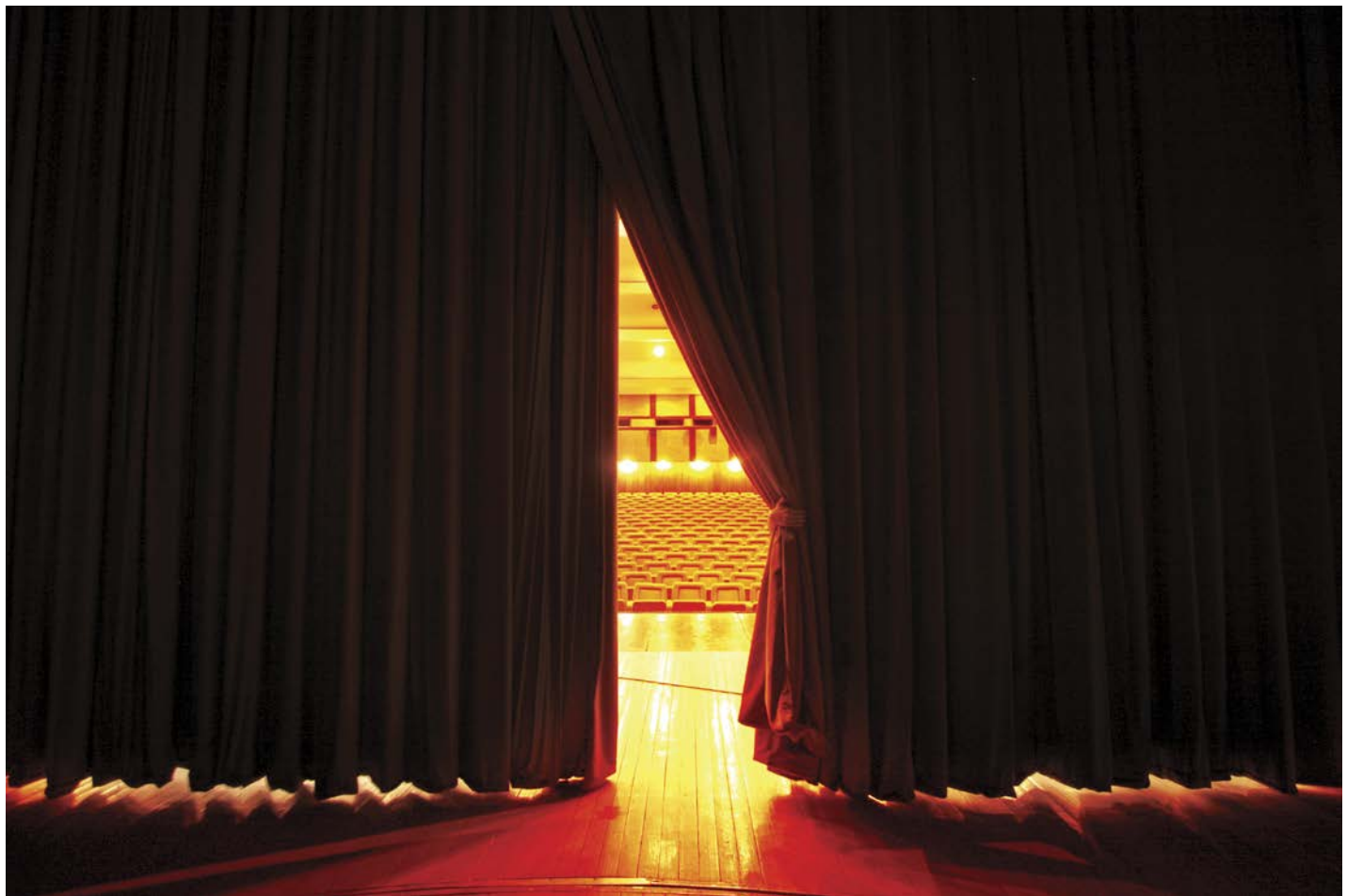
When everything is transparent,
nothing can be seen.

Something is only visible if it is opaque; otherwise you will see right through the thing itself and will therefore not see it. This means that full transparency is undesirable: transparency only works if it is defined and limited. For example, transparency only works if there is also confidentiality and secrecy.



When private bad behavior becomes public,
it cannot be publicly defended as being private.

If one is discredited professionally due to improper private behavior (for example, the school teacher who commits domestic violence and this becomes known at school), then one cannot pretend that this does not publicly exist and therefore does not concern others. The deed is known and can therefore affect the credibility and reliability not only of the person at work but also of his work. Demonstrating that nothing improper happened or acknowledging guilt and promising to improve or get better are more appropriate responses to such revelations.



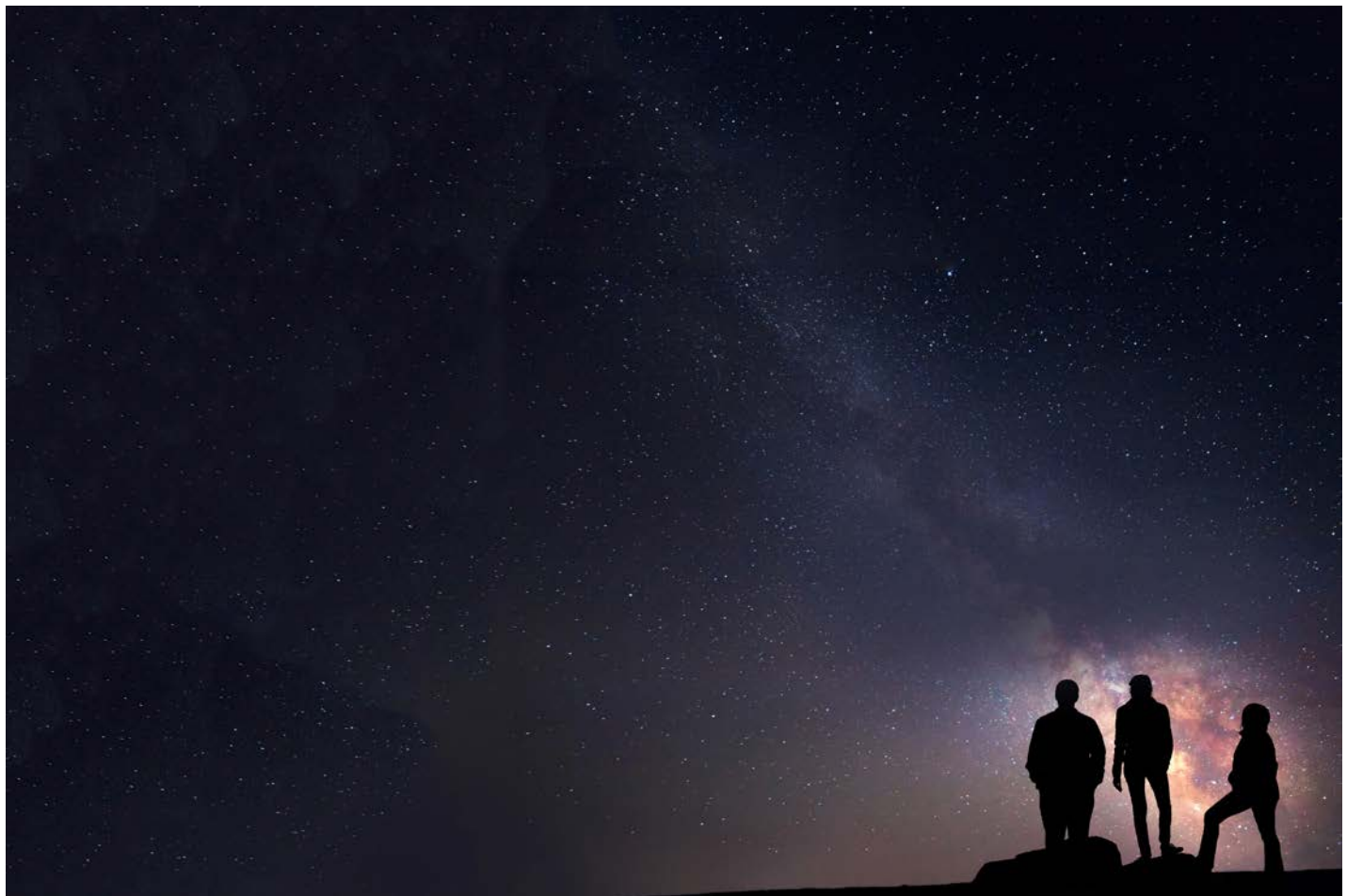
Trust is not restored simply by either complying *or* explaining,
but by complying *and* showing.

Violated or lost trust is not regained by tacitly doing good things and communicating only about the things that are not going well. In this manner, it is the things that go wrong that get the most attention, which only corroborates the lack of confidence. When in fact, the things that are going well demonstrate that people are working on restoring trust. Hence, restoring confidence is done by communicating about both what is not going well and what's going well and better.



Transparency casts
its shadow ahead.

The knowledge that things can eventually become public influences behavior. If things become public, people will be less inclined to do those things that they do not want to become public. For example, knowing that one will be caught will make one less inclined to commit the offense than if one thinks that one will get away with it.



There is no room for ethical behavior
when even the mere possible appearance of unethical behavior
is seen as unethical.

The Appearance Standard says that appearing to behave unethically is unethical. This standard is peculiar because there is no actual unethical behavior involved, only the appearance of it makes the behavior unethical. However, if the standard is broadened such that even just the possible appearance of unethical behavior is considered unethical (i.e., the chance that such appearance will arise), then all behavior becomes unethical. The appearance of unethical behavior will always be possible with just a little bit of healthy suspicion and doubt.



The almighty test:
Learn about your lack of integrity by imagining
what you would do if you were omnipotent.

Plato used the story of the Ring of Gyges as a thought experiment to illustrate human badness: with the ring on, people can make themselves invisible and they can do wrong unhindered. Note however that the ring does not give people the capacity, only the opportunity, to do wrong. To get an even better picture of one's own badness (as well as goodness), one must be able to do everything that one wants to do. So if one imagines that one is all-powerful - that is, one can do anything and everything one wants - then what one thinks of doing reveals one's own integrity or the lack thereof.

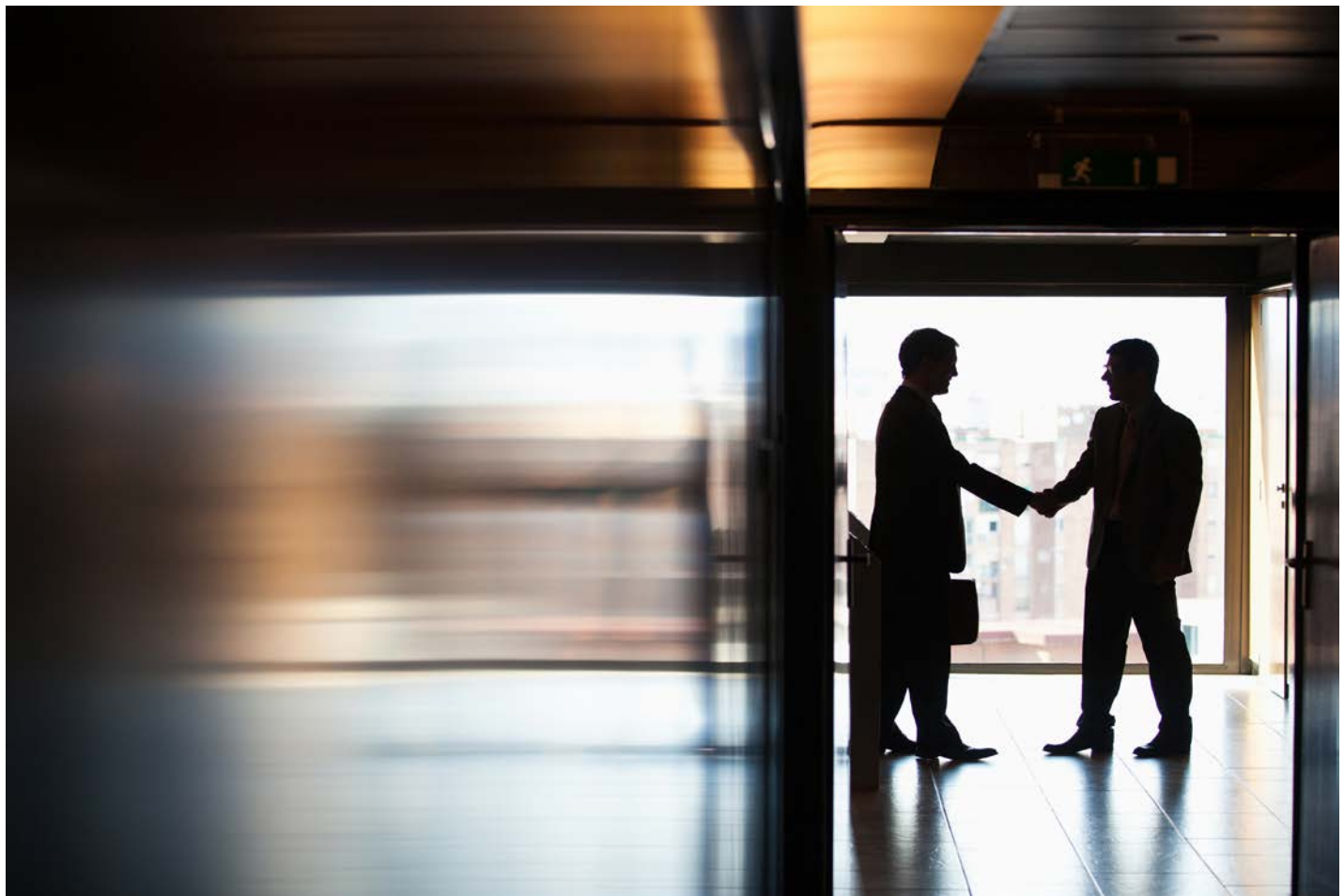
7.2

Openness:
Sincerity



The end can only justify the means
if you mean it.

It is possible to justify a violation of a standard or norm by appealing to a higher good or interest that the violation supposedly serves. A crucial condition for this is that people actually endorse and pursue this higher good or interest and are not simply using it as an excuse to justify the norm violation - that people would also do without a higher good or interest. If the higher good is being used as an excuse, then the act is doubly malicious: a norm is violated and they also lie about the goal or interest behind the violation.



When you give your word to someone,
then you give your dignity as a pledge.

When you make a promise to someone,
then you not only promise to do or not do
something, but you also commit yourself.
If you do not keep the promise, then you
are no longer worthy of being trusted
and thus you lose your dignity. So dignity
is the collateral of a promise.



Every very profitable organization
has a shady side.

If an organization is exorbitantly profitable, then this must be the result of operating in a dubious and covert manner in a free market economy, such as by selling products with hidden defects. In a free market economy, an organization cannot achieve such huge profits thru very high prices (customers will otherwise patronize the cheaper competitor). Their costs cannot be too low either because this means they do not invest in product development (then customers will patronize the better competitor) or their suppliers and employees are underpaid (then they will choose a better-paying organization). The dubious practice must also be secret because otherwise the stakeholders of the organization will intervene or withdraw.



Appearances can be deceptive,
so avoid the appearance of deception.

An appearance of wrong behavior can be created even if one is not doing anything wrong.

For example, at work you grant promotion to a colleague who is your personal friend. Even if this colleague might deserve the promotion, this can still create the appearance of an improper favor. The so-called Appearance Standard prescribes that people should not even give the appearance of wrongdoing. By creating such an appearance, you ensure that others get a wrong view of reality and are misled. Therefore, the appearance of deception, as a form of wrongdoing, must also be avoided.

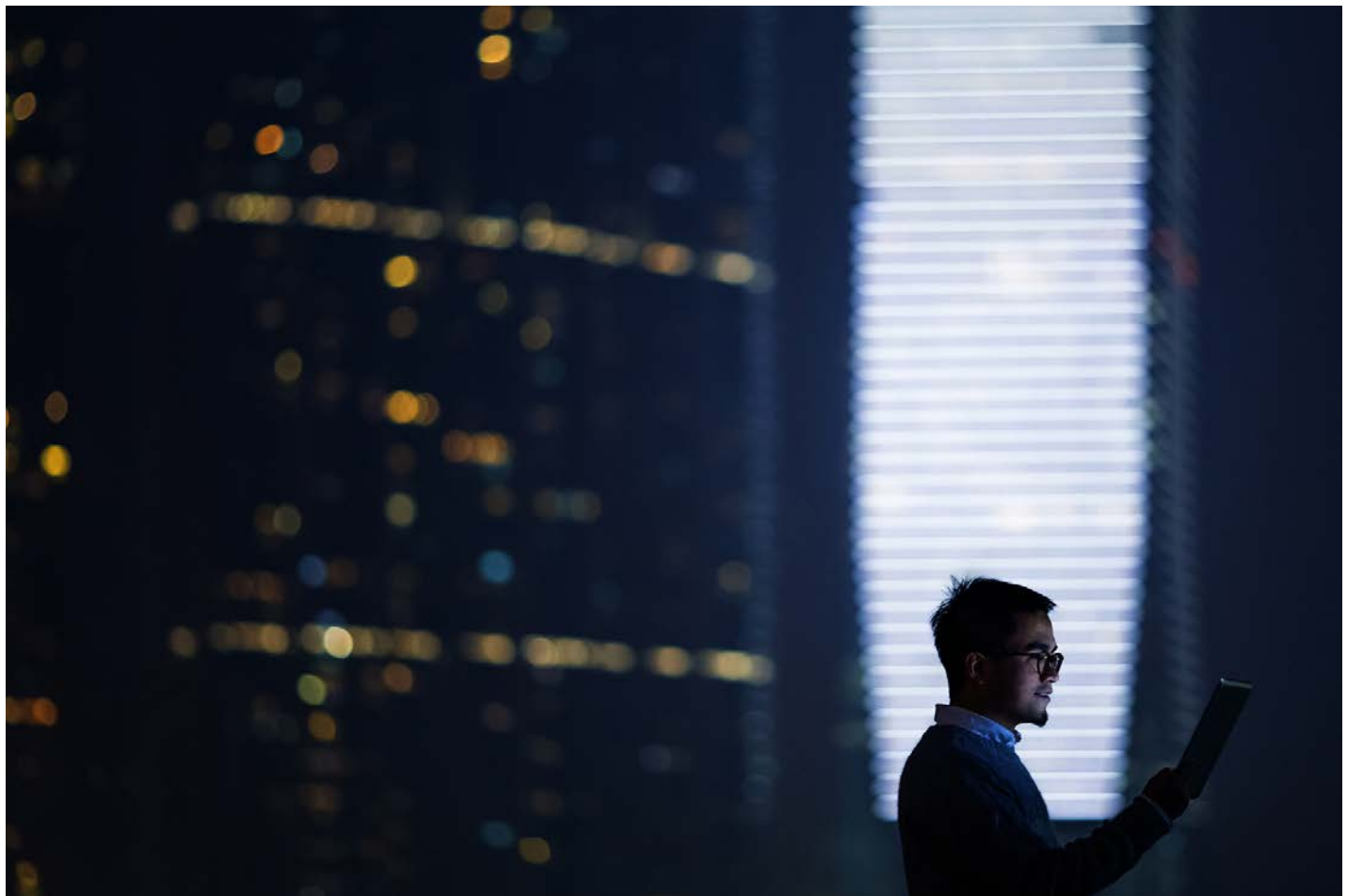


Anybody who believes that their misconduct is acceptable
because nobody will find out
is indeed a nobody.

Whether something is good or bad does not depend on whether it
is will be discovered and becomes known. Otherwise, it would
mean that anything that remains secret is permissible. People who
think this way subvert themselves. If you justify your behavior as
being correct by claiming that nobody will find out, then you
obviously don't count and don't see yourself as someone.

7.3

Openness:
Honesty



A lie is a lie.
A big lie is a lie about a lie.
And a bigger lie is a lie about a big lie.

The danger of a lie is that another lie is needed to cover it up, which makes the lie bigger. One lies about a lie. The lie becomes even bigger if one lies about having lied about the lie. When this repeatedly happens and compounds, one is dishonest or even a liar.



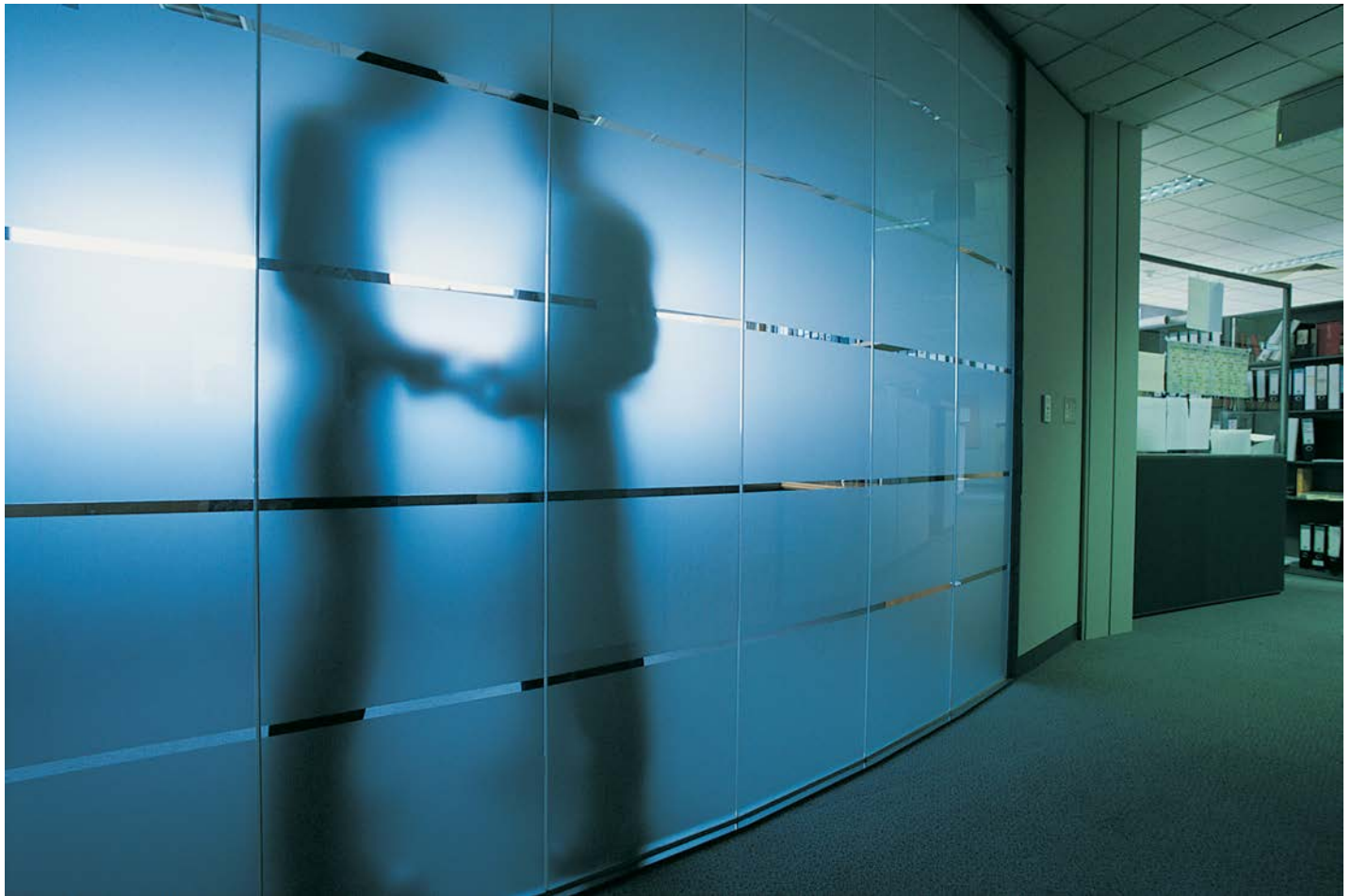
People who hide their hands
behind their back or under the table
have dirty hands.

People who are not open (they are literally and figuratively hiding their hands) are usually hiding some mistake or wrong they have done (they have the proverbial dirty hands). After all, if one does not have anything to hide, then one can be open.



The secret of honesty is knowing
when silence becomes lying.

Silence turns into lying when not saying
anything leads to someone being deceived.
The difference between silence and lying is very
slight and is context-dependent. It is an art
(the secret to success) to be able to clearly make
this distinction in practice and to only to remain
silent if one does not want to lie.



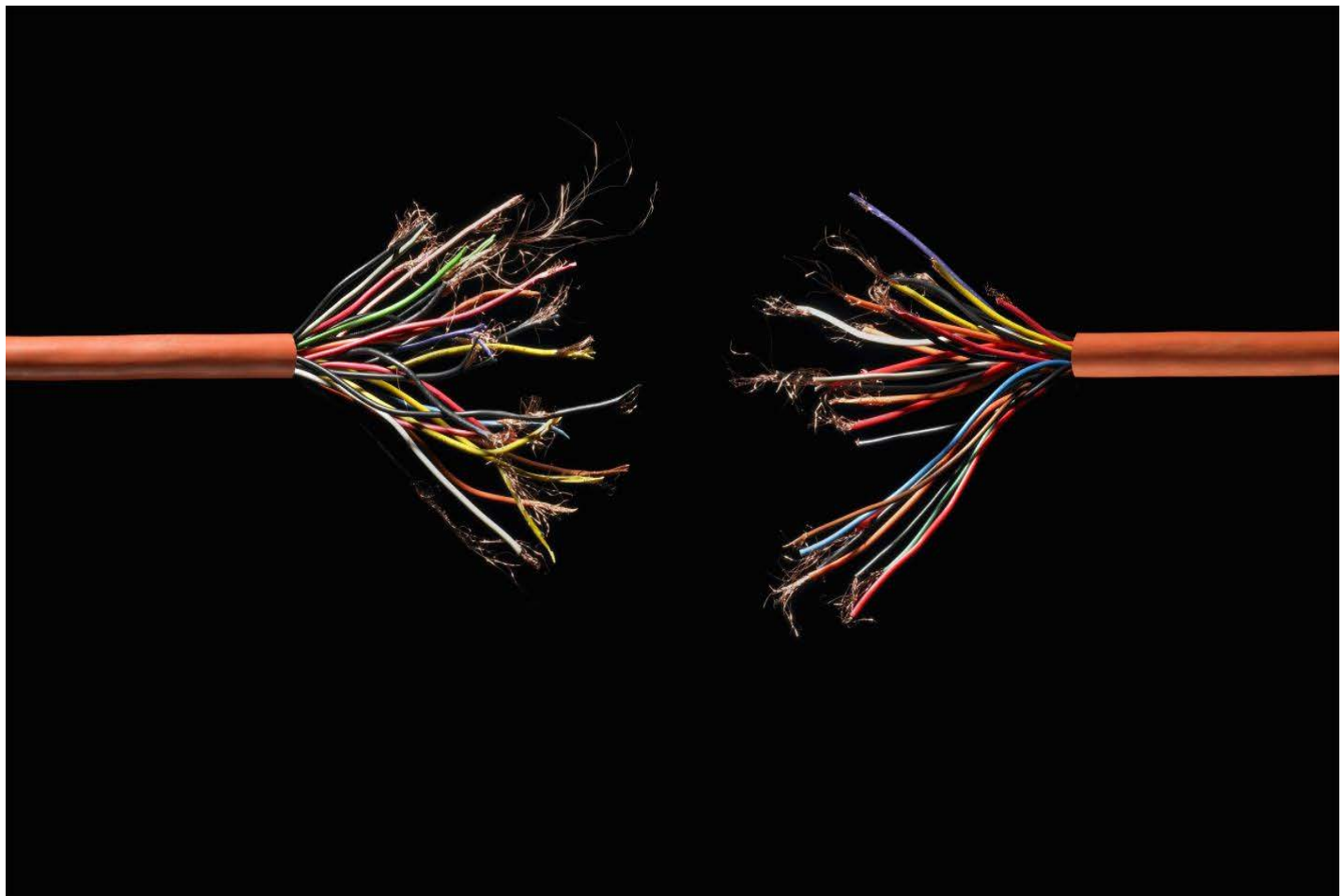
A seller robs customers when he gives them the impression that haggling is impossible while he gives others a discount because they nevertheless haggled.

If a seller gives the impression that the price is fixed, then customers may assume it is and they should not haggle. If there are customers who nevertheless haggle and end up paying less, then those who do not haggle are robbed: they pay too much for the same product (and even indirectly pay for the discount that the other customers received if the company gets the total profit on the product).



Honesty and openness are not the same:
you can honestly say that you cannot be open.

Honesty does not require being open to everyone by, for example, divulging confidential and secret information. If one cannot be open about something, it does not mean that one should lie about it. An honest explanation about why one cannot be open about something (for example, because the negotiations have not been completed yet) is quite acceptable.



Someone who cheats for you
will also cheat on you.

Someone who is capable of cheating another is capable of cheating anyone. This is because cheating involves the renunciation of the moral edict to be always honest to everyone. Those who benefit from or authorized the deception are also more likely to be cheated themselves afterwards. From the deceiver's perspective, deceiving these people would not be a violation of their norms nor would it be a wrongdoing. It would also be easier to deceive those who profited knowingly from the fraud because it would be more difficult for them to correct it given that they themselves are guilty of the earlier fraud. Finally, there is the risk that the cheater will take revenge on the profiteers out of frustration and envy because the latter benefited from the deception, but being opportunists and hypocrites, they had the deceiver do the trick.



The more often someone says he is telling the truth,
the more likely he is lying when he does not say this.

In normal human interactions, one may assume that someone is telling the truth. Without this presumption, communication would be impossible because then nothing said could be believed or trusted. Thus it is suspicious if someone spontaneously and without being asked declares to be telling the truth (“To be honest ...”). This not only raises the question why this is suddenly said (“Is there a reason to doubt that one is telling the truth?”) but also what it means when this is not being obviously stated or asserted. For the more often one indicates that one speaks the truth, the more this suggests that when one does not say this explicitly then one must not be speaking the truth. Why else would people claim in certain occasions that they are telling the truth but not do the same in another?



The 7 don'ts of a good fraudster are:

1. Don't hurry.
2. Don't involve others.
3. Don't speak about it.
4. Don't leave any evidence.
5. Don't show the loot.
6. Don't conceal fraud with more fraud.
7. Don't commit fraud at all.

The first six items apply to a successful defrauder because, for example, to be successful, a defrauder should be as invisible, silent, and normal as possible. However, despite all these knowledge and skills, the good defrauder will not commit the fraud (the seventh item). Fraud is, after all, an improper misappropriation of money and goods.



It is better to be deceived
than to deceive.

One can be misled and thus feel maltreated, aggrieved, and injured. However, this is still less bad than to be the one who deceives others. When one misleads others, one is not a victim but a perpetrator; one is not harmed, but the one who harms others; and one is not innocent but guilty. Even if one is in danger of being deceived by others or has already been deceived, this is not a moral reason to be the deceiver.

One deception never justifies another.



The more you lie,
the better memory you need.

To prevent being unmasked, liars must remember their lies well.
It is more difficult to remember in detail something that one has
invented compared to what one has actually experienced.
The more one lies, the better memory one must have to be able
to remember all the lies. Thus, the risk increases that people
become entangled in their own web of lies and betray
themselves. This by itself is a reason not to lie.

7.4

Openness:
Discussability



A dilemma shared
is a burden halved
and a virtue doubled.

By discussing with others one's own ethical dilemma, we make others partners in the dilemma. This can offer relief (by merely expressing it), perspective (because others say they have (had) experienced the same dilemma themselves), and tranquility (because others give wise suggestions). Discussing is also good in two other respects: people try to be open (in telling the dilemma and listening to the reactions of others), and give others the opportunity to be open themselves (by listening and thinking along).



It is a virtue to know when to stand up and speak
and when to sit down and listen.

Speaking is not a virtue in itself because someone who always speaks is not listening to what others have to say and is not even giving others the opportunity to speak. This is why the art of speaking is knowing when not to speak because it is better to listen to what others have to say. Listening improves speaking because people then speak based on what they have heard about what is going on with others.



Working within a culture of fear
is a violation of a basic human right:
the right to be free from fear.

Freedom from fear is a basic human right because human rights provide guarantees about essential conditions for living and working. Working in an organization where fear dominates (for example, the fear for countermeasures if the truth is told) is therefore a major violation of this fundamental human right.



When you scratch each other's backs,
your conscience will itch.

Covering up each other's wrongdoings brings about a crisis of conscience. In this situation, people not only ensure that someone else's misconduct is concealed, which makes them an accomplice, but they also ensure that their own misconduct is concealed by someone else. Hence, they involve another in their own misconduct and thereby also making the other as guilty.



Openness without confidentiality
is as impossible as
space without boundaries.

Openness may only be expected if there is also confidentiality. If all information becomes public, then people would be less honest and transparent for fear that the information they provide would be used against them. For example, people would be reluctant to talk about their weaknesses and limitations with the company doctor if this information would be immediately passed on to the company's management and then shared on the Internet.

7.5

Openness:
Addressability



Integrity consists of the principles for which you stand, step forward, and speak out.

Integrity concerns the principles, values, and norms for which you do not waver (position), which compel you (step forward), and which you profess (speak out). Integrity is therefore not passive: it is active in both words and deeds.



That speech is silver and silence golden
is the fallacy behind not blowing the whistle.

That silence is best is not what is expected when
unethical behavior is observed. By being silent
people then consent to the unethical behavior.
It is only by addressing the behavior and escalating
it to possibly higher up in the organization, or even
outside it, can one ensure that the behavior stops
and the perpetrator is dealt with.



The lack of ethics you tolerate from your neighbors
reveals your own lack of ethics.

“Tell me who your friends are, then I will tell you who you are” is a popular saying. We can apply this same idea regarding wrong behavior in the work place (i.e., the behaviors of one’s colleagues, business partners, and customers, the so-called “neighbors”). Tolerance or absence of visible disapproval of wrong behavior could be construed as approval because if one really disapproves of something, one would then take action that reflects that disapproval. Thus, inaction does not show disapproval but is actually approval. This manifests one’s ethics and the lack thereof. Through our silence or tolerance, wrong behavior spreads negatively to everyone who knows about it but does nothing.



Ethics is doomed
when we are silent
about vitally important matters.

Ethics concerns the articulation and
discussion of moral points of view
regarding issues that matter.
Silence on such fundamental issues
invalidates ethics. Ethics is then
obsolete, passé, dead.



Blowing the whistle
too loud or too frequently
might make others deaf.

People who often call attention to abuses run the risk of losing their audience's attention (i.e., listeners will no longer take it seriously and ignore it). Those who exaggerate and magnify the abuses that they report also face the same risk. In both cases, the listeners may start to think that the reporter does not have any good intentions but is rather frustrated, petty, or vengeful. The art of reporting abuses is to do this at the right time, in the right way, and in the right forum.

8.1

Leadership:
Role Modeling



Live in such a way
that when your colleagues think of a good role model, they will immediately think of you,
and that when there is bad rumor about you, they will immediately dismiss it as utter nonsense.

The extent to which someone is a good role model not only depends on whether others see it that way too, but also on how strong this perception is. The stronger this perception, the more someone is a role model. The yardsticks for measuring this strength are the extent to which others unanimously, exclusively, and resolutely see someone as a good role model, and how unlikely and unthinkable they find that someone is doing bad things.



You cannot blame people if they follow your bad example;
you can only blame yourself all the more.

Giving examples of bad behavior is bad because it is wrong.
But if it also leads to others doing the same thing, then it is all
the worse. After all, the bad behavior is no longer limited to the one
who set the bad example; now more people are doing it. The one
who set the bad example is the cause and thus his guilt increases, too.



The question is not whether a manager is a role model,
but whether a manager is a good role model.

Because of their position, managers are role models for their employees. Employees pay attention to the ethics and integrity of their manager because this is apparently what is expected of them as employees, it what they will be assessed on, and what they have to show to become a manager. This is also what the organization expects from managers and thus from employees, because otherwise the manager would not be in her/his current position. What remains is the question whether a manager has or displays good ethics and integrity.



Leadership without ethics is like a balloon without air, a bird without wings, a car without wheels, a human body without a heart, a tree without roots, and water without oxygen.
If you still don't grasp the meaning of this maxim, then you are not fit to be a leader.

Ethics is a necessary and essential
part of leadership.
A leader without ethics does not
pursue the correct, good
objectives and does not use the
correct, good resources for them.



In good times the good leader stands behind his followers,
while the bad leader stands before them.
In bad times, it's the other way around.

A good leader credits success to his people
and does not claim it for himself; after all, it is
his people who ensures success. The good
leader does not shift the responsibility for
failures or losses to his people but takes the
responsibility himself, because it is the leader
who could have prevented the failure.



The tone at the top of an organization
is composed on the way to it.

Exemplary behavior at the top of an organization is displayed by the people who are at the top of the hierarchy of the organization. They formed their behavior during their usually long careers from the bottom to the top of the hierarchy. How they have been trained and assessed, what they have done and learned, and with whom they associated and negotiated are formative.



A leader in ethics is someone who
creates a new ethical norm
and convinces others to follow it.

Leadership in ethics does not require that someone is already a leader. Someone becomes a leader in ethics by setting a new ethical norm and convincing others to adopt this norm (for example, by living up to this new norm or explaining why it is important). An ethics manager, on the other hand, focuses on existing ethical norms and ensures that others follow them.



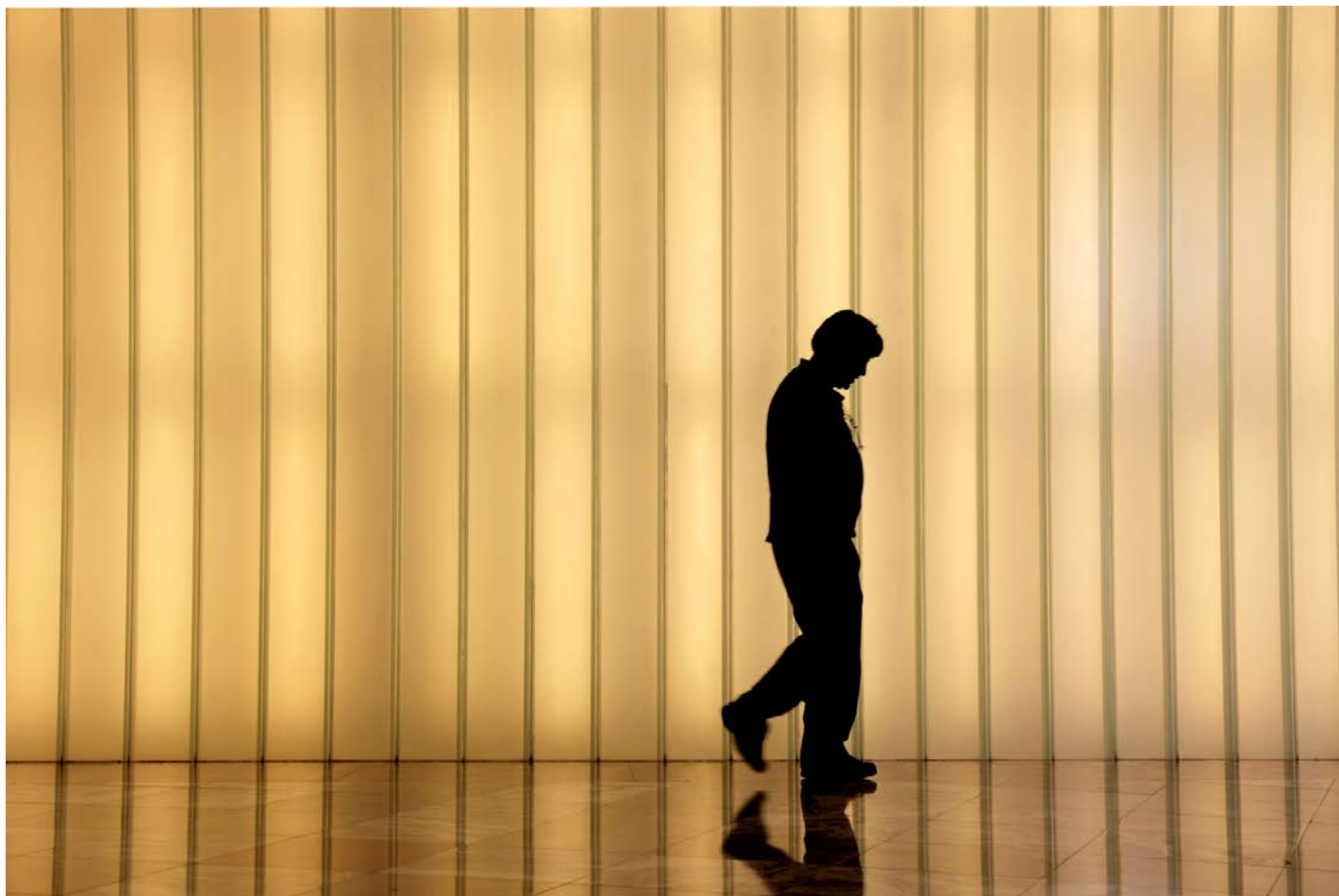
A rotten organization can only be cleansed by starting at the top
because an organization is like a fish:
it always rots from the head down.

If leadership and exemplary behavior
from the top of an organization strongly
determine the good functioning of
the entire organization, this means that if
an organization malfunctions and is even
rotten, then something is wrong at the top
and therefore repair must start from there.



A cornerstone of integrity
cannot roll over.

Someone whose integrity is relied upon by
and supports others should not escape this
responsibility by, say, giving bad examples,
abusing their powers, or delivering unfinished
work. People who are highly honorable will fulfill
this responsibility because otherwise,
by definition, they are not highly honorable.



Your ultimate maxim
is what people say about you
when you are dead.

One can think of maxims and pass them on to others (just like this book). However, how someone is remembered after his job, career, or life is over and what life lesson is attached to it is the ultimate maxim that one can pass on. ‘Ultimate’ in the sense of the most meaningful (what others remember most when looking at the entire life), in the sense of what the behavior expresses (instead of what one has said or written), and in the sense of being the last (one cannot repeat or surpass it because one is no longer there).

8.2

Leadership:
Proactivity



The biggest risk to take
is to take no risk.

Living without any risks is impossible.
Personally and professionally, one can
only exist and survive if one takes
risks. Avoiding all risks by not taking
any is therefore the greatest risk.
This makes living, working and any
undertaking impossible.



People who think that their integrity is so precious
that it needs to be kept at home
should just stay home.

Leaving one's own conscience at home to prevent it
from being lost or damaged is dangerous because
one is completely vulnerable to wrong influences.
To leave one's integrity at home is not to stand for
anything. If one wants to do this, then it is better
not to go out and go to work. Otherwise one is
a danger to oneself and others.



We can make our hands dirty
even by doing nothing.

If to do something is morally desirable
but nothing is done, then this passivity is
morally undesirable. Passivity creates the
proverbial dirty hands: one is guilty of the
damage caused by one's own lack of action.



Never waste a good crisis,
although it is better to prevent a crisis.

“Never waste a good crisis” is a lofty saying about transforming a crisis into something better and thereby making it bearable and creating support for progress. However, this saying does not justify either praising the causes of a crisis or causing as many crises as possible. Crises are accompanied by damage and misery, hence it is better to prevent crises and even better to make progress without any.



Paying attention to integrity only when there is trouble
is the same as
brushing your teeth only when you have a toothache.

Even an excellent integrity requires regular maintenance.

Otherwise, the chance of making mistakes increases.
Waiting for mistakes to happen means that action is only
taken when something already went wrong and there is
damage already. By then recovery can be drastic because
the “rot” has already advanced and is widespread.



One of the dangers of a compliance program is that it is like a lollipop:
it tastes sweet at the start to entice people
but shortly after only a stick is left to chastise them.

To promote compliance with laws and regulations, we need a well balanced “carrot-and-stick” approach (carrot = reward compliance; stick = punish noncompliance). If only the carrot is offered at the start of the compliance program and the stick remains for the duration of the compliance program, then compliance will be a purely negative approach full of distrust, inspections, and penalties.



If you think you have integrity until proven otherwise,
then you will focus on not doing bad rather than on doing good.

If one is of the opinion that people are honorable until proven otherwise,
then one will focus on preventing the opposite (i.e., that one is not honorable)
from being proven. Hence one will pay attention on not doing the wrong
thing. However, if we turn this view on its head, that people are bad unless
the contrary is proven, then one will focus precisely on doing the right thing.

This is a positive approach: doing things for improvement. It is contrary to
the first, which is a negative approach, namely not doing things for the worse.



An ethics program is like deodorant:
those who need it most don't use it.

Employees who voluntarily participate in activities to improve their ethics (for example, a training in ethics) have a good basic attitude because they obviously think ethics is important and they want to get a move on. This attitude lays the groundwork for ethical behavior. Employees who do not voluntarily participate in such activities are less likely to have this basic attitude. Hence, they actually need these ethical activities most because these are necessary for creating in them the right basic attitude.



While some people have a solution for every problem,
others have a problem for every solution.

It is questionable whether those who always come up with a solution to a problem always do justice to the problem. After all, there are problems that cannot be solved and that require a lot of deliberation or many piecemeal solutions. Hence, it is preferable to also have people who are critical of the proposed solutions. However, such individuals should not go too far by never ceasing to find problems with any solution such that a solution is never reached or the problem just continuously grows.



Don't wait for the last leaf
to start with the raking.

When facing some trouble or setback, such as being inundated by complaints and criticisms, it seems efficient to just wait until the trouble has passed before taking some action to repair the damage. However, a wait-and-see attitude is risky because it suggests that one does not mind the trouble, or not care about the damage, or not know how to deal with the situation. It then assumes that one knows exactly when the trouble will go away. If the trouble lasts longer, then the likelihood that there will be irreparable damage or that people will be forced to leave increases, and the chance to repair the damage disappears.

