The Philosophy of Evil and the Abandonment of Business Codes of Ethics

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Avoidance of well established ethical business-codes currently continues as a prime societal problem. Codes have a tendency to be ignored for reasons inherent to competitive firms. These inherent reasons are examined in the context of Arendt’s (1971, 2003) and Bonhoeffer’s (1997) theories of why ethical codes are abandoned. Svendsen’s Philosophy of Evil (2001) is shown to provide insights relevant for preserving these codes. In addition, the evidence from recent experimental psychology is shown to reinforce these devolution theories.

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THE PROCESS OF EVIL

Codes and Ethics

Ethical norms and codes are essential to what we consider to be civilization. Historically, however, they have been periodically abandoned both within cultures and sub-culture organizations. In studying and explaining why these abandonments occur, philosophers offer the theory of destruction by evil. Rather than viewing this “evil” as a separate entity, such as some demon, we more properly can view it as a characteristic of a process, and/or an adjective that describes the result of this process. This is the approach taken here where the abandonment of business codes of behavior (ethical business codes) are examined.

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Business codes consist of the behavioral norms manifested in law, custom and various explicit and implicit contracts. A variety of documents internal to the firm express portions of these codes: manuals that concern employee management, external firm communications, capital-budgeting procedure manuals, and internal control and auditing procedure manuals. All of these documents manifest ethical maxims, although some are more explicit in this manifestation than others. For example, employee management manuals generally specify grievance procedures for those who perceive they were treated unfairly. External communications are often restricted to particular executives, and even then only after approval by other managers. Capital budgeting procedures are generally designed to prevent firm resources being spent on the “pet projects” of management that add no value to the company. It is obvious that internal control procedures are designed to prevent fraud. Hence all of these embody ethical codes.

A significant portion of the social interactions in Western civilization occur through business. As a result, the study of how we establish ethical business codes, and why we then ignore them, forms a considerable subject for practical philosophy and management. The study presented here, however, primarily relies on the philosophical works of Arendt (1963, 1971, 1979, 2003), Svendsen (2001) and Kant (1785) who study the broader aspects of cultural degeneration and cataclysmic resulting evil. It is shown, however, that the principles established apply well to recent business scandals where ethical business codes of conduct were ignored. As such, perhaps the effort presented here is of considerable value.

The Process of “Stupid Evil”

Notions of evil have been well explored in Western philosophy. In Socratic-Platonic philosophy evil is anything that hinders our pursuit of the good (or the flourishing life as in the Greek eudaimonia). It has often been interpreted in a narrow sense as purposeful harm to others. Both of these definitions are suboptimal when we seek to explain group processes resulting in severe damage to others, whether this damage results from purposeful avoidance or cavalier ignorance of ethical codes.
It is the process of devolution from the ethical code that we seek to focus on, not merely an individual’s actions.

Kant (1785) argues that evil is caused by an absence of *reflective thought*; that this absence results from “stupidity caused by a wicked heart.” This is the form of evil that Hannah Arendt (1963) describes as “banal.” In particular, we argue that although this “stupidity” may be an initial step that leads to resulting evil actions, we find that there is much more to the process. The initial stages, we argue, can be interrupted so that the devolution is halted.

Of course, we seek insights into the processes that led to massive evil such as the holocaust of World War II, Stalin’s and Mao’s purges and similar events, and from these insights we seek to draw parallels to the ethical-process deterioration of widespread business scandals such as Enron and Madoff. We find that it is more than only an absence of reflective thought that generates this dynamic devolution process. This devolution, whether in broader society or in business, contains common elements such as authoritarianism (or its more severe form of totalitarianism), group think, teambuilding, and humiliation of dissenters. These elements can easily be developed within the competitive business firm. All forms of evil exhibit a lack of respect for the dignity of others, but we must ask ourselves, “How can this lack of respect develop within our familiar organizations? What process could bring this about? More particularly, what principles of managerial leadership are necessary to prevent this process in business?”

Svendsen (2001, pp. 85–87) indicates four anthropological types of evil:

1. Demonic evil: Evil committed for the sake of evil. This is a classical concept generally based upon religious notions of demonic subversion of individuals.
2. Instrumental evil: This evil is a side result from pursuing some goal that is itself not inherently evil. The evil itself in not intended but is nonetheless a consequence. An example could be the pursuit of wealth where that pursuit causes harm to others.
3. Idealistic evil: This evil is intended, but the pursuit of some other goal that is considered good necessitates it. Social reforms might
provide examples where these reforms require the coercion of some subgroups.

4. Stupid evil: This is evil that result from a lack of reflective thought. As shown in this paper, it is particularly present in business, and remedying this is the primary purpose of our proposed preventive action.

There are three overlapping inherencies to the competitive firm that make these organizations particularly subject to systematic violations of society’s ethical norms:

1. The competitive firm encourages management and employees to abstractly identify with the organization, to develop an attitude of *us-versus-them* towards competitors, an attitude often developed through team building exercises.
2. These firms generally exhibit considerable division of labor in accomplishing important tasks. This division of labor also allows a division of responsibility when it comes to enforcement of ethical codes.
3. Competitive firms tend to be authoritarian where each individual’s career depends upon the authority above them.

These inherencies make group-think prevalent and dissent difficult even when the question concerns some moral standard. This makes it easier for individuals to accept evil results. Arendt (1963) argues that the prevention of these results always begins with and relies upon *reflective thought*. Svendsen (2001) argues, as reviewed below, that more is required for this prevention.

This required *reflective thought* follows Kant (1785) in that certain *a-priori* characteristics are necessary. In particular, these necessary characteristics include the following:

1. Participants must have *sympathy* in the Humian sense, i.e. they must be capable of envisioning a substitution of themselves into
someone potentially hurt by the violation of the ethical norm. This generates a potential for remorse in the actor who might violate the norm. But this is not sufficient.

2. The actor must also be able to apply logic to envision the potential consequences of their actions, and be willing to apply this logic consistently. This may eliminate a mere application of a-priori ideology to the potential problem at hand, an ideology that poses a bias in analysis of possible results.

3. Finally, the actor must be willing to spend the time and effort necessary for this reflection. This last requirement might pose the most significant problem necessary to overcome the tendency to abandon normal codes of ethical behavior.

This reflective thought, even if fully characterized as above, need not be sufficient to overcome abandonment of ethics if there are no actors who are willing to exhibit what Arendt terms the noble nature, i.e. the willingness to speak out in a social setting that some action is wrong, that it violates the ethical code, and that this code is necessary for harmony in society or within the firm. Without this willingness to publicly defend the code, all the thoughtful reflection, however logical and proper, will be ineffective. Much more about this noble nature is presented below.

**THOUGHTFUL REFLECTION AND CODES OF CONDUCT**

**Reflection as a Process**

A basic premise of Greek philosophy is that people do not commit evil voluntarily, but only out of ignorance about the consequences of their actions. This is basic Socratic (the Gorgias dialogue) and Platonic philosophy. (See Plato, 1999.) Yet history, and particularly the history of the 20th century, illustrates how very common evil is. Arendt (1963, 1971, 2003) presents us with a particularly cogent argument as to why this evil occurs, and this argument is reviewed here. It concerns people who follow what we might consider a proper code of conduct, but who do so with an absence of reflective thinking.
Hanna Arendt witnessed the rise of Hitler’s Germany and left that country for the United States in 1933. As a journalist, she witnessed Adolf Eichmann’s trial in 1959, and wrote about her observations (1963). Although World War II and its aftermath formed the basis for her contributions, it is argued here that she also has a great deal to say about current applied business ethics.

Arendt perceived that the evil which occurred on such a gigantic scale during the 20th century, such as the holocaust of WWII, did not result from the wickedness of the people involved, but rather from the extraordinary shallowness of bureaucratic behavior associated with following simple codes of conduct. Indeed, she perceived that standardized codes of conduct protected people from reflective thought, that “conscience” essentially consisted of this reflection. Since the evil she witnessed occurred without this thought process, it was essentially without motive. Note that Arendt’s view is consistent with the Socratic view that people select evil only out of ignorance.

Kant (1785) argued that reasoned thought provides the foundation of ethics, and that the reasoning ability of the ordinary average person is sufficient to establish an ethical society. This idea was challenged by Arendt (2003, pp. 164). Her argument begins with this statement:

If the ability to tell right from wrong should have anything to do with the ability to think, then we must be able to “demand” its exercise in every sane person no matter how erudite or ignorant, how intelligent or stupid he may appear to be. Kant, in this respect almost alone among the philosophers, was much bothered by the common opinion that philosophy is only for the few precisely because of this opinion’s moral implications. In this vein, he once remarked, “Stupidity is caused by a wicked heart,” a statement which in this form is not true. Inability to think is not stupidity; it can be found in highly intelligent people, and wickedness is hardly its cause, if only because thoughtlessness as well as stupidity are much more frequent phenomena than wickedness. The trouble is precisely that no wicked heart, a relatively rare phenomenon, is necessary to cause great evil. Hence, in Kantian terms, one would need philosophy, the exercise of reason as a faculty of thought, to prevent evil. (2003, pp. 164)
The substance of Arendt’s argument proceeds as follows:

i. It is true, as Kant argued, that thinking is a trait of all people.
ii. When we reach conclusions as a result of our thought processes, we typically have considerable uncertainty as to their validity, especially with respect to our moral thought. As a result, we seek dialogue with others, and perhaps democratic debate that acts as a filter for our ideas before we accept the conclusions of our reflective thought.
iii. By its very nature, reflective thought leads to a period of abstraction from the real world, a “paralysis” from other actions.
iv. Because of ii. and iii. above, there is a cultural bias against reflective thought and towards following simple rules, or codes of conduct. Because these rules have no basis in our own reflective thought, they are therefore supported by only shallow belief.
v. Because of iv, people are willing to disregard codes of conduct. People are quick to follow others who appear to have a passion for alternative actions that violate the code. These others argue that they have given the new action careful thought.

Arendt argues that “thinking is a marginal affair” in society, “except in emergencies.” (2003, pp. 188) Evil is a violation of rules that are based on rational thought. As a result, the counter to evil lies in what Arendt terms the noble nature, which is the desire to publicly participate in rational argument in defense of the ethical code. It is not, Arendt argues, the common reasoning person who is responsible for maintaining societal ethical conduct, but rather it is the person who exhibits the noble nature of reflective thought as voiced in the social setting who is necessary to avoid evil.

With respect to the above mentioned “emergencies,” Arendt writes:

At these moments, thinking ceases to be a marginal affair in political matters. When everybody is swept away unthinkingly by
what everybody else does and believes in, those who think are
drawn out of hiding because their refusal to join in is conspicu-
ous and thereby becomes a kind of action. The purging element
in thinking, Socrates’ midwifery, that brings out the implications
of unexamined opinions and thereby destroys them—values,
doctrines, theories, and even convictions—is political by impli-
cation. For this destruction has a liberating effect on another
human faculty, the faculty of judgment, which one may call, with
some justification, the most political of man’s mental abilities.
(2003, pp. 188–189)

One should not perceive Arendt’s argument as applying only to
the large mass political movements such as the National Socialism
of Germany, or the communism of the Soviet Union. This argument
applies to our business scandals as well. The bureaucracy we typically
find in business, which is certainly essential for efficiency, often regul-
ates behavior by a code of conduct that subsumes rational or reflective
thought. Mob psychology sweeps through organizations just as in politi-
cal societies. If people do not have clarity as to the thoughtful reasons
behind the code, then these rules can be easily discarded, and unethical
pursuits result. Managerial leadership must provide this clarity.

The Competitive Firm and Tendencies
Towards Code Abandonment
As briefly reviewed above, there are inherencies that naturally lead the
competitive firm towards abandoning any rationally adopted ethical
code that is consistent with a Western tradition. Paramount among these
inherencies is group think. Groups cannot have a conscience, only indi-
viduals do. As such, groups can feel no remorse; only individuals mani-
fest this character. Groups can, however, spread a generally accepted
ideology among their members. Problems with ethical content viewed
through the lens of ideology then remain unanalyzed. Where beating
the competitors, or contributing to the team effort, or other ideological
versions of slogans become the firm’s mantra, then no matter how devoid
of unethical content the slogan might appear, when applied to ethical
problems the group emotions can move the individual actors away from their better logical sense and towards unethical actions they would not adopt as individuals. For example, top managerial leaders might allow the individual to be humiliated, coerced or even deceived since they might believe that competitors do the same, and these allowances are therefore necessary for motivating employees.

Gourevitch (1998) claims that genocide is essentially an exercise in team building, an extreme version of *us-versus-them* activity. Ethnici-ties are a typical method of identification, but no matter how abstract the in-common traits that link some team together, all versions of team building separate the human bonds between the groups, at least to some small degree if not to a considerable degree. Competitive firms seek to establish these common traits among employees, and to separate from those of competitors. In the more extreme cases, the other firms become viewed as evil. These sorts of group identities may motivate ethical code abandonment for the sake of defeating the perceived greater evil posed by the competition.

Bonhoeffer (1997) identifies the thoughtlessness of Arendt’s *lack of reflective thought* as *foolishness*, where the fools become manipulated tools of the leader. This is essentially Arendt’s perception that someone offers an alternative to the code for which the followers have little commitment. Bonhoeffer points out that under these circumstances, new shallow slogans replace the code as guides to behavior. The *noble nature* is then seen as betrayal of *us* in favor of *them*. Individual thought that questions the *group think* is viewed as betrayal. It follows then that “our most basic moral understanding crumbles in the face of (this) ideological conviction.” (Svendsen 2001, pp. 127) In addition, perceptions of outside forces and communications become warped in which (1) the group perceives all external forces and communications as aimed at it personally, (2) the group focuses on those interpretations of circumstances that reinforce its prior notions of being threatened, and ignores aspects that contradict, and (3) the group interprets even positive external statements as malicious. Facts that contradict this new warped vision are merely ignored. The authoritarian firm is therefore changed into a totalitarian
firm, the latter exhibiting the elimination of individual thought where even the individual doubts their own conscience so that ultimately we see that individuality is eradicated.

There are certain conformity characteristics manifested by this totalitarian firm, i.e. the firm that abandons a logical ethical code:

1. Dissenters, whether internal or external, are humiliated, or at least attempts at humiliation are made.
2. The group manifests contempt for weakness among its members in that any sign indicating anything less than enthusiastic support for its new adopted slogan-oriented code is strongly discouraged.
3. To reinforce the new code, leaders speak of what should be recognized as evil as being the opposite. (Note: Hitler spoke of purifying the Aryan race as his “holiest obligation.”)

Elimination of the old code and adoption of the new slogan-oriented code is just the first step in the firm’s devolution into business evil. Svendsen (2001) indicates four steps capable of resulting in members accepting evil:

1. The wrong doing must be presented in such a way as originally being only a minor first step. For example, a violation of an auditing requirement might be presented as having only a minor impact on the final result, or that it would be only temporary and rectified later.
2. The group members must be distanced from the evil decision. “People at the top decided it this way, so I am not blameworthy even thought I could speak out that this is wrong. It is not I who is committing this wrongdoing.”
3. The wrong doing is broken into a division of tasks where each member is seen as only a small cog in the wheel. Responsibility is therefore spread so that no one need feel guilty about the overall result.
4. An escalation in acceptance of the new immoral values can then occur so that the new values are generally accepted by the firm, while each member can still rationalize themselves as decent because they had little responsibility for the result.

**Psychological Studies of Unethical Conduct**

**Moral Disengagement**
The philosophical examinations of evil processes reviewed above are based upon anecdotal-historical observation. In recent years, however, experimental psychology has developed theories of psychological disengagement with respect to personal devolution of moral standards. This psychological literature attempts to explain the process of first acceptance of personal immoral actions, followed by rationalization, and then further immoral actions. This literature powerfully reinforces the organizational evil processes described by Arendt, Bonhoeffer and Svendsen.

Aquino and Reed (2002), Bandura (1990), Bandura et al. (1996), and Baumeister and Heatherton (1996) show that unethical behavior elicits self-censure, which provides the principal restraint on this behavior. When ethical beliefs conflict with actual behavior, Elliot and Devine (1994) show that psychological dissonance, a stressful form of discomfort, occurs that motivates a process of attitude change. The actors in question either modify their behavior to align with their ethical values, or they modify their values. It is the latter that has the potential for feeding evil processes.

Bandura (1990), Bandura et al (1996), and Detert, Trevino and Sweitzer (2008) offer an explanation of the process of realigning ethical beliefs with actions, namely beliefs are modified through moral disengagement, thereby relieving the cognitive dissonance. This disengagement process allows the unethical conduct to become personally acceptable. The disengagement takes any of four possible forms:
1. The unethical conduct is portrayed as serving a moral purpose.
2. The unethical conduct is betrayed as being caused by external causes.
3. The consequences of the conduct are interpreted as being innocuous.
4. The victims of the unethical conduct are dehumanized.

It is argued in the next section that it is the interruption of these four forms that potentially provides the basis of preventive action.

Bandura, et al. (1996, 2001) show that this moral disengagement also acts as a predictor of future immoral behavior. Vollum, et al. (2004), shows that disengagement predicts violence towards animals, and Aquino, et al. (2007) and McAllister, et al. (2006) show that disengagement also predicts support for militant action. These studies reinforce the philosophical explanations of the devolution process.

Henkel and Mather (2007) show that people are “revisionist historians” when recalling their own personal past, that they engage in “choice supportive memory distortion” that over attributes positive features to options they actually selected, and also over attributes negative features to options they rejected. Associated with this evidence of selective recall is the phenomenon that individuals are found to be routinely more critical of the moral behavior of others than of their own ethics. Messick, et al (1985, pp. 497) shows, “We believe we are fairer than others because we think that we do fair things more often and unfair things less often than others.” Epley and Dunning (2000), and Epley and Caruso (2004) show that people are more suspicious of the ethical motives of others than of themselves. Miller and Ratner (1998) and Ratner and Miller (2001) show that others are generally perceived as more self-interested and motivated by monetary rewards. Alicke (1985), Baumeister and Newman (1994), and Messick and Bazerman (1996), all show that people believe they are personally more honest, and that they try harder to pursue ethical actions than others.

These moral disengagement studies show that people are more prone to justify their own immoral actions than those of others. The disengagement and cognitive dissonance frees the individual from the guilt and
stress of self sanction. This enables the individual acceptance of initial unethical steps. Of paramount importance is the explanation that disengagement makes success difficult for those who do speak out to persuade others of the importance of keeping the code of moral standards. Knowing that others are disengaged would logically lead even those who have Arendt’s noble nature, to be reluctant to speak. Why make waves when one perceives little possibility for actual successful persuasion, but far greater possibility for humiliation?

Some of the experimental evidence does, however, show possibilities for prevention of the dissolution. The experiments of Shu, Gino and Bazerman (2011) show that the individual levels of disengagement depend upon the severity of the moral violation. They show that moral disengagement occurs only post personal unethical actions, and not after the actions of others. Furthermore, their research supports the conclusions of Gino, et al. (2009) and Mazar, et al. (2008) that being in a permissive environment rather than a strict environment results in greater disengagement. This “permissive environment” research pertains to whether students who were subject to possibilities of cheating were reminded of an “honor code,” or not reminded, prior to facing the opportunity for cheating. This was interpreted as making morality more “salient” by making the improper behavior more “clear cut.” Mazar, et al. (2008) also found that a-priori drawing attention to ethical standards reduces dishonest behaviors.

**Active and Passive Acceptance**

Shu, Gino and Bazerman (2011) argue that there is a difference between active and passive acceptance of moral standards; that making a voluntary decision (actually selecting among various options) versus accepting a passive result yields greater commitment to the standard. Individuals may commit more strongly to moral behavior when they actively agree to ethical standards (by signing an honor code as an example) rather than just passively reading the code. Active acceptance results in decreased disengagement. Shu, Gino and Bazerman found experimental support for these hypotheses. For example, an active acceptance might involve a
written test concerning the elements of the code, or require interpretations of the code in light of posed cases. The experimental evidence indicates that active demonstration of code acceptance, rather than passively reading or hearing the code explained, results in a greater degree of ethical commitment.

This experimental research and literature support notions presented above that there is a dissolution process for abandonment of ethical codes in business. Individuals are easier on themselves with respect to violations, that they suffer selective memory bias with respect to rationalizing the immoral conduct, and that the degree of moral disengagement becomes more severe the further into the process individuals move. Prevention would logically rely on early and active (rather than passive) reinforcement of the code. Also, offering objective evidence that contradicts the cognitive dissonance might be a possible palliative.

**THE PREVENTION**

**Interrupting the Devolution Process**

Svendsen (2001) points out that any ex-post remorse for the final result of wrongdoing follows a gradient that begins with “How could I have been so stupid?” If the group dynamic is allowed to progress, then statements such as, “Why did I not resist?” follow. If the dynamic is allowed its full development, then statements such as “What have I let myself become?” follow. The task of prevention is to not allow development of the first stage, or at least to not allow the second stage to occur.

This task is best facilitated by frequent and full active-review of the properly adopted ethical code such as presented above. This notion of “active review” is meant in the sense of Shu, Gino and Bazerman (2009), i.e., an active signing or recognition of the relevant code principles. For example, internal controls and/or auditing principles ought to be reviewed regularly, but after this review, and only after the agent answers questions about the review, a signature indicating acceptance of the code should be elicited. Furthermore, this review should emphasize Kant’s *third formula for the categorical imperative*, i.e. that the proper
motivation for keeping the code of moral maxims is to pursue a broader social goal and not merely a narrow personal goal. Agents should accept the idea that the reason for keeping the code is not just because they will be separated (fired) if they do not, but because the agents’ actions serve a broader social goal.

Group members must be persuaded to believe that the ethical maxims manifested by the code serve either society’s interests, or at least the best interests of the firm. This would make psychological disengagement, as associated with code violations, more difficult. For example, agents should be brought to realize that without the accounting rules and accuracy, both society and the firm suffer and ultimately break down if violations become commonly accepted. For another example, consider that agents must be brought to realize that without general respect for fellow employees, the firm cannot function effectively.

**Reinforcing the “Noble Nature”**

Each of the code’s moral maxims must therefore be frequently and actively reviewed, explained, and accepted as being in the interests of the firm and society in general. This is necessary so as to limit moral disengagement. To further encourage engagement, and discourage disengagement, it is particularly important to emphasize respect for the thinking individual members of the group. Once the voicing of reflective thought is discouraged, once dissenters are humiliated or marginalized, then disengagement is generated, and the dynamic of code violation is not likely to stop outside of external interference via society’s laws or vigorous interference from other stakeholders. Disengagement by the involved agents facilitates Svendsen’s first stage. By the time that the “How could I be so stupid?” stage is reached, harm has occurred. Beyond the first stage prevention is particularly difficult. Note that the term “stupid” here means lack of reflective thought. Reflection inhibits moral disengagement, and hence it is to be encouraged and reinforced.

As indicated previously, however, reflection is not sufficient to prevent harm. The *noble nature* of stating “This is wrong!” publicly within
the group is necessary, but this also requires the voicing of a cogent argument about why it is wrong. Hence, public dissent must be *a priori* encouraged and not humiliated. Discouragement of humiliation must be part of the code itself, and its importance explained frequently. The rational dissenter must be praised so that the evil devolution process is prevented. The combination of rational dissent, and prevention of the humiliation of the dissenter, is the key to prevent potential ethical-code deterioration. As reviewed in the section above, the moral disengagement process allows the unethical conduct to become personally acceptable. The purpose of the “noble nature of speaking out that *This is wrong!*” is to prevent disengagement in any of its forms. In light of Bandura (1990), Bandura et al. (1996), and Detert, Trevino and Sweitzer (2008), the noble nature can be demonstrated in any of four ways:

1. Firmly voicing a contradiction that the code violation somehow serves a moral purpose.
2. Firmly voicing a contradiction that the code violation is caused externally and hence forced on the actors.
3. Firmly voicing a conviction that the consequences of the code violation are not innocuous.
4. Firmly voicing a conviction that the ultimate victims of the unethical conduct should not be dehumanized or belittled to any extent.

**CONCLUSION**

Both the anecdotal evidence cited by philosophers of the last century (Svendsen, Bonhoeffer, and Arendt), and the more recent experimental evidence of psychological studies, indicate there is a devolutionary process to organizational abandonment of ethical codes. This is certainly applicable to abandonment of the ethical codes of business. The possibility of prevention of this devolution depends upon establishing an organizational culture of support for what Arendt terms the noble nature of publicly speaking out that *This is wrong!* This organizational
support, however, depends upon achieving a general clarity as to the
devolutionary process, and especially a clear recognition of certain man-
ifestations of *moral disengagement*, i.e. statements such as:

i. the ethical code violation really serves a moral purpose,
ii. the violation is caused by external forces,
iii. the violation is innocuous,
iv. the victims of the violation are unworthy of protection.

The possibility for prevention of the devolutionary process depends
upon the *noble nature* of publicly contradicting these manifestations of
*moral disengagement*. 
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1. Many case studies, such as the Enron analysis in Jennings (2009, p. 285), illustrate firms that violates each of the listed characteristics, i.e. humiliation of dissenters, contempt for any weakness in adoption of the new code, and leaders describing evil as being the opposite.

2. See Sullivan (1997) for an examination of Kant’s three formulas for the *categorical imperative*. The third formula, *formula for the kingdom of ends*, emphasizes the proper ethical motivation.