

Study Questions

Ethical Practice: Professionalism, Social Responsibility, and The Purpose of the Corporation

Session 9: Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Corporate Social Responsibility IV—Corporate Culture and Individual Responsibility

- Alex Gibney, Dir., *Enron: the Smartest Guys in the Room* (film; optional showing Tuesday 5/1, 7 pm)
 - Joel Bakan, *The Corporation: the Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*, pp. 56-59
 - Thomas C. Schelling, “The Marketplace Is No Excuse,” in *Choice and Consequence: Perspectives of an errant economist*,” pp. 53-56.
1. Based on Alex Gibney’s film version of the rise and fall of Enron, do you accept Joel Bakan’s argument that the corporation shows “psychopathic” traits?
 2. How do you account for what happened at Enron? How would you assess the relative importance of culture, environment, and personal values in the company’s history?
 3. Based on the *Enron* narrative, Bakan’s use of a psychological analogy for corporate behavior, and Schelling’s argument that “the marketplace is no excuse,” how would you define the role of personal values/responsibility in the daily operations of a large corporation?
 4. What could/should Enron employees have done about the slowly unfolding scandal in their company?

* Team writing assignment #4: “Apply one of the solutions to ethical violations that we articulated in class to a recent corporate scandal, or to one or more corporate mal-functions that you personally have experienced or witnessed. How might that solution have obviated the difficulties experienced by the company(ies) in question.” Take 3-4 pages, double-spaced, to explain your views; keep a copy of your work. Assignment due Friday, May 4, 5 pm; electronic submission.