

Study Questions

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

Session 12: Monday, May 14, 2007

The Purpose of a Corporation III—A Critique of Capital

- Alexis de Tocqueville, excerpts from Democracy in America
 - Charles Handy, “Tocqueville Revisited: The Meaning of American Prosperity” (*HBR* Reprint R0101C)
 - George Soros, “The Capitalist Threat” (*Atlantic Monthly*, February 1997)
1. What do you make of Tocqueville’s mid-19th century assessment of the American character, and the place of business in it?
 2. Is there a message for business people in Tocqueville’s comment that “the science of association is the mother of science” (CP, p. 246)? What is “the science of association,” and how might it bear on business education?
 3. Do you assign as much importance to entrepreneurial activity in the global scheme of things as does Charles Handy, in “Tocqueville Revisited,” when he focuses on the “fleas” of the new capitalism?
 4. In “The Capitalist Threat,” George Soros comments, “What used to be professions have turned into businesses” (CP, p. 269). How does this comment reflect on the first module of our course?
 5. What role do all three authors for this session assign to business in relation to government and social systems broadly defined? Can the business community aspire to shape public policy? Should it?