

Alexandra Simon

Professional Ethics

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Professional Integrity:

What Motivates Success

To preface his own thoughts, author Mike W. Martin, in chapter two of his book *Meaningful Work* (2000), reviewed two separate individuals whose ideas on professional integrity contrast greatly. First, Martin analyzed Adam Smith who wrote esteemed business ethics novels in the late 1770s. Martin wrote that while Smith may have been self-contradictory in some areas, Smith consistently concluded that professional motivation was that based on “self-interest and altruism, prudence and public good” (p. 14, para. 3). The review on Smith also showed that he believed professionals kept their moral needs to their private life; a danger that Martin highlighted as a type of “schizophrenic” moral compartmentalization that leads its hand to the wavering of the public’s greater good. Overall, Martin underlined Smith as a libertarian utilitarian that wanted to promote corporate welfare over the people’s, that if any benevolence were to arise it would be because it promotes the company in the process.

The second philosopher Martin refers to was Albert Schweitzer, who was a scholar, a professor, a minister, a doctor, as well as a complete opposite to Adam Smith. Martin found in his review that Schweitzer “called his outlook ‘ethical mysticism’” (p. 16, para. 5), which was explained as philanthropy with a total view of the world and the connections between all life on

earth. Martin explained that Schweitzer's view on professional motivation is based on gratitude and empathy, and labeled him as an egalitarian deontologist; Schweitzer suggests that humans should express gratitude to those who the feeling is not directly related to, "as our 'inaccessible benefactors'" (p. 18, para. 1). Both Martin and Schweitzer acknowledged the fact that Schweitzer lived in such a way that was influenced by his own influence, which I would add was a sort of Hawthorne effect where he was acting in a way that was consistent with what he believed in and taught to a very active extent.

Following this, Martin gave a number of examples from varying professions and concluded two things: first, ideals between people differ greatly and second, do not rely on the profession as much as they do personal integrity. With this, Martin circled back to the title of this chapter, *Meaningful Work*, suggesting that "most professionals achieve meaningful lives substantially through the meaning they derive from their work," (p. 21, para. 4), and then laid out his own theories on professional motivation. Martin first wrote that professionals are pushed by the self-satisfaction of their "excellence" and the "autonomy" that comes with it. Parallel to this, Martin's next motive is "Compensation" in all definitions of the word, autonomy, financial stability, "recognition," and authority. And while Martin wrote these two motives not too dissimilar, "Compensation" is meant to be more self-fulfilling; and the first, "Craft," is meant to be a society-fulfilling motive, this is because "excellence" is often graded to a social standard and therefore concerns more than one individual person. Lastly, Martin brought to our attention that these two motivations are nearly impossible to separate and related to his third and final motive: "Moral Concern" (p. 23, para. 3), which emphasized the ethical backbone of the other two by suggesting that individuals will act in accordance with society's morals for their own

personal greater good with, more often than not, a marriage of both “Compensation” and “Craft” motivational ideals.

After going over the five professional motives that Martin explained, Smith’s, Schweitzer’s, and his own three, it is difficult to disagree or find a flaw in Martin’s logic. He discussed many varying professions and example motivations from professionals, successfully describing a scale of motives that can arise in the real world - all of which fall under the same scale of “Moral Concern” with two ends of either one’s self or others. I do appreciate how Martin did not ignore just how much the subject of *motivation* has been studied and is in no way definitively provable in humans. And because we are social animals, I would agree with Martin’s conclusion that professional motives have a foundation of moral effort. Even if an act is in the best interest of an individual, they would be careful enough to think of how it affects the outside world because of how the outside world affect them; meaning any stake on one’s reputation must be altruistic in order to achieve social and professional success.