

Avoiding the Tragedy of Whistleblowing

Michael Davis

*[T]he strength of the pack is the Wolf, and the strength
of the Wolf is the pack.*

--Rudyard Kipling, "The Law of the Jungle"

Most discussions of whistleblowing seek to justify whistleblowing or to distinguish justified from unjustified whistleblowing; or they report who blows the whistle, how, and why; or they advise on how to blow the whistle or how to respond to an employee about to blow the whistle or what to do once she has; or they make recommendations for new laws to protect whistleblowers. In one way or another, they treat whistleblowing as inevitable. I shall not do that. Instead, I shall try to help individuals and organizations *avoid* whistleblowing.

That purpose may suggest that I oppose whistleblowing. I do not. I think whistleblowing is, on balance, at least a necessary evil (and sometimes even a good thing). I certainly think whistleblowers should have legal protection.¹ They should not be fired for their good deed or punished for it in any other way. But I doubt that much can be done to protect them. I shall use much of this paper to explain why.

That explanation will bring out the destructive side of whistleblowing, making it easier for most of us to see ourselves in the role of those who mistreat whistleblowers. Insofar as it does that, it will give the organization's case for mistreatment. The explanation will, however, also show the importance of avoiding whistleblowing. We should try to get the benefits of whistleblowing without making people and organizations pay the enormous price whistleblowing typically exacts.²

This paper is addressed *both* to those who have a substantial say in how some organization runs *and* to those who could some day have to blow the whistle on their own organization. These groups overlap more than most discussions of whistleblowing suggest.³ That, however, is not why I have chosen to address both here. My reason runs deeper. I believe that, even if those two groups did not overlap, they would still share an interest in making whistleblowing unnecessary; that both groups can do much to make whistleblowing unnecessary; and that each will be better able to do its part if it understands better what the other group can do.

I. The Informal Organization Within the Formal

Let us begin with the obvious. No matter how large or small, every formal organization includes one or more informal groups. An academic department, for example, is a network of poker buddies, movie buffs, cooks, and so on. Departmental conversation is not limited to what must be said to carry on departmental business. Ordinary life, ordinary attitudes, permeate the formal structure. Much of what makes the formal organization succeed or fail goes on within and between these informal groups. Who likes you is at least as important in most organizations as what you are. Success is not simply a matter of technical skill or accomplishment. You must also have enough friends properly placed--and not too many enemies. Perhaps only at hiring time do academics talk much about personality but every academic knows of a department that fell apart because certain members did not get along and others that survived financial troubles, campus disorders, and tempting offers to individual members in part at least because the faculty got along so well together.

Though my example is an academic department, nonacademics will, I think, confirm that much the same is true of corporate offices and even of government bureaus. Most of what makes such organizations work, or fail to work, can't be learned from the table of organization, formal job descriptions, or even personnel evaluations. Thinking realistically about whistleblowing means thinking about the

informal aspects of formal organization as well as the formal. I shall focus on those informal aspects here.

II. Blaming the Messenger

"Whistleblower" is a capacious term. Whistleblowers can, it seems, be anonymous or open, internal or external, well-intentioned or not so well-intentioned, accurate or inaccurate, justified or unjustified. Perhaps strictly speaking, some of these are not whistleblowers at all.⁵ But I have no reason to speak strictly here. For my purposes, "whistleblower" may refer to any member of a formal organization who takes information *out of channels* to try to stop the organization from doing something he believes morally wrong (or to force it to do something he believes morally required).⁶

Most organizations will fire a whistleblower if it can, whether she was right or not; will ruin her job prospects if it can; and, if it can do neither, will still do what it can to make her life miserable. Otherwise humane organizations can treat a whistleblower savagely.⁷ Why?

The most common answer is that those who mistreat whistleblowers do so because they expect to benefit from having fewer whistleblowers. The self-interest of individuals or their organization explains the mistreatment.

Though no doubt part of the truth, this explanation is, I think, only a small part. We are in general far from perfect judges of self-interest. Our judgment does not improve simply because we assume an organizational role. We can still be quite irrational. Recall how Shakespeare's Cleopatra responds to her messenger's report that Antony has married Octavia:

. . . Hence,

Horrible villain! or I'll spurn thine eyes
Like balls before me; I'll unhair thy head:
Thou shalt be whipp'd with wire and stew'd in brine...

. . . let ill tidings tell
Themselves when they be felt.⁸

Though Cleopatra had ordered him to spy on Antony, the messenger will hear more harsh words, receive several hard blows, and have a knife angrily put to this throat before he is allowed to leave with a small reward.

Today's formal organizations can treat the bringer of bad news much as Shakespeare's love-sick Cleopatra did. So, for example, in a recent book on corporate life, Robert Jackall grimly recounts what happened to several executives with bad news to tell their respective organizations. Though each discovered wrongdoing it was his duty to discover, reported it through channels, and saw the wrongdoer punished, though none of them was responsible for the wrong reported, and though the organization was better off for the report, the lucky among Jackall's executives had their part in the affair forgotten. Some paid with their careers.⁹

We generally think of information as power--and it is. But thinking of information that way is no small achievement when the information wrecks our plans. Even experienced managers can find themselves telling subordinates, "I don't want to hear any more bad news."

The rationality of formal organization is an ideal never more than partially achieved. We must keep that in mind if we are to understand what happens to so many whistleblowers. An organization that would "whip with wire and stew in brine" the simple bringer of bad news is not likely to respond well to the whistleblower--even if, as often happens, the whistleblower serves the organization's long-term interests. The whistleblower is, after all, not only a bearer of bad news; he *is* bad news.

III. Whistleblowing as Bad News All Around

Discussions of whistleblowing tend to emphasize the undeniable good the accurate whistleblower does. The incidental harm tends to be overshadowed, perhaps because so much of it seems deserved. The harm done by inaccurate whistleblowing has received much less attention. Why?¹⁰

Whatever the reasons for ignoring the bad news about whistleblowing, the fact remains that much of it is ignored and, for our purposes, the bad news is crucial. So, let us recall how much bad news there is.

Whistleblowing is always proof of organizational trouble. Employees do not go out of channels unless the channels at least seem inadequate.

Whistleblowing is also proof of management failure. Usually several managers directly above the whistleblower will have heard his complaint, tried to deal with it in some way, and failed to satisfy him. However managers view the whistleblower's complaint, they are bound to view their own failure to "keep control" as a blot on their record.

Whistleblowing is also bad news for those on whom the whistle is blown. What they were peacefully doing in obscurity is suddenly in the spotlight. They will have to participate in "damage control" meetings, investigations, and the like that would not otherwise demand their scarce time. They will have to write unusual reports, worry about the effect of publicity on their own career, and face the pointed questions of spouse, children, and friends. And they may have to go on doing such things for months--or even years.

Insofar as whistleblowing has such effects, no one within the organization will be able to hear the whistleblower's name without thinking unpleasant thoughts. No manager will be able to make a decision about the whistleblower without having bad associations color her judgment. The whistleblower not only makes conscious enemies within his organization, he can also create enormous biases against himself, biases very hard to cancel by any formal procedure.

And that is not all the bad news. What must the whistleblower have become to blow the whistle? At the very least, he must have lost faith in the formal organization. If he had kept faith, he would have accepted whatever decision came through formal channels--at least once he had exhausted all formal means of appeal.

For anyone who has been a loyal employee for many years, losing faith in the organization is likely to be quite painful--rather like the disintegration of a marriage. My impression is that few whistleblowers

take their job thinking that they might some day have to blow the whistle. They seem to start out as loyal employees--perhaps more loyal than most. One day something happens to shake their loyalty. Further shocks follow until loyalty collapses, leaving behind a great emptiness. While managers tend to think of whistleblowers as traitors to the organization, most whistleblowers seem to feel that, on the contrary, it is the organization that has betrayed them.¹¹

This bad news implies more. Before the whistleblower was forced to blow the whistle, she trusted the formal organization. She took its good sense for granted. That is longer possible. Faith has become suspicion. Since what we call "organizational authority" is precisely the ability of the organization to have its commands taken more or less on faith, the "powers that be" now have as much reason to distrust the whistleblower as she has to distrust them.¹² She no longer recognizes their authority. She is much more likely to blow the whistle than before. She is now an enemy within.

Something equally bad has happened to relations between the whistleblower and her coworkers. Whistleblowing tends to bring out the worst in people. Some friends will have become implacable enemies. Others will hide, fearing "guilt by association." Most, perhaps, simply lose interest, looking on the whistleblower as they would someone dying of cancer. These desertions can leave deep scars. And even when they do not, they leave the whistleblower an outsider, a loner in an organization in which isolation for any reason makes one vulnerable.

All this bad news suggests some hard questions: How can a whistleblower work as before with people whose loyalty he no longer shares? How can coworkers treat him as they did before when he is no longer quite one of them? How can he hope for promotion, or even retention, in an organization in which he can put no trust, in which he has no friends, and for which he is likely to make further trouble? These, I think, are plainly not questions a law can answer.

IV. Helping the Whistleblower and the Organization

What then can be done for the whistleblower? One option is to find her another job. That is not easy. Potential employers generally shun known whistleblowers. That alone makes finding a new job hard. Then too, the whistleblower may not be as good an interviewee as before. Many whistleblowers seem to signal the bad news even when they do their best to conceal it. They may, for example, sound emotionally exhausted, ask questions that suggest distrust, or just seem prickly. They are like people going through a bad divorce.

Since few potential employers want someone else's troubles, we must draw this paradoxical conclusion: the whistleblower's best hope for continuing her career may be her old employer. That the old employer may be her best hope is the chief reason to support laws protecting whistleblowers. Though a law can offer the whistleblower little direct protection, it can prod the organization to think about making peace with the whistleblower.

This, however, is still a slim hope. The organization can make peace with the whistleblower *only if* it can reestablish his loyalty to the organization and his trust in those with whom he must work. That is not easy.

Clearly, the formal organization itself must change enough for the whistleblower to have good reason to believe that he will not have to go out of channels again. The changes will probably have to be substantial, something most organizations automatically resist. But formal changes alone will not be enough to reestablish the whistleblower's informal relations with superiors, subordinates, and coworkers. What is needed in addition is something like marriage counseling, some sort of group therapy to expose and resolve all the feelings of betrayal, distrust, and rejection whistleblowing inevitably generates. The whistleblower will not be safe until he is reintegrated into the informal organization.

Some government agencies have required employees involved in a whistleblowing case to participate in such group therapy. The results so far have not been good. Managers, especially, seem to view such therapy as just one more hoop to jump through on the way to the

inevitable.¹³ To work, the therapy probably needs to be voluntarily undertaken by all participants, something not easily legislated.

That is why even this best hope for the whistleblower, reconciliation with the organization, is so slim. We need to find better ways to protect whistleblowers. In the long run at least, peace between the whistleblower and the organization is as good for the organization as for the whistleblower. The whistleblower is not really an enemy. An organization that has whistleblowers needs them. The whistleblower is like the knock at the door that wakes one in a house on fire--unwelcome, but better than sleeping till the fire reaches the bed. An organization that punishes its whistleblowers blinds itself to troubles better faced.

To say that is not to deny the disadvantages of whistleblowing described earlier but to explain why we should try to make whistleblowing unnecessary rather than try to prevent whistleblowing in other ways. It is to the chief means of making whistleblowing unnecessary that I now turn.

V. How Organizations Can Avoid Whistleblowing

If whistleblowing means that an organization has trouble using bad news, one way for an organization to avoid whistleblowing is to improve the organization's ability to use bad news. We may distinguish three approaches.

One approach, what we might call the "procedural," builds invitations to report bad news into the ordinary ways of doing business. These procedures can be quite simple, for example, a space on a form for "disadvantages" or "risks." Such a blank almost forces the person filling out the form to say something negative. Those above him are also more likely to treat bad news reported in this way as part of "doing the job" than they would the same bad news reported without that specific invitation.¹⁴

The first approach also includes more complicated procedures, for example, "review meetings" the purpose of which is to identify problems. The review meeting works like a blank space. Where the

emphasis is on revealing bad news, more bad news is likely to come out. Revealing bad news is more likely to seem part of the job.

Of course, how things will seem is in part a matter of the mental set the people involved bring to the procedure. That set will be determined in large part by what has happened in the organization before. Organizational atmosphere can turn any procedure into a mere formality. If, for example, people who fill in the disadvantage blank or speak up at a review meeting are commonly treated like Cleopatra's messenger, the procedures will bring in little bad news. Part of making procedures work is making sure those involved think about them in the right way. This is especially important when the procedures are new and patterns of response have not yet developed.¹⁵

In a way, then, my first approach, the procedural, presupposes others. Those participating in various procedures need to understand how important bad news can be. They also need regular reminders, because everyday experience tends to teach them how much bad news hurts. Education can provide one reminder; a structure of formal incentives can provide another.

I intend "education" to be understood broadly (so broadly in fact that the line between education and formal incentives all but disappears). Training sessions in which superiors or special trainers stress the importance of hearing the worst is only part of what I have in mind. Everyday experience is also part of education. Subordinates are more likely to take the formal training to heart if they are regularly thanked for giving superiors bad news, if they see that bringing bad news is treated much as bringing good news is, and so on.

Superiors are, of course, more likely to treat well subordinates who bring bad news if the organization makes it rational to do so. But treating such subordinates well will generally be rational only if the organization routinely uses bad news in ways that encourage reporting it--or, at least, do not discourage reporting it. An organization's ability to do this routinely depends on its structure.

For example: Suppose that an organization holds a manager responsible only for what gets reported "on her watch." Suppose too that her subordinate informs her that her predecessor improved the division's profits by skipping routine maintenance and now much of

the machinery is in poor condition. The manager will *not* want to report this to her superiors. She would be bringing news that will threaten everyone who must pass it on. She will therefore not want to hear the bad news herself. She will have good reason to tell her subordinate, "Let sleeping dogs lie." Perhaps the dogs will not howl until her successor takes over.

Now, suppose instead that the organization has routine ways of assigning responsibility to a manager for what she does while in a position even if the bad consequences only become apparent later. In such an organization, a manager has good reason to want subordinates to report the bad news about her predecessor's work as soon as they learn of it. She need not fear such "sleeping dogs." They will not wake to howl for her blood. And, if she lets them lie, she may later have to explain how *she* could have missed them.

Most organizations tend to treat the person in charge as responsible for whatever bad news he must report. Few have any routine for assigning responsibility to anyone else (perhaps because such a routine would be quite expensive).¹⁶ Hence, in that respect at least, most organizations have structures tending to discourage bad news. Leaving managers in charge for long terms, say, ten or twenty years, would probably compensate for this tendency. Few problems lie dormant that long. Today, however, managers seldom stay in one position for even five years. If they do not rise quickly within an organization, they are likely to move to another. This mobility means that most organizations must rely on other means of giving managers reason to welcome bad news.

The most common approach these days is to create alternative channels for bad news so that no one in an organization is in position to block its flow upward. The most traditional of these alternative channels is the regular outside audit. Another is an "open door" policy allowing subordinates to go directly to a senior official, bypassing several layers of management. Another is changing the traditional chain of command into something much more like a lattice, so that subordinates have less to fear from any particular superior and have routine access to more than one. Such arrangements give a manager reason to be thankful that he has heard the bad news from a

subordinate rather than from a superior and reason to try to respond in a way likely to satisfy the subordinate. The subordinate has saved the manager from being "blindsided." Such arrangements tend to make whistleblowing unnecessary.

That, I think, is enough for now about how organizations can make whistleblowing unnecessary. We are ready to consider how individuals can avoid becoming whistleblowers.

VI. How to Avoid Having to Blow the Whistle

The simplest way to avoid having to blow the whistle may seem to be joining an organization in which whistleblowing will never be necessary. Unfortunately, things are not that simple. Organizations are human contrivances; none is perfect.

Still, organizations do differ quite a bit. By choosing the right organization, one can reduce substantially the chance one will have to blow the whistle (much as one can reduce substantially the chance of divorce by not "marrying in haste"). The question is how the organization handles bad news. The answer will be found in the organization's procedures, educational programs, and structure, not the ones "on paper" but the ones actually in effect. The difference can be crucial. For example, if the organization has an open door policy, is the door ever used? Since organizations always work imperfectly, an open door that is never used is probably a channel no one dare use, not an unnecessary channel. Using such a channel will probably be treated as whistleblowing.

Any organization described as "one happy family" should be examined with special care. Organizations, like families, generally have arguments, tensions, and the like. That is how they grow. The organization that recalls only good times is not the one that had no bad times but the one that has no use for bad news. It is exactly the kind of organization in which whistleblowing is most likely to be necessary. Personally, I would prefer an organization in which old battles are recalled blow by blow and the general happiness must be inferred from the fact that all participants survived to work together again.¹⁷

Having chosen the right organization, can one do anything more to reduce the chance he will some day have to blow the whistle? Certainly. But he will have to think in strikingly political terms.

He will, first of all, want to develop his own informal channels to augment formal channels. So, for example, a new employee W officially reports to A. But if B carries more weight with their common superior, W might want to get to know B. Perhaps they share an interest in chess. Once W is friends with B, W is in position to pass information around A should A try to suppress it. A can hardly object to W playing chess with B. Yet, once A knows W and B are chess buddies, A will be less likely to suppress information W wants passed up. A knows W has a channel around him.

Second, one should form alliances with colleagues and subordinates, people who share one's responsibilities. One should not have to stand alone against a superior. Whenever possible, the superior should have to respond to a common recommendation. Managers are likely to treat a group concern much more seriously than a single individual's. One should try to work through groups as much as possible.

But, third, not any group will do. The group should be sensitive to the moral concerns likely to force one to blow the whistle. The organizations most in need of whistleblowers are also most likely to be so organized that employees become morally less sensitive the longer they work for the organization.¹⁸ So, one will probably need to cultivate the moral sensitivity of potential allies. There are many ways to do this. The simplest is to bring in items from the newspaper raising problems similar to those the organization could face and pass them around at lunch, asking how "we" could handle them. If potential allies share the same profession, one might try getting the local professional society to host discussions dealing with the ethical problems that come up in work they do.¹⁹

Last, but not least, one needs to cultivate one's own ability to present bad news in a way most likely to get a favorable response. Part of doing that is, of course, presenting the information clearly, with enough technical detail and supporting evidence. But there is more to it than that. Some people have, I think, become whistleblowers for

lack of a pungent phrase.²⁰ A master of words is less likely to have to blow the whistle than someone who, though understanding a peril, has trouble communicating it.

And that is not all. Presenting bad news in a way likely to get a favorable response also includes what used to be called "rhetoric." A little sugar helps the medicine go down. Is there a good side to the bad news? If so, why not present that first? If there is no good side, how about presenting the bad news in a way likely to bring out the personal stake the decision-maker has in responding favorably? Such tactics are usually not mentioned in a discussion of whistleblowing. Yet, it seems to me, many people end up as whistleblowers because they did not pay enough attention to the feelings of their audience.

Those who have substantial say in how an organization runs might, then, want to consider some educational programs our earlier discussion of education may not have suggested. In particular, they might want to consider training employees in such political skills as how to present bad news effectively and how to maneuver it through channels. They also might want to review their hiring practices. For example, will the personnel office reject an applicant who asks whether the company has an open door policy, treat such a question with indifference, or consider it as a plus? Any organization that does not treat such questions as a plus will not select *for* people with the skills needed to make whistleblowing unnecessary.

VII. Concluding Remarks

The world can be a hard place. One can do everything in her power and still end up having to choose between blowing the whistle on her organization and sitting by while innocent people suffer harm she can prevent. The whistleblower is a tragic character. Her decency pushes her to bring great suffering on herself and those about whom she cares most. Her only alternative, sitting by, would save those she cares about most from harm--but at an incalculable cost (failing to do what she has a duty to do). Her organization will probably be better off in the long run--if it survives. But, in the short run, it too will suffer.

When events leave only this choice, most of us--at least when we are not directly involved--would hope the person upon whom that choice is forced will find the strength to blow the whistle. Heroism is the best we can hope for then. But, looking up from this chain of unhappy events, we can see how much better off everyone would have been had heroism been unnecessary. That is why I have focused on making whistleblowing unnecessary.

NOTES

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1. For a good summary of what is (or could be) offered, see Martin H. Malin, "Protecting the Whistleblower from Retaliatory Discharge," *Journal of Law Reform* 16 (Winter 1983): 277-318. For some suggestion of how ineffective that protection is, see Thomas M. Devine and Donald G. Aplin, "Whistleblower Protection--The Gap Between the Law and Reality," *Howard Law Journal* 31 (1988): 223-239; or Rosemary Chalk, "Making the World Safe for Whistleblowers," *Technology Review* 91 (January 1988): 48-57.

2. The literature describing the suffering of whistleblowers is, of course, large. For a good scholarly summary, see Myron Peretz Glazer and Penina Migdal Glazer, *The Whistleblowers: Exposing Corruption in Government and Industry* (Basic Books: New York, 1989). There is, in contrast, very little about how the organization suffers (or benefits). Why?

3. The holder of a "professional position" is much more likely to become a whistleblower than an ordinary employee is. See, for example, Marcia P. Miceli and Janet P. Near, "Individual and Situational Correlates of Whistle-Blowing," *Personnel Psychology* 41 (Summer 1988): 267-281.

4. Compare Chester A. Barnes, *The Function of the Executive* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1938).

5. For a good discussion of the problems of defining "whistleblowing," see Frederick Elliston et al., *Whistleblowing Research: Methodological and Moral Issues* (Praeger: New York, 1985), esp. pp. 3-22 and 145-161.

6. Even this definition should be read liberally. In most organizations, there are "ordinary" channels the use of which gives no offense and "extraordinary" channels the use of which will give offense. Sometimes one can only determine that a channel is extraordinary by using it. Those using an extraordinary channel will be treated as whistleblowers (and, indeed, will often be so labeled even when they are not whistleblowers according to this--or any other standard--definition). Similarly, the dispute between a whistleblower and her organization may in part be over whether her objection is a moral rather than a technical one (everyone agreeing that *if* the objection is moral, she would be justified). But, since they think the objection is not a moral one, they consider her a "disgruntled employee," not a whistleblower. I do not intend what I say here to turn on how we resolve such difficult cases. For a good summary of the recent literature of definition, see Marian V. Heacock and Gail W. McGee, "Whistleblowing: An Ethical Issue in Organizational and Human Behavior," *Business & Professional Ethics Journal* 6 (Winter 1987): 35-46.

7. I have in mind especially the response to whistleblowers within academic institutions such as my alma mater: see, for example, Bruce W. Hollis, "I Turned in My Mentor," *The Scientist* 1 (December 14, 1987): 1-13.

8. William Shakespeare, *Anthony and Cleopatra* Act II: Sc. 5.

9. Robert Jackall, *Moral Mazes* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1988), esp. 105-112 & 119-133.

10. One reason may be that inaccurate whistleblowing is less likely to make news. Newspapers, police departments, and senior managers are constantly receiving "tips" that don't pan out. These are not news. Another reason inaccurate whistleblowing has received little attention may be that reliably determining that a particular whistleblower is inaccurate can be quite difficult. The whistleblower's evidence may establish only a presumptive case against an organization. The organization may not be able to reply in full without revealing proprietary information or violating the privacy of other employees, leaving outsiders no way to know that the whistleblower is mistaken. Even the organization in question may not be able to make such a determination without great expense--and may therefore never bother. Much whistleblowing seems enveloped in the organizational equivalent of what Clausewitz called "the fog of battle." If we knew more about cases of inaccurate, mistaken, or otherwise flawed whistleblowing, perhaps our assessment of the overall good effect of whistleblowing would change. Perhaps whistleblowing, like tyrannicide, is so likely to hit the wrong target that it cannot in practice be justified. This is a subject about which we need to know more.

11. See, for example, Dick Polman, "Telling the truth, paying the price," *Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine*, June 18, 1989, pp. 16ff.

12. For an interesting analysis of this traditional view of organizational authority (and related issues), see Christopher McMahan, "Managerial Authority," *Ethics* 100 (October 1989): 33-53.

13. I owe this observation to Thomas Devine. I have found no research to confirm it.

14. For a procedure I doubt will do much good, see Theodore T. Herbert and Ralph W. Estes, "Improving Executive Decisions by Formalizing Dissent: The Corporate Devil's Advocate," *Academy of Management Review* 2 (October 1977): 662-667. Dissent is likely to be more effective if the dissenter is not viewed as "just going through the motions" and likely to be more common if not the job of just one person.

15. Compare James Waters, "Catch 20.5: Corporate Morality as an Organizational Phenomenon," *Organizational Dynamics* 6 (Spring 1978): 3-19.

16. *Moral Mazes*, for example, pp. 105-112.

17. These are, of course, matters of what is now often called "culture." For a good discussion, see Charles O'Reilly, "Corporations, Culture, and Commitment: Motivation and Social Control in Organizations." *California Management Review* (Summer 1989): 9-25.

18. This claim is defended in: Michael Davis, "Explaining Wrongdoing," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 20 (Spring/Fall 1989): 74-90. See also M. Cash Matthews, "Ethical Dilemmas and the Disputing Process: Organizations and Societies," *Business & Professional Ethics Journal* 8 (Spring 1989): 1-11.

19. Michael Davis, *One Social Responsibility of Engineering Societies: Teaching Managers About Engineering Ethics*, Monograph #88-WA/DE-14 (The American Society of Mechanical Engineers: New York, 1988).

20. Perhaps the best example of such a person would be Roger Boisjoly (if his required testimony before Congress was whistleblowing at all). The warnings Boisjoly gave on the night before the *Challenger* exploded were (though technically accurate) in the bloodless language in which engineers generally communicate. He never said anything like "This decision could kill seven human beings." How might things have gone had Boisjoly (or anyone else present) said something of that sort when NASA pressured Thiokol to approve a launch? A hard question, to be sure, but one that at least suggests the potential power of language at the moment of decision. For details, see *The Presidential Commission on the Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster* (Washington, DC: June 6, 1986).

Philosophy & Social Criticism

Volume 14

Nos. 3-4

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