



*Teaching Caselettes*

## Teaching Notes

# PRODUCT (RED)

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Product (RED) was founded by Bono and Bobby Shriver to encourage private corporations to donate money to public health organizations in developing countries. Essentially, companies are allowed to put the (RED) logo on their products if they donate a certain percentage of the profits to the Global Fund, an organization which provides money to programs that fight AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. (RED) has raised a great deal of money for Africa. However, critics complain that (RED) allows corporate and consumer greed to be disguised as charity. An overview of the “Understanding Hypocrisy and Integrity” framework accompanies these teaching notes.

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(Note: Please refer to the “Understanding Hypocrisy and Integrity” overview at the end of these teaching notes to familiarize yourself with the general ethical framework these cases were created to illustrate.)

Issues: This case helps participants understand the moralist/moderate paradigm and encourages them to examine their own moral intuitions. Ideally, participants will be able to identify their own approach to ethical dilemmas and gain some insight into the benefits and dangers of their approach. Participants may also gain some appreciation for alternative approaches.

1. *What factors are most important in your evaluation of the (RED) campaign?*
  - a. *Is the program’s ability to raise money for Africa important?*
  - b. *Would your evaluation of the program be different if the AIDS crisis were less dire?*
  - c. *Do the motivations of those involved matter? Would your evaluation of Product (RED) be different if you thought that Bono and Shriver were motivated by a desire for fame?*

These questions are intended to help participants articulate their own feelings about Product (RED), as well as give them some insight into their own moral intuitions.

2. *Are you sympathetic to any of (RED)’s critics? If so, which ones?*

This question encourages participants to explain exactly what, if anything, bothers them about Product (RED). Are they upset that (RED) benefits companies that have exploitive business practices? Are they bothered because the it allows greed to be disguised as altruism? Alternately, do they believe that (RED) is an ineffective way to fight the AIDS crisis?

In asking participants to evaluate Product (RED), it may be helpful to determine their level of support. Would they be willing to buy clothing with the (RED) label? Would they be willing to volunteer time to help advertise the (RED) campaign? Would they be upset if the founders of Product (RED) won a Nobel Peace Prize?

3. *Is this a debate between moralists and moderates? Do both sides have integrity, or is one side being hypocritical?*

Many participants should identify Bono and Shriver as moderates and their critics as moralists. Other responses might be accepted if they are based on a correct interpretation of the paradigm. By asking participants to justify their responses, the discussion leader should make sure that participants understand the moderate/moralist distinction. Participants should understand that this is, at least partially, an ethical disagreement and not simply a debate about how best to address the AIDS crisis.

Some participants may identify one or both sides as being hypocritical. They may argue that Product (RED) is hypocritical because it allows greed to be disguised as altruism, or they may argue that Product (RED)’s critics are hypocritical, in that they are more interested in feeling self-righteous than in helping other people.

If no one identifies either side as hypocritical, the discussion leader might ask participants why some people might accuse either Product (RED) or its critics of hypocrisy. The discussion leader should

encourage participants to see that moralists, who believe that integrity requires pure deeds and motivations, will tend to find schemes like (RED) to be hypocritical, whereas moderates are less likely to have moral qualms if they think that (RED) is actually effective in fighting AIDS. This should also help participants understand some of the fundamental differences between moderates and moralists, as well as some of the difficulties with distinguishing between hypocrisy and integrity. (Of course, hypocrisy is not entirely a matter of perspective—both moralists and moderates will agree that someone like Bernard Madoff, who preached charity while stealing from others, was a hypocrite).<sup>1</sup>

4. *Do you see yourself as a moralist or a moderate in this case? What are the advantages and potential problems with your perspective?*

Participants should draw upon their responses to previous questions. Those who are concerned about the motivations of those involved or about the business practices of participating companies are moralists. Those who are primarily concerned about the project's capacity to ensure a good outcome and/or believe that focusing upon motivations is a waste of time because human beings are incapable of completely "pure" motivations are moderates. Some participants may find themselves torn between both perspectives; for example, they may be concerned about the motivations of those involved and the capacity of the program to ensure a good outcome.

Regardless of whether participants consider themselves to be moralists, moderates or something in between, there are potential problems with their perspectives. It is useful to discuss these potential problems, both in the context of the Product (RED) case and more generally. Both moralists and moderates can become unconscious hypocrites – the moralist may be driven more by a desire to feel morally superior than by a desire to do the right thing, whereas the moderate may claim that he is compromising his principles for the greater good when he is really compromising to benefit his own self-interest. However, moralists and moderates can cause problems even when they are not being hypocritical. Moralists may sacrifice good outcomes – in this case, better medical care for AIDS victims in Africa – in order to maintain moral purity. Moderates may do terrible things in order to ensure a just outcome, or they may fail to recognize that integrity sometimes requires sacrifice.

**Conclusion:** The discussion leader can conclude by summarizing the discussion. He/she can ask participants if they agree with Grant's claim that both moralists and moderates are capable of integrity and prone to hypocrisy, and that each tends to see only hypocrisy in the other. Do they agree that both moralists and moderates are capable of integrity? Is it useful or possible for moralists and moderates to understand each other?

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Madoff was a Wall Street legend and celebrated philanthropist who conducted one of the biggest financial frauds in history, which bankrupted many prominent charitable organizations.

## Understanding Hypocrisy and Integrity

Often ethical action is depicted as a continuum, with cynicism on one end, moral fanaticism on the other and integrity as the perfect mean. The problem with viewing ethical action as a continuum, Ruth Grant explains, is that it obscures the fact that there are multiple forms of integrity and hypocrisy. Grant is Professor of Political Science and Philosophy and Senior Fellow in the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University.

She identifies two different forms of integrity: the integrity of the moderate and the integrity of the moralist. The moderate focuses upon the consequences of her actions and is willing to “be a little bad” in order to ensure a just outcome. The moralist, on the other hand, evaluates actions by the motivations that guide them and is inclined to obey her conscience, regardless of the consequences.

The moralist is unwilling to compromise her principles because she associates integrity with purity. Purity, she believes, is achieved by ensuring that her motives are not tainted by self-interest and her actions are not corrupted by compromise. The moderate finds this struggle for purity unproductive. Moral actors are unlikely to achieve complete purity of motivation, the moderate argues, as humans are complicated and conflicted creatures. While she believes that individuals should strive to ensure that selfish motivations do not prevent them from pursuing just outcomes, the moderate emphasizes that an obsession with the purity of one’s motives and deeds can hinder the pursuit of such outcomes.

Just as there are different kinds of integrity, there are different kinds of hypocrisy. The most obvious is the cynical hypocrite, who deliberately uses the pretence of virtue to obtain selfish and ignoble ends. However, most hypocrites are not consciously aware of their hypocrisy, and both moderates and moralists may be self-deceiving hypocrites. The moderate engages in hypocrisy by telling herself that she is compromising for the greater good, when she is really pursuing her own interests. Or, she is simply complacent, failing to recognize injustice rather than disturb her own comfortable position. The moralist engages in hypocrisy when she tells herself that she is standing on principle, despite when her actions are motivated less by the justness of the principle and more by a desire to feel and appear morally superior.

	<i>Moderation</i>	<i>Moralism</i>
<i>Integrity</i>	<i>Statesman</i>	<i>Moralist</i>
<i>Hypocrisy</i>	<i>Complacent Hypocrite</i>	<i>Righteous Hypocrite</i>

Moralists and moderates have difficulty understanding each other, because each believes that their form of integrity is the only form of integrity. As a result, each sees only hypocrisy in the other. Whereas the moderate believes that all moralists are self-righteous hypocrites willing to sacrifice a just outcome for selfish reasons, the moralist regards the moderate’s willingness to compromise as a lack of conviction. Perhaps moralists and moderates would understand each other better if they recognized that there are multiple forms of hypocrisy and integrity.

*See Ruth Grant, Hypocrisy and Integrity: Machiavelli, Rousseau and the Ethics of Politics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pages 62-8 and 171-2*