



Teaching Caselettes

PRODUCT (RED)

Nora Hanagan

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 this case study.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution - Noncommercial - No Derivative Works 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>. You may reproduce this work for non-commercial use if you use the entire document and attribute the source: The Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University.

Product (RED) is a campaign started by Bono and Bobby Shriver (President John F. Kennedy's nephew) to raise money for AIDS charities in Africa. When consumers buy products with the (RED) logo, a certain percentage of the profits are donated to the Global Fund, an organization which provides money to programs that fight AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. (RED) has been the largest source of private donations to the Global Fund. However, the campaign has a number of critics.

Some critics are concerned that the participating companies seem motivated more by a desire to sell products than a desire to help others. Not only does the (RED) label help companies promote individual products, but it enables them to improve the image of their entire brand. More money has been spent advertising (RED) products than has been donated to AIDS charities.¹ Essentially, critics argue, (RED) enables companies to profit from Africa's tragedy.²

The fact that (RED) enriches participating companies is particularly galling to those who believe that multinational corporations are the source of problems in both the developed and the undeveloped world. For example, some participating companies have been caught outsourcing clothing production to factories that use child labor. "The thought of using consumer dollars made off the backs of workers held in sweatshops to help fund Bono's causes is really hypocritical—that's not the way to go," said Charles Kernaghan, director of the National Labor Committee for Worker and Human Rights.³ Many anti-sweatshop activists are unsatisfied by Bono and Shriver's assurance that products carrying the (RED) logo are not made in sweatshops. It is immoral, they argue, for (RED) to allow companies that profit from sweatshop labor to present themselves as philanthropists.

Finally, (RED) has also been criticized as providing a justification for consumer greed and for encouraging the notion that doing good does not require any personal sacrifice.⁴ Should consumers feel good about themselves for buying a shirt for \$45, if only ten percent of that money goes to charity? Why not encourage the consumer to simply donate the entire \$45 to charity? One critic has even started a website entitled Buy (LESS), which mocks the (RED) website and encourages individuals to donate directly to the charities that (RED) funds.⁵

The project's defenders have responded that (RED) is not a traditional charity; instead, it is a program designed to encourage private donations to Africa by making charitable donation something that is in corporations' interest. The participating corporations would have spent money on advertising anyway, but as a result of the (RED) campaign, that advertising money is also being used to spread awareness about the AIDS crisis.⁶

Moreover, the severity of the crisis denies activists the luxury of being overly scrupulous. "We're fighting a fire," explains Bono. "The house is burning down. Let's get the water. You end up beside somebody who lives up the road who you don't really like. Do you care if he's polishing up his image by putting the fire out?"⁷

¹ Ron Nixon, "Bottom Line for (Red)," *New York Times* February 6, 2000. Available from <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/06/business/06red.html>

² Mark Rosenman, "The Patina of Philanthropy," *Stanford Social Innovation Review* April 11, 2007. Available from http://www.ssireview.org/opinion/entry/the_patina_of_philanthropy/

³ Geoffrey Gay, "Achtung, Bono! Activists See Red," *New York* October 30, 2006. Available from <http://nymag.com/news/intelligencer/23175/>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ron Nixon, "Bottom Line for (Red)."

⁶ Bobby Shriver, "Red's raised lots of green," *Advertising Age* March 12, 2007: 8.

⁷ Jane Martinson, "The Amex chief providing backing for Bono," *The Guardian* March 17, 2006. Available from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2006/mar/17/columnists.guardiancolumnists>

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