Online Appendix for: Putting Integrity Into Finance: A Purely Positive Approach

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Abstract

This Online Appendix to "Putting Integrity Into Finance: A Purely Positive Approach" available at http://www.nber.org/w19986 rigorously defines and discusses the meaning of one's word, whether that word be the word of an individual human being or the word of a human entity such as a partnership, corporation or governmental agency.

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ONLINE APPENDIX: ONE'S WORD – DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS²

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A. ONE'S WORD DEFINED

We define a person's or other human entity's word as consisting of each of the following six elements:

Word-1. **What You Said:** Whatever you have said you will do or will not do, and in the case of do, by when you said you would do it.

Note: Requests Of You Become Your Word Unless You Have Timely Responded To Them: There are four legitimate canonical responses to a request, namely: accept, decline, counter offer, or promise to timely respond at some specific later time. If when you receive a request you do not timely respond to that request with one of the four legitimate responses, you have in effect accepted (given your word to) that request. That is to say, that request is part of your Word 1.

Note: In Contrast, Your Requests Of Others Do Not For You Become Their Word When They Have Not Responded In A Timely Fashion: The efficacy (workability) of the asymmetry between the Note directly above and this Note is explained below in Section B, Word-1.

Word-2. **What You Know:** Whatever you know to do or know not to do; and in the case of do, doing it as you know it is meant to be done and doing it on time – unless you have explicitly said the contrary to those who are counting on you.

Also see in Section B below, Word-2

Word-3. What Is Expected of You (that is, <u>expectations that are in fact unexpressed requests</u> of you): Whatever anyone with whom you desire a workable relationship expects you to do or not do, and in the case of do, doing it on time – unless you have explicitly said to the contrary. (Obviously, this includes what you have *allowed* others to expect of you even though you have not *said* that you could be expected to do it or not do it.)

For the rationale for this, see Section B below, Word-3 (including numbers1through 5).

Note: Your Expectations Of Others (Expectations That Are In Fact Unexpressed Requests) Are Not For You Their Word: What you expect of others and have not explicitly expressed to them (requested of them) is not for you part of their word as defined in this new model. Only those expectations you have of others that you have made clear to them by an explicit request is part of their word for you (unless they decline or counter-propose your request). The efficacy (workability) of the asymmetry between 1) others' expectations of you being (for you) your word, while 2) your

The content of this Appendix is a revised version of the definition of one's word contained in: Werner Erhard, Michael C. Jensen, and Steve Zaffron, "Integrity: A Positive Model that Incorporates the Normative Phenomena of Morality, Ethics, and Legality – Abridged" (March 7, 2010). http://ssrn.com/abstract=1542759

expectations of others are not (for you) their word, is explained below in Section B, Word-3 Note.

Word-4. What You Say Is So: Whenever you have given your word to others as to the existence of some thing or some state of the world (canonically, an assertion), your word includes you being willing to be held accountable that the others would find your evidence for what you have asserted walid for those others.³

Note: What You Knowingly Allow Others To Assume Or Believe: In addition to what you have outright asserted, your Word-4 includes anything you knowingly allow others to assume or believe. If you allow them to continue to assume or believe it, your word includes you being willing to be held accountable that they would find that your evidence (including any contrary evidence) for what you have allowed them to assume or believe also makes it valid for them.

Notice that at one end of the spectrum of Word-4 there is outright lying, while the other end of the spectrum involves simply allowing others to believe or assume something that is for you not valid.

Also see in Section B below, Word-4

Word-5. **What You Stand For:** What you stand for is a fundamental aspect of who you are for others. And, while perhaps less obvious, what you stand for is even a fundamental aspect of who you are for yourself. In each case, what you stand for is your word.

What you stand for (canonically, a declaration) is constituted by 1) who you hold yourself out to be for others (the way of being and acting you say others can or you allow others to count on from you), and 2) who you hold yourself to be for yourself (the way of being and acting you say or you assume you can count on from yourself, whether specifically articulated by you or not).

Given that your word as what you stand for with others and with yourself is a fundamental aspect of who you are, when your word as what you stand for lacks integrity (is less than whole, complete, unbroken, sound, in perfect condition), you as a person lack integrity. In a real sense you are less than whole, complete, unbroken, sound, in perfect condition as a person. This is true not only for a person, but just as true for any other human entity, e.g., a corporation, partnership, agency, or association.

Also see Section B. Word-5

Word-6. **Moral, Ethical And Legal Standards:** The <u>social</u> moral standards, the <u>group</u> ethical standards and the <u>governmental</u> legal standards of right and wrong or good and bad behavior in the society, groups and state in which one enjoys the benefits of membership are also part of one's word (what one is expected to do or not do) unless a) one has explicitly and publicly expressed an intention to not keep one or more of these standards, and b) one is willing to bear the costs of refusing to conform to these standards (the rules of the game one is in).

See: Searle, 1969, Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, especially for his discussion of assertions.

Also see Section B, Word-6

Note that what we have defined above is what constitutes a "person's or other human entity's word" – not what constitutes integrity. Integrity for a person or other human entity is that person's or that human entity's word (each of the six aspects of one's word spelled-out above) being whole, complete, unbroken, sound, in perfect condition.

B. CLARIFICATIONS OF "ONE'S WORD" AS DEFINED ABOVE

Word-1. Most people will not have a problem with Word-1 (*their word being constituted by that to which they have given their word*).

About The Two Notes In Word-1: However, many people will have a problem in Word-1 with the seeming "unfairness" of the asymmetry of Note B: Your requests of others *do not* become *for you* their word when they have not responded to your request in a timely fashion. Assuming that the non-response of another to your request is an acceptance on their part invites a breakdown in workability and a consequential decline in the opportunity for performance. Where another has not timely responded to your request, you avoid the chance of such a breakdown if you hold yourself accountable for obtaining a response. Note that integrity is a matter of the workability resulting from being whole and complete as to one's word, not an issue of fairness.

Conversely, others requests of you do become for you your word if you have not timely declined, counteroffered, or promised to timely respond at some specific later time. This asymmetry avoids the possible breakdown of the other assuming your acceptance of their request, when you might have intended to decline their request. Again, integrity is a matter of the workability resulting from being whole and complete as to one's word, not an issue of fairness.

- Word-2. Some people may have a problem with Word-2 (their word also being constituted by what they *know to do and doing it as it was meant to be done*), because there might be situations in which they don't know what to do, or may not know how it is meant to be done. If one does not know what to do, and one *does not know* that one does not know what to do, that does not fit the definition of one's word as stated in Word-2, (*doing what you know to do*). However, if one does not know what to do and one *knows* that one does not know, that does fit the definition of one's Word-2, and explicitly saying that one does not know what to do would be a part of one's word, otherwise the other would be left with the belief that one does know what to do. Likewise with knowing how it is meant to be done.
- Word-3. Many people will have a problem with their word being constituted by Word-3 (whatever is expected of you by those with whom you desire a workable relationship unless you have said to the contrary). Of course if someone has expressed his or her expectation of me in the form of an explicit request, I can accept, decline or counteroffer that expectation no problem with that. It is being obligated by expectations that have not been expressed explicitly, and certainly those about which one is unaware, with which many people will have a problem. When these are also considered as being part of one's word, it

occurs for many as wrong that one should be obligated to fulfill the unexpressed expectations that others have of one. There are five points to be considered

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- 1. In this model you are not obligated to fulfill others expectations of you. However, if you do not either decline the expectations of others or fulfill them there will be a breakdown in your opportunity for performance in the relationship.
- 2. Suppose someone has expectations (expectations that are in fact unexpressed requests) of another. For better or for worse, what is expected of one is expected of one; in life there is no escaping expectations. And if there is an expectation, and you do not either meet that expectation, or uncover it and explicitly declare that you will not meet it, the outcome is much the same as having given your word and not kept that word. That is, there will be a breakdown and your opportunity for performance in that relationship will decline. When one's word in a relationship is less than whole, complete, unbroken, sound, in perfect condition, one's opportunity for performance in that relationship declines.
- 3. The notion of it being wrong or right (or bad or good, or unfair or fair) that you are affected by the unannounced expectations of others with whom you desire to have a workable relationship is a normative value judgment, and in this new model of integrity, integrity is devoid of such normative value judgments. Whether you like it or not is irrelevant from the standpoint of integrity, and therefore of workability and performance. Given the obvious impact of unmet expectations on the workability of relationships, recognizing that the expectations of others matter (treating all expectations of those with whom you desire to have a workable relationship as part of your word unless you have explicitly declared you will not meet them), your integrity will increase. When integrity increases (that is, your word is more fully whole, complete, unbroken, sound, in perfect condition), the workability of your life increases, and your opportunity for performance increases. One follows the other, willy-nilly (i.e. willingly or unwillingly).
- 4. In light of the above two points, it follows that for a person's word to be whole and complete and to thereby create a life with high workability and high performance, one has to be "cause in the matter" of what is expected of one. By looking at life from the perspective that I am cause in the matter (a declaration, not an assertion⁴) of what people expect of me, I am then led to be highly sensitive, and motivated to ferret out those expectations and to take action to manage them. If I am straight with those who have expectations that I will not fulfill, my word will be intact, life will have greater workability, and my performance (however defined) will be greater.
- 5. Expectations and requests of you are your word only if you have failed to decline them. Consequently, when declining an expectation of you, you do

⁴ See: Searle (1969)

not have to deal with any mess that arises as a result of your decline. Note that there may well be a mess in the relationship as a human system as a result of your decline. On the other hand, you will have continuing messes, and misidentify the cause of those messes, that arise from not being straight with those who have expectations that you will not fulfill. Speaking about the impact on one as a person of not being straight with those who have expectations that you will not fulfill, as the old adage says: "If you can't say 'no', you can't really say 'yes'." While not needing to do so as a matter of integrity, you would be wise to do something to deal with the mess that results from your decline. If you ignore the mess, the relationship itself (a human system) will be less than whole, complete, unbroken, sound, in perfect condition.

In summary, one's word as we have defined it in this new model is not a matter of being obligated or not (or even of being willing or not willing) to fulfill the expectations (expectations that are in fact unexpressed requests) of others. If there is an expectation, there is an expectation, and if you do not fulfill the expectation and have not said that you will not fulfill the expectation the consequence on workability and performance is the same as that to which you have explicitly given your word. This is true even though you have a justification for not fulfilling the expectation. For example, like it or not a person's performance is often judged against expectations (unexpressed requests), even if that person has never agreed to, or was not even aware of, those expectations (requests). Thus, to create workability with those with whom you desire to have a relationship you must clean up any mess created in their lives that result from their expectations of you that you do not meet and that you have not explicitly declined. This is what it means to take yourself to be cause in the matter of expectations of you.

Word-3

Note

Your Expectations (unexpressed requests) of others Are Not The Word Of Others: There is an asymmetry here: As we said above, your word *includes* the unexpressed expectations of others unless you formally decline them; yet your unexpressed expectations are *not* the word of others. Thus you cannot hold others accountable for fulfilling your unexpressed expectations. Indeed, holding others accountable for fulfilling your unexpressed expectations will result in a diminution of workability and performance, a consequence of your being out of integrity. This asymmetry – in effect an instance of "what's good for the goose is <u>not</u> good for the gander" – is required to be whole and complete in one's word with oneself and with others.

Word-4. With respect to Word-4, some people will have a problem that one's word as to the existence of some thing or some state of the world includes being accountable that the other would find valid for themselves the evidence that one

had for asserting something to be the case. Of course there are times when one says that this or that is so, or not so, but one would not be willing to be held to account for having evidence that the other would find valid. In such cases, one's word would include acknowledging that, and perhaps saying what level of evidence one does have: for example when one *assumes* that something is the case.

- Word-5. The explicit content of what you stand for is not a matter of your integrity. However big or small what you stand for, if you deal with what you stand for with full integrity, you have the maximum opportunity for living up to that stand. Integrity is determined by simply living up to (living consistent with) what you said you stand for, and when you will not or have not, you honor your word by saying that you will not or have not, and by when you will or that you never will, and you clean up the mess your not having lived up to what you said you stand for with those who were counting on you. However, you should be aware that to a large extent the magnitude of what you stand for determines the size of your opportunity set for performance in the world, with others, and with yourself performance defined in whatever way you wish to define it.
- Word-6. The moral, ethical and legal standards of the society, group and governmental entities in which one enjoys membership are a part of one's word. Word-6 recontextualizes the moral, ethical and legal standards of the society, group and governmental entities in which one enjoys membership from something inflicted on me someone else's will or in the language of this new model "someone else's word" to *my word*, thus, leaving me with the power to honor my word, either by keeping it, or saying I will not and accepting the consequences. As *my* word, I can enter with power (rather than force) the discussion about just what those standards should be.

A detailed discussion of the issues associated with defining one's word is available on SSRN at the following:

Erhard, Werner and Jensen, Michael C., A Positive Theory of the Normative Virtues (Chapters 1 through 3) (December 7, 2011). Harvard Business School NOM Unit Working Paper No. 12-007; Barbados Group Working Paper No. 11-06. Available at SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=1906328

Werner Erhard, Michael C. Jensen, Steve Zaffron, "Integrity: A Positive Model that Incorporates the Normative Phenomena of Morality, Ethics and Legality" http://ssrn.com/abstract=920625

Werner Erhard, Michael C. Jensen, and Steve Zaffron, "Integrity: A Positive Model that Incorporates the Normative Phenomena of Morality, Ethics, and Legality – Abridged" (March 7, 2010). http://ssrn.com/abstract=1542759

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