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## Capitalism Revisited: The Interplay of Motivation, Inspiration and Risk

Duncan Goose  
*Global Ethics Limited*

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*Many great business leaders have had childhood experiences and been exposed to certain behaviors early on in their lives which inevitably affect their business decision-making skills in their later years. Family members, social events, school instructors, friends and work colleagues may have intentionally or even unwittingly created an impressionable affect upon the future entrepreneur, predisposing that person to an astute awareness of binding social obligations. It is that certain individual, imbued with respect, understanding and benevolence toward others coupled with a strong work ethic, who embraces moments of intuitive perception with a newfound and all-encompassing passion and zeal, and moves outside of his or her comfort zone, prepared to act, risk and lead.*

# **Capitalism Revisited: The Interplay of Motivation, Inspiration and Risk**

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DUNCAN GOOSE, CEO, GLOBAL ETHICS LIMITED, FOUNDER “ONE” WATER CO., LONDON, UK

## **Introduction**

### **(Editor’s Notes)**

When one thinks of benevolent capitalism, thoughts of Andrew Carnegie and David Rockefeller of yesteryear and more recently, Bill Gates, William Randal Hurst III and Warren Buffett, emerge. These individuals are pillars of the business world who all emphasized the obligation of bettering society with one’s acquired wealth. But how did these men all arrive at this common conclusion, that successful business people should serve as stewards and trustees for the public good?

Many people, during the course of their respective lifetimes, experience life-changing moments. Some might be near-death events and others might involve troubling world crises. Regardless, not every person responds in like manner to incidences of particular influence, whether latent or conspicuous. Therefore, it is necessary, in learning from values-based business leaders, to examine the sociological and psychological makeup of that particular individual and determine what makes him or her “tick” and respond to that exposure in a meaningful way. So, by examining a person’s background and relationships both central to and external from that individual’s being, perhaps a common thread can be uncovered.

## Case Examples:

**Bill, Melinda and Mary Gates:** The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is the leading example of acquired wealth generated from superior business acumen and distributed in large increments towards the end of the business man or woman's lifetime. But is this just an attempt to create a legacy while gaining financially beneficial personal tax strategies? Or did the familial, religious, environmental, educational and/or social underpinnings of these business people shape their anthropologist direction?

In the case of the founding of the Gates Foundation, an interesting story has emerged. Melinda French, (n/k/a Melinda Gates), a Roman Catholic, was once an employee of Microsoft. In 1993, she met her employer's co-founder, Bill Gates. In that year, she traveled to South Africa on safari and was struck by the fact that the local women there were all walking or running without shoes to the nearest village to sell vegetables. This experience determined what she would do next in her life and the people – most notably her soon-to-be husband – she would influence. Additionally, when Bill and Melinda married in 1994, on the eve of Melinda's bridal shower, Bill's mother Mary Maxwell Gates – the first female King County United Way President and a former University of Washington Board of Regents member who fought hard to divest the latter organization's investments in South Africa to protest that government's system of Apartheid – handed her a note which read: "To those who are given much, much is expected." This was a self-proclaimed epiphinal experience for the young couple (Lohr and Strom, 2006).

**Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream:** Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield have their roots in the New York City area and each was raised in the Jewish faith. Their respective parents inculcated within them the expectation to treat their fellow human beings with benevolence and respect. In the early 1970s, Jerry attended Oberlin College in Ohio. The Kent State University shootings committed by the National Guard against defenseless students in May of 1970 – only miles away from Oberlin – became an epiphinal experience for these business partners, leading them to commit to giving back to society as their business grew (A&E Television Networks, 2005).

**Ray Anderson:** Ray Anderson, founder and CEO of Interface, Inc., was raised in a Southern Baptist environment. In 1973, he founded the now billion-dollar, largest carpet making industry in the world. In 1994, Mr. Anderson read the book "The Ecology of Commerce" by Paul Hawkins. This book constituted his life-changing experience, which precipitated the formation of a company committee assembled to discover how much material was being extracted from the earth to generate one dollar of profit for the company. After Mr. Anderson discovered the staggering statistics of his company's resource usage, he proclaimed that he was a "thief and plunderer of the earth." Several years later, he wrote the book, "Mid-Course Correction" which addresses his commitment to transforming Interface into a sustainable enterprise. (Achbar, Mark et al, 2005).

**The story of Duncan Goose provides yet another example of the interplay of business success, world situation awareness, and commitment to philanthropy. The following exposition is based upon an interview conducted with Mr. Goose from his home in London, UK, on October 10, 2008.**

## **A Venture Capitalist with a Commitment to Stewardship**

Duncan Goose was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in a well-to-do family consisting of his parents and two younger sisters. His father was a medical surgeon and his mother a housewife. During Duncan's adolescence, his father was offered a lucrative position to practice medicine in Buffalo, New York. He rejected this offer with the full knowledge that he most likely would have become a millionaire in no time. However, with universal health care firmly established throughout the United Kingdom, his father believed it much more important to serve the public interest than to accumulate individual wealth.

Even more impressionable on Duncan during his early years was his relationship with his paternal grandfather, a farmer by trade. His grandmother had died at an early age and so his grandfather was left to raise their four children on his own while maintaining farming operations. He later sold his farm while he was still in his 50s, but did not retire. He went on into public service and subsequently became mayor of a small town in northern England. But most importantly, Duncan's grandfather continued to champion the needs of the underdog. More specifically, the "underdog" in his immediate world consisted of the inhabitants of the rural, agrarian communities. He fought to ensure that these small towns were provided equal access to housing, medicinal, and educational services as were prevalent in major urban centers. Duncan further describes him as demonstrating "an amazing work ethic, even at the age of 83. He always had a sense of fairness about him." Duncan believes that this sense of fairness was shaped by how he had witnessed the treatment of German POWs during World War II. "Everyone knew they were conscripted and really didn't know what was going on. They were treated as members of our family."

Duncan's maternal grandmother also greatly impacted his life. She was an ambassador for Unilever (the multi-national corporation which eventually purchased Ben & Jerry's) and served as a volunteer for "Meals on Wheels," often assisting people much younger than she. She also stressed respect for and generosity toward others, and, as Duncan further describes, living the biblical phrase: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Duncan was born into a family who largely ascribed to the Church of England. At the age of ten, he was sent to a boarding school one hundred miles away from his home. While he states that he hated the first six months of being there — primarily due to the highly structured day and his own home sickness — "you could not have pulled me out from that school after that point." The boarding school was run by religious representatives of the Church of England. The tenets of the Church of England were thoroughly infused into the school's prescribed academic instruction.

When Duncan was 17, he entered college. He attempted to secure a business internship in London during his first summer break. He was initially rejected. But after repeated attempts, he secured a position with an advertising firm and decided not to return back to school to finish his business degree. The people he worked with were like a family to him and provided him with all the incentive he needed to remain there. "And of course, being a young lad in London, with a good paying job, I must admit I did my share of partying."

## **Impact of Religion**

With respect to religious influences that may have shaped his character, Duncan describes his father as a man of faith who still attends Church of England services, but only on certain

days like Armistice Day in November, and then on Christmas and Easter. His paternal grandfather, who was an instrumental figure in Duncan’s upbringing, became a more regular churchgoer after his wife died. Duncan’s boarding school education was rooted in Church of England teachings, where religious instruction was taught six days a week and the principle of respect for all people was inculcated by example. At this school, Duncan recalls a diversity in the student population, children from all socioeconomic walks of life as well as international students, several of whom he specifically recalls as emanating from Nigeria, Korea and China.

In describing himself, Duncan states: “I would not refer to myself as being a religious man. I cannot definitively state if any religious tenets that I was formally taught or to which I was exposed – either at home or at school – had a bearing on whom I am today. I simply don’t know for sure. When I am asked what I believe in, my response is ‘I don’t disbelieve in anything.’”

**“When I am asked what I believe in, my response is ‘I don’t disbelieve in anything.’”**

### Impact of the Work World

While Duncan was working for the advertising firm in London, he developed a very strong work ethic that he states still defines him today. “I tend to rise and respond well to immediate challenges and almost impossible deadlines. For example, not too long ago, a proposed business transaction first appeared to me to be hopeless to secure for our company; I spent three days not eating or sleeping and made it happen. Perhaps it was then that my upbringing coupled with my work ethic propelled me to respond differently to a series of epiphal moments experienced later in life with such great passion.

From 1998-2000, Duncan took a temporary leave of absence from his place of employment with no concrete plans of what would happen to him upon his return. “I bought a motorbike and fulfilled my life’s dream of riding around the world. When I traveled across Honduras, Hurricane Mitch hit this Central American nation with immense force and devastation, leading to the deaths of 30,000 people and property losses approximating \$4 billion. I helped with the cleanup efforts to the best of my ability but it became very obvious that most of the damage was irreversible. After I returned to London and resumed my job responsibilities, I was sitting in a pub downtown with several friends. One patron mentioned a statistic which I regard as another epiphal moment in my life. He asked us if we were aware that 1 billion people in this world had no access to clean water. That was it for me. I risked everything by leaving my job, and liquidating all of my assets to invest in a new business enterprise: the production, manufacture, and distribution of ‘One Water.’”



Duncan further explains that competition between other bottled water companies was challenging, but with his business background and work ethic and with a strong support system, the company was able to successfully permeate the markets in the UK, in Europe, in Malaysia, in

Australia, and is now emerging as a competitive product in US markets. “I decided that after the payment of expenses and the cost of doing business that I would donate 100% of the net sales of this product to an NGO which offered the world a clean water initiative and was sustainable. This is when I discovered Playpumps International. Therefore, all of the net profits of ‘One Water’ go to Playpumps. I use the motto: ‘You drink; they drink.’”

With respect to how Bill Gates understands capitalism and social responsibility, Duncan acknowledges that he would both agree and disagree with Gates’s ideology respecting the interaction between business undertakings and philanthropic endeavors, stating that: “I am a capitalist in that I have developed an industry, fought competition, developed emerging markets, and marketed this particular product for world wide distribution. But the profits are earmarked for social change. I am not like the Bill Gateses and Warren Buffets of this world who give away masses of money towards the end of their lives; I don’t work in this dramatic fashion, rather I believe that as money is being made; it should be given away simultaneously. I have spoken at conventions like Path North, which is an association of very wealthy business men and women, primarily from Canada and the United States. My philosophy of giving away money is not necessarily shared by them although they have made late transitions in their lifestyles again after epiphinal moments, the majority being near-death experiences.”

In describing how to function as a benevolent capitalist, Duncan explains: “When I say I am affecting social change and doing what is ‘right’ I can never be sure what is right as ‘right’ is a relative term. I believe that once an opportunity is presented, many questions should be asked and researched before any action is taken to prevent adverse consequences or an unanticipated backlash. This is my greatest fear. But it doesn’t cause me to refrain from taking action with the possibility that the consequences of my ‘doing good’ might actually result in unforeseen harm to the recipients of my benevolence. No one knows for sure. All I can say is that I give it my best shot and hope for the best. If I can help just one child, I know I’ve done a good thing.”

**Risking yourself and your assets for what you believe to be beneficial to society is risking outside of one’s comfort zone. You must accept that you are not going to get everything right; just minimize what you get wrong and give it your best shot.”**

**— Duncan Goose**

Duncan thoroughly identifies with 20<sup>th</sup> century French writer and

theologian Jacques Ellul’s ideological statement: “to live is to risk” (modifying Soren Kierkegaard’s well-known idiom “to live is to risk...dying”), but cautions that this way of living and doing business “does not mean that each person should take uncalculated risks. That type of risk-taking can lead to permanent harm to all participants involved. The risk I am speaking of is one of well-reasoned calculations, but definitely going outside of your comfort zone. Carry a card in your pocket that reads ‘if you want it, go for it.’ Try everything once. Take a chance. I’ve done amazing things and am lucky to be alive. Although I have sustained injuries, I have never been discouraged. Always be prepared to make the jump. If you have that foothold already, you should have no regrets.”

## On Developing Countries

For Duncan, the subject of assisting third world communities is especially complex. He emphasizes that when coming into these underdeveloped communities, one must first partner with the local residents and work as a team to combat or resolve identifiable issues adversely affecting that community. Following this mindset, Duncan chose Playpumps International as the recipient NGO of his company's net profits. "The playpump is an invention that involves the community in an intergenerational way and provides local employment to maintain each water system. It is a truly sustainable operation. Family planning, on the other hand, is too complex to address without involving a specialist such as a socio-philanthropist."

## The Ingredients of Creative Capitalism

Motivation, risk, a strong sense of work ethic and a predisposition to benevolence. These characteristics of an individual – especially one exposed to a life-changing experience – produce our most formidable, principled business leaders of today. Duncan Goose is certainly one of those leaders. He describes his life as "a series of awakenings – you live your life when you live it backwards. Riding my motorbike around the world allowed me to expand my rather limited international travel experiences and to witness things that I may have otherwise never encountered." This, in turn, has changed the way he views life and conducts his business.

In summarizing his own method of pursuing capitalistic ventures while remaining socially responsible, Duncan has shaped a unique ideology:

***"To make profit is the remit of the businessman, to give back is the remit of the philanthropist, but the two need not be mutually exclusive."***

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## Biography

Duncan Goose, a native of Scotland, is the CEO of London-based Global Ethics Limited with offices in Washington, D.C., London and Australia. Duncan is also the founder and owner of the “One” bottled water company, situated in the U.K., with a worldwide distribution base.

In 2004, Duncan left his position as a board member and development director of WPP plc, a world leader in marketing communications, and established the not-for profit organization, “Global Ethics Limited” with the principal aim of raising funds for sustainable projects in developing countries. In 2005, Global Ethics launched the “One” bottled water business. The net profits derived from the sale of “One” water are dedicated to programs which provide clean water solutions in Africa. The concept of “One” water began in a completely innocuous way when Duncan, between 1998 and 2000, fulfilled a life-long ambition of riding a motorbike around the world. During this time, Duncan witnessed first-hand the devastation caused in Honduras by Hurricane Mitch which precipitated the establishment of a fundraising program which helped to reconstruct 13 villages. This experience radically changed his view of the world and the way of conducting business. He soon realized just how a little bit of ingenuity and support could drastically improve peoples’ lives forever.

After learning that more than 1 billion people in world have no access to clean drinking water and that approximately 2 million people die each year from diseases related to unsafe water, the concept of “One” was realized. In the first year of trading, “One” donated £1 million with the aim to donate £5 million annually directly through “One” water sales. Currently, these proceeds have been helping to finance the manufacture of roundabout water systems powered by PlayPumps, a unique water pumping system in which children play on roundabouts that pump fresh, clean water from deep underground aquifers into storage tanks for use by the whole community.

Since “One” was launched at Live8 in 2005, it has helped install 899 roundabout pumps in South Africa, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zambia – enough to supply 1.2 million people with clean drinking water from a sustainable source. This has changed the lives for many African children who now have the opportunity to go to school rather than spend the majority of their time collecting water and has additionally had a significant impact on reducing the prevalence of illness and death from contaminated water.