[Introductory section for Wayne Eastman, Why Business Ethics Matters: The Logic of Moral Emotions in Game Theory; the book is under contract with Palgrave Macmillan]

In this book, I rely on an array of scientific, philosophical, and practical sources that I believe contain important insights into human nature in both its universal form and in its culturally and individually specific forms in modern organizations. My aim is to blend respect for science and humanism, for theory and for practice, and for a consensual, moderate spirit and an oppositionist, radical spirit. The chapters of the book are paired, with the odd chapters devoted primarily to moral emotions game theory, and the even chapters to business practice and to normative philosophy. The exposition is divided into three parts. The first part deals with Harmony games, the second with moral emotions, and the third with business ethics as a way of solving social games.

Part I: Harmony

This part presents a perspective on human beings as intuitive creators of shared interest Harmony games. In the first chapter, We’re Better than We Think,* I suggest that humans excel at solving social games intuitively through interpreting their ambiguous feelings in Harmony terms, and relate that claim to evolutionary psychology and the Social Intuitionist Model of human morality. In the second chapter, Living in Imperfect Harmony,* I consider connections between the Harmony perspective and practical questions of how we teach, learn, manage, and lead our lives. I address ethical dilemmas in business, and suggest the value of creating new Harmony games as an alternative to either acquiescing in bad Harmony games or defying them. On the philosophical side, I suggest that a Harmony perspective on human nature supports a simultaneously optimistic, self-critical, and self-improving ethics.

Part II: The Four Temperaments

This part advances a modern, game-theoretic version of the classical perspective on ethics as living in accord with healthy human nature. In the third chapter, Why Four Temperaments Are Better than One, I contend that a mutable mix of happy, sympathetic, proud, and ashamed emotions and intuitions helps people solve social games effectively, while a fixed mix of calculation and any one emotion, including sympathy, fails. I relate my claim to the classical Greek, Roman, and Middle Eastern idea of the four temperaments, and to similar ideas
in South Asia, East Asia, and other parts of the world, to applied game theory, and to behavioral economics. In the fourth chapter, Moral Emotions at Work, I describe how managers, employees, and others who want to help their co-workers, their organizations, and society encounter their own versions of the Prisoner’s Dilemma, the Stag Hunt, and the Battle of the Sexes, and explain how we can draw on moral emotions to help solve the dilemmas of everyday life. Drawing on Laozi and other classical sources, I suggest appreciation of our divided, emotional nature, and contend that skepticism in regard to overarching ethical theories is in order.

Part III: A New Understanding of Business Ethics

The central idea of this part is that business ethics can be understood as a particular, highly productive approach to playing Harmony and other social games. In Chapter Five, Business Ethics is Much Stronger than We Think, I explain business ethics as a phlegmatic, pragmatic way of solving social games that channels and disciplines moral emotions, ratchets up pressure to work, and advances broadly shared trust and leadership. I explain how the moral emotions approach gives a clear answer to the proverbial question of whether ethics pays: Business ethics pays, in spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs. Under the understanding I propose, business ethics is a constitutive component of the material order of modern business, not a weak voice of dissent or acquiescence. In the final chapter, Appreciating the Alternatives to Business Ethics, I suggest that we are divided psychically now, as in the past, into a phlegmatic side manifested in business ethics, a choleric side manifested in the egalitarian, anti-oppression ethics ascendant in the hunter-gather era, an ashamed side manifested in the hierarchical ethics ascendant in the agricultural era, and a sanguine, sociable, happy-go-lucky side. I argue for the value of all of these sides, and consider how we can appreciate not only business ethics but also alternative ethical modes in our work roles, and the other roles of our lives.

The Theoretic, Practical, and Personal Sides of the Book

In my judgment, the moral emotions approach to understanding human nature that is the central theme of the book needs to combine social scientific theory, normative theory, practical applications, and connections to personal realities. One major part of the book deals with moral emotions game theory, and its relation to moral psychology and evolutionary psychology. A
second part deals with “what shall we do with our lives” normative ethics, which for all its ethereality is also highly practical, or ought to be. A third, applied part deals with ethical challenges as people live and experience them in organizations, and with teaching, researching, and learning business ethics. A fourth part is personal. If there is value in the teachings here, it is only because I have been well taught. This book is dedicated to six professors, beginning with my father, whom I have been lucky enough to know, to look up to, and to be shaped by.

*Included in packet.