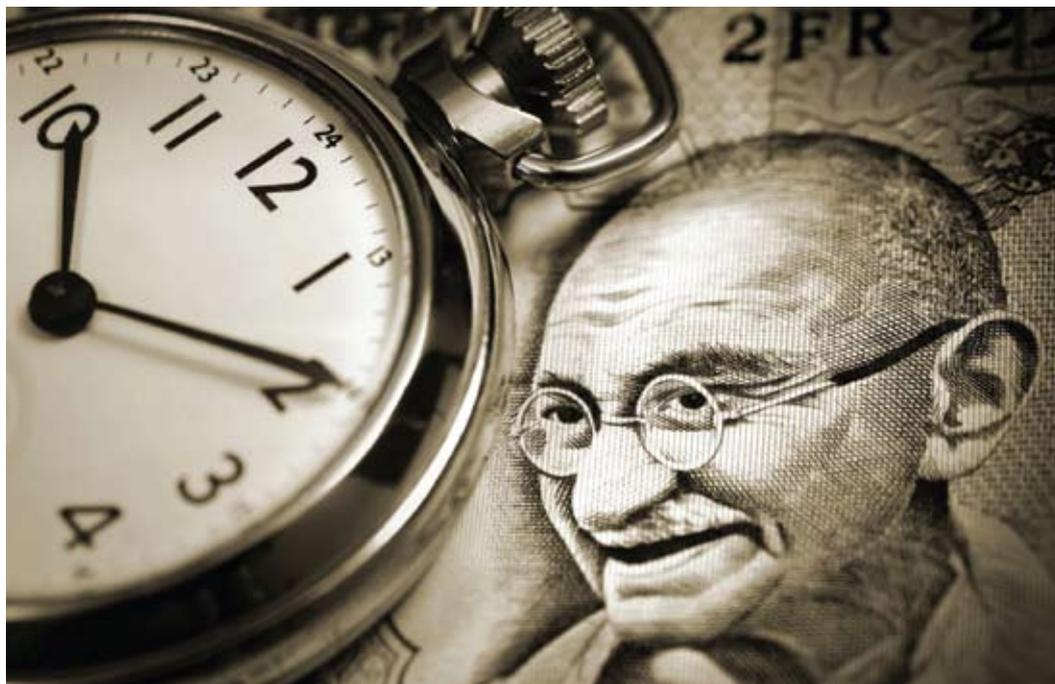




DON'T DO GOOD!

Fredrik Hären



Don't do good.

How many business leaders wake up in the morning and say to themselves: "Well, today I am going to be as evil as I possibly can."

Not many I think.

I am sure that even the leaders of drug cartels in Mexico - whom we can cynically call 'business leaders' - are able to give what they consider to be a good reason for why they are doing what they do.

They might say: "We are not forcing anyone to use the drugs. We are only here to make sure supply meets demand..." or alternatively, they say, "If we don't

do it someone else will." Or, "The US has created a structure that makes it impossible for us Mexicans to make a good living in any other way." As far as cartels are concerned, the success of their business assures that their children are provided for.

Members of the organisation Sea Shepherd may think that whale-hunting is one of the most evil of human activities. In contrast a captain on a Japanese whale-hunting-ship will argue that the practice is a long-running cultural tradition; that it is only natural. He will call it a good thing to do.

Similarly, there are people who will call the fight for free abortion one of the most important struggles of the 20th century. In opposition to them, there



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are people in the US who will plant bombs at abortion clinics because, for them, an abortion equals murder.

Both sides are fighting for their cause fully convinced that they are fighting for what is Right. For what is Good.

And it is because of the views of fanatics and extremists that I am afraid - or at least very, very sceptical - when I hear companies and organisations bragging about being 'a good company.'

When people are overly convinced of the moral uprightness of what they are doing, for me, alarm bells go off.

It is true that power corrupts. I think it is equally true that people - and organisations - who call themselves 'good' are in a position where they risk being blinded by their own good.

Am I suggesting that companies and organisations should not strive to good and do well? Is it wrong that business is finally starting to look at social responsibility in a responsible way? Am I opposed to the trend of companies coming round to the idea that they have corporate social responsibility?

Of course not.

But it is important that the slogans do not stand in the way of what is really important.

Instead of always trying to achieve what we think is 'good' or 'correct', perhaps we should instead try to focus on doing something which in the end is less focused on ourselves. Let's be a bit less selfish.

One of my favourite movie scenes is from the film *Gandhi*, the biopic about the great Indian leader. In that scene, Mahatma Gandhi meets a Christian man who is devastated after having killed a child. The dialogue is:

Nabari: I'm going to Hell! I killed a child! I smashed his head against a wall.

Gandhi: Why?

Nabari: Because they killed my son! The Muslims killed my son!

Gandhi: I know a way out of Hell. Find a child, a child whose mother and father have been killed and raise him as your own. Only be sure that he is a Muslim and that you raise him as one.

The idea of being unselfish may not be as catchy a sound bite as the idea of being good, but I think it is a better goal to strive for. One thing is certain: at a time when we have become efficient at using the earth's resources in a completely unsustainable manner, the value of putting aside one's personal wants and desires is far greater.

Unselfishness is perhaps the most beautiful of human traits. Unfortunately it is as rare as it is beautiful. And as important right now as it is rare.