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Pioneers in business ethics: Michael Davis

Michael Davis is Professor of Philosophy and Senior Fellow in the Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions at the Illinois Institute of Technology, in Chicago, Illinois, USA. Davis was interviewed by **Gretchen Winter** and **Patricia Werhane**. Winter is Clinical Assistant Professor of Business Administration, Gies College of Business, and Adjunct Professor, College of Law and Grainger College of Engineering City Scholars Program, at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in Illinois, USA. Werhane is an Adjunct Teaching Professor of Business Administration and Center for Professional Responsibility Faculty Fellow, also at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and also serves as a visiting scholar at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, USA.

A note on this series: In the last 40 years or so, an entirely new academic and occupational niche for practicing ethics in business has emerged. Many of the original academic business ethicists came to the field through philosophy, then brought their thinking and research into business schools. Many of the original practitioners came to the field through the law and remain close to the practice of law.

In an effort to preserve and share this knowledge and practical experience, the Center for Professional Responsibility in Business and Society at the University of Illinois Gies College of Business has filmed and transcribed the oral histories of these pioneers and early adopters. To date, almost 50 academics and practitioners have been interviewed, each with 25 years or more of experience in the field of business ethics. This series aims to provide a better understanding of how the business ethics field and profession have evolved over the decades, through the interviewees' own experiences. This interview was condensed for clarity and brevity. This interview is loosely based on the Business Ethics Pioneer interview that took place earlier, and updates have been made. For more details on this series, contact Gretchen Winter (gwinter@illinois.edu).

GW & PW: What's your personal backstory?

MD: My entire career has been in academia. But unlike many of the academics who work in business or professional ethics, I came to the field through political philosophy, not moral theory. I was (and still am) primarily interested in how groups should make decisions, rather than in how individuals should make decisions. I began with an examination of classical social contract theory, not with John Rawls and all that, but with John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. And I've kept that interest for my entire career.

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