UNSETTLEDNESS IN DELAWARE CORPORATE LAW: BUSINESS JUDGMENT RULE, CORPORATE PURPOSE*

BY LYMAN JOHNSON**

ABSTRACT

This Article revisits two fundamental issues in corporate law. One—the central role of the business judgment rule in fiduciary litigation—involves a great deal of seemingly settled law, while the other—is there a mandated corporate purpose—has very little law. Using the emergent question of whether the business judgment rule should be used in analyzing officer and controlling shareholder fiduciary duties, the latter issue having recently been addressed by Chancellor Strine in the widely-heralded MFW decision, this Article proposes a fundamental rethinking of the rule’s analytical preeminence. For a variety of reasons, it is suggested that fiduciary duties should be made more prominent and the business judgment rule should be dramatically deemphasized. The policy rationales for the rule are sound, but they have no relevance for shareholders and introduce needless complexity. For directors, those rationales do not apply in the loyalty setting, and in the care setting, can be achieved by recalling simply that there is no substance to judicial review in that context.

As to corporate purpose, the Article advocates that Delaware law permit a pluralistic approach in the for-profit corporate sector. Long agnostic about ultimate corporate objective, Delaware law may have turned unnecessarily toward a strict shareholder primacy focus in the 2010 eBay decision. To bring clarification and to foster flexibility, Professor Johnson recommends a legislative default provision, with an opt-out feature. This feature should be in the business corporation statute itself. Delaware’s new benefit corporation law laudably advances the goal of institutional pluralism, but does so at the ironic risk

---

*This Article is adapted from the 28th Annual Francis G. Pileggi Distinguished Lecture in Law, delivered at Widener University School of Law and at the DuPont Hotel, on November 9, 2012. The Author wishes to thank the Pileggi family for supporting this lecture and all those at Widener University who assisted in making necessary arrangements, and the judges, lawyers, professors, and students who attended, asked tough questions and provided helpful comments.

**Robert O. Bentley Professor of Law, Washington and Lee University School of Law; LeJeune Distinguished Chair in Law, University of St. Thomas (Minneapolis) School of Law. The Frances Lewis Law Center at Washington and Lee University School of Law and the University of St. Thomas (Minneapolis) provided financial support for Professor Johnson.
of reinforcing a belief that business corporations themselves are legally permitted only to maximize profits. Judges in a democratic society should not dictate institutional goals.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 406
II. RETRENCHING THE BUSINESS JUDGMENT RULE .............. 410
   A. The Settled Business Judgment Rule for Corporate
      Directors ................................................................. 411
   B. The Unsettled Issue of the Business Judgment Rule and Corporate
      Officers ................................................................. 413
   C. The Unsettling Issue of the Business Judgment Rule and
      Controlling Shareholders ........................................... 415
      1. The Appearance of the Business Judgment Rule ........ 416
      2. The Suppression of the Business Judgment Rule ........ 418
      3. The Possible Re-Emergence of the Business Judgment
         Rule ................................................................. 419
   D. The Business Judgment Rule and Review of Director
      Conduct ................................................................. 423
III. DOES (OR SHOULD) CORPORATE LAW MANDATE CORPORATE
     PURPOSE? ........................................................................... 432
   A. Background ............................................................. 432
   B. The eBay Decision ................................................... 439
      1. Craigslist and Its Investors ..................................... 439
      2. The Court's Analysis ............................................. 441
      3. The Aftermath of eBay ........................................... 444
IV. CONCLUSION ................................................................. 450

I. INTRODUCTION

Apart from the Justices on the United States Supreme Court, it is hard to imagine that any judges in our country receive closer scrutiny than those serving on Delaware's courts. This is due to their central role, historically, in expounding corporate law and, more recently, in fleshing

---

1 Michael J. Maimone, Causes of Action, in DELAWARE SUPREME COURT GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY 1951-2001, at 53, 57 (The Honorable Justice Randy J. Holland & Helen L. Winslow eds., 2001) (“It is beyond dispute that the Supreme Court of Delaware is regarded as the nation's leading arbiter of issues of corporate law.”).
out the law of noncorporate business entities. Numerous dimensions of their business law jurisprudence have been scrupulously analyzed. These include, to note just a few, the longstanding "race" debate over state and federal rivalry with Delaware—both as to competitors' possible influence on Delaware law and also as to the preferred forum for chartering and for adjudicating disputes; the supposed substantive superiority (or inferiority) of Delaware law as compared to other states' laws; and the different philosophies underlying its noncorporate and

---


3 See infra notes 4-7 and accompanying text.


corporate decisions. And of course, there is the age-old question of whether, in a particular case or line of cases, Delaware "got it right." Or, as to an issue yet to be resolved, speculation as to whether they will "get it right."

This Article takes up certain issues in Delaware corporate law that are, as yet, unsettled. But the Article also examines some issues in Delaware's law that, although ostensibly settled, nonetheless, to this Author at least, remain unsettling and worth revisiting. The Article addresses issues in Delaware's substantive corporate law itself. It does not tackle issues about that law (or Delaware's courts) in relation to procedural matters or to developments or institutions outside Delaware.

The aim—in this ideal venue for exchanging ideas among the bench, bar, and academic communities that, along with the General Assembly, comprise the commonwealth of Delaware corporate law—is to raise some first-order questions. Ultimately, judges must express the resolution of fundamental issues in doctrinal terms, their lingua franca. Consequently, this Article will also attend to matters of legal doctrine in Delaware law. The larger point, however, is about Delaware corporate law as a highly adaptive and dynamic social institution, notwithstanding the apparently settled nature of core precepts.

Delaware's leadership in corporate law is not just the result of its well-established body of precedent, its highly regarded judiciary, or its supposed tilt (or lack thereof, depending on one's viewpoint) toward management or investors. Delaware's bench also has the advantages of having so many opportunities to address critical corporate law issues, the certainty of immediate and sustained scrutiny and feedback from lawyers and scholars, and the deft lever of equity that permits judges, as a lawmaking mechanism, to stand between the categorical edicts of a

Carney and Shepherd's analysis about the indeterminacy of Delaware law).

7See Lyman Johnson, Delaware's Non-waivable Duties, 91 B.U. L. REV. 701, 705-08 (2011) (describing the more contractarian approach of Delaware noncorporate law as compared to its corporate law).


9See Brian Broughman, Jesse M. Fried & Darian Ibrahim, Delaware Law as Lingua Franca: Evidence from VC-Backed Startups 2 (Harv. Pub. Law Working Paper No. 12-38, 2012), available at http://ssrn.com/abstract=2117967 ("Delaware law can be expected to serve as a 'lingua franca': firms seeking out-of-state investors will be more likely to use Delaware law so they can provide a common language to all their investors.").

10See supra notes 4-5 and accompanying text.

11More than 50% of all U. S. publicly-traded companies, and 63% of the Fortune 500 are incorporated in Delaware. Division of Corporations, St. of Del., http://corp.delaware.gov/ (last visited April 10, 2013).
legislative/regulatory state and pure, unconstrained private ordering. To do the latter effectively, and in a way congruent with shifting expectations of corporate behavior in a democratic society, requires an enormous capacity for professional introspection, engagement with the larger corporate community, and a willingness to rethink and possibly remold prior rulings, in the light of experience.

This Article is organized into four parts and takes up, broadly, two issues. The first involves a subject on which, in general, there is a great deal of law in Delaware, but not on two related and emerging sub-issues. The second pertains to a topic on which there is virtually no law. In particular, Part II explores whether the cornerstone doctrine of Delaware law—the business judgment rule—should play a central role in adjudicating the still nascent (and unsettled) areas of officer's and controlling shareholder's duties and liability. Those two topics also, however, are a useful lens to raise a more general issue: Should the business judgment rule, rather than fiduciary duties themselves, really remain the central analytical construct in Delaware corporate law? This Article provides several reasons why the business judgment rule should recede in prominence in favor of emphasizing fiduciary duties. Only Delaware's courts can settle this issue.

Part III addresses the always nettlesome issue of corporate purpose. Specifically, does Delaware law currently—and, relatedly, should Delaware law—mandate a particular corporate purpose? Or, is law—and should it remain—rightly agnostic on that baseline issue? After briefly considering certain theoretical and doctrinal failings on corporate purpose, the Article extensively reviews the 2010 Delaware Court of Chancery decision in eBay Domestic Holdings, Inc. v. Newmark appearing to mandate profit maximization. It will be suggested that eBay wrongly espouses a narrow, singular objective for corporate endeavor that lacks authoritative support. At best, and somewhat remarkably, existing positive law is still sufficiently unclear in 2013 that a statutory solution, via a default purpose and optional opt-outs, is advisable. Without a statutory "fix," or timely clarification by the Delaware Supreme Court, Delaware law might be interpreted as imposing an undesirable monism of corporate purpose at a time when, in

---


1316 A.3d 1, 35 (Del. Ch. 2010).
corporate law as elsewhere, institutional pluralism should be encouraged. If Delaware's courts will not rectify this issue—as they can—the General Assembly should, and it should do so within the business corporation statute itself, not merely by enacting a new "public benefit" corporation statute as it has recently done. Part IV is a brief conclusion.

II. RETRENCHING THE BUSINESS JUDGMENT RULE

The business judgment rule has long been the cornerstone concept in Delaware corporate law.14 To suggest its retrenchment in a lecture attended by many of Delaware's eminent judges and leading members of its elite corporate bar—and in an article published in Delaware's premier law journal—might seem an act of legal sacrilege. Some might liken it to visiting the Vatican with the intention of giving the Pope a copy of Luther's small catechism,15 or Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion.16 It is not intended in that way, but rather in the spirit of Holmes's famous observation that "[i]t is revolting to have no better reason for a rule of law than that it was laid down in the time of Henry IV."17 Any rule of law, however old and established, must continue to serve its intended purposes or it should be discarded, stare decisis notwithstanding. At a minimum, it is useful from time to time to take up settled matters, if only to reaffirm them as not having outlived their usefulness. Moreover, the business judgment rule is well established as a mainstay doctrine in Delaware only with respect to corporate directors, not with respect to officers or controlling shareholders.18 This Part, after very briefly describing what is settled about the business judgment rule, turns to the far less settled areas of its application to officers and

---

17Oliver Wendell Holmes, The Path of the Law, 10 Harv. L. Rev. 457, 469 (1897). This passage was quoted by the Delaware Supreme Court in Keeler v. Hartford Mut. Ins. Co., 672 A.2d 1012, 1017 n.6 (Del. 1996).
18All of the old decisions cited by Mr. Ward, supra note 14, involve corporate directors.
controlling shareholders before reflecting more generally on how the rule and fiduciary duties might be sensibly realigned in all three areas—directors, officers, and controlling shareholders.

A. The Settled Business Judgment Rule for Corporate Directors

Doctrinally, the business judgment rule "is a presumption that in making a business decision the directors of a corporation acted on an informed basis, in good faith and in the honest belief that the action taken was in the best interests of the company."\(^{19}\) That 1984 formulation, however, is only one of three constitutive strands of the rule, specifically, the procedural guide.\(^{20}\) Another aspect stems from the 1993 effort to link analytically the business judgment rule and fiduciary duties.\(^{21}\) There, the Delaware Supreme Court stated that to rebut the rule's Aronson presumption, the plaintiff must sufficiently plead a breach of fiduciary duty, whereupon the burden shifts to defendant directors to prove the entire fairness of a transaction.\(^{22}\) This is the rule-duty linkage strand.\(^{23}\) If a plaintiff fails to carry that burden, the substantive dimension of the rule "attaches" to protect director decisions because courts will not "second-guess" business judgments.\(^{24}\) This last "substantive" law strand of the rule stems, in its current formulation, from the 1971 decision in Sinclair Oil Corp. v. Levien.\(^{25}\) Thus, although well established, the contours of the business judgment rule have been altered over the years and now encompass refinements from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

Clearly, moreover, the decisional law focus is on directors.\(^{26}\) This is seen not only in existing doctrine, but also in well-known policy

\(^{19}\)Parnes v. Bally Entm't Corp., 722 A.2d 1243, 1246 (Del. 1999); Aronson, 473 A.2d at 812.


\(^{21}\)Id. at 361-62.

\(^{22}\)Id. See Gantler v. Stephens, 965 A.2d 695, 706 (Del. 2009) (affirming the procedural and the rule-duty linkage strands of the business judgment rule announced in Cede & Co.).

\(^{23}\)See Gantler, 965 A.2d at 706.

\(^{24}\)Cede & Co., 634 A.2d at 361.

\(^{25}\)280 A.2d 717, 720 (Del. 1971) (director business judgment will not be overturned if it "can be attributed to any rational purpose"). See also Unitrin, Inc. v. Am. Corp., 651 A.2d 1361, 1373 (Del. 1995) (quoting Unocal Corp. v. Mesa Petroleum Co., 493 A.2d 946, 954 (Del. 1985)). Prior to Sinclair, as enhanced by Aronson, Delaware courts would not interfere with business judgments unless there was "gross and palpable overreaching," or equivalent conduct. E.g., Getty Oil Co. v. Skelly Oil Co., 267 A.2d 883 (Del. 1970) (quoting Meyerson v. El Paso Natural Gas Co., 246 A.2d 789, 794 (Del. Ch. 1967)).

\(^{26}\)See infra Part II.D (discussing the business judgment rule and director conduct).
rationales for the rule. Delaware courts frequently ground the rule in that section of the corporate statute providing that the business and affairs of a corporation are to be managed by or under the direction of its board. This is a director-centered rationale. Another rationale is to induce qualified persons to serve as directors and to more closely align director attitudes toward risk—they will capture little of the eventual payoff from success but face litigation exposure from failure—with stockholder risk preferences as influenced by holding a diversified portfolio of stock. A third rationale emphasizes that judges, as public officials, unlike directors, are not business experts; and directors, not judges, are elected by stockholders. These rationales coalesce to form the rule's "powerful presumption in favor of actions taken by the directors."

Moving beyond doctrine and policy to history, one finds that the business judgment rule became a key feature of Delaware's jurisprudence long before the duty of care. This history is well traced by Justice Henry Ridgely Horsey in a lecture delivered at Widener University School of Law and later published as an article in this journal. Justice Horsey confessed to being surprised at finding that it was only in 1963 that the Delaware Supreme Court came to "first recognize the existence of a director's fiduciary duty to act in an informed and prudent manner,

29 See, e.g., In re Cox Commc'sn, 879 A.2d at 614 ("It would not be much of a stretch to say that the central idea of Delaware's approach to corporation law is the empowerment of centralized management, in the form of boards of directors and the subordinate officers they choose, to make disinterested business decisions.").
30 See Gagliardi v. Trifoods Intl, Inc., 683 A.2d 1049, 1052 (Del. Ch. 1996). Former Chancellor William Allen describes the rule as seeking to overcome a director inclination toward "sub-optimal risk acceptance." Id. at 1052-53.
32 Cede & Co., 634 A.2d at 361.
34 Id.
i.e., with due care. The essence of the business judgment rule, of course, had been around for decades before that.

Taking the doctrines in the historic order in which they had emerged, Justice Horsey in both his 1994 scholarly article and his contemporaneously written 1993 judicial opinion in *Cede*, linked the duty of care with the business judgment rule by making the former a "component" or an "element" of the latter. In this way, reflecting Holmes's insight that the life of the common law's development is not always logic, but experience, the duty of care, for corporate directors at least, became doctrinally embedded in the still regnant business judgment rule only about 20 years ago. The business judgment rule, first to arrive on the Delaware legal scene, remained predominant, with the director duty of care (and the duty of loyalty) being subsumed within it.

B. The Unsettled Issue of the Business Judgment Rule and Corporate Officers

Surprisingly, given Delaware's extensive corporate law jurisprudence, it is not settled today whether in cases involving corporate officers, judges will doctrinally deploy the business judgment rule in the same all-encompassing manner that it has been used for corporate directors. Delaware courts have stated in dicta that the rule covers officers, but they have not held it to be so applicable, nor have they

---

35 *Id.* at 985 (citing *Graham v. Allis-Chalmers Mfg. Co.*, 188 A.2d 125, 130 (Del. 1963)). Two years before *Graham*, however, Chancellor Seitz had held corporate directors liable for failing in their duty to exercise, in a case involving no business judgment, "a reasonable discharge of their duties." *Lutz v. Boas*, 171 A.2d 381, 395 (Del. Ch. 1961). The duty of care was even more forthrightly expressed in *Smith v. Van Gorkom*, 488 A.2d 858, 872-73 (Del. 1985) (distinguishing care from loyalty).

36 See supra note 14.

37 See *Cede & Co.*, 634 A.2d at 361.

38 Horsey, *supra* note 33, at 989, 991, 997.

39 *Cede & Co.*, 634 A.2d at 361, 366.


41 *Cede & Co.*, 634 A.2d at 360-61.

42 See *id.* at 360 (referring to the duty of loyalty and the duty of care strands of the business judgment rule).


44 *Id.* at 443-47 (discussing cases). See also Lawrence A. Hamermesh & A. Gilchrist Sparks III, *Corporate Officers and the Business Judgment Rule: A Reply to Professor Johnson*, 60 BUS. LAW. 865, 865 (2005) (stating that the "policy rationales underlying the development and application of the business judgment rule" warrant its application to officers as well as directors).
analytically linked it to fiduciary duties as they did with respect to directors in the Cede framework. Consequently, they also have had no occasion to fully consider the policy case for and against application of the rule to officers.45

In fact, in the 2009 decision of Gantler v. Stephens,46 a case of first impression on officer duties, the Court rather obviously did not subsume the duty of care under, or even mention, the business judgment rule in its treatment of officers. Importantly, the Court stated that while it had earlier "implied that officers of Delaware corporations, like directors, owe fiduciary duties of care and loyalty, and that the fiduciary duties of officers are the same as those of directors . . . [w]e now explicitly so hold."47 Conspicuously absent in its analysis of officer duties, however, was the business judgment rule.48 Thus, in Gantler, after applying the usual analytical framework of requiring plaintiffs to overcome the presumptions of the business judgment rule for directors,49 by way of contrast, the Court straightforwardly found, with respect to officers, that the plaintiff's allegations "state a claim that they breached their fiduciary duties as officers."50

Although neither the doctrinal nor policy aspects of the business judgment rule have been settled with respect to officers, on the historical front officers strikingly differ from directors.51 Recall that for directors in Delaware the business judgment rule emerged well before full articulation of the duty of care.52 Consequently, perhaps out of a belief that the newer concept should be engrafted onto the older (rather than vice versa) director fiduciary duties became "elements" or "components"

45For contrasting views on this issue, compare Johnson, supra note 31, at 452, 462-69 (advocating against an application of the business judgment rule to officers), with Hamermesh & Sparks, supra note 44, at 865 (advocating for an application of the business judgment rule to officers).
46965 A.2d 695 (Del. 2009).
47Id. at 708-09.
48See id. at 708-09 (holding plaintiffs had stated claim that defendants breached their fiduciary duties as officers without discussing the business judgment rule in reference to the officers).
49Id. at 708.
51Follett, supra note 50, at 566-69 (discussing the different duties between officers and directors and whether the courts should grant officers protection under the business judgment rule).
52See supra notes 35-36 and accompanying text.
of the business judgment rule in 1993. But in Gantler, the fiduciary duties of officers emerged prior to the business judgment rule, which has not yet been adopted for officers in Delaware. Therefore, with respect to officers, in Delaware there is currently no pre-existing historical, policy, or doctrinal connection between fiduciary duties and the business judgment rule, as is the case with directors. Put another way, at least for now, Gantler momentarily has properly placed the fiduciary duty horse in front of the business judgment rule cart, not behind it, as in Cede. The unsettled issue is whether Delaware law eventually will, for officers, follow the approach adopted for directors and subsume duties within the rule or, conversely, not do so and, in fact, use officers as a timely occasion to reconsider the linkage earlier made for directors. Before addressing that, the unsettled (and unsettling) relationship of the business judgment rule to controlling shareholders will be treated, because it helpfully illuminates precisely the same issue.

C. The Unsettling Issue of the Business Judgment Rule and Controlling Shareholders

If the future application of the business judgment rule to officers remains unsettled, the possible application of it to controlling shareholders is unsettling. The deployment of the business judgment rule in the shareholder setting seemed to first appear in the late 1960s. It was then more or less suppressed for controlling shareholders in the 1990s in favor of uniformly using an entire fairness standard where self-dealing is involved; now it may be on the verge of more generally reappearing, particularly in light of Chancellor Strine’s recent and important opinion in In re MFW Shareholders Litigation. This Article does not dispute the various policy considerations favoring a more deferential approach to controlling shareholder conduct under certain

53 See supra notes 37-39 and accompanying text.
55 See supra note 43 and accompanying text.
56 This is elaborated on in infra Part II.D.
57 See infra Part II.C.1.
58 See infra Part II.C.2.
59 See infra Part II.C.3.
conditions, but the business judgment rule is not the appropriate doctrinal vehicle for implementing that approach. Thus, as is the case with officers, the possible re-emergence of the rule in the controlling shareholder context offers a timely occasion to re-consider the larger utility of the rule in framing Delaware's fiduciary duty analysis. This will be taken up after first tracing the rule's fleeting but possibly re-emergent role in the shareholder setting.

1. The Appearance of the Business Judgment Rule

Delaware courts traditionally examined business dealings between a controlling shareholder—frequently a parent corporation—and the controlled company using a strict entire (or intrinsic) fairness test.60 Sterling v. Mayflower Hotel Corp. and Gottlieb v. Heyden Chemical Corp. are widely cited 1952 decisions that did so, and neither mentioned the business judgment rule.61 In 1970, however, the Delaware Supreme Court introduced the business judgment rule into its analysis of transactions involving controlling shareholders.62 In Getty Oil Company v. Skelly Oil Company,63 the Court recited that the proper test for parent-subsidiary dealings was fairness,64 but stated that there were two tests "to determine the limits of 'fairness' . . . ."65 Citing Sterling,66 the Court first referred to the "intrinsic fairness" test,67 but then also referred to the "business judgment' test,"68 the latter being applicable where the terms of a transaction are set by a third party, not the parent.69 As support for the latter proposition, the Court cited a 1967 Delaware Court of Chancery decision, Meyerson v. El Paso Natural Gas Co.70 The court in Meyerson acknowledged that the

61David J. Greene & Co., 249 A.2d at 430.
63Id.
64Id. at 886.
65Id. at 887.
6693 A.2d at 107.
67267 A.2d at 887 (finding that fairness standard would be met through a transaction reached as though each party exerted bargaining power at arm's length).
68Id.
69Id. (observing in the special context of that case that the third party is "usually the State or Federal Government").
70246 A.2d 789 (Del. Ch. 1967). See also Wolfunsohn v. Madison Fund, Inc., 253 A.2d 72, 76 (Del. 1969) (holding that a finding of overreaching is necessary to prevail against a parent of a subsidiary).
proper test for parent-subsidiary dealings was fairness, but considered the arm's length measure to be meaningless in parent-subsidiary dealings, and thus the court observed that the question "is reduced to one of business judgment with which the court should not interfere . . . ."71 Relying on this approach, the Getty Court also noted, however, that one basis for interfering with business judgment is an advantage obtained by the controlling shareholder to the disadvantage of the subsidiary or its minority shareholders.72 The court in Getty found no advantage accruing to the parent in relation to the subsidiary or its minority stockholders and, therefore, held that there was no warrant for the court to interfere.73 The following year, the Delaware Supreme Court sought to clarify the relationship between the entire fairness and business judgment standards in the shareholder context.74 In Sinclair Oil Corp. v. Levien,75 the Court stated that the intrinsic fairness standard did not apply to all parent-subsidiary dealings, but only those where there was "self-dealing"—i.e., where the "parent causes the subsidiary to act in such a way that the parent receives something from the subsidiary to the exclusion of, and detriment to, the minority stockholders . . . ."76 Critically, however, the Court observed that, where self-dealing is absent, then the business judgment standard is to be applied to transactions involving controlling shareholders;77 the Court also reiterated the pertinence of that standard for corporate directors.78 Thus it is that the business judgment rule standard came to be applied to controlling shareholders. But the reason is not so much that a compelling case for the rule was ever made, or even considered. Rather, the rule was then seen as the only available doctrinal alternative to the much stricter fairness standard.79 After Sinclair, absent self-dealing by a controlling shareholder, the business judgment rule became the generally applicable or "default" standard.80 Consequently, a rule originally designed for corporate

---

71 246 A.2d at 794.
72 267 A.2d at 887.
73 Id. at 888.
74 Sinclair Oil Corp. v. Levien, 280 A.2d 717, 720-22 (Del. 1971).
75 Id.
76 Id. at 720.
77 Id.
78 Sinclair, 280 A.2d at 720.
79 See id.
80 See generally Lewis H. Lazarus & Brett M. McCartney, Standards of Review In Conflict Transactions On Motions To Dismiss: Lessons Learned In The Past Decade, 36 Del. J. Corp. L. 967, 998-1003 (2011) (illustrating through case studies that the presumption of the business judgment rule is standard under Delaware law unless rebutted). But see Frank v.
directors and rooted in policy rationales specifically tailored to the statutory role of corporate directors in company governance took hold in the 1970s in the controlling shareholder context.

2. The Suppression of the Business Judgment Rule

Although the business judgment rule after Sinclair became the default standard for reviewing a transaction where a controlling shareholder did not self-deal, the question arose as to whether there was some other way to invoke that relaxed standard instead of entire fairness, even where there was self-dealing. This was particularly true after two mid-1980s Delaware Supreme Court decisions reaffirming application of the demanding entire fairness test with a corresponding burden of proof shift. After some uncertainty at the Delaware Court of Chancery level, the Delaware Supreme Court held in 1994 that entire fairness—not business judgment rule review—was the only applicable standard. And this was true even if the self-dealing transaction was approved by a properly functioning committee of independent directors with real bargaining power or was approved by a vote of a majority of the minority shareholders. Either of those approval mechanisms could effectuate a shift in the burden of proof from defendants to plaintiff, but would not lead to business judgment rule review. Thus, having been unleashed into the controlling shareholder area, application of the business judgment rule to controlling shareholder transactions had, by 1994, become severely restricted in key settings.

---

Elgamal, 2012 WL 1096090, at *8 (Del. Ch. Mar. 30, 2012) (entire fairness standard where no self-dealing by controlling shareholder but where latter derived benefit from and could veto transaction with nonaffiliated party).  

81 Frank, 2012 WL 1096090, at *7-*8. The rule also is typically applied where a non-controlling stockholder’s conduct is challenged. Id.  


83 Id.  


85 Kahn v. Lynch Commun’c Sys., Inc., 638 A.2d 1110, 1117 (Del. 1994). For a recent reaffirmation of this approach by the Supreme Court, see Americas Mining Corp. v. Theriault, 51 A.3d 1213, 1243 (Del. 2012).  

86 Kahn, 638 A.2d at 1117.  

87 Id. at 1116. The Court in Kahn did not consider the effect of deploying both approval mechanisms on the standard of review. See infra note 93 and accompanying text.
3. The Possible Re-Emergence of the Business Judgment Rule

The possible application of the business judgment rule standard even to self-dealing transactions by controlling shareholders has emerged in certain Delaware Court of Chancery decisions. In *In re Cox Communications, Inc. Shareholders Litigation*, then-Vice Chancellor Strine addressed two policy concerns arising under the *Lynch* entire fairness review standard. First, he noted the value of creating an incentive for transactional planners to use the deal structure that is most advantageous to minority shareholders. Second, he explained the importance of providing defendants with a meaningful option to get rid of nonmeritorious cases short of trial.

The chief hindrance to both of these was the entire fairness test which, even with a burden of proof shift resulting from independent committee or minority shareholder approvals, made it virtually impossible for defendants to gain a pre-trial dismissal. Emphasizing that *Lynch* had not foreclosed use of the business judgment rule standard where both an independent negotiating committee and approval by a majority of minority shareholders were used, Strine noted that such "double approvals" would benefit minority shareholders. To incentivize their salutary use in structuring transactions ex ante, Strine suggested that self-dealing "going private" mergers be accorded business judgment rule review where the controlling shareholder proposed a deal subject, from inception, to both approval mechanisms. Moreover, in any ensuing litigation, defendants could then obtain a pre-trial dismissal unless "plaintiffs pled particularized facts that the committee was not independent, or was ineffective because of its own fiduciary duty breach or wrongdoing by the controller (e.g., fraud on the committee)[.]" or

---

88 *In re MFW S'holders Litig.*, 2013 WL 2436341, at *4 (Del. Ch. May 29, 2013); *In re CNX Gas Corp. S'holders Litig.*, 4 A.3d 397, 400 (Del. Ch. 2010); *In re Cox Commc'ns, Inc. S'holders Litig.*, 879 A.2d 604, 606 (Del. Ch. 2005).
89 *Cox Commc'ns*, 879 A.2d at 606-07.
90 *Id.* This point was repeated several times by Chancellor Strine in the 2013 *MFW* decision. *MFW S'holders Litig.*, 2013 WL 2436341, at *4, *20, *21.
91 *Cox Commc'ns*, 879 A.2d at 607. The Supreme Court in *Theriault* held that, prospectively, "if the record does not permit a pretrial determination that defendants are entitled to a burden shift," the defendants will retain the burden throughout the trial. *Americas Mining Corp. v. Theriault*, 51 A.3d 1213, 1243 (Del. 2012).
92 *Cox Commc'ns*, 879 A.2d at 617.
93 *Id.* at 617.
94 *Id.* at 642.
95 *Id.* at 643-44.
because the approval by minority shareholders was somehow tainted.96

Seeking to reconcile his doctrinal suggestion with the rules
governing so-called Siliconix tender offer freeze-outs,97 Strine proposed
extending it into that setting as well.98 This proposal was subsequently
considered at length by Vice Chancellor Laster in his 2010 decision in In
re CNX Gas Corp. Shareholders Litigation.99 As Strine had five years
earlier,100 Laster cited extensive academic commentary addressing this
issue,101 and he agreed that Strine's suggestion was the "coherent and
correct approach."102 He also made the doctrinal point that using both
approval mechanisms (i.e., an effective independent committee and
minority stockholder approval) meant that, essentially, the controller
only stood on "one side of the transaction,"103 thus removing the predicate
of standing on "both sides of a transaction" that, stemming from Sterling
and Sinclair,104 underlies the demanding entire fairness standard.105

However astute the analyses of Chancellor Strine and Vice-
Chancellor Laster, the Cox and CNX cases did not squarely present the
issue of whether using both an independent committee and a majority-of-
the minority provision would result in business judgment rule review.106
That changed in MFW, where the issue was squarely posed for the first
time to Chancellor Strine.107 In a very careful and scholarly opinion,
Chancellor Strine drew heavily on, and further elaborated on, his earlier
analysis in Cox.108 He held that when a controlling shareholder merger
has, from the outset, "been subject to (i) negotiation and approval by a
special committee of independent directors fully empowered to say no,
and (ii) approval by an uncoerced, fully informed vote of a majority of
the minority investors, the business judgment rule standard of review

---

96Cox Commc'ns, 879 A.2d at 644.
97See In re Pure Res., Inc., S'holders Litig., 808 A.2d 421, 437 (Del. Ch. 2002); In re
Siliconix Inc. S'holders Litig., 2001 WL 716787, at *6 (Del. Ch. June 21, 2001), reprinted in
98Cox Commc'ns, 879 A.2d at 607, 646.
994 A.3d 397, 414 (Del. Ch. 2010).
100Cox Commc'ns, 879 A.2d at 618 n.34, 624 n.50, 625 n.52, 644 n.85.
101CNX Gas Corp., 4 A.3d at 407 n.4, 409 n.5.
102Id. at 414.
103Id. at 412. This also somewhat harkens back to the Getty reference to a "third
party" presence as permitting business judgment review. See supra notes 62-73 and
accompanying text.
104Sterling v. Mayflower Hotel Corp., 93 A.2d 107, 110 (Del. 1952); Sinclair Oil Corp.
105CNX Gas Corp., 4 A.3d at 410-11 n.7 (citing authority).
106In re MFW S'holders Litig., 2013 WL 2436341, at *3 (Del. Ch. May 29, 2013).
107Id. at *1.
108Id. at *20 n.140.
Finding those conditions to have been met, Chancellor Strine reviewed the transaction under the business judgment rule standard, found that standard to have been met by the controlling shareholder, and granted summary judgment to all defendants.\textsuperscript{109} Chancellor Strine's analysis did not differ for the controlling shareholder and the directors.\textsuperscript{111} Strikingly, for purposes of this Article, Chancellor Strine did not consider whether, given that the dual approval mechanisms had spared all defendants a strict entire fairness review, an alternative review standard other than "business judgment" review would better suit a controlling shareholder whose conduct is attacked.\textsuperscript{112} Specifically, as in \textit{Gantler} for officers,\textsuperscript{113} Chancellor Strine might have straightforwardly asked, with respect to the controlling shareholder, whether plaintiffs could proffer any evidence that the shareholder had breached a fiduciary owed to them. Failing that, as plaintiffs did, warranted entry of summary judgment.\textsuperscript{114} The cumbersome business judgment rule edifice did not need to be introduced into the \textit{MFW} analysis because it not only added nothing, it is not designed for, nor are its policy underpinnings aimed at, shareholders.

The reasoning and conclusions reached in all of these Delaware Court of Chancery decisions are impressive and persuasive. But moving away from entire fairness review in the going private setting (or any self-dealing context) in favor of a more deferential approach to achieve laudable policy objectives simply does not necessarily mean a business judgment rule framework should be adopted. Instead, in a manner similar to the approach taken by \textit{Gantler} with respect to corporate officers,\textsuperscript{115} the Delaware Supreme Court should, notwithstanding Chancellor Strine's use of the rule in \textit{MFW}, consider this controlling

\textsuperscript{109}Id. at *4. The pertinent language derived from this case states:

The business judgment rule is only invoked if: (i) the controller conditions the procession of the transaction on the approval of both a special committee and a majority of the minority stockholders; (ii) the special committee is independent; (iii) the special committee is empowered to freely select its own advisors and to say no definitively; (iv) the special committee meets its duty of care; (v) the vote of the minority is informed; and (vi) there is no coercion of the minority.

\textsuperscript{110}Id. at *25. \textit{MFW S'holders Litig.}, 2013 WL 2436341, at *25. The defendants were a controlling shareholder and the directors of the to-be-merged corporation. \textit{Id.} at *1.

\textsuperscript{111}Id. at *1-*2.

\textsuperscript{112}Id. at *20.

\textsuperscript{113}See \textit{supra} text accompanying notes 46-50.

\textsuperscript{114}See \textit{MFW S'holders Litig.}, 2013 WL 2436341, at *25.

\textsuperscript{115}See \textit{supra} notes 46-50 and accompanying text.
shareholder issue as a straightforward matter of fiduciary duty. In other words: Has the plaintiff sufficiently pled a duty of care breach (extremely unlikely with respect to a shareholder) or a duty of loyalty breach? The business judgment rule—designed for directors, rooted in their plenary governance role, and central there only because of history—should be bypassed here. To speak of "business judgment" in the shareholder context is incoherent because such a shareholder makes no "business" judgment on behalf of the corporation in the same statutory way directors do. To be sure, in a third party merger, shareholder approval is necessary to effectuate the merger, but shareholders in that setting—controlling or otherwise—owe no fiduciary duties to the corporation and other shareholders. Instead, they can and do vote based on whether, to them as investors, the merger is financially beneficial. When minority shareholders similarly are empowered under a majority-of-the-minority provision in a controlling shareholder self-dealing merger, they too lack fiduciary duties, can vote based on self-interest, and are not required to advance the company's best interests or those of any other person. And when the ostensibly controlling shareholder in that setting votes on the merger, it does not "control" the outcome given the dual approval mechanisms and it properly and likely votes its own financial investor interests.

The issue of the best interests of the corporation is a matter of concern only for directors. Moreover, there simply is no reason to require a "rational business purpose" in reviewing the conduct of a shareholder who does not act for the company or breach a fiduciary duty. Chancellor Strine did so, however, because he saw the business judgment rule construct as the only alternative to entire fairness. That inquiry, however, is simply inapt for examining shareholder conduct.

In the Lynch, MFW, and Siliconix settings, the underlying concern is whether the controlling shareholder discharges its duty of loyalty as it seeks to gain for itself complete ownership of the stock (or other advantage) to the exclusion of the minority shareholders.

---

117 See id. ("[T]he duty to put the best interest of the corporation and its shareholders above any interest . . . not shared by the stockholders generally does not mean that the controller has to subrogate his own interests so that the minority stockholders can get the deal that they want." (internal quotations omitted)).
118 See id.
119 See MFW S'holders Litig., 2013 WL 2436341, at *16.
Although taking different transactional paths, only one of which involves classic self-dealing, both forms implicate the hallmark of loyalty—"the need to protect minority stockholders . . . ." Triggered by the desire of the controller to gain something from, or to the detriment of, the minority, the duty of loyalty would, as a default standard, require the controller to prove the entire fairness of the transaction. However, if as Chancellor Strine proposed in Cox Communications, and squarely held in MFW, the controller conditions the proposal from the outset on the dual approval mechanisms, then ex ante the controller presumptively fulfills its duty of loyalty subject only to ex post allegations of fiduciary wrongdoing by the independent committee or tainted approval by the minority shareholders, as to which the plaintiff has the burden. The conduct of the committee members themselves, moreover, provided they truly were independent and properly-functioning, would, because they are directors, receive traditional business judgment rule review. Maybe…

D. The Business Judgment Rule and Review of Director Conduct

Having suggested that application of the business judgment rule standard to corporate officers and controlling shareholders is unnecessary and unsound on doctrinal and policy grounds, could the same be said with respect to application of the rule to directors themselves? The emergent areas of officers and controlling shareholders at least offer a lens to reconsider this issue. Such a suggestion, initially, seems heretical, particularly given the rule's long pedigree as the presumptive standard of judicial review. And the policy rationales for the rule are sound, particularly the court's deference to the substance of director decisions. Nonetheless, the role of the business judgment rule in

(2002).

121In re Cox Commc'ns S'holder Litig., 879 A.2d 604, 624 (Del. Ch. 2005).
122Sinclair Oil Corp. v. Levien, 280 A.2d 717, 720 (Del. 1971).
123879 A.2d at 643-44; 2013 WL 2436341 at *5.
124Id. at 644 (if only one approval mechanism were used, the entire fairness standard would remain applicable).
125For officers, the doctrinal and policy rationales for applying the business judgment rule are stronger than for controlling shareholders given officers' managerial role in corporate governance, but use of the rule is unnecessary. For controlling shareholders, use of the rule is unsound on doctrinal/policy grounds and the rule unnecessarily complicates what should be a more straightforward fiduciary duty analysis.
127See supra notes 27-32 and accompanying text.
128QVC Network, Inc., 637 A.2d at 45 n.17.
Delaware corporate law warrants revisiting for several reasons. First, the business judgment rule, not fiduciary duties, currently enjoys pride of place in Delaware. Essentially, the business judgment rule is a doctrinal vessel of judicial review into which the fiduciary duties of care and loyalty are fitted and subsumed. As noted by the Delaware Supreme Court, the duty of care is but an "element of the rule." But fiduciary duties are broader in scope than the reach of the business judgment rule, which applies only if an identifiable business judgment is made. An example is a faulty oversight context where no business decision was exercised. And fiduciary duties apply to directors whether or not their conduct is reviewed later in court. Thus, the more narrowly applicable doctrine should not sensibly serve as the umbrella concept for the broader-reaching duties. Moreover, given the importance of judicial formulations to lawyerly counsel and director understandings, it is no answer to insist that the rule is a standard of review only and not a standard of conduct. Presumably, many non-law factors influence legal advice and director conduct, but when it comes to law itself, the sole concern is likely whether, if attacked, a decision stands up in court and liability is averted. The deployment of the business judgment rule as the organizing framework, therefore, is jurisprudentially flawed because it is under-inclusive. Its retention as the keystone concept reflects a misguided effort to use it as a unifying doctrinal artifact for both conceiving and reviewing director compliance with fiduciary duties.

Second, the primacy of the business judgment rule over fiduciary duties in Delaware's analysis of director performance is an accident of history. The duty of care, being a doctrinal latecomer, was, along

---

129 See, e.g., eBay Domestic Holdings, Inc. v. Newmark, 16 A.3d 1, 36 (Del. Ch. 2010) (noting that under the business judgment rule, the court presumes "directors of a corporation acted on an informed basis, in good faith and in the honest belief that the action taken was in the best interests of the company").

130 See supra notes 37-41 and accompanying text.


133 Rales v. Blasband, 634 A.2d 927, 933-34 & n.9 (Del. 1993).

134 See Malone, 722 A.2d at 10 (noting that fiduciary duties are a "constant compass by which all director actions . . . must be guided").

135 See id. (noting the court has tried to mark clear guidelines regarding fiduciary duties to help directors act within them); Cede & Co., 634 A.2d at 360 (stating the business judgment rule is "both a procedural guide for litigants and a substantive rule of law").

136 See supra Part II.A.
with the duty of loyalty, embedded into the pre-existing business judgment rule framework in Cede, in an effort to harmonize those duties with the rule. But the rule has retained analytical preeminence, leading to a diminished emphasis on what is really most critical to corporate governance, both in and out of court: Did directors fulfill or breach either of their fiduciary duties? That issue should be doctrinally showcased, not obscured.

Third, all of the laudable policy rationales said to undergird the rule can be preserved while placing primary emphasis on a director's fiduciary duties. The plaintiff still must establish a breach of any fiduciary duty. And in the duty of care context, the court still would not weigh in on the substantive soundness of director decisions. But that already is true in the duty of care context because care itself is entirely process-oriented. There is no substance to duty of care review. Consequently, there is no need to add, via the rule, either Aronson's "presumption" strand of the rule or the Sinclair/Cede "substantive" strand. Thus, it is as an aspect of duty of care review that the true "substantive" function of the business judgment rule can be seen. It cogently houses the sensible policy decision of courts not to second-guess business judgments as part of reviewing fiduciary duty of care claims. Ironically, then, business judgment deference is better understood as an "element" of care, not the reverse, as currently is the case. In effect, the judicial policy of not substantively reviewing care claims mirrors the opposite entire fairness approach in loyalty claims where substance is reviewed.

---

137 See supra notes 34-41 and accompanying text.
138 See supra notes 37-42 and accompanying text.
139 Cede & Co., 634 A.2d at 360 (describing the duties of loyalty and care as standards within the business judgment rule).
140 Id. at 361.
141 Brehm v. Eisner, 746 A.2d 244, 264 (Del. 2000) ("As for the plaintiffs' contention that the directors failed to exercise 'substantive due care,' we should note that such a concept is foreign to the business judgment rule. Courts do not measure, weigh or quantify directors' judgments.").
142 Id. ("Due care in the decisionmaking context is process due care only.").
143 Id.
144 See supra notes 22-25 and accompanying text. To the extent a substantive "floor" for fiduciary behavior is thought desirable, substantively irrational behavior permits an inference that good faith is lacking. Parnes v. Bally Entm't Corp., 722 A.2d 1243, 1246 (Del. 1999).
145 See Cede & Co., 634 A.2d at 361 (highlighting the policy of the courts not to second-guess business judgments).
146 See id. at 360 (describing the duties of loyalty and care as standards within the business judgment rule).
147 See Brehm v. Eisner, 746 A.2d 244, 264 (Del. 2000) (noting that in the context of business judgments due care is not reviewed substantively); Cede & Co., 634 A.2d at 361
cases, of course, the judicial policy of no substantive review falls away and the rule does not and should not play any role.\textsuperscript{148}

Moreover, the only theoretical basis for imposing liability on a director or for overturning a board decision is violation of some legal precept, such as a fiduciary duty.\textsuperscript{149} It is not unlawful to make a business judgment; it is unlawful to do so in a way that breaches a duty.\textsuperscript{150} Thus, the focus should be on fiduciary duties, which courts are legally competent to address, not the "business judgment" rule. The mere phrasing of it suggests that there is some jurisprudential basis for judicially interfering (or not) in a business decision when there is no such basis apart from a duty breach.\textsuperscript{151} Even then, courts do not "review" or "second-guess" the substance of business decisions; they simply proceed with the analysis under fiduciary duty principles.\textsuperscript{152}

Directors are afforded ample latitude in making business decisions and taking appropriate risks by calibrating the duty of care at the gross negligence level,\textsuperscript{153} essentially a permissive recklessness standard.\textsuperscript{154} Thus, even as to process, great deference is given to directors. Moreover, statutory exculpation remains fully available for duty of care breaches if stockholders approve an even greater measure of protection for directors than just a loose liability standard.\textsuperscript{155} Neither of these benefits requires the business judgment rule. In addition, the current pleading or review standards on a motion to dismiss need not change. A pleading that is inadequate to make it past a dismissal motion today under the rule's rubric will still be inadequate when the straightforward focus is on duties.\textsuperscript{156} If a plaintiff today cannot sufficiently plead enough to overcome the "presumption" of Aronson and Cede, he has not adequately pled a breach of duty.\textsuperscript{157} And, as Professor (describing the entire fairness standard of review).

\textsuperscript{148}See supra Part II.C.1, C.3.
\textsuperscript{149}See Cede & Co., 634 A.2d at 360-61 (explaining that plaintiffs have the burden of showing a breach of a fiduciary duty).
\textsuperscript{150}Id.
\textsuperscript{151}See id. at 361 (noting that the court will not second guess a business judgment absent a showing by the plaintiff of a breach of director's fiduciary duties).
\textsuperscript{152}See id. (describing the entire fairness standard used for analysis of the disputed transaction).
\textsuperscript{153}Smith v. Van Gorkom, 488 A.2d 858, 873 (Del. 1985).
\textsuperscript{154}McPadden v. Sidhu, 964 A.2d 1262, 1273-74 (Del. Ch. 2008).
\textsuperscript{155}DEL. CODE ANN. tit. 8, § 102(b)(7) (2012) (permitting exculpation of directors for damages resulting from duty of care breaches).
\textsuperscript{156}See, e.g., McPadden, 964 A.2d at 1274-75 (granting a motion to dismiss where plaintiff failed to plead directors acted with "a conscious disregard for their duties").
\textsuperscript{157}See, e.g., Cede & Co. v. Technicolor, Inc., 634 A.2d 345, 361 (Del. 1993) (to overcome the presumption of validity of the business judgment rule, plaintiff must show a breach of fiduciary duty).
Larry Hamermesh has usefully pointed out, even with care claims, many are derivative in nature, and thereby are subject to existing Rule 23.1 pleading requirements.\(^{158}\)

Fourth, elevating fiduciary duties to be the primary focal point in judicially analyzing director conduct—and officer and shareholder conduct—streamlines that analysis and rationally aligns it with other fiduciary approaches in law, such as those used in agency law.\(^{159}\) For example, in a 2010 decision involving agency principles, Vice Chancellor Parsons noted how a claim for fiduciary duty wrongdoing requires proof of two elements: "that a fiduciary duty existed" and "that a defendant breached that duty."\(^{160}\) That simple framework likewise could be used for directors. Of course, directors owe unremitting duties,\(^{161}\) so the focus in any particular case is, quite simply, whether they did or did not breach a duty. In the care setting, the plaintiff must bear that burden,\(^{162}\) while in the classic self-dealing loyalty context, one or more directors will shoulder the burden.\(^{163}\)

Fifth, prioritizing the business judgment rule rather than fiduciary duties in judicial analysis serves to unsoundly deem directors to be performing at a higher level than they might actually be performing, while simultaneously insufficiently emphasizing the affirmative nature of their duties.\(^{164}\) The business judgment rule, after all, presumes that directors have acted on an informed basis, in good faith, and in the honest belief that their actions are in the best interests of the company.\(^{165}\) In other words, it presupposes that directors are behaving carefully and loyally, without expressly stating it just that way.\(^{166}\) Yet, by agreeing to serve as directors, such persons take on an affirmative obligation they did not have before assuming their position—i.e., to act with care and loyalty in discharging their offices.\(^{167}\) Care and loyalty are not exercised, and the

---


\(^{159}\)See, e.g., Beard Research, Inc. v. Kates, ASDI, Inc., 8 A.3d 573, 601 (Del. Ch. 2010) ("Under fundamental principles of agency law, an agent owes his principal a duty of loyalty, good faith, and fair dealing.").

\(^{160}\)Id. (citing Zrii, LLC v. Wellness Acq. Gp., Inc., 2009 WL 2998169, at *11 (Del Ch. Sept. 21, 2009)).


\(^{162}\)Cede & Co., 634 A.2d at 361.

\(^{163}\)See, e.g., Gantler v. Stephens, 965 A.2d 695, 707 (Del. 2009) (noting that where a majority of the remaining directors are self-interested, they must prove entire fairness).

\(^{164}\)See, e.g., Lyman Johnson, Rethinking Judicial Review of Director Care, 24 DEL. J. CORP. L. 787, 805 (1999) (expressing concern that duty of care analysis is substantially shrinking partially due to the business judgment rule).

\(^{165}\)Aronson v. Lewis, 473 A.2d 805, 812 (Del. 1984); Cede & Co., 634 A.2d at 360-61.

\(^{166}\)Cede & Co., 634 A.2d at 360.

\(^{167}\)Cf. RESTATEMENT (THIRD) TORTS, § 7 cmt. k (2010) (stating that one who
best interests of the company are not served, merely by the fact of occupying the office of director or by inaction.\(^{168}\) In both judicial doctrine and legal counsel given to directors, therefore, it should be emphasized that directors, as the key governing body in a corporation, must affirmatively fulfill their duties, not essentially get a linguistic benefit of the doubt that they are doing all they should unless proven otherwise.\(^{169}\)

This obligation is masked by an approach that presumes directors have behaved properly, rather than one underscoring that directors must energetically endeavor to do so.\(^{170}\) This has nothing to do with altering the customary burden of proof in litigation.\(^{171}\) It goes instead to not unwittingly crafting a review standard that, in operation, misleadingly suggests that directors have fulfilled their duties unless a plaintiff can prove otherwise.\(^{172}\) The tree does fall in the forest whether or not someone is there to observe it. So too, inadequate director conduct is inadequate, even if undetected or unproven.

And in featuring fiduciary duties more prominently in their opinions, judges should not couch those duties only in negative, liability-avoiding ways.\(^{173}\) Thus, with respect to care, courts can and certainly should state that the culpability standard is gross negligence.\(^{174}\) But the duty of care is not merely a duty to avoid gross negligence,\(^{175}\) because such phrasing lacks a reference point: Don't be grossly negligent with respect to what? Rather, as Chancellor Chandler noted in the Disney litigation,\(^{176}\) the "duty of due care requires that directors of a Delaware corporation 'use that amount of care which ordinarily careful and prudent men would use in similar circumstances.'\(^{177}\) And in loyalty cases, courts

\(^{168}\) See, e.g., Francis v. United Jersey Bank, 432 A.2d 814, 823 (N.J. 1981) ("A director is not an ornament, but an essential component of corporate governance.").

\(^{169}\) Id.


\(^{171}\) But see Aronson v. Lewis, 473 A.2d 805, 812 (Del. 1984) ("[T]he burden is on the party challenging the decision to establish facts rebutting the presumption.").

\(^{172}\) Id.

\(^{173}\) See, e.g., Smith v. Van Gorkom, 488 A.2d 858, 872 (Del. 1985) ("[F]ulfillment of the fiduciary function requires more than the mere absence of bad faith or fraud.").

\(^{174}\) Id. at 873 ("We think the concept of gross negligence is also the proper standard for determining whether a business judgment reached by a board of directors was an informed one.").

\(^{175}\) Id. at 872-73. The Revised Uniform Partnership Act also provides that the duty of care for a general partner is that of gross negligence. REV. UNIF. PART. ACT § 404 (1997).

\(^{176}\) In re Walt Disney Co. Derivative Litig., 907 A.2d 693 (Del. Ch. 2005), aff'd, 906 A.2d 27 (Del. 2006).

\(^{177}\) Id. at 749 (quoting Graham v. Allis-Chalmers Mfg. Co., 188 A.2d 125, 130 (Del. 1963)).
likewise should not only emphasize the importance of not being disloyal—as, for example, by not wrongly self-dealing or appropriating corporate opportunities. Here again, the affirmative aspect of loyally advancing the best interests of the company should be routinely recited. Doing so would both draw on the traditional moral discourse aspect of fiduciary duties recently emphasized by Chief Justice Steele, and promote emerging evidence from behavioral psychology that ex ante moral admonition can lead to more honest conduct.

When a plaintiff asserts a claim, moreover, the focus should be forthrightly on whether a cognizable breach of duty claim has been pled, unfiltered by unnecessary reference to (or through) the threshold "presumption" of the business judgment rule, which is not even a particularly useful heuristic. A legal Occam's Razor should excise the rule at this stage of fiduciary analysis, and functionally draw on it only to preclude substantive second-guessing as part of the due care review.

Finally, elevating fiduciary duties in prominence, and reducing a

---

178See, e.g., Telxon Corp. v. Meyerson, 802 A.2d 257, 263 (Del. 2002) (providing an example of self-dealing by directors of a corporation); Guth v. Loft, 5 A.2d 503, 510 (Del. 1939) (providing an example of directors usurping a corporate opportunity).

179See generally Lyman Johnson, After Enron: Remembering Loyalty Discourse in Corporate Law, 28 DEL. J. CORP. L. 27 (2003) (emphasizing affirmative aspect of loyalty); Leo E. Strine, Jr., Lawrence A. Hamermesh, R. Franklin Balotti, & Jeffrey M. Gorris, Loyalty's Core Demand: The Defining Role of Good Faith in Corporation Law, 98 GEO. L.J. 629 (2010) (concluding that the basic definition of the duty of loyalty is the obligation to act in good faith to advance the best interests of the corporation).

180Myron T. Steele, The Moral Underpinnings of Delaware's Modern Corporate Fiduciary Duties, 26 NOTRE DAME J.L. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 3, 3 (2012) (explaining that one of the two purposes of fiduciary duties is to serve as a "moral pulse of our society as we define and set expectations for business relationships"). See also Lyman Johnson, Counter-Narrative In Corporate Law: Saints and Sinners, Apostles and Epistles, 2009 MICHL. ST. L. REV. 847, 850-51 (2009) (elaborating on the strong moral reproof role of Delaware's opinions).


182Cf. Beard Research, Inc. v. Kates, 8 A.3d 573, 601 (Del. Ch. 2010) ("A claim for breach of fiduciary duty requires proof of two elements: (1) that a fiduciary duty existed and (2) that the defendant breached that duty.").


184Occam's Razor (or, the law of parsimony) is a principle whereby a simpler theory with equivalent explanatory power is preferred over a more complex approach, in effect "shaving away" what is unneeded. Ockham's razor, Britannica.com, http://www.britannica.com/EBechecked/topic/424706/Ockhams-razor (last visited May 21, 2004).

185See Brehm v. Eisner, 746 A.2d 244, 264 (Del. 2000).
threshold emphasis on the business judgment rule as a standard of review, would facilitate teaching law students and others the rudiments of fiduciary duties. In a wry bit of understatement, the American Law Institute's Principles of Corporate Governance state as follows: "Confusion with respect to the business judgment rule has been created by the numerous varying formulations of the rule and the fact that courts have often stated the rule incompletely or with elliptical shorthand references."  

In an effort to alleviate confusion, the ALI, unlike Delaware which embeds the duty of care within the business judgment rule edifice,  
regards the rule as simply "a judicial gloss on duty of care standards . . . ." Yet, confusion persists, and not just in the ranks of the elite corporate bar.  

After all, the patrons of Delaware law are not only the sophisticated members of the Delaware judiciary and Delaware bar. They include numerous business lawyers across the country (and maybe in other countries, such as Canada and England) who devote less than an exclusive professional focus on Delaware developments. Importantly, they also include thousands of law students every year who must learn law and who someday may counsel the governing officials of Delaware companies. Is Delaware fiduciary duty law and judicial analysis as clear and user-friendly as it might be to these less knowledgeable patrons? And to the extent Delaware law influences corporate law in other jurisdictions, such as other states and countries, perhaps Delaware exports needless complexity to lawyers and students in those places.  

As just one law professor who has grappled with teaching this material to law students for almost thirty years, this author can say that presenting students with a comprehensible, coherent, and cogent understanding of fiduciary duties is made more difficult by Delaware's current business judgment rule construct. Students—having studied the concept of legal duty in diverse curricular offerings such as torts, trusts and estates, agency and partnership law, and professional

188 A.L.I. PRINCIPLES, supra note 186, at cmt d., at 141.
189 See, e.g., S. Samuel Arsh, supra note 33, at 94 ("Subsuming the presumptions and limitations under the term 'business judgment rule' leads to confusion because the single term is then employed with reference to wholly different aspects of the rule's application, which are governed by disparate legal principles.").
191 See Arsh, supra note 33, at 93-94.
responsibility—understand the importance of legal duties, including the scope of duty and situations of no-duty.\textsuperscript{192} The concepts of care and loyalty, in all their manifestations, are therefore relatively easy to grasp, if of somewhat surprising contours. And the longstanding policy of judicial non-review that forms the key substantive essence of the business judgment rule\textsuperscript{193}—really, as noted, an aspect of duty of care review—even if initially startling for many students who see legal liability expanding elsewhere as judges scrutinize so many aspects of modern life, can at least be appreciated and grasped, if not also immediately agreed with.\textsuperscript{194}

Analytically and doctrinally, the teaching could stop there—with fiduciary duties and their breach—and students would have a solid and workable understanding.\textsuperscript{195} Little but unnecessary complexity in the law and pedagogy is added by then filtering all of the above through the threshold of the business judgment rule construct as a standard of review, particularly with the \textit{Cede} breach of duty/burden shift feature.\textsuperscript{196} Introducing this form of the business judgment rule after addressing fiduciary duties can lead students to think they may not truly grasp duties after all, whereas starting with the Delaware business judgment rule construct—before taking up duties—can hinder students from ever clearly seeing just how vital duties really are.\textsuperscript{197} The overall result today may be student familiarity with core concepts, but likely not a true understanding. This, unfortunately, likely is the case with many practicing lawyers as well.

\textsuperscript{194}See Arsh, supra note 33, at 94 (stating that the confusion surrounding the business judgment rule has been compounded by "[j]udicial penchant for colorful phrases" like "gross negligence," "gross abuse of discretion," and "palpable overreaching").
\textsuperscript{195}See Clark W. Furlow, \textit{Good Faith, Fiduciary Duties, and the Business Judgment Rule in Delaware}, 2009 UTAH L. REV. 1061, 1063 (2009) ("The duty of loyalty defines what the directors are to seek to accomplish . . . . The duty of care defines how they are to pursue that goal . . . . Good faith . . . describes the state of mind of a director who is acting in accordance with her duty of loyalty.").
\textsuperscript{196}Cede & Co. v. Technicolor, Inc., 634 A.2d 345, 361 (Del. 1993), modified, 636 A.2d 956 (Del. 1994).
\textsuperscript{197}See, e.g., Melvin A. Eisenberg, \textit{The Duty of Care of Corporate Directors and Officers}, 51 U. PIT. L. REV. 945, 972 (1989) (concluding that "[t]he duty of care is not without its problems. Nevertheless, it has served as a critical component of the corporate system in this country.").
III. DOES (OR SHOULD) CORPORATE LAW MANDATE CORPORATE PURPOSE?

A. Background

If there is a surfeit of law on the business judgment rule, there is a paucity on corporate purpose. No corporate statute in the United States, for example, requires a corporation to advance a particular purpose, such as profit or share price maximization. Rather, consistent with an expansive, enabling philosophy on company powers and purposes, corporate statutes—including Delaware's—are wholly agnostic on corporate purpose. Delaware's corporate purpose statute broadly states that a corporation may conduct "any lawful business or purpose[]."

As to case law, there are only a handful of decisions in the entire country that address purpose, and some of those do so quite obliquely in dicta. The Delaware Supreme Court has held only that corporate

---

198 See supra Part II.
200 See Einer Elhauge, Sacrificing Corporate Profits in the Public Interest, 80 N.Y.U. L. REV. 733, 738 (2005) ("Corporate managers have never had an enforceable legal duty to maximize corporate profits."). See generally LYNN STOUT, THE SHAREHOLDER VALUE MYTH 24-32 (2012) ("The notion that corporate law requires directors, executives, and employees to maximize shareholder wealth simply isn't true.").
201 See EDWARD P. WELCH ET AL., FOLK ON THE DELAWARE GENERAL CORPORATION LAW § 102.4 (5th ed. 2012) ("In lieu of the formerly required recitals of the corporation's business or purposes, the statute now requires only the statement that the corporation may engage in any lawful act or activity."). See also DAVID A. DREXLER ET AL., DELAWARE CORPORATION LAW AND PRACTICE § 6.01[3] (2012) (explaining that the Delaware corporate purpose statute has become widely used as the "exclusive statement of purpose").
202 Compare DEL. CODE ANN. tit. 8, § 101(b) (2011) ("A corporation may be incorporated or organized under this chapter to conduct or promote any lawful business or purposes...."), and § 102(a)(3) ("It shall be sufficient to state.... that the purpose of the corporation is to engage in any lawful act or activity.")., with JAMES D. COX & THOMAS LEE HAZEN, TREATISE ON THE LAW OF CORPORATIONS 240-48 (3d ed. 2010) (comparing Delaware's broad corporate purpose statutes with other state statutes that allow or require a corporate purpose that takes into account parties involved other than shareholders).
203 The iconic case is Dodge v. Ford Motor Co., 170 N.W. 668, 684 (Mich. 1919) (stating in dictum and without recitation of authority that a business's primary purpose is to maximize shareholder wealth). Dodge is a peculiar case for many reasons, not the least of which is that minority shareholders earned over 20 times their initial investment from special dividends alone. See Lyman Johnson, Pluralism in Corporate Form: Corporate Law and Benefit Corps, 25 REGENT L. REV. 269, 274 n.22 (2012). See generally, David Yosifon, The Law of Corporate Purpose, 10 BERKELEY BUS. L.J. (forthcoming 2013). This Author and
directors do not typically have an obligation to maximize the share price in the short term, even as they act to "benefit" stockholders—or to accede to shareholder desires on that score—and they only have such an obligation only in one narrow setting: a corporation's "end stage," i.e., in a corporate break-up, when they initiate an active bidding process, or when they enter into a transaction that shifts a dispersed shareholding base into a controller's hands, essentially a privatization. In each of these settings, the aim is for most of the shareholders to exit because the venture, for them, will be over. Beyond that, the Delaware Supreme Court has mandated nothing, or even spoken.

The Delaware Court of Chancery likewise said little until 2010 in a decision to which this Article will return. In dictum, in a 1986 case brought by creditors, the Delaware Court of Chancery said that corporations should advance the long-term interests of stockholders. And, correspondingly and in line with the Delaware Supreme Court decision in *Time*, in 2011, that Court observed that directors have no obligation to maximize the short-term share price.

Professor Yosifon disagree on what Delaware law requires as to corporate purpose but Professor Yosifon's article provides a full treatment. See also Leo E. Strine, Jr., *Our Continuing Struggle With The Idea That For-Profit Corporations Seek Profit*, 47 WAKE FOREST L. REV. 135, 147 n.34, 147-48 n.35 (2012) (collecting commentary). For other judicial decisions discussing corporate purpose see *Katz v. Oak Indus. Inc.*, 508 A.2d 873, 879 (Del. Ch. 1986) (“It is the obligation of directors to attempt, within the law, to maximize the long-run interests of the corporation's stockholders.”). *But see Long v. Northwood Hills Corp.*, 380 S.W.2d 451, 476-77 (Mo. Ct. App. 1964) (examining a corporation's purpose that is not to maximize shareholder wealth).

204See *Paramount Commc'n, Inc. v. Time Inc.*, 571 A.2d 1140, 1150 (Del. 1989).


206See *Paramount Commc'n, Inc.*, 571 A.2d at 1150.


210See *Cox & Hazen, supra* note 202, at 240-48 (comparing Delaware's vague use of the corporate purpose statute with other states that suggest or require a more narrow corporate purpose).

211See *eBay Domestic Holdings, Inc. v. Newmark*, 16 A.3d 1, 33-34 (Del. Ch. 2010).

212See *infra* Part III.B (discussing the decision in *eBay*).


214Id. at 879.

215See *Paramount Commc'n, Inc. v. Time Inc.*, 571 A.2d 1140, 1150 (Del. 1989).

216See *Air Prods. & Chems., Inc. v. Airgas Inc.*, 16 A.5d 48, 112 (Del. Ch. 2011)
If there is so little law, one might ask where beliefs on this foundational issue originate.²¹⁷ Pretty clearly, thinking stems from perceptions (even if faulty) about legal mandates,²¹⁸ business norms and conventions, management lore, faulty executive compensation incentives, and through the professional training provided in business and law schools.²¹⁹ These are powerful influencers of thought and conduct.

Underlying these formative molders of belief and action lie theories about both individuals and institutions.²²⁰ As to individuals, a strong political-legal emphasis on liberty, coupled with neo-classical economic analysis,²²¹ leads to a depiction of people as essentially self-interested.²²² Consequently, in commercial settings, whether in or outside a firm, individuals, behaviorally, are presumed to consistently navigate and bargain for self-advantage.²²³ Recently, this impoverished anthropological view of human behavior has been challenged by behavioralists based on empirical work,²²⁴ largely because instances of altruistic behavior and self-denial are simply too common to ignore.²²⁵

At the organizational level of theory—whether as to a corporation or other association—this cramped anthropology of the individual carries over.²²⁶ The organization is frequently theorized as a "nexus of contracts,"²²⁷ that is, as simply a web of various contracting relationships.²²⁸ It is essentially disaggregated and disregarded as a meaningful institution in its own right.²²⁹ Little heed is given to whether the organization itself—be it a business firm, university, sports team,

(Quoting Paramount Commc’n, Inc., 571 A.2d at 1150).

²¹⁸ This certainly lies behind the post eBay enactment of legislation in several states permitting the formation of so-called "benefit corporations," that need not maximize profits or returns to shareholders. See id.
²¹⁹ Id. at 275-76.
²²¹ Bratton, supra note 220, at 1480.
²²² See Butler, supra note 220, at 103-06. See also Lyman Johnson, Re-Enchanting the Corporation, 1 WM. & Mary Bus. L. Rev. 75, 84-89 (describing self-interest premise in corporate law and contrary evidence).
²²⁴ See Stout, supra note 200, at 96-102. See also Johnson, supra note 217, at 273-76.
²²⁵ See Stout, supra note 200, at 96-102.
²²⁶ See id. at 97-102
²²⁷ See Easterbrook & Fischel, supra note 223, at 12.
²²⁸ See id.
²²⁹ See Bratton, supra note 220, at 1475.
labor union, religious organization, school, social club or other group—might have an overarching institutional purpose or "mission" distinct from that of its various constituencies.\footnote{230} Many such contractarian theorists, moreover, are strictly shareholder focused,\footnote{231} especially those emphasizing an agency theory approach,\footnote{232} and thus "corporate" purpose for them means maximizing shareholder wealth.\footnote{233} Multi-stakeholder conceptions of a corporation, including the Team Production theory,\footnote{234} broaden corporate purpose to encompass non-shareholder constituencies.\footnote{235} But neither shareholder primacy nor stakeholder theorists fully account for various noncontractual interests.\footnote{236} And neither model articulates a truly "corporate" institutional objective or purpose.\footnote{237} Moreover, these alternative theoretical ways of thinking about corporate purpose are largely unaffected by the fact that such collectivities are legal persons utterly distinct from their diverse constituencies.\footnote{238}

Beyond positive law and theory addressing corporate purpose, the normative debate has gone on for decades and shows no signs of abating.\footnote{239} The shareholder primacy camp advocates that profit

\footnote{230}{This is a critical failing of both shareholder primacy and stakeholder theory approaches to corporate purpose. See Lyman Johnson et al., Teaching The Purpose of Business in Catholic Business Education, J. CATH. HIGHER ED. 18-24 (2012) (criticizing these two approaches and advocating that a better individual and institutional understanding of a corporation is gained through a "Community of Persons" Model). Professor Andrew Keay recently has fully articulated the Entity Maximization and Sustainability Model he has been developing in various articles. See ANDREW KEAY, THE CORPORATE OBJECTIVE ch. 4 (2011) (explaining that a corporation, as an entity, has its own distinctive objective).}

\footnote{231}{See EASTERBROOK & FISCHER, supra note 223.}

\footnote{232}{See Michael C. Jensen & William H. Meckling, Theory of the Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs, and Ownership Structure, 3 J. FIN. ECON. 305, 312-13 (1976). Professor Jensen, nonetheless, recognizes that there continues to be a considerable difference of opinion as to corporate purpose. See Michael C. Jensen, Value Maximization, Stakeholder Theory, and the Corporate Objective Function, 14 J. APP. CORP. FIN. 8, 8 (2001).}

\footnote{233}{See Jensen & Meckling, supra note 232, at 8.}

\footnote{234}{See Margaret M. Blair & Lynn A. Stout, A Team Production Theory of Corporate Law, 85 VA. L. REV. 247, 249-50 (1999).}

\footnote{235}{See id.}

\footnote{236}{See KEAY, supra note 230, at 191-97 (explaining the problems with the contractarian theory).}

\footnote{237}{This critique is made quite penetratingly by Professor Keay. See id. at 189-97.}

\footnote{238}{However corporations are conceived as a matter of theory, and however contentious (and unresolved) the shareholder-stakeholder debate about corporate purpose may be, it is not controversial that, as a positive law matter, corporations are distinct legal persons, separate from their various constituencies. See Lyman Johnson, Law and Legal Theory in the History of Corporate Responsibility: Corporate Personhood, 35 SEATTLE U. L. REV. 1135, 1140 (2012).}

\footnote{239}{This is well captured in a number of places but KEAY, supra note 230, at 173}
maximization and shareholder wealth should be the proper and sole corporate purpose. This largely builds on Adolph Berle's original "trust" conception of managers as "trustees" for shareholder interests, in an effort to avoid according managers uncontrollable discretion. Today, this is frequently couched in principal-agent terminology, in which, contrary to law, financial theorists simplistically regard directors and managers as "agents" of their "principals," the shareholders. This descriptive error in modeling corporate relationships haunts "corporate" theory today. It represents, moreover, a profound failure by corporate law scholars, in the 1980s and now, who draw on finance theory, to insist on accurately portraying the legal dimension of institutional relationships. Even theorists who emphasize the reality of board governance make the normative turn toward investor interests. Thus, shareholder well-being is the normative goal in Professor Bainbridge's well-known "director primacy" model.

Those advancing multiple purposes or a broader corporate focus than simply maximizing financial returns for investors, frequently stand on a "multi-stakeholder" or "communitarian" conception of corporate purpose. More neutrally, they may advance a pluralistic, institutionalist approach in which different firms and their managers pursue different purposes, in varying degrees combining financial pursuits with "socially responsible" objectives. The antecedents for stakeholder views are Merrick Dodd's multi-constituency conception of director duties, and Berle's more societal model of the corporation—each extending consideration to noncontracting parties such as the "public interest"—as well as mid-20th century managerialism. These

---

240 Id. at 43-44.
241 A. A. Berle, Jr., For Whom Corporate Managers Are Trustees: A Note, 45 HARV. L. REV. 1365, 1367 (1932).
242 See STOUT, supra note 200, at 18; Jensen & Meckling, supra note 232, at 309.
244 See Jensen & Meckling, supra note 232, at 309-10.
246 KEAY, supra note 230, at 117-18.
247 See Johnson, supra note 217, at 290-91 (advocating a more pluralistic, less monistic approach to corporate purpose but not a stakeholder approach).
248 E. Merrick Dodd, Jr., For Whom Are Corporate Managers Trustees?, 45 HARV. L. REV. 1145, 1147-48 (1932).
250 See, e.g., PETER F. DRUCKER, THE PRACTICE OF MANAGEMENT 37 (1954)
normative stakeholder/communitarian positions, while certainly expanding the number of interests that should be considered and/or served by a corporation's governing officials, continually fail to articulate a truly overarching "corporate" purpose or mission.251

As to which normative position has held sway, historically, they tend to ebb and flow in influence.252 Growing out of the famous Berle-Dodd debate of the early 1930s,253 the manageralist view predominated in mid-century as shareholder primacy receded.254 Notwithstanding iconic assertions by economist Milton Friedman in the early 1960s and again in 1970,255 many prominent mid-century thinkers did not concur with his profit maximization position.256 The Friedman view received an intellectual shot in the arm from financial theorists in the 1970s, however, with the emergence of theoretical work on the firm by financial theorists.257 And that "nexus of contracts" theory was very quickly imported into legal scholarship via the "law and economics" movement in the 1980s.258 Its normative shareholder primacy position, moreover, rapidly became predominant as well in corporate law theory.259 Today, it permeates the teaching of corporation law at elite law schools (and business schools).260 Yet, through all this, even during the tumultuous 1980s takeover era,261 Delaware law remained largely agnostic and

(footnotes)

251KEAY, supra note 230, at 171; Johnson, supra note 217, at 290-91.
252KEAY, supra note 230, at 21.
253Berle, supra note 241, at 1367 (arguing that the justification for Dodd's argument is "theory, not practice"); Dodd, supra note 248, at 1147-48.
254DRUCKER, supra note 250, at 36. Berle conceded mid-century that Dodd's view, at that time, seemed to have prevailed. Berle, supra note 241, at 1371-72. His concession proved to be premature.
257See Jensen & Meckling, supra note 232, at 329-30.
258EASTRIBROOK & FISCHER, supra note 223, at 12, 90-91.
261Lyman Johnson, The Delaware Judiciary and the Meaning of Corporate Life and Corporate Law, 68 TEX. L. REV. 865, 933 (1990) (noting that Delaware courts remained
ambivalent about corporate purpose.262

As we currently stand in the midst of a seemingly strict shareholder primacy theoretical era, it should be recalled that normative positions on corporate purpose have dramatically changed, historically. Besides changes in 20th century thinking noted above, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, for example, corporations generally were chartered to fulfill some public purpose, not solely to pursue private gain.263 Although law moved away from requiring a public purpose to permitting private gain, it never—outside very narrow settings264—has required the pursuit of a particular purpose. Thus, law today, by being agnostic, rightly refrains in a free society from prematurely (if ever) foreclosing ongoing, and sometimes shifting, social and normative debates about the proper goal(s) of corporate activity.265 This stance seems particularly sensible at those moments when significant segments of American society once again appear to be somewhat disenchanted with the corporate sector. Likely, we are now in a period in which societal expectations of the private business sector are shifting. As such, law rightly adopts an enabling and pluralistic approach to corporate purpose, even as the fiduciary obligations of directors and managers can clash with that permissiveness because of the need to hold such persons accountable for their conduct. Often the deference of the business judgment rule becomes a key mechanism for creating the necessary slack between law's agnosticism about corporate purpose and actual governance conduct.

It is against this doctrinal, theoretical, and historical backdrop that the 2010 Delaware Court of Chancery case of eBay Domestic Holdings, Inc. v. Newmark arises.266 For the first time, albeit in an unusual procedural setting, a Delaware court, outside the so-called Revlon setting,267 articulated shareholder wealth maximization as the required objective of corporate endeavor.268 Such a novel and bold position invites close study.

"ambivalent" about corporate purpose to reflect larger societal ambivalence).


263Johnson, supra note 238, at 1144-47.

264See supra notes 207-08 and accompanying text.

265See supra notes 261-62 (noting societal ambivalence about corporate purpose).

26616 A.3d 1 (Del. Ch. 2010).


268eBay, 16 A.3d at 34.
B. The eBay Decision

1. Craigslist and Its Investors

Craigslist, Inc. was formed in the 1990s as a California corporation that, in 2004, was reincorporated in Delaware. It had three early shareholders—Messrs. Craig, Buckmaster, and Knowlton—and thirty-four employees. Chancellor Chandler acknowledged that Craigslist had an unusual business strategy, culture, and perspective on what it means to run a successful business. This is because it mainly operates its business as a community service. Nearly all classified ads are placed without charge, and Craigslist does not sell advertising space. Its only revenue is derived from fees for job postings in selected cities and from apartment listings in New York City. Mr. Craig described this as the corporate "mission," and Chandler observed that the management team was "committed to this community service approach to doing business." Thus, management's good faith is evident, as is Craig's recognition that money is needed to advance the corporate mission. This philosophical approach to business, it should be noted, is similar to Mark Zuckerberg's 2012 description of Facebook's strategy, as described by that iconic company's founder in a letter to shareholders accompanying the filing of a registration statement with the Securities and Exchange Commission. There, Mr. Zuckerberg stated that Facebook did not "build services to make money; we make money to build better services."

The Craigslist strategy has been very successful. Craigslist long has been the dominant company in the online classified ads industry. In 2002, however, one shareholder—Knowlton—wanted a greater emphasis on profits and thus he started shopping his shares in an effort to goad his two co-investors to effectuate change. eBay sought

269Id. at 7.
270Id. at 11.
271Id. at 8-9.
272Id.
273Id.
274Id.
275eBay, 16 A.3d at 8.
276eBay, 16 A.3d at 8.
278Id.
279eBay, 16 A.3d at 8.
280Id. at 9.
Knowlton's shares, tentatively agreeing to pay $15 million.\textsuperscript{281} eBay's initial hope was to acquire all of the Craigslist stock, not remain a minority investor.\textsuperscript{282} Craig and Buckmaster made it quite clear, however, that they would not sell to eBay.\textsuperscript{283} As part of the negotiations to purchase Knowlton's stock, eBay negotiated with Craig and Buckmaster as well over a variety of corporate governance issues.\textsuperscript{284} The result was that Knowlton received $16 million from eBay for his stock and, in essence, eBay invested another $16 million in Craigslist followed by Craigslist paying Craig and Buckmaster $8 million each as a dividend.\textsuperscript{285} In this way, importantly, all three investors gained significant financial benefit from their positions as shareholders and as a result of the Knowlton transaction, eBay owned 28.4\% of Craigslist stock, and Craig and Buckmaster continued to own 42.6\% and 29\%, respectively.\textsuperscript{286}

These three shareholders entered a Shareholders' Agreement that, among other provisions, gave eBay the right to consent to certain transactions and restricted the transfer of shares by all three investors.\textsuperscript{287} eBay expressly preserved a right to compete with Craigslist in the classified ads business.\textsuperscript{288} Upon doing so, however, it would lose its consent rights but, correspondingly, its shares became freely transferable.\textsuperscript{289} Although eBay's long-term plan was to acquire Craigslist outright, it went into its position as a minority shareholder in a business having a unique strategy with its corporate eyes open.\textsuperscript{290} eBay was under no illusion as to what Craigslist's avowed "mission" and business strategy was.\textsuperscript{291} Moreover, it negotiated certain provisions but not others.\textsuperscript{292} Notably, recalling here the teachings of \textit{Nixon v. Blackwell} on the ability of investors in close corporations to bargain ex ante for certain financial benefits such as mandatory dividends, "put" or "call" options, and so on,\textsuperscript{293} eBay did not so bargain on the core subjects of corporate
purpose, profit-making, and purchase rights.294

Far from Craig and Buckmaster altering the Craigslist business philosophy, they sought from eBay even greater appreciation for Craigslist's "unique mission."295  The parties—now in a co-investor relationship—had sharply divergent views about whether and how to more vigorously "monetize" Craigslist.296 Relations became further strained when eBay launched its own competitive business in 2007.297  This meant that eBay lost consent rights, but also that its stock became freely transferrable.298  Craig and Buckmaster sought legal counsel as to how to keep eBay from placing a director on the three-person board, given that Craigslist had cumulative voting, and also on how to limit eBay's ability to purchase additional Craigslist shares.299

Critical for this Article's purposes was the eventual adoption of a Rights Plan ("poison pill"), an oddity for a close corporation. The aim of the Craigslist Plan was to prevent eBay from selling its shares as a block and from buying additional shares, particularly after Craig and Buckmaster died.300  In 2008, eBay sued Craigslist, Craig and Buckmaster, alleging that, by adopting the Rights Plan (and other measures not pertinent here), the latter gentlemen breached their fiduciary duties as both directors and controlling shareholders of Craigslist.301

2. The Court's Analysis

Characterizing the Rights Plan as a defensive measure, the Chancellor applied the Unocal enhanced scrutiny standard.302  This played a decisive role in the Chancellor's decision to nullify the Rights Plan because unlike Delaware law generally—which is agnostic on corporate purpose—Unocal, according to Chandler and a 2007 Delaware Court of Chancery decision he cited, requires that directors "identify the proper corporate objectives served by their actions . . . ."303  In fact,
Unocal requires directors to identify a threat to "corporate policy and effectiveness . . . ."  This linguistic modification, and invocation of the phrase "proper corporate objective" (or "proper corporate purpose"), was central to Chandler's analysis because it seemingly presented for resolution the issue of what is a "proper" corporate purpose or objective. After invoking Unocal, Chandler immediately focused on "stockholder value" to define what he believed "corporate objective" meant. This is because Unocal arose in, and was designed for, hostile takeovers, where stockholders typically are, or conceivably might be, presented with an offer to purchase their stock. That setting, however, was not pertinent in Craigslist because the company's Plan did not preclude any existent or imminent purchase offer to investors. But it influenced the analysis, as did the opinion's under-appreciation of Unocal's distinction between "corporate enterprise" and "stockholders." It was a threat to the former that Unocal focused on, even if the threat came from an existing stockholder. By Chandler's own admission, eBay wanted to alter Craigslist's (very effective) corporate policy.

The defendant directors understandably presented as the identified threat under Unocal, the possible alteration of Craigslist's core values, culture, business model, and public-service mission. Chandler pooh-poohed this as a trial tactic: a "fiction," designed to invoke the memorable reference to "corporate culture" in Paramount Communication, Inc. v. Time. But that characterization is passing strange given his own statement of facts where he clearly credits

(304) Unocal, 493 A.2d at 955.

(305) Occasionally, Chandler would use the Unocal "corporate policy and effectiveness" language. eBay, 16 A.3d at 31-32.

(306) Id. at 33-34.

(307) In this way, Craigslist was somewhat more like Moran v. Household International, Inc., 500 A.2d 1346 (Del. 1985) (approving adoption of Rights Plan and leaving until later its deployment).

(308) For the analysis of Craigslist's Rights Plan under the Unocal standard, see eBay, 16 A.3d at 31-33.

(309) Unocal, 493 A.2d at 954.

(310) eBay, 16 A.3d at 32. Chandler also seemed overly quick to dismiss the 1960 Chancery Court decision in Kors v. Carey, 158 A.2d 136 (Del. Ch. 1960). eBay, 16 A.3d at 32 n.102. That Unocal altered the analytical framework for defensive measures does not mean it overturned the gist of those decisions acknowledging pre-existing corporate policies as worthy of protection. Moreover, Chancellor Chandler did not reference Cheff v. Mathes, 199 A.2d 548 (Del. Ch. 1964), which identified a proposed change in corporate sales policies as a valid corporate interest, an obviously pertinent authority for the craigslist policy.

(311) eBay, 16 A.3d at 32.

(312) Id. at 32-33 (quoting Paramount Commc’n, Inc. v. Time, Inc., 1989 WL 79880, at *4 (Del. Ch. July 14, 1989), aff’d, 571 A.2d 1140 (Del. 1990)).
Craigslist's "different" strategy, culture, and perspective on business.313 as well as his acknowledgment that the strategy "continues to be successful."314 Moreover, eBay obviously recognized the uniqueness of the Craigslist policy because it was precisely that business strategy that presented such a large potential monetization opportunity.315

Again switching from a focus on "corporate culture" to stockholders, Chandler stated that defendants had not shown that Craigslist "sufficiently promotes stockholder value . . . ."316 But Knowlton, an early shareholder, had recently departed with a cool $16 million in an arm's length stock sale, and Craig and Buckmaster collectively received $16 million in dividends as part of that same transaction.317 Craigslist, thus, was not failing to provide significant financial returns to its investors. The Chancellor then disparaged the public service mission as a "sales tactic" designed to build a vast community of users so that Craigslist could charge fees to select employers and real estate brokers seeking a "large market of consumers . . . ."318 Business strategy, however, is for corporate directors to craft, not judges. Moreover, the complete reverse of what Chandler conjectured could equally be true. Craigslist, like Facebook, might seek profits—clearly redounding to investor benefit—so that it can advance its larger, public-service corporate mission.

Having equated "corporate purpose" with "stockholder value," Chandler sought to add one further twist given that, factually, investors already had made significant sums from their holdings in Craigslist and thus its activities were not "purely philanthropic."319 He stated several times that a corporate policy is improper if it does not seek to "maximize" economic value for stockholders.320 Chandler acknowledged that Craig and Buckmaster had proven that they sincerely believed Craigslist's mission should not be about stockholder wealth maximization.321 Yet this determination of corporate objective by the

---

313Id. at 7.
314Id. at 8.
315eBay, 16 A.3d at 9.
316Id. at 33.
317Id. at 11.
318Id. at 33.
319eBay, 16 A.3d at 34. This verbal jab is reminiscent of Dodge v. Ford Motor Co., 170 N.W. 668, 684 (Mich. 1919), where the Court chided Henry Ford about "incidental" benefits to investors when, in fact, he had provided his early stage investors with staggering financial returns of about 20 times their initial investment, in the form of special dividends. Modern day hedge fund managers, no doubt, would be delighted to replicate such returns.
320eBay, 16 A.3d at 34.
321Id.
properly-constituted board of directors—who held, as stockholders, 72% of the stock—was considered by the Chancellor to be of no legal moment for Delaware law. 322 It was not for them to decide, he effectively ruled, what purpose a corporation they founded and controlled should advance or even whether, as holders of 72% of the stock, they knew what was in their best interests. 323 Rather, he said, it was up to him, and he could not accept such a strategy as valid. 324 Seeking some legal foundation for his view, he could only come up with the fact that Craigslist was a "for-profit" corporation. 325 But he did not go on to explain how being a "for-profit" corporation meant a company had to "maximize" profits, as opposed to making (or seeking or enhancing) profits 326—as Craigslist undoubtedly did—while also serving other chosen corporate objectives. More importantly, whatever one's normative beliefs, or even prevailing non-law business norms, the question remains whether positive law does or should mandate a monistic rather than pluralistic approach to corporate purpose.

3. The Aftermath of eBay

The eBay opinion carries important implications for corporate theory and legislative reform as well as future doctrinal analysis by courts. At the theory level, the opinion strongly manifests Berle's "trust" conception of the director-stockholder relationship as well as the current "principal-agent" conception of agency theory. 327 In each of these views, the corporate enterprise is effectively disregarded in favor of focusing on the director-stockholder nexus. Thus, notwithstanding that corporations are distinct legal persons, 328 nor that eBay was not an end-of-the-enterprise case like Revlon, 329 ultimately, the Craigslist "corporate" mission did not matter to the Court, only stockholders did. Lost then was any respect for the corporation as an institution serving interests that included—but more importantly, transcended—providing returns to investors. In this way, although Delaware doctrine pays homage to an

322 Id.
323 Id.
324 eBay, 16 A.3d at 34.
325 Id.
326 Economist Henry Simon, for example, argued that companies might seek to make satisfactory profits, what he called "profit-satisficing." HENRY SIMON, MODELS OF MAN 204 (1957).
327 See supra notes 232, 241 and accompanying text.
328 See Johnson, supra note 238, at 1158.
329 See supra note 208 and accompanying text.
entity conception of the corporation in some settings, when corporate purpose was on the line as in eBay, the entity conception gave way. Doctrinally, this reflects a recurrent flaw of both the shareholder primacy and stakeholder theories of the "corporation"—neither, in fact, pays real heed to the corporation itself as a meaningful social-legal institution.

Both shareholder primacy and stakeholder theories, moreover, like the eBay opinion, are grounded in an anthropology of humans that remains individualistic and self-interested. Stakeholder theory may broaden the range of persons to be considered by corporate decision makers as claimants, but it does not advance a fundamentally different vision of human role and motivation within an institutional setting—i.e., that the participants' purpose, once in the firm, is to advance the larger, common good of the company's mission. Nor, at the organizational level, does stakeholder theory articulate an overarching "corporate" purpose or mission. Rather, in both shareholder primacy and stakeholder theories, the "corporation" is simply an analytical and semantic trope representing either shareholder interests, on the one hand, or those of multi-stakeholders, on the other. Firm relationships in both theories remain bargained-for economic exchanges, not what Lynne Dallas calls "covenantal relationships" based on mutual commitment to the welfare of others and allegiance to a set of shared values and goals, as expressed in a truly "corporate" mission and purpose. Put another way, pursuit of an all-embracing corporate "common good" is ignored at both the organizational and individual level of theory. This is odd, and a loss, given the very etymology of "company" as meaning "breaking bread" together, and of "corporation" meaning "body," of which many parts are integral. Apparently, under eBay's cramped view of corporate purpose—as in corporate theory generally—it is legally and conceptually incoherent to speak of Penn State, the New York Yankees, Craigslist, or any other of countless groups, as having interests that transcend those of particular constituencies. Profound failures of modern corporate theory

331See supra notes 229-233 and accompanying text.
332Lynne L. Dallas, Short-Termism, the Financial Crisis, and Corporate Governance, 37 J. CORP. L. 265, 356 (2012).
333EDWIN S. HUNT & JAMES M. MURRAY, A HISTORY OF BUSINESS IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE, 1200-1550, at 13 (1990) ("[T]he daily dietary question was what to have with bread, cum panis, the etymological root of the word 'company' and its derivatives . . . .").
334See KLEIN'S COMPREHENSIVE ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (Unabridged, One-Volume ed. 1971) (Corporation is a derivate of the Latin infinitive, corporare, "to take into body").
thus meant the Chancellor had little scholarly support in striking a blow for the validity of a genuinely corporate purpose.

As to Craigslist's pursuit of its avowed corporate purpose, the court's remedy of nullifying the Rights Plan under Unocal did nothing to change Craigslist's corporate mission. eBay follows the iconic Dodge v. Ford Motor Co.\textsuperscript{335} in this regard, where, after a judicial scolding, dividends were ordered to be paid but Henry Ford still went his merry way hiring workers and pricing vehicles just as he pleased.\textsuperscript{336} The corporate purpose chosen by the properly-constituted governing officials was judicially rebuked in both cases, but not judicially altered.\textsuperscript{337} This is because judges do not and cannot make directors and officers maximize anything in the operation of a business venture. They can only prohibit them from taking particular actions.\textsuperscript{338} Notwithstanding this constraint on judicial reach, the quite troubling question still arises as to whether it is at all appropriate for a judge, who is a government official, to command management of a private enterprise to advance (or refrain from) otherwise lawful activities. This is particularly true where a savvy shareholder went in with its financial eyes wide open.\textsuperscript{339} In effect, eBay the crafty investor was fortuitously saved by a modern rendition of the slumbering ultra vires doctrine.\textsuperscript{340}

The issue of corporate purpose, moreover, can potentially raise a troubling religious liberty concern, if not a First Amendment free exercise issue.\textsuperscript{341} This can be seen by looking at the privately held (like Craigslist) Chick-fil-A company, a business recently in the news for the views of its controlling shareholder-manager on gay marriage.\textsuperscript{342} That company famously is not open for business on Sundays.\textsuperscript{343} The reason is the founding family's religious belief that one should rest and not unnecessarily labor on Sundays.\textsuperscript{344} Moreover, Chick-fil-A headquarters

---

\textsuperscript{335} Dodge v. Ford Motor Co., 170 N.W. 668 (Mich. 1919).
\textsuperscript{336} See id. at 683.
\textsuperscript{337} See id. at 684; eBay Domestic Holdings, Inc. v. Newmark, 16 A.3d 1, 48 (Del. Ch. 2010).
\textsuperscript{338} E.g., Dodge, 170 N.W. at 684 (explaining the court's decision to avoid judicial interference in Ford's business policy because "judges are not business experts," and there exists a lack of sufficient threat to the interests of the shareholders to condone such judicial interference).
\textsuperscript{339} See discussion supra Part III.B.1.
\textsuperscript{340} See DEL. CODE ANN. tit. 8, § 124 (2011); see, e.g., Jacksonville M., P. Ry. & Nav. Co. v. Hooper, 160 U.S. 514, 526 (1896) (a defense of ultra vires was not sustained).
\textsuperscript{342} Id.
\textsuperscript{343} Id.
\textsuperscript{344} Id.
displays a plaque that clearly states the religious dimension of its corporate purpose: to "glorify God by being a faithful steward . . . [and] have a positive influence on all . . . ."

In addition, the company and its founder have given magnanimously to financially assist numerous disadvantaged groups and individuals. Thus, the company over the decades has pretty clearly failed to "maximize" profits or shareholder wealth, potentially having left hundreds of millions of dollars unearned by its decision to close all 1,600 stores on Sunday and to generously donate company funds.

At the urging of a hypothetical eBay-like future investor in Chick-fil-A, would—could—the Delaware Court of Chancery rule that that company wrongly refused to maximize profits and, therefore, should be ordered to sell chicken on Sundays? Alternatively, what if the founders of Craigslist had founded that company and operated it as they do out of deeply-held religious convictions; could a Court then mandate a change in operations so as to achieve profit maximization? To the extent that numerous companies are operated in a profit-seeking, but not profit-maximizing, manner out of religious belief, it would seem disturbing on religious liberty grounds for a state official to mandate that the governing constituents of a business must strive to make more money. This raises in a particularly troubling way the more general issue of why corporate officials of any philosophical bent should be heavy-handedly required by law to endeavor to earn as much money as

345See Chick-fil-A at Independence Center Timeline Photos, FACEBOOK, https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151480736938318&set=pb.55766183317.-2207520000.1373591949.&type=3&theater (search "Chick-fil-A at Independence Center"; then click on "Photos" hyperlink; and scroll to find "Corporate Purpose" plaque).


347The Author is not suggesting that such a mandate would violate the First Amendment, given the neutrality of application to all corporations, but only that religious liberty would thereby be substantially curbed in the corporate setting. Compare Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & Sch. v. EEOC, 132 S. Ct. 694, 711-12 (2012) (First Amendment protects group communication of religious beliefs) (Alito, J., concurring), with Emp't Div., Dept. of Human Res. of Or. v. Smith, 494 U.S. 872, 890 (1990) (upholding a law affecting religious activity when that law was equally applicable to all citizens).
possible, provided prospective investors are fully informed in advance of any investment, as eBay clearly was. Lawmakers should not impose their own beliefs about the proper goals of business activity on the private sector but should themselves remain, ironically enough, "agnostic."

The modern corporate form after eBay may seem to offer less flexibility than the modern LLC form when it comes to business purpose. Delaware's LLC statute explicitly permits that type of entity to be used by both for-profit and not-for-profit purposes, as noted by certain commentators. By way of contrast, corporations, although they can conduct "any lawful business or purposes," are, formally, one of only two types of corporations—i.e., for-profit or nonprofit—unlike LLCs, where either for-profit or nonprofit ventures can be conducted in the same type of vehicle. The error and teaching of eBay, however, is to hold that to operate at all in the for-profit mode means that profits must be maximized rather than pursued (or enhanced, satisfied, and so on) in some manner and to some degree. The for-profit corporation statute itself, however, includes no such requirement. Thus, in the LLC setting, there likewise can be no assurance after eBay that for-profit LLCs may refrain from maximizing profits, if they elect to pursue profits at all.

One legislative response to eBay in numerous states already is the adoption of legislation authorizing the formation of benefit corporations. These so-called "B Corps" are for-profit companies that seek to make profits while also serving environmental/social objectives. They do not need to maximize profits. Proponents of this legislation routinely read the eBay decision as requiring profit

---

350 See supra note 202 and accompanying text.
351 See Conaway, Global Use of the Delaware LLC, supra note 349, at 780-71.
352 See supra notes 348-349 and accompanying text.
353 See DEL. CODE ANN. tit. 8, § 101(b) (2012).
354 See Johnson, supra note 217, at 270 n.6 (listing states as of 2012). In 2013, additional states have adopted benefit corporation statutes, including Delaware. S.B. 47, 147th Gen. Assemb. (Del. 2013).
355 See Johnson, supra note 217, at 287-88.
356 See id.
maximization\textsuperscript{357} and, thus, that decision comprises a key reason for promulgating a new "dual mission" form of business vehicle.

Another legislative approach to accommodate mixed purpose business vehicles can be seen in Oregon's corporate statute.\textsuperscript{358} Oregon permits a corporation's articles of incorporation to include a provision authorizing or directing the conduct of the business in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.\textsuperscript{359} Prospective investors thus know from the outset that such a corporation may not be maximizing profits in all circumstances and they can invest or refrain accordingly. In this way, as with benefit corporation legislation, states are permitting, but not mandating, a pluralistic approach to corporate purpose rather than decreeing a singular objective. Market and social forces, not law, can then work to determine which models succeed.\textsuperscript{360}

Another statutory approach for Delaware in the aftermath of \textit{eBay}, besides its new benefit corporation statute, would be to more clearly adopt a statutory default rule on the profit-seeking/profit-maximizing issue within its business corporation statute.\textsuperscript{361} The most likely rule, given widespread corporate norms and conventions,\textsuperscript{362} would be profit maximization (or, perhaps profit "enhancement"). This should be coupled with a permitted opt-out of profit maximization (or enhancement) in favor of an alternative and clearly specified purpose or combination of purposes.\textsuperscript{363} In this way, the notion of the corporation as a meaningful social-economic institution serving its own overarching

\textsuperscript{357}See \textit{id} at 273 n.16 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{358}OR. REV. STAT. § 60.047 (2011).

\textsuperscript{359}\textit{Id}.

\textsuperscript{360}Of course, if shareholders eventually fund only zealous profit maximizers, then capital providers—not boards of directors or senior executives—will effectively decide corporate purpose in our society. Proponents of greater legal pluralism to permit corporations to pursue more varied business purposes thus need to be careful of what they hope for. They may get it but with a different outcome than anticipated.

\textsuperscript{361}Delaware law both provides that a corporation may pursue "any lawful business or purposes," see DEL. CODE ANN. tit. 8, § 101(b) (2012), and that a company's certificate of incorporation may include any "provision for the management of the business and for the conduct of the affairs of the corporation . . . not contrary to the laws of this State." \textit{Id}. § 102(b)(1).

\textsuperscript{362}See supra notes 215-19 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{363}The British East India Company, Professor Keay notes, stated in its charter that the company's purpose was to serve "public interests." KEAY, supra note 230, at 6-7 & n.38. The articles of incorporation of Control Data Corporation, a major computer manufacturer in the 20th century, contained since at least the 1970s a provision that the company served the interests of numerous constituencies. M. AOKI, THE CO-OPERATIVE GAME THEORY OF THE FIRM 179 (1984). And originally, many early American corporations were granted charters because they sought to advance a public purpose, not simply facilitate private financial gain. See Johnson, supra note 217, at 276-78.
mission distinct from that of any of its constituencies—investors or otherwise—could be restored and brought into legal reality. And as currently is the case in Canada, the director duty of loyalty to advance the corporate purpose would be owed to the corporation itself, not to the stockholders.364 Furthermore, this reform would advance the laudable goal of facilitating greater institutional pluralism in the corporate realm,365 thereby avoiding the overly sharp current dichotomy (and typology) between for-profit and nonprofit corporations. As recently observed by the Delaware Supreme Court: "[I]t is hardly absurd for the General Assembly to design a system promoting maximum business entity diversity."366

IV. CONCLUSION

Delaware corporate law is unsettled on two rather basic issues addressed in this Article, i.e., the precise reach but also the continuing utility of the business judgment rule as now formulated, and whether a narrow corporate purpose is and should be mandated. Unsettledness, to varying degrees, is an inherent feature of dynamic lawmaking in the common law system. Delaware law, after all, does not design rules for a business system that itself is static; consequently, law itself cannot be static, and lawmaking mechanisms must themselves be highly adaptive.

We saw this very clearly in a highly compressed time period in 2012 when doubt was raised as to the existence of default fiduciary duties in LLCs, a doubt quickly dispelled by the General Assembly.367

But doctrinal flux can also operate in a narrow band and over a longer, Kondratiev-like cycle.368 We see this where baseline issues remain contested and where thoughtful judges, lawyers, and professors retain a lingering discomfort as to rule optimality and social congruence. This Article suggests that while the policy underpinnings of the business

---

364 This is not to say that in other respects the directors would not also owe a duty of loyalty to shareholders.
365 Contractarian scholars who generally favor shareholder primacy also believe business people should be free to opt for the pursuit of another purpose. See, e.g., Easterbrook & Fischel, supra note 223, at 35; Stephen Bainbridge, Director Primacy: The Means and Ends of Corporate Governance, 97 NW. U. L. REV. 547, 577-80 (2003).
367 This is fully described in Johnson, supra note 12.
368 According to some economists, a Kondratiev wave is a business cycle spanning a long period, ranging from 45 to 60 years. See e.g., Toivo Tanning, Maksim Saat, & Lembo Tanning, Kondratiev Wave: Overview of World Economic Cycles, 2 GLOBAL BUS. & ECON. RES. J. 1, 3 (2013).
judgment rule remain sound, Delaware's deployment of the rule is not. Delaware's rule has outworn its usefulness for analyzing director conduct for the simple if startling reason that it is doctrinal surplusage; and for controlling shareholders, the rule is simply inapt and does nothing but complicate the analysis. The key question for all corporate fiduciaries, like all other fiduciaries, is whether they did or did not breach their duties in a way that caused harm. Delaware's rule is a prolix, doctrinal vestige wrongly pressed into service as a unifying vehicle for analyzing this straightforward issue. Such over-refined complexity in intellectual thought typically precedes a much-needed, simplifying paradigm shift.\textsuperscript{369} Delaware judges should fundamentally alter the "map" of fiduciary analysis by showcasing fiduciary duties and downplaying the business judgment rule. They can begin doing so by not adopting the rule in analyzing officer and shareholder conduct. And for directors, the policy of no-substantive review central to duty of care analysis can easily accomplish the goal of deferential review in a more streamlined doctrinal manner.

As to corporate purpose, in a complex modern economy committed to free choice, ingenuity, experimentation, and diverse social patterns, Delaware law should not mandate a narrow money-maximizing purpose. As in the tumultuous 1980s, when Delaware judges wisely refused to endorse a view that corporations existed solely to enrich shareholders,\textsuperscript{370} common law judges should not dictate that objective today. Such a view, although dominant in corporate law theory, is at odds with broader social expectations of business conduct in the modern world and it undermines much-needed judicial legitimacy in the business law area. Delaware law should retain its enabling quality and remain agnostic on this issue.

\textsuperscript{369}This, of course, is the insightful thesis of Thomas Kuhn's classic book, \textsc{Thomas Kuhn}, \textit{The Structure of Scientific Revolutions} (1962).
\textsuperscript{370}See Johnson, supra note 261.