1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
2	x
3	RANDY CURTIS BULLOCK, :
4	Petitioner : No. 11-1518
5	v. :
6	BANK CHAMPAIGN, N.A. :
7	x
8	Washington, D.C.
9	Monday, March 18, 2013
10	
11	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
12	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
13	at 11:10 a.m.
14	APPEARANCES:
15	THOMAS M. BYRNE, ESQ., Atlanta, Georgia; on behalf of
16	Petitioner.
17	BILL D. BENSINGER, ESQ., Birmingham, Alabama; on behalf
18	of Respondent.
19	CURTIS E. GANNON, ESQ., Assistant to the Solicitor
20	General, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; for
21	United States, as amicus curiae, supporting
22	Respondent.
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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(11:10 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument
4	next in case 11-1518, Bullock v. Bank Champaign.
5	Mr. Byrne?
6	ORAL ARGUMENT OF THOMAS M. BYRNE
7	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
8	MR. BYRNE: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
9	please the Court:
10	This case presents one of the most
11	confounding questions of bankruptcy law, and that is the
12	meaning of defalcation, which is found currently in
13	Section 523(a)(4) of the Code. It is an undefined term
14	in a Bankruptcy Code with more than 100 defined terms
15	and it has been in the Bankruptcy Code Bankruptcy
16	Act, excuse me, since 1841 and in every version of it
17	since then. There is no plain contemporary, ordinary
18	meaning that we can resort to, with respect to
19	interpretation of the word because it is not in common
20	use.
21	This case presents both the question of the
22	action required to establish defalcation and the mental
23	state that most that must accompany it. And on the
24	mental state issue, the circuits have split in probably
25	three ways at least

1	The Eleventh Circuit here held that
2	Petitioner committed defalcation by acting recklessly
3	and affirmed on summary judgment a summary judgment
4	order that was granted for the petitioning creditor.
5	JUSTICE ALITO: Well, before we get to the
6	various candidates for applicable mental state, if there
7	is one, could you tell me what this mental state applies
8	to? Does it apply to facts or does it apply to law?
9	MR. BYRNE: Your Honor, it should apply to
LO	both, but it applies the act must be accompanied by a
L1	culpable mental state. We will argue that and have
L2	argued that mistake of law can be relevant to the
L3	knowledge that the actor has when he commits the act,
L4	and we have argued that in this particular circumstance
L5	particularly involving dischargeability, that a mistake
L6	of law ought to be permissible in responding to the
L7	claim of defalcation.
L8	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, what we have here
L9	is, I think everybody agrees, that these transactions
20	were not authorized and they were self-dealing to the
21	extent that there was a benefit to Mr. Bullock from the
22	investments that were made. So what, in addition to
23	being unauthorized and self-dealing, which the
24	government tells us should be enough to make
25	defalcation what else other than that it was not

- 1 authorized and it was self-dealing?
- 2 MR. BYRNE: Your Honor, we believe that a
- 3 showing of extreme recklessness at least is required as
- 4 to the self-dealing, and so we have advocated for the
- 5 First and Second Circuit standard, which requires either
- 6 extreme recklessness or conscious misbehavior by the
- 7 actor.
- 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But is a trustee who is
- 9 taking -- borrowing against the cash value of the life
- 10 insurance making an investment for the benefit of
- 11 himself and his mother getting profit from that
- 12 investment and not sharing it with the other siblings
- 13 who are also. So what more than -- I mean, he did that
- 14 all advertently.
- 15 MR. BYRNE: Well, Your Honor, let me go back
- 16 to the question, first were -- were the loans
- 17 authorized? Now, this case -- the finding of
- 18 defalcation here is based entirely on the two Illinois
- 19 court orders in collateral estoppel. And the Illinois
- 20 courts specifically reserved the question of whether the
- 21 loans were authorized. But let me put that aside,
- 22 please, and answer your second question.
- 23 And what -- what sets this case apart and
- 24 what -- what at least creates a factual question on
- 25 whether Mr. Bullock committed defalcation was what was

- 1 his -- what was the overall transaction. This is a
- 2 family trust, it was created by his father, involving
- 3 his father's life insurance policy. There is
- 4 uncontradicted evidence that he did not know that making
- 5 a loan to his mother at his father's request would
- 6 somehow run afoul of the law more than a decade later
- 7 when this all came -- when this all came to court.
- 8 So we say, Your Honor, that there is at
- 9 least a factual question that would have entitled him --
- 10 should have entitled him to a trial on the question of
- 11 the mental state that accompanied his actions.
- 12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But what about the two
- 13 other transactions which were not done at the bidding of
- 14 the father?
- 15 MR. BYRNE: Well, Your Honor, they were done
- 16 at the bidding of the mother and also they were -- they
- 17 went into the family business. These are two loans that
- 18 went into the business created by the father and the
- 19 mother, the garage building business. That's where the
- 20 proceeds went. And so it would have been a surprise, we
- 21 say, to the average person to learn that there was a
- 22 legal problem with those loans.
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I mean, it's
- 24 often the case that -- that children don't want to go
- 25 into the family business and it's often the case that

- 1 some of them do and some of them don't and the idea that
- 2 one of the children who wants to put the money back in
- 3 the family business is -- you know, you wouldn't think
- 4 that was wrong when the other children want to take the
- 5 money out or put it somewhere else. That's not at all
- 6 unusual.
- 7 MR. BYRNE: Well, it's not unusual to have
- 8 some sort of conflict about that, Your Honor. But the
- 9 record is very limited in this case as to what the
- 10 preferences of the others were. It is -- it seems clear
- 11 that --
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Their preference is that
- 13 they wanted a piece of the action. They still do. They
- 14 want the profits from that investment. Whether they're
- 15 entitled to it is a different issue, but --
- 16 MR. BYRNE: That -- that position seems
- 17 clear now, Your Honor, that -- that background, these
- 18 loans were made, please, recall, in the '80s.
- 19 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I -- I assume the other
- 20 children did not have an interest in the business, but
- 21 just the trustee and the mother did. Or is that clear
- 22 from the record.
- 23 MR. BYRNE: That is not clear from the
- 24 record, Your Honor. I think I know the answer to that
- 25 question, but it is not in the record in the case, so --

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: Could -- could you go back,
- 2 please, to Justice Alito's question? I -- I don't
- 3 understand the answer to that. That is, I don't
- 4 understand, and it's just something I don't understand.
- 5 I'm not saying it facetiously. I don't understand the
- 6 relationship of mental state to the issue.
- 7 I mean, I didn't think there is any doubt
- 8 here that the individual, your client, knew what he was
- 9 doing. He knew for a fact that he was taking money from
- 10 the trust. He knew he was giving it to his mother. And
- 11 he knows where it's going. And he knows it was later
- 12 paid back with 6 percent interest. So you don't have to
- 13 assume extreme recklessness. He knew it.
- Now, what he didn't know was that that was
- 15 unlawful. And therefore, if I look at the accompanying
- 16 things, embezzlement, larceny, fraud in the trust, I
- 17 don't think any of them require a knowledge that what
- 18 you're doing is unlawful.
- 19 So if I -- or do they? I don't think -- you
- 20 can be convicted of embezzlement while misunderstanding
- 21 the law of embezzlement.
- You can be convicted of larceny, it's
- 23 saying. And as far as I know, a person to commit fraud
- 24 lies, knows it's material, knows, et cetera, but he
- 25 doesn't have to know there's a law against it. And --

- 1 and so -- if I do what Justice Harlan was doing and
- 2 comparing it to the other three, it looks as if you
- 3 don't need to know that what you're doing is against the
- 4 law, where you commit defalcation.
- 5 Now, that I think is what Justice Alito was
- 6 driving at. And I'd like to hear an absolutely clear
- 7 answer on that.
- 8 MR. BYRNE: Your Honor, let me -- let me
- 9 try -- let me try to give such an answer. The first,
- 10 with respect to larceny, embezzlement and fraud, a
- 11 mistake of law is admissible where it negates the
- 12 scienter or the mental state.
- 13 JUSTICE BREYER: But I didn't think there's
- 14 any respect here in which admissing -- mistake of law,
- 15 would negate the mental state as to having taken money
- 16 from the trust, used it in the family business and then
- 17 paid it back, which I take it are, we assume, which is a
- 18 different question I have, but for present purposes, we
- 19 are assuming that that's sufficient for defalcation.
- 20 Is that right? Where does it, where does
- 21 it negative the intent in respect to what happened?
- MR. BYRNE: Well, Your Honor, the knowledge
- 23 of the law, knowledge of wrongdoing I think is what --
- 24 what you're asking, where does that come into this? And
- 25 it comes into the question A, if you didn't have it; and

- 1 B, the question becomes was it extremely reckless under
- 2 the scienter standard that the First and Second
- 3 Circuits -- the First and Second Circuits follow --
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: No, it had nothing to do
- 5 with recklessness. He did these three things knowingly.
- 6 That is a stronger mental state than recklessness, not a
- 7 weaker one.
- 8 MR. BYRNE: Well, Your Honor, but he did then
- 9 without knowing that they --
- 10 JUSTICE BREYER: Were unlawful. So we're
- 11 back at the same question, and I'm now assuming you have
- 12 no answer to the question because there is none.
- MR. BYRNE: Well, Your Honor, the -- in many
- 14 instances, not many, but in some instances, the Court
- 15 has held that not knowing that a practice is unlawful is
- 16 a defense to a charge of the crime.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: My problem is the
- 18 following, which is let's assume he had taken the money
- 19 and lost it and he never repaid it. What does it matter
- 20 whether he thought he could take the money or not? I
- 21 thought the very basic definition of defalcation in
- 22 every dictionary of the time and forever, one of the
- 23 three definitions has always been that you cause a loss
- 24 to the -- to the trust. Why does mental state matter at
- 25 all, is my bottom line?

- I think that your stronger argument is that
 loss to the estate, or the one that you have to -- can
- 3 direct your attention to, is what is the loss to the
- 4 trust? But what does it matter whether I intended to
- 5 lose it or not if I wasn't entitled to lose it?
- 6 MR. BYRNE: Well, Your Honor, the question
- 7 would be whether or not on the mental state and I'll
- 8 get to the actus reus element of this quickly, but
- 9 as to the mental state, if the mental state is not
- 10 culpable, then it seems entirely inconsistent --
- 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, that's Justice
- 12 Breyer's point, which is if you took the money and lost
- 13 it, what does it matter? You took it. Unless -- unless
- 14 you were drugged and didn't know that you were taking
- 15 the money and somebody else forced you to in some --
- 16 under some sort of duress defense, some outrageous
- 17 question, isn't the issue the one that Justice Breyer
- 18 came to? If you're a fiduciary, why should an excuse of
- 19 ignorance of the law ever save you when you are required
- 20 to exercise the highest protection of the trust?
- 21 MR. BYRNE: Well, Your Honor, of course, it
- 22 does not save you from liability. Our issue here is
- 23 dischargeability, which is a --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Why should you be
- 25 discharged if you took -- if you knowingly did an act,

- 1 the actus reus --
- 2 MR. BYRNE: Because --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- with its concomitant
- 4 mental state. You intended to take the money.
- 5 MR. BYRNE: Well, Your Honor, because for
- 6 dischargeability purposes, because of Gleason v. Thaw,
- 7 and the rule that -- that bankruptcy discharge
- 8 exceptions are confined to those plainly expressed
- 9 doubts are resolved in favor of the debtor. And if you
- 10 look at the other requirements for exceptions to
- 11 discharge in Section 523(a) you see a high level of
- 12 culpable conduct. For example, in Geiger the Court held
- 13 that reckless torts do not amount --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Yes, but you see -- should
- 15 I have to write the opinion in this case, I would have
- 16 to deal with this issue and I'd have to say something
- 17 about it. And as soon as I look at the other words,
- 18 those are words like "embezzlement," "larceny," and
- 19 "fraud." Now, elsewhere in the U.S. Code where those
- 20 are crimes ignorance of the law is not an excuse. It
- 21 often is an excuse where in fact it's a tax violation or
- 22 some other technical violation.
- So I would have to explain why the word
- 24 "defalcation" when linked to those three is being
- 25 treated differently. Or I'd have to say Congress used

- 1 words which never have ignorance of the law as an excuse
- 2 and meant them differently. Each of those is pretty
- 3 hard to say.
- 4 MR. BYRNE: Well, Your Honor, you're
- 5 alluding to Cheek v. United States and Rasco v. United
- 6 States, cases in which ignorance of the law, as an
- 7 exception to the general rule, was found to be a defense
- 8 in those cases. And what you had in those cases was a
- 9 complex legal regime. You had the tax laws and then you
- 10 had the -- anti-structuring statute.
- 11 And here, we say that trust law in and of
- 12 itself is a complex enough legal regime that a mistake
- of law at least ought to be admissible, not for
- 14 liability, but for establishing bankruptcy --
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: I have one other question
- on a different subject that may be more helpful to you
- 17 or not. I think of defalcation as the individual who
- 18 has defalcated shows up in Rio with two suitcases full
- 19 of money, and it seems to me if you look at the root of
- 20 the word, it consists of diminishing, taking a sickle
- 21 and cutting something down, and therefore it did seem to
- 22 refer to an instance where you take the corpus or money
- 23 belonging to the trust, now it becomes ambiguous, and
- 24 you run off with it.
- 25 Is there anything you would like to say

- 1 about that?
- 2 MR. BYRNE: Yes, Your Honor. I would like
- 3 to say that defalcation requires a shortage in accounts
- 4 at the end of the day. And so there must be -- if it's
- 5 a trust, there must be some res missing when the trustee
- 6 is called to account.
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But there is a
- 8 shortage of accounts at the end of the day. It's just a
- 9 question of what day it is. When he takes -- takes the
- 10 stuff and it's a lost -- it's either viewed as a lost
- 11 opportunity or an increase in the risk to the
- 12 beneficiary, and that's a loss to them at that point.
- 13 The fact -- it's like a bank robber giving back the
- 14 money. There is no loss to the bank, but it's still
- 15 a crime.
- 16 MR. BYRNE: Well, Your Honor, the deletion
- of the word "misappropriation" in 1978 from the
- 18 Bankruptcy Code by Congress suggests that
- 19 misappropriations that are on an interim basis that
- 20 cause -- that do not cause a loss to the trust and
- 21 are -- are never accounted for is not the kind of action
- 22 or act that should result in an exception to discharge.
- 23 But if you look with respect to defalcation
- 24 at the definitions at the time, the definitions that
- 25 were available in 1841 as I believe Justice Breyer has

- 1 done, the -- the definitions you get are, for example in
- 2 Webster's 1828 dictionary, the act of cutting off or
- 3 deducting a part.
- 4 And the origin of the defalcation exception,
- 5 and I believe the amici for Respondent are correct in
- 6 this respect, was the Swartwout scandal in 1838, when
- 7 one Samuel Swartwout, who was the -- in charge of
- 8 collections for the New York Customs House, which was a
- 9 substantial part of the Federal budget at that time, was
- 10 found after he departed the country to have \$1.2 million
- 11 missing from his accounts. And that was referred to as
- 12 a defalcation at the time and it's quite reasonable to
- 13 assume that's how it ended up in the statute.
- So the loss of res there -- the loss of
- 15 funds to which the fiduciary is responsible for
- 16 collecting at the time of -- that he turns over his
- 17 office because this really originated with public
- 18 officials, is the relevant time.
- 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: But I quess the question is
- 20 how do you measure this loss? I mean, if you take money
- 21 away and then you give it back, or even if you give it
- 22 back with 2 percent interest or something, I mean, maybe
- 23 if that money had remained in the trust and I realize
- 24 that this is a strange trust, but we have to think about
- 25 other kinds of trusts, if that money had remained in the

- 1 trust, there would have been a profit to be made from
- 2 that money.
- And -- you know, it's not -- if you say,
- 4 well, I gave it back, well, yes, but if you had just
- 5 left it there, you would have had that money plus all
- 6 the money that that money earned.
- 7 MR. BYRNE: Correct, Justice Kagan. But
- 8 here, there was never any money taken from the trust
- 9 that didn't wind up with the trust at the end of the
- 10 day. The evidence is that the net policy value on the
- 11 day Mr. Bullock unwittingly became a trustee in 1978 was
- 12 the same as when he, at the end of his tenure --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: But what -- what about
- 14 the profit from the transactions, the profit that he
- 15 made? Yes, he paid back everything with interest, but
- in addition to that, according to the Illinois court's
- 17 judgment, there was a profit that he made that he didn't
- 18 put back in the trust -- he didn't put in the trust.
- 19 MR. BYRNE: He was -- he was charged with
- 20 having profited with respect to one or more of the
- 21 loans, Your Honor.
- 22 JUSTICE SCALIA: A quarter of a million
- 23 dollars in loans.
- 24 MR. BYRNE: That's correct, Your Honor.
- 25 JUSTICE SCALIA: And that did not go back

- 1 into the trust.
- 2 MR. BYRNE: It did not.
- 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: As it should. Doesn't the
- 4 trustee have to disgorge whatever he makes by improper
- 5 use of the trust funds?
- 6 MR. BYRNE: He -- he does for liability
- 7 purposes, of course, Justice Scalia. But here the
- 8 question is whether there is a bankruptcy defalcation.
- 9 And that's a question of Federal law.
- 10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: May I ask you a question
- 11 that is not a technical bankruptcy question, but he --
- 12 the objective of filing for bankruptcy was to get rid of
- 13 this judgment debt, this Illinois judgment debt, right?
- MR. BYRNE: Yes, Your Honor.
- 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And the Eleventh Circuit
- 16 said -- you know, we're really sympathetic to that, but
- 17 the problem is that the bank would not let you sell the
- 18 collateral. If you could sell the collateral, then you
- 19 could pay off the loan and you wouldn't need to declare
- 20 bankruptcy.
- 21 Did you bring such a suit, the suit that
- 22 suggests that the bank was the culpable party here by
- 23 not letting you sell the property which would have
- 24 enabled you to pay the debt?
- 25 MR. BYRNE: That -- that action has not been

- 1 brought, Your Honor. And in that action, let's say it
- 2 were brought today, it could do nothing to relieve
- 3 Petitioner of the judgment of the Eleventh Circuit and
- 4 the lower courts here that he has a debt that is -- a
- 5 substantial debt that is excepted from discharge. He
- 6 could continue litigating perhaps if he has the
- 7 resources in -- in Illinois for many more years perhaps,
- 8 but --
- 9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, give me your
- 10 best answer to the rule that we should write, okay?
- 11 Forgetting that I don't accept that you need a mental
- 12 state, okay? Let's go to just the loss issue.
- 13 If I agree with you that you need to prove
- 14 the loss, this is a very unusual trust because the
- 15 measure of what the trust's res should be is fixed. It
- 16 was the amount of the trust plus the fixed interest,
- 17 essentially. This is a very unusual trust. In the
- 18 norm, the trust just says to the trustee invest
- 19 prudently. And the trustee self-deals by taking the res
- 20 out, puts the investment in his or her own name and
- 21 takes the profit.
- In that situation, how would you measure the
- 23 loss? In the normal self-dealing where the trustee just
- 24 has to invest prudently and is depriving the trust of
- 25 that investment value, would you say in that situation

- 1 that the loss is measured by the lost opportunity?
- MR. BYRNE: Your Honor --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Because there is a
- 4 difference between what the trust loses and the gain
- 5 that the trustee makes, which under normal trust
- 6 principles the gain has to be disgorged.
- 7 Are you separating out those two things and
- 8 how are you separating them out and how would I -- how
- 9 would we write -- the Court write this opinion to give
- 10 loss meaning? What's the -- what's the meaning you want
- 11 to give it?
- MR. BYRNE: Your Honor, the -- the loss to
- 13 the trust should be measured by the economic loss to the
- 14 trust between points A and point B. And -- and it's --
- 15 it's as simple as that, and of course here there wasn't
- 16 loss to the trust. As you point out, it's an unusual
- 17 situation perhaps, but of course life insurance trusts
- 18 and other kinds of trusts that present this situation
- 19 are --
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So under your theory,
- 21 the profit to the trustee is never a measurement.
- 22 MR. BYRNE: The profit to the trustee would
- 23 not come into play. It could come into play for fraud.
- 24 It could come into play for embezzlement. It could come
- 25 into play if the mental state that we argue for is

- 1 otherwise met.
- 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Assume that that is
- 3 distasteful because for all the reasons the government
- 4 argues in its amicus brief, the idea that a trustee
- 5 could self-deal is the height of a breach of fiduciary
- 6 duty.
- 7 So give me something that -- that would win
- 8 your case without upsetting the fact that defalcation
- 9 somehow should, in the norm, include something as
- 10 egregious as self-dealing. You don't think your guy did
- 11 because he didn't know, but let's assume the worst case,
- 12 the guy knew.
- MR. BYRNE: Well, for the -- for that worst
- 14 case, Your Honor, there is embezzlement in the statute.
- 15 So if a -- if someone comes into possession of property
- 16 and misuses it and does so with fraudulent intent, it
- 17 sounds like here, then there is a -- then embezzlement
- 18 can be established under the statute.
- 19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Byrne, I -- I wasn't
- 20 finished asking you about the background of this. It --
- 21 it seems the simplest thing, if the bank is the culprit,
- then why not go after the bank and then get the money
- 23 which would make the Chapter 7 unnecessary?
- 24 MR. BYRNE: Your Honor, there is a good bit
- 25 not in the record on that, and I presume you want me to

- 1 stick to the record in responding and there is no real
- 2 explanation for that. There is in the record a
- 3 consistent track of Petitioner trying to get the bank to
- 4 sell the collateral in order to pay the debt off over
- 5 time and with an urgency to it because the collateral
- 6 was deteriorating in value. But beyond that, there's
- 7 not anything else in the record about the practicality
- 8 or availability of the remedies in the Illinois court.
- 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But it was what the
- 10 Eleventh Circuit thought was a solution to this problem.
- 11 MR. BYRNE: It was, Your Honor.
- 12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And were they wrong in --
- MR. BYRNE: As a practical matter, Your
- 14 Honor, yes, and also as a legal matter because the
- 15 Illinois courts cannot set aside the order here
- 16 excepting the debt from discharge.
- 17 The only -- the only agenda potentially left
- 18 for Petitioner would be litigation in the -- in the
- 19 Illinois courts against the trustee to create some sort
- 20 of a judgment that might be used in some way to
- 21 ameliorate the effect of the bankruptcy court's
- judgment, but he still has -- basically, he's been
- 23 consigned to permanent insolvency the way that this
- 24 judgment now sits.
- 25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: The briefs -- the briefs

- 1 on your side of the case say, well -- you know, there is
- 2 a series of words here: Fraud, defalcation,
- 3 embezzlement, larceny.
- But really, fraud and defalcation are
- 5 defined in a further way where embezzlement and larceny
- 6 are not. Fraud and defalcation, while acting in a
- 7 fiduciary capacity, then embezzlement and larceny.
- 8 So I'm not quite sure it's fair to say that
- 9 all four words must be consulted for the use of
- 10 generous because fraud and defalcation are qualified by
- "in a fiduciary capacity" and then a comma.
- MR. BYRNE: Well, that is correct, Your
- 13 Honor, that -- that that's the way that this particular
- 14 version of the Bankruptcy Act is set up.
- 15 In the past however, in Neal v. Clark, in an
- 16 important decision by this Court in 1878, the Court held
- 17 that fraud should be construed to require fraud with
- 18 moral turpitude because of the presence of embezzlement
- 19 in the 18 --
- 20 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Yes. In that respect, I
- 21 think the word "fraud" gives you some assistance in
- 22 arguing your case.
- MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Your Honor. Unless
- 24 there are further questions, I'll reserve the remainder
- 25 of my time for rebuttal.

1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
2	Mr. Bensinger?
3	ORAL ARGUMENT OF BILL D. BENSINGER
4	ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
5	MR. BENSINGER: Mr. Chief Justice, and may
6	it please the Court:
7	The Petitioner's act of self-dealing was a
8	reckless breach of his fiduciary duty of loyalty and was
9	therefore a defalcation.
10	JUSTICE KENNEDY: Was there a finding of
11	recklessness in the State court?
12	MR. BENSINGER: No, Your Honor. There was
13	not a finding of recklessness. The State court simply
14	found that the debtor engaged in self-dealing. That he
15	used trust assets for his own purposes and, thereby,
16	created a split, a conflict of interest between his
17	interest and the interest of the trust.
18	The moment that he made those loans, there
19	is an absolute certainty that there would be a conflict
20	of interest and a reasonable person a reasonable
21	trustee in the Petitioner's position would not have made
22	those loans because the risk was so high, nigh on an
23	absolute certainly, that there would be this conflict of
24	interest, and that is when the harm occurred at the
25	moment he made the loans, Your Honor.

1 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Is the crime	of
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- 2 embezzlement proven if you show recklessness? Or do you
- 3 need a further criminal intent?
- 4 MR. BENSINGER: Generally speaking, Your
- 5 Honor, embezzlement does require some sort of specific
- 6 mental intent, an intent to deceive or to defraud. But
- 7 defalcation does not require that same mental intent and
- 8 that's borne out by the history.
- 9 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, of course, that's
- 10 one of the things we are arguing about here. I don't
- 11 think that's conceded.
- MR. BENSINGER: No, Your Honor, it's
- 13 certainly not conceded, but it's borne out in the
- 14 history of the Bankruptcy Act. Defalcation was first
- 15 added to the Bankruptcy Act in 1841 and it was simply an
- 16 exception to discharge for defalcation. There was no
- 17 mention of fraud, there was no mention of embezzlement,
- 18 there was no mention of larceny. It wasn't until 1867
- 19 that Congress, in the Bankruptcy Act of 1867, that
- 20 Congress added an exception to discharge for
- 21 embezzlement and for fraud.
- 22 JUSTICE ALITO: You think recklessness is
- 23 required?
- MR. BENSINGER: I'm sorry, Your Honor?
- 25 JUSTICE ALITO: You think recklessness is

- 1 required?
- 2 MR. BENSINGER: Yes, Your Honor.
- 3 Recklessness is required as to the objective act.
- 4 JUSTICE ALITO: Recklessness as to the law,
- 5 as to what the law requires of the trustee.
- 6 MR. BENSINGER: Recklessness as to the law,
- 7 correct, Your Honor, but also as to the act. This was a
- 8 reckless act.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: Oh, yes. Wait, wait. You
- 10 say -- you mean either, both? I mean, there is no doubt
- 11 here, I agree with you, as far as the act is concerned.
- 12 It wasn't just reckless, it was intentional. So you
- don't have to worry about that one.
- 14 Thus Justice Kennedy's basic question I'd
- 15 like to hear your answer to. I thought it might have
- 16 come from the other side, but you -- you concede, I take
- it, that there has to be an element in which the person
- 18 not only knows what he has done, but that he does it
- 19 with an element of moral turpitude; i.e. he knows that
- 20 the law forbids it or -- or are you conceding this and
- 21 then fill in the blanks, or?
- MR. BENSINGER: No, Your Honor, and I
- 23 apologize if I misspoke. All that is required is an
- 24 intent to do the act and that's what --
- 25 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Then if that's

- 1 your position, what do you say to what Justice Kennedy
- 2 said, add in Justice Harlan's comment that embezzlement
- 3 and larceny are set off. These two concern fraud and
- 4 defalcation in respect to the trust. There is a case of
- 5 this Court that says fraud in respect to the trust
- 6 requires an element of moral turpitude.
- 7 That suggests a knowledge that what you are
- 8 doing violates the law. And if we read in pari materia,
- 9 we get the same kind of requirement for this, indeed
- 10 more so. Indeed, you just conceded it existed even in
- 11 respect to embezzlement, which is outside the
- 12 parenthesis.
- MR. BENSINGER: Your Honor, fraud, like
- 14 embezzlement, does require a specific mental intent, but
- 15 defalcation does not. Defalcation --
- 16 JUSTICE BREYER: Why? Defalcation on your
- 17 definition would seem to be more likely to be thought
- 18 innocent by someone who commits it in some circumstances
- 19 than would fraud.
- 20 MR. BENSINGER: Your Honor, defalcation must
- 21 mean something other than fraud. The statute says
- 22 that --
- JUSTICE BREYER: No. It may mean, for
- 24 example here, fine, okay, no fraud, but what you did was
- 25 you took some money that belonged to the trust given by

- 1 your father to help your mother. And your mother says,
- 2 help me, and the brothers and sisters will benefit well
- 3 too. And so you go to your insurance guy and he says,
- 4 sure, no problem. And then, lo and behold, they did it.
- 5 I mean, innocence just radiates from what the conduct
- 6 was as described.
- 7 (Laughter.)
- 8 MR. BENSINGER: When it's described like
- 9 that, maybe, Your Honor.
- 10 (Laughter.)
- 11 MR. BENSINGER: However, it was still a
- 12 reckless act, Your Honor, in that a reasonable
- 13 trustee --
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't understand. Where
- 15 does this reckless act come from? Where do you get
- 16 reckless act out of either fraud or defalcation?
- 17 MR. BENSINGER: Your Honor, the courts have
- 18 traditionally ascribed -- most courts have said that
- 19 defalcation does require some form of reckless --
- 20 JUSTICE SCALIA: Perhaps so. Where did they
- 21 get it from?
- 22 (Laughter.)
- MR. BENSINGER: Your Honor, that's the
- 24 genesis of this case.
- 25 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What does it matter if

- 1 the money is missing? What does it matter the reason
- 2 why in terms of recklessness or intent? You took the
- 3 money. Justice Breyer and I both agree you intended to
- 4 take the money. So why are you adopting the need for
- 5 recklessness, unless you're trying to avoid the second
- 6 component that the other side's talking about, which is
- 7 that you caused a loss to the trust? Because that's
- 8 where you have a problem here, where you have a problem
- 9 because there really is no loss to the trust in a
- 10 traditional sense.
- 11 MR. BENSINGER: Possibly in the traditional
- 12 sense there might not have been a loss, but there was a
- 13 loss in the context of trust law, Your Honor. The
- 14 Petitioner in this case used trust funds for his own
- 15 benefit.
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, the problem is
- 17 that, yes, there was a breach of the trust. But in
- 18 terms of the terms of the trust, the trust got every
- 19 penny that it would have earned if the money had not
- 20 been taken. It got the trust plus the fixed 6 percent
- 21 that the trust was entitled to. So it suffered no loss
- 22 in its traditional sense.
- MR. BENSINGER: Maybe not in the traditional
- 24 sense, but in the context of a fiduciary obligation a
- 25 trustee is not allowed to benefit from his position as

- 1 trustee.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, the -- why are you
- 3 giving away that it's not in the traditional sense? I
- 4 think it's a loss in the traditional sense. The trust
- 5 was entitled to whatever profit was made from the use of
- 6 its funds, right?
- 7 MR. BENSINGER: Correct, Your Honor.
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: And he made a quarter
- 9 million dollars that should have belonged to the trust.
- 10 It's not enough to say, well -- you know, I'll pay you 2
- 11 percent interest or whatever the going rate of interest
- 12 was. He made \$250,000 which should have been given to
- 13 the trust.
- MR. BENSINGER: That's correct, Your Honor.
- 15 And that is what the Illinois State court found, and
- 16 that is borne out also by the other exceptions to
- 17 discharge in Section 523(a)(4). If a fraudster commits
- 18 fraud, he doesn't just remedy that by paying back what
- 19 he took. He has to return all of the profits that he
- 20 has obtained.
- 21 JUSTICE ALITO: But the question here -- the
- 22 question here is not whether the trustee is liable.
- 23 Yes, the trustee is liable. The question is whether
- 24 it's dischargeable.
- 25 MR. BENSINGER: Correct, Your Honor.

1	JUSTICE	ALITO:	And	if	vou	look	at	the

- 2 other, the other words in this list, fraud,
- 3 embezzlement, larceny, those are -- those are bad acts.
- 4 There is a degree of moral culpability involved and
- 5 maybe there are people who commit fraud, embezzlement
- 6 and larceny and don't realize that it's illegal, but
- 7 there are not many. It's commonly understood that those
- 8 are bad.
- 9 So in a very impressionistic sense, there is
- 10 a difference between that and the kind of conduct that's
- 11 presented to us here. But you think that's irrelevant.
- 12 MR BENSINGER: It is irrelevant, Your Honor,
- 13 because a reasonable trustee would not act this way. A
- 14 reasonable trustee would know that the moment he makes
- 15 loans to himself he has created a conflict of interest
- 16 between himself and his trust.
- 17 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, what about a
- 18 reasonable trustee who just invests very imprudently, an
- 19 unreasonable trustee who invests very imprudently? Any
- 20 reasonable trustee would realize that investing
- 21 in -- you know, the widget factory totally unrelated to
- 22 him is a really bad idea and money is lost there.
- 23 What about that trustee? Is that a
- 24 defalcation.
- 25 MR. BENSINGER: If it's unreasonable, it

- 1 would be, Your Honor.
- 2 JUSTICE BREYER: Is it -- before we leave
- 3 this conduct, I mean, I understand I was painting you a
- 4 picture of they're being innocent. But we are in a
- 5 court that this Court has described as a court of equity
- 6 or akin thereto.
- 7 MR. BENSINGER: Yes, sir.
- 8 JUSTICE BREYER: One principle I used to
- 9 learn was he who has clean hands can come into equity,
- 10 but not anybody else.
- 11 Now, we have two lower courts that are
- 12 saying your client has pretty dirty hands or at least
- 13 they don't understand it. That this, the other client
- 14 has tried to get him to sell the property, but they
- 15 write the properties are abandoned and uninsurable.
- 16 Even though Mr. Bullock produced a buyer, they won't
- 17 sell it. And so do you have clean hands? Not you
- 18 yourself. You didn't take the money and you do not
- 19 have dirty hands, all right?
- 20 But did your client here, does he lack clean
- 21 hands because two courts have said he should have just
- 22 sold his collateral and he would have gotten the money
- 23 and saved everybody a lot of trouble?
- MR. BENSINGER: No, Your Honor.
- 25 JUSTICE BREYER: Because?

1	MR.	BENSINGER:	Because,	first	of	all,	the

- 2 bankruptcy court never made any specific finding of
- 3 facts. Those were allegations that were included in --
- 4 in the record of the district court --
- 5 JUSTICE BREYER: Did we remand it so they
- 6 could?
- 7 MR. BENSINGER: No, Your Honor, because the
- 8 Petitioner had every opportunity to bring those facts
- 9 into -- into evidence at the bankruptcy court and he did
- 10 not. There are facts outside the record as there are on
- 11 both sides with regard to this issue, why the trust
- 12 would not allow subsequent sales.
- But it does go back to an important point,
- 14 and that's that the Petitioner did have, and retains
- 15 today, an opportunity to go back to State court and seek
- 16 a reduction in this judgment should he so desire.
- 17 A reduction in the judgment would reduce the
- 18 debt, and if there is no debt, then there is nothing for
- 19 the trust to collect subsequent to this discharge or
- 20 subsequent to the lack of discharge, as Respondent is
- 21 requesting.
- 22 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So there's nothing in the
- 23 record that shows why the bank refused to release any of
- 24 the collateral?
- 25 MR. BENSINGER: No, Your Honor, there is

- 1 not. That was not an issue that ultimately came before
- 2 the bankruptcy court. The bankruptcy court made no
- 3 finding of facts. There were only allegations on appeal
- 4 to the district court and to the Eleventh Circuit, Your
- 5 Honor.
- 6 However, to return back to the point
- 7 concerning that the required mental intent or the mens
- 8 rea, both in the petition and here this morning, the
- 9 Petitioner has not been able to articulate exactly what
- 10 mens rea is required, that is, what mental intent is
- 11 required. But the mental intent that he asked is that
- 12 it be something greater than extreme recklessness, in
- 13 effect.
- 14 However, that cannot work in the code
- 15 because it would make other code sections superfluous.
- 16 Specifically, if the mental intent required were an
- intent to cause an injury, Section 523(a)(6) of the
- 18 Bankruptcy Code already accepts from discharge debts for
- 19 willful and malicious injury.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, a number of
- 21 embezzlers -- not all of them -- many embezzlers fully
- 22 intend to pay everything back once things turn out all
- 23 right. But there's still an embezzlement. But there is
- 24 also a criminal intent at the time, or a wrongful
- 25 intent, even if -- even if you plan to pay it back.

- 1 And it -- it seems to me that you're
- 2 standing very firm on the fact that defalcation means
- 3 something different than fraud in the first clause, or
- 4 embezzlement and larceny in -- in the following clause.
- 5 MR. BENSINGER: It does, Your Honor.
- 6 Defalcation when it was first introduced into the
- 7 Bankruptcy Act in 1841 had a known meaning, and that
- 8 known meaning, at least according to the Oxford English
- 9 Dictionary, is a monetary deficiency through breach of
- 10 trust.
- 11 That was when the --
- 12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And the problem is, as
- 13 the -- your friend on the other side points out, that
- 14 there's two problems with this. Number one, it's not
- 15 consistent with these -- with the meaning of the other
- 16 three terms in the -- in the statute; and two, it's not
- 17 consistent with the idea that discharges should be
- 18 freely given so that debtors can begin again.
- 19 MR. BENSINGER: But, Your Honor, the
- 20 subsequent inclusion of the terms fraud, embezzlement
- 21 and larceny cannot retroactively modify or change the
- 22 known definition of the word defalcation. This Court in
- 23 Schwager v. Northern Burlington considered two sections
- 24 of -- or two statutes in the Securities and Exchange
- 25 Act, Section 14(e) and Section 10(b). Section 10(b) was

- 1 the first enacted statute. Section 14(e) was
- 2 subsequently enacted.
- Both statutes prohibited a manipulative type
- 4 of transaction with regard to securities. Section 14(e)
- 5 also prohibited a fraudulent act with regard to
- 6 securities. This Court stated in that case -- while it
- 7 wasn't central to its holding -- the Court did state
- 8 that the inclusion of the term "fraudulent" in Section
- 9 14(e) could not modify the understanding of the term
- 10 "manipulative."
- 11 And the same logic applies here. The
- 12 subsequent inclusion of the terms "fraudulent" and
- 13 "embezzlement" and "larceny" cannot modify the known
- 14 meaning, even if that known meaning has been lost, the
- 15 meaning of the word "defalcation."
- 16 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Bensinger, if I heard
- 17 you correctly, you said that the definition was a
- 18 monetary deficiency arising from a breach of trust. Is
- 19 that -- does that mean that you're conceding that there
- 20 has to be a loss of monetary deficiency?
- 21 MR. BENSINGER: Your Honor, there was a
- 22 monetary deficiency in this case when the --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Whether there was or was not
- 24 in this case, but you're conceding that there has to be
- 25 a monetary deficiency according to the traditional

- 1 definitions.
- MR. BENSINGER: Yes, Your Honor. For there
- 3 to be even a debt, which is what the Bankruptcy Code
- 4 discharges, there must be a monetary deficiency in this
- 5 case, or in the case of a defalcation.
- 6 And that is what this Court --
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So are we fighting about
- 8 the meaning of loss? That's really the question.
- 9 MR. BENSINGER: I'm sorry, Your Honor?
- 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Are we fighting about
- 11 what loss means?
- MR. BENSINGER: Your Honor, that is
- 13 certainly an issue that the parties have contested in
- 14 the briefs before this Court and in the courts below,
- 15 whether there was a loss. And there was a loss. The
- 16 State court recognized that there was a loss in the
- 17 amount of \$250,000.
- 18 That judgment of \$250,000 creates a claim.
- 19 The Bankruptcy Code in Section 101-5 defines a claim as
- 20 a right to payment.
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So if he made
- 22 nothing on the deal, and it just turns out he got
- 23 whatever the -- the trust was getting under its interest
- 24 rate and gave it back, there'd be no defalcation because
- 25 there'd be no loss in the sense of a lost opportunity?

- 1 MR. BENSINGER: There would be a
- 2 defalcation, Your Honor, but there would be no debt in
- 3 that case. And that -- there would be nothing --
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm sorry. I
- 5 understood your answer to Justice Kagan to be that
- 6 you -- there must be a loss, right?
- 7 MR. BENSINGER: Your Honor, there -- there
- 8 needs to be a loss for there to be a debt.
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Right. Does there
- 10 have to be a loss for there to be a defalcation?
- MR. BENSINGER: No, Your Honor.
- 12 If I'm inconsistent in that answer, I apologize. I did
- 13 not intend to be. There must be a loss for there to be
- 14 a debt. For there to be a defalcation, that merely goes
- 15 to the bad act. The act of, in this case, self-dealing.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So taking the money
- 17 out is sufficient for defalcation even if it's brought
- 18 back in full and even if there is no lost opportunity.
- 19 MR. BENSINGER: Correct, Your Honor.
- 20 JUSTICE SCALIA: That's not consistent with
- 21 the original meaning of defalcation to which you were
- 22 appealing. It's pretty clear to me that the original
- 23 meaning of -- is a cutting off, a failure to turn over
- 24 money that was due. So you -- are you appealing the
- 25 original meaning or not?

1	MR.	BENSINGER:	Your	Honor	

- JUSTICE SCALIA: You're saying defalcation
- 3 just means breach of trust. That's it.
- 4 MR. BENSINGER: No, Your Honor. We're
- 5 saying that in this case, the breach of trust, the
- 6 self-dealing, was that cutting off of the --
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: And that's what made it a
- 8 defalcation, no?
- 9 MR. BENSINGER: Correct, Your Honor.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, so then you say there
- 11 has to be a cutting off. There has to be a loss, for
- 12 defalcation. Not just for -- for a debt, but also for
- 13 the defalcation.
- MR. BENSINGER: Your Honor, at that point,
- 15 there was a --
- 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: Why are you fighting that?
- 17 You're going to have to prove the loss anyway. You say
- 18 there is a loss.
- 19 MR. BENSINGER: Your Honor, the loss in that
- 20 case occurs -- Your Honor is absolutely right -- at the
- 21 time that there is that cutting off, at the time in this
- 22 case the Petitioner used the trust assets for his own
- 23 benefit.
- 24 JUSTICE BREYER: And then what's the loss?
- 25 I mean, let's assume the trust was worth \$1 million plus

- 1 6 percent, and every year, they have in their coffer \$1
- 2 million plus 6 percent.
- 3 MR. BENSINGER: Your Honor --
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: The only part they don't
- 5 have is the extra money that the trustee made, that
- 6 there is no cutting down of the size of the trust. At
- 7 least that's an argument. Now, what's the answer?
- 8 MR. BENSINGER: Because, Your Honor, the
- 9 loss occurred. There was a loss in the amount of the
- 10 loans that he took out. And that loss was compounded,
- if you will, Your Honor, by the Petitioner's failure to
- 12 return those -- the proceeds of those loans --
- 13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But he did. This is the
- 14 unusual part of this trust, which is that by the terms
- 15 of this trust, it was only going to grow at principal
- 16 plus a fixed interest. Most trusts are not written this
- 17 way.
- This is the highly unusual trust, where it
- 19 never -- should have made more money because taking the
- 20 Chief Justice's hypothetical, which is he had invested
- 21 it and just gotten the interest due, why would there be
- 22 a defalcation?
- 23 What's the loss opportunity or the loss that
- 24 you would have suffered?
- MR. BENSINGER: Your Honor, the loss that

- 1 the trust suffered was that its principal was taken
- 2 away, was it invested by the trustee for his own
- 3 benefit --
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Yes. But let's assume a
- 5 different fact scenario, that he didn't make \$250,000,
- 6 that he happened to make just the amount of the interest
- 7 required, and he paid all of that back just as he did
- 8 here, what would have been the defalcation under the
- 9 Chief Justice's hypothetical?
- 10 MR. BENSINGER: The defalcation there, Your
- 11 Honor, would be that the trustee has split his interest,
- 12 has created a conflict of interest, and that causes a
- 13 loss. There might not be a monetary -- a straight
- 14 monetary loss at that time.
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I've never heard of a
- 16 defalcation that didn't result in some monetary loss.
- 17 What would have been the monetary loss in the Chief's
- 18 hypothetical?
- 19 MR. BENSINGER: In that case, Your Honor,
- 20 there would not have been a strict monetary loss in that
- 21 hypothetical had the -- all the proceeds -- had there
- 22 not been any benefit that the trustee obtained from the
- 23 investment and use of those funds.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But there is still a
- 25 loss. I mean, when you're investing obviously the

- 1 return is part of it, but also the question is what risk
- 2 you assume. And the trust would have suffered because
- 3 during that period they were incurring a greater risk.
- 4 That's one reason you set up a trust, so you don't --
- 5 you protect people from that risk.
- 6 MR. BENSINGER: That's correct, Your Honor.
- 7 Thank you.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Mr. Gannon?
- 9 ORAL ARGUMENT OF CURTIS E. GANNON
- 10 ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES,
- 11 AS AMICUS CURIAE, SUPPORTING RESPONDENT
- MR. GANNON: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
- 13 please the Court:
- No particular mens rea is inherent in the
- 15 term "defalcation" or the structure of Section
- 16 523(a)(4).
- 17 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Unlike fraud -- fraud,
- 18 larceny and embezzlement?
- 19 MR. GANNON: Each of those terms does have
- 20 some mens rea associated with it. It is not, however,
- 21 the willfulness requirement that my friend was invoking
- 22 on the other side. There is no obligation under any of
- 23 those that there be an intentional violation of a known
- 24 legal duty.
- 25 There are specific intents to defraud, but I

- 1 think we know that this can't be -- it can't have that
- 2 mens rea because that would make it superfluous. That's
- 3 what Judge Hand said in the Herbst decision, and that's
- 4 what even the Second Circuit and the First Circuit
- 5 recognized here, that they could not adopt the same mens
- 6 rea that belongs with the other terms here and I --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Because?
- 8 MR. GANNON: Pardon?
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: Because? I mean, I thought
- 10 defalcation is -- supposes that the person does pack his
- 11 suitcases with the money and he goes and shows up in
- 12 Rio. I take it that would be defalcation. That isn't
- 13 fraud.
- MR. GANNON: That would probably be
- 15 embezzlement and it would be superfluous in that sense.
- 16 I think that the dictionary definitions, if you look at
- 17 the dictionary definitions of defalcation that we quote
- on pages 10 and 11 of our brief, both the English
- 19 dictionary definitions and the legal dictionary
- 20 definitions, they basically --
- 21 JUSTICE BREYER: But you didn't cite to the
- 22 Latin, did you?
- MR. GANNON: Pardon?
- 24 JUSTICE BREYER: But you didn't have the
- 25 Latin definition, which I take it from my colleague and

- 1 it was confirmed by my law clerks, it comes from
- 2 medieval Latin, starting with a sickle and meant to cut
- down, to cut down, and that suggested reduction.
- 4 MR. GANNON: We did quote the Samuel Johnson
- 5 dictionary and the Webster's 1828 dictionary that have
- 6 that meaning. If you look at the Oxford English
- 7 Dictionary definition, that was an obsolete meaning.
- 8 And I think that it's quite clear that the
- 9 meaning that Congress was invoking here is what is dealt
- 10 with under heading five in the Oxford English
- 11 Dictionary. And my friend quoted it earlier, there is
- 12 either a monetary deficiency through a breach of trust
- 13 by one who has the management or charge of funds --
- 14 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, monetary deficiency,
- 15 again, isn't that a loss? But I thought that your
- 16 position was that there didn't need to be a loss.
- MR. GANNON: Well, there are two questions
- 18 there and I think that one of the illustrative
- 19 quotations that the OED uses for that very definition
- 20 doesn't actually refer to a monetary deficiency, and
- 21 neither do most of the other dictionary definitions. So
- 22 I do think that there's probably an open question about
- 23 what the purest meaning of the term defalcation, whether
- 24 it requires a loss.
- 25 Here, we do think that there is a loss.

- 1 There is a loss in a very real and traditional sense.
- 2 There is no doubt about it that because the Petitioner
- 3 took -- engaged in self-dealing and made a profit with
- 4 that, with the money that he had taken out of the trust
- 5 corpus and refused to return those profits to the trust,
- 6 that is a loss to the trust, just as it would be had he
- 7 taken the money and invested it in some great investment
- 8 scheme and -- or he decided to bet it at the track --
- 9 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, that's certainly
- 10 true --
- 11 MR. GANNON: -- and he decided --
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- in an ordinary trust, but
- isn't there a real question as to this trust because if
- 14 this trust would -- the trustee shouldn't have been
- 15 investing this in the first place. All that this trust
- 16 was going to get was the principal plus a fixed income.
- 17 MR. GANNON: I don't think that's a fair
- 18 statement of the way this trust operates. It's not
- 19 consistent with Petitioner's own arguments.
- 20 Petitioner's argument in the State court and in the
- 21 Bankruptcy Court, the argument that he says is the
- 22 reason why there is no -- no determination about whether
- 23 this was an authorized use of the money under the trust
- 24 instrument is that -- that he was allowed to invest the
- 25 assets of the trust.

- 1 And so the way the courts -- and the parties
- 2 have offered to lodge the trust instrument with the
- 3 Court. As I understand it it's not otherwise in the
- 4 record. But the point here is that he did --
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Would you just repeat
- 6 what you said? Your voice turned.
- 7 MR. GANNON: The last part I said, that the
- 8 parties have offered to lodge the trust instrument with
- 9 the Court, but my understanding is that it's not in the
- 10 record. But I don't think anybody has taken the
- 11 position that the only thing that could ever be in the
- 12 trust was the life insurance policy plus 6 percent.
- 13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That's what I
- 14 understood. So you're saying that that is not the case?
- 15 MR. GANNON: I believe that that is not the
- 16 case and that is not even consistent with Petitioner's
- 17 own position in the State court, where he said he was
- 18 taking this money and investing it in some alternative
- 19 thing because he thought that would be safer than
- 20 leaving the money with the life insurance company.
- 21 And I think if I can go back to explaining
- 22 why I think that this is a loss and so I think that this
- 23 trust is not as unusual or unique as you think it is, in
- 24 part because we don't have the language of it in front
- 25 of us.

1	But secondly, I was trying to say that had
2	he taken this money for an authorized purpose or not and
3	decided he was going to go invest it, he had some boffo
4	scheme, he had some friend who had a great stock tip, or
5	he had a tip at the races and he was going to go down to
6	the track and bet this money, and he made 1,000 percent.
7	And he decided, well, you know what, had I
8	not taken the money out of the trust all I would have to
9	do is return, all I have to do is make it whole in the
10	sense of having the 6 percent that it otherwise would
11	have had. That everybody would understand, that's a
12	breach of his duty of loyalty. That's a defalcation.
13	It is an injury to the trust. It is a loss in every
14	relevant sense.
15	And in addition here, the \$35,000 that the
16	State court awarded for attorney's fees and costs is
17	also another concrete loss to the estate. And this
18	Court's decision in Cohen v. De la Cruz, which was about
19	nondischargeability of a fraud judgment, of a debt for
20	fraud, said that that debt for fraud included all of the
21	legal liability associated with the underlying fraud
22	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But there is two
23	components of the award, the attorney's fees plus the
24	\$250,000 profit. And you're representing to me right
25	now that, as a trustee, he was entitled to invest that

- 1 fund for the trust? And so there was a lost opportunity
- 2 here as well?
- 3 MR. GANNON: It's not that there -- it's not
- 4 the opportunity loss. It's not the fact that the trust
- 5 wasn't already earning the interest in the -- vis-à-vis
- 6 the insurance company as it otherwise would.
- 7 Petitioner's position is if he already gave back the
- 8 money that it would have earned in interest vis-à-vis
- 9 the insurance company, my position, the government's
- 10 position, is that the loss here is that he failed to
- 11 disgorge the profits that he made by self-dealing in the
- 12 assets of the trust corpus. That is a --
- 13 JUSTICE BREYER: What about the other
- 14 argument? I just don't want you to leave without
- 15 addressing the other argument.
- MR. GANNON: The other argument --
- 17 JUSTICE BREYER: In your brief you talk
- 18 about and quote "Learned Hand" and say it means -- "If
- 19 it doesn't mean a deliberate malversation, " said Learned
- 20 Hand --
- 21 JUSTICE SCALIA: "Malversation."
- 22 JUSTICE BREYER: -- then it must be the same
- 23 as fraud or embezzlement. So I will go look up
- 24 "malversation" as soon as I return to my office, and I
- 25 will get that.

1	Now, the other argument was, yes, fine, a
2	loss. Two, done deliberately, but with an innocent
3	state of mind because he didn't understand the law.
4	Justice Kennedy quoted, fraud from this Court, that
5	fraud in bankruptcy for purposes of this provision
6	requires some degree of moral turpitude. Well, that
7	suggests that you aren't innocent in respect to
8	knowledge that it's against the law. What about that?
9	MR. GANNON: My response to that is that the
10	Neal v. Clark decision that's being discussed here is
11	and we discuss this in our brief is distinguishable
12	in part because its current descendent is actually not
13	this provision. It is not this reference to fraud. It
14	is the exception from discharge in paragraph $(a)(2)(A)$.
15	And what makes this different is that this
16	is fraud in a fiduciary capacity which was not true in
17	the context of Neal v. Clark, and that's something that
18	the Court said at the time, that because it did not
19	actually have the limitations of the fiduciary context,
20	they needed to infer some type of limitation. They
21	inferred it, the Court inferred it, from embezzlement.
22	And so going back to Justice Kennedy's
23	question, the way Congress has dealt with that is that
24	it has put actual fraud in $(a)(2)(A)$, and here it has
25	grouped fraud with defalcation in a fiduciary capacity

- 1 and therefore it includes the type of limitation that
- 2 the Court was trying to impose in Neal v. Clark.
- We don't think that there is any inherent
- 4 mens rea in defalcation and --
- 5 JUSTICE ALITO: Could you explain what you
- 6 mean, before your time expires, in footnote 18? I
- 7 understood your argument until I got there, but then you
- 8 said that there was no particular mental state required.
- 9 And then in footnote 18 you said, well, there may be
- 10 cases where a particular mental state is required.
- 11 MR. GANNON: Well, I think when it gets
- 12 further away from the heartland definition of
- 13 defalcation, which does -- which, as we discussed in
- this Court's 1844 decision in Chapman and in the 1841
- 15 bankruptcy law, the defalcation was equated with
- 16 self-dealing in trust assets. And so we think that's
- 17 the heart of defalcation.
- 18 As you move away from that particular type
- 19 of fiduciary breach, and if you move away from there it
- 20 may become more relevant whether there is --
- 21 JUSTICE ALITO: Where are courts supposed to
- look to find out what is the border between the
- 23 heartland of defalcation and the badlands of defalcation
- 24 and whatever else?
- MR. GANNON: Well, to be fair, the

- 1 dictionary definitions are broad enough to include other
- 2 types of fiduciary breaches, but it's not clear that
- 3 that means that defalcation needs to be doing all the
- 4 work here of potentially putting limits on the scope of
- 5 the exception.
- 6 And so if you look at the Ninth Circuit, for
- 7 instance, the way it has handled this is it has
- 8 recognized, as we do, that defalcation can be innocent
- 9 and -- but it has, it has concluded that the essence of
- 10 defalcation is the failure to account for or to produce
- 11 funds, and therefore it wouldn't be something that would
- 12 just be garden variety mismanagement of the assets.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, why not? I mean,
- 14 it's a -- it's a violation of the trustee's
- 15 responsibility when he makes a negligent investment of
- 16 the funds, right?
- 17 And so he doesn't turn over as much money as
- 18 should be turned over. It's a defalcation.
- 19 MR. GANNON: Well, we certainly do think
- 20 that that may well be the ultimate answer. We think
- 21 that would be further away from the core of defalcation,
- 22 but it's not this case, so we would urge the Court to
- 23 affirm.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 25 Mr. Byrne, you have five minutes left.

Τ.	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF THOMAS M. BYRNE
2	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
3	MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Your Honor.
4	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Is it your position that
5	he couldn't have invested this? Let's assume that he
6	knew that he knew.
7	MR. BYRNE: Assuming he knew, Your Honor, he
8	could his position is and it was it was true his
9	position in the State court was that he could have
10	invested this, but
11	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: As a trustee for the
12	trust.
13	MR. BYRNE: As a trustee for the trust.
14	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Okay. Then you may be
15	losing this case.
16	MR. BYRNE: Well, Your Honor, that is
17	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Because if he could
18	invest it for the trust, why isn't the loss isn't it
19	a loss for the trust that he took this opportunity away
20	from the trust?
21	MR. BYRNE: Well, Your Honor, the of
22	course, the Illinois court never decided whether he was
23	right about whether he could actually invest the money
24	other than as as specified.
25	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Let's assume he could

- 1 have.
- MR. BYRNE: If you assume he could have --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Then why isn't the loss
- 4 of opportunity?
- 5 MR. BYRNE: Well, Your Honor, the -- the --
- 6 the trust instrument, I think you'll see does not
- 7 expressly authorize him to do that. He's making -- he
- 8 was making an argument --
- 9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Let's assume his
- 10 argument that he could.
- 11 MR. BYRNE: If the argument is or if the
- 12 trust provided that he could invest in other things and
- 13 it made him prudent investments, then there could be a
- 14 loss to the trust. Then his mental state would -- would
- 15 be poor.
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Then we have to go back
- 17 to -- to the first issue, whether a mental state is
- 18 required or not.
- MR. BYRNE: That's correct, Your Honor.
- 20 Now, to respond to a few things said by Respondent and
- 21 by the solicitor, the Petitioner actually did put into
- the record when he opposed summary judgment pro se in
- 23 the bankruptcy court all of his evidence about what
- 24 he -- what should have been done with the money that was
- 25 in the constructive trust, what should have been done

- 1 with the property that was in the constructive trust
- 2 during that period.
- 3 He put that in -- in evidence, it's in the
- 4 record and his repeated pleas that the assets be sold to
- 5 pay the judgment are reflected by that.
- The Respondent relied entirely on the two
- 7 Illinois court orders and put in no evidence other than
- 8 the original pleadings, if they are evidence, in the --
- 9 in the Illinois case. So there is that question about
- 10 the record, and Petitioner did track what -- what his
- 11 efforts were to try to persuade the trustee to consent
- 12 to the sale of the property.
- 13 And it's interesting, the constructive
- 14 trust, of course, was imposed on the properties that
- 15 were acquired with loans two and three. So if there are
- 16 any profit from the loans, they would have been caught
- in those properties. And eventually, of course, they
- 18 were not sold.
- 19 But to determine the amount of the loss
- 20 here, a trial would be needed. And that's really why we
- 21 were hoping the Court will give us -- give Mr. Bullock a
- 22 day in court here to establish under the proper legal
- 23 standard what any loss really was, if there was one.
- 24 And it was said earlier that a conflict of
- 25 interest itself is a defalcation, but not if there's no

- loss. That's just -- that's entirely inconsistent with
- 2 the other exceptions to discharge in the Code.
- 3 Mr. Gannon read the -- noted that the
- 4 dictionary definitions evolved over time, but the 1856
- 5 definition of defalcation from Bouvier's Law Dictionary
- 6 that's quoted in the government's brief actually still
- 7 reflects the -- the idea that -- or the definition that
- 8 defalcation is the act of a defaulter. And a defaulter
- 9 is defined as, "one who fails in making his accounts
- 10 correct."
- 11 So by 1856, years after the first enactment
- 12 of defalcation, that was still the definition that was
- 13 prevailing in the day, at least according to that
- 14 dictionary, and according to the others that -- that we
- 15 cite earlier.
- 16 Petitioner here made a mistake in judgment.
- 17 There was never any finding of dishonesty on his part.
- 18 There was never any finding that he acted with a
- 19 malicious intent. In fact, there was a finding that he
- 20 acted with no apparent malicious intent in the Illinois
- 21 courts. This question is one of dischargeability, and
- 22 his debt is really what bankruptcy is for. It's for a
- 23 fresh start for an honest, but unfortunate debtor.
- 24 Unless the Court has any further questions,
- 25 that concludes my argument.

1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
2	The case is submitted.
3	(Whereupon, at 12:10 p.m., the case in the
4	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
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