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Values and Ethics of Industrial-Organizational Psychology

THIRD EDITION

20th Anniversary Edition

Joel Lefkowitz

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"This thought-provoking book provides a thorough yet digestible presentation of theory, research, and practical considerations in the ethical conduct of work in our profession. In his third edition of this one-of-a kind text, Lefkowitz has incorporated new research, thinking, and illustrative examples. He writes about complex issues in a conversational manner with helpful summaries provided throughout the text. He clearly communicates when and how his own views and motives are reflected in his writing, challenging the reader to self-reflect on their own values and how those influence their own ethical decision-making. All I-O psychologists, regardless of career stage or professional role, will find something to learn here."

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Benjamin Schneider, *Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland. Past President, Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology, USA*

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VALUES AND ETHICS OF INDUSTRIAL-ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

This foundational text was one of the first books to integrate work from moral philosophy, developmental/moral psychology, applied psychology, political and social economy, and political science, as well as business scholarship. Twenty years on, this third edition utilizes ideas from the first two to provide readers with a practical model for ethical decision making and includes examples from I-O research and practice, as well as current business events.

The book incorporates diverse perspectives into a "framework for taking moral action" based on learning points from each chapter. Examples and references have been updated throughout, and sections on moral psychology, economic justice, the "replicability crisis," and open science have been expanded and the "radical behavioral challenge" to ethical decision-making is critiqued. In fifteen clearly structured and theory-based chapters, the author also presents a variety of ethical incidents reported by practicing I-O psychologists.

This is the ideal resource for Ethics and I-O courses at the graduate and doctoral level. Academics in Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management will also benefit from this book, as well as anyone interested in Ethics in Psychology and Business.

Joel Lefkowitz is Professor Emeritus at the Baruch College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, USA, where he headed the I-O doctoral program from its inception in 1982 until 2009. He still regularly teaches the doctoral course in Ethical, Professional and Legal Issues for Psychologists, and is a Fellow of the Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology, The American Psychological Association—Divisions 9 and 14, and the Association for Psychological Science.

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VALUES AND ETHICS OF INDUSTRIAL-ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Third Edition

Joel Lefkowitz

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This book is dedicated to back-office clerks doing data entry
in the financial districts of New York;
goldminers in the dark and the wet and the heat
more than a mile beneath the Black Hills of South Dakota;
a police officer alone in his cruiser at 3:00 a.m.
after several days of street violence in Dayton, Ohio;
young women high school graduates
learning power sewing machine operation for piece rates
in Pennsylvania and New England;
partially literate washers and pressers in a steamy industrial laundry
in rural Louisiana;
aircraft parts production workers in Cleveland;
and many more....
Because they graciously allowed themselves
to be observed, interviewed, surveyed, tested, evaluated or trained,
I came to appreciate what it is like to work in America.

And to Setha, who continues to model so brilliantly the role of
passionate scholar-author.

And in a world seeming heavier and heavier, in appreciation for
the lightness and effervescence of Max, Skye and Gavin.

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SERIES FOREWORD

The goal of the Applied Psychology Series is to create books that exemplify the use of scientific research, theory, and findings to solve real problems in organizations and society. Lefkowitz's *Values and Ethics of Industrial-Organizational Psychology, Third Ed.*, takes this approach. The current volume updates and significantly expands the second edition, preserving the strengths of previous work while incorporating new material with a slightly new focus.

Lefkowitz introduces a wide-ranging book with thoughtful discussion of the meaning of ethical behavior and of philosophers' long quest to understand the meaning and determinants of ethics. Lefkowitz shares his rationale for the subtle change in the book's title from previous editions, specifically, to emphasize the primacy of "values". He also notes the importance of filling the gap between ethical principles and practice. Following this introductory chapter, the first section of the book ("Moral Philosophy and Psychology"; Chapters 2–7) provides a discussion of the current streams of thought regarding ethics in the long history of western civilization. Lefkowitz pays careful attention to identifying concrete principles that can be applied to help make ethical decisions in organizations. In Part II ("Values"; Chapters 8–12), he builds a detailed and rigorous model for analyzing ethical choices in organizations. In Part III ("The Responsible Conduct of Research"; Chapters 13–14), he applies these principles to understand the ethical conduct of business, as well as the ethical conduct of research in practice in applied psychology. In the concluding section, Lefkowitz provides a detailed strategy for resolving ethical dilemmas at work, making ethical decisions, and taking moral action.

Lefkowitz draws from a broad literature, presenting thoughtful syntheses of a number of disciplines. He makes a strong case for the need to take ethical reasoning seriously. Importantly, the book integrates both the philosophical foundations and the practical implications of the systematic study of ethical behavior in organizations. We welcome the addition of *Values and Ethics of Industrial-Organizational Psychology, Third Ed.*, to the Applied Psychology Series.

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INTRODUCTION

A successful academic author once told me that an effective book is based primarily on just one good idea—irrespective of how broad the topic or complex the material is. Well, the overarching thesis of this book is that contrary to a widespread view, professional ethics is not an unreasonable set of rules or expectations designed by intrusive idealists to make our lives more difficult.

As psychologists we study human behavior. To do so, we depend on the goodwill and trust of the persons who cooperate with us voluntarily, sometimes revealing their private selves to us, enabling us to do our applied work and research. As industrial and organizational (I-O) psychologists, we further depend on the goodwill of organizational decision-makers who trust us when we say that we can improve the effectiveness of their enterprises. As professionals, we cannot do that work very well, at least not for very long, if we do not treat all of those persons ethically—that is, honestly, fairly and with respect and dignity. It has been observed that

> the idea of dignity as underlying the intrinsic value on human life and liberty has been central to societal progress since the Middle Ages … . Dignity represents a pillar of our moral and political heritage; so much so that even some economic historians argue that the attribution of human dignity was a key success factor of social and economic development in the West.
>
> *(Pirson et al., 2016, p.465)*

Accordingly, it has played a central (albeit sometimes implicit) role in moral philosophy, social science, business ethics and attempts to humanize organizations. And in two recent surveys "Ethical, legal, & professional contexts" was rated 4th-highest among 25 domains of competency by I-O graduate program

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directors (Payne et al., 2015) and 2nd-highest among 21 content areas by practicing I-O psychologists (Steiner & Yancey, 2013).[1]

But our motives ought not to be solely instrumental. Indeed, as reviewed in chapters 3 and 5, the hallmark of some moral theories is the rejection of such utilities or "cost-benefit analyses" as a means of judging ethical behavior. As is characteristic of all professionals we assume the responsibility of "the service ideal." As psychologists we carry with us a humanistic tradition that includes a concern for promoting people's welfare, some of which is formalized in our ethical codes. Thus, ethical issues of fairness and justice and of duty and beneficence are central to our core values as professional psychologists. That is also in keeping with contemporary views regarding personal morality: "Living a fully ethical life involves doing the most good we can" (Singer, 2015, p. vii); "the central core of morality [is] to treat others only in ways that could be justified to them" (Scanlon, 1998, p. 361). Similar voices are being raised in academe—e.g., in advocating an expansion of the criteria for hiring, tenure and promotion beyond the traditional ones of research, service and teaching, to a fourth dimension of "doing for the greater good," including intrinsic values like ethical behavior, fostering community well-being, and quality of mentoring (Luthar, 2017; Sternberg, 2016).

Some of the more controversial portions of this book, however, include the criticism that much of I-O psychology drifted rather far from those core values and to a considerable degree replaced them with a narrow version of business values that are not commensurate with psychology's humanistic heritage. I agree with Kelman (2021) that "ultimately a responsible psychologist is a responsible citizen" (p. 3). At their best, they are both guided by the fundamental values of society. And this can be illustrated by the core meta-questions posed in Box 1.1. (Throughout the book I have refrained from offering commentary on the box illustrations—leaving that material for the reader's own reflections and/or group discussion.)

There seem to be essentially four kinds of publications concerned with ethics. Each type is rather different from the others and makes a relatively unique contribution, notwithstanding that there is some inevitable overlap among them. The first category of publications consists of normative guidelines in the form of ethical codes that have been promulgated by governments, professional and trade associations, individual organizations (including business corporations) and others. Such codes are offered as presumably helpful and practical guides to ethical behavior, generally within particular domains such as business management or a particular profession. The Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions has a collection of more than 2,500 codes from approximately 1,500 organizations! There are, however, frequently problems with ethical codes—such as fuzzy boundaries between what is considered professional behavior (covered by

1 However, one wonders whether the inclusion of *legal* concerns as part of the domain may have contributed to a positive rating bias.

BOX 1.1 CORE ISSUES IN NORMATIVE ETHICS—TWO QUESTIONS

Throughout human history—probably starting even earlier among proto-human populations—there has been a core moral domain that can be expressed by just two (non-independent) all-encompassing questions or challenges that have been considered in many moral philosophies.[2]

I. Start with the premise that we each have the right to maintain and enhance our dignity and well-being, self-esteem, and chances to succeed. But there are often good justifications for maintaining and enhancing the well-being of others in our communities (whether for moral reasons or for reasons that have adaptive advantages for everyone). So we are challenged, whether we like it or not, to consider,

QUESTION I: *What is the appropriate dividing line (or balance) between individual rights and the common good?*[3]

II. Let us recognize that there are always people who, for a multitude of reasons (including circumstances not of their making), are hard-pressed to provide for themselves the adequate means to survive, much less thrive. So we are challenged, whether we like it or not, to consider,

QUESTION II: *What is one's responsibility with regard to the less fortunate?*

Individuals, families, groups, organizations, societies, nations and international associations have adopted a variety of responses to that question, including simply ignoring it.

Our answers to these questions reflect our individual and collective beliefs about human nature and worth, as well as our valued norms of social organization—expressed in our systems of economics, governance, education and law—including professional ethics.

Many, perhaps every professional ethical dilemma one faces, no matter how enmeshed it may be in technical matters, complex social relations, and idiosyncratic circumstances, contains a kernel of one or both of those issues.

2 This is written from an avowedly Western cultural perspective without explicitly considering, e.g., Buddhist, Confucian, Hindu or Taoist insights.

3 With an appreciative nod to the sociologist Amitai Etzioni's (2015) book title, *The new normal: finding a balance between individual rights and the common good*.

the code) and personal behavior (not covered) (Pipes et al., 2005). It has also been pointed out that a singular reliance solely on a professional code "may lead practitioners to focus on rules so much that they risk harming the quality of their professional relationships" (Knapp et al., 2013).[4] The ethical psychologist will need to think beyond merely being familiar with the 5 aspirational principles and 89 enforceable standards of the American Psychological Association's *Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct* (hereafter, APA Code).

In contrast, the second category of publications consists of highly theoretical and philosophical treatises. Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 of this book present a distillation of moral philosophies in which it is my intention to allow the reader to become familiar with some varieties of ethical reasoning. They offer alternative conceptual approaches that may be useful in anticipating, evaluating and resolving ethical dilemmas—even when you cannot find your specific problem described in an ethics code. Different ethical problems, even within a single domain such as business practices, may induce different types of ethical reasoning corresponding to different moral theories (Fritzsche & Becker, 1984).

A third category of publications consists of illustrative casebooks that contribute to our understanding by providing applications of ethical principles and guidelines that may otherwise be ambiguous. But they tend to be limited by the same factors that limit the codes themselves, and no one person or even a small number of persons is likely to have direct experience with enough real cases to represent anywhere near an entire code. Good casebooks, therefore, almost always need to be collaborative enterprises—perhaps developed by members of a professional ethics committee with considerable experience evaluating complaints. New to this 3rd edition are a total of 23 verbatim narrative descriptions of actual ethical situations experienced and reported by members of the Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology (SIOP) (cf. Tables 6.5 and 15.1).

The last major category of ethics publications consists of books that aim to impact people's lives and, by extension, society by showing how ethical considerations are relevant to everyday affairs, contributing to general well-being and to having a fulfilling life. These books deal with applied ethics, practical ethics or social criticism (from an ethical or moral perspective). Perhaps the two best-known contemporary examples of this genre are both by Peter Singer (2011; 2015): the wide-ranging *Practical Ethics*, which tackles issues like euthanasia, animal killing, environmental degradation, climate change, the distribution of wealth and much more, from a consistent theoretical position (that of *consequentialism,* see Chap. 4), and *The Most Good You*

4 The authors are writing about training in clinical psychology, but I believe the point is apt for us as well.

Can Do, explaining the philosophy and social movement of "effective altruism." Other examples are targeted at a specific audience, such as books on business ethics (Schminke, 2014).

With perhaps more than a little hubris, but within the limited domain of professional ethics for I-O psychologists, this book touches at least lightly all four of those bases and emphasizes primarily the ubiquitous, but often unacknowledged, role played by personal and institutional values in shaping moral action.

This is not primarily a book *about* organizational ethics as studied by I-O psychologists and other organizational scholars (e.g., ethical leadership, ethical organizational climate, managerial corruption) although some of that scholarship is presented in chapters 6 and 7 as illustrative of "contemporaneous contextual influences" on ethical behavior. Nor have ethical aspects of recent technological developments been covered, such as research using "big data" (Favaretto et al., 2020); use of Amazon's "Mechanical Turk" as a source of participant data (Buhrmester et al., 2018; Paolacci & Chandler, 2014); or the use of social media as a research tool (Kosinski et al., 2015; Sugiura et al., 2017; Taylor & Pagliari, 2018). Each of those could warrant a separate text.

This book develops a "framework for ethical decision-making," culminating in a model of ethical reasoning for taking moral action. The important role played by the values that underlie our reasoning is emphasized throughout, and there are three broad objectives: to enhance the reader's ability to: (1) recognize and understand the origins and nature of ethical problems and their contemporary determinants; (2) appreciate the role of personal and societal values in shaping ethical dilemmas and our reactions to them; and (3) improve the quality of those reactions—i.e., make better moral choices. Deliberately fostering a broad, open-ended perspective also serves the function of preparing one to engage in ethical issues that may never have been encountered previously.

An explosion of interest in ethics and morality appears to have taken place in many spheres of life. Social scientists (Etzioni, 1996, 2015) and revered religious leaders (e.g., Dalai Lama, 1999, 2011) have felt the need to offer prescriptions for improving the moral dimension of society; psychologists have shown increased interest in morality as a unifying cognitive construct (Brandt & Reyna, 2015); the number of books published on business ethics has soared and professional journals, such as *Ethics & Behavior, The Journal of Business Ethics, Business Ethics Quarterly*, *The Journal of Religion and Business Ethics*, *Journal of Business, Peace and Sustainable Development*, *Business and Society,* and others have flourished; the surefire indicator that a scholarly field has achieved a critical mass of attention—an edited handbook—has existed for a while as well (Cooper, 2001); consultants teaching business ethics or "values clarification" in corporations and "character training" in the schools constitute a growth industry; within our

profession the APA (1992) revised its ethical code not all that long ago yet recently revised it again (APA, 2002), and again, even more recently (APA, 2010a, 2017), and as of this writing is in the process of another major revision; in conjunction with the APA, SIOP revised and expanded its casebook on ethics (Lowman et al., 2006); morality and character issues have become preeminent screening criteria for those who wish to serve in public office[5]; and if further mundane demonstration were needed to make the point, the Sunday magazine section of my hometown paper, *The New York Times*, has been publishing an advice column titled "The Ethicist" for more than 15 years for those who find themselves ethically challenged.

But that does not address why attention to ethics and morality has recently increased. I do not know that anyone has provided a fully satisfactory non-metaphysical explanation, but there has been a litany of anxiety-producing, fear-inducing events that may have contributed to people searching for something "better." Briefly, they are:

1. The world has been stunned by biomedical advances such as mapping of the entire human genome (Zimmer, 2021); genetic engineering of food crops and livestock; the cloning to-date of approximately two dozen species of animals since Dolly the sheep in 1996—albeit not yet including humans; the creation of human embryos in order to extract undifferentiated stem cells that can be "directed" into becoming a variety of specialized tissues; a very efficient method of "gene editing" (i.e., altering an organism's heritable DNA); plans to collect genetic data on one million Americans while it remains unclear as to who will "own" that data (Davis, 2016); and most recently, the successful transplantation of the heart of a genetically altered pig into a human (Rabin, 2022). It is not surprising that many have become more than a little concerned by the ethical implications of those achievements (National Human Genome Research Institute, 2015; Pollack, 2015; Wade, 2015; Zimmer, 2015)—and for some, it even recalls the horrific eugenics movement in the U.S. from the 1920s into the 1950s, in which tens of thousands of men and women underwent forced sterilization because of their alleged inferiority (Cohen, 2016; Leonard, 2016). A consortium of four international medical and scientific academies has recently called for a moratorium on gene alteration because of doubts about its moral and medical appropriateness (Wade, 2015b).
2. The globalization of American corporations has led to a growing awareness of differences in what are considered ethically acceptable business practices in other cultures and to the passage and amendment of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (U.S. Congress, 1977/1998), as well as to a concern for the

5 With some astounding recent exceptions.

extent to which U.S. corporations maintain working conditions and terms of employment in developing-world production facilities that they could not do in the United States. There have been 127 FCPA enforcement actions brought by the Securities and Exchange Commission against American corporations over the past 10 years, 2011–2020, most resulting in fines of many millions of dollars (SEC, 2021).

3. The proliferation of the Internet, access to the World Wide Web and social media have led to grave concerns regarding privacy and confidentiality in business transactions, extortionate hacking of websites, abusive social behavior toward others, as well as paradoxically to a growing sense of anonymity. It is paradoxical because there is growing evidence that many people actually strive to be anonymous, or use a pseudonymous identity on the web; yet even though the incidence of *cyberbullying* and *trolling* on social media is extensive it may not be associated disproportionately with anonymity (Herrman, 2021). There is also evidence that smartphone access and degree of internet usage are associated with loneliness and lower life satisfaction among teenagers worldwide (Twenge et al., in press).
4. There has been a growing fearfulness associated with apparently random street crime since the 1980s; tragic numbers of drug overdoses and deaths; a seemingly ceaseless incidence of highly publicized mass shootings—all of which are viewed by many Americans as evidence of moral failing rather than emotional disturbance or a reflection of socioeconomic and sociopolitical forces.
5. There has been an extraordinary increase in the power exercised by business corporations over people's lives—virtually tearing up the old implied social contract—as well as the shift from a manufacturing to a service economy with the attendant job losses from the 1980s–2000s, loss of a sense of economic security, and destruction of the sense of commitment and loyalty to a long-term employer. These have all been exacerbated by the financial crisis of 2008 and the subsequent worldwide recession. Interestingly however, although it is too early to draw firm conclusions, the enormous economic dislocations wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic seem to be having a paradoxical effect in empowering workers in the U.S. and elsewhere—labor movements somewhat ironically labeled "the mass resignation."
6. There have been so many high-profile instances of unethical or corrupt behavior on the part of corporate leaders that it has been characterized in the press as a "scourge" (Zipkin, 2000). And it seems to have continued virtually unabated since that discouraging comment was made: unscrupulous mortgage lending practices and corruption in the financial services sector in 2008 and beyond (Sorkin, 2015) in which, e.g., Goldman Sachs (and other banks) "falsely assur[ed] investors that securities it sold were backed by sound mortgages, when it knew that they were full of mortgages that were likely to fail" (Delery, 2016, p. B3); corporate personnel concealing ignition switch

> malfunctions responsible for at least 124 deaths in General Motors cars (Ivory et al., 2015; Meier, 2016); corporate sabotaging of emissions control computer software in Volkswagen cars (Hakim et al., 2015); intentionally selling salmonella-tainted peanut butter, resulting in at least 9 deaths and hundreds of cases of food poisoning (Lewis, 2015); disregard of safety regulations at the Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia, resulting in an explosion killing 29 miners and jail time for the company's CEO (Blinder, 2015, 2016; Stolberg, 2015); and on it goes … .

All of this is taking place amidst a zeitgeist of fearful forces that we seem unable and/or unwilling to deal with effectively: near-cataclysmic events associated with climate change and global warming; a seemingly ever-mutating global pandemic; multiple wars on terrorism; the flourishing of authoritarian governments and decline of democratic pluralism; expanding social and economic inequalities (in wealth, income, education, healthcare, morbidity, etc.); extreme social and political polarization, enhanced by vitriolic social media; and rapidly shifting technology causing traumatic dislocations for workers. No wonder many people have begun to wonder—what is going on? What is the right thing? How can I lead a better life?

Philosophy and Psychology

The relationship between psychology and philosophy is a long and close one. As pointed out by the philosopher K.A. Appiah (2014),

> the canonical philosophers belong as much to the history of what we now call psychology as to the genealogy of philosophy … . And though we typically suppose that psychology calved off from philosophy, you can make a case that it was the other way round. (p. 11)

He goes on to point out that it wasn't until the late 19th century that philosophy "swerved away from psychologism" and became "what the best philosophy has always been: conceptual analysis" (p. 12). So it is not surprising to learn that much of the content of ethical philosophical thought deals with familiar psychological issues. Assumptions about human nature and motivation abound in ethical treatises.

Even to the classical philosophers the plausibility of an ethical theory was a psychological criterion that is implicitly empirical (even if that sounds like an oxymoron). That is, philosophers generally recognize that it makes little sense to advocate a normative ethical model of morality that is based on unrealistic assumptions and expectations about human behavior. In recent years there has been a resurgence of an explicitly empirical approach to the study of philosophy—ethics in

particular—with the growth of the interdisciplinary field of *experimental philosophy* (Luetge et al., 2014).

Moreover, Steininger et al. (1984) argued that the several differences that were traditionally advanced as distinguishing between ethics and psychology failed to establish a clear demarcation. For example, one of the primary distinctions has to do with the presumed differences between description and explanation—which is what psychologists do—versus the ethical justification of behavior. But on analysis the differentiation between the [scientific] "causes" of behavior and the [phenomenological] "reasons" for engaging in it turns out to be not so clear-cut. For example, *why* some accountants at Arthur Anderson shredded documents from Enron or *why* some engineers at G.M. did not correct the faulty ignition switches would seem to be different questions from whether they *ought (not) have* done so. But scientific explanations of behavior often involve the actor's own agentic reasons or justifications; and moral justifications generally depend on assumptions about the causes of behavior. "In the domain of human action, it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to explain without assuming or implying values, and the 'why?' often refers to both" (Steininger et al., 1984, p. 262). When someone asks why those accountants shredded the documents, they are probably seeking both the explanation and the justification for the actions.

> *Both the psychologist who tries to explain behavior in morally [i.e., values-] neutral terms and the ethicist who tries to justify judgments about the moral rightness or wrongness of an action independent of any psychological considerations are denying the inevitable overlap of their two disciplines.*
>
> *(p. 266, emphasis added)*

I-O Psychology, Social Science and Professional Ethics

As I-O psychologists the great bulk of our theoretical and practice concerns focus on individual workers and work groups—especially lower-level employees and managers (Bergman & Jean, 2016). But as scientists we have long known that we cannot fruitfully avoid the economic and sociopolitical antecedents of organizational behavior any more than we could hope to understand the functioning of a company as if it were a closed system, ignoring its cultural history and the social, political and economic environments that influence and set constraints on its policies (Katz & Kahn, 1978). In an analogous fashion, when we consider professional ethics it is even more imperative that we expand our horizons to consider the insights of social historians interested in economic and business institutions, as well as insights from political philosophy, political economy, sociology and, of course, moral philosophy. That is because those realms contribute to the establishment of the values and normative standards of what we consider acceptable/unacceptable,

right/wrong, appropriate/inappropriate, just/unjust, etc. An implication of this is that the ethics of what we do are not reasonably separable from the moral standing of the institutions and organizations in which we do it.[6] Consequently, portions of this book are concerned with matters that probably go beyond what some of my colleagues view as the appropriate domain of professional ethics. And that is why the book title has been changed to "Values and ethics *of* Industrial-Organizational Psychology"—emphasizing the primacy of values, and because "of" incorporates "in" but connotes a more inclusive perspective. For example, with respect to employee selection in particular:

> … doing selection well (i.e., technical competence) is inextricably bound up with doing it right. This approach also opens to reflection the implicit values and moral justification underlying the practice itself, in addition to considering the manner in which its constituent activities are implemented. In other words, the ethics *of* employee selection are as relevant as the ethics *in* employee selection.
>
> *(Lefkowitz & Lowman, 2017, p. 575, emphases in the original)*

One of those "more inclusive" issues pertains to the consequences of organizational actions. For example, I-O psychology studies as legitimate and important facets of individual employees' job performance their organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) because such prosocial behaviors contribute to organizational effectiveness, even though they may not be part of the prescribed work role (Podsakoff et al., 2009).[7] By extension, we should not ignore the moral qualities and actions of the organizations to which we devote our efforts—in effect, an *organization's citizenship behavior*—with respect to the society that legitimizes and supports it and in which it functions. Similarly, just as we study employee perceptions of organizational justice vis-a-vis an organization's *internal* human resources activities (Gilliland et al., 2001; Greenberg, 2009), we should also be concerned with the social justice implications of the organization's *external* actions, which characterize the probity of its role in society. This perspective is in keeping with that of other psychologists who have begun to express concern for the way in which professionals carry out *good* work—"work that is both excellent in quality and socially responsible" (Gardner et al., 2001).

6 To offer an absurdist example, can a certified public accountant following generally accepted accounting principles, or an I-O psychologist using best practices to develop an employee selection system be considered ethical if their work is in service to a criminal enterprise?

7 Although in recent years a view has begun to take hold that OCB may also have some detrimental effects on individuals (Bolino et al., 2013, 2015; Koopman et al., 2016).

Ethics Education in I-O Psychology

There has been in recent years considerable turmoil about how ethics should be taught—in philosophy departments, in professional and pre-professional programs, and in the sciences, including I-O psychology. Hartner (2015) contrasts

> Two approaches to ethics education. Traditional, or theoretical, ethics might best be understood as the approach to teaching ethics that emphasizes the philosophical roots of ethics … . A more practical approach to teaching ethics, by contrast, generally means drawing heavily from real-world scenarios and cases, putting a focus on relevant empirical and technical details related to the student's future profession. (p. 350)

He observes a movement in academia to largely replace the former with the latter (and argues against it). For example, Bhuyan and Chakroborty (2020) cite the advantage of case studies as requiring students to deal with "irreconcilable dichotomies" (p. 113); Choe-Smith (2020) emphasizes "teaching ethics, not teaching about ethics" (p. 97) and argues for the effectiveness of *service learning*, as opposed to "philosophical reflection," which involves structured *experiential learning* in an applied setting. And systematic investigations of the effectiveness of business school ethics courses (Waples et al., 2009) have yielded conclusions characterized as "a mixed bag" (Naidoo, 2020). I agree with all of them! Realistic experiential learning, even just case discussion, is essential. But discussing ethical problems detached from their moral roots risks devolving into a nearly useless attempt to memorize lists of disembodied "dos and don'ts." Uglietta (2018) has advocated a resolution to the issue by articulating the "middle level of theory" that comprises the "wide gap between abstract moral theories and concrete professional cases." He advocates becoming intimately familiar with and "incorporating the goals, circumstances, customs and other established social practices and compromises of particular professions" (p. 161)—i.e., it would have to include *every* profession to be considered.

My own independent perception of that gap led to virtually the opposite approach. I have suggested that the gap can be bridged usefully by inserting an additional conceptual level, consisting of the *form* or *structure* of ethical dilemmas.

> This relatively 'content-free' structural aspect of ethical dilemmas enables comparisons across different domains (of professions, organizations, demographic groups, age cohorts, etc.) in which the overt idiosyncratic ethical problems experienced are not commensurable. Similarly, it can yield interpretable longitudinal comparisons despite changes in the manifestations of ethical problems encountered over time.
>
> *(Lefkowitz, 2021, p. 297) (cf. Table 6.4)*

BOX 1.2 ETHICAL ISSUES THAT DIDN'T EXIST A FEW YEARS AGO[8]

Most people are aware that Facebook has been dogged with trying to eliminate or control the enormous amount of violent and hateful material that regularly is posted on the social media site. Their first lines of defense are screening algorithms developed by means of artificial intelligence, which catch over 90% of the objectionable posts. Very few people are aware, however, that the remaining highly noxious material—still an enormous amount—is outsourced to other companies and inspected by many thousands of their employees.

Foremost among those companies is the consulting firm Accenture (formerly Anderson Consulting) with almost 6,000 full-time employees doing this "content moderation" in eight cities around the world, including Mountain View, CA. and Austin, TX. The annual fee for this (and other consulting work, as well) is reported to be more than $500 million.

The outsourced employees are tasked with deciding whether to keep a posting or remove it. (For example, testifying at a legal hearing a former moderator in Austin indicated he was required to decide "whether to delete a video of a dog being skinned alive or simply mark it as disturbing.") This work is performed under a strict performance management system in which moderators can be fired for excessive mistakes in implementing Facebook's policies—which are regularly in a state of flux.

The adverse emotional, psychological and physical effects of performing this work are apparently substantial, and at least one class-action lawsuit has been filed against Accenture to protest these conditions. Workers have also pressed for better pay and benefits. There is no indication of any systematic employee selection screening for the job, although the company did prepare a brief realistic job preview that indicates the job has "the potential to negatively impact your emotional or mental health." None of this has directly impacted Facebook because the workers are employees of Accenture.

Here are some questions that come to mind:

- Is Accenture responsible for the nature of the job, and its effects on employees?
- Should the company refuse the consulting contract?

8 This narrative is based on the extensive reporting of Adam Satariano and Mike Isaac (2021).

- Isn't the work being performed a societal good?
- Is it Facebook's primary responsibility to not accept the noxious posts to begin with?
- What about the adverse effect of the employees' condition on the company's reputation?
- Is it appropriate to have tight performance management standards with severe consequences for this type of job?
- Could the company benefit from a systematic employee selection system?
- The senior management team at Accenture recently held a meeting to discuss the situation with its lucrative client. As head of H.R. at the company, what is your opinion?

For example, Box 1.2 describes a situation with ethical aspects that came into existence only recently.

Another dimension to the debate is emphasized by Rehwaldt (2019), especially with respect to teaching introductory ethics courses. He believes that such instructors emphasize the exploration of moral theories and "fail to recognize humans as biologically driven, psychologically shaped, and sociologically constrained beings" (p. 35). He argues for greater attention to the role of emotion, unconscious bias, and the influence of social structures on ethical decision-making. This book, since the 1st edition, has attempted to reflect that perspective.

But for our purposes, even more important may be that in the sciences ethics is often taught as "something we unfortunately must require you to do, so let's get it over with as quickly as we can, and then we can move on to the important things" (Zigmond & Fischer, 2014, p. xviii). One could be excused for inferring that something of that sort is also common in I-O psychology graduate/doctoral training in so far as 65% of I-O doctoral programs do not offer a required or even elective course in ethics (Brossoit et al., 2021)—despite the fact that it is an officially recommended area of competence (SIOP, 2016) and that ethics training seems to be effective (Watts et al., 2017). The most common reason given by program directors (70% of them) is that ethics is included in a unit in other courses. But it may be that considering a few particular problems that arise in the research lab, segmented from those that arise while doing employee selection, separate from those encountered on an organizational consultation, distinct from those faced while teaching or supervising students, etc., etc., misses critical meta-issues and other important considerations—such as much of the content of this book, including ethical reasoning.

However, aiding ethical decision-making is just one of the main purposes served by moral theory for professionals such as applied psychologists (Knapp, 1999). The other purposes are to help explain the fundamental moral

underpinnings of society and its institutions, to identify and justify the general principles on which our ethical standards and codes are based, to encourage moral behavior, and to assist in the education and self-regulation of the profession by providing a basis for compliance with those standards.

There are other pedagogical, social and moral issues that ought to be considered, as well. Much appropriate professional and ethical behavior is probably taught implicitly by example, role-modeling and other socialization processes on the part of graduate faculty, internship supervisors and early mentors at work—and there are some data indicating that that is also the case in I-O psychology (Brossoit et al., 2021). Hafferty (1998), in writing about curriculum reform in medicine, emphasized the importance of the *informal curriculum* and the *hidden curriculum*, as distinct from a program's formal curriculum. The former is "an unscripted, predominantly ad hoc, and highly interpersonal form of teaching and learning that takes place among and between faculty and students," and the latter refers to "a set of influences that function at the level of organizational structure and culture" (p. 404). In a similar vein, Handelsman et al. (2005) emphasize the acquisition of ethical knowledge and skill as an acculturation process.

It's interesting to note that in I-O psychology informal curricula seem focused primarily on research ethics, whereas hidden curricula have, until very recently, served to socialize or acculturate beginning I-O psychology students into I-O psychology's predominant corporatist value system (Lefkowitz, 2019). But there are also newer, more humanistic and prosocial perspectives emerging in the field to be acknowledged (cf. Carr et al., 2013; Carr et al., 2012; McWha-Herman et al., 2016; Olson-Buchanan et al., 2013; Reichman, 2014). In recognition of that flux one of the objectives of this book is to encourage students to reflect on their core professional identity—by which I mean one's *beliefs, goals, and meta-objectives concerning what it is you intend to accomplish in the organizations with which you work and how you prefer to go about accomplishing them* (Lefkowitz, 2010, p. 294, emphasis in the original). How one answers that question has profound implications for how one views professional ethics and behaves accordingly.

The reader may find one of the moral theories discussed in chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 more useful or otherwise more compatible than others so that it might be adopted as a consistent perspective within which to approach ethical deliberations. Alternatively, I have found different models with their associated ethical principles to be more or less helpful and appropriate with respect to different types of problems. This accords with the opinion of Bennis et al. (2010a) who, in discussing moral decision-making based on rules versus cost/benefit analyses, assert that "different modes of decision making can be seen as adaptations to particular environments" (p. 187). Either perspective necessitates becoming familiar with the general issues and alternative approaches offered by the various moral philosophies. In fact, I will note the opinions of several scholars who advocate considering simultaneously all three major normative perspectives

presented in these pages (deontology, consequentialism and virtue ethics). Consequently, my primary aim in this regard has been to produce a usable synthesis that would be helpful in decision-making, not just for the rare ethical crisis one might face but for the "quiet, steady, day-to-day choices that add up to a career characterized by integrity or moral malaise and/or conflict. It is for the quotidian choices that moral guideposts are most needed and most wanting" (Lowman, 1991, p. 196).

Personal Biases

This book is premised on a number of personal beliefs and concerns about ethics, the profession of psychology, I-O psychology in particular, the contemporary world of business, and the sociopolitical nature of society. Most will become apparent in later chapters, but it is fair to the reader and perhaps constructive to make some of them explicit at this point.

First off, concern about a high level of unethical behavior by I-O psychologists, or even a high incidence of ethical dilemmas in the field, was not among the motives for writing (or revising) this book. In fact, when I was asked some years ago to prepare a talk admonishing I-O psychologists to improve their ethics, I demurred because I felt it was unnecessary and instead focused on criticizing the underlying values of the field (Lefkowitz, 2008). Based on very limited empirical data, self-reported ethical problems in I-O psychology have never seemed to be a prevalent problem (Pope & Vetter, 1992). More recent surveys targeted to I-O psychologists have revealed the wide range of ethical issues we face, but response rates were not adequate to estimate their incidence in the population (Lefkowitz, 2021; Lefkowitz & Watts, 2022).

Despite the critical determinative role played by values in one's experience of and reactions to ethical dilemmas, discussions concerning the foundational values of the field are not well represented in the professional literature of I-O psychology. And so this book is as much or more about values as it is about ethics per se.

Young I-O psychologists and business managers have come of age professionally at a time when the U.S. business world has been marked by momentous displays of greed, self-aggrandizement, and disregard on the part of many leaders for the well-being of customers or clients, workers, the public-at-large and sometimes even shareholders. One of the issues to be considered later is whether this merely represents the actions of a relatively few "bad apples" or whether there may also be systemic influences involved (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). If the latter, it would be the sort of cultural influence that could contribute to generational differences in the workplace (Constanza & Finkelstein, 2015).

Especially germane to the aims of this book, I have observed a variety of unfortunate adaptations to the prevailing zeitgeist exhibited by many students. Some seem resigned to accepting greed and corruption as natural reflections of

the essentially egocentric nature of human beings in a competitive environment. Similarly, some seem to view it as representing merely unfortunate excesses of the free-enterprise system—minor costs to pay as the price for harnessing the enormous productive potential of individual ambition and incentive. Some I-O psychologists appear to be exercising a form of "technocratic denial"—retreating behind the presumably objective-scientific implementation of assessment and selection devices, training modules, quasi-experimental interventions, competency models, performance management systems, etc.—as if the perhaps questionable practices of the enterprises in which these are implemented were none of our concern.

But others hold an alternative view of the possibilities and justification for moral and ethical corporate behavior and the salience of more altruistic concerns. In fact, there is a substantial, albeit loosely organized coalition of business scholars, social critics and progressive business leaders who have been pressing the moral dimension of capitalism and promoting *corporate social responsibility* as well as models of *corporate social performance*. Up until relatively recently I-O psychologists had been conspicuously absent in this alliance. However, as alluded to above, since the first edition of this book appeared in 2003 a number of dramatic and uplifting changes have taken place, marked by the creation of a Global Organization for Humanitarian Work Psychology (GOHWP) as well as the more prosocial perspectives on the field mentioned earlier (Carr et al., 2012; McWha et al., 2015; Olson-Buchanan et al., 2013; Reichman, 2014).[9]

An adequate consideration of professional ethics entails incorporating the border domain it shares at one level with models of personal ethical decision-making—what the father of *utilitarianism* Jeremy Bentham referred to as "private ethics"—and at the macro-level with the moral aspects of institutional decision-making, social policy and political economy. All these levels of activities reflect underlying values concerning interpersonal and group relations and pertain to deliberations about what is appropriate in that regard. And it seems to me that it would be intolerably inconsistent—requiring substantial amounts of rationalization—to accept the primacy of moral standards and the importance of human dignity in one's personal life, but not with respect to one's professional behavior; or to accept those norms personally and professionally, but not to expect and demand such from the organizations in/with which we work; or to accept them at the personal, professional and organizational levels but to not be concerned for the manifestations of economic [in]justice in our society. As Cohen (2002) noted, ethical virtues are expressed not only in the individual's behavior toward others but in the quality of the societies we create; they should be identified with civic virtue. And as mentioned earlier, "ultimately a responsible psychologist is a responsible citizen" (Kelman, 2021, p. 3).

9 Information can be obtained from http://gohwp.org/

The existence of cross-domain professional journals like *Business and Society; Journal of Humanistic Management; Philosophy and Public Affairs;* and *Psychology, Public Policy and Law* suggest that a book on values and ethics of I-O psychology should range beyond the specific ethical issues we face in our research and practice. It should include discussions of such topics as business ethics and the morality of corporations and the capitalist system—focusing on the domains in which we conduct our research and practice and the organizations we support.

As I-O psychologists we share with our colleagues in the other subspecializations of psychology a common heritage regarding what it means to be a psychologist. We have acknowledged and prided ourselves on adhering to some aspects of those traditions (e.g., the epistemic values of empirical science) but have given short shrift to other aspects, such as its humanistic ideals. Chapter 12 explores some of the consequences of having largely abandoned those ideals and offers some suggestions for their redevelopment.

In our role as applied psychologists working in complex social settings we encounter some potential ethical dilemmas that for the most part, do not confront our academic colleagues engaged exclusively in laboratory or basic research. Some of those dilemmas are the result of conflicts between the humanistic value system of psychology noted previously, and the value system of the organizations within which we work—the values of a competitive free-enterprise, profit-driven economic system.

Complicating the situation, but also rendering it more interesting, is the fact that a dominant ideology in I-O psychology is the belief in value-free science and research (e.g., the distinction between the putatively neutral and scientific issue of *test bias* and the value-laden social issue of *test fairness).* This view is advanced by those who believe improbably that the field is entirely objective and scientific despite our service to the highly competitive world of business in which our professional practice and much of even our research agendas are shaped by the values and goals of the corporation and the ideology of the economic system. For some time now I have disagreed with and critiqued aspects of that belief (Lefkowitz, 1990, 2005, 2008, 2009a, 2010a, 2011b, 2012a, 2013a, 2014a, 2016, 2017, 2019). When one's personal value system (such as that of a management-oriented I-O psychologist) is consonant with that of the social systems within which one functions (such as a profit-oriented corporation in a free-market economic system), the absence of conflict or "moral friction" between those values sets can make it seem as if the systems are value-free.

In any event, as noted sagely in the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (Canadian Psychological Association, 2017), "Although it can be argued that science is value-free and impartial, scientists are not" (p. 1). One of the advantages of a single-author book is the opportunity to express a particular point of view—especially so in the realm of applied ethics because real-world moral decisions are value driven. I cannot (and would not wish to) claim that my own values and views regarding a variety of issues have not influenced the content of

this book—in choice of topics, opinions expressed, what I have criticized, what I have lauded, and how they impact my ethical analyses. But I have tried to make those values explicit, both here and in the essays cited above, and thereby subject to scrutiny. My hope has always been that this prompts readers to consider the ways in which their own values disagree or are in accord with mine, and—more importantly—how they affect their ethical deliberations. In that way we may together raise the level of discourse, if not necessarily agreement, in moral reasoning and ethical problem-solving among I-O psychologists.

SECTION I

Moral Philosophy and Psychology

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2

META-ETHICS

> Despite the efforts of Descartes and his successors to elaborate a method—based, in different versions, on clear and distinct ideas, dialectics, mathematical logic, phenomenological intuition or conceptual analysis—philosophers have never agreed on a way to resolve their disputes. At the same time, the area of competence in which they roam has steadily diminished, as the natural and then the social sciences developed bodies of theory and methods of investigation calling for specific apprenticeships, not general wisdom. Philosophers have been left with commentary on the sciences and arts, along with musings on morality whose superiority to anyone else's, when there is any, is due to a higher degree of self-conscious organization of thought rather than to some special knowledge or method.
>
> —Paul Mattick

Expressing an even more pessimistic view, some moral philosophers (Cross, 2021) argue that "the extent of disagreement in modern moral philosophy prevents moral philosophers from being classified as moral experts (p. 188)" to whom others should defer regarding ethical recommendations. But I believe that Mattick and Cross are being too harsh on their profession and colleagues. First, there is much to be said for a "high degree of self-conscious organization of thought"—especially when it illuminates a domain not well explored by others. As behavioral scientists we are used to refining ambiguous constructs operationally and resolving theoretical contradictions empirically. It is precisely when we enter the realm of values and ethics that we are largely left in the lurch by the scientific method and must call on the "general wisdom" and the "musings on morality" by philosophers to help us light the way. For example, the more optimistic philosopher Alexander Rosenberg (2016) pointed out that philosophy has always addressed the questions that the

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sciences cannot answer, such as what ought to be the case as opposed to what is, as well as the epistemological questions concerning why science cannot answer them. Those musings concern questions like "What is the right thing to do in this situation?" "How should I live my life?," "What ought she have done then?" Attempts to provide systematic answers to these questions by defining *right* and *wrong* or *good* and *evil* and justifying rationally what one should or ought to do constitute the substantive matter of ethics or moral philosophy and are referred to as *normative ethics*.[1] Kant (1785) distinguished between natural philosophy (physics) and moral philosophy (ethics) and indicated that the former is affected by "laws according to which everything does happen; the latter, laws according to which everything *ought* to happen" (p. v, emphasis added).

An interesting take on the relationship between philosophy and empirical social science is offered by the recent rejuvenation of an avowedly *experimental ethics* by philosophers, psychologists, economists, cognitive scientists and sociologists. It has been defined as "an experimental approach to research questions traditionally deemed purely philosophical … . the study of moral intuitions, justification, and decision making as well as metatheoretical stances" (Luetge et al., 2014a).

Before embarking on a survey of normative ethics it will be helpful to begin by discussing some of the fundamental issues that provide its underpinnings. What, for example, is the nature of morality or ethics and of ethical theories? How does one go about arriving at the definitions of *right, wrong* or *good?* These concerns are commonly referred to as *meta-ethical issues* and they are embedded at least implicitly in all normative ethical theories. At the end of the chapter, I present a set of conclusions that may be drawn from considering these matters and, therefore, provide us with the beginnings of a **Framework for Ethical Decision Making.**

Two Critical Meta-Ethical Issues

The ancient Greeks dealt with meta-ethics along with their deliberations about the content issues of normative ethics. In contrast, the great 17th, 18th and 19th century "modern" philosophers (e.g., Thomas Hobbes, Immanuel Kant) were primarily concerned with developing normative theories. However, in the 20th century meta-ethical concerns saw something of a revival. Perhaps the most important meta-ethical issue is whether answers to the fundamental ethical questions (e.g., what does it mean when we say something is morally right?) are in some way potentially verifiable objectively. In other words, do morals represent "truths" to be uncovered, or are they entirely subjective? All the classical

1 There is frequently a nuanced distinction between the term ethics, which is of Greek origin, and morality, which is Latin: The latter term is often used with a religious implication, whereas ethics is invariably used when referring to professional issues, as with ethical codes of conduct. I follow customary practice by using the terms roughly synonymously.

ethical theories may be categorized as explicitly or implicitly *objectivist* or *subjectivist* in nature. The second major meta-ethical issue concerns the perspective from which the conclusions of right or wrong are made. Here, the issue is a dichotomy between a consideration only of the person who is doing the deciding (e.g., one's own flourishing as the criterion) and a more encompassing perspective (e.g., the well-being of all involved). This is the issue of whether normative ethical theories are *egoistic* or *universalistic* in nature. It is rather remarkable that the roots of both the *subjectivist–objectivist* and the *egoist–universalist* controversies in ethical thinking originate in western thought from the same source—the *Sophists*.

Subjectivist Versus Objectivist Perspectives

Origins of Subjectivism

Approximately 2,500 years ago in Greece a very bright group of itinerant teachers earned their living by helping their fellow citizens be successful politically and commercially. These *Sophists* were generalists, teaching much of what we would call the liberal arts curriculum. But they specialized in teaching public speaking, debate or rhetoric because rhetoric was a critical skill for success in public life. However, they were not well-liked in many quarters because of their emphasis on the arts of persuasion—convincing others or winning an argument rather than on illuminating truth. (To this day the characterization of one's views as "sophistry" is generally meant as an insult.) But some of the Sophists were not only rhetoricians but philosophers who dabbled in the ethical dialogues of 5th century BCE Athens. Their reaction to the criticism was not merely to defend their activities on pragmatic grounds—much like their contemporary counterparts in the fields of public relations, advertising and political consulting may be expected to do. Instead, they took the philosophical offensive by questioning the very existence of objective truth.

They advanced a point of view that thousands of years later psychologists refer to as a *phenomenological perspective*. It maintains that because we each experience the world through our separate perceptual-cognitive systems and interpret it through the filters of our (relatively) unique psycho-social-cultural histories, there is no objectively verifiable truth to be known. How one person experiences the world cannot be the same as another person experiences it. This ultimately leads to a position of *ethical relativism* at the individual level—what is right for me is not necessarily right for you—and of *cultural relativism* at the societal level. The Sophists' growing awareness of diverse social practices and customs among the many societies to which sophisticated Athenians were exposed undoubtedly influenced the development of their notion of cultural relativism. Because all societies have a set of moral conventions—albeit different in each case—morality must simply be a matter of social convention. (As discussed later, this is a rather naïve version of relativism in comparison with contemporary views.)

Objectivist Rejoinders

So, if morality and laws are mere conventions and if, as some Sophists observed, those rules are enacted by the powerful in society (i.e., "might makes right"), there is no moral reason to obey them. But then, how does one know what is correct? What should replace social convention? Their answer was the introduction of the concept of *natural law*—a notion that plays a key ingredient in the philosophies of the "big three" who follow: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Obedience to conventional law is supplanted by obedience to natural law, by which they meant human nature—which is simply the pursuit of one's own self-interest, undeterred by conventions. Now, these Sophists were not so naive as to fail to recognize that a society in which everyone pursues only their own self-interests is likely to run into some difficulties concerning a lack of integration and cooperation, frustration of objectives, conflict and aggression. Consequently, they acknowledged the necessity for laws to provide protection against the exploitation of the weak. But, having no inherent value, these laws were to be obeyed only if and when one had to in order to avoid punishment.

The radical Sophists provided Plato and Aristotle with a conceptual point of view called *ethical naturalism,* which they elaborated to refute the subjectivist view that all morality is relative. They reasoned that the best way to live can be inferred from human nature, which is an objective, potentially knowable aspect of the real world. But before Plato and Aristotle there was Socrates, who was no less iconoclastic and as annoying to much of Athenian society as were the Sophists; in fact, his incessant annoying challenges and refutations of accepted conceptions of virtue got him killed.[2]

He, like the Sophists, challenged the conventional morality but did so by poking holes in the customary views of what is meant by moral principles like justice or personal virtues such as honesty. Unlike the Sophists he believed that these virtues were potentially knowable by the good person—indeed, it is such knowledge that renders the person good, because that is all that is necessary to *be* good. Although that seems psychologically naive to us today, ignoring motivational determinants of behavior, the important point is that he laid the groundwork for the importance of logical reasoning in deciding what is justifiably good or right. It is worth noting that attempts to integrate the cognitive dimension of ethics ("what is the right thing to do, and how can I know it?") with the pragmatic motivational dimension ("why should I do what's right?") have plagued moral philosophers for centuries—ever since Socrates simply finessed the

2 There is no direct written record of Socrates' views. Virtually all of what we know of his thought is from how he is represented in the writings of Plato, and scholars are uncertain about how much of those representations are Plato's views, not those of Socrates.

question by assuming that knowing what is right is all that is needed in order to do the right thing.

Plato, Socrates' pupil, developed a very modern sounding answer to the questions "What does it mean to be just or good," and "How will we know?" His answer is psychological in nature and also draws on (primitive) sociology and physiology by analogy. Individual physical health reflects the various parts of the body functioning properly and synchronously, and we experience that as pleasurable. By extension therefore the just (moral) person must be one for whom the three aspects of human nature also are in harmonious balance: under the control of *reason* which, with the help of *spirit*, keeps *desire* in check. "Goodness," therefore, becomes the health and harmony of the personality (Norman, 1998). And by further extension, a just society is one in which the three major social classes—guardian, military and economic—perform their functions well so that the society as a whole functions harmoniously. Thus, Plato provided an answer to the problem that Socrates simply defined out of existence. The reason we act in accord with reason and justice is that it is pleasurable to do so.

As a student of Plato's, Aristotle's meta-ethics also represents a version of ethical naturalism and gives a prominent position to the role of reason. But according to Aristotle the ultimate aim of human behavior is happiness. Happiness is taken as an intrinsic human objective needing no explanation or justification. It is the ultimate good that results from acting in accord with all the customary human virtues: honesty, bravery, prudence, etc. In fact, the reason the virtues *are* virtues is that behaving in that manner produces happiness. Although that is the usual closest translation of the Greek *eudaimonia,* the word is generally conceded to include the state of being fulfilled or actualized, as well as simply feeling happy. Frequently used equivalents nowadays include *flourishing* and *the meaning of life*. And it is noteworthy that a great deal of empirical psychological research has focused on exploring the nature, antecedents and consequences of such (cf. Diener, et al., 2015; Diener & Seligman, 2018; King & Hicks, 2021; Myers & Diener, 2018; Ryff, 2018 for summaries). The research has "delineated numerous characteristics of what it means to be mentally healthy, fully developed, purposefully engaged, self-actualized, fully functioning, and mature" (Ryff, 2018, p. 242). And most recently, the adverse impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on subjective well-being has been documented (Zacher & Rudolph, 2020).

Egoism Versus Universalism, Altruism, Cooperation and Compassion

Whether subjectivist or objectivist, the ancient Greek philosophers shared the same meta-ethical position concerning whose interests should be considered in attempting to understand what is good or right: one's self—i.e., it is right/best for everyone to pursue their own well-being. This is reflected in the Sophist's pursuit of self-interest generally and in Aristotle's focus on happiness (one's own). The

position is referred to as *ethical egoism* and characterizes relatively few normative ethical theories, although it is well represented in modern economic and political theory and business values. Perhaps the best-known example among the classical moral theories is that of Thomas Hobbes, and among more contemporaneous sources the views of Ayn Rand and Libertarians.[3]

Ethical egoism is in opposition to the more numerous normative ethical theories characterized as *universalist* in nature because they explicitly consider the concerns of a wide array of folks—typically all who may be affected by the actions under consideration. Examples include the theories of Hume, Kant, Mill and Hegel, as well as both Jewish and Christian ethics. For example, one variety of *consequentialist* theory (that of Mill) holds specifically that the most morally defensible action is that which results in the greatest happiness for all those affected. The philosophical tenet of universalism is a realistic normative standard because of the extensive psychological reality of altruism, cooperation and compassion in human behavior.

The beauty of Aristotle's position in this regard is that he simply did not see any conflict between self-interest and morality because the human virtues, even the altruistic and compassionate ones like honesty, sympathy, charity, and so on, represent the reasoned and correct moral choice because they are pleasing to oneself. In fact, there is a considerable amount of evidence to suggest that people are less motivated by self-interest than even they would describe themselves to be (Miller, 1999; also cf. Crocker et al., 2017). In our highly individualistic society, we are often taught that rational self-interest is not only natural but also appropriate and good. Therefore, Miller suggested, we may be more influenced by not violating a social norm of rational self-interest and thereby appearing to be a "do-gooder" or "bleeding heart" than by genuine motives of self-interest.

In fact, it may be entirely natural to be altruistic (Brown et al., 2011; Hare, 2017; Simon, 1990; Stich et al., 2010) and there is a considerable amount of empirical evidence supporting the notion of an "altruistic (or prosocial) personality"—albeit with little yet known about the extent of intraindividual variability (Carlo et al., 2009). Many scholars view altruistic behavior as having evolved by natural selection because of the advantages it conveys to the

3 ***Ethical egoism*** is a meta-ethical view that it is right and proper for each of us to pursue our own selfish interests: morally, that is how we *ought* to behave. This is invariably based on an assumption of ***psychological egoism***, which is the view of human nature that we are predominantly if not exclusively motivated by selfish or hedonistic concerns—a view that does not withstand psychological scrutiny. However, one could be a psychological egoist without necessarily being an ethical egoist. Whereas Rand was for the most part what I would call an unqualified or unrestrained ethical egoist, Hobbes was a qualified or enlightened ethical egoist (cf. Chap. 3). ***Rational egoism*** is a separate construct in moral philosophy, referring to the relatively tenable assertion that it is reasonable or rational to act in accord with one's self-interests, although that may not be the moral thing or necessarily even the best thing to do in any situation.

population (Kurzban et al., 2015; Simon, 1990, 1993). On one hand, some emphasize that what we inherit is only a "selective altruism" enhanced by cultural-developmental processes (Wynn et al., 2018). Conversely, there are those convinced that "modern moral sensibilities have expanded far beyond the standards of past generations" (Crimston et al. 2018, p. 14)—even to the extent of a growing interest in the expression of compassion at work (Dutton et al., 2014). In any event, as Miller (1999) suggested, the extent and preeminence of self-interest motivation may be highly exaggerated in our society, and this is confirmed by the prevalence and rewarding nature of altruistic endeavors and an organized social movement for *effective altruism* (Singer, 2015).[4]

Recent evidence indicates that cooperative behavior in humans appears early in life (Warneken, 2018), is widespread across cultures (Henrich & Muthukrishna, 2021), is probably hard-wired (de Waal, 2009; Rilling et al., 2002; Sober & Wilson, 1998; Whiten, 2017), and may be facilitated by one's "identification with all humanity" (McFarland et al., 2013). And even the notion of compassion has been acknowledged in organizations (Dutton et al., 2014) because people do evidence suffering at work and compassionate reactions from others can reduce anxiety, enhance attachment to the organization and help people feel valued at work.

Rand's (1964) defense of ethical egoism depends in great measure on placing it in opposition to altruism and on the justification that altruism is so self-sacrificing and all-consuming that it precludes the ability to lead a meaningful, productive and independent life. Consequently, a concern solely for one's own interests is promoted as the only morality that respects the integrity of the individual. And so, the welfare of society must always be subordinate to individual self-interest.[5]

But that is a fallacious argument. As noted above, altruism is not the opposite of ethical egoism. Egoism is opposed by universalism, the belief that all persons'

4 The more cynical among us may accept the appearance of altruism within one's family as being natural, but when such behavior is directed toward others it is frequently rationalized as mere *reciprocal altruism*—undertaken with an expectation of reciprocation, hence not really altruistic at all. Similarly, many take a Hobbesian position that altruistic feelings are merely a version of self-satisfaction. The economist Samuelson (1993) replied: "When the governess of infants caught in a burning building reenters it unobserved in a hopeless mission of rescue, casuists may argue: 'She did it only to get the good feeling of doing it. Because otherwise she wouldn't have done it.' Such argumentation (in Wofgang Pauli's scathing phrase) *is not even wrong*. It is just boring, irrelevant, and in the technical sense of old-fashioned logical positivism 'meaningless'" (p.143, italics in the original).

5 That's a hard argument to understand as I write this in the summer of 2021, witnessing a major increase in hospitalizations and deaths from Covid-19 in the areas of the U.S. in which large numbers of people are contributing to that by refusing to wear masks, socially distance or be vaccinated because it supposedly infringes on their liberty/freedom (cf. Question I in Box 1.1.)

interests deserve equal consideration—unless there are justifiable reasons to do otherwise. There is no moral theory of which I am aware that posits that one ought to always act in a manner to benefit others, even if it is antagonistic to one's self-interest. Even the burgeoning creed of *effective altruism*—"based on a very simple idea [that] we should do the most good we can … . [notes that] … . we should not think of effective altruism as requiring self-sacrifice, in the sense of something necessarily contrary to one's own interests. If doing the most you can for others means that you are also flourishing then that is the best possible outcome for everyone" (Singer, 2015, pp. vii, 5). Perhaps that is what accounts for "our species' unusual levels of cooperation" (Henrik & Muthukrishna, 2021, p. 209).

There is little reason to accept Rand's assumption about the extremity of the consequences of behaving altruistically; concern for others need only be one of several considerations that govern our actions in any instance, along with self-interest; and there seem to be many examples of accomplished, flourishing, autonomous people who nevertheless engage in substantial altruistic, even charitable, activities. (Cf. the well-known example of Zell Kravinsky [Strom, 2003)]—popular professor and successful investor and philanthropist—who has donated a kidney and almost all his considerable fortune to strangers and has considered donating the second kidney, as well.) Bill and Melinda Gates, Warren Buffet and more than 150 other multi-billionaires have taken Mr. Buffett's "giving pledge" to donate at least half of their wealth before they die, or in their wills, to enhance the human condition (Goel & Wingfield, 2015). In fact, of special interest to I-O psychologists is Simon's (1993) observation that economic analyses should pay more attention to the motivational effects of forms of altruism derived from the group and organizational loyalties. Accordingly, Grant and Shandell (2022) emphasize the social forces (e.g., prosocial motives, competition) that influence work motivation. There is empirical evidence that altruism is prompted by subjective well-being (Brethel-Haurwitz & Marsh, 2014), and organizational scholars have begun to study compassion—i.e., the interpersonal processes that attenuate the various forms of suffering that occur in organizations (Dutton et al., 2014).

As Barry and Stephens (1998) summarized, philosophical views such as Rand's (1964) single-minded focus on self-interest have not generally been well-received among modern moral philosophers or as an avowed foundation for applied business ethics. Nevertheless, they are not totally without adherents (Becker, 1998; Locke, 1988; Locke & Becker, 1998; Locke & Woiceshyn, 1995). In general, ethical egoism seems to be endorsed mostly by those who see themselves as holding sufficient social advantage to successfully promote their self-interests even though everyone else is presumably trying to do the same, and by adherents of the narrow classical model of economic behavior emphasizing "rational self-interest" in making choices (*homo economicus*).

Rachels and Rachels (2015) present two arguments that many philosophers believe sink unconditional egoism as a viable meta-ethical position.[6] The first is that a primary objective of ethics is the resolution of interpersonal conflict (as well as intrapersonal). In other words, moral guidance comes into being as a means of reducing conflict and enhancing relations among members of society. This jibes with psychological views that "moral systems are interlocking sets of values, virtues, norms, practices, identities, institutions, technologies, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to suppress or regulate selfishness and make cooperative social life possible" (Haidt, 2010, p. 800). And it supports a respect for furthering the common good—i.e., "what we owe one another as members of the same society" (Reich, 2018, p.6). If one accepts all this as a legitimate conceptualization of ethics, it is clear that unqualified ethical egoism provides no basis for contributing to this enterprise; if universally adhered to it would, in fact, exacerbate tensions and conflict. This outcome has been well documented at the macro-level in economics by the *fallacy of composition*—what is best for each person need not be best or even good for all (Samuelson, 1993). Moreover, we currently see the adverse effects of egoism at the macro-level in the form of increasing *nationalism*—at a time when humanity is facing the existential crisis of climate change that requires collective action.

Admittedly, however, we can see in Hobbes' work (cf. Chap. 3) how a cooperative ethical model—the social contract—can be developed within a framework of egoistic assumptions about human behavior.

The second criticism places unrestricted egoism in a class of moral views that makes a priori distinctions among people and views as morally correct the practice of treating people differently based on those distinctions—e.g., racism, sexism, antisemitism, ageism, etc. (I.e., my group versus "them.") In this case, however, the distinction consists of there being just two classes of people—oneself and everyone else. In both cases, of course, there is no a priori morally acceptable justification for treating groups of people (or oneself) as differentially worthy of respect or consideration. It is refuted by the Principle of Equal Treatment (Rachels & Rachels, 2015): *"We should treat people in the same way unless there is a good reason not to"* (p.79, emphasis in the original). In other words, there should be some factual difference between them that is relevant to justifying the difference in treatment. In this context we can understand that the process of stereotyping a group is a spurious attempt to provide such "factual differences" to justify discriminatory treatment. So, this refutation of ethical egoism leads us to acknowledge that there can be no a priori moral basis for

6 They do not threaten seriously Hobbes' version of qualified or enlightened egoism (cf. Arrington, 1998; Copleston, 1994; Kymlicka, 1993). And they do not necessarily contradict a benign interpretation of Rand's (1964) views as reflecting mere rational egoism rather than ethical egoism (Locke & Woiceshyn, 1995). Refer to Baier (1993) for a critique of the several versions of egoism.

considering anyone's interests as having precedence over anyone else's. Singer (2011) elaborated these views considerably into a riveting discussion of "equality and its implications." His major point does not concern *factual* equality because individual differences among people are clear, but with *equality of interests*—one's rights and freedoms—that are independent of individual differences in ability, talent, intelligence, and so on.

But now, after having discussed two of the fundamental meta-ethical issues in moral philosophy, we will consider, albeit briefly, some illustrative meta-ethical theories.

Examples of Meta-Ethical Theories

Objectivist Theories

The objectivist perspective is sometimes referred to as *moral realism* (Smith, 1993), and has two basic tenets. First, as with all normative ethics, the focus is the very practical goal of providing the basis for doing what is morally right or making the ethically correct choice. Second, and this is the essence of the issue, objectivist or moral realist theories assume that those right actions and correct choices exist as a body of "moral facts" that are potentially knowable and verifiable, just as are empirical scientific facts. Different objectivist theories entail different ways of presumably knowing and verifying those "facts."

Ethical Naturalism

The earliest version of a naturalist theory in ethics was, as discussed, the model of natural law developed by the ancient Greeks. Aristotle defined the essence of human functioning as our reasoning capacities that, if adopted as the guiding principle of our lives, will result in achieving fulfillment and happiness. The Stoics stipulated that this should mean *right reason* to preclude mere selfishness, and the model is later taken up and systematized further by the Roman Cicero. The theme survives to the Middle Ages at which time it is given perhaps its best-known expression by Thomas Aquinas:

> Whatever is contrary to the order of reason is contrary to the nature of human beings as such; and what is reasonable is in accordance with human nature as such. The good of the human being is being in accord with reason, and human evil is being outside the order of reasonableness … . So human virtue, which makes good both the human person and his works, is in accordance with human nature just in so far as it is in accordance with reason; and vice is contrary to human nature just in so far as it is contrary to the order of reasonableness.
>
> *(Cited in Buckle, 1993, p. 165)*

One of the major difficulties with natural law theory is its ambiguity: Natural law theorists rarely specify just what actions are natural and which are unnatural; when some behaviors are specified as unnatural, the justifications—if any are offered at all—tend to be vague condemnations that they are self-destructive (often without specifying how or in what way). This is true even of the most popular contemporary versions of ethical naturalism—theories of human rights—as developed by John Locke (1689/1988) and culminating in such grand statements as the United Nation's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948).

Less ambiguous are the versions of natural law employed by some orthodox religious groups in condemning sexual behaviors like homosexuality, masturbation and contraception. The natural law objection (and there are other bases of objection as well) is that these practices are "unnatural" because they violate the basic biological function of sex, which is procreation for species propagation. As Buckle (1993) pointed out, biological function is a very restricted conceptualization of human beings.

Evolutionary psychology

More justifiable is the contemporary naturalist position represented by the field of *sociobiology* (Wilson, 1975/2000)or *evolutionary psychology* (Barkow et al., 1992): the use of evolutionary theory and evolutionary biology to understand human behavior. Although most psychologists do not receive training in this area (cf. Lewis et al., 2017), it has been applied specifically to organizational psychology (Van Vugt, 2017; Van Vugt, Hogan & Anderson, 2008). One of the more interesting features of sociobiology is that it posits an evolutionary origin for intraspecies cooperation, including the prosocial and altruistic actions that characterize what we call ethical or moral behavior. It views altruistic behavior as well as the accompanying thoughts about altruism (i.e., our ethical beliefs) as a human adaptation: our ancestors who thought and acted in that fashion survived and reproduced better than those who did not (Hare, 2017; Ruse, 1993; Whiten, 2017). Contemporary economists have also indicated that altruistic behavior is an underrecognized human motive in social and economic behavior (Samuelson, 1993; Simon, 1993).

Sociobiology or evolutionary psychology as a meta-ethical theory is rightly considered an example of ethical naturalism, positing a biological basis for the very existence of morality itself, and we will return to this topic briefly in the chapters on Moral Psychology. From that empirical standpoint it has been concluded that "In sum, I think the evidence for moral nativism is incomplete, at best" (Prinz, 2008, p. 403), and other critiques have been offered as well (Li et al., 2018; van Vugt, 2017).

At this point in time, it seems to me that not much can be said about it from the standpoint of normative ethics—that is, what the *content* of an ethical theory based on evolutionary psychology might be. The study of moral psychology is a

descriptive, scientific enterprise; it does not explicitly offer prescriptive guidance on how one should behave. On the other hand, it now seems clear that humans, along with the four other species of great apes—orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos—are highly social creatures so that even though there exists a great deal of competition among each, there is also a great deal of friendship, co-operation, collaboration, helping and reciprocity (Seyfarth & Cheney, 2012; Tomasello & Vaish, 2013), as is somewhat the case even with lower primates (deWaal, 2008). Nevertheless, Jerome Kagan (2018) suggests that "human morality rests on a combination of cognitive and emotional processes that are missing from the repertoires of other species" (p. 346).

The overarching criticism of ethical naturalism as a moral theory is that its essential nature is a non-sequitur. It is a specific case of the *naturalistic fallacy,* which consists of defining something (a concept—e.g., goodness) by means of the object(s) that possess that thing or ability. It is a conflation of two separate realms of meaning. For example, because reasoning is good, it does not follow that we can define good exclusively as reasoning. Hume (1978) pointed out, in what has become known as Hume's Law, it is a logical fallacy to believe that empirical facts, even if correct, tell us anything about moral judgments. Arrington (1998) summarizes:

> From the fact that human beings are constituted in a certain way and behave in certain ways, nothing follows about how they *ought* to behave and about the character they *ought* to have. Being what they are, human beings may in fact never do or be what they ought (p. 242).

One cannot justifiably infer what ought to be merely from what is.[7]

All of this should not be taken as a blanket criticism of evolutionary psychology's relevance to the study of morality. Investigating the possible hereditary foundations of moral behavior is a perfectly appropriate and valuable enterprise; what is at issue is whether the heritability of an ethically relevant behavior pattern justifies it as moral. I believe de Waal (1996) overstated the case when he asserted that "we seem to be reaching a point at which [biological] science can wrest morality from the hands of philosophers" (p. 218). Twenty years later, and even in light of the burgeoning advances in neuropsychology during that time, not all psychologists accept *eliminative reductionism* (the view that psychological phenomena can be

7 Arrington also noted, however, that Hume's famous "is/ought" distinction has not gone unchallenged by other philosophers and that there is considerable controversy over its validity (cf. Flanagan et al., 2008; Sinnott & Armstrong, 2008). For example, Tiberius (2015) points out that the issue(s) are more complex than usually thought, and that scientific facts (what *is*) are relevant to the empirical assumptions made in moral philosophies (about what *ought* to be). She concludes "maybe you can't derive an ought from an is, but it would be a huge mistake to think that what is—particularly what is true about our psychology—doesn't matter for ethics" (p. 219).

explained completely at the biological level) (Schwartz et al., 2016). In fact, one could make the case that there has been in recent years great integration and cooperative synergy between philosophers with psychologists, brain scientists and evolutionary biologists—under the umbrella of *moral psychology* (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2008) and to a lesser degree, *experimental philosophy* (Luetge et al., 2014). But I think it is valuable to keep in mind the still-relevant distinction between normative, i.e., prescriptive, models of moral action and the descriptive scientific study of moral behavior, including its origins. Nevertheless, it is certainly plausible to accept some behaviors (e.g., prosocial-altruistic) as moral if they have an evolutionary basis—i.e., they cannot readily be dismissed as "unnatural."

Yet morality is largely a matter of human values, as defined in the humanities, social sciences and religious teachings. It is in those realms that we forge the essence of morality as the socially constructed meanings of respect, responsibility, dignity, duty, fairness and justice, as well as the qualities of empathy, caring, altruism, honesty, reasoning, susceptibility to community and other social influences, and so on. Admittedly, it is fascinating and important to our conception of human nature to learn that protobehaviors reflecting those qualities are observed in infrahuman species, especially the other great apes, and that there is undoubtedly an evolutionary basis for the expression of those human qualities. But I agree with Malik (2014) that the essence of morality is the distinction between "man [sic] as he happens to be" and "man [sic] as he could be" (p. 336). But it's a moving target: we need to recognize that our understanding of who we "happen to be"—i.e., human nature—changes over time (partly in response to advances in biological and social science) and that, in turn, transforms our notions of who we "could be."

Religion

A position taken by some proponents of religion is that there can be no true morality divorced from religious faith. Or, as Dostoyevsky put it "If God does not exist, everything is permitted" (cited in Malik, 2014, p. vi). The meta-ethical issue concerns the nature of the relation between ethics and religion—whether ethics *depends* on religion.

From an empirical standpoint, there is evidence that religious beliefs are a cultural adaptation with societal benefits (Laurin, 2017) and that participating in religious communities is associated with aspects of flourishing (VanderWeele, 2017). Bloom (2012) concludes that "religion has powerfully good moral effects and powerfully bad moral effects, but these are due to aspects of religion that are shared by other human practices. There is surprisingly little evidence for a moral effect of specifically religious beliefs" (p. 179). Galen (2012) goes even further in observing that "many [prosocial] effects attributed to religious processes can be explained in terms of general nonreligious psychological effects" (p. 876).

According to philosophers such as Berg (1993) and Shafer-Landau (2015) there are three ways in which ethics might be dependent on religion: (a) God as

the source of that which is good, which is known as the *divine command theory* of ethics; (b) God as the source of moral knowledge; and (c) God as the source of moral motivation, that is, as the provider of the reason(s) for behaving morally. None of these ideas is very successful at making a case for the indispensable reliance of morality on religion.

Divine command theory

This point of view holds that what is "good" (i.e., moral, just or right) is equivalent to "God's will." There can be no conception of the good without God. The difficulties encountered by this view were elucidated by Plato even before the spread of monotheism: "Do the gods love holiness because it is holy, or is it holy because they love it?" (cited in Berg, 1993, p. 527). If one chooses the first option, that God wills us to be good because it is good, it must mean that there is an independent standard or criterion of "goodness" that is separate from God's will. This would appear to be an unacceptable infringement on the putative omnipotence of God. Conversely, one may believe that it is only by virtue of God's will that what we think of as good is good. But that renders the notion of good extremely arbitrary. If God had willed torture, slavery, and genocide to be good and helping others in need to be bad would we accept that? A religionist rejoinder to that challenge is that God is good and, therefore, could not possibly will those evil things. But that puts one back on the other horn of the dilemma.

God as the source of moral knowledge

Perhaps it can more reasonably be concluded that our knowledge of good and evil and of right and wrong depends on God.[8] But we know that there are plenty of atheists who know right from wrong, and many of them even demonstrate extremely moral behavior; thus, morality cannot depend on knowing or believing in God. Perhaps what is meant by this view is simply that, for each of us, our moral sense is God-given whether we realize it or not. That may be a comforting source of faith for some, but it is not really a justification.

God as the source of moral motivation

This pertains to the distinction between the cognitive aspects of normative ethical theory (knowledge of what one ought to do) and the motivational aspects (why one should do it). The answer traditionally provided by religion to the question

8 As Berg (1993) pointed out, this does not refer to the unhelpful belief that God is the source of everything in the universe including whatever it is that we know. The directly relevant issue is whether God is the source of moral knowledge in some special way that is not true for, say, scientific knowledge.

"why be moral?" is so that one can hope for the reward of heaven and avoid divine punishment. This is probably the least justifiable of the three bases considered. It seems apparent that there are many reasonably moral people who do not believe in an afterlife. Clearly, their motivation must have other sources.

These arguments should not be misconstrued as being anti-religion. In fact, a major concern of this book are the ethical issues of justice and care, and religious principles are among the prominent sources supporting concern for economic and social justice (cf. Chap. 8). For example, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1986) asked Americans to consider "How do my economic choices contribute … to a sensitivity to those in need?" and "With what care, human kindness and justice do I conduct myself at work?" (Para. 23). It should also be noted that more recently the relationships among religion, morality, intergroup relations and culture have been approached in avowedly scientific and evolutionary perspectives (Cohen, 2015; McKay & Whitehouse, 2014). In that context Haidt (2010) emphasizes the evolutionary basis for religion as enhancing "trust, cooperation, generosity, and solidarity within the moral community" (p. 821).

Subjectivist Theories

Suppose I was to ask you "Aren't affirmative action programs wonderful?" and you reply "Are you kidding? They are awful and destructive." I am expressing a positive attitude about affirmative action, and you are expressing the opposite. But which of us is correct—i.e., are such programs good/right or bad/wrong? Simple *subjectivism* doesn't consider that question. You have your view; I have mine, and "truth" does not enter into it. This is very different from the objectivist belief in the existence of moral facts, however they are defined.

To be sure, each of us may be convinced that we are correct—that we are on the side of truth. But the subjectivist would point out that at the level of known facts you and I are probably in agreement. That is because all that our respective statements mean to the subjectivist is I approve of affirmative action, and you disapprove. Both of those factual statements are true, and each of us would presumably agree to their accuracy. Thus, simple subjectivism trivializes moral expression because it implicitly treats moral judgments merely as factual statements about our attitudes. But there have been subsequent modifications designed to improve the simple version of the theory.

Emotivism and Prescriptivism

Stevenson (1944) developed a partially successful advance over simple subjectivism based on linguistic analysis. He pointed out that language is used for more than merely stating facts—whether they are descriptive facts (e.g., "Since the advent of affirmative action the employment rate of ethnic minorities and women has increased") or facts about attitudes ("I think affirmative action is

great"). Moral language is *emotive;* that is, it is used to express attitudes (implicitly, "Thank goodness for affirmative action") and to influence other people's behavior ("You should consider implementing an affirmative action program in your organization"). The contribution over simple subjectivism is that this expressiveness and influence clearly separates the factual from the attitudinal. You and I may agree or disagree about the empirical facts regarding affirmative action and its effects. But even if we agree on most of those facts, emotivism allows we may still disagree in our attitudes. Our disagreement is, according to Stevenson, a moral one—meaning that it is a difference *in* attitude, rather than a disagreement *about* attitudes.

The problem is that even after this elaboration we still are left with the expression of potentially conflicting ethical attitudes with no basis to choose among them. That is because the theory does not concern itself with the processes by which those competing points of view may be evaluated. That's where reason comes in. Contemporary philosophers have refined emotivism by emphasizing that any value judgment, especially moral points of view, must be supported by reasons. (Attitudes about trivial matters of taste require no greater justification than one's preference. E.g., no reason is required for the assertion that you enjoy listening to heavy metal.) Moreover, the explanations should be morally relevant and not merely expressions of self-interest or bias. Recall that this harks back to the Stoics and their emphasis on the right reason. Rachels (1993) pointed out that it is consonant with several contemporary ethical theories, such as the ideal observer theory, which holds that the ethical choice is the one all perfectly rational, impartial, and benevolent observers would make.

By far the best-known of the contemporary elaborations of subjectivism is Hare's (1993) *universal prescriptivism*. In prescriptivism, Hare emphasized that moral statements always contain an implicit action recommendation of what one ought or ought not to do. And it is that recommendation that needs justification. If I cannot produce good answers to your question "Why should my company implement an affirmative action program?" then my advocacy cannot claim to be an ethical position.

According to Hare (1993), the fundamental justification of moral prescriptives is their *universalizability:* If, in a particular situation, I tell you to do such-and-such, my viewpoint can be accepted as an ethical one only if I accept that anyone (including myself) in the same situation ought to do the same thing. The principle of universalizability is reminiscent of the various versions of *The Golden Rule* ("Do unto others only that which you would have them do unto you") that are found in Confucianism (ca. 500 BCE), in the Old and New Testaments, and as reflected in Kant's famous categorical imperative ("Act only on that maxim which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law"; Cf. Chap. 3). The eminent personality psychologist Erik Erikson (1964) viewed the rule, in all its many cultural versions, as a foundation of morality. It is the universalizable characteristic that makes a particular "ought statement" moral.

Relativism[9]

At the beginning of this chapter the origination of the idea of cultural relativism by the Greek Sophists was noted. It has remained a seductively attractive notion all this time—probably because it seems to fit so well our common experience of the enormous variation in customs, practices and institutions of the world's diverse cultures and even subcultures within pluralistic societies. For example, I am writing this during the 2021 summer Olympic Games in Tokyo. In today's newspaper there is a report of the abject shame felt, tears shed, and heartfelt apologies offered by a number of Japanese athletes who suffered the ignominy (to them) of winning only silver medals in their events (Rich, 2021)—(i.e., signifying being merely the second-best in the world!).

Although at the descriptive level of analysis we are in social science, particularly cultural anthropology and sociology, the relevance for ethics is direct. Isn't it self-evident that what is morally correct varies as a function of what each society deems it to be? However, from within one's own cultural perspectives and biases, most of us find it extremely difficult to accept as normal—much less, moral—customs that we find shocking: "One's own morality lies deeply internalized, and it is not easy to overcome ethnocentric prejudice when confronted by behavior which prima facie offends against it" (Silberbauer, 1993, p. 15). Or more basically, "In one's own culture, it is easy to fail to see that a cultural lens exists and instead to think that there is no lens at all, only reality" (Oyserman, 2017, p. 435).

It has become common for many managers in this age of globalization to encounter foreign business people, government officials and customers whose business practices are not merely different, but seem strange and perhaps even unethical—e.g., distortions of the facts or bluffing, and bribes or side payments in contract negotiations. In any discussion of cultural relativism it is important to keep in mind what sort of behavior is under consideration—mere social conventions, or ethical behavior reflecting moral norms of right and wrong. From a social science perspective, the effects of cultural differences on conventional organizational functioning have been studied extensively (Gelfand et al., 2007; Hofstede, 2004; Hofstede et al., 2010). Although cultural differences have been observed in the content of ethical principles and ethical reasoning processes (Thorne & Saunders, 2002), results are often modest or inconsistent (Weber & Warnell, 2022). But there are those who make the case for there being universal values and virtues across cultures, even in business (Demuijnck, 2015; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2022; Schwartz, 1992, 1994, 1999).

9 *Ethical* or *cultural relativism* is one of two major forms of rejecting objectivist theories (Shafer-Landau, 2015); the other is *moral nihilism*—the view that there are no moral truths at all. E.g., that there is no legitimate moral basis for believing that genocide is wrong. I have not explored that view here.

The modern representation of cultural relativism can be traced back to the theory of *functionalism* in sociology developed by Emil Durkheim (1898/1953, 1893/1956), and advanced by his successors in sociology (Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton) and anthropology (Bronislaw Malinowski). It starts from the belief that societies fulfill certain functions to survive effectively, and each society develops customs and folkways that reflect those functional accomplishments. Each society's functional adaptations may be unique, and as there is presumably no independent standard of right or wrong each culture's traditions are correct by virtue of their satisfying the society's needs. However, if that's all there were to it there'd be no basis for moral condemnation—e.g., of Nazi Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, of the Soviet Union during Stalin's regime, of South Africa during apartheid—or of conditions of employment in the U.S, prior to the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

That uncertainty has tended to give cultural relativism a bad name. In addition, as Hatch (1983) and many others pointed out, there appears to be an inherent contradiction in the cultural relativist position in so far as it involves the non-relativist values of tolerance and understanding of all cultures. (Are tolerance and understanding "universal" moral values?)

Clearly, notions of relativism warrant some clarification. According to Scanlon (1998) moral relativism is the notion "that there is no single ultimate standard for the moral appraisal of actions, a standard uniquely appropriate for all agents and all moral judges; rather there are many such standards" (pp. 328–329). Note that he doesn't suggest, as some vociferous critics of moral relativism contend, that there are *no* moral standards (as with moral nihilism), but that there are multiple such, each capable of being justified in moral terms by what I have been calling right reasoning: i.e., "if a moral appraisal of an action is to be defensible it must be understood not as a judgment about what is right or wrong absolutely, but only about what is right or wrong relative to one of many possible standards" (Scanlon, 1998, p.332). That means it is possible for two conflicting moral judgments to both be true if there are "good reasons for taking [each] to be worthy of respect" (p. 345).[10]

Recall that objectivism—the view that there exists some independent universal and knowable standard of morality that pertains to all cultures—also does not fare well upon analysis. In fact, even presumably widespread and "basic" moral evaluations such as "the tendency to attribute intentions to negative but not positive outcomes (the side-effect effect)" may depend on the cultural context (Robbins et al., 2017, p. 23).

10 Later on, Scanlon admits that such reasons "require us to strive to find terms of justification that others could not reasonably reject. But we are not in a position to say, once and for all, what these terms should be. Working out the terms of moral justification is an unending task" (p. 361).

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) was rather disparaging of what he referred to as "a hunt for universals in culture," although he acknowledged that it is a scientifically and emotionally appealing position:

> In essence, this is not altogether a new idea. The notion … that there are some things that all men [sic] will be found to agree upon as right, real, just, or attractive and that these things are, therefore, in fact right, real, just, or attractive—was present in the Enlightenment and probably has been present in some form or another in all ages and climes. It is one of those ideas that occur to almost anyone sooner or later. (pp. 38–39)

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, he observed, this "hunt" took the form of a search "for empirical uniformities that, in the face of the diversity of customs around the world and over time, could be found everywhere in *about the same form*" (p. 38, emphasis added). This approach was largely a failure: The forms (behavioral patterns) are simply different. In modern anthropology beginning in the 1920s, according to Geertz, this hunt adds something new: "It added the notion that … some aspects of culture take their specific forms solely as a result of historical accidents; others are tailored by forces which can properly be designated as a universal" (p. 39). The universals are based on core values embedded in the requirements for developing and maintaining any human society, and/or predispositions we inherited because they are adaptive, whereas some cultural practices do not imply any such core values but merely reflect historical tradition, particular political systems, or environmental factors and the like.

Among the several telling criticisms that Geertz (1973) offered of that view, the most relevant for us is the challenge that even if such substantial universals can be demonstrated (and he by no means concedes the point) the question remains:

> should [those universals] be taken as the central elements in the definition of man [sic], whether a lowest-common-denominator view of humanity is what we want anyway. This is, of course, now a philosophical question, not as such a scientific one; but the notion that the essence of what it means to be human is most clearly revealed in those features of human culture that are universal rather than in those that are distinctive to this people or that is a prejudice we are not necessarily obliged to share. (p. 43)

A rapprochement

The philosopher David B. Wong (1993) observed:

> Almost all polemics against moral relativism are directed at its most extreme versions: those holding that all moralities are equally true (or equally false,

> or equally lacking in cognitive content) … . One reason, in fact, that not much progress has been made in the debate between relativists and universalists is that each side has tended to define the opponent as holding the most extreme position possible. (pp. 446–447)

Wong took as his starting point the view that all human beings have developed some form of moral system. This is so because it serves two universal human needs: regulating interpersonal conflict and regulating intrapersonal conflict due to competing motives. Therefore, some commonality among those systems is likely to exist. Rachels and Rachels (2015) agree as they assert that there is actually less disagreement among cultures than it appears. They explain that the relevant commonalities exist at the level of societies' values, not their overt customs and practices. In particular,

> … we cannot conclude that two societies differ in values just because they differ in customs. After all, customs may differ for a number of reasons. Thus there may be less moral disagreement across cultures than there appears to be. (p. 22)

Using a variant of Durkheim's societal functions argument Rachels and Rachels (2015) go on to suggest that there are certain values that must be more or less universal because they seem important for the maintenance of virtually any functioning society. These would include objectives such as the care and protection of infants, telling the truth, and prohibiting willful murder—notwithstanding that there may be some exceptions under certain conditions and that the relative importance of each of them may vary. Other scholars believe that there is an even longer list of principles and practices that may be universally represented in virtually all moral codes: keeping promises, protecting the vulnerable, avoiding incest, justice, unprejudiced judgment, reciprocity, and respect for personal property (Shweder et al., 1987). According to this view these shared values represent the core of a more-or-less universal set of moral principles: That is, many (but not all) of these values are shared by many (but not all) societies because they are adaptive. But even so, they may be expressed in rather divergent practices at the behavioral level because overt social practices and customs reflect not only a society's moral values and principles but are also influenced by environmental and contextual factors. Those might include the form and level of economic development, historical and religious beliefs, traditions and folkways, as well as cultural conventions and institutions, such as the political system.

In the field of international business, in which these academic considerations take on a very pragmatic cast, such broad-based normative or ethical principles have been conceived as *hypernorm*s that provide the basis for macrolevel social contracts (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1994). The conception still allows room for the existence of more idiosyncratic microlevel social contracts, if they don't

contradict the hypernorms. Similarly, Donaldson (1989) presented a common ethical core of 10 fundamental rights to be respected by all corporations wherever they conduct business. Nevertheless, justifications for the existence of hypernorms are still being considered (Scherer, 2016).

The view represented by both Rachels and Rachels (2015) and Wong (1993) is a modified or attenuated version of cultural relativism. (Alternatively, it could be referred to as a modified version of universalism.) They held that all societies develop moral systems because of a need to regulate conflict among their members so that the societies can function. Similarly, they argued that there is a certain degree of similarity in human nature as well. Based on those two sets of constraints, ethical systems are developed that are comprised of a certain number of core values that generalize across cultures but may be expressed in a variety of social practices due to the influence of other antecedent influences such as historical tradition, environmental context, nature of the political system and level of economic development of the society. This view leaves open the question of how much commonality or uniqueness one may find across cultures.

Toward a Framework for Ethical Decision Making

So, where does all this leave us? This brief overview of meta-ethics has yielded six "Learning Points" that provide the beginning of a useful framework for ethical decision-making to which we can add in later chapters.

1. The use of ethical reasoning is critically important. The major meta-ethical issue that we have dealt with is the tension between subjectivist and objectivist views. Rachels and Rachels (2015) warn that we should not fall into the trap of structuring the issue as a dichotomous choice between two extremes: Either (a) there are objective moral facts just like empirical facts in science, or (b) one's moral principles and values are merely reflections of the idiosyncratic subjective feelings and beliefs of each of us. As we have seen there are substantial problems with both stances. They point out the following:

> This overlooks a third possibility. People have not only feelings but reason, and that makes a big difference. It may be that … moral truths are matters of reason; *a moral judgment is true if it is backed by better reasons than the alternatives.*
> *(p. 41, emphasis added)*

In that sense supporting our moral judgments and actions with good reasons, being able to explain why those reasons matter, and showing that the alternative possibilities are not as good, is as close to "proof" as one gets in the realm of normative morals. Although Rachels and Rachels are quick to point out that demonstrating such proof may not necessarily persuade others to accept it—for many reasons of which the psychologically oriented reader is probably well aware.

But that conclusion can seem inadequate to psychologists who are trained in the traditions of empirical science:

> Human cognitive ability is so flexible and creative that every conceivable moral principle generates opposition and counterprinciples … . However, whereas oppositional thought in science is checked by empirical constraints, it goes unimpeded in ethics. Ethics, unlike science, as repeatedly noted, has no extrinsic criterion, shared by all, that can be used to judge the validity of moral principles … . A moral pluralism appears to be a psychological end product of a democratic society whose members are free to express their ethical views … .
>
> *(Kendler, 1999, p. 832)*

But then Kendler went on to discuss the necessity for moral pluralism to be conceived as an ongoing set of guidelines that "require constant evaluation to determine their consequences so that the functional value of moral pluralism will not be endangered either by disruptive moral conflicts or by intolerant restrictions" (p. 832).[11] It seems that what Kendler envisioned as the evaluation of alternative moral principles is akin to the ethical reasoning advocated by the moral philosophers, so there is little distinction between his position and the one advocated here.

Drawing an analogy from the realm of science may be helpful in elucidating the notion of appropriate or "right" moral reasoning from inappropriate. McIntyre (2015), a historian of science, has explained the difference between scientific *skepticism* as opposed to *denialism*. All good scientists are skeptics, i.e., one doesn't accept a scientific theory unless it is well substantiated by empirical evidence, or accept the conclusions of a research study unless it employed rigorous scientific methods. Our scientific beliefs are justified in that way. In contrast, when one refuses to believe something even in the face of compelling evidence, that's denial—usually motivated by ideological, religious and/or political beliefs. Speaking psychologically, McIntyre goes on to point out "The throes of denial must feel a lot like skepticism. The rest of the world 'just doesn't get it.' We are the ones being rigorous" (p. 8). Obvious contemporary examples include the denial of evolution, human-induced global climate change, or the effectiveness of vaccines. Applying that sort of distinction, by analogy, to the realm of moral action we can demand that well-explained and justifiable ethical reasons are

11 Kendler's (1999) remarks were written in the context of the ongoing debate regarding the relation between values and science and in defense of the position that psychology must adhere to the model of value-free science. There are many proponents of the alternative view that values are always inherent in the scientific enterprise and that the value-free model of the natural sciences is an ideal that has never characterized science as it is practiced. These matters will be discussed in chap. 10.

required to distinguish a moral choice from one motivated primarily by self-interest or other irrelevant motives.[12]

Nevertheless, we would be poor psychologists if we underestimated both the psychological complexity of logical reasoning and the potentially distorting influences of which humans and even nonhuman primates are capable (Kahneman, 2011; Santos & Rosati, 2015). Decision-making processes can be influenced by emotional arousal integral to the situation at hand, or by "incidental emotions" carried over from other situations (Lerner et al., 2015). Even emotionally neutral rules of logic may yield ambiguous determinations (Rips, 2001). And we know all too well that personality factors and strongly held political, social and religious beliefs and values influence the premises on which our reasoning processes are based. As a consequence of different strongly held attitudes, what seems reasonable (i.e., appropriately reasoned) to me may not appear so to you and vice versa. The best we can do is to be aware of those potentially distorting influences, try to be honest with ourselves by unmasking those hidden blinders, and expose our views to others who are likely to not share the same biases—that is, to attempt always to engage in "right reason." But we will also need to consider contemporary models of morality that view ethical reasoning as playing a decidedly minor role in moral judgments, in comparison with innate moral intuitions and emotions (Haidt, 2001, 2010; Haidt & Joseph, 2004; cf. Chap. 6).

2. An indispensable aspect of moral reasoning is the universalizability of an ethical decision. Most people probably accept this principle implicitly, but it bears being made explicit. I cannot give you advice regarding what to do in a difficult situation and expect it to be considered an ethical recommendation if I would not advise myself similarly in the same situation. Universalizability is responsive to the principle that there should be consistency in what is considered ethical behavior, irrespective of individual personalities.

3. Egoism is rejected in favor of the universalist tradition. Despite how well thought out the basis for one's behavior, it will not in these pages be considered ethical if the justification is entirely self-interest. The position I have adopted is reflected in the moral philosophies reviewed in the next three chapters and is consonant with that of Singer (1995): "Self-interested acts must be shown to be compatible with more broadly based ethical principles if they are to be ethically defensible, for the notion of ethics carries with it the idea of something bigger than the individual" (p. 10). No one's interests and concerns, especially

12 The analogy is not a perfect one. In the realm of science, one cannot be both a skeptic and a denier (about the same phenomena): the latter precludes having the open mind and curiosity necessary for the former. But it is possible for an ethical choice to be both egoistically self-serving and morally justified if it is not *only* or *primarily* self-serving. Paradoxically, however, there is some evidence that actions that produce both personal gain as well as charitable benefits are viewed as worse (less moral or ethical) than equivalent actions that yield no charitable benefits—a *tainted altruism* effect (Newman & Cain, 2014).

one's own, can be held to have a greater a priori moral claim than anyone else's. Beyond the individual level of analysis this principle refers also to the self-interest of one group (e.g., senior executives) over other groups (e.g., shareholders, employees, and/or consumers).

Some scholars believe that there is no antagonism between selfishness and altruism. For social beings self-interest and social-mindedness may be entirely compatible. Some cynics even go so far as to assert that there is no such thing as altruism because doing good is pleasurable, hence completely egoistic. But that seems like tautological wordplay: concluding that altruistic behavior is egoistic because of the presumption that all behavior is egoistic.

4. There is a potential distinction to be acknowledged between moral knowledge and moral action. On one hand, we can agree with *universal prescriptivism* (Hare, 1993) that knowing the correct thing to do in the face of an ethical dilemma always carries with it the implicit commitment to act accordingly. And we can further agree, therefore, that the failure to do so renders our behavior unethical. Nevertheless, as psychologists we know that most behavior is multiply- determined, and we should bear in mind that moral dilemmas can be complicated and stressful, with competing motives. Consequently, if the situation warrants, and if significant harm has not been done, we should be prepared to cut others (as well as ourselves) some slack in terms of the severity of condemnation that an ethical violation deserves. Chapters 6 and 7, which introduce the scientific psychological perspective as distinct from the philosophical, explore further the process of moral reasoning, choice and action.

5. The problem represented by cultural relativism in ethical thinking remains incompletely resolved. The middle-ground position discussed in this chapter may be useful. That is, judgments regarding the degree of similarity or difference among cultures in their ethical standards ought to consider not merely the surface manifestations or social practices of the societies but the meaning of those practices in terms of their implicit moral values. It is to be expected that at the level of values there will be greater cross-cultural similarity than at the level of social customs because customs are determined by a variety of nonmoral antecedents as well as by those values.

6. We should remember Hume's Law. As social scientists we may be especially vulnerable to slipping into the "ought from is" trap. We may be so accustomed to looking to our empirical data as the means of resolving ambiguities, discrepancies and disagreements in our work that we uncritically generalize that procedure to our deliberations regarding ethical matters. Natural phenomena, including even those aspects of human behavior that may have a high genetic component, carry no a priori moral capital by virtue of their naturalness. Ethical reasoning cannot legitimately be co-opted entirely by recourse to scientific facts.

3

NORMATIVE ETHICAL THEORIES: I. DEONTOLOGY

> The word philosophy means the love of wisdom, but what philosophers really love is reasoning. They formulate theories and marshal reasons to support them, they consider objections and try to meet these, they construct arguments against other views. Even philosophers who proclaim the limitations of reason—the Greek skeptics, David Hume, doubters of the objectivity of science—all adduce reasons for their views and present difficulties for opposing ones. Proclamations or aphorisms are not considered philosophy unless they also enshrine and delineate reasoning.
>
> —Robert Nozick

The sample of philosophers presented in this chapter illustrates the truth of Nozick's observation with a dazzling variety of forms of moral reasoning. Most contemporary philosophers in the western tradition agree that there are three broad categories of normative ethical theories, albeit with many examples and variations within each: *deontological theories*, *teleological theories* and *aretaic theories*.[1] *Deontology* derives from the Greek word *deon,* meaning duty, and refers to points of view in which actions are viewed as inherently ethical or not. *Teleology* derives from the Greek *telos,* or goal, and is used to label theories in which what is ethical or moral is determined by the effects or consequences of the actions.

Rawls (1999) explains the conceptual distinction between the two as determined by the way in which a theory defines and relates the two notions of (a) right and wrong and (b) good and evil (or bad). Teleological ethical

1 This book is biased by the omission of eastern philosophy such as *Confucianism* and *Buddhism*, even though these have had some prominent application in the business world (cf. Chan, 2008; Schumacher, 1973).

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theories—more frequently referred to nowadays as *consequentialist* theories—give primacy to the good: That is, they focus on the good and bad that will result from an act, or from two or more alternatives, and they define the rightness or wrongness of the action(s) in terms of the net amount of goodness that results from each. Deontologists essentially do not deal with notions of good and bad; the rightness or wrongness of an act is intrinsic to the nature of the act, based on whether it violates a moral principle, and is independent of its consequences. Whether or not I may ethically mislead the student–participants in a psychological experiment will depend, for the consequentialist, on the balance of benefits likely to result from the research, in comparison with the possible harms that might ensue from the deception. For the deontologist, deceiving the participants—that is, not providing fully informed consent—is wrong irrespective of how much good might result from the research. The deontologist will view me as having *wronged* those students even if I have not *harmed* them. This perspective has been applied in I-O psychology with the construct of "deontic justice, the view that justice is of value for its own sake" (Cropanzano et al., 2017; also see Gan et al., 2020).

Virtue theorists (cf. Chap. 5) largely reject the dependence on ethical reasoning of either sort, and instead focus on the moral character of the protagonist as determinative. The ethical question to be answered shifts from "what is the right (or best) thing to do?" to "what is the (right) kind of person to be?"

Deontological Theories

Most of the moral rules or principles that constitute a deontological position are phrased in the negative as a proscription. In other words, deontological morality generally has to do with defining what is permissible or impermissible—not what is required.[2] For example, in a treatise on ethical concerns in conducting organizational surveys, 23 ethical principles are promulgated all of which begin "You shall not …" (Sashkin & Prien, 1996). As Davis (1993) pointed out, although the rules might be rephrased in the positive (e.g, "always tell the truth") the negative formulation focusing on the impermissible is not accidental in the deontological perspective. There is both a pragmatic and a theoretical reason for it. The practical reason is that it would be extremely difficult to stipulate everything that a person should do: The possibilities are virtually infinite; specifying what is wrong is a more limited enterprise. The theoretical reason has to do with the distinction that must be maintained by deontologists between intended and unintended effects. Within this view one would violate the proscription against harming others only if one did so intentionally; if our behavior harms others unintentionally, we have not transgressed—even if we anticipated the harmful results of our actions! This is a theoretically necessary aspect of a deontological

2 There are exceptions, such as theories that focus on one's affirmative duties.

position because, if it were not, one would come perilously close to adopting a consequentialist position (foreseeing negative consequences is a teleological reason to refrain from carrying out such a bad act).

The sorts of deontological theories I have been alluding to are examples of *rule deontology*. They entail the establishment of general moral rules to be followed. A rule-deontological theory does not assume that following the rule is necessarily the best thing to do in every instance, just that it's the best *general* rule, so that the specifics of any situation are simply not considered. Obviously, basic questions for deontology are "What are those moral rules," and "How are they determined?" The different answers to those questions constitute different normative ethical theories. One of the essential problems for rule deontologists has to do with situations in which the rules are in conflict. Perhaps I feel professionally obligated to advance psychological knowledge and understanding (to contribute to the betterment of society, and as "pay back" for government funding that enabled my education). And I also feel obligated to be open and honest with the cooperating participants in my research projects. What do I do if I am contemplating conducting a study the success of which entails deceiving those participants about aspects of the study? Strict rule deontology has no fully satisfactory answer to this dilemma because all the rules are conceived as absolute moral principles.

However, compromises are possible. For example, one could rank order the principles to establish some prioritization. But that certainly is a lot more complicated to deal with than a simple list of universals that are morally equivalent (e.g., whose preferences will hold sway in determining the rankings?). This approach is illustrated prominently by a rank ordering of the four principles that comprise the organizing structure of the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (Canadian Psychological Association, 2017). Barring exceptions having to do with imminent danger to someone's physical safety, respect for the dignity of persons is expected to take precedence over responsible caring, which in turn is viewed as more important than integrity in relationships, which outweighs responsibility to society.

Another possibility is that the rules could be formulated more narrowly so that the incidence of conflict among them is diminished. This is exactly what has been done for millenia even with respect to the biblical commandment not to kill: It has been interpreted in western civilization as a prohibition only against taking innocent life. Other exceptions are routinely made even by religious people, such as wartime killing. In psychology one might operate under the qualified rule that "it is wrong to deceive research participants unless the study is breaking important new ground." Of course, the difficulties are apparent. "Important" according to whom? By what standards, and to what degree? How new is "new"?

Religious precepts tend to be deontological in nature: They set forth specific rules to follow in a legalistic fashion (Fletcher, 1966). Over the years, however, circumstances change, and empathic motives of sympathy, fairness and justice lead to modifications, exceptions and qualifications to the rules that, in

Chandler's (2001) ironic characterization, take the form of "rules for breaking the rules" (p. 187). The most extreme compromise is called *act deontology* in which each alternative action-response in a particular situation is evaluated in light of the relevant deontological principles, which are treated more as guidelines than absolute rules. The question to be answered is whether following the rule(s) is justified in this instance. But note that the evaluation is supposed to remain within the boundaries of deontological considerations—presumably ignoring the teleological issue concerning the consequences of each contemplated action. However, many consequentialist philosophers are of the opinion that these individual situational act-deontological evaluations inevitably involve a consideration of the relative good or harm associated with the available options, thus constituting a utilitarian justification.

Probably the quintessential deontological theory is that of Immanuel Kant, who ultimately offered a single moral principle that may be said to underlie all others: Do not violate anyone's dignity, respect and autonomy, which are everyone's rights.

Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) wrote about many areas of philosophy, as well as geology and astronomy. He probably has been the most influential philosopher in western culture since Aristotle even though his work has been criticized extensively (cf. Arrington, 1998; O'Neill, 1993). The importance of his work stems from three sources. First, his elaborate theoretical formulations come close to representing an appealing common-sense view of ethics. Kant conceived of moral behavior as answering the call of duty, of doing what one ought to do, despite having motives—what he termed *inclinations*—to the contrary.

Second, he has been so influential because many of the principles he introduced or systematically elaborated have become generally accepted foundations for moral positions that many ethicists and laypeople take for granted. Those include most of the points noted at the conclusion of the previous chapter constituting the beginnings of a general framework for ethical decision-making: (a) the essential role of reasoning or the rational self as the source of morality; (b) the criterion of consistency or universalizability in the application of ethical principles (i.e., that the same moral rules should apply to everyone); (c) the requirement of universalism (i.e., everyone's interests and autonomy must be respected) because of the inherent worth and dignity of all human beings; and in a psychological vein (d) his emphasis on the criticality of the motives for an action in judging its ethicality, not merely the behavior itself or its consequences.

And third, this Kantian perspective has been extended to many related realms of study, such as moral development in psychology—influencing greatly the work of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg—and business ethics (Bowie, 2017),

in which many believe "that a Kantian point of view is essential to democratic capitalism" (Werhane, 2018, p. 110).

The Centrality of Motivation and the Function of Reason

According to Kant there is only one thing in the world that can be taken as good (i.e., moral, or right) without qualification. That thing is what he called *good will,* or what we might think of as moral motivation. Even Aristotle's criterion of happiness cannot be taken as an unqualified good: A person might be pleased at someone else's misfortune. Because right motives are unqualifiedly good, their moral value does not depend on the person's success in implementing them. If I see a child drowning in the ocean at a nearly deserted beach and I plunge into the surf to rescue her but am too poor a swimmer to reach her before she disappears, my behavior is no less moral for its ineffectiveness. Similarly, suppose I do rescue her but unfortunately, she cannot be revived. My behavior is no less moral because of the negative outcome. This definition of moral behavior independent of its consequences is one of the attributes that clearly renders Kant's philosophy deontological in nature. And it resonates with people's general notions of morality as having to do with good intentions. These intentions or motives—more particularly, the underlying principle(s) that they reflect (e.g., one should try to save an innocent person's life if there is the possibility of doing so)—Kant called a *maxim*. Recent experimental evidence underscores the intuitive importance of motivation, in that people tend to ascribe intentionality to a person's actions when it results in harmful (even if accidental, side) effects, but do not infer intentionality when the side effects are helpful or benign (Wagner, 2014).[3]

None of this emphasis on intentions or maxims would make much sense if Kant didn't assume that we are all autonomous beings free to choose (or not) the correct thing and that we have the reasoning capacity to do so. It is reason that guides the operation of free will. Each of us, as rational agents, prescribes for ourselves what is moral.[4] How that comes about takes us to the next elements in his philosophy.

Duty

Kant was the first to put the notion of duty at the core of an ethical theory. He undoubtedly was influenced by the ideas of the Protestant ethic, which viewed the fulfillment of one's duties in everyday life (e.g., duties as a parent, good citizen, and loyal employee) as the highest calling in life (Norman, 1998). Kant

3 However, the theoretical interpretation of this "so-called Knobe effect" is unclear.

4 One might question, "Why should reason be given this preeminence? Why be rational?" However, as Norman (1998) pointed out, one who poses such a question has already accepted the truth of the assertion.

contrasted duties with those aspects of our behavior influenced by our desires, temptations, preferences or what he referred to as our *inclinations*. What makes an act moral is it's being motivated by a sense of duty rather than by our inclinations. The prototypical moral act is one we initiate out of a sense of duty despite feeling compelled by an inclination to do otherwise. And it is not enough for Kant that the action merely is in *accord* with a sense of duty; for it to have moral worth it must actually *be motivated* by a sense of duty rather than inclination.

Therefore, referring to my previous hypothetical encounter with a drowning child, if my motives for attempting her rescue were entirely egoistic (e.g., fantasies about being hailed as a hero) or instrumental (anticipation of a monetary reward) or even a reflection of my basically kind-hearted, generous and altruistic nature, then for Kant my actions are without moral worth. If I had been quaking with fear and wishing I had not come along at just that time, but my concern for the child managed to overcome that trepidation so that I dove into the surf, then my behavior would be morally worthy.

One of the interesting implications of Kant's position is the indeterminacy of judgment in mixed-motive situations in which our inclinations and our duty coincide. Kant did not have a good answer for that. Conversely, he should not be misinterpreted as proposing that any involvement of our inclinations precludes moral value. He was saying only that acting from duty is the necessary condition. Moreover, this perspective seems to be supported by empirical psychological findings that adults (but not young children) view as morally superior someone who does the right thing by overcoming conflicting desires, in comparison with persons who do the [same] right thing without having experienced immoral impulses (Starmans & Bloom, 2016).

Kant went a step further and radicalized the notion of duty as a generalized abstraction requiring adherence for its own sake, without reference to any specific purposes or outcomes. And we can do our duty (i.e., do what we ought to do or what is right) by following the dictates of reason. To summarize, ethical behavior is that which is motivated by good intentions, or the aim of doing one's duty, which is most clearly evidenced when one must overcome contrary inclinations in order to do so. This seems to correspond to findings of empirical socialization studies that societies depend on citizens developing an "obligation to obey the law" (Fine & van Rooij, 2021).

But what does Kant mean by generalized duty? If duties are not to be defined by their descriptions, purposes or consequences, then what are they?

Universal Law and the Categorical Imperative

Kant said that "duty is the necessity to act out of reverence for the [moral] law" (cited in Arrington, 1998, p. 267). This is important because only rational beings can have laws and intentions to follow them, so the highest purpose of reason is to provide the motivation to follow moral law. But, wait a second. Kant seems to

have merely shifted the focus without answering the question. If duty consists of obeying moral law, but the content or substance of the duty is undefined, what is this "law"? His answer is brilliant. Because the law, like duty, cannot be defined by its content (which can at best refer only to a qualified good) or by its unreliable consequences, it can only be defined by the formal quality of law itself, which boils down ultimately to its universal nature, or what I have previously referred to as universalizability. For a principle or maxim such as "never tell a lie" or "help others if you can" to qualify as a moral law, it must be one that we can be assured all people should be obliged to obey.

For Kant (as with Hare's universal prescriptivism two centuries later; see Chap. 2) a moral principle or maxim has the nature of a command: "Do this" or, more frequently, "don't do that." The reason that we experience it as an imperative is because we have inclinations that may be in opposition to our duties which need to be overcome. According to Kant an imperative that is conditional on an inclination is a *hypothetical imperative*. For example, "If you want to graduate and receive your PhD degree you must complete your doctoral dissertation"; "The honest thing to do is to return that money." Completing your dissertation and returning the money are imperatives only if you accept the conditional purposes of wanting to graduate and being honest, respectively. In contrast, universal moral laws are expressed as *categorical imperatives,* meaning that they have no conditional purpose(s). Obedience to them is absolute: "Do not lie [ever, under any circumstances]."

"Do not lie" is a categorical imperative because it is universalizable. "It's okay to lie under some circumstances" is not universalizable. That is, if society operated according to that qualified principle no one could know whether or when they were being lied to so no one's word could be accepted, and society could not survive. As is evident from this example the determination of whether a maxim is universalizable is generally hypothetical, imagining what society would be like if everyone always behaved in accord with it. Could there be a viable society in which no one was ever sure whether they were being lied to?[5]

Although there are many maxims that could be formulated as potential categorical imperatives, there is one overall categorical imperative—*The* categorical imperative: "Act only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." Thus, universalizability is the hallmark of morality; because we are all rational beings, we all will agree on what is universalizable. Kant developed a few other formulations of the categorical imperative that are meant to be expressed in more practical terms. The most important of these is referred to as the *formula of the end in itself*, or the *formula of humanity*.

5 It is just this sort of reasoning, however, that leads consequentialists to charge that Kantian deontology, in the process of analyzing the universalizabilty of an imperative, resorts to a utilitarian assessment of consequences, illustrating that deontology cannot stand on its own independent of a consideration of outcomes.

Respect for People as Ends in Themselves

Just as Kant reasoned that there is only one unqualified good (goodwill), he also reasoned that there is only one thing that has absolute, objectively verifiable value: human beings. The value of all other things such as physical objects or even individual qualities of people (e.g., their wit or intelligence) varies; in fact, human beings, through their inclinations, impart value to all other things. Because the values of things vary some things may be perceived and used as *means* of obtaining other valued things. This cannot be true of human beings because their value is absolute; we are *ends* in and of ourselves. Arrington (1998) pointed out that this is consistent with the universalizability of the categorical imperative:

> If all rational beings are ends-in-themselves, we treat them as such only if we refuse to make any arbitrary distinctions among them, distinctions that would demote some of them to the status of mere things to be used by others. We must, that is to say, act consistently toward all rational beings. Hence whatever we conceive to be right for ourselves, we must also conceive to be right for other rational creatures—all of them. And whatever commands to action we give to others, we must also give to ourselves as well; whatever duties we assign to them, we must also impose on ourselves. (p. 277)

Therefore, Kant was led to this revision or corollary of the categorical imperative: "So act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of any other, never solely as a means but always also as an end." The qualifiers *solely* and *also* are important. Kant recognized that we may, with no adverse moral implications, "use" people as appropriate to the circumstances—to cook a meal for us, drive us to the airport, or mentor the development of our careers. Kant's formula of humanity is generally viewed as one of the most fundamental moral principles ever developed. It dictates that we never lose sight of the view of all human beings as having absolute worth in and of themselves and thus should be treated with dignity and respect. Far from being a trite platitude, the implications of this view, as Norman (1998) articulated, are profound. It suggests that we be concerned for other people's objectives as well as our own. It means recognizing that the pursuit of our own goals is limited by their potential infringement on the rights of others; we should not manipulate or use others merely for our own purposes, regardless of how worthwhile those purposes may be. It implies respect for the liberty and autonomy of others to pursue their own ends freely.

Thomas Hobbes

Suppose you lived in a world in which people were motivated exclusively by their own selfish interests; there was no political, legal or social machinery to