Corporate Ethics and Corporate Governance

Walther Ch. Zimmerli · Klaus Richter
Markus Holzinger
(Editors)

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Springer

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Walther Ch. Zimmerli
Dr. Markus Holzinger
Volkswagen Aktiengesellschaft
AutoUni
Mobile Life Campus
Hermann-Münch-Straße 1
38436 Wolfsburg
Walther.Zimmerli@volkswagen.de
Markus.Holzinger@volkswagen.de

Klaus Richter
Volkswagen Aktiengesellschaft
Koordination CSR und Nachhaltigkeit
Postfach 1882
38436 Wolfsburg
Klaus.Richter@volkswagen.de

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Introduction

Walther Ch. Zimmerli, Klaus Richter, and Markus Holzinger

Corporations are under fire. Hardly a day goes by that executive conduct doesn't appear as a topic—or, more accurately, as a problem—in the media. This leads to increased public pressure on corporations, many of whom are reacting and publicly assuming their corporate responsibility. But how serious are they? Doesn't the shiny façade of an environmentally and socially aware corporation simply conceal a game played according to the market's purely economic rules? The notion that business and ethics are mutually exclusive refuses to die. And the prejudice that business success is possible only at the expense of morality continues to prevail. Or as the satirist Karl Kraus alledgedly responded to a student: "You want to study business ethics? Then study either one or the other!"

After years of diligent scientific efforts aimed at finding a satisfactory, conclusive answer to this fundamental question, companies have begun to implement various approaches in practice. The question is no longer *whether*, but *how* economics and ethics can be united. Corporations and their executive committees have found various answers, ranging from philanthropic approaches to strategic positioning and institutionalized implementations. The belief in the theory advanced by business ethicist Karl Homann, that "the systematic place of morality in the market economy is the basic framework," (Homann 1994, p. 111) prevails in many boardrooms. Homann posits two different system levels: the rules of the game and the moves in the game. According to Homann, moral principles are anchored in the rules of the game. "Morality migrates from the motives into the restrictions of action." (Homann 1994, p. 111) The cause of immoral behavior does not lie in the evil motives of the actors, but instead can be traced to institutional defects: usually the inadequate enforceability of sanctions. The political-legal order thus essentially defines the normative basis responsible for the basic ethical principles in the economy.

Other companies are closer to the ideas of Peter Ulrich, who rejects the emphasis on the pure profit principle. "Strict profit-maximization cannot be a legitimate principle of corporate conduct, since it discards the moral self-commitment from the start," according to Ulrich (Ulrich 2002, p. 145). For him, legitimate profit-seeking is "always morally (self-) limited profit-seeking—depending on the accountability and the reasonableness with respect to all affected parties." (Ulrich

2002, p. 145) The moral obligation of corporate management is thus to protect the legitimate expectations and moral rights of all parties affected by corporate activities.

In the modern risk society (Beck 1992), moral codifications should be variables of efficient corporate policy, since a company's survival and reputation are determined not only by the market logic but also by societal acceptance. A survey by the McKinsey management-consulting company revealed that investors base their decisions not only on stock prices and returns but also on "good corporate governance." Wherever the trust in corporate governance is lost, the company also loses the trust of the investors. (Mc Kinsey & Company 2002)

The events perceived as crises—such as the destruction of the environment and consequent climate change, the extreme corruption scandals and the failure of the global economy to eradicate poverty worldwide—are those that have put business ethics on the map and in the media. It is becoming increasingly clear that the business world is not immune to moral judgment.

Because companies today act before the eyes of a global, nearly limitless public, dubious economic maneuvers can bring entire industries into disrepute. The customer, like capital, now has global power at his disposal—the global power of foregoing consumption. The critical consumer "transforms the act of buying into a vote on the corporations' political role in the world." (Beck 2002, p.131 and Spar/La Mure 2003) For purely economic reasons, no company can afford to behave immorally. Or expressed differently: in the long run, companies can only operate if they comply with moral norms and thus receive their "license to operate."

Companies consist of more than just economic relations, facts and figures. They are not soulless entities but are "full of subjectivity, abstraction, puzzles, invention, and unpredictability." (Weick 1995) The economic rationality principle may always be cited, but it has no normative force in and of itself. Every company must constantly tangle with normative and moral problems.

To a growing degree, successful corporate management today requires social and moral expertise in addition to purely professional skills. Responsibility for all that occurs in the company must be actively assumed. Traits such as social competence, trustworthiness and personal integrity thus core competencies become essential in dealing with employees, corporate partners, and a critical public.

Ethics training sessions should already be used as instruments for conveying ethical standards—especially at the level of governance structures. And because "sensitizing managers to issues of value management as part of transcultural skills training" (Zimmerli/Palazzo 1999) is becoming more and more important at the operative level, a program on the subject of "Corporate Ethics and Corporate Governance" was developed at Volkswagen's AutoUni.

This book includes the central materials of that program, supplementing them with current contributions in order to reflect the entire spectrum of business ethics. It represents an introduction to and overview of the diverse aspects of the ethical challenges confronting companies today. It introduces (future) executives, stu-

dents and interested observers to the complex trends and developments in business ethics. On the one hand, this book presents industry-specific topics in ethics, and on the other provides a general, interdisciplinary survey of the ethical dimensions of management and business.

The book encompasses five groups of subjects:

Setting the Scene

The introductory chapter, "Setting the Scene," discusses fundamental issues in corporate ethics, a topic that many see as an oxymoronic middle ground between morality and economic interest. That this is not actually the case is demonstrated, for example, by the fact that Adam Smith, the intellectual father of the free market, was a moral philosopher. For him, the connection between business and ethics existed mainly in the notion that the free pursuit of self-interested individual motives would promote the wealth and welfare of all—through the "invisible hand" of market forces. But this invisible hand would work only to the extent that the actors on the market exhibited trust and sympathy in their dealings with each other.

Thomas Hobbes's idea of "war of everyone against everyone," which can be traced back to Plato (cf. Ottmann 1992), was inspired by his own experience of civil war. According to Hobbes, this war could only be avoided by means of a social contract backed up by enforceable sanctions. Citizens must relinquish a portion of their freedom to the state in order to avoid a life that is nasty, brutish and short. The significance of Hobbes for modern economic and management thought is that his concept of human nature has been accepted completely. Man is only interested in himself and always seeks to maximize his own benefits. In business theory, one speaks of "homo oeconomicus."

In his essay titled "Introduction to Ethics," Robert C. Solomon provides a brief overview of the thought of these fathers of economic theory, discusses the most effective arguments of major philosophers from Aristotle to Kant to the Utilitarians, provides an introduction to moral theory and identifies the place where we all encounter it—our own lives. What are we even talking about when we pose moral questions?

Walther Ch. Zimmerli and Michael Assländer expand upon this general introduction in their "Business Ethics" essay, which systematically integrates business and corporate ethics into the field of Ethics while providing an analysis and definition of terms.

It is obvious that not every culture understands and implements corporate ethics in the same way. There is thus a significant difference in the development of European and Anglo-American approaches to corporate ethics. In her article "Habits of the Heart in US-American and German Corporate Culture," Bettina Palazzo describes the differences between German and U.S. companies by analyzing the ways in which companies deal with values within the organization.

Leading Self and Others

After the introduction to the fundamental ethical issues in general and corporate ethics in particular, the second chapter, "Leading Self and Others," brings the discussion closer to day-to-day operations. It addresses the questions of what leadership means and what its ethical significance should be.

In her essay "The Importance of Leadership in Shaping Business Values" Joanne B. Ciulla also discusses what "good" leadership means. But some questions remain unanswered: should the emphasis be on managers' most effectively ensuring that other individuals do certain things, or on getting the "right" things done while the managers treat their employees well? The greatest challenge—and difficulty—lies in harmonizing both objectives.

The essays "The Servant as Leader" by Robert Greenleaf and "The Structure of Moral Leadership" by James MacGregor Burns highlight further normative approaches to leadership. They also address the interaction between managers' success and personal values, revealing that values as such do not necessarily have to exert any influence on the management behavior. For many management personalities, it is enough to "have values" without actually implementing them into action. Yet the employees always orient themselves to the actions of their managers. It thus doesn`t come as a surprise that many corporate value statements have at best a minimal impact, or can even evoke cynicism when the behavior of the managers does not conform to the proclaimed values.

In "Why work," Joanne B. Ciulla discusses the meaning of work: Why do we work at all? Why is work so important to us? What compromises are people ready to make in the tug-of-war between meaningful work, free time, money, and security?

Organizational Ethics

The "Organizational Ethics" chapter goes beyond the focus on the individual by examining the organizational factors that are crucial for ethics in a company and how these ethics can be managed.

Companies today place a growing emphasis on integrity programs in addition to compliance programs. Integrity programs view exposing and punishing misbehavior as a necessary evil rather than an actual goal of any given measure. But they also view conduct in compliance with the law as a fundamental prerequisite for corporate ethics. Integrity programs and compliance programs thus do not have to be mutually exclusive. The actual goal of integrity programs is to create a climate of trust and thereby to prevent potential misconduct. The program is thus best viewed as an instrument of self-governance. It has a broader scope than a compliance program, since it seeks not only to prevent illegal conduct but also to enable responsible behavior. It goes deeper because it works not only on the surface but also attempts to encompass the entire corporate value structure (ethos). And it is more demanding because it requires active commitment—not just passive obedience to rules. Guido Palazzo discusses these aspects of integrity man-

agement in his article "Organizational Integrity – Understanding the Dimensions of Ethical and Unethical Behavior in Corporations."

Ethics management is, however, influenced by more than just the corporate culture: the national culture also defines values such as loyalty, diligence and transparency very differently in different countries. The case of Enron, described in detail in Alejo Sison's essay "Enron. Pride Comes Before the Fall," clearly illustrates this point. A corporate culture driven by profit at any price raises the probability that employees and managers will transgress (violate!) ethical boundaries. The case of Enron also demonstrates that a code of conduct has no effect when the company's incentive system is directed solely towards aggressive, short-term profits. Enron presents a typical example of "window dressing," where the ethics management remains on the surface of cultural artifacts while the deeper layers of corporate culture—such as the values that governed the managers' and employees' decisions and actions—were shaped by aggressiveness, greed and competition. Sison discusses another such scandal in his second article about "Arthur Andersen. No Fairy Tale Ending."

The topic of corruption—and how to avoid it—is becoming increasingly important in the business world. Non-governmental organizations such as Transparency International assume growing responsibility for educating about and exposing bribery and corruption. In his article "How to Discover and to Avoid Corruption in Companies," Caspar von Hauenschild demonstrates the practical management challenge that the battle against corruption poses, and argues that fighting and containing corruption effectively and sustainably is only possible when government, business, and civil society work together and form coalitions.

Business in Society

In the fourth chapter, "Business in Society," the internal dimension of corporate ethics is left behind for an analysis of the company as an entity that is integrated into a dense, complex network of social interest groups. For many years, the notion prevailed that companies are responsible only for maximizing their profits. But the Stakeholder Theory has shown that, in reality, companies have long been operating with a much more complex concept of responsibility: the interests of employees, customers, and the general social context of the community are, as a rule, carefully balanced with the interests of the shareholders.

Today's buzzword is 'CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility.' According to the underlying idea, companies are responsible not only for profits, but also for the ecological and social side effects of their economic activities. There are hardly any companies today that would not define themselves—or wish to be perceived—as a "good corporate citizen." CSR was initially based on the observation that the scope of corporate responsibility is expanding. What began as an ecological issue in the 1970s has permeated every link of the global value-creation chain, today even encompassing subjects such as human rights. In addition, companies today are more actively engaging in fields that used to belong to the political realm.

They build schools, sponsor professorships, construct roads, fight against AIDS and for peace and human rights, and they are involved in defining playing rules and laws. In his essay "The Path to Corporate Responsibility," Simon Zadek points out that CSR may be a wonderful thing but it would be an illusion to maintain that all companies are living it. Companies must therefore actively work to implement global rules under which doing business without regard to social ramifications simply does not pay.

CSR has recently established itself as a synonym for corporate responsibility and developed into a central concept for corporate management. Issues of ethics, sustainability and corporate citizenship are discussed in this context, but without an underlying, differentiated understanding of CSR. One theory that many scientific papers take as a starting point—usually in order to refute it—originates from the writings of Milton Friedman, Nobel laureate in Economics. He became famous with his provocative thesis that the sole social responsibility of the manager is to maximize profits for the owners (shareholders) within legal boundaries. His newspaper article titled "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits" is reprinted here. But only half of Adam Smith underlies this justification for shareholder-value thought in the seventies. Freedom is maximized when market rules are allowed free play; the rest—welfare for everyone—then is supposed to follow on its own.

The continued development of the term 'CSR' is demonstrated in the essay of Dirk Matten and Jeremy Moon, titled "Pan-European approach: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding CSR." Their model distinguishes between "explicit" and "implicit" CSR. "Explicit CSR" refers to a policy that leads the company to feel responsible for the interests of society. "Implicit CSR," by contrast, refers to a country's formal and informal institutions through which the companies' responsibility for social interests has been agreed upon and transferred to the companies.

Two essays from the Volkswagen Group illustrate how a theoretical concept can be implemented in corporate practice. In "Corporate Social Responsibility at Volkswagen Group," Reinhold Kopp and Klaus Richter demonstrate how the automobile manufacturer handled and integrated this multi-layered subject. In "Historical Responsibility: Corporate Forms of Remembrance of National Socialist Labour at the Volkswagen Plant," Manfred Grieger provides a detailed look at the work of the corporate archive as a concrete example of a continuous CSR project within the Group.

Terence Jackson's essay "Cross-cultural Sensitivities in Developing Corporate Ethical Strategies and Practices" digs deeper into the intercultural dimension of corporate ethics touched briefly upon above. It specifically addresses how cultures can be differentiated at all and introduces standard academic cultural categories (Hofstede, Trompenaars). Jackson demonstrates the consequences these cultural categories can have for implementing corporate ethics in the international context and how far intercultural tolerance can—or should—go with respect to ethical conflicts (cultural relativism vs. universalism). At the same time, this essay forms the transition to the concluding topic.

Global Corporate Ethics

The fifth chapter discusses the global dimension of corporate ethics. It analyzes the multinational corporation within the framework of globalization: what are the most important changes in the conditions of action? CSR and sensitivity to stakeholder interests assume increased significance primarily because our traditional national-industrialsociety model is being eroded by globalization. Companies act transnationally to a growing extent, but lawmakers remain limited to their national spheres of influence. Gaps in regulation arise because there is neither a legislative global government nor a global morality. The multinational company is thus weighted with increasing social expectations, and its responsibility is extended along the value-creation chain. This chapter discusses the consequences of globalization for the role of the corporation in society. In his essay "Transnational Actors and World Politics," Thomas Risse demonstrates the link between transnational actors—including corporations and international non-governmental organizations—and government as well as civil society.

Globalization in the political realm refers primarily to the increasing constriction of the nation-state model. Globalization undermines the policies of nation-states. Globalization drives democracy into a crisis, and the state surrenders a large share of its authority. In "The UN Global Compact: The Challenge and the Promise," Oliver F. Williams describes what a contract between transnational actors should look like under these conditions. The UN Global Compact is a voluntary corporate obligation to observe ten principles concerning human rights, labor, environment and corruption. Williams's article provides a critical view of these principles and reflects new perspectives on this approach to voluntary global "legislation."

Demands for global ethics result from the new political situation that transnational companies find themselves in. Multinationals are constantly confronted with having to assume duties that political institutions used to fulfill. And because they are the only actors that operate globally and deal regularly with people throughout the world, they assume a societal duty. It is thus expected that companies take on social responsibility in the cultural and political contexts that they influence. This challenge is analyzed in the concluding essay by Andreas G. Scherer, Guido Palazzo and Dorothée Baumann, "Global Public Rules and Citizenship Rights: A New Responsibility of Private Business Firms?" which also predicts the future challenges that will confront business as well as individual companies.

Writing and editing a book takes time. It is a long way from the idea to the bookstore. We would like to sincerely thank everyone who supported us along the way.

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PART I:

Setting the Scene

Introduction to Ethics[1]

Robert C. Solomon

Ethics: A Briefer Introduction

Last Thursday, you went out for lunch with an acquaintance from class, a nice-enough fellow but not a candidate for lifelong friendship. As you were wolfing down your last bite of cheeseburger, you suddenly gulped and flushed: you realized that you had forgotten your wallet. You were flat broke. Embarrassed, you entreated your classmate to lend you five dollars, which you would, of course, pay back on Tuesday. Today is Wednesday; you forgot.

Now you are doubly embarrassed, for having had to borrow the money in the first place, for having then forgotten to pay it back when promised. You are tempted, momentarily, to ignore the entire awkward situation, just to assume – what may well be true – that your classmate has forgotten about the loan. (After all, it is only five dollars.) But maybe he hasn't forgotten, or, at least, he'll remember it when he sees you. For an irrational instant, you consider dropping the course, but then you realize that would be ridiculous – the five dollars just isn't that important. It is highly unlikely – it would be very embarrassing for him – that he would actually ask you for the money. Any way, you aren't close friends and don't generally talk to each other. So what's the difference?

But now, small hints of large doubts start interrupting your day. You've made up your mind. You are convinced that no harm will come to you. The fellow knows none of your friends and it is hardly likely that he will announce to the class or put a personal ad in the paper that you are a "deadbeat". And yet, it's ruining your day, and it may well ruin other days. "If only I could get rid of this guilty feeling", you say to yourself. But it is not just a feeling; it is a new and wholly unwelcome sense of who you are. A voice inside of you (sometimes it sounds like your own voice; occasionally it seems to be your mother's) keeps whispering, "deadbeat", "deadbeat" (and worse). Already distracted from your work, you start speculating, "What if we all were to forget about our debts?" Your first response is that you would probably be washing dishes at the Burger Shop, since no one would ever lend anyone money and your classmate would never have lent money

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[1] Published in: Solomon, R.: Ethics: A Briefer Introduction. Chapter 1: Introduction to Ethics. Wadsworth 2005. Reprinted by permission of the author.

to you. Your second response to yourself is that "everyone doesn't forget", but this argument doesn't make you feel any better. It reminds you that in a world where most people pay their debts, you are one of the scoundrels who does not. You start rationalizing: "After all", you say to yourself, "I need the money more than he does." In a final moment of belligerence, you smash your fist on the table and say, in part to yourself and in part to the slightly surprised people sharing your library table, "The only person I have to worry about is me!" There is an embarrassed silence. Then you walk over to the bank of phones and dial: "Hello, Harris? You remember that five dollars you loaned me?"

This point of this little scenario is to capture the day-to-day nature of ethics. Even such a simple situation involves conflicting interests, profound moral principles and the nagging voice of conscience, culminating in a quiet but nevertheless telling conclusion concerning the sort of person you are. This case does not involve any of the more notoriously difficult social problems and life-or-death decisions so vehemently debated today, such as the abortion issue, the legitimacy of war, the plight of the homeless in a land of affluence or starving children in a world awash with surplus food. But, ultimately, the considerations that enter into our debates on these global issues reflect our habits and opinions in the most ordinary circumstances. Our politics express who we are and what we believe, and even our most abstract ideologies reveal (although often in a convoluted and even reactionary way) the principles and prejudices of everyday life.

What Is Ethics?

Ethics is that part of philosophy which is concerned with living well, being a good person, doing the right thing, getting along with other people and wanting the right things in life. Ethics is essential to living in society, any society, with its various traditions, practices and institutions. Of course, those traditions, practices and institutions can and must themselves be assessed according to ethical standards, but they themselves determine many of the rules and expectations that define the ethical outlook of the people living within them. Ethics therefore has both a social and a personal dimension, but it is not at all easy, in theory or in practice, to separate these. Moral judgment is both the product of society and one of its constitutive features. What we call our "personal values" are for the most part learned together and shared by a great many people. Indeed, those values we consider most personal are typically not those that are most idiosyncratic but rather those that are most common, and most profound, respect for human (and animal) life, outrage at being the victim of a lie, compassion for those much worse off than yourself and an insistence on personal integrity in the face of adversity.

The word "ethics" refers both to a discipline – the study of our values and their justification – and to the subject matter of that discipline – the actual values and rules of conduct by which we live. The two meanings merge in the fact that we behave (and misbehave) according to a complex and continually changing set of

rules, customs, and expectations; consequently, we are forced to reflect on our conduct and attitudes, to justify and sometimes to revise them.

Why do we need to study ethics as a discipline? Isn't it enough that we *have* ethics, that we do (most of us, most of the time) act according to our values and rules? But part of our ethics is understanding ethics, that is, acting for *reasons* and being able to defend our actions if called upon to do so. It is not enough, after the age of eight or so, simply to do what you are told; it is just as important to know the reason why, and to be able to say no when you think an act is wrong. So, too, it is not enough to have strong political opinions on this or that controversial social issue. It is important to have reasons, to have a larger vision, to have a framework within which to house and defend your opinions. The study of ethics teaches us to appreciate the overall system of reasons within which having ethics makes sense. Understanding what we are doing and why is just as essential to ethics as the doing itself.

We learn ethics, typically, a piece at a time. Our education begins in childhood, first and foremost, with examples, continuous demonstrations of "normal" behavior. We watch our parents and our older siblings, before we know what they are doing, and we imitate them, no doubt before we know what we are doing. Our education continues with a number of instructions and prohibitions, such as "don't hit your little sister" and "you should share your toys with your friends". The recognition of authority is essential, of course, beginning with "You do what your father says" and culminating in "Because it's the law, that's why". But it is also learning reasons, such as "because if everyone did that, there wouldn't be any left" or "because it will make her unhappy". Ultimately, we learn the specialized language of *morality* and its more abstract reasons for doing or refraining from certain actions, such as "because it is your *duty*" and "because it is *immoral*". By this time we have begun to learn that ethics is not just a varied collection of "do's and don'ts" but a *system* of values and principles which tie together in a reasonable and coherent way in order to make our society and our lives as "civilized" and as happy as possible. The study of ethics is the final step in this process of education – the understanding of that system as such and the way that all our particular values and principles fit into it.

Change, Choice and "Pluralism"

Our understanding of ethics is complicated enormously by the fact that, as a living system, our ethics is continually *changing*. Consider, for example, the tremendous changes that our society has experienced over just the past few decades in the realm of sexual morality; today, we accept behavior which would have been wanton immorality fifty years ago (for example, topless beachwear for *men* !). Similar changes have taken place in our concept of personal roles and career options. Only twenty years ago, many people considered it "unethical" for a wife to work except in cases of dire family need, but it was perfectly acceptable – in fact, even com-

mendable – for a husband to spend so much time working at his career that he virtually never saw his children or did anything but work. Today, we would not find such behavior praiseworthy but, rather, akin to a disease – some call it "workaholism". Attitudes toward authority have also changed dramatically. Fifty years ago, the attitude of most young men, when drafted into the army (or invited to enlist), was unquestioning acceptance. Twenty-five years ago, those who refused to follow orders and resisted authority were praised by many people as moral heroes. What this means, and whether there are more basic values that support both obedience and disobedience, depending on the situation, are some of the most important questions of ethics.

We live in a society filled with change and disagreements, in which each generation is taught to reexamine the values and actions of the older generation, in which doing what you are told or simply conforming to tradition is not necessarily a mark of moral goodness but may be considered cowardice or lack of character. Our ethics, in other words, essentially involves *choice.* In fact, having and permitting individual freedom of choice is itself one of the most noteworthy values of our ethics. But choice is not arbitrary and to choose between alternative courses of action or opposed values requires intelligent deliberation and some sense of the reasons why we should choose one rather than another. Each of us must select a way of life, perhaps a career or a profession, perhaps a long search for selfhood or a life of creativity or adventure. We might "follow in our parents' footsteps" or we might go off on a completely different path. But we must choose. Each of us must decide whether or not to get married, and when and to whom. We must decide whether or not to have children, how many, and how they will be raised, thus affecting the lives of others in the most direct and dramatic sense possible. Every day, each of us decides whether or not to engage in a dozen small misdeeds and an occasional misdemeanor, such as whether to drive high-speed Highway 10 to El Paso at a safe (but illegal) 80 miles per hour, or to take an extra box of paperclips from the office, since "no one will ever miss them".

The importance of choice in ethics is often confused with the notion that we "choose our values", that values are merely "subjective", that everyone has his or her own "personal values". This is misleading. Most of ethics involves decisions between already-established possibilities and already-available reasons, and those we do not choose. A student deciding between joining the Navy or going to law school does indeed have an important choice to make, but the alternatives and their values are provided by the society as a whole (There must already be a navy to join or a society with a role for lawyers). One does not choose the alternatives; one chooses among the alternatives. And once one has chosen, he or she is suddenly situated in a world of "objective" values – the iron-clad rules of the military or the ethics of the legal profession. In ethics we face choices, but the personal values we thereby endorse are virtually never one's own values alone. The very nature of values is such that they must be shared; they exist over and above those who embrace them.

Nevertheless, there is a sense, defended recently by the French "existentialist" Jean-Paul Sartre, in which each of us "chooses" our values every time we make an ethical decision. By deciding not to take advantage of a loophole in the tax laws, for example, one personally affirms the priority of compliance over individual gain. By acting in one way rather than another, we support one value rather than another, one sense of who we are rather than another. Thus, Sartre also says that we "choose ourselves", that ethics is largely a matter of individual choice and commitment rather than of obedience to already-established authorities.

We live in an ethically *pluralist* society. This means that there is no single code of ethics but several different sets of values and rules in a variety of contexts, communities and "subcultures". Professional and business people in our society emphasize individual success and mobility; some cultural communities stress the importance of group identity and stable ethnic tradition. Some college and urban communities are notably more "liberal" in their tolerance for eccentricity and deviance than the more conservative suburban neighborhoods surrounding them. Even what would seem to be the most basic rules of morality seem to vary from culture to culture and context to context, neighborhood to neighborhood. Thus, we find our Supreme Court – the ultimate arbiter of laws if not morals – insisting on "community standards" as the test for what is permissible, in the case of pornography, for instance. Such disagreements cut to the very core of our ethical values. Many people in our society insist that the ultimate value is individual freedom. But freedom has its costs, among them the inconvenience and deprivation of others, and many people thus argue there are issues of morality and justice that are more important than individual freedom. Some people consider it absolutely wrong to take a human life even if the life in question is that of an unborn zygote or fetus; others do not believe that such a life counts a "human" and should be sacrificed if necessary to the well-being of the mother. None of these differences in ethics are easily reconciled; in fact, they may be irreconcilable. But that makes it all the more important that we understand the nature of these differences, and at least know how to try to reconcile our differences instead of intransigently shouting our views at one another, using the law to "legislate" morality or simply storming out of the room. Trying to be "reasonable" in this sense is much of what ethical discussion and debate are about, and pluralism provides much of the motive. If one isn't clear about the nature and justification of one's own values, he or she won't be in a position to understand the nature and justification of other people's values. And if one doesn't understand other people's values, neither will one understand how they conflict or might be brought into harmony with one's own.

Ethics and Ethos

The word "ethics" comes from the Greek word *ethos,* meaning "character" or "custom", and the derivative phrase *ta ethika,* which the philosophers Plato and Aristotle used to describe their own studies of Greek values and ideals. Accordingly, ethics is first of all a concern for individual character, including what we

blandly call "being a good person", but it is also a concern for the overall character of an entire society, which is still appropriately called its "ethos." Ethics is participation in, and an understanding of, an ethos, the effort to understand the social rules which govern and limit our behavior, especially those fundamental rules, such as the prohibitions on killing and stealing and the commandments that one should "honor thy parents" and respect the rights of others, which we call *morality*.

The close connection between ethics and social customs ("mores", which shares its etymological root with the word "morality") inevitably raises the question of whether morality is *nothing but* the customs of our particular society, our ethics nothing but the rules of our particular ethos. On the one hand, it is clear that ethics and morality are very closely tied to the laws and the customs of a particular society. Kissing in public and making an enormous profit in a business transaction are considered immoral in some societies, not in others. But, on the other hand, we are firmly convinced that not *all* laws or customs endorsed by an entire society are equally acceptable. The rules of etiquette may be merely a matter of local custom or taste, but the prohibition against cannibalism, for example, seems to have much more universal power and justification than the simple reminder, "That just isn't done around here".

One way of circumscribing the principles of morality – as distinguished from rules of etiquette and standards of good taste, for example – is to insist that these are not the province of only a particular society or subculture within society but, rather, rules which we apply to all people everywhere and expect them to obey. We might be happy to accept, and even be charmed by, the fact that people in another culture eat food with wooden sticks instead of forks or enjoy music based on quarter tones without a discernible melody. But when we consider the "culture" of gangland America, for example, or the peculiar rules of certain cults and subcultures, our tolerance diminishes and we find ourselves quite willing to "impose" our values and standards. Ethics provides the basic rules of an ethos, but those rules are not limited to that ethos. Ethics needs a culture in which to be cultivated, but that does not mean that ethics consists of just the rules of that particular culture. Morality, according to many philosophers, is that set of rules which applies to all cultures, whatever their customs or traditions.

An ethos is that core of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings that gives coherence and vitality to a people (in ancient Greek, an *ethnos,* a word significantly similar to "ethos"). It may be spelled out explicitly in terms of laws, but much of an ethos resides in the hearts and minds of the people, in what they expect of one another and what they expect of themselves, in what they like and dislike, in what they value and disdain, hope and fear. It is an essential part of our ethos, for example, that individual success and "standing out in the crowd" are very important to us. There is no law or moral principle that commands that this should be so, but obviously our ethics very much depends upon these values of individualism and achievement. In some societies, by way of contrast, individual ambitions and eccentricities are unacceptable. "The nail that sticks out is the one that gets hammered down", reads a traditional Japanese proverb. We should not assume that all ethè (the plural of "ethos") are the same, even in their most basic values and visions.

Morality

Ethics includes the whole range of acceptable social and personal practices, from the rules of "common courtesy" to the institutions that determine the kinds of work we do, the kinds of friends we have, and the ways we relate to both family and strangers. Morality, on the other hand, is something more specific, a subset of ethical rules which are of particular importance and transcend the boundaries of any particular ethos or situation. Thus, we believe, it is *always* immoral to be cruel to children, even if doing so is part of a family tradition for several generations. "Morality", accordingly, is thought to be a weightier term than "ethics". If someone refuses to play fair or to honor a verbal contract, we might say that he or she is untrustworthy or "unethical", but we would not say "immoral". If a person abuses children or poisons his in-laws, however, we would call such behavior "immoral", thus indicating the seriousness of these violations. Morality consists of the most basic and inviolable rules of a society.

The distinction between ethics and morality – ethics as the whole of our sense of self and our place in society and morality as the core, universal, most inviolable rules in any society – is not always followed in either ordinary conversation or philosophical theorizing. Indeed, the curious history of these terms shows how much our very conception of ethics and morality has shifted over the centuries along with the more obvious shifts in the practices they evaluate and prescribe. The current definition of the word, "morality", for example, displays a range of meanings that shows both the ancient sense in which the terms "morality" and "ethics" both embrace the whole of human behavior and the very narrow nineteenth century concern in which sexual behavior became an obsessive focus of ethical concern. The Random House Dictionary, for example, lists as definitions of "morality" (a) conformity to rules of right conduct, (b) Moral quality of character, (c) virtue in sexual matters, (d) a doctrine or system of morals, (e) moral instruction. We shall see how these various conceptions play off against one another in current as well as traditional debates in ethics. But for our purposes here, we shall start by sticking fairly closely to the first definition of morality as "conformity to rules of right conduct" – and as those rules themselves. But this is not sufficient. Many rules in ethics ("don't be rude") and even in etiquette ("don't eat your burrito with a spoon") seem to be "rules of right conduct". What distinguishes moral rules is a number of rather distinctive features, which are emphasized (in different ways and with many mixed opinions) by philosophers and other moral theorists. Here are four of the most-often mentioned:

Moral Rules Have Great Importance

Moral rules, however else they may be characterized, are of indisputable importance. They are like trump cards in certain games, overpowering all other considerations. In our opening example, the *obligation* to repay a loan outweighs purely

personal concerns, such as one's embarrassment or one's own need for money. Indeed, it is the mark of morality that the amount of money involved is not what is important. The obligation would override selfinterest whether the amount involved were ten cents or a thousand dollars. It is sometimes suggested that moral rules are those without which a society could not survive, or, at least, could not function in what it considers a "civilized" way. For example, how could there be promises or contracts at all – the basis of much of our lives – if the respect for promises and contracts were not more important than a person's personal advantage in breaking them? Furthermore, to call a person or an act "immoral" is to condemn that person or act in the strongest possible terms, just as to say that an issue is a "moral issue" is to say that it is of the utmost urgency.

One problem with characterizing moral issues in terms of their extreme importance, however, is that this reduces the insistence that any particular moral issue is important to a mere tautology, the trivial demand that it is important because it is important. Some matters concerning a person's private sexual behavior, for instance, are considered moral issues but, in the larger scheme of things, hardly seem very important. And some of the most global issues confronting us, international politics and wars which threaten the lives of millions, while indisputably important, are often not treated by State Department officials as moral questions at all. Therefore, while it is generally true that moral issues are important issues and that one way of emphasizing the importance of an issue is to designate it a moral issue, importance alone does not seem to be adequate to capture what we ordinarily mean by morality. There can be petty moral issues, and there can be extremely important non-moral issues.

Morality Consists of Universal Rules

Morality is rule-governed in that it tells us what sorts of things to do and not to do, by way of general classes and types of acts, such as "one ought to repay debts" and "don't ever tell a lie". Morality involves obedience of such rules, but it also requires understanding, knowledge of the rules and the recognition that they are necessary and obligatory. Furthermore, moral rules are distinguished by the fact that they are *universal:* they apply to everyone everywhere. They are not just local customs or the rules of some particular practice (such as, staying behind the line of scrimmage is obligatory in football).

One problem with characterizing morality in terms of obedience to rules is that it seems to leave out a great deal of behavior that is, in an important sense, "mindless". Good habits are as important in ethics as they are in etiquette and sports, and the very nature of a habit is such that its actions are nondeliberative, unthinking. Of course, habitual behavior can *conform* to a moral principle, but this weakens the notion of obedience considerably. And is it true that all of what we consider moral can be captured in a genuine principle? The demand that we should "love our neighbors" has the form of a principle, but does it capture the spirit of love

that one should express affection *on principle*? Can the notion of rules capture all of the aspects of morality, for instance, the role of the right feelings in moral behavior? Or is obedience of certain rules just one aspect of morality and not morality as such? The question of universality, of course, is one of the central controversies in ethics. Again, moral principles may be universal in form ("everyone ought to...") but the scope of the "everyone" remains in question. Does it mean everyone in the world, or everyone in this society, or everyone "like us", or, the most trivial, everyone who is in the same relevant circumstances? At the minimum, moral principles can't be designated for one and only one person. "John Jones ought to..." is not and cannot be a moral principle (even if, indeed, John Jones ought to).

Moral Rules Are Rational, Disintereseted and Objective

There are special *reasons* for acting morally, for example, "because it is my obligation". These reasons require special concepts (e.g., "duty", "obligation", "on principle") and a special kind of up-bringing in which these concepts are inculcated. This ability to think in terms of abstract principles (e.g., "never tell a lie") and reasons ("because if everyone lied, no one could believe anyone") is often called "rationality". One of the key features of rationality, according to many philosophers, is its universality. Unlike most emotions and desires, for example, reason is the same in everyone. Everyone may have his or her own ideal of love or 'pet peeve', but we all necessarily share the conclusions of reason, e.g. "two plus two equals four". Thus it is sometimes said that, if a reason is a good reason, it will be so "for every rational creature", and morality has been defined by some philosophers as the rules and actions of "a completely rational person". The hard question then, of course, is whether rationality is itself objective and universal, or whether what counts as "practical reason" in ethics might differ from culture to culture (It also differs from philosophical theory to philosophical theory).

It is also said that morality is rational, in part, because it is *disinterested.* A moral rule is disinterested both in that it applies without regard to one's own personal interests or feelings or status in the case and in that it remains oblivious to the interests, feelings and status of the people to whom it applies (Think of the classic image of Justice as wearing a blindfold, thus being "blind" to individual interests and the identities of the people who stand before her). One has an obligation to repay a loan whether or not one needs the money, whether or not repaying the loan will advance one's interests in other ways (for example, making it easier to obtain another loan in the future) and whether or not the person who made the loan needs the money back. Of course, one can sometimes use a moral principle to one's own advantage, but the moral principle itself is formulated to no one's advantage and with no particular person's interests in mind. To so insist that morality is independent of "subjective" feelings and interests is to say that morality is *objective.* Thus rationality and disinterestedness imply objectivity. "Adultery is

wrong!" does not mean "I don't like adultery" or "Our society disapproves of adultery"; a moral rule is objective insofar as its correctness is quite distinct from what particular people — or even whole societies — happen to think of it. "What's right is right and what's wrong is wrong." ("Subjectivity", by contrast, is often dismissed as the notion that morals are only "one's own personal opinion" – nothing more)

Again, however, the scope of this feature of morality can be called into question. Is rationality, that is, thoughtfulness and deliberation, essential to all moral behavior, or is unthinking, habitual performance sometimes far more impressive? Should morality be disinterested? Perhaps in the case of justice or an actual judge in a courtroom, but should we praise parents for disinterestedly raising their children or friends for disinterestedly doing what they ought to do, for example, visiting a sick friend in the hospital? So, too, with objectivity. If objectivity rather than subjectivity means little more than a defensible, not merely personal opinion, then there may be no objection to it (though even then, with reference to such personal feelings as love and grief, there are hard questions to be raised). But if objectivity is taken to mean that there are moral facts in the world, quite independent of our feelings, interests and attitudes, then the notion of objectivity becomes quite controversial.

Morality Is Concerned with Other People

Morality essentially involves consideration of interests other than one's own and is thus well summarized in the various versions of the so-called Golden Rule. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is found in almost every ethical system. In the Hebrew Talmud, for example, it is presented as the basic principle of ethics: "What is hurtful to yourself do not to your fellow man; that is the whole of the Torah [the Jewish Scriptures] and the remainder is but commentary". The Confucian *Analects* tell us, "Do not unto others what you would not they should do unto you". The Taoist *T'ai Shang Kan Ying Pien* says, "Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and regard your neighbor's loss as your own loss". The Buddha insisted, "Hurt not others with that which pains yourself". And Mohammed commanded (as in the *Analects*), "Do not unto others what you would not they should do unto you". The slight differences among these versions of the rule may make a considerable difference in morals. Consider the difference, for example, between the warning that what you do to others might be done to you in turn and the appeal to compassion, that you should think about other people's feelings in the same way that you think of your own. It is worth noting that most of the versions refer to one's own possible pains and interests. But, at the same time, every version makes reference to the interests of other people, and this is the essence of morality; it presupposes an awareness of the interests of others as well as of one's own. (We might note that even the cynical version, "Do unto others before they do unto you", presupposes awareness of other people's interests and in-

tentions but construes these in a strictly antagonistic way). The opposition between morality and mere self-interest, however, does not imply that to be moral you must always go against your own self-interest. Indeed, one of the most common arguments for morality is that it ultimately serves all of our self-interest and, all things considered, it is to our advantage that everyone (including us) obeys the rules of morality and pays attention to the interests and well-being of others.

Again, however, the criterion comes into question when we begin asking what makes an action moral rather than, say, kind or considerate. To care for other people is undoubtedly a good thing, but one can pay attention to other people for many reasons other than the tugs of morality. One can love them, be friends with them, be related to them, have a job to look after them, work together in such a way that cooperation and coordination is essential. The idea resurfaces that morality cannot be merely other-directed concern but involves some special domain of issues and concerns or of rules and rationality. Thus we find ourselves in the somewhat peculiar position that while the study of ethics centers on the concept of morality it is precisely that concept which is in question. What is morality? Does morality consist of some special domain? Or could the distinction between moral and non-moral issues be a bogus distinction, an odd historical curiosity or a merely rhetorical device? Is morality so important, or is it nothing more than an overly precise name for a more general sense of the public good, caring about other people and being a good person.

Somewhere near the beginning of any book on ethics, it is virtually compulsory to introduce the most prominent single philosopher in modern ethics, who is, more than anyone else, responsible for this emphasis on "morality" in ethics, Immanuel Kant. Kant was a German who wrote at the end of the eighteenth century. In ethics, it is Kant who introduces the most distinctive philosophical version of the Golden Rule; it is also Kant, however, who defends the strictest characterization of morality in the history of ethics. His somewhat technical version of the Golden Rule is, "Act so that the maxim (principle) of your action can be willed as universal law". Kant's thesis is a formal version of the demand that morality is essentially universal and that moral principles are universalizable; moral rules always apply to everyone and never refer to just one person or that person's own interests alone. But where most conceptions of morality tend to give equal emphasis to both one's own interests and the interests of others (as in the standard formulations of the Golden Rule), Kant separates self-interest and morality completely; indeed, insofar as an act is based on "inclinations" of any kind (whether personal desires or sympathy for the other fellow), that act is not called "morally worthy". Morality, he says, is a law unto itself, "categorical" and independent of all personal interests and inclinations. Accordingly, Kant analyzes morality in terms of what he calls the "categorical imperative". An imperative, of course, is simply a command; morality for Kant consists of rules. "Categorical" is a strong way of insisting on the absolute nature of moral rules. According to Kant, morality is thoroughly objective, a product of reason ("practical reason"). A moral principle has nothing to do with personal interest or the particular circumstances of the case. It is thoroughly disin-

terested, in other words, and it is also what Kant calls "a priori", or "prior to" any particular cases or moral judgments we might make. It is in Kant's ethics, in other words, that the four basic features of morality are brought together into a singularly powerful conception of morality. Many philosophers and readers have challenged this conception as too narrow, as too impersonal, even as "heartless", and many others have come to Kant's defense and argued more flexible, less dogmatic interpretations of his ethics. But even in its most rigid expression, Kant's model of morality is so systematic and persuasive that it is impossible to study ethics without coming to grips with it. Indeed, there are ethicists who would say that the study of ethics today is a study of variations and objections to the theory set out by Kant some two hundred years ago. Still others would say that the heart of contemporary ethics is the rejection of this same moral theory.

Ethics, Ethos and Morality: The Problem of Relativism

To understand the ethos and the ethics of various peoples is one of the aims of the science of anthropology. Ethics, however, is something more than this. For example, as the great French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss commented in a 1970 interview:

> "When I witness certain decisions or modes of behavior in my own society, I am filled with indignation and disgust, whereas if I observe similar behavior in a so-called primitive society, I make no attempt at a value judgment. I try to understand it."

Philosophers often distinguish between *descriptive* statements and *prescriptive* statements; the former tell us what the facts are, but the latter tell us what *ought* to be. It is one thing to describe what people do and what they value; it is something more to enter into their lives and tell them what they ought to do and value. In anthropology, we can and should be content with description. In ethics, however, our descriptions are always mixed with prescriptions, for we are not merely trying to understand ourselves. We are also trying to live well and do what is right to do.

Ethics is not a descriptive science but an active participation in a set of values, a way of life. But as we have already noted the notion of "a way of life" leaves open the question whether some ways of life (human sacrifice, military aggression for the fun of it) might be morally wrong. Morality, as characterized in the preceding section, is universal and not just one set of values among others. Moral rules, accordingly, get applied not just to one's own ethos, but to all others as well. When European explorers found out that the natives of the New World practiced human sacrifice, they did not simply note it as an anthropological curiosity; they were horrified (even as the Inquisition was systematically killing people in Europe in the name of Christianity). When Northerners visited the Southern states during the years preceding the Civil War, they did not see slavery as a quaint custom or a

local necessity; they viewed it as the grossest immorality and a pretext for war. When some rural German philosophers visited the sweatshops of London and Manchester at the beginning of the industrial revolution, they were indignant, and they started fomenting a revolution of a very different kind. Karl Marx was one of them, and, not surprisingly, he formulated his revolutionary manifesto in the universal vocabulary of morality and justice, not just in economic terms.

Moral rules are more than mores and customs because they claim to outline the conditions which *any* society must fulfill, applicable to everyone everywhere. The moral prohibition on incest, according to some influential anthropologists and biologists, is not only a universal moral rule but built right into our genes as well. (Partial evidence for this is the prevalence of incest taboos among most animal species, although such inferences from other species to human morality are always to be made with extreme caution). The moral rule that "thou shalt not steal" seems to be not just a custom common to many societies but the necessary condition for there being any secure sense of ownership at all. The moral rule that it is wrong to lie seems to be the precondition of anyone's ever believing anyone else. Imagine visiting a city, for example, where most of the directions you receive are lies, as the natives mischievously send you off in this direction and that. After a short time, you will refuse to listen to any directions at all, knowing the odds against their being correct. A society can exist with *some* lying, of course, but it is impossible to imagine a society in which lies would be more than occasional deceptions, presupposing that most people most of the time tell the truth.

Moral rules are considered to be basic rules because they outline the conditions for the very existence of society. Certain moral rules may be of special importance in particular societies. For example, cheating and plagiarism are considered moral transgressions in a college community because they undermine the conditions for a truly competitive, creative community. Violating a contract and refusing to pay one's bills are considered especially serious violations in business because such acts threaten the very existence of the business community. Some moral rules seem to be of special importance in virtually every society: sexual mores and family relationships, for example, have a profound importance in almost every culture, insofar as having babies and raising them is obviously essential to the continuation of the culture.

Although morals are basic to the existence of a society, there is clearly at least a shift if not a dramatic change in morals depending on changing social and economic conditions. For instance, the morality of having children changes dramatically in times of serious overpopulation or underpopulation. Whenever the population seems to be increasing to the breaking point, many people insist that it is "immoral" to have more than one or two children, even when a family can easily afford them. In societies eager to increase their population on the other hand, *not* having children is typically considered a moral failing. (In underpopulated ancient Rome, for example, pregnancy was so encouraged that there was not even a word for "contraception" [ironically, a term derived from Latin roots]). Indeed, there are overpopulated societies in which even murder is taken less seriously, and the death

of hundreds of people from disease and starvation is considered merely a normal part of daily life. Or, to take a more agreeable example: In a society in which there is much to be accomplished (for instance, in colonial America), work becomes a virtue – even an "ethic" unto itself. Just lying back and enjoying life, the "virtue" of some aristocratic and leisurely societies, is recast as "laziness", a vice.

These variations in morals from society to society have naturally troubled moralists and ethical philosophers who would like to find a single, universal set of standards which lies at the basis of all societies. Some ethicists avoid this problem by restricting their attention to the moral rules and the logic of moral thinking just in their own society, without even attempting to pass judgment on societies other than their own. Other ethicists consider the variations on a single set of moral rules which are universal. Consider, for example, the various senses of "stealing". Aristotle and much of medieval society considered the taking of profits in business transactions a mode of stealing, and Marxist societies regard the very institution of private property as a form of theft. ("Property is theft", wrote a nineteenthcentury French socialist named Proudhon, who was quoted by Marx). On Wall Street, it is just another day's business to take an entire company away from its unwilling owners (an "unfriendly acquisition"), so long as the buyer is willing to pay for 51 percent of the stock and an expensive team of lawyers and strategists. What counts as 'stealing' is often determined by context. In baseball, running unexpectedly from one canvas sack to another counts as "stealing a base", but this is a legitimate part of the game. (Stealing a base by actually picking up one of those sacks and running off the field with it, however, is not part of the game and thus illegitimate). In the face of very different views of what might be called "stealing", it would not seem easy to isolate some underlying if very complicated universal principle, summarized simply and without qualification as "thou shalt not steal", which applies to medieval life and Marxism as well as Wall Street and baseball. But one could argue, for instance, that all of these variations are but special instances of the general rule, "do not take that to which you are not entitled". Of course, one would then, in any particular application of the rule, have to specify what warrants "entitlement". Aristotle accepted the idea of private property and the desirability of wealth but rejected the legitimacy of exchange for profit. Marx rejected the institution of private ownership and so saw all accumulation of wealth as theft. Stealing a base is a legitimate play in baseball but disrupting the field by taking the sack is not. So although what counts as stealing may vary from context to context, the underlying moral prohibition remains the same. But then again, could it be that this underlying principle is trivial – saying only that "wrongful taking is wrong"?

There are ethicists, however, called relativists, who reject this idea that there are universal moral principles, with or without local variations and contextual qualifications. Relativists argue that morality is indeed *relative* to an ethos and limited to that ethos. "What is moral in India can get a man hanged in France", wrote one eighteenth-century relativist, his conclusion being that morals are nothing but the local customs of a particular community. This conclusion might not

upset us, if it meant only that certain customs and mores – eating habits and attitudes toward pets, for example – were different in different societies. Nor would it be especially troublesome if it were only a way of reminding us that *particular* moral rules and actions differ from place to place – whether charging high interest rates counts as "stealing" or whether early abortion counts as "murder". What is upsetting is the idea that cold-blooded murder or slavery might be moral, in feudal Japan or ancient Greece, for example, and that we have no right whatever to condemn them.

Relativism in its extreme form claims that there is much more than just superficial differences among societies. It insists that the most basic rules of morality are different too, that not only what counts as murder, for example, but even murder itself has different moral status in different societies. For example, in some cultures, religious sacrifices, such as Agamemnon's slaughter of his daughter and the Aztec annual vivisectionist rituals, were considered legitimate forms of killing. Trying to bridge the cross-cultural gap, one might say that it is not a murder in such cases because there was *some reason* for the killing, namely, a religious reason. But this limp suggestion would eliminate as murder virtually all cases of killing except involuntary manslaughter (which is not murder) and the very rare cases of intentional murder without any (conscious) reason at all. Again, one might make the purely verbal point that "murder" by definition means "wrongful killing", and thus *all* murder is (necessarily) wrong, but this just moves the question back one step to "killing", and whether killing is always considered wrong. Relativism, consequently, continues to be one of the most pressing problems in ethics, and it will follow us like a shadow through many of the discussions in this book. A society's ethos is partially defined and circumscribed by its morals, but does the ethos alone define and circumscribe morals? Is morality, like etiquette and entertainment, just the product of a particular society, or does it underlie the *ethè* of all societies as their basic foundation? Are we justified in extending our moral principles to people across the world? Or is this, too, just another example of "imperialism", the unwanted imposition of one culture's tastes and standards upon another which itself is considered, by many people, to be morally wrong?

Egoism and Altruism

Just as some philosophers have been suspicious that what we call "morality" may be only the projection of our own ethics onto other people, many philosophers and a great many other people (e.g. most economists) have suspected (or presumed) that what moves people to act is virtually never morality or the interests of other people (except, perhaps, their closest kin) but rather *one's own* interests, which may or may not coincide with the moral rules. Of course, such behavior in one's own interest need not be crude or inconsiderate, and it need not even serve one's own interests "in the short run". Indeed, the mark of smart or "enlightened" self-interest or what we call *prudence* is precisely the wisdom to be considerate and