

Eighth Edition



The Moral of the Story

An Introduction to Ethics

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Nina Rosenstand

The Moral of the Story

AN INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

Eighth Edition

NINA ROSENSTAND

San Diego Mesa College





THE MORAL OF THE STORY: AN INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS, EIGHTH EDITION

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For Craig and my parents

Immorality may be fun, but it isn't fun enough to take the place of 100 percent virtue and three square meals a day.

—*Design for Living*

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Preface

Like the previous editions of *The Moral of the Story*, the eighth edition is a combination of classical questions in ethical theory and contemporary issues. The general concept remains the same: that discussions about moral issues can be facilitated using stories as examples, as a form of ethics lab where solutions can be tried out under controlled conditions. The book is written primarily for such college courses as Introduction to Ethics; Moral Philosophy; and Introduction to Philosophy: Values. Many textbooks in value theory or ethics choose to focus on problems of social importance, such as abortion, euthanasia, and capital punishment. This book reflects my own teaching experience that it is better for students to be introduced to basic ethical theory before they are plunged into discussions involving moral judgments. Consequently, *The Moral of the Story* provides an overview of influential classical and contemporary approaches to ethical theory. However, without practical application of the theories, there can be no complete understanding of the problems raised, so each chapter includes examples that illustrate and explore the issues. As in previous editions, each chapter concludes with a section of examples—summaries and excerpts—taken from the world of fiction, novels and films in particular.

Within the last few decades, narrative theory has carved out a niche in American and European philosophy as well as in other academic disciplines. It is no longer unusual for ethicists and other thinkers to include works of fiction in their courses as well as in their professional papers, not only as examples of problem solving, but also as illustrations of an epistemological phenomenon: Humans are, in Alasdair MacIntyre's words, storytelling animals, and we humans seem to choose the narrative form as our favorite way to structure meaning as we attempt to make sense of our reality. The narrative trend is making itself felt in other fields as well: The medical profession is looking to stories that teach about doctor-patient relationships; psychotherapists recommend that patients watch films to achieve an understanding of their own situation, and have patients write stories with themselves as the lead character. The court system is making use of films and novels to reach young people in trouble with the law. The U.S. military is partnering up with authors to anticipate possible scenarios for future assaults on American interests. NASA is teaming up with science fiction writers and Hollywood in an attempt to once again make space exploration exciting for new generations of readers, and judging from the success of recent films, that approach is working. And neuroscientists tell us that we understand the world by superimposing narrative order on the chaos we experience. It seems that new fields are constantly being added to the list of professions that are discovering, or rediscovering, the potential of stories.

Organization

Like the previous editions, the eighth edition of *The Moral of the Story* is divided into three major sections. Part 1 introduces the topic of ethics and places the phenomenon of storytelling within the context of moral education and discussion. Part 2 examines the conduct theories of ethical relativism, psychological and ethical egoism, altruism, utilitarianism, and Kantian deontology, and explores the concepts of personhood, rights, and justice. Part 3 focuses on the subject of virtue theory and contains chapters on Socrates and Plato, Aristotle, contemporary virtue theories in America, theories of authenticity in the Continental tradition, and gender theory. The virtues of courage, compassion, and gratitude are examined in detail, and the book concludes with a more detailed discussion of a broad selection of moral issues, applying theories introduced in previous chapters. Each chapter concludes with a set of study questions, a section of Primary Readings with excerpts from classical and contemporary texts, and a section of Narratives, a collection of stories that illustrate the moral issues raised in the chapter. The Primary Readings are selected for their value as discussion topics; they don't necessarily reflect my own views, and I have made no attempt to select readings that cover all possible angles, because of space limitations. The Narratives will be described in more detail below.

Major Changes to the Eighth Edition

Throughout the eighth edition all examples and discussions reflecting moral and social issues in the news have been updated wherever an update seemed reasonable. In addition, key words and names have been either italicized or changed to bold type for an easy overview, all depending on the context. Major changes to the eighth edition include the following: as with every new edition, **Chapter One** has been thoroughly revised, with a new introduction, reflecting the turbulent times we live in. Stephen Pinker's famous theory of times getting better is juxtaposed with John Gray's more pessimistic vision. The section "Good and Evil" has been updated and expanded to examine current stories of egregiously evil behavior. Finally, the Narratives section now includes a summary and excerpt of the famous short story "The Lottery."

Chapter Two has been updated with current examples of films and television shows illustrating moral problems, including *Fargo* and *True Detective*. New boxes feature the Zombie phenomenon in entertainment, virtual reality and narrative video games, and the moral complexities of the book/HBO series *Game of Thrones*.

Chapter Three has an updated discussion of the female genital mutilation issue, and updates of other current issues.

Chapter Four expands upon the concept of "heroes" to explore the actions of individuals giving up their lives to save students and co-workers in mass shootings and acts of terrorism. In addition, the Narratives section now includes the Swedish film *Force Majeure* which starts out as a family film and spirals downward into a study of fundamental selfishness.

Chapter Five has a new box on the concept of "consequences," and another on the movie *The Purge* and its take on the hedonistic calculus. In the Narratives

section, the film *Outbreak* has been reinstated from previous editions due to the relevancy of its subject matter, and the recent film *Contagion* has been added as a companion story.

Chapter Six has an expanded section on animal cognition, and the Narratives section now includes the graphic novel (and film) *Watchmen*.

Chapter Seven has been thoroughly updated with discussions about cloning and personhood, a reference to the recent shootings, both by and of police officers, a new box exploring the moral implications of creating robots, and an update on new views on restorative justice. The Narratives section has had the classic science fiction film *Blade Runner* reinstated, and the new film *Ex Machina* has been added as a companion piece.

Chapter Eight has a new box on American/Canadian Indian values successfully promoted by an imposter, Archie Grey Owl.

Chapter Nine has a new section on Intelligent Design, as well as the complete list of Aristotle's original virtues and vices.

Chapter Ten has a new box dedicated to a brief discussion of hard determinism, free will, and compatibilism. In addition, the Levinas section has been expanded with a discussion of the European refugee crisis seen from the point of view of Levinas's theory of the Other.

Chapter Eleven has been updated with new examples of courageous behavior, related to terror attacks and school shootings. The classic Japanese novel *Kokoro* has been added to the Narratives section.

Chapter Twelve has an update on gender-neutral language, as well as an update on the changes in military policies allowing women in combat. In addition, the story of Hypatia has been added, and the boxes on conservative feminism, the princess phenomenon, as well as same-sex marriage have been updated.

Chapter Thirteen has several thoroughly revised sections, including new perspectives on euthanasia, and updates on media ethics issues. A new box in the Business Ethics section explores the origin of the 2008 financial crisis seen through the film *The Big Short*, and another new box discusses the phenomenon of personal branding. The section on Just War has a new box focusing on the war in Iraq. The section on Environmental Ethics has been updated and the Death Penalty section has been revised with new examples and data. In the section on Telling One's Life as a Story, a box from the previous edition's Chapter Ten on personal identity has found a better home. The Primary Readings now include an excerpt from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's presentation of the FSMA (FDA Food Safety Modernization Act) from 2011, an excerpt from Marc Bekoff and Jessica Pierce's *Wild Justice*, and a column by Rachel Gandy on Justice Breyer's opinion on the death penalty. New narratives include the Academy Award-winning film *Spotlight* and the acclaimed HBO series *True Detective*, Season 1.

I would like to mention an issue that I myself am not too happy about: the field of textbook publishing is changing, and some changes have impacted this 8th edition of *The Moral of the Story*. Those readers who have used this book through several editions will notice some changes in the Primary Readings and Narratives sections: Some texts have disappeared, or have been replaced with public-domain translations,

paraphrased summaries and short excerpts. This decision was necessary, due to the fact that permissions to include lengthy text excerpts in textbooks have become much harder or downright impossible to obtain, and I had no choice but to exclude some texts despite them being a staple in the book for many editions. In addition, I've had to abandon the inclusion of several new, planned primary readings, such as an excerpt from Mary Midgley's "Mythology of Selfishness." As a compromise I have chosen to maintain the presence of such texts in the book by placing detailed descriptions and short excerpts into the chapter text itself, or in the case of narratives (particularly the novels), paraphrasing the stories and keeping brief excerpts of an essential paragraph or two allowed under the public domain notion. I hope I have done those texts justice.

Using the Narratives

The Narratives have been chosen from a wide variety of sources ranging from epic prose, poems, and novels to films, and one graphic novel. I wish to emphasize that from a literary and artistic point of view, summaries and excerpts do not do the originals justice; a story worth experiencing, be it a novel, short story, or film, can't be reduced to a mere plot outline or fragment and still retain all of its essence. As Martha Nussbaum says, the form is an inherent part of the story content. Usually, there is more to the story than the bare bones of a moral problem, and in writing these summaries I have had to disregard much of the richness of story and character development. Nevertheless, I have chosen the summary or excerpt format in order to discuss a number of different stories and genres as they relate to specific issues in ethics. Because I believe it is important to show that there is a cross-cultural, historic tradition of exploring moral problems through telling a story, I have opted for a broad selection of Narratives. Each chapter has several Narratives, and some additional narratives—or narratives from previous editions—now appear in boxes within the chapter text, but it is not my intention that the instructor should feel obligated to cover all of them in one course; rather, they should be regarded as options that can be alternated from semester to semester—a method I like to use myself for the sake of variety. There are, of course, other ways than summaries in which stories and ethical theory can be brought together; one might, for instance, select one or two short stories or films in their original format for class discussion, or make them available to the students for extra credit. I hope that instructors will indeed select a few stories—novels, short stories, or films—for their classes to experience firsthand. However, the Narratives are written so that firsthand experience should not be necessary to a discussion of the problem presented by the story. The summaries and excerpts give readers just enough information to enable them to discuss the moral problem presented. I hope that some readers will become inspired to seek out the originals on their own. In most cases the ending is important to the moral significance of a story, and whenever that is the case, I include that ending. In cases where the ending is not significant to the moral drama, I have done my best to avoid giving it away because I don't want to be a spoiler.

Because space is limited, I have not been able to include more than a sampling of stories, and I readily admit that my choices are subjective ones; I personally find

them interesting as illustrations and effective in a classroom context where students come from many different cultural backgrounds. Because I am a naturalized U.S. citizen, originally a native of Denmark, I have chosen to include a few references to the Scandinavian literary and film tradition. I am fully aware that others might choose other stories or even choose different ethical problems to illustrate, and I am grateful to the many users of the previous seven editions, instructors as well as students, who have let me know about their favorite stories and how they thought this selection of stories might be expanded and improved. The new Narratives reflect some of those suggestions.

Some students (and instructors) may be disappointed that this edition has no narratives from video games. I hear from students and colleagues that video games are increasingly focused on elaborate narratives rather than merely accumulating points and killing enemy entities, and I know from colleagues that some narrative video games now offer interesting ways of experiencing moral problems and decision-making, even involving scenarios of emotional and ethical complexity. However, since I have no experience with actually playing such games (my video gaming experience ended some time in the 1990s), I have not included any games in the Narratives sections.

As was the case with previous revisions, I have had to make some difficult choices: To keep the cost of the book down, I have had to cut materials from previous editions to make room for new readings, updates, and narratives. This is never easy, because many of the older readings and stories are favorites of mine, and I am well aware that they may also be the favorites of instructors using this book, and important elements in well-functioning syllabi. Fortunately, in this electronic age we can include new materials without losing all of the older elements. The Connect site (see description below) will include a number of narratives from previous editions, such as *The Invention of Lying*, *Eat Drink Man Woman*, *Return to Paradise*, *Match Point*, *Dead Man Walking*, *Do the Right Thing*, and *Thelma and Louise* for easy access and downloading by instructors. As in previous editions, I emphasize that I wholeheartedly welcome e-mails from students as well as instructors who use this book, with relevant comments and suggestions for new stories as well as additional philosophical perspectives: nrosenst@sdccd.edu.



The Eighth edition of *The Moral of the Story*, is now available online with Connect, McGraw-Hill Education's integrated assignment and assessment platform. Connect also offers SmartBook for the new edition, which is the first adaptive reading experience proven to improve grades and help students study more effectively. All of the title's website and ancillary content is also available through Connect, including:

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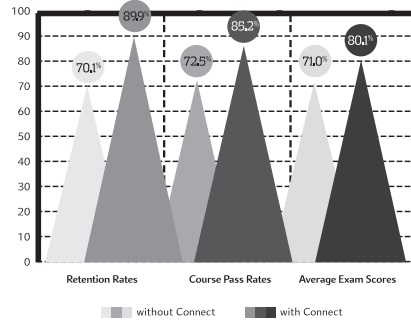
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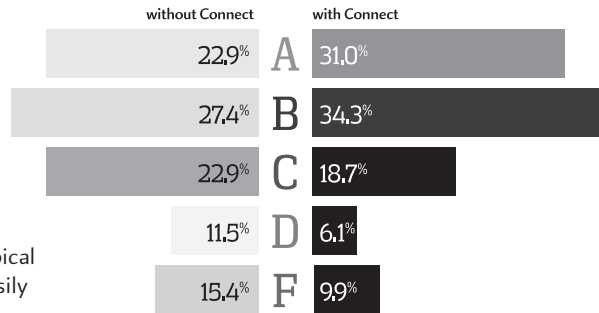
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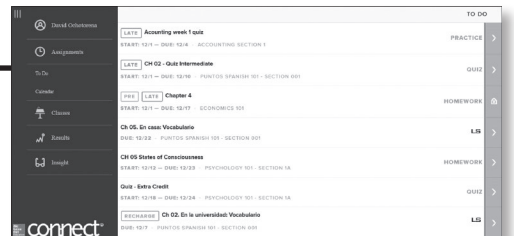
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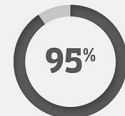
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Chapter One

Thinking About Values

Living in Interesting Times

Sometimes we hear about an old Chinese saying, *May you live in interesting times*, and, according to tradition, it is meant as a curse, not a benign wish. As a matter of fact, there doesn't seem to actually be such an ancient Chinese expression; the one that comes closest seems to be 1600 century Chinese writer Feng Menlong's opinion that it is "Better to be a dog in a peaceful time than a human in a chaotic world," and the "interesting times" expression seems to have been introduced by Western writers in the 1930s. But whether or not it really is an ancient Chinese curse, or an idea concocted by sarcastic Westerners and attributed to Chinese wisdom, it strikes a chord in many hearts these days. As much as we in the Western modern world have been used to thinking that an exciting life is a good life, there is an ancient cross-cultural wisdom present in the saying, echoed in famous French seventeenth century philosopher René Descartes's personal motto, *Bene vixit qui bene latuit*, "One lives well who hides well": a quiet life, safe from turmoil and violent death, has been the dream of many a human being who has fled destruction and persecution, or kept a low profile hoping that the tide of violence might pass them by. And here we are, in our various cities and regions of the West and around the world, living two kinds of lives these days, our normal lives with their normal hopes for our families, our health and our jobs, and a New Normal life where we are constantly reminded that we are vulnerable, to a degree that few of us had imagined only a few decades ago. At the global level we are experiencing climate turmoil that questions our previous models of predictability (in Chapter 13 you can read more about the debate over climate change); in addition, people from some parts of the world are on the move, changing demographics and economies in the places they migrate to, on a scale not seen since before World War II. Some flee their war- and terror-ridden countries. Others seek a better life, financially, for themselves and their families, and yet others, it would seem, are set on bringing their brand of terror with them to new venues. And locally, terror massacres and school shootings are reminders that "hiding well" is no guarantee that sudden disaster will pass you by. All this unpredictability takes its toll; even people from cultures that have previously registered high on the "happiness" scale are registering lower than before. We are worried about tomorrow, overall. Some people predict that we in the next half-century may be facing challenges, environmental as well as financial and political, never seen before in recorded human history.

And yet: Human beings are amazingly resilient. Humans have been through plagues, famine, natural disasters, and wholesale abuse by fellow human beings. In other words, we have *always* lived in “interesting times.” And perhaps our current era is actually even less “interesting” than earlier centuries. As American-Canadian cognitive scientist and linguist Steven Pinker stresses, statistically we live in far less violent times now than for instance the Middle Ages. In *The Better Angles of Our Nature* (2011) Pinker says,

“We now know that native peoples, whose lives are so romanticized in today’s children’s books, had rates of death from warfare that were greater than those of our world wars. The romantic visions of medieval Europe omit the exquisitely crafted instruments of torture and are innocent of the thirtyfold greater risk of murder in those times. The centuries for which people are nostalgic were times in which the wife of an adulterer could have her nose cut off, children as young as eight could be hanged for property crimes, a prisoner’s family could be charged for easement of irons, a witch could be sawn in half, and a sailor could be flogged to a pulp. The moral commonplaces of our age, such as that slavery, war, and torture are wrong, would have been seen as saccharine sentimentality, and our notion of universal human rights almost incoherent. . . . The forces of modernity—reason, science, humanism, individual rights—have not, of course, pushed steadily in one direction; nor will they ever bring about a utopia or end the frictions and hurts that come with being human. But on top of all the benefits that modernity has brought us in health, experience, and knowledge, we can add its role in the reduction of violence.”

So are we moving toward a kinder, gentler, more peaceful world, because we, as Pinker thinks, are paying more attention to the voice of reason and common sense? An opposing view has been voiced by British political philosopher John Gray who finds Pinker’s optimism naive. For Gray, civilization is a fragile entity. In “Steven Pinker is wrong about violence and war” Gray says, “Improvements in civilization are real enough, but they come and go. While knowledge and invention may grow cumulatively and at an accelerating rate, advances in ethics and politics are erratic, discontinuous and easily lost. Amid the general drift, cycles can be discerned: peace and freedom alternate with war and tyranny, eras of increasing wealth with periods of economic collapse. Instead of becoming ever stronger and more widely spread, civilization remains inherently fragile and regularly succumbs to barbarism.” So who is right? Are we teetering on the brink of some kind of cultural collapse, or are we just *in medias res* (in the middle of things), looking at chaotic life from the inside, unable to see the bigger and fairly reassuring picture?

As I frequently mention to my students, and I will pass it on to you, the reader, the future envisioned in overall positive terms by Pinker and in negative terms by Gray is, in many ways, in your hands. You may not have the actual power to mold the future, but you will have the power to help inspire and even mold reactions of fellow human beings to whatever challenges are waiting for us, up ahead in the stream of time, through social media, and whatever other kind of media we may have in the future. Being forearmed with knowledge, not only of the past, but with

the *values* of both past and present, will help you in your decision-making. And so we embark on this journey into *The Moral of the Story*, examining moral value systems of primarily the Western culture in contemporary and modern times as well as past centuries—because each new idea is generally a reaction to older ideas that have somehow become inadequate. The book, however, is not a chronological journey. It moves through modern moral problems, to equivalents in the past, and back to contemporary scenarios.

The fact is that we all encounter issues involving moral values on an everyday basis; sometimes they involve small decisions, sometimes large ones. Some everyday issues that are in the news are questions about **Internet file sharing**/copying/downloading of copyrighted material. Some find it is rightfully illegal, while others find it to be completely acceptable and even a morally decent thing—sharing new ideas with others. Another issue that you may have been engaged in discussing is the ethics of **texting and Facebook communication**, and what exactly is an appropriate level of intimacy and sharing of information if it risks getting into the wrong hands? And what is the kind of information we can, in all decency, text to each other—Is it acceptable to break up through a text message? Sext—send sexy pictures taken with or without the portrayed person’s permission? Share gossip? All these questions involve an underlying code of ethics. So, too, do the major moral issues we as a society are struggling with: Some of the big questions and even conflicts we have dealt with during the first decade of this century have involved the **right to marry** whomever you choose, including a person of your own gender; the question of the appropriate **response to terrorism** (through the civil courts, or military actions and tribunals); the use of **torture in interrogations** of presumed terrorists; the right to have access to **euthanasia**; the continued question about the moral status of **abortion** (both of these topics are featured in Chapter 13); the periodically resurfacing discussion about the right to **gun ownership**; the moral status of **pets** as property or family members; and other such issues that involve both moral and legal perspectives. This book will deal with some of those issues, but perhaps more important, it will deal with the values underlying those issues—the moral theories explaining those values. Later in this chapter we look at the terms of *values*, *morals*, and *ethics*. Some questions involving values focus on **how we ought to behave** vis-à-vis other human beings; any moral theory that involves a focus on action, on *what to do*, is known as an *ethic of conduct*, and we will look at various theories of ethics of conduct from Chapter 3 through Chapter 7. However, there is a different kind of moral philosophy that focuses on **developing a good character**, on *how to be*, generally referred to as *virtue ethics*, and that is our topic for Chapters 8 through 11. Of the remaining chapters, this chapter and Chapter 2 explore the current spectrum of moral discussions and the influence of storytelling as a tool for both teaching and learning about moral values. Chapter 12 looks at various models of ethics as seen by feminists, and Chapter 13 represents what is known as “applied ethics,” moral philosophies applied to specific cases or scenarios, such as the abortion issue, euthanasia, media ethics, just-war theory, animal rights, and environmental ethics.

For each of the issues mentioned above there is generally a side promoting it and a side arguing against it. We’re used to that kind of debate in a free society,

and you'll see some of those questions discussed in this book, in particular in Chapters 7 and 13. What we have also become used to during the past decades is that our nation seems more divided than in previous decades—what some political commentators have labeled a “50-50 nation.” In election years, particularly in the first decade of the twenty-first century, political opinions divided the country almost in half—at least if there were only two options to choose from, Democratic or Republican. The presidential elections of 2000 and 2016 were particularly close. In 2016 the Republican candidate Donald Trump the clear winner of the electoral votes, while the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton won the popular vote. Even if we have “blue states” and “red states” showing up on the electoral map, there are blue and red areas within each state. This is of course politics, and our main topic is going to be ethics and values, but there is a relevant connection: There is a set of moral values commonly associated with Democratic policies, such as being pro-choice/pro-abortion, increased gun control, pro-gay rights, and scaling back military operations, and another associated with Republican politics generally advocating pro-life/anti-abortion, pro-gun ownership, anti-gay rights, and strong support for the military. A theory has been voiced by several commentators that there seems, at present there seems, to be a drift toward the “left” in the American public, with the gradual acceptance of same-sex marriage, women in combat roles, and concern for intersex equity, but interestingly enough the trend does not include an added support for gun control. These stereotypes don't always hold up, and in addition there is a growing movement of Independents, voters who decline to state a party affiliation on their voter registration form. So it may be misleading to say that the nation is divided down the middle—but it is a clear indication that across this nation we just don't all agree on the details of how one should be a good citizen, other than it is a good thing to have a form of government where the people have the opportunity to vote. So if we're looking for a code of ethics to live by, and even to promote, we should expect that not everyone is going to agree. But what is also commonplace is that we tend to think that those who disagree with us are either stupid, ignorant, or perhaps even evil. The blogosphere is full of such assumptions. And that lends itself to thinking that we, perhaps in fact, are citizens of two cultures within the United States, the culture of liberal values and the culture of conservative values (a pattern known in many other countries with a Western tradition of democracy and right to free speech). Some call it a *culture war*. So here I have a little recommendation—an introduction of a moral value, if you will: For the sake of a good discussion, whether in the classroom, online, or perhaps just as an internal dialogue with yourself, it may be useful not to jump to the immediate conclusion that people who disagree with you are stupid, ignorant, or evil. As we strive to become a nation of successful diversity, we sometimes forget that *moral and political diversity* also deserves a place alongside diversity of gender, race, religion, economic background, sexual orientation, and so forth. In other words, people have a right to have a wide variety of opinions, and some of these opinions are arrived at through honest and conscientious deliberation. We have little chance of being able to talk with one another and even learn from one another if we keep thinking that everybody who doesn't agree with us is automatically wrong or wrongheaded.

On the other hand, an acceptance of the fact that people disagree on moral issues doesn't have to lead to a moral relativism, or an assumption that there is always another side to everything. Despite our moral differences in this culture, most reasonable people are going to agree on some basic values: In my experience, the majority of Americans are in favor of justice and equality, and against murder, child abuse, racism, sexism, slavery, animal torture, and so forth. In Chapter 3 you'll find a discussion of ethical relativism, and in Chapter 11 you'll find a further discussion of the search for common values in a politically diverse culture.

Values, Morals, and Ethics

In its most basic sense, what we value is something we believe is set apart from things that we don't value or that we value less. When do we first begin to value something? As babies, we live in a world that is divided into what we like and what we don't like—a binary world of plus and minus, of yes and no. Some psychoanalysts believe we never really get over this early stage, so that some people simply divide the world into what they like or approve of and what they dislike or disapprove of. However, most of us add to that a justification for our preferences or aversions. And this is where the concept of *moral values* comes in. Having values implies that we have a moral code that we live by, or at least that we tell ourselves we try to live by, a set of beliefs about what constitutes *good conduct and a good character*. Perhaps equally important, having values implies that we have a conception of what *society* should be, such as a promoter of values we consider good, a safety net for when things go wrong, an overseer that punishes bad behavior and rewards good behavior, a caregiver for all our basic needs, or a minimalist organization that protects the people against internal and external enemies but otherwise leaves them alone to pursue their own happiness. In Chapter 7 we examine several of these conceptions of social values.

In the late twentieth century the number of college classes in introductory ethics and value theory swelled. When they hear I teach ethics, people who are unfamiliar with how college classes in the subject are taught say, "Good! Our college students really need that!" That response always makes me pause: What do they think I teach? Right from wrong? Of course, we do have discussions about right and wrong, and we can, from time to time, even reach agreement about some moral responses being *preferable* to other moral responses. If students haven't acquired a sense of values by the time they're in college, I fear it's too late: Psychologists say a child must develop a sense of values *by the age of seven* to become an adult with a conscience. If the child hasn't learned by the second grade that other people can feel pain and pleasure, and that one should try not to harm others, that lesson will probably never be truly learned. Fortunately, that doesn't mean everyone must be taught the *same* moral lessons by the age of seven—as long as we have *some* moral background to draw on later, as a sounding board for further ethical reflections, we can come from morally widely diverse homes and still become morally dependable people. A child growing up in a mobster type of family will certainly have acquired a set of morals by the age of seven—but it isn't necessarily the same set of morals as those acquired by a child in a liberal, secular, humanist family or in a Seventh-Day Adventist family. The point is that all

these children will have their moral center activated and can expand their moral universe. A child who has never been taught *any* moral lessons may be a sociopath of the future, a person who has no comprehension of how other people feel, no empathy. A case that garnered attention recently, and introduced a new concept, “affluenza,” was the 2013 case of Ethan Couch, then 16 years old, whose drunk driving resulted in the deaths of four people. At his trial, a psychologist testified for the defense that growing up in a very affluent, permissive family had not taught him right from wrong. Whether or not this argument was just a lawyer’s clever trick, it highlighted the possibility that we indeed have to be exposed to ideas of right and wrong as children in order to recognize them as significant later in life. And with the attempted flight of Couch and his mother to Mexico in 2015, it seemed clear that Couch’s lack of understanding that one must take responsibility for one’s actions was something that his mother may not have sufficiently understood, either. In 2016 a Texas judge ordered him to serve 2 years in prison, 180 days for each of the four victims.

If having moral values has to do with brain chemistry, and with simple likes and dislikes, why don’t we turn to the disciplines of neuroscience and psychology for an understanding of values? Why is philosophy the discipline that examines the values issue? That question goes to the core of what philosophy is: Neuroscience can tell us about the physical underpinnings of our mental life and possibly whether our mental reactions have a correlation to the world we live in, but as you will see below, it can’t tell us whether our mental processes are socially appropriate or inappropriate, morally justified or unjustified, and so forth. Neuroscience has recently identified areas in the brain where moral decisions involving empathy take place, but that doesn’t mean that neuroscientists can tell us *which* moral decisions are more correct than others. Psychology can tell us only what people believe and possibly why they believe it; it can’t make a statement about whether people are justified in believing it. Philosophy’s job, at least in this context, is to *question* our values; it forces us to provide *reasons*, and preferably good reasons, for giving our moral approval to one type of behavior and disapproving of another. Philosophy asks the fundamental question *Why?*, in all its fields, including the field of value theory/ethics. (Box 1.1 gives an overview of the classic branches within philosophy.) Why do we have the values we have? Why do values make some people give up their comfort, even their lives, for a cause, or for other people’s welfare? Why do some people disregard the values of their society for a chosen cause or for personal gain? Is it ever morally appropriate to think of yourself and not of others? Are there ultimate absolute moral values, or are they a matter of personal or cultural choices? Such fundamental questions can be probed by philosophy in a deeper and more fundamental way than by neuroscience or psychology, and we will explore such questions in the upcoming chapters.

If having values is such an important feature of our life, should elementary schools teach values, then? It may be just a little too late, if indeed a child’s moral sense is developed by the age of seven, but at least there is a chance it might help; and for children whose parents have done a minimal job of teaching them respect for others, school will probably be the only place they’ll learn it. Some elementary schools are developing such programs. Problems occur, however, when schools begin to teach values with which not all parents agree. We live in a multicultural

Box 1.1 THE FOUR CLASSIC BRANCHES OF PHILOSOPHY

In the chapter text, you read that philosophy traditionally asks the question *Why?* This is one of the features that has characterized Western philosophy from its earliest years in Greek antiquity. We generally date Western philosophy from approximately seven hundred years B.C.E./B.C. (“before the common era”/“before Christ”), when some Greek thinkers, such as Thales, Heraclitus, and Parmenides, began to ask questions about what *reality* truly consists of: Is it the way we perceive it through the senses, or is there an underlying true reality that our intellect can understand? Thales believed the underlying reality was water; Heraclitus believed that it was a form of ever-changing energy; and Parmenides saw true reality as being an underlying realm of permanence, elements that don’t change. We call this form of philosophy *metaphysics*; in Chapter 8 you will read a brief introduction to Plato’s famous theory of metaphysics, but otherwise the topic of metaphysics has only indirect bearing on the topic of this book. A few centuries after Thales, the next area of philosophy that manifested itself was *ethics*, with Socrates’ questioning of what is the right way to live (see chapter text). Two generations later the third area of philosophy was introduced, primarily through the writings of Aristotle: *logic*, the establishing of rules for proper thinking as opposed to fallacious thinking. But the fourth area of Western philosophy didn’t really take hold in the minds of thinkers until some two thousand years later, in the seventeenth century, when René Descartes began to seriously explore what the mind can know: *epistemology*, or theory of knowledge. All four branches of philosophy are represented today in school curricula and enjoy vibrant debates within the philosophical community. The only branch to have languished somewhat is metaphysics, since modern science has answered some of its ancient questions: We now know

about the subnuclear reality of quantum mechanics. But a classical question of metaphysics remains unanswered by science to this day: What is the nature of the human mind? Do we have a soul that outlives our bodies, or will our self be extinguished with the demise of our brain?

Until the mid-twentieth century, philosophy was usually taught in the West with the underlying assumption that philosophy as such was, by and large, a Western phenomenon. That rather ethnocentric attitude has changed considerably over the last decades. It is now recognized unequivocally among Western scholars that Asian philosophy has its own rich traditions of exploration of metaphysics and ethics in particular; and some philosophers point out that in a sense, all cultures have metaphysics and ethics, even if they have no body of philosophical literature, because their legends, songs, and religious stories will constitute the culture’s view of reality as well as the moral rules and their justifications. As for logic and epistemology, they are not as frequently encountered in non-Western cultures: Indian philosophy has established its own tradition of logic, but epistemology remains a Western philosophical specialty, according to most Western scholars.

To the four classic branches, philosophy has added a number of specialized fields over the centuries, such as philosophy of art (aesthetics), social philosophy, philosophy of religion, political philosophy, philosophy of sports, philosophy of human nature, philosophy of gender, and philosophy of science. What makes these fields philosophical inquiries is their special approach to their subjects; they investigate not only the nature of art, social issues, religion, politics, and so on, but also the theoretical underpinnings of each field, its hidden assumptions and agendas, and its future moral and social pitfalls and promises.

society, and although some parents might like certain topics to be on the school agenda, others certainly would not. Some parents want their children to have early access to sex education, whereas others consider it unthinkable as a school subject. There is nothing in the concept of values that implies we all have to subscribe to exactly the same ones, no matter how strongly we may feel about our own. So, beyond teaching basic values such as common courtesy, perhaps the best schools can do is make students aware of values and value differences and let students learn to argue effectively for their own values, as well as to question them. Schools, in other words, should focus on *ethics* in addition to *morality*.

So what is the difference between *ethics* and *morality*? *Ethics* comes from Greek (*ethos*, character) and *morality* from Latin (*mores*, character, custom, or habit). Today, in English as well as in many other Western languages, both words refer to some form of proper conduct. Although we, in our everyday lives, don't distinguish clearly between morals and ethics, there is a subtle difference: Some people think the word *morality* has negative connotations, and in fact it does carry two different sets of associations for most of us. The positive ones are guidance, goodness, humanitarianism, and so forth. Among the negative associations are repression, bigotry, persecution—in a word, *moralizing*. Suppose the introductory ethics course on your campus was labeled “Introduction to Morals.” You would, in all likelihood, expect something different from what you would expect from a course called “Introduction to Ethics” or “Introduction to Values.” The word *morality* has a slightly different connotation from that of the terms *ethics* and *values*. That is because *morality* usually refers to *the moral rules we follow*, the values that we have. *Ethics* is generally defined as *theories about those rules*; ethics questions and justifies the rules we live by, and, if ethics can find no rational justification for those rules, it may ask us to abandon them. *Morality* is the stuff our social life is made of—even our personal life—and *ethics* is the ordering, the questioning, the awareness, the investigation of what we believe: Are we justified in believing it? Is it consistent? Should we remain open to other beliefs or not? If we live by a system of moral rules, we may or may not have understood them or even approved of them, but if we have a code of ethics, we signal to the world that we stand by our values, understand them, and are ready to not only act on them but also defend them with words and deeds.

In other words, it is not enough just to have moral rules; we should, as moral, mature persons, be able to justify our viewpoints with ethical arguments or, at the very least, ask ourselves why we feel this way or that about a certain issue. *Ethics*, therefore, is much more than a topic in a curriculum. As moral adults, we are required to think about ethics all the time.

Most people, in fact, do just that, even in their teens, because it is also considered a sign of maturity to question authority, at least to a certain extent. If a very young adult is told to be home at 11 P.M., she or he will usually ask, “Why can't I stay out till midnight?” When we have to make up our minds about whether to study over the weekend or go hiking, we usually try to come up with as many pros and cons as we can. When someone we have put our trust in betrays that trust, we want to know why. All those questions are practical applications of ethics: They question the rules of morality and the breaking of those rules. Although formal training in ethical questions can make us

better at judging moral issues, we are, as adult human beings, already quite experienced just because we already have asked “Why?” a number of times in our lives.

Good and Evil

You have probably heard the “E-word” (evil) recently, in conversation or in the media. And *good* is surely one of the most frequently used words in the English language. But interestingly, for most of the previous century ethicists preferred to use terms such as “morally acceptable and unacceptable,” or “right versus wrong,” rather than good versus evil. That pattern seems to be changing, and we’ll talk about why in this section.

When terrible things happen to ordinary people, including natural disasters as well as calamities of human origin, we frequently hear stories of people who are not only victims of the disaster, but also subsequent victims of human schemes of violence or fraud. But we also hear about people who go out of their way to help others. During the nuclear crisis in Japan following the earthquake and tsunami, what became known as the Fukushima 50 (actually around 300 volunteers) chose to go in and work in the damaged nuclear reactors, in peril of their lives and certainly exposed to high levels of radiation, for the sake of the community. It was clear that they knew the risk, but also that they volunteered because they felt it was the right thing to do for their community. In 2015, three young American males—two service members and a college student—thwarted a terrorist attack on a high-speed passenger train headed for Paris by tackling and subduing the terrorist, risking their lives in the process; during the December 2015 massacre at the Regional Center building in San Bernardino, carried out by a radicalized Islamist husband-and-wife team, fourteen people died. One of those fourteen, Shannon Johnson, died saving one of his co-workers by covering her body with his own, saying “I’ve got you.” In the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007 in Blacksburg, Virginia, thirty-two students and professors were murdered by a student, Seung-Hui Cho, but many more might have died had it not been for Dr. Liviu Livrescu, a 76-year-old semi-retired professor who blocked the door for Cho until all his students could make their escape through the window. In the end Dr. Livrescu couldn’t hold the door any longer, and Cho burst in and killed him, and subsequently killed himself. Such stories (of which you will hear more in Chapter 4 where we will discuss the phenomena of selfishness and altruism) remind us that dreadful things can happen in the blink of an eye, but also that there are extraordinary people who will rise to the occasion and make decisions that may cost them their lives, for the sake of others. That, to most of us, may be the ultimate form of goodness, but the everyday kindness of a helping hand or a considerate remark shouldn’t be discounted, even if the kind person isn’t endangering his or her life.

There is hardly a word with a broader meaning in the English language than *good*—we can talk about food tasting good, test results being good, a feeling being good, but also, of course, of actions being good and persons being good, and we mean something different in all these examples. In Box 1.2 you’ll find a discussion of moral and nonmoral values, and “good” fits right into that discussion: It is a value term because it expresses approval, but it can be an approval that has to do