

CHAPTER

7

Ethical Resources: Traditions and Tools to Develop Ethical Wisdom and Action

THE FOCUS IN THIS CHAPTER IS ON THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- Moral citizenship: thinking
- Moral citizenship: action
- A decision framework

The previous chapter presented and discussed moral citizenship from the perspective of awareness and feeling in regard to ethical issues. Caring and enacting a cause were discussed as important elements of moral citizenship. Theories and ideals that emphasize aspects of caring in moral citizenship were presented. This chapter turns to the elements of thinking and action. As noted in the discussion about the nature of ethics, a reasoning process is necessary to arrive at an ethical solution. The element of thinking provides some ethical perspectives that can enhance the way we evaluate and analyze ethical situations. The element of action provides a discussion about the necessity of movement, of doing something as a result of the thinking process. A decision model that provides questions to consider completes this chapter.

Thinking: Rationality and Respect

Applied ethics is an approach to determine the right course of action, or what we morally ought to do in a particular situation, *all things considered*. Therefore, thinking

about the situation is necessary. One would presume that thinking is easy; after all, thinking is part of daily life. However, there is a danger of not thinking about moral issues (Arendt, 1963). Let us return to Arendt's research on moral thoughtlessness focused on the actions of individuals during the Holocaust. Adolph Eichmann, a Nazi administrator who was responsible for the attempted extermination of the Jews during World War II, was identified as the ideal type of moral thoughtlessness. Eichmann was the ultimate administrator; his major concern was his organizational performance. He was also under severe organizational pressure to enact the wishes of Hitler. Two significant points about thinking are reflected through his actions (Nielson, 1984). First, the organizational environment required Eichmann to obey orders, rather than to pay attention to his personal moral conscience. Second, he was separated from the consequences of his orders and the orders he was following: the extermination of millions of people. Arendt (1963, p. 287) concluded that Eichmann was a "thoughtless" and "banal" man who . . .

To put the matter colloquially, never realized what he was doing. . . . He was not stupid. It was sheer thoughtlessness—something by no means identical with stupidity. . . . [He was] ignorant of everything that was not directly, technically, and bureaucratically connected with his job.

The nature of the bureaucratic form of organization (discussed in Chapter 8), as in Eichmann's case, is just one factor that can have a major impact on leaders' thinking about moral issues. Many internal and external factors can impede thinking, too. Nevertheless, the ability to think about responsibility and consequences is a necessary part of an ethical decision process.

The discussion on thinking as a part of moral citizenship begins with two components of thinking: rationality and respect (see Figure 7.1). Rationality and respect are followed by material that is helpful in an ethical-reasoning process, the premises of decisions. An overview of some ethical theories and principles are offered to organize some of the important ideas and ideals to consider as part of a reasoning process.

Rationality

Two aspects related to thinking ethically—*rationality and respect*—are necessary for the morally responsible decisionmaker (Goodpaster, 1983). *Rationality* is a requirement to make the best ethical decisions; the best decision—the right course of action—is supported by the best reasons (Rachels, 1980). A rationale is an explanation based on a reasoning process, a justification that provides the logic, facts, premises, and supporting information that leads to a particular conclusion. Therefore, rationality pays ". . . careful attention to ends and means, alternatives and consequences, risks and opportunities . . ." (Goodpaster, 1983, p. 7). The facts in ethical and moral dilemmas are complex and multifaceted. The reasoning process helps to establish the facts, to determine what facts are necessary to a particular context or situation, and to apply the relevant ethical premises of the decision to the facts. All of these factors result in a particular moral conclusion. Rationality is self-directed; the leader is motivated to seek

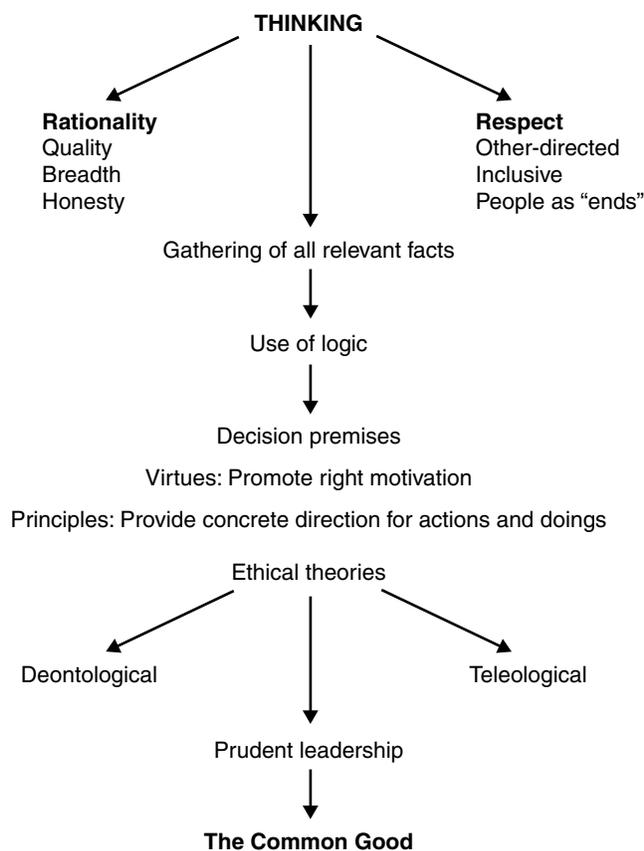


FIGURE 7.1 Thinking as a Reasoning Process

out all of the important and relevant information. Thus, the leader is ethical by intention (Goodpaster, 1983).

Leaders can improve the rationality of their thinking about ethical decisions by considering three criteria: *quality*, *breadth*, and *honesty* (Messick & Bazerman, 1996).

Quality. *Quality* decisions help to avoid ethical mistakes. The quality of decisions are improved by making sure that all of the consequences of potential actions are considered and that accurate assessments of risks are assigned to each alternative solution. Further, Messick and Bazerman (1996, p. 20) argue for the general principle that personal flaws and biases are more apt to influence decisionmaking “. . . when decisions are intuitive, impulsive, or subjective rather than concrete, systematic, and objective.” For example, developing quantitative measures for performance evaluation criteria eliminates the opportunity for subjective, possibly stereotypical, biases that influence

the decisionmaker. In addition, systematic procedures of evaluation provide a process that is viewed by constituents as more fair and objective than impulsive or subjective decisions. Quality decisions are based on “. . . data rather than hunches . . . the best guide comes from close attention to the real world . . . not from memory and intuition” (Messick & Bazerman, 1996, p. 20). This implies a commitment to accurate record keeping and benchmarks that help to monitor the objective measurement of project and/or people performance.

Breadth. The second criterion is *breadth*, an analysis of the full extent of consequences that decisions or policies may produce. The structures a leader uses for analysis can promote openness about the decision process. First, an ethical audit of any decision must include an assessment of all potential stakeholders and the outcomes for all stakeholders. Two possible strategies help to accomplish this. First, open up the decision process by inviting involvement or input from interested or impacted individuals or groups. Another option is to account for the differences that certain stakeholders have in access to information by making a point of including representatives of particular stakeholder groups as a part of the decisionmaking team. Messick and Bazerman (p. 21) recommend “broad consultation” that is based on an “active search to enlist all affected parties into the decision process . . . Openness itself is often a signal to potential opponents that nothing is being hidden and there is nothing to fear.” An active effort to involve all interested stakeholders is part of recognizing the organization’s role in the larger community; thus, the impact of decisions on the community must be assessed and addressed.

Finally, a leader’s awareness and analysis of the future impact of policies and decisions is imperative. The American Indian philosophy that a decision should be evaluated based on the potential impact seven generations from the present is especially salient. An organization’s use of resources or the postponement of financial responsibility places an unethical burden on subsequent generations. Decisions about recycling, paper versus Internet communications, renewable resource and transportation incentives, and so forth are small examples of social responsibility for the organization that go beyond the present.

Honesty. The third criterion is *honesty*. Honesty with others does not imply that all information must be divulged. Messick and Bazerman (1996) acknowledge that some information is confidential or could impede the success of the organization. However, conscience can be a helpful guide to the ethical quality of projects and decisions. Conscience is the litmus test for whether a decision is ethical. “If an idea cannot stand the light of day or the scrutiny of public opinion, then it is probably a bad idea” (Messick & Bazerman, 1996, p. 21). In addition, rather than relying on one’s own reaction to what is ethical, “. . . we should ask whether the people with the most to lose would accept the reasons for our actions. If not, we are probably on thin ice” (Messick & Bazerman, 1996, p. 21). Part of thinking, then, is an honest evaluation of the veracity and openness of any decision process about ethical issues. Along with examination of their own reasoning process, decisionmakers must also be concerned with the other.

Respect

Respect is other directed. Respect includes a consideration of the viewpoints and values of other people (Goodpaster, 1983). Leaders must be able to see beyond their own self-interest, values, subjective opinions and so forth. Immanuel Kant argued that people, especially those who may be affected parties, should be treated as *ends* and not as *means*. Treating others as “ends” provides a “self-imposed constraint” on rationality. As decisionmakers, it is important to realize that moral purposes are only valuable because they reside in a humanity that is shared by people who are likely to be affected by those purposes (Goodpaster, 1983).

Respect is especially salient when people who are different from the decisionmakers are involved in, or affected by, the decisions. For example, individuals and groups with different ethnic or racial background; religious beliefs; sexual orientation and identification; and cultural values, norms, and beliefs may not have their values and perspectives reflected in the reasoning process (Manning, 1997). The process of deciding is intimately connected to the personal, professional, and societal values that have been part of a leader’s socialization; in turn, the values of diverse individuals and groups that are affected should also be included.

These two components—the self-directed component of rationality and the other-directed component of respect—combine to provide a spirit that is the foundation of moral responsibility (Goodpaster, 1983). Rationality also includes meaningful propositions or premises that help to inform the decisionmaker about the nature of ethical situations and dilemmas.

Decision Premises

Ethical and moral philosophy have been evolving since thousands of years before the time of the Greeks and Western civilization. All of the ancient civilizations and most religions have contributed to universal and culturally particular ideals. Some of the early Western writing about ethics is found in the works of Socrates, Protagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and other Greek philosophers. Their ideas about moral and ethical behavior are relevant today. The depth and breadth of their contributions are beyond what could be presented in this book. However, the following provide some examples about philosophical thought and how such ideas and ideals can inform leaders about ethics.

Socrates promoted the method of the dialectic, arguments and counterarguments to add breadth and depth to the understanding of moral knowledge. He argued that, “the only wisdom consists in knowing you know nothing” and that “people do not do evil voluntarily if they know (understand) the good” (Freeman, 2000, p. 39). His thinking reinforces the importance of seeing all sides of an issue and understanding the moral and ethical significance of each side. Also, part of leadership is supporting education for constituents about ethics and how to reason about good and evil, which, in turn, will promote more ethical behavior.

Protagoras put forth one of the first statements of moral relativism, saying that man is the measure of all things (reality is not the same for everyone). Moral relativism promotes the argument that moral standards are always relative; there are different moral standards because of culture, differences in government and society, and differ-

ences through time and history. An awareness of contextual relativism helps pursue the respect discussed earlier, taking into account the experience of the other.

Plato identified the importance of social justice as an imperative for life with one another in community. From Plato's early works, the concept of justice has been developed to include personal rights, the common good, and development and maintenance of principles and rules that provide for society's existence. Leadership in organizations is constantly confronted with dilemmas of justice for consumers, employees, and other constituents. An organization can promote policies and practices that further development of the organizational community as a community that treats each other in a just manner.

Aristotle provided the earliest effort (*Nicomachean Ethics*) (1987) to develop a systematic approach to ethics and the underlying principles. He started with questions about "What is the good life?" and provided early arguments about the nature of virtue. Virtue, for Aristotle, was about the "... excellence of a thing ... and the effective performance of its proper function" (Freeman, 2000, p. 88). Aristotle was interested in "... giving meaning to human action ..." and to the evaluation of that action from an ethical point of view (Freeman, 2000, p. 88). This idea is particularly important for professional leaders; virtuous leaders would be effective in fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of their position and would promote a moral climate for all constituents and the organization.

Aristotle defined virtue as being a good person. He further developed this definition by arguing that, to be a good person and to flourish, one must be able to reason well. In thinking about the development of character, he originated the doctrine of "lying in a mean." That is to say that a person should avoid in one's character the "extremes of excess and of deficiency, both of which hinder performance" (Freeman, 2000, p. 88). For example, the person with self-confidence is lying at the mean, with arrogance being excess and subservience a deficit. Aristotle began the inquiry about virtue, but it has continued to develop as an ethical model ever since. The ethics of virtue focus on the development of virtuous characteristics and traits of people in order to act ethically.

Virtue Ethics

These ethical models rest on certain ideals, or virtues, toward which we should strive and that allow for the full development of our humanity. A virtue is "... a disposition to act, desire, and feel that involves the exercise of judgment and that leads to a recognizable human excellence, an instance of human flourishing" (Freeman, 2000, p. 91). The point of acquiring virtues is not further guidance. It is not to tell us what to do, but to ensure that we will do the right thing willingly, based on the development and manifestation of attitudes, dispositions, or character traits. A person must "be this" rather than "do this," but "being" involves "trying to do" (Frankena, 1973). There is a distinction between doing what is good and being a good person. The *motivation* to do good, rather than choosing a right or correct behavior based on rules or principles, is what is important. For example, a "moral atrocity" is committed "when one acts rightly, but with bad motivations" (Freeman, 2000, p. 89).

Plato and other Greek philosophers developed four cardinal virtues:

- Wisdom
- Courage
- Temperance
- Justice

One cannot be derived from another and all other moral virtues can be derived from these four, or can be shown to be forms of them. Other derivatives of these virtues include honesty, compassion, generosity, fidelity, integrity, fairness, self-control, and prudence.

Leadership ethics are strengthened by virtue-based ethics because the focus is on the responsibility of the person. Dobel (1998) argues that, without this focus, the exercise of power reduces to what Havel called the “innocent power” of the individual actor who becomes an “. . . innocent tool of an ‘innocent’ anonymous power, legitimized by science, cybernetics, ideology, law, abstraction and objectivity—that is, by everything except personal responsibility to human beings as persons and neighbors” (Havel, 1986, pp. 136–158). Virtue ethics promotes the moral responsibility of the leader for actions taken and not taken.

The *principle of virtue* states that what is ethical is what develops moral virtues in us and our communities. Virtues are developed through learning and practice. “Just as the ability to run a marathon develops through much training and practice, so too does our capacity to be fair, to be courageous, or to be compassionate” (Markula Center for Applied Ethics, *Ethics & Virtue*, 2000). In time, virtues become habits. After they are acquired, they become a characteristic of that person. These character traits are developed within the communities where we grow up and to which we belong. Because an individual’s character traits are not developed in isolation, important institutions and groups, such as family, school, church, and other private and public associations influence the virtuous traits that are valued by that community. The values and traits that are encouraged and the community role models that are celebrated affect the kinds of traits that are developed. Similarly, the individuals who reside there shape the values and traits of community (and organization).

Hence, community is at the heart of the virtue approach (Markula Center for Applied Ethics, *Ethics & Virtue*, 2000). The reciprocity of influence between individuals and the community fits for organizations as a community as well. As discussed in Chapter 3, transformational leadership has the capacity to support the development of virtuous traits among constituents, and constituents have the ability to influence the moral culture of the organization. The moral life, then, according to virtue ethics, is a process of trying to determine the kind of people we should be and contributing to the development of character within our communities (and within our organizations).

Virtue ethics, because they are community specific, have a disadvantage in that they can become ethnocentric, which becomes a position from which to exercise intolerance (Kitchener, 1996). Kitchener (1996, p. 4) states, “It is my own suspicion that as many acts of intolerance have been committed in the name of virtue as in the name of principle—from the burning of women as witches in Salem to the murder of abortion physicians in Florida.” Virtue ethics, then, for the individual leader, organization, or community must be balanced with ethical principles and theories, as a way to eval-

uate “. . . both virtues and the actions committed in the name of virtue . . .” (Kitchener, 1996, p. 5). Virtuous character combined with ethical principles and theories provide a wider range of understanding the nature of ethical issues and the balance necessary for deciding what we ought to do.

Ethical Principles

Principles help to bridge the subjective gulf of individual experience reflected through virtues. Frankena (1973) argued that “. . . principles without traits are impotent and traits without principles are blind” (Freeman, 2000, p. 93). Therefore, virtues and principles are complementary. Virtues help promote the right motivation, and principles provide concrete direction and guidance. Moral principles focus primarily on people’s actions and doings. We apply them by asking what these ideas and principles require of us in response to particular dilemmas or circumstances.

Ross (1930) developed *prima facie* obligations that he argued were self-evident. These principles inform about what one should do if there are no other overriding moral considerations:

- Obligation of fidelity to keep promises and to tell the truth
- Obligation to make reparation to people for any injury we wrongfully caused
- Obligation to render services in return for any services rendered to us
- Obligation to assist and not to prevent distribution of happiness (goods, wealth, and resources) in accordance with merit
- Obligation to do whatever good we can for others to made their condition better
- Obligation to improve ourselves of virtue and intelligence
- Obligation not to injure others

These *prima facie* obligations are encompassed by the ethical principles of nonmaleficence, beneficence, fidelity, autonomy, and justice.

Nonmaleficence and beneficence are the principles that prescribe actions of preventing harm and doing good. Frankena (1973) sees beneficence and nonmaleficence as the same principle with a four-part hierarchy: a) do not inflict harm, b) prevent harm, c) remove harm, and d) do good. The hierarchy helps to prioritize behavior, and each one takes precedent over the next. Therefore, doing good is the highest priority. Further, refraining from harm is passive, whereas doing good implies a positive action. Thus, these two principles are at the heart of risk/benefit analysis and professional duty. The process of assessing and disclosing risks and benefits includes an assessment of potential harms that could result, as well as the benefits that may be produced, from a particular decision or action.

Beneficence, or the obligation to do good, is the professional duty to promote good for others. Beneficence can become “a slippery slope” in relation to the question “in whose best interests” (Freeman, 2000, p. 24). Leaders may consider particular actions to be in the best interests of their constituents (employees, clients, or community members) when the constituents have a different perspective or have not been consulted as to their perspective. *Parentalism*, more traditionally called *paternalism*, is the professional decision to act in a constituent’s (client’s) best interest, based on professional expertise and knowledge and against the autonomy or will of the constituent.

Fidelity is the principle that is important to constituents' trust in a leader. Fidelity has to do with faithfulness and a careful observance of duty as a professional (Freeman, 2000). Constituents must be able to trust that the leader will follow through on the performance of obligations. Also, professional leaders must be willing to devote themselves to the service of others and work toward a vision of a higher good.

Autonomy directs us to consider the self-determination of others (Manning & Gaul, 1997). This principle directs decisionmakers to honor each individual's right to autonomous actions and choices, which are not constrained by others. People can be autonomous only if they are self-governing. A person's autonomous choice does not necessarily ensure freedom from harm, or even good judgment. However, the nature of autonomy is that the person is still free to choose as long as the individual is a competent adult. In addition, authenticity is a part of autonomy. Individuals make life and work choices based on what is fitting to their experience, values, beliefs, and characteristics as people. Respecting authenticity requires an ability to consider people individually, that is, who they are as unique persons, rather than lumped into a group or collective.

The issue of autonomy is a frequent challenge for leaders in human services, either in relation to employees or to the autonomy of clients. The use of authority and power over others can impede or prohibit the autonomy of constituents. Employees may have unique characteristics and traditions that are jeopardized by work requirements or expectations. Also, organizational policies and procedures that affect consumers of service and employees, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to refuse treatment, invoke the principle of autonomy and require an understanding of what is necessary to respect autonomy.

Justice. *Justice* has been a consistent ideal in Western civilization since the fundamental principle of justice was defined by Aristotle more than 2,000 years ago (Markula, Justice & Fairness, 2000). Aristotle said that "equals should be treated equally and unequals unequally." In contemporary terms, the principle means that "individuals should be treated the same, unless they differ in ways that are relevant to the situation in which they are involved" (Markula, Justice & Fairness, 2000, p. 2). For example, if two employees have the same job description and do the same work, and there are not relevant differences in the work they are doing, then, in justice, they should receive the same salary. When someone is paid more because of gender (for example, male) or ethnicity (for example, caucasian), there is an injustice—discrimination—because gender and race are not relevant to the work that is performed.

Criteria have been developed that provide a justification for treating people differently, but still justly (Markula, Justice & Fairness, 2000). *Need-based* criteria, championed by Karl Marx, make it possible to give benefits to the poor, those who have a greater *need*, which would not be made available to those who are more affluent. Social welfare benefits are an example of need-based justice. Criteria based on *equality* would mean that each person has an equal share of a benefit, for example, Medicare, or the same amount of annual leave in an organization. The person who arrives first at the company party has the best choice of the food, and the first in line for theatre tickets gets the best seats. Employees who do not perform well are given disciplinary actions that are not distributed to others. Both of these groups have met the criteria of *desert*,

or justice according to *individual effort*. It is generally recognized as fair to reward those who have contributed more, for example, to a particular project or through numerous volunteer hours to help with various projects that support the agency mission. Those people are rewarded with particular resources (for example, monetary, recognition, and so forth) based on their *contributions or merits*.

Social or distributive justice is concerned with fairness; the fairness of how benefits and burdens, good and evil, are distributed. The institutions of society are responsible to make sure resources and burdens are distributed in ways that are fair and just. An underlying assumption is that justice is related to scarcity; there would not be a need for fairness if there were an unlimited amount of benefits accessible by all. Leaders and constituents in organizations are involved in issues of justice in many ways. For example, equitable employment policies (for example, hiring, promotion, performance reviews, and merit increases) ensure fairness in the distribution of benefits available through the organization. Policies, such as grievance, affirmative action, equal employment opportunity, sexual harassment, and so forth, also help to promote fairness in the distribution of benefits and burdens and to provide for due process within the organization. Decisions about the distribution and allocation of resources, often through budget processes, are always concerned with justice issues. Policies about access to services, consumer ability to afford services, and distribution of facilities where services are provided all contain issues relevant to equity and fairness.

Social justice also includes a *social contract* between people. John Rawls (1971) contribution was the concept that “people have the right to make agreements with one another and these agreements are binding on them” whether the agreements are formal (as in a written contract) or informal (as in a promise) (Freeman, 2000, p. 56). The social contract between people is the key to the concept of justice. Thomas Hobbes (1996) conceptualization of the golden rule (Do unto others that which you would have done to you) extends the idea of a social contract. This agreement among people outlines the mutual obligations and expectations. Applying social contracts between people with the golden rule provides an agreement among people that can be entered into willingly, chosen as a moral obligation through mutual consent and agreement, rather than being imposed by society. This approach requires “. . . the ability to see that one cannot pursue one’s own self-interests without taking into consideration the interests of everyone else” (Freeman, 2000, p. 57). Leaders have to consider the impact of their decisions on all of the other constituents of the organization. In addition, establishing the social contract as a foundation for organizational culture helps to promote critical thinking about the nature of mutual obligations among and between all constituents.

Rawls (1971) further developed the idea of a social contract through an imaginary device that individuals can use to uncover moral principles. He suggested imagining a group of rational individuals, a legislative body so to speak, to determine principles to live by that would govern themselves in the future; they would take the the original position. Further, the principles could only be morally justified if agreed to by a group that did not know any of the particular characteristics they would possess in this future society, for example, gender, race, economic status, social position, and so forth. Thus, they were endowed with a veil of ignorance. He argued that first the group would agree to equality, that is, freedom for everyone. “Secondly, they

would protect themselves in case they turned out to be the least advantaged in the society. In doing so they would agree . . . to the principle that allows for differences but also directs society to improve the circumstances of the less advantaged” (Freeman, 2000, p. 58). The original position and the veil of ignorance are metaphors that can be useful in creating ethical organizations. Leaders and constituents can create new ways to think about justice and fairness in the organization by considering the impact of practices and policies on all stakeholders.

Principles provide guidelines for thinking about ethical issues and dilemmas. They introduce particular moral premises into ethical situations and dilemmas. They help delineate the particular moral threats in situations. However, principles do not provide a theoretical approach, or how to consider and analyze the nature of a dilemma and the right resolution or answer.

Ethical Theories

Consider the following activity and think about your own reaction to the situation.

Activity: Imagine that you are on a spelunking expedition. You have entered a cave and traveled deeper into the caverns for several hours. The group has entered a small room with only one entrance, the one used to enter the cavern. The entire group except for the leader has entered. As the leader crawls through the entrance, a cave-in occurs. The way out is blocked by her body, which is covered with tons of rubble. She is alive, determined by a pulse in her wrist, which is sticking out of the rubble. It isn't possible to assess the degree of injury (for example, broken neck, internal injuries, and so forth) and moving her may cause more serious injury or death. Time passes, and no help has arrived. Further, the air in the small room is getting stale, and there is less oxygen to breathe. Would you remove her body, by any means possible, and, in the process, sacrifice her life in order to exit the cavern? Would you decide not to do anything to cause further injury or possibly death? What is the rationale for both responses? Integrate the reasons with the means versus the ends arguments that support the following theories (Abrams, 1989).

Two primary ethical theories have evolved that have as their primary focus two different ways to arrive at doing the right thing. The means used to achieve a particular good is one approach. A focus on what good can be produced, or what harm can be reduced—the end result—is another way to justify what is right. In the previous story, a decision based on *deontological theory* would be focused on the means, or duty. Individuals who approach the dilemma based on their motivation to use moral rules and principles to arrive at a decision would treat the leader, who is blocking the way out, as an end, not as a means to an end (escape). The duty to prevent harm to the leader would require that the group refrain from causing this person further injury or death, even at the risk of losing other lives. In contrast, *teleological theory* would require a calculation of what would provide the best end result. If the object was to save lives,

the leader's life could be sacrificed in order to save the group, the greatest good for the greatest number. The following discussion provides further distinction between these ethical theories.

Deontological: Our Duty to Act Rightly. The word deontological is derived from the Greek root, "deontos," which means "of the obligatory." This approach is based on the philosophy that actions are inherently right or wrong, apart from any consequences to which they might lead (Frankena, 1973). Ethical rules can be formulated and hold under all circumstances because they are inherently right. Further, a person that is motivated by duty is motivated by something beyond their own self-interest, that of universal law. A universal law is something all people ought to live up to whether they want to or not. The motivation, or good will, to act is the respect for obligations that one would be willing to have everyone else act on as well, thus a universal law. Deontologists profess that the means, or certain duties, principles, and rules, must be adhered to in all circumstances, regardless of the end result.

Immanuel Kant made deontological concepts central in an ethical system; morality is accomplished, at least in part, through the consistency and application of rules, principles, and duty. He developed categorical imperatives, unconditional demands that were morally necessary and obligatory under all circumstances.

Two categorical imperatives developed by Kant are useful in many ethical dilemmas: a) Act as if the maxim of your action by your will would become a universal law, and b) Act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of any other, always as an end and never as a means (Kant, 1963). The first imperative requires that principles for ethical action be universal without contradiction. The principle should apply across any situation or dilemma. In addition, the universal directives for action should not conflict by willing one thing for one's self and another thing for others (that is, do unto others as you would have them do unto you). The second imperative argues that people are ends in themselves and should never be treated as means to an end. One is obligated to act only in ways that respect the human dignity and moral rights of all persons. The end justifies the means would never be a justifiable argument for ethical action, according to this imperative.

Teleological: The Greatest Good. Teleological is derived from the Greek root, "teleios," which means, "brought to its end or purpose." This is the classic utilitarian approach. The founder of modern utilitarianism was Jeremy Bentham. John Stuart Mill further developed this approach. Their policy was to seek "the greatest good for the greatest number." Teleologists justify ethical decisions in terms of the consequences of the decision or the ends achieved. A given course of action should not be chosen only because it is inherently good, but because it leads to desired results. The Principle of Utility states that the moral ends to be sought in all we do is the greatest possible balance of good over evil in the world as a whole. The morally right course of action would be the one "... that produces the greatest balance of benefits over harms for everyone affected . . . utilitarianism does not care whether the benefits are produced by lies, manipulation, or coercion" (Markula, *Calculating Consequences*, 2000).

The judgment of what constitutes the greatest good is based on a unitary criteria that is used to evaluate the greatest good or the least harm based on that criteria (for example, economic criteria, such as cost-effectiveness, or assigning value to a personal preference, such as quality of life). The decisionmaker(s) identify various courses of action or choices and then determine all of the possible benefits or harms that would result from each course of action, according to the criteria chosen. Finally, the course of action is chosen according to what provides the greatest benefits after costs have been taken into account. The implication of the teleological approach is that, whatever the good and bad are, they are capable of being measured and balanced against each other in some quantitative or objective fashion.

There are some problems in applying the utilitarian approach (Markula, *Calculating Consequences*, 2000). First, in order to consider the consequences of a particular action to determine whether it is right, you must have knowledge, or access to knowledge, about all of the possible consequences. It is also necessary to attach some sort of value to the benefits and harms that could result. Not all benefits and costs are measurable, for example, the quality of life or the value of human dignity. Further, it is difficult to compare values such as cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness with the value of life or human expression or aesthetic goods. The most serious difficulty with a utilitarian approach is that it does not include a consideration of justice and fairness. The focus on the end result can justify immoral practices because they result in a positive gain for an organization or for a society. The strength of this approach is that it requires concentration on the results of a decision, both immediate and more distant consequences. Utilitarianism also asks the decisionmaker to be impartial in calculating the interests of all stakeholders involved. Thus, self-interest of the decisionmaker cannot be satisfied over the interests of others.

Prudent Leadership

The means and the ends each add a different lens about ethical issues, but linking them is crucial to “prudent leadership” (Dobel, 1998, p. 78). Linking the means and ends in relation to leadership has several dimensions. First, Dobel argues for “finding the right means to attain an end.” Reflect back to Chapter 4, in regard to power, and think about the many forms of influence available to leaders, from persuasion to coercion. The means a leader uses will affect the quality of relationships between the leader and constituents as well as the politics that are set into motion by the action. Second, leaders must evaluate the means and resources used, as well as postponed opportunities, in relationship to the end that is being sought. Are the means necessary proportionate to the resulting good, or is there a disproportionate amount of resources expended in order to arrive at a questionable good result? Third, the means that are used can have a profound effect on the success of the end result. When leaders use questionable tactics or abuse authority and power to achieve a particular end, employees, citizens, and consumers may sabotage or undercut the result because of resentment and anger, “. . . the moral residuals of excessive and immoral methods to attain goals” (Dobel, 1998, p. 78). The use of coercion “. . . looms as the most dangerous means . . .” in relation to legitimacy of an achievement (Dobel, 1998, p. 78). The more

leaders use coercion to attain a goal, the less likely it will be that the goal will be viewed as legitimate or will endure over time.

A Rights Approach

A rights approach to thinking about ethics promotes the philosophy that human beings have certain moral rights, for example, rights to life, liberty, happiness, and well-being; freedom from pain and suffering; and so forth (Fox, 1997). When we ascribe those rights to others as well as ourselves, we are acknowledging the existence of a moral community. A moral community is innately social, as was discussed earlier. The social community is based on interaction of human beings where there is a mutual understanding and recognition of the autonomy and “personhood” of others (Fox, 1997, p. 129). Membership in a moral community requires that each person commits to guarantee other human beings the opportunity for autonomous action, self-determination and expression, and an equal opportunity to actualize their fullest potential, things that a person would also wish for oneself. Therefore, the rights approach acknowledges the fundamental right of each person to be respected and to be perceived as a free and equal person that is capable of making his or her own decisions. The principle states, “An action or policy is morally right only if those persons affected by the decision are not used merely as instruments for advancing some goal, but are fully informed and treated only as they have freely and knowingly consented to be treated” (Markula, 2000, Rights Approach, p. 2).

The rights approach is congruent with transformational leadership theory. The recognition of each constituents’ self-determination and right to self-actualize is similar to the principles of empowerment. The emphasis on disclosure of information and consent processes promotes participation and inclusiveness in resolving ethical dilemmas and issues. The focus on mutual responsibility and commitment to respect the autonomy of others provides for developing a higher level of morality within the organizational culture; the organization is transformed to moral community. The rights approach turns our attention to the moral responsibility of relationships with others. Another approach also recognizes the good of the whole.

The Common Good

In recent years, the news media has consistently reported an increasing preoccupation with self-interest and individualism and an eroding concern for the common good of society. Policy issues range from economic concerns (the widening gap between the poor and the wealthy) to health care (rising costs and decreasing access for those uninsured), with increasing appeals to return to a vision of the common good. The common good “. . . consists primarily of having the social systems, institutions, and environments on which we all depend work in a manner that benefits all people” (Markula, 2000, The Common Good, p. 1). Issues that become part of the common good include health care, safety and security, a protected natural environment, and a healthy economic system. The principle states, “What is ethical is what advances the common good” (Markula, 2000, The Common Good, p. 2).

The common good requires cooperation from many people, because each individual's own good is interconnected with the good of the whole. When too few concern themselves with the good of the whole, it is much more difficult to develop and maintain the institutions that benefit all. Obstacles to working toward the common good are many in a pluralistic society. For example, it is difficult to agree on what should be valued or promoted as the common good with a multitude of voices with different opinions. Where there is agreement, such as affordable health care, there may be differences in the value attached as compared to other goods that are desired, for example, a strong military for security, strengthened education system, and so forth. These factors interfere with a sustained effort to promote a particular common good. In addition, some people do more of their share of sacrifice than others to achieve a particular common good, based on personal motivation and commitment. Finally, the American tradition of individualism and the focus on individual rights can act as a barrier to sacrifice personal goals for the sake of the common good (Markula, 2000, *The Common Good*).

Social work leaders are bound to a commitment to the common good by virtue of the purpose of social work. A commitment to vulnerable populations and meeting their basic human needs has long been associated with the social work profession. Assessing the ethical requirements of the common good in response to ethical dilemmas presents an opportunity to constantly reflect on "what kind of society we want to become and how we are to achieve that society" (Markula, 2000, *The Common Good*, p. 4). In this way, through considering the common good, political and ethical issues are treated together (Rhodes, 1986). The ethical question of what a person ought to do in relation to others becomes a question of how society ought to be. The leader who considers the impact on the common good of every moral issue and ethical decision is thinking globally, but acting locally.

The preceding discussion has been an overview of many different ways to consider the nature of an ethical situation. At some point, however, it is important to take action.

Action

Action is the final component of moral citizenship. Action is a beginning and an ending. An ethical dilemma or quandary is resolved, and, in the process, new ethical insights and concerns are identified. As discussed earlier in this chapter and Chapter 6, action implies application of what is known, what is cared about, or what is reasoned to be the right course of action. Moral values and beliefs are only meaningful when they are transformed into action.

Taking action about an ethical dilemma or issue is the final step in being ethical by intention. Petrick and Quinn (1997, p. 100) note that intention may be at a different level of motivation than execution. However, "the desire to act ethically and to expend the requisite effort to do so makes the character difference in individual and collective moral performance." Ethical intention requires both a cognitive readiness as well as a volitional readiness. Cognitively, we are prepared to act based on the development of personal moral judgment, an understanding of how to think about eth-

ical dilemmas, the organizational climate in relation to ethics, and an understanding of what is required for a future result. Volitional readiness is based on the involvement of the emotions and the level of caring about a particular concern. In addition, developing moral virtues, such as attending to one's conscience, becomes a motivating factor for the volition to act. A leader's moral passion to act on a moral vision provides the motivation to "summon up the will to act" (Petrick & Quinn, 1997, p. 102). The will to act moves leaders and constituents into the implementation phase of an ethical resolution or decision.

Implementation

Implementation of a decision that is the result of a reasoning process is the act of moving from thought to action (Goodpaster, 1983). Moral responsibility is manifested through implementation of some kind of action. The final task is determining how to make things happen. Goodpaster (1983, p. 9) notes that "... as the proverb has it, a certain road is 'paved with good intentions' ... moral responsibility ... includes a measure of seriousness about detail that makes the difference between wishful thinking and actual performance, between 'seeing it' and 'seeing it through.'"

Implementation includes several processes that help to take action. An *understanding of political, natural, and social forces* in the environment of the proposed action is important to have successful action (Goodpaster, 1983). Identifying stakeholders who may resist or lack understanding of the action and then strategizing an approach (for example, providing adequate information/education) can make a difference in rallying support and reducing barriers. Conversely, finding collaborators or advocacy groups to participate in moral action increases the potential power that can be wielded and promotes the probability of success. Using legal and regulatory bodies as potential rationale for the issue can help persuade others that a policy is necessary. For example, appeal processes in managed care organizations became more attractive to owners by identifying potential liability to the agency and the regulatory requirements that would be satisfied through a more ethical policy and procedure.

Perseverance in guiding the decision toward realization is also important. The route toward moral action is complex and not always direct. Leaders have described numerous punitive and resistive practices from others that impede ethical decisions and policies for a variety of reasons (Jackall, 1988; Manning, 1990). As discussed in Chapter 4, persistence and even stubbornness can be useful in developing influence in regard to particular actions. Here, leadership is a critical component.

Acting Civically

The action of moral citizenship is different from acting as a good person. Action as a moral citizen in an institution is political action that flows from the relationship with others; one is acting civically in reaction to an institution's unethical practices or to promote ethical practices (Neilsen, 1984). Civic action places re-

sponsibility on the decisionmaker to act toward the good of the organization and all who make up the community of the organization. Sometimes acting civically places the leader or constituents in loyal opposition with the organization (Tillich, 1952). The leaders take moral action against unethical practices and/or policies, not against the organization, but because of their loyalty to the organization. Ultimately, moral action is in the best interests of various stakeholder groups and the organization as well.

Leaders have special responsibilities to maintain and strengthen community foundations (Dobel, 1998). The civic leader evaluates action, and the effects of actions taken, on the results to the internal organizational community and the external community. Evaluation of ethical actions should be considered a routine component of a decision process. It provides opportunities for identifying any unanticipated consequences and additional moral problems. Routine evaluation helps leaders avoid reinventing the wheel by monitoring continuously the moral and ethical conditions of the organization that result from actions taken.

Consultation, dialogue, and interaction focus the action on the public good, rather than on private and/or personal good. Interaction with others provides the public space to discuss and decide, rather than acting in isolation. When leaders act in isolation, they are more susceptible to explicit and implicit coercion and immoral ideas and behaviors, factors that promote private interests (Arendt, 1963).

The freedom to comment and to give feedback in the organizational context is a critical variable in taking ethical action. In order for a leader or employee to serve as a moral citizen in an organization, there must be protected civil liberties (Arendt, 1963). Leaders and constituents experience great pressure to obey, to belong, and to be successful in their work. The courage to think and judge independently is the basis for acting civically with other managers and employees in order to resist immoral people, behaviors, and phenomena.

Freedom to comment supports two factors that lead to ethical actions and heightened moral sensitivity (Manning, 1990; 1997). First, to comment freely leads to a better quality of ethical action. Leaders and constituents must first interact, persuade, and debate complex moral issues in order to decide the right course of action; the freedom to comment starts a process that is ethical by intention. Individuals, units, and groups are alerted to potential immoral and unethical policies and practices through the feedback from individuals. Organizational practices can be evaluated openly, with a spirit of discovery rather than dread or avoidance. This process helps to reinforce a culture that informs all employees about right and wrong behavior.

Individuals and groups that take moral action, then, have the capacity to transform the organization. Stephen Rose (1995) argues that the soul of the human being carries action in it. Leaders and employees, as moral citizens, "can change history and produce history." The courage to be as oneself and the courage to be a part (of the organization) together make up the elements "... from which action flows" (Tillich, 1952).

Ethical Decision Framework

A framework that provides a guide to thinking about ethical situations can help to identify ethical situations as well as consider the many ramifications. Ethical leadership requires an understanding of complex situations with a myriad of emotional and intellectual data to be organized and applied. The following framework offers a structure to encourage awareness, feeling, thinking, and action in a systematic fashion. This framework is not all-inclusive, nor will it fit for every ethical dilemma. Hopefully, it will help to bring forward a rich reasoning process that is rational, experiential, respectful of self and others, and practical in relation to decisions and actions. This model incorporates material from several different sources (Johnson, 2001; Loewenberg, Dolgoff, & Harrington, 2000; Manning, 1990; 1997; Markula, Center for Applied Ethics, Decision Framework, 2000; Reamer, 1995; Rhodes, 1986).

Awareness: Recognize a Moral Issue

These questions help to recognize and identify the moral and ethical issue(s) (the *what* and the *why*) and begin to delineate the ethical aspects of the issue.

- Is there something wrong personally, interpersonally, organizationally, or socially that could be damaging to employees, consumers, community citizens, or other people? To animals, the environment, the organization, or society?
- Is there something missing that could be beneficial to the constituents mentioned previously, such as animals, the environment, the organization, or society?
- Does the issue go deeper than legal or institutional concerns? What are the implications for people as persons who have dignity, rights, and hopes for a better future?
- Have you defined the problem accurately? What if you stood on the other side of the fence?
- How did this situation occur in the first place?

Feeling: Care About Who Will Be Affected

These questions focus your attention on the well-being of the *other*—the individuals or groups who may be affected by your decisions and/or actions.

- What individuals and groups have an important stake in the outcome? What is at stake for each? Do some have a greater stake because they have a special need (for example, those who are poor or excluded) or because we have special obligations to them? What are those obligations? Are there other important stakeholders in addition to those directly involved? What is at stake for them?
- What values and perspectives are represented through these individuals and groups? What cultural traditions, norms, and beliefs are important to these stakeholders? What are their choices and/or preferences in regard to the issue?

- What is their personal experience in regard to the issue? How does their experience inform you?
- What are your values about the issue? How are your values influencing the way you think about the issue?
- What is your intention in making this decision? How does your intention compare with the likely results?
- What does the issue represent in terms of your moral vision, your cause, and your professional purpose?

Thinking: The Facts and the Wisdom to Use Them

This section helps you in the ethical reasoning process. The questions provide a format to think comprehensively and in collaboration with others.

- What are the relevant facts of the issue? What information needs to be obtained? What list of questions needs to be answered? By whom?
- To whom are you obligated? To whom do you feel loyal? Employee? Client? Agency?
- What is the symbolic potential of your action if understood? If misunderstood?
- What sources can you turn to for guidance? Code of ethics? Ethical theories and principles? Experts? Consultants? Peers? Constituents?
- What are the options/alternatives for acting?
- Have you discussed the issue with others? What are their perspectives about the moral issues? Have all the relevant people and groups been consulted? If you showed your list of options to someone you respect, what would that person say?
- How does the code of ethics inform you in relation to professional duties?

Evaluate the Alternatives from Various Moral Perspectives

These questions assist you in considering the moral implications of various alternatives from the perspective of ethical theory, principles, and philosophies.

- Which option will produce the most good and do the least harm?
- Which option respects the rights and dignity of all stakeholders? Even if not everyone gets all they want, will everyone still be treated fairly?
- Which option would promote the common good and help all participate more fully in the goods we share as a society, as a community, as an organization, or as a family?
- Which option would enable the deepening or development of those virtues or character traits that we value as individuals? As a profession? As employees? As a community? As a society?
- Which option would strengthen and honor relationships?
- Which option would build a caring community?
- Which option takes action against oppression?

- Which option will be valid into the future?

Action: Make a Decision and Implement

After taking into account the following three questions you are ready to make a decision and take action.

- Considering these perspectives, which of the options is the right thing to do?
- If you told someone you respect why you chose this option, what would that person say?
- Could you disclose, without qualm, your decision or action to your boss, CEO, the board of directors, your family, or society as a whole?

Take Action

In this section the questions precipitate a decision and help you consider your level of comfort with the decision. Would the decision “feel right” if you were to share it with significant others?

- What are the political, natural, and social forces surrounding the proposed action?
- Are there stakeholders that you need for support? Who could you include as collaborators in the action?
- Who may resist the action? What strategies would help reduce or eliminate the resistance?

Reflect on the Decision and Action

This section promotes evaluation of the decision and action, the consequences of implementing the decision, and provides further learning for you and the organization. The results of reflection can be the basis for improved policies and practices.

- How did it turn out for all concerned? If you had to do it over again, what, if anything, would you do differently?
- What were the unanticipated consequences of the decision? What other moral or ethical problems have been identified as a result?
- What new knowledge and understanding did you gain from responding to this issue?
- How does the result inform you about needed policies and practices in the organization?

The use of a framework for decisionmaking may seem cumbersome and time consuming at first. However, with some practice, most of the topics and questions will become second nature; they will be internalized and routinely come to mind as leaders are confronted with the daily ethical problems of administration, management, and leadership.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes the framework of moral citizenship as an approach to considering ethical dilemmas and problems. Thinking, as the critical variable in a reasoning process, is emphasized. Thinking includes the aspects of rationality, which must be self-directed, and respect, which is other-directed. A comprehensive reasoning process includes a means of justification for an ethical decision, usually a combination of facts, logic, and decision premises. Decision premises (ethical principles, theories, and philosophical approaches) can inform leaders about many of the ethical aspects of a particular dilemma. However, the process of decisionmaking is also a part of thinking. The criteria to evaluate an adequate process include considering the quality, breadth, and honesty of the decision.

Taking action is more than simply implementing the decision. Activities and strategies that will help support the success of implementation are important. Equally important is the ability to assess potential resistance and variables that may act as barriers to the decision and also to find creative ways to change obstructions. Creating a public space for action to occur in relation to moral and ethical issues is part of the action of leadership. Public space provides the structure, time, and culture necessary for constituents to give feedback and facilitate ethical action. Ultimately, the willingness of a leader to act as institution citizen, sometimes in loyal opposition to particular individuals or groups, in order to promote the moral well-being of the organization is the true measure of ethical leadership.

The next section of the book moves the view from the leader as an individual decisionmaker to the leader's role in building an ethical organization. First, the nature of bureaucracy is considered, followed by chapters on ethical cultures and structures to promote ethical action.

QUESTIONS AND APPLICATIONS

1. Analyze the following ethical dilemma from the perspective of rationality and respect (Dilemma Tucker & Marcuson, 1998). A local nonprofit organization that networks with other service agencies in the area was designed to fill gaps in needed services for families. This agency has been in existence for several years and has gained the respect of the community. The staff of this agency can serve families who have a need that cannot be served in any other way through connecting these families with community volunteers who adopt them.

The volunteer director of the agency works on a volunteer basis and contributes numerous hours each week to fulfill responsibilities associated with this position. To reduce her workload, the director of the agency applied to seven different foundations to request money for a part-time administrative assistant. The agency requested \$10,000 from each of the foundations, with the hope that they would receive assistance from one of them. To the surprise of the director, three of the foundations accepted their proposal and awarded the agency with \$10,000 for the salary of the part-time employee. The agency ended up with \$30,000, which was three times as much as was

needed for the salary. The granting foundations had different requirements for reporting on the use of the money. However, at least two of the foundations asked that the money be used in the manner for which it was requested.

- What are the known facts?
- What facts are missing that need to be obtained?
- Who are the potential stakeholders? (for example, agency, clients, public/community, or grantors?)
- What are the potential outcomes, both good and harm, for all stakeholders?
- Who would you seek out for input, advice, and consultation?
- What does your conscience say to you about this dilemma?
- What are the values and perspectives of those who could be affected by your decision?
- What ethical principles apply? What do they require in this situation?
- How do the ethical theories—the means or duty versus the ends or greatest good—apply to this situation? How would you link the two?

What would be your decision?

2. In order to take action, what political, natural, and social forces need to be considered?
3. What is your civic obligation for the good of the organization and the good of the community?

