A 21ST CENTURY ETHICAL TOOLBOX

Fourth Edition

Anthony Weston

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ANTHONY WESTON

FOURTH EDITION

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PREFACE

A 21st Century Ethical Toolbox is a textbook for a college ethics or applied ethics course, with applications in any course that ventures into practical ethical issues. Its most basic aim is to enable its users to make a more constructive difference, in both word and deed, in problematic ethical situations. To do so requires, as you will see, a wide range of skills. We all need those skills, and we need them all—daily, it seems, we need them more—in the life of community and state, in school and in our families and on the job, as well as across the range of practical ethical work, from the law, the ministry, and community service to medicine, the service professions, teaching at all levels, and just plain good citizenship.

In service of that aim, you will find here a wide range of topics, from a careful survey of moral values to tools for critical, creative, and constructive thinking, moral vision, and making a real difference. You will also encounter a wide range of writers, from ancient Greek and Chinese philosophers to contemporary college students, novelists, architects, cranks, prophets, Nobel Peace Prize winners alongside unsung community activists, some provocative contemporary philosophers, and others with stories to tell too. Good company. I hope you find this book a rewarding, inspiring, and consistently useful resource—a good toolbox indeed.

Dozens of introductory ethics textbooks are available. Mostly they distinguish themselves in subtle ways: a slightly different selection of theories here, a little more history or a more multicultural perspective there. Each approach is important and useful. For better or worse, though, this text differs from the others in bigger and bolder ways.

First, every theme introduced here is directly in service of an improved ethical intelligence and through it of an engaged and enabled moral practice. Other skills often lovingly inculcated in ethics courses, such as theory building and argument reconstruction, do come up, but only in the way that music theory might come up in a voice course. We're really here, as it were, to sing.

Second, a far wider range of skills is offered in this book than in traditional ethics texts. Problem-solving creativity may be as crucial to ethical intelligence as responsiveness to values and the analytical and critical skills usually featured in ethics courses. Minding the evidence, taking care with the

shape of our very speech itself, moral vision and imagination, learning how to "break out of the box" that reduces so many ethical problems to dilemmas between two sharply opposed and supposedly exhaustive options—all of these skills, rarely even glimpsed from a distance in other ethics texts, have a central place here.

Contentious issues are likewise approached with a reconstructive intent. The familiar controversies are here—abortion, animals, sex, environment, social justice—as well as some that will be less familiar. But the familiar points of disagreement are not the main focus—certainly not the only focus—of attention. Moral theories are not deployed as argumentative or combative frameworks, and issuing definitive moral judgments is not the aim. About the various contending arguments, each surely with something to offer, we instead shift the questions we ask. Rather than trying to figure out which side is right, we ask what *each* side is right *about*. Then we may be able to find some common ground, or at least some creative ways to shift the problem toward matters that we can do something about—together. Figuring out how to make a constructive difference is as important as figuring out who is right.

Finally, the working hypothesis of this book is that it is actually possible to make progress on the ethical issues of the day. We *can* make a constructive difference. Thinking clearly about those issues is a good start, for sure, but we can ask much more than that. We can also make progress on deeper levels: seeing farther into the issue; understanding each other better; and devising new, mutually agreeable ways forward, while strengthening and enlivening the ethical community that enables us to take up any issue constructively together in the first place. Welcome to the good work.

TEACHING WITH THIS BOOK

Ethics so conceived readily lends itself to interactive teaching. In fact it *requires* interactive teaching. It requires constant in-class practice. There is no other way to learn it. This book therefore differs from most other ethics texts in pedagogical terms too. It insistently invites, and consistently supports, an active and engaged pedagogy.

Toolbox had its start, now nearly two decades ago, in ever-growing sets of readings designed to free up my own classes' time for practice. My aim was to collect most of the necessary introductions and discussions and put them in material that could be assigned prior to class and for the most part could be understood by students on their own. Today this has come to be called "flipping" the classroom—I am for it. Throughout, my aim is to do the usual work of lecture in the book instead, leaving actual class meetings for the class to work.

This book's focus on teaching constructive practical skills like dialogue and creative problem solving also undergirds an active pedagogy. The text

invites a wide range of experiential and "applied" activities for an ethics class. Some of these are in-class activities: structured dialogues and workshops, simulations, surveys, idea-generating challenges. Exercises at the end of each chapter, along with some of the more ambitious challenges in the **Going Farther** sections between the chapters, introduce some of these activities. The "Teaching Like a Pragmatist" Endnote section offers a little more detail as well as giving them a more philosophical context.

Many of these activities in turn aim beyond the classroom. As the "Teaching Like a Pragmatist" Endnote section also explains, students in my classes have sponsored workshops on conflict mediation and creativity, co-framed beds with the guests at local shelters for the homeless, mediated closer long-term collaboration between a local retirement community and our college, conducted a "Council of All Beings" for the community to extend our discussion of environmental ethics, and launched an "ethical cookbook" initiative to address local food insecurity issues while also promoting healthy eating and local organic growing – among other projects. In recent years I have structured my course directly around student-designed ethical change work, using this book as a conceptual and practical support structure and scaffolding for the process. All of this flows naturally from the *Toolbox*, and I encourage you—teachers and students alike—to embrace and pursue this larger kind of work.

CHANGES IN THE FOURTH EDITION

In this fourth edition I have tried both to respect many users' major investments in syllabi based on the third edition, and to make a major upgrade to the text for the times.

The biggest change is that I have dropped Part IV of the third edition—chapters 16 through 18—repositioning much of that material earlier in the text, as suggested by a number of reviewers, and leaving aside some of the rest. Many users were uncertain about Part IV's themes or those chapters' intent and placement. My hope is that those themes and readings carried over from the old Part IV will be clearer and more topical in their new locations. The third edition's chapter 17, for example, which some felt was too activist to be a proper chapter, is now a separate Resource section at the end, somewhat more expansive, and certainly freer to be itself. Other overarching themes from the old closing chapters now show up early in the text.

This shift also means that the chapter on Moral Vision is now the book's final chapter. Vision is indeed the most venturesome theme, and in many ways the most affirmative—an aspirational note on which to end. Please don't slight it. In fact, *celebrate* it! Since some instructors found the theme unfamiliar—but, really, how can ethics do without vision?—and therefore especially challenging, I have tried to expand the exposition accordingly.

The third edition added a number of regular optional sections, called "Using Your Tools" (UYTs), between every other chapter, offering various ways to expand and develop the themes of the chapters without imposing upon them. This fourth edition takes this another step, increasing the number and variety of these sections, and interpolating them more often. They are now called **Going Farther** sections. Many of the old UYTs are here, but there are a number of new pieces as well.

This edition's chapter 13 combines the third edition's chapters 13 (Creative Problem Solving) and 14 (Reframing Problems) to make a more compact single chapter—with some "Going Farther" supplementary material as well. For those who want to fully explore these themes, rest assured that most of the third edition's material remains, just in a more adaptable format. Those who want still more might consider my free-standing little handbook, *Creative Problem-Solving in Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

The combined effect of dropping the old Part IV and combining the old chapters 13 and 14 is that the book now has just fourteen chapters total, which should help instructors better fit it into the standard fourteen-week semester calendar. No main theme need be dropped, although there is probably still more material here than a single term can hold. That's mostly on purpose; it gives instructors the chance to pick and choose, and may tempt students too to read farther.

Some chapters are sharpened up. Chapter 5, for one, is now somewhat more focused. The material on Rawls and justice is moved to its own **Going Farther** section. I have added critical sections, called "Complications," for all four of the families of moral values in chapters 5 through 8—previously only Utilitarianism came in for direct criticism—and have tried to be more explicit about the scope and limits of each family as well. Given the inertia of moral theorizing, it can't be emphasized enough (in my view) that the families of moral values need *not* be seen as competitors for the One True Ethics, but are (hopefully) helpful maps of certain regions of value, though partial maps too—each only maps some regions, and only from one perspective even on that region.

The focus of chapter 9 has also been sharpened. Previously I called it "Critical Thinking," but it seems that some users were led by this title to expect a guide to logically analyzing and critiquing the standard sorts of philosophical arguments in applied ethics. That is a perfectly fine goal if one of your primary aims is to teach students how to read philosophical arguments in the contemporary analytical style. There are other fine books for this, however, such as David Morrow's recent *Moral Argument* (Oxford University Press, 2017). It is *not* the intention of chapter 9 in this book. I am less interested in the infrastructure of argument-construction, counterexample, and the like than in careful generalization and the responsible sourcing of factual claims—learning to think critically, yes, but about the kinds of anecdotal appeals and under-analyzed correlations and the like that afflict many ethical

arguments today. That is, my central practical concern is specifically with the use of empirical evidence in ethical thinking. Chapter 9, accordingly, is now called "Minding the Evidence."

Other and smaller changes include:

- The chapters are somewhat fuller in general
- A few chapters are relabeled, such as 1 and 2 (okay, the third edition's "Ethics-Avoidance Disorders" was perhaps a bit much!)
- The review questions at the end of each chapters are expanded from ten to twelve
- There are parallel exercises in chapters 5 through 8. The same six broad moral issues are posed as the main subjects "For Reflection and Discussion" in each chapter, though with somewhat varied introductory explanations.
- Chapter 10 includes a new treatment of the Golden Rule.
- Chapter 12 now speaks of "bringing values into congruence" rather than "integrating values." The idea is the same, but I have found that the new language makes it much clearer.

Speaking of major issues discussed, I should also note that some of the main themes have shifted, in accord with the times. A theme more prominent in this edition, for example, both in the text (including at the very beginning) and in the **Going Farther** sections, is justice to future generations, and correlatively the appropriate respect and care for Earth. I believe we are at a time of heightened urgency around these issues, and that some of the more usual but seemingly more manageable concerns of "applied ethics" need to make way for these larger, less manageable but immensely important issues to be brought to the fore.

This revision also comes at a time of exceptional tension in the body politic, and how it will play out is anyone's guess at the moment. But the book does reflect its times. It is a little edgier, and more willing to confront some developments in ways that may seem partisan to some readers. Climate change denial, for one, has become ethically unconscionable, in my view, to put it bluntly—no longer a subject to be avoided because some readers might consider the topic controversial or the claims questionable. The line between textbook expository neutrality and advocacy is never hard and fast, and at times like these one could even argue that not taking a stance is also, actually, taking a stance. Not all widely advertised positions on such subjects are intellectually or morally equal, and in my view ethics now not only allows but requires that we call the pretenders out. You'll see what I mean in due time.

As the Endnotes also explain, this book is written so that Part III can be used before Part II if users so wish. That is, you can explore skills for ethical practice (Part III) before the family/theory material in Part II. Sometimes I use the book in this way myself. A number of reviewers also reported using,

or wishing to use, just some of the skills-oriented material from Part III, particularly the chapters on Minding the Evidence (9) and Dialogue (11), before exploring Moral Values in more detail in the chapters of Part II. This is an entirely reasonable order too, in my view. There is a certain amount of cross-referencing between chapters and parts—both ways, in fact—but not much, and in any case I have been careful not to presuppose material from either part in the other. The order is up to you.

Finally, there are a few additions requested or suggested by users and reviewers that include were easy to make without any intrusion on established uses of the text—only to augment them, I hope. One is a concordance of themes. Users of the third edition noted that a wide variety of specific ethical issues come up through the text—environmental issues, abortion, assisted suicide, animals, and the rest of the the usual and sometimes not-so-usual list—but not, again, in chapters of their own. It can be difficult for students or instructors pursuing those issues to locate and connect all of the text's various considerations and treatments of them. A new guide to "Major Ethical Issues Discussed," at the end, now offers a quick and easy way to do so. Second, some other teachers suggested a glossary of key terms—more than just an index—coupled with a note of their key occurrences in the text, and especially their initial definitions. I appreciate this suggestion and have taken it as well.

RETURN OF THANKS

Many years of teaching in a wide variety of settings leaves me with many debts both large and small. First among these is my debt to my students, who have always taught me much and who lately, especially, have answered the challenge to take ethics into action—again and again—with a range of projects I could never have anticipated but that always open up novel and inspiring prospects. Their feedback on the text along the way has also improved it immeasurably.

Among colleagues, I am continuously grateful to my collaborators in the Elon University Department of Philosophy, past and present—Nim Batchelor, Ann Cahill, Martin Fowler, Amy Glaser, Ryan Johnson, Yoram Lubling, Stephen Bloch-Schulman, and John Sullivan—where for some years we have moved, each in our own interlacing ways, toward a practical ethics in something like the sense laid out here. Other colleagues, far and near and recent and past, have inspired various commissions and omissions: Beth Raps, Amy Halberstadt, Rebecca Todd Peters, Peter Williams, Elsebet Jegstrup, Tom Birch, Betty Morgan, J. Christian Wilson, Bob Jickling, Eva Feder Kittay, Joe Cole, Mike Simon, Richard McBride, and Patrick Hill, as well as a host of others, including my children, Anna Ruth and Molly, even in ways unbeknown to them. Many thanks and a deep bow to you all.

Among my colleagues, Professors Batchelor, Fowler, and Sullivan again contribute writing to this edition. Vance Ricks of Guilford College contributes a discussion to chapter 9 based on a running dialogue we have had for years about the places where critical thinking intersects with and informs ethics. Amy Glaser contributes a new piece, part of her dissertation and social-change work on children's liberation. As a reviewer in preparation for the second edition, Spoma Jovanovic of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro showed me how much further the book could go in the direction of communicative ethics; in this fourth edition, as in the third, she contributes a major reading on that theme to the "Dialogue" chapter. My student, maggie castor, Elon class of 2012, who encountered this book first as a textbook for her own introductory class in ethics taught by Professor Fowler, became my research assistant for the third edition in the Summer of 2011, and again for this fourth edition over the past year, and also again contributes some writing of her own, this time to the "Making a Difference" section. A number of students from the 2016 Senior Seminar in Philosophy at Elon collaborated to produce some of the dialogues in the exercises for chapters 2 and 11, and are specifically credited there.

I am also enormously grateful to many other users of the previous editions of this book, along with my little book *A Practical Companion to Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 4th ed., 2011), whose enthusiasm and encouragement have emboldened me to undertake yet another edition of "the big book." People across the United States and Canada are using this book to approach ethics in a new key, and increasingly in institution-wide general studies programs concerned with moral citizenship and "ethics across the curriculum" as well. I have heard from many and even met some of you. I am honored, and I hope this new edition, tailored with some of your needs in mind, will be even more helpful. Please continue to be in touch.

At Oxford University Press, Robert B. Miller patiently nurtured the first incarnation of this project through its slow coalescence and allowed it to come to completion in its own good time. Three times since he has repeated the feat, generally under conditions of more resistance and alarm from my end. As ever, I could not ask for a more consistently responsive, supportive, and politic editor.

Publisher's reviewers for the first edition were David Boersema, Richard L. Lipke, Verna Gehring, Patricia Murphy, and Jack Green Musselman. Reviewers for the second edition, along with Professor Jovanovic, included Ralph Acampora, Greta Bauer, Deborah Hawkins, and Stevens Wandmacher. My colleagues Professors Sullivan and Cahill also read significant parts of the manuscript for the second edition and offered helpful feedback and encouragement. Beth Raps was my utterly reliable and savvy assistant in every aspect of the preparation of that edition.

Reviewers for the third edition were Russell DiSilvestro, California State University–Sacramento; Douglas Drabkin, Fort Hays State University; Steven

M. Duncan, Bellevue College; Jeremy Garrett, California State University–Sacramento; Paul F. Jeffries, Ripon College; Keith Korcz, University of Louisiana at Lafayette; Karla Pierce, Florida State College–Jacksonville; Davis Sweet, Middlesex Community College and Massachusetts Bay Community College; and Kathryn Valdivia, University of San Diego.

For the fourth edition, reviewers were Tayo Basquiat, Bismark State College; Kristin Borgwald, Miami Dade College; Shari Collins, Arizona State University; Marcus Cooper, Wayne State University; Colin Patrick, Portland State University; Anna Peterson, University of Florida; Frank Ryan, Kent State University; Brook Sadler, University of South Florida; Albert R. Spencer, Portland State University; James H. VanderMay, Mid Michigan Community College; and Jeanne L. Wiley, College of Saint Rose.

For this edition, my colleague Professor Cahill again kindly advised me on several sections, and I was very pleased also to work with Elon's Ketevan Kupatadze, Professor of World Languages and Cultures, who ably translated the new reading from Esperanza Guisán in chapter 6.

I would like to add that for all four editions, but most notably for the two most recent ones, many of the reviewers went well above and beyond the usual level of reviewing to offer exceptionally detailed and useful critiques and suggestions. (Total for this fourth edition was over fifty single-spaced pages.) Naturally I have not been able to take account of all of them (any author will recognize the amusing bind that arises when different reviewers sometimes recommend diametrically opposite changes; and there are others that would simply change the book into something quite different, though perhaps just as good or better an idea), but I was honored by all of them. Indeed I am deeply appreciative and moved by the care and even love that so many reviewers and users have shown for this project. I hope that all of you who worked so carefully through earlier editions will recognize the fruits of your labors in the book you now hold in your hands.

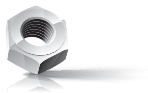
Needless to say, the commissions and omissions that remain—some of them even, scandalously, repeated—are to be charged to me alone. As always, feedback of all sorts is very welcome. May the circle continue to widen.

Anthony Weston
Durham, North Carolina
May 2017

I

EMBRACING ETHICS

CHAPTER 1



What Is Ethics?

Our subject is ethics. It would be sensible to start by asking what ethics *is*, at its core.

Let us say that to think or act ethically is to *take care for the basic needs and legitimate expectations of others as well as our own*. This definition builds on certain key ideas. We can consider each of them in turn.

TAKING CARE

Ethics asks us, first and foremost, to "take care." There are three different and relevant ways in which we can do so.

PAYING ATTENTION

First, we take care for something when we simply *look into or investigate it*. Put another way, on a first level, ethics asks us simply to *pay attention*.

On the personal level, ethics challenges us out of the tempting habits of relating to the world, especially other people, in self-absorbed and offhand ways. Probably you already know what it is like sometimes to step out of the world of roles—teachers or students, customers, waitresses, political candidates, too-loud neighbors or too-fast drivers—to see the *people*, the feeling, hoping, and striving selves behind these roles, and be seen ourselves the same way in turn. Ethics asks us to do this more often, more consciously and deliberately—and at times when it is not so easy.

Pay attention to larger worlds as well. Half the human race is trying to survive on impossibly meager provisions, basic personal security is uncertain for many people, and, alas, there is persistent malfeasance on all levels, up to global corporations and governments too. On the other sides of these coins, there are widespread initiatives for social and racial justice and broad movements for corporate and social responsibility from within the corporate and governmental worlds themselves. Meanwhile, ethical attention may not stop at the human species boundary, or the present generation, either.

The Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy enjoins us to pay attention even to our great-great-great-grandchildren. When our actions today have that kind of reach—when for instance we may be leaving them degraded land and climate—then, once again, there is no turning away. Once again too, ethics can highlight real alternatives, different paths—we must pay attention to new possibilities, emerging moral visions, as well.

You can also pay attention to ethics itself—the field, that is: its history, its skills, its categories. It is a welcome implication of this sense of "taking care" that the study of ethics itself turns out to be, already, a way of being ethical. Just by picking up this book and beginning to read it, then, you are beginning to take care for ethics in the sense that you aim to learn more about it. It is not just that you will be ethical someday . . . hopefully . . . but rather that you are ethical *now*, as you devote yourself to better understandings of the core moral values for which ethics speaks and the skills it takes to put them into action. Welcome to the good work!

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

In a second sense, we "take care" for something when we are *conscientious* about it; that is, when we're "careful" of it. In part, then, ethical thinking and action, in the broadest sense, is an attempt simply to acknowledge the others around and next to us, which is certainly one basic legitimate expectation. Everyday decency, acknowledging others who have cared or "paid forward" for us, respecting others' rights, following the rules (as in, for example, good sportsmanship) . . . these are forms of careful action in this sense, reflecting and sustaining an understanding of ourselves as one among others, taking care together.

You might be interested in another way to look at the "seven generations" idea. In traditional cultures where women began bearing children in their teens, it would have been common for a young person to know their parents' parents' parents—their great-grandparents, who might even still have been in their vigorous fifties or sixties. In the very same way, at the other end of life, they themselves would have been likely to know their own great-grandchildren: three generations in the other direction. Add all of this together, counting a person's own generation in between, and your view could encompass seven generations.

We won't know our great-great-great-grandchildren—seven generations straight into the future—at least until time machines are invented (hmm, and how would *that* change ethics?)—but we can actually know seven generations over the course of a long life if we think of ourselves, like this, in the *middle*. It is no surprise, then, that one of the most powerful imperatives in Native American culture is to "Remember who you are!" The reminder is that we are individuals, no doubt, but we are also children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren of particular known people, and likewise are or may be parents and grandparents and great-grandparents of particular but soon-to-come people who will inherit this Earth after our stewardship.

Put another way, we ourselves are products of the same kind of care-taking that ethics asks of us in turn. After all, we are here because our parents bore and raised us; because others bore and raised *them*; because whole multitudes of people raised food and created cities and struggled over systems of governance and inquired into the workings of the natural world and of the heart. And this is not just a point about the past. Here and now, parents—yours, for example, and possibly you yourself as well—give of themselves to sustain the safety and love of a family for children and partners. If you are a college student, a multitude of others, from parents and grateful former alumni to dedicated faculty and a variety of taxpayers, are covering much of the cost of your education. They are "paying it forward" in the hopes that you will pay it forward too, eventually, in turn. Out in the public world, think of the legions of strangers, every day, who take care to drive carefully, treat you and each other decently, and just do their jobs, whatever they are, honestly and well, sustaining and maybe even improving the world. As do we, ourselves (I hope!)

SUSTAINING AND FURTHERING THE GOOD

Ethics asks us to pay attention, then, and to be conscious and conscientious about standing within larger patterns of relationship and expectation. But there is a third sense of "taking care" in which we also take *action*.

In this third sense, we take care for something when we act to *sustain and further it*. We take care for something or someone by taking care *of* it or them. To act ethically in this case, again very broadly speaking, is to actually try to meet some of the basic needs and legitimate expectations of others as well as ourselves: to sustain or nurture others, as well as ourselves, materially or spiritually or both.

It might be as simple as trying to be a good steward of the earth or taking your surplus produce or clothes to the local homeless shelter; or building homes with Habitat for Humanity, which serves specific people and families, who are usually building right alongside you. Or it might be as extreme as the Russian botanists who allowed themselves to starve to death during the siege of Leningrad in World War II rather than eat the abundant food all around them, because that food happened to be the world's last seed reserves for hundreds of berry species. Those species, saved at such cost, are now regenerated and spread around the world.

Jesus spoke of no man having greater love than to give his life for his friends. These are people who gave their lives for *seeds*. There are a few more human possibilities than we may think in our cynical moments! Peter Benchley, author of *Jaws*, was so chagrined by the anti-shark hysteria created by his book that he devoted the rest of his life and fortune to shark conservation and ocean protection. Not just for future human generations, either—also for the sharks. He felt as though he'd incurred an ethical debt to them as well. Yes—sharks.

It is a question within ethics just what people's basic needs and expectations are or how far and in what ways you or I are obliged to try to meet them.

The key point, though, is that ethics at least requires that the needs and expectations of others have some role in what we do and how we decide about it—that is, that we "take care" for them in our actions.

NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

As a rough beginning, we can say that basic needs include things like food, clothing, and shelter—more broadly, sustenance. We might add health, education, community, and a chance to participate. Freedom. A voice. A liveable environment, too.

These are the conditions that all of us need to survive and to have some chance to flourish. I don't mean, though, that people are obliged to simply give these things to anyone in need. That is one possible ethics, but not the only one. Ethics in general, again, just requires us to pay attention to them—not to live as an island, unaware or unconcerned, blind to anyone else. Ethics calls us to recognize that others have needs and expectations as well as ourselves, regardless of how exactly we go on to respond to them, if we do.

I also don't mean that this list of basic needs is final or fixed. Debating exactly what our basic needs *are* is one more central and serious question within ethics. Our conception of morally relevant basic needs has shifted over time. Medicine, for example, wasn't considered a basic need until quite modern times, which was the first time it became especially effective. (Or put it this way: health was always a basic need, but until modern times there were fewer effective ways in which others might be morally impelled to help when health failed.) Other needs may now be on their way toward recognition as "basic," for better or worse: a clean environment, for one. Human diversity within ecological diversity, perhaps.

We all have legitimate expectations to be treated with respect and as equals. Some legitimate expectations are rights: to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"; to be able to speak our minds or worship (or not) as we please; and so on. But rights are only one aspect or expression of legitimate expectations; other legitimate expectations take other forms. We legitimately expect each other to act responsibly, to keep promises, and so on. There are a variety of views within ethics about how to think about legitimate expectations (starting with: What makes some expectations "legitimate" in the first place?), once again a debate to which we will come in due time.

A FEW OTHER THINGS

There is, finally, that term "others." Ethical thinking and action take care for the basic needs and legitimate expectations of *others* as well as our own.

Who is this? Other people, yes: that is now a given (though historically, as some of our readings will note, this was not always the case: all too often ethics has been limited to one's own class or gender or city . . .). These days,

"others" may also include (some?) other animals and the natural world too. Even sharks, maybe. Exactly what other "others" ethics may include is one more foundational question in ethics. Often, indeed, it is ethical questions at the "edges"—such as, today, questions about other animals—from which we learn the most about ethics at its core. These are the most challenging questions, as well, to ethical "business as usual." It seems that a certain open-endedness is a key to ethics as well.

Again, note that our own selves are included too. Ethics takes care for the basic needs and legitimate expectations of others *and also our own*. Ethics according to this definition is not opposed to the self. Quite the contrary: our own needs and expectations are built into the definition. Our own needs get a voice as well as others'. The essential thing, though, is that our own needs cannot be the whole story. Ethics connects us to a larger world. The self doesn't vanish—it just awakens to itself as, yes, one among others.

Here is one other note about terms. The term "moral" is typically used in much the same sense as "ethical," but there can be a difference of shading. Sometimes a "moral" person is a little more like a person who just reliably does what's right, while an "ethical" person is a little more like someone who thinks twice about it, or is more engaged with issues where values are in flux or at odds. Some philosophers use the word "moral" to describe the values we actually hold—the word "moral" traces back to the Latin "mores," meaning manners or customs—whereas by "ethics" they mean the *study* of morals, or more broadly the deliberate process of thinking our morals through, of systematizing and criticizing and possibly even revising our moral values, as well as more consciously embracing them.

I will respect these shadings in this book, but without making much more of them. From now on, for example, typically I will speak of moral *values* but ethical *issues* or *debates* or *problems*. Again, though, nothing serious hangs on this usage. Some authors, even some reprinted in this book, use the terms interchangeably without making such a distinction. In the end there is still one subject, our vital subject: taking care for the basic needs and legitimate expectations of others as well as our own.

OUR DEFINITION

In its completely spelled-out form, this section's definition of ethics is this: We think or act ethically when we *investigate, are conscientiously attentive to, and/or try to meet the basic needs and sustain legitimate expectations of others as well as our own*. Since you may have noticed that this is a bit on the awkward side for everyday reference, typically we can use the briefer version that was our first attempt:

> *We think or act ethically when we take care for the basic needs and legitimate expectations of others as well as our own.*

ETHICS AS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The main point of studying ethics is to learn how to engage with ethical values and issues in more critical, systematic, and effective ways. The point of having an ethical *toolbox* is to develop the understandings and the skills you need to make a more constructive difference, in both word and deed, in problematic ethical situations.

Ethics is a learning experience! We want to get *better* at it. You will find that there are many ways. Here are five to anticipate as we begin this study together.

SYSTEMATIC THINKING

Philosophy in general might be defined as the study of how things hang together in the broadest sense—that, at least, is how the 20th-century pragmatist philosopher Wilfred Sellars put it. Sellars' definition certainly applies in ethics: part of the philosopher's work in ethics is to try to figure out which of our moral values are the most basic and whether there is a common and single core to all of ethics—in short, whether and how moral values "hang together." Studying ethics is, in part, learning something of the history and general outline of this *systematic* thinking.

Consider: we hold a lot of moral values. Fairness, equality, respect, and responsibility; reducing pain and suffering; "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"; humility, benevolence, keeping your promises; honesty, responsibility, community, dignity . . . and that is only a barest beginning of a list. A natural question is: how can we discern the forest—a bigger and hopefully clearer picture, more order and less confusion—amidst all these trees?

Many of our moral values are related to fairness, equality, and justice. Perhaps we could find some elegant and clear way of drawing them together, some relatively simple criterion or bottom line? Or again, many moral values have to do with personal virtues, like honesty, humility, and self-possession. Maybe there is some relatively clear and focused human ideal that connects these different virtues—that gives them each a logical place in a single, unified picture. We would understand all the virtues better if we could paint that bigger picture with confidence and clarity.

You begin to see the hope: that we might discover that many of our moral values actually "hang together" in basic ways. There may be deep connections among moral values that can bring some order to the confusion that may strike us at first. In Part II of this book, we explore how moral values might be systematized into families, introducing one of the main projects of philosophical ethics today, sometimes also called ethical *theory*.

THE HISTORY OF ETHICS

Along the way we will explore some of the long and rich history of ethics as well. We will discover that much of it not only still speaks to us but in fact underlies and shapes ethical discussions to this day.

For example, the Ethics of the Person (as I call it in this book), formulated by the 18th/19th-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, both gives voice to a widely felt kind of moral value and seeks to ground it in a deep way in the nature of reason itself. From Kant we learn to pay attention to persons—ourselves and others—as "ends and not merely means," and even imagine ourselves living in an ideal "Kingdom of Ends." More concretely, meanwhile, the 20th-century Jewish mystical philosopher Martin Buber famously gave voice to similar values with his contrast between "I/Thou" and "I/It" relationships. Persons are *subjects*, not mere objects—not mere "Its"!

Other historical thinkers offer quite different ethical ideas and ideals. The 19th-century British ethicist John Stuart Mill outlined the "Utilitarian" orientation that underlies much modern ethical and political thinking, with its famous formula of seeking the greatest good of the greatest number. Ancient Taoist understandings of an Ethics of Virtue give voice to an ethic of familial and community obligations. Ancient Greek views of virtue emphasize individual character-building. The Ethics of Relationship gives voice to the responsibilities that arise from our deep connections to others, from specific loved ones to our various adopted and cultural communities, in the midst of the generations, and all the way out to the larger living Earth. ("Remember who you are!", indeed.)

This book will give you brief looks at classic and representative writings of all of these thinkers and traditions. I should add that, at least in the view of this book, we do not have to choose between them. Theirs is not a debate that someone must win and everyone else must lose. Instead, it is a conversation that all can deepen—you too, in the end. Ethical tradition gives you a variety of maps for moral landscapes. Like real maps, they can overlay and augment each other, mapping different aspects of the terrain for different purposes, but rarely is a map simply wrong. Some are just more useful than others for different purposes. It pays to have a good collection.

CRITICAL THINKING

Next, the study of ethics also requires us to look systematically and thoroughly into the empirical questions that underlie and define many ethical issues—"taking care," remember, in the sense of *investigation*. Here we come to factual questions that are sometimes complex and difficult, but nonetheless have answers that can be determined with care and effort. How much do animals suffer in laboratories and slaughterhouses, for example? What are the effects of pornography, or violent video games, on subsequent behavior

and feelings? Is "restorative justice"—reconciliation rather than retribution—possible? And if so, what then?

On questions like these, we need to do more than simply assert what we think is obvious or seek out a few facts that seem to support what we already think. The real challenge is to find out more, to understand better, even if we have to change what we think as a result. Actual evidence is available, though it can be complex and uncertain at times. If we want to debate about such questions, we had better first get informed about them—and first from relatively unbiased sources, too. *Then* we can get into advocacy, if necessary, and begin to make up our minds. One notorious problem with ethical debates is that we often approach the factual issues already committed to some moral conclusion, and thus prejudiced as to the facts—or, all too often, not even interested in the actual facts. Your ethical learning here will invite you to take a more open and exploratory attitude.

Learning about other cultures' practices may provoke some critical thinking as well. Are our views perhaps a little too constricted by limited experience or imagination? In Australia many couples live together in so-called "de facto" marriages—a legally recognized category. They do about as well as the official kind. Might that change our view of the morality of marriage? You can get marijuana legally in the Netherlands and the result is not disaster. What can we learn from that?

There are some societies that will not tolerate leaving even a single person homeless. Abortion, one of America's most divisive and painful and seemingly fundamental social conflicts over the past thirty years, is barely an issue in many other countries (though now we're exporting it), and historically was not much of an issue even here. Again, can we learn anything from these contrasts? Well, sure . . . and we can systematically seek to find out more.

Here's another thing: when we explore some of the ways in which moral values hang together, we also may well find ourselves provoked to rethink some of our judgments that might not fit so well, or that come into conflict with each other. This too is a form of critical thinking. For example, many people who are "pro-life" when it comes to the abortion question do not seem quite as pro-life when it comes to questions like capital punishment or killing other animals for food. Is this a consistent position? Or does something have to give? Note that exactly the same kind of question also comes up the other way around. Some people who are "pro-choice" when it comes to the abortion question do not seem very pro-choice when it comes to, say, eating other animals. Again: What gives?

We'll return to all of this too. It's a part of the bigger work that lies ahead. The point for now is just that ethics challenges us to some hard thinking and perhaps change. Putting together a consistent and well-founded set of ethical judgments is hard work. Once again, there is more learning and thinking to do.

CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

Here's a tight spot

> A child in second grade underwent chemotherapy for leukemia. When she returned to school, she wore a scarf to hide the fact that she had lost all her hair. But some of the children pulled it off, and in their nervousness laughed and made fun of her. The child was mortified and that afternoon begged her parents not to make her go back to school. Her parents tried to encourage her, saying, "The other children will get used to it, and anyway your hair will soon grow in again."

Suppose you are the teacher. This is your class. Rights and wrongs are pretty clear in this case, don't you think? You need to defend the afflicted child. You can defend her with more or less skill—maybe by angrily lecturing the class about not hurting her feelings, maybe by telling a parable that makes the point more deftly—but the fact is (so it seems) that you need to read the riot act. This is a time when even young children must take some responsibility to avoid causing hurt. Even second grade is not too early to learn the lesson.

Still, you can predict what the effects will be. A few children will get it, maybe. More are just going to "really feel sorry" for the poor kid, making both her and themselves terribly self-conscious. Others will retreat into sullenness. A few will put on a show of care but keep on taunting her behind your back, maybe even with sharper (because hidden) twists of the knife. And she herself will be even more embarrassed and hurt.

Is there any other way? Are there alternative ways to approach the whole situation so that the class begins to learn the right kind of sensitivity and care but does not end up feeling strained or stuck? Think about it. Really, what would *you* do?

> The next morning, when their teacher walked into class, all the children were sitting in their seats, some still tittering about the girl who had no hair, while she shrank into her chair. "Good morning, children," the teacher said, smiling warmly in her familiar way of greeting them. She took off her coat and scarf. Her head was completely bald.
>
> After that, a rash of children begged their parents to let them cut their hair. And whenever a child came to class with short hair, newly bobbed, all the children laughed merrily, not out of fear but out of the joy of the game. And everybody's hair grew back at the same time.

How wonderful—and how ethical! This teacher did something transformative and memorable, and far more powerful than a lecture would have been. By shaving her own head, she invited the children into an entirely new way of relating to the child with no hair. She showed them that there is something to do besides gape at her or feel sorry for her. The bald child was

no longer a problem or an object of pity, but a playmate with options, just like she was before. Maybe even better. The possibility of a whole new kind of solidarity (not to mention fun) opens up.

What a creative teacher! Would that all our teachers were like her—would that we were like her ourselves. And in all seriousness: why not? Another kind of ethical learning, not so familiar as systematic and critical skills but arguably just as important, is creative thinking. It turns out to be a genuinely learnable skill, as well. (Don't even *think* of saying, "You can't learn creativity." How do you know until you've tried?)

What if even the most seemingly "stuck" situations have totally unexpected possibilities, ways out or beyond that are far outside the range of options we usually consider? Suppose we could find whole new options or ways of thinking about assisted suicide, or justice, or environmental ethics? What kinds of skills and vision does it take to begin to discover them?

DIALOGUE AND RESPONSIVENESS

Finally, ethics is a learning experience because it invites and requires us to develop our skills at both dialogue and responsiveness to others *in practice*.

It's sad and certainly ironic that we have such trouble talking or debating respectfully and productively about ethical disagreements. Nonetheless, notoriously, we do. Abortion, affirmative action, animal rights, assisted suicide. . . .: that's just the A's, and already we have four totally polarized issues on which even otherwise perfectly lovely and reasonable people apparently cannot manage to begin to talk decently to each other. Ironically, it seems that in ethics itself we have great difficulty being ethical: that is, actually listening to one another and honoring our relationship as we work together toward constructive solutions.

Still, as we'll see, these are learnable skills too. Sometimes it doesn't even take two to tango—one is enough. So why not *you*?

Responsiveness also takes some learning. It is not just a matter of feeling sympathy for others, though of course that is a fine start (and also is a skill that improves with practice). As well, it means knowing how to get involved and make a difference: how to make yourself an ethical change-maker and how to join change-making communities.

Many people feel unable to make a difference in a world as complex and fast-changing as ours. Young people, especially, like students, may feel this way. "What can *I* do?" The answer, actually, is: quite a lot. It's just that putting ethics into action in this way takes a little more attention to method and opportunities than we are usually offered. It turns out that there are many ways to do so, some of them not just equally available to young people and students but *more* available to you. Some attention to these will complete your ethical toolbox—anyway, for now!

REPORT FROM MY STUDENTS

I ask my students what they've learned about ethics in the last few years. Only a few say that very little has changed for them. More say that not so much has changed yet, but they're looking forward to it. Most say that they *have* changed, ethically, sometimes in ways they could never have predicted. They travel, for fun maybe, but come back with whole new ideas about life. They learn about some new subject and have to change their ways. They have a friend or a family member who has an accident or a challenged child, and suddenly they have both more sympathy for others and more passion for the moment. Some learn the hard way to see people beyond labels and categories: race categories, sexual orientation, politics. The phrase, "They're people just like me" keeps coming up—something we know (we know the words, anyway) and yet, often, don't quite "know" well enough. This too must actually be learned, perhaps again and again, and not just by young people.

It turns out that the story of ethics itself is continuously unfolding. The idea of rights, for example, which most of us take for granted, is a piece of ethical theory that was literally revolutionary in the 18th century. On July 4 we shoot off fireworks and celebrate the Declaration of Independence as if it were the most natural and obvious thing. But it was a radical document in its time—after all, it started a revolution—and even now we struggle to realize the full promise of "all [people] are created equal."

My students, like you, see new ethical perspectives arising. Instead of Declarations of Independence we are now beginning to see Declarations of *Inter*dependence: the insistence that humans are deeply dependent on the rest of the biosphere for health, wealth, and, indeed, our very survival—and that it would therefore be a good idea to treat nature with more respect. "Environmental ethics" itself is a coming field. Forty years ago whales were being slaughtered all over the high seas, and no one recycled anything. Young people now can listen to whale songs on CD, whale hunting is banned (though some still goes on), and recycling bins are everywhere. What's next?

Other unheard-of issues will be coming up, such as an entire range of thorny and unprecedented questions about cloning and genetic engineering. Old issues will come up in new forms, such as questions about privacy rights in an age preoccupied with security. In personal and professional life, "just getting by" by current standards is soon likely to be nowhere near enough. Ethical norms for managers and CEOs are changing so fast that some of yesterday's accepted behavior is already becoming grounds for dismissal, or even jail. New ideals are arising—for work, for the place of older people in a new world, for diversity and tolerance and also for the reaffirmation of certain traditional values. My students, like you, want to be ready. An ethical toolbox should help!

READING 1

"It Was Almost Like Being Born Again"

C. P. ELLIS

AS TOLD TO STUDS TERKEL IN
AMERICAN DREAMS: LOST AND FOUND

C. P. ELLIS (1927–2005) was a North Carolina segregationist and Ku Klux Klan member who became a civil rights activist and union organizer, through a series of experiences he traces here. Ellis speaks here with Studs Terkel (1912–2008), a beloved broadcaster and oral historian who published many books of interviews like these on innumerable topics with people from all walks of life. This one, from his *American Dreams*, is surely one of his most remarkable.

Ask yourself how Ellis managed to change so much. How does he find his way around the endless temptations and pressures to stay where and what he is? What does he have to *fight* in order to keep on opening his mind? And what has happened by the time he comes to the point of saying, "It was almost like being born again. It was a new life. . ."?

My father worked in a textile mill in Durham. He died at forty-eight years old. It was probably from cotton dust. Back then, we never heard of brown lung. I was about seventeen years old and had a mother and sister depending on somebody to make a livin'. It was just barely enough insurance to cover his burial. I had to quit school and go to work. I was about eighth grade when I quit.

My father worked hard but never had enough money to buy decent clothes. When I went to school, I never seemed to have adequate clothes to wear. I always left school late afternoon with a sense of inferiority. The other kids had nice clothes, and I just had what Daddy could buy. I still got some of those inferiority feelin's now that I have to overcome once in a while.

I loved my father. He would go with me to ball games. We'd go fishin' together. I was really ashamed of the way he'd dress. He would take this money and give it to me instead of putting it on

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himself. I always had the feeling about somebody looking at him and makin' fun of him and makin' fun of me. I think it had to do somethin' with my life. . .

All my life, I had work, never a day without work, worked all the overtime I could get and still could not survive financially. I began to say there's somethin' wrong with this country. I worked my butt off and just never seemed to break even.

I was workin' a bread route. The highest I made one week was seventy-five dollars. The rent on our house was about twelve dollars a week. I will never forget: outside of this house was a 265-gallon oil drum, and I never did get enough money to fill up that oil drum. What I would do every night, I would run up to the store and buy five gallons of oil and climb up the ladder and pour it in that 265-gallon drum. I could hear that five gallons when it hits the bottom of that oil drum, splatters, and it sounds like it's nothin' in there. But it would keep the house warm for the night. Next day you'd have to do the same thing.

I left the bread route with fifty dollars in my pocket. I went to the bank and I borrowed four thousand dollars to buy the service station. I worked seven days a week, open and close, and finally had a heart attack. Just about two months before the last payments of that loan. My wife had done the best she could to keep it runnin'. Tryin' to come out of that hole, I just couldn't do it.

I really began to get bitter. I didn't know who to blame. I tried to find somebody. I began to blame it on black people. I had to hate somebody. Hatin' America is hard to do because you can't see it to hate it. You gotta have somethin' to look at to hate. (Laughs.) The natural person for me to hate would be black people, because my father before me was a member of the Klan. As far as he was concerned, it was the savior of the white people. It was the only organization in the world that would take care of the white people. So I began to admire the Klan.

I got active in the Klan while I was at the service station. Every Monday night, a group of men would come by and buy a Coca-Cola, go back to the car, take a few drinks, and come back and stand around talkin'. I couldn't help but wonder: Why are these dudes comin' out every Monday? They said they were with the Klan and have meetings close-by. Would I be interested? Boy, that was an opportunity I really looked forward to! To be part of somethin'. I joined the Klan, went from member to chaplain, from chaplain to vice-president, from vice-president to president. The title is exalted cyclops.

The first night I went with the fellas, they knocked on the door and gave the signal. They sent some robed Klansmen to talk to

me and give me some instructions. I was led into a large meeting room, and this was the time of my life! It was thrilling. Here's a guy who's worked all his life and struggled all his life to be something, and here's the moment to be something. I will never forget it. Four robed Klansmen led me into the hall. The lights were dim, and the only thing you could see was an illuminated cross. I knelt before the cross. I had to make certain vows and promises. We promised to uphold the purity of the white race, fight communism, and protect white womanhood. After I had taken my oath, there was loud applause goin' throughout the buildin', musta been at least four hundred people. For this one little ol' person. It was a thrilling moment for C. P. Ellis. . . .

I can understand why people join extreme right-wing or left-wing groups. They're in the same boat I was. Shut out. Deep down inside, we want to be part of this great society. Nobody listens, so we join these groups. . . .

This was the time when the civil rights movement was really beginnin' to peak. The blacks were beginnin' to demonstrate and picket downtown stores. I never will forget some black lady I hated with a purple passion. Ann Atwater. Every time I'd go downtown, she'd be leadin' a boycott. How I hated—pardon the expression, I don't use it much now—how I just hated that black nigger. (Laughs.) Big, fat, heavy woman. She'd pull about eight demonstrations, and first thing you know they had two, three blacks at the checkout counter. Her and I have had some pretty close confrontations.

I felt very big, yeah. (Laughs.) We're more or less a secret organization. We didn't want anybody to know who we were, and I began to do some thinkin'. What am I hidin' for? I've never been convicted of anything in my life. I don't have any court record. What am I, C. P. Ellis, as a citizen and a member of the United Klansmen of America? Why can't I go to the city council meeting and say: "This is the way we feel about the matter? We don't want you to purchase mobile units to set in our schoolyards. We don't want niggers in our schools."

We began to come out in the open. We would go to the meetings, and the blacks would be there and we'd be there. It was a confrontation every time. I didn't hold back anything. We began to make some inroads with the city councilmen and county commissioners. They began to call us friend. Call us at night on the telephone: "C. P., glad you came to that meeting last night." They didn't want integration either, but they did it secretively, in order to get elected. They couldn't stand up openly and say it, but they were glad somebody was sayin' it. We visited some of the city leaders in their home and talk to 'em privately. It wasn't long before

councilmen would call me up: "The blacks are comin' up tonight and makin' outrageous demands. How about some of you people showin' up and have a little balance?" I'd get on the telephone: "The niggers is comin' to the council meeting tonight. Persons in the city's called me and asked us to be there."

We'd load up our cars and we'd fill up half the council chambers, and the blacks the other half. During these times, I carried weapons to the meetings, outside my belt. We'd go there armed. We would wind up just hollerin' and fussin' at each other. What happened? As a result of our fightin' one another, the city council still had their way. They didn't want to give up control to the blacks nor the Klan. They were usin' us.

I remember one Monday night Klan meeting. I said something was wrong. Our city fathers were using us. And I didn't like to be used. The reactions of the others was not too pleasant: "Let's just keep fightin' them niggers."

I'd go home at night and I'd have to wrestle with myself. I'd look at a black person walkin' down the street, and the guy'd have ragged shoes or his clothes would be worn. That began to do somethin' to me inside. I went through this for about six months. I felt I just had to get out of the Klan. But I wouldn't get out.

Then something happened. The state AFL-CIO received a grant from the Department of HEW, a $78,000 grant: how to solve racial problems in the school system. I got a telephone call from the president of the state AFL-CIO. "We'd like to get some people together from all walks of life." I said: "All walks of life? Who you talkin' about?" He said: "Blacks, whites, liberals, conservatives, Klansmen, NAACP people."

I said: "No way am I comin' with all those niggers. I'm not gonna be associated with those type of people." A White Citizens Council guy said: "Let's go up there and see what's goin' on. It's tax money bein' spent." I walk in the door, and there was a large number of blacks and white liberals. I knew most of 'em by face 'cause I seen 'em demonstratin' around town. Ann Atwater was there. (Laughs.) I just forced myself to go in and sit down.

The meeting was moderated by a great big black guy who was bushy-headed. (Laughs.) That turned me off. He acted very nice. He said: "I want you all to feel free to say anything you want to say." Some of the blacks stand up and say it's white racism. I took all I could take. I asked for the floor and I cut loose. I said: "No, sir, it's black racism. If we didn't have niggers in the schools, we wouldn't have the problems we got today."

I will never forget. Howard Clements, a black guy, stood up. He said: "I'm certainly glad C. P. Ellis come because he's the most

honest man here tonight." I said: "What's that nigger tryin' to do?" (Laughs.) At the end of that meeting, some blacks tried to come up shake my hand, but I wouldn't do it. I walked off.

Second night, same group was there. I felt a little more easy because I got some things off my chest. The third night, after they elected all the committees, they want to elect a chairman. Howard Clements stood up and said: "I suggest we elect two co-chairpersons." Joe Beckton, executive director of the Human Relations Commission, just as black as he can be, he nominated me. There was a reaction from some blacks. Nooo. And, of all things, they nominated Ann Atwater, that big old fat black gal that I had just hated with a purple passion, as co-chairman. I thought to myself: Hey, ain't no way I can work with that gal. Finally, I agreed to accept it, "cause at this point, I was tired of fightin', either for survival or against black people or against Jews or against Catholics.

A Klansman and a militant black woman, co-chairmen of the school committee. It was impossible. How could I work with her? But after about two or three days, it was in our hands. We had to make it a success. This give me another sense of belongin', a sense of pride. This helped this inferiority feelin' I had. A man who has stood up publicly and said he despised black people, all of a sudden he was willin' to work with 'em. Here's a chance for a low-income white man to be somethin'. In spite of all my hatred for blacks and Jews and liberals, I accepted the job. Her and I began to reluctantly work together. (Laughs.) She had as many problems workin' with me as I had workin' with her.

One night, I called her: "Ann, you and I should have a lot of differences and we got 'em now. But there's somethin' laid out here before us, and if it's gonna be a success, you and I are gonna have to make it one. Can we lay aside some of these feelin's?" She said: "I'm willing if you are." I said: "Let's do it."

My old friends would call me at night: "C. P., what the hell is wrong with you? You're sellin' out the white race." This begin to make me have guilt feelin's. Am I doin' right? Am I doin' wrong? Here I am all of a sudden makin' an about-face and tryin' to deal with my feelin's, my heart. My mind was beginnin' to open up. I was beginnin' to see what was right and what was wrong. I don't want the kids to fight forever.

We were gonna go ten nights. By this time, I had went to work at Duke University, in maintenance. Makin' very little money. Terry Sanford give me this ten days off with pay. He was president of Duke at the time. He knew I was a Klansman and realized the importance of blacks and whites getting along.

I said: "If we're gonna make this thing a success, I've got to get to my kind of people." The low-income whites. We walked the streets of Durham, and we knocked on doors and invited people. Ann was goin' into the black community. They just wasn't respondin' to us when we made these house calls. Some of 'em were cussin' us out. "You're sellin' us out, Ellis, get out of my door. I don't want to talk to you." Ann was gettin' the same response from blacks: "What are you doin' messin' with that Klansman?"

One day, Ann and I went back to the school and we sat down. We began to talk and just reflect. Ann said: "My daughter came home cryin' every day. She said her teacher was makin' fun of me in front of the other kids." I said: "Boy, the same thing happened to my kid. White liberal teacher was makin' fun of Tim Ellis's father, the Klansman. In front of other peoples. He came home cryin'." At this point—(he pauses, swallows hard, stifles a sob)—I begin to see, here we are, two people from the far ends of the fence, havin' identical problems, except hers bein' black and me bein' white. From that moment on, I tell ya, that gal and I worked together good. I began to love the girl, really. (He weeps.)

The amazing thing about it, her and I, up to that point, had cussed each other, bawled each other, we hated each other. Up to that point, we didn't know each other. We didn't know we had things in common.

We worked at it, with the people who came to these meetings. They talked about racism, sex education, about teachers not bein' qualified. After seven, eight nights of real intense discussion, these people, who'd never talked to each other before, all of a sudden came up with resolutions. It was really somethin', you had to be there to get the tone and feelin' of it.

At that point, I didn't like integration, but the law says you do this and I've got to do what the law says, okay? We said: "Let's take these resolutions to the school board." The most disheartening thing I've ever faced was the school system refused to implement any one of these resolutions. These were recommendations from the people who pay taxes and pay their salaries.

I thought they were good answers. Some of 'em I didn't agree with, but I been in this thing from the beginning, and whatever comes of it, I'm gonna support it. Okay, since the school board refused, I decided I'd just run for the school board.

I spent eighty-five dollars on the campaign. The guy runnin' against me spent several thousand. I really had nobody on my side. The Klan turned against me. The low-income whites turned against me. The liberals didn't particularly like me. The blacks

were suspicious of me. The blacks wanted to support me, but they couldn't muster up enough to support a Klansman on the school board. (Laughs.) But I made up my mind that what I was doin' was right, and I was gonna do it regardless what anybody said.

I was invited to the Democratic women's social hour as a candidate. Didn't have but one suit to my name. Had it six, seven, eight years. I had it cleaned, put on the best shirt I had and a tie. Here were all this high-class wealthy candidates shakin' hands. I walked up to the mayor and stuck out my hand. He give me that handshake with that rag type of hand. He said: "C. P., I'm glad to see you." But I could tell by his handshake he was lyin' to me. This was botherin' me. I know I'm a low-income person. I know I'm not wealthy. I know they were sayin': "What's this little ol' dude runnin' for school board?" Yet they had to smile and make like they're glad to see me. I begin to spot some black people in that room. I automatically went to 'em and that was a firm handshake. They said: "I'm glad to see you, C. P." I knew they meant it—you can tell about a handshake.

Every place I appeared, I said I will listen to the voice of the people. I will not make a major decision until I first contacted all the organizations in the city. I got 4,640 votes. The guy beat me by two thousand. Not bad for eighty-five bucks and no constituency.

The whole world was openin' up, and I was learnin' new truths that I had never learned before. I was beginnin' to look at a black person, shake hands with him, and see him as a human bein'. I hadn't got rid of all this stuff. I've still got a little bit of it. But somethin' was happenin' to me.

It was almost like bein' born again. It was a new life. I didn't have these sleepless nights I used to have when I was active in the Klan and slippin' around at night. I could sleep at night and feel good about it. I'd rather live now than at any other time in history. It's a challenge.

Back at Duke, doin' maintenance, I'd pick up my tools, fix the commode, unstop the drains. But this got in my blood. Things weren't right in this country, and what we done in Durham needs to be told. I was so miserable at Duke, I could hardly stand it. I'd go to work every morning just hatin' to go.

My whole life had changed. I got an eighth-grade education, and I wanted to complete high school. Went to high school in the afternoons on a program called PEP—Past Employment Progress. I was about the only white in class, and the oldest. I begin to read about biology. I'd take my books home at night, 'cause I was determined to get through. Sure enough, I graduated. I got the diploma at home. . . .

Last year, I ran for business manager of the union. He's elected by the workers. The guy that ran against me was black, and our membership is seventy-five percent black. I thought: Claiborne, there's no way you can beat that black guy. People know your background. Even though you've made tremendous strides, those black people are not gonna vote for you. You know how much I beat him? Four to one. (Laughs.)

The company used my past against me. They put out letters with a picture of a robe and a cap: Would you vote for a Klansman? They wouldn't deal with the issues. I immediately called for a mass meeting. I met with the ladies at an electric component plant. I said: "Okay, this is Claiborne Ellis. This is where I come from. I want you to know right now, you black ladies here, I was at one time a member of the Klan. I want you to know, because they'll tell you about it."

I invited some of my old black friends. I said: "Brother Joe, Brother Howard, be honest now and tell these people how you feel about me." They done it. (Laughs.) Howard Clements kidded me a little bit. He said: "I don't know what I'm doin' here, supportin' an ex-Klansman." (Laughs.) He said: I know what C. P. Ellis come from. I knew him when he was. I knew him as he grew, and growed with him. I'm tellin' you now: follow, follow this Klansman." (He pauses, swallows hard.) "Any questions?" "No," the black ladies said. "Let's get on with the meeting, we need Ellis." (He laughs and weeps.) Boy, black people sayin' that about me. I won one thirty-four to forty-one. Four to one.

It makes you feel good to go into a plant and butt heads with professional union busters. You see black people and white people join hands to defeat the racist issues they use against people. They're tryin' the same things with the Klan. It's still happenin' today. Can you imagine a guy who's got an adult high school diploma runnin' into professional college graduates who are union busters? I gotta compete with 'em. I work seven days a week, nights and on Saturday and Sunday. The salary's not that great, and if I didn't care, I'd quit. But I care and I can't quit. I got a taste of it. (Laughs.)

I tell people there's a tremendous possibility in this country to stop wars, the battles, the struggles, the fights between people. People say: "That's an impossible dream. You sound like Martin Luther King." An ex-Klansman who sounds like Martin Luther King. (Laughs.) I don't think it's an impossible dream. It's happened in my life. It's happened in other people's lives in America.

I don't know what's ahead of me. I have no desire to be a big union official. I want to be right out here in the field with the

workers. I want to walk through their factory and shake hands with that man whose hands are dirty. I'm gonna do all that one little ol' man can do. I'm fifty-two years old, and I ain't got many years left, but I want to make the best of 'em.

FOR REVIEW

1. How does this text define ethics? (Be exact.)
2. What are the three senses in which ethics "takes care"?
3. What is the difference between them?
4. "Remember who you are!" What does this mean?
5. What are "basic needs"?
6. What are "legitimate expectations"?
7. How can systematic thinking serve ethics?
8. How can critical thinking serve ethics?
9. How can creative thinking serve ethics?
10. Give an example of ethical growth in an individual. Why is it ethical? Why is it growth?
11. Give an example of ethical growth in our society. Why is it ethical? Why is it growth?
12. How did C. P. Ellis transform from a committed segregationist to a civil rights activist?

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1.1 FOR REFLECTION

What experiences and expectations do you bring to the study of ethics? What did you expect when you signed up for this course and first cracked the covers of this book? Are you going to find ethics challenging and inviting in ways you didn't expect? What hopes and fears do you bring to this new study?

What events in your life were occasions for ethical learning? What did you learn? What made that learning possible? How specifically do you think you have changed, morally speaking? How do you expect to change in the future?

Look for biographies or autobiographies of people you admire (and maybe some of people you don't) and pay attention to the ways in which they learned and changed—that is, pay attention to what made learning and change possible for them. Or interview some people you know or could contact, asking the same questions: What have been major ethical changes in your life? Why did those changes happen? Were they hard? Why? How do you feel about them now that you look back at them? What advice do you have for younger people looking ahead to such changes in their own lives?

1.2 LIMBERING UP

Here is a range of varied and probably unexpected questions—just to think about, for now, as we begin a broad and open-ended engagement with ethics, and also specifically to open class discussion or for reflective writing projects. Pick some that interest you. Take them in an open-ended way—*not* to nail down some ethical decision right now, but just to explore with some curiosity and good humor (get in the habit!), discuss with each other, and then hold in mind as we proceed through the book (we will revisit some of them).

■ SEVEN GENERATIONS

What specifically do you think a "seven generations" view might change? Or, to put it another way: What are we doing right now that cannot be sustained for at least seven generations? How would the world look if we stopped doing those things? That is, what are the alternatives?

Try to be imaginative here. Don't just imagine the world without certain unsustainable practices. Consider what an inventive world might do *instead*.

Ask around a bit. For at least a three-generation view, ask your own grandparents what they think. If they are unavailable, or in any case, you can ask some other grandparents. Online you can contact the International Council of the Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers at www.grandmotherscouncil.com. Email them a question.

■ BLIND SPOTS

With today's moral consciousness we look back and wonder how people in the past could have been so morally blind: to racism and sexism, for example, which were simply taken for granted, in the most extreme forms, for centuries. Animal-rights advocates sometimes wonder whether our treatment of other animals will not seem equally unbelievable to future generations. Already it does to some of us.

For decades it was very difficult or impossible for dying people to get morphine to ease or block their sometimes immense pain, even though morphine

has long been known to be the best painkiller available and is very easy to make, and for pennies a pill. Doctors were averse to prescribing it for fear of addiction. In America this aversion arose partly because morphine was indeed overprescribed, especially for injuries during the Civil War. A large number of addicts were created, suffering side effects and withdrawal agonies as a result. Most modern medical sources argue, however, that the risks of addiction can be managed with proper dosing, and that addiction, if it does occur, can be reversed.

In any case, these considerations surely do not apply to dying people. For them, addiction is not an issue. Yet they were denied access as well, and suffered greatly as a result. Again, the question: How could those doctors have been so blind? And it's not over yet. In recent decades, Western doctors have become much more willing to use morphine liberally as a painkiller for dying people—though many argue that we are still not liberal enough. A certain moral prejudice against "drugs" remains, as the continuing unease over medical marijuana also attests. Meanwhile the problem persists in much of the rest of the world, compounded by the unfortunate history of opiates. As *Time* magazine remarks, "in East Asia, where European colonial powers once used opiates to subdue much of the population of Indochina, governments retain an almost pathological aversion to opiates of any kind" (Martha Overland, "Morphine Remains Scarce for Pain Sufferers WorldWide," *Time,* June 7, 2010, http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1993375,00.html, accessed September 2, 2016. Read the whole article for more). But the consequence is that many people still die in misery.

Of course, one of the paradoxes of blind spots is that the people who have them can't tell. Otherwise they wouldn't be *blind* spots, obviously. Yet we can wonder—we can suspect them indirectly. Surely we are unlikely to be the first generation of people to live with perfectly clear moral vision. We still have blind spots! Knowing this, what do you think they might be? What kinds of moral blindness (not necessarily just about drugs) might still be the accepted wisdom today? Why?

■ DRUGS

Speaking of drugs, here is a (seemingly) much simpler question. What if there were a cheap, legal, "up" hallucinogenic drug that genuinely had no side effects? What moral objections, if any, would remain?

■ SHOULD YOUR DRIVERLESS CAR KILL YOU?

Computer-controlled cars are on the way: vehicles that can drive themselves under most circumstances. This means that they will have to be programmed to make their own choices in a variety of circumstances: under what kinds of conditions to choose to pass, slow down, exceed or not exceed speed limits, and on and on. And: what to do in impending accident situations. When some

collision or accident is inevitable, how should the car decide what to do? If it has the choice, will your autonomous car risk killing you (the driver) or, say, pedestrians on the street?

According to a recent survey,

> 76% of participants said that it would be more ethical for self-driving cars to sacrifice one passenger rather than kill 10 pedestrians. But just 23% said it would be preferable to sacrifice their passenger when only one pedestrian could be saved. And only 19% they would buy a self-driving car if it meant a family member might be sacrificed for the greater good. ("Ethics Dilemmas May Hold Back Autonomous Cars," *The Sun*, June 24, 2016, http://www.thesundaily.my/news/1849631.)

What do you make of this data? (Read the whole article for more.)

And, by the way, quite apart from your potential autonomous car, what would *you yourself* do faced with such split-second choices? Would you sacrifice yourself to keep from killing a pedestrian? Why or why not?

■ GETTING UNSTUCK?

Take some painful and "stuck" contemporary moral issues—abortion is one but certainly not the only possible example—and deliberately and creatively look for some alternative possible approaches, off the scale of "pro" or "con." Look for alternative approaches *now:* Are there organizations, say, working on reconciliation, or alternative ways of framing the problem so that it doesn't come up in so destructive a way? How is abortion, for example, dealt with in societies that do not have the polarized kind of abortion debate we have? (Again, this is *not* an invitation to replay the usual abortion debate. Instead, can you think of any other, very different ethical approaches?) What about, say, welfare dependency? Any types of solutions that are *entirely* different from the usual agenda of cutting benefits and making welfare tougher to get?

■ CREATIVE ANTI-RACISM

Think back to the teacher who shaved her head in solidarity with a young student who was being singled out for having lost her hair to chemotherapy—a dramatic gesture that was also very creative. Now consider the possibilities for this kind of creativity to other instances of injustice and prejudice that you/we regularly encounter. Racism, for example. Can you think of unexpected and dramatic ways to highlight and challenge racial injustice and prejudice?

There might be ways to directly transpose this teacher's strategy to the problem of racism. (Like what?) But don't confine yourself just to those. What else might be possible that is off the usual scales? Look around and see what kinds of anti-racism work are already happening, nationally and in your area

as well. What would be creative next steps with some of this work? Does C. P. Ellis's story give you any ideas?

Please note that one of the especially effective features of this teacher's action is that it immediately invited the rest of the class into some visible and appealing alternative. It didn't play on guilt or begin with moralizing, but opened up an entirely different way of seeing. What kinds of actions might have a similar effect when racism is concerned?

■ JUSTICE AS FAIRNESS

Try designing a company without knowing what your own status will be within it. If you don't know whether you'll be a janitor or a CEO, how will you set up your company's decision-making processes? Likewise, if you're really ambitious, try designing a whole economic or political system under the same kind of "veil of ignorance"—without knowing what your role will be once the system is set up. If you don't know whether you'll be a Rockefeller or a disadvantaged minority-group member, a founder or a recent immigrant, a movie star or a bag lady, how will you decide to distribute power? Who will have what kind of decision-making roles? How will your society take care of the needy? Remember, you might be one of them . . . but then again, you might be a well-off suburbanite uninterested in higher taxes.

How does your answer under the "veil of ignorance" differ from your answer when you do know who you are? Which way of asking the question do you think is more ethical? Why?

(This thought-experiment is borrowed from *A Theory of Justice*, a famous book by the ethical and political philosopher John Rawls [1921–2002]. We will return to it in more detail later in **Going Farther** #7. For now, though, don't look ahead—just take it in your own terms and see what emerges from your own thinking and discussion.)

■ ETERNAL LIFE

Imagine that people lived forever. Would that be wonderful? Awful? How would we adjust? Totally switch identities every few hundred years? (Would you want to be the same person forever?) Would some people want out? What about you? What might be some of the effects on ethics as we know it? Would eternal life actually be a good thing?

■ GENERATION STARSHIPS

If humans are to reach potentially habitable planets of even the closest stars, huge starships will probably have to be sent out that will in effect be mini-worlds. The trip may take centuries—and thus multiple generations. After

the first generation, the people who find themselves on this trip will have no choice about it—or about quite a number of other things, such as the need to have children, pursue a fairly small range of jobs, keep the ship running, and so on. This raises all manner of questions, but one ethical question is: Is this fair? By what right do we lock future generations into such a constrained situation, something they did not and cannot choose?

Then again, what really is the difference (*is* there a difference?) between obligating future generations by sending out such a "generation" starship and obligating future generations by, say, knowingly changing the climate? (Suppose the starship takes, say, seven generations.) For that matter, don't we "obligate" future generations in some sense no matter *what* we do? But if so, are there ethically better and worse forms of such obligations?

Finally, while we're on such science-fiction topics, how about this one: If we were to have to pick the crew of such a ship—or, let's say, just one or a few people to represent the human race (or, Earth as a whole), to some alien extraterrestrial civilization, a first envoy to the stars—who should it be? Can you name an individual or a kind of person? Why? Is this an ethical question, at least in part?

NOTES

For more on the "seven generations" idea, see Oren Lyons (b. 1930, Chief of the Onondaga Nation), "An Iroquois Perspective," in Christopher Vecsey and Robert W. Venables, editors, *American Indian Environments: Ecological Issues in Native American History* (Ithaca, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), pp. 173–174. The Constitution, or "Great Binding Law," of the Iroquois Nations is online at www.indigenouspeople.net/iroqcon.htm (see section 28).

For a good first sense of the range of practical ethics, check out EthicsWeb Canada at http://www.ethicsweb.ca/resources/. An excellent though now somewhat dated resource, also including more general philosophical debates and issues, is Lawrence Hinman's "Ethics Updates" website at ethics.sandiego.edu.

GOING FARTHER #1
TOWARD AN INTERPERSONAL ETHICS

This is the first of eighteen sections in between the chapters of this book that offer ways of "going farther"—as the title says—beyond the offering of the preceding chapter or chapters. Sometimes, as in this first **Going Farther** section, the main content is a reading that extends the chapter in some further direction. Other times it is a more involved exercise than the regular "For Reflection and Discussion" exercises in the chapters proper. Still other **Going Farther** sections offer especially provocative perspectives. Some do all of this at once! Some of them may also be rather more difficult than the regular chapters. Others are just provocatively different. Your instructor may assign some of them along with regular chapters, but of course nothing stops you from reading some or all of them whether assigned or not!

Going Farther #1 will give you a taste of the philosophy of ethics: a taste of the "meta-ethical" ideas that lie behind this book. Broadly speaking, those ideas are *pragmatic*—but this term is used by philosophers in somewhat different ways than it is used in popular and journalistic writing today. The American pragmatist John Dewey (1859–1952) challenged the traditional idea that ethical problems are a kind of puzzle that needs to be solved. On the traditional view, the very point of ethics is to judge actions. For Dewey, by contrast, the point of ethics is to actually improve the world. It is to apply intelligence in a constructive way to what Dewey called "problematic situations"—not some kind of intellectual puzzle, but a large and unsettled region of values in possibly productive tension.

This is why this book offers a large and varied toolbox. Traditional ethical theories have a role, to be sure, but here they will not be presented as contenders for the one great moral truth; rather, simply as one way to help us spell out and understand some of the values at stake. Meanwhile, most importantly, a great many *other* skills and understandings also are essential for intelligently and constructively engaging the moral problems and challenges of the day, as we have just seen, such as critical thinking, dialogue skills, creative problem-solving, and moral vision.

Another inspiration for this book's approach is feminist ethics. Within feminist philosophy generally, ethics naturally takes many forms, but common themes include valuing the traditionally devalued realms identified with women, especially children and family, while at the same time aiming to free women from being restricted to and by them; the importance of caring and relationships (not just, or mainly, independence and freedom); and the tending of those relationships in all their concreteness and variety. (More on this in chapter 8.)

Ethics on both views is fundamentally a way of staying connected and working things out together. It begins—surprise!—with *paying attention*. It moves readily and naturally to various other forms of what we have called *taking care*. Ethics on this understanding is not apt to make sweeping judgments of classes of actions from a supposedly impartial and uninvolved standpoint, but rather to work from inside and propose tentative and partial judgments, and sometimes no judgment at all, so much as reshaping problems so

that they come up in more manageable forms in the first place, or perhaps do not come up at all.

Neither feminists nor pragmatists, moreover, are necessarily persuaded that the way the world is at present is the only way it can be. Some of our ethical (and other) problems come up because of the kind of world we have built, and the power relations within it (including, but not only, between the sexes). The best answer therefore may well be to *change the world!*

READING 2

Selections from *"Moral Understandings"*

MARGARET URBAN WALKER

MARGARET URBAN WALKER (b. 1948) is Professor of Philosophy at Marquette University. She has also taught at Arizona State University, Fordham University, and the Catholic University of Leuven, where she was awarded the Cardinal Mercier chair at the Catholic University of Leuven in 2002, the first woman ever to hold that position.

In these brief excerpts from her influential 1989 article "Moral Understandings," Walker contrasts two general conceptions of ethics. One she calls the "universalist/impersonalist tradition" or "standard model" of ethics. This model pictures individuals "standing before the bar of impersonal truth." Contrasted to this is a conception of ethics that is neither impersonal nor merely personal, but, as she puts it, interpersonal. As a conception with strong feminist and pragmatist roots, this second view is the one that underlies the approach in this book.

Walker's article "Moral Understandings" later became a book, *Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics* (2nd edition, Oxford University Press, 2007). For another ambitious contrast of "standard models" of ethics with alternative feminist and multicultural perspectives, see James Sterba's collection *Ethics: Classical Western Texts in Feminist and Multicultural Perspectives* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

In the words of . . . the nineteenth-century utilitarian philosopher Henry Sidgwick, the goal [of ethics] is systematization of moral understanding, and its ideal of system is that of "precise general

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knowledge of what ought to be" (1907, 1), encoded in "directive rules of conduct" (2) which are "clear and decisive" (199) and "in universal form" (228). The rationale for pursuing a "scientifically complete and systematically reflective form" (425) in morals is that it "corrects" and "supplements" our scattered intuitions, and resolves "uncertainties and discrepancies" in moral judgment. By useful abstraction it steers us away from, in Sidgwick's words, "obvious sources of error" which "disturb the clearness" of moral discernment (214). For Sidgwick, such distractions include complexity of circumstances, personal interests, and habitual sympathies. Thus, according to Sidgwick, only precise and truly universal principles can provide for "perfection of practice no less than for theoretical completeness" (262).

This capsule description of standard intent and methodology aims to bring into relief its very general picture of morality as individuals standing before the bar of impersonal truth. Moral responsibility is envisioned as responsiveness to the impersonal truths in which morality resides, each individual stands justified if he or she can invoke the authority of this impersonal truth, and the moral community of individuals is secured by the conformity (and uniformity) guaranteed by obedience to this higher authority.

. . . The alternative view will not be one of individuals standing singly before the impersonal dicta of Morality, but one of human beings connected in various ways and at various depths responding *to each other* by engaging together in a search for shareable interpretations of their responsibilities, and/or bearable resolutions to their moral binds. These interpretations and resolutions will be constrained not only by how well they protect goods we can share, but also by how well they preserve the very human connections that make the shared process necessary and possible. The long oscillation in Western moral thought between the impersonal and the personal viewpoints is answered by proposing that we consider, fully and in earnest, the *interpersonal* view.

The result . . . is not, then, an "opposite number" or shadow image of impersonalist approaches, it is instead a point of departure for a *variety* of different problematics, investigations, focal concerns, and genres of writing and teaching about ethics . . . These endeavors can, however, be carried out in a cheerfully piecemeal fashion, we need not expect or require the results to eventuate in a comprehensive systematization.

. . . Moral problems on this view are nodal points in progressive histories of mutual adjustment and understanding, not "cases" to be closed by a final verdict of a highest court.

From the alternative view, moral understanding comprises a collection of perceptive, imaginative, appreciative, and expressive

skills and capacities which put and keep us in unimpeded contact with the realities of ourselves and specific others. . . .

The alternative picture also invites us not to be too tempted by the "separate spheres" move of endorsing particularism for personal or intimate relations, universalism for the large-scale or genuinely administrative context, or for dealings with unknown or little-known persons. While principled, generalized treatments may really be the best we can resort to in many cases of the latter sort, it is well to preserve a lively sense of the *moral incompleteness* or inadequacy of these resorts. This is partly to defend ourselves against dispositions to keep strangers strange and outsiders outside, but it is also to prevent our becoming comfortable with essentially distancing, depersonalizing, or paternalistic attitudes which may not really *be* the only resorts if roles and institutions can be shaped to embody expressive and communicative possibilities. It is often claimed that more humanly responsive institutions are not practical (read instrumentally efficient). But if moral-practical intelligence is understood consistently in the alternative way discussed (the way appropriate to relations among persons), it may instead be correct to say that certain incorrigibly impersonal or depersonalizing institutions are too morally impractical to be tolerated. It is crucial to examine how structural features of institutionalized relations—medical personnel, patients and families, teachers, students and parents, case workers and clients, for example—combine with typical situations to enable or deform the abilities of all concerned to hear and to be heard. Some characteristically modern forms of universalist thinking may project a sort of "moral colonialism" (the "subjects" of my moral decisions disappear behind uniform "policies" I must impartially "apply") precisely because they were forged historically with an eye to actual colonization—industrial or imperial.

Finally, this kind of [view] reminds us that styles of moral thinking are not primarily philosophical brain-teasers, data begging for the maximally elegant theoretical construction, but are ways of answering to *other people* in terms of some responsibilities that are commonly recognized or recognizable in some community.

Sedgwick, Henry (1981) [1907]. *The Methods of Ethics*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 7th ed.

GOING FARTHER #2
TWO VIEWS OF ETHICS AND OTHER ANIMALS

Going Farther #2 offers two readings on the subject of the human relation to other animals. Both readings aim to place the eating of animals, in particular, into a larger moral context, to take a larger perspective. You will see that they are very different perspectives! As with the various challenges and topics in Exercise 1.2, take these as an occasion for exploration, not to decide anything or to defend one view against the other. Instead, try to make sense of both, attending to and appreciating the points and the perspectives that you might *not* have thought of before. After the first reading I will suggest some ways to interpret it as a moral perspective—then, for the second, you are on your own.

READING 3

"Am I Blue?"

ALICE WALKER

ALICE WALKER (b. 1944) is an American novelist, short story writer, poet, and activist best known as the author of *The Color Purple*, though she has penned other fine novels too, as well as numerous books of reflective and autobiographical essays. She is certainly not the first storyteller to weigh in on ethical matters. Some have even started moral revolutions. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—the best-selling novel of the 19th century—inspired the anti-slavery movement. Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac* jump-started modern environmental ethics (there is a selection in Reading 21). In general, stories and essays can be powerful ways to bring basic needs and legitimate expectations into view,

even—maybe especially—where we've had trouble seeing them before.

Here is a well-known essay in which Walker struggles with several ethical issues: with the fate of a horse who has become a distant sort of friend, with her commitment to fighting oppression of all sorts, and ultimately, in the very last lines, with diet as an ethical issue. They come together in unexpected and uneasy ways—and she doesn't flinch.

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*"Ain't these tears in these eyes tellin' you?"**

For about three years my companion and I rented a small house in the country that stood on the edge of a large meadow that appeared to run from the end of our deck straight into the mountains. The mountains, however, were quite far away, and between us and them there was, in fact, a town. It was one of the many pleasant aspects of the house that you never really were aware of this.

It was a house of many windows, low, wide, nearly floor to ceiling in the living room, which faced the meadow, and it was from one of these that I first saw our closest neighbor, a large white horse, cropping grass, flipping its mane, and ambling about—not over the entire meadow, which stretched well out of sight of the house, but over the five or so fenced-in acres that were next to the twenty-odd that we had rented. I soon learned that the horse, whose name was Blue, belonged to a man who lived in another town, but was boarded by our neighbors next door. Occasionally, one of the children, usually a stocky teen-ager, but sometimes a much younger girl or boy, could be seen riding Blue. They would appear in the meadow, climb up on his back, ride furiously for ten or fifteen minutes, then get off, slap Blue on the flanks, and not be seen again for a month or more.

There were many apple trees in our yard, and one by the fence that Blue could almost reach. We were soon in the habit of feeding him apples, which he relished, especially because by the middle of summer the meadow grasses—so green and succulent since January—had dried out from lack of rain, and Blue stumbled about munching the dried stalks half-heartedly. Sometimes he would stand very still just by the apple tree, and when one of us came out he would whinny, snort loudly, or stamp the ground. This meant, of course: I want an apple.

It was quite wonderful to pick a few apples, or collect those that had fallen to the ground overnight, and patiently hold them, one by

one, up to his large, toothy mouth. I remained as thrilled as a child by his flexible dark lips, huge, cubelike teeth that crunched the apples, core and all, with such finality, and his high, broad-breasted *enormity*; beside which, I felt small indeed. When I was a child, I used to ride horses, and was especially friendly with one named Nan until the day I was riding and my brother deliberately spooked her and I was thrown, head first, against the trunk of a tree. When I came to, I was in bed and my mother was bending worriedly over me; we silently agreed that perhaps horseback riding was not the safest sport for me. Since then I have walked, and prefer walking to horseback riding—but I had forgotten the depth of feeling one could see in horses' eyes.

I was therefore unprepared for the expression in Blue's. Blue was lonely. Blue was horribly lonely and bored. I was not shocked that this should be the case; five acres to tramp by yourself, endlessly, even in the most beautiful of meadows—and his was—cannot provide many interesting events, and once rainy season turned to dry that was about it. No, I was shocked that I had forgotten that human animals and nonhuman animals can communicate quite well; if we are brought up around animals as children we take this for granted. By the time we are adults we no longer remember. However, the animals have not changed. They are in fact *completed* creations (at least they seem to be, so much more than we) who are not likely *to* change; it is their nature to express themselves. What else are they going to express? And they do. And, generally speaking, they are ignored.

After giving Blue the apples, I would wander back to the house, aware that he was observing me. Were more apples not forthcoming then? Was that to be his sole entertainment for the day? My partner's small son had decided he wanted to learn how to piece a quilt; we worked in silence on our respective squares as I thought . . . .

Well, about slavery: about white children, who were raised by black people, who knew their first all-accepting love from black women, and then, when they were twelve or so, were told they must "forget" the deep levels of communication between themselves and "mammy" that they knew. Later they would be able to relate quite calmly, "My old mammy was sold to another good family." "My old mammy was ———— ————." Fill in the blank. Many more years later a white woman would say: "I can't understand these Negroes, these blacks. What do they want? They're so different from us."

And about the Indians, considered to be "like animals" by the "settlers" (a very benign euphemism for what they actually were), who did not understand their description as a compliment.

And about the thousands of American men who marry Japanese, Korean, Filipina, and other non-English-speaking women and of how happy they report they are, "*blissfully*," until their brides learn to speak English, at which point the marriages tend to fall

apart. What then did the men see, when they looked into the eyes of the women they married, before they could speak English? Apparently only their own reflections.

I thought of society's impatience with the young. "Why are they playing the music so loud?" Perhaps the children have listened to much of the music of oppressed people their parents danced to before they were born, with its passionate but soft cries for acceptance and love, and they have wondered why their parents failed to hear.

I do not know how long Blue had inhabited his five beautiful, boring acres before we moved into our house; a year after we had arrived—and had also traveled to other valleys, other cities, other worlds—he was still there.

But then, in our second year at the house, something happened in Blue's life. One morning, looking out the window at the fog that lay like a ribbon over the meadow, I saw another horse, a brown one, at the other end of Blue's field. Blue appeared to be afraid of it, and for several days made no attempt to go near. We went away for a week. When we returned, Blue had decided to make friends and the two horses ambled or galloped along together, and Blue did not come nearly as often to the fence underneath the apple tree.

When he did, bringing his new friend with him, there was a different look in his eyes. A look of independence, of self-possession, of inalienable *horse*ness. His friend eventually became pregnant. For months and months there was, it seemed to me, a mutual feeling between me and the horses of justice, of peace. I fed apples to them both. The look in Blue's eyes was one of unabashed "this is *it*ness."

It did not, however, last forever. One day, after a visit to the city, I went out to give Blue some apples. He stood waiting, or so I thought, though not beneath the tree. When I shook the tree and jumped back from the shower of apples, he made no move. I carried some over to him. He managed to half-crunch one. The rest he let fall to the ground. I dreaded looking into his eyes—because I had of course noticed that Brown, his partner, had gone—but I did look. If I had been born into slavery, and my partner had been sold or killed, my eyes would have looked like that. The children next door explained that Blue's partner had been "put with him" (the same expression that old people used, I had noticed, when speaking of an ancestor during slavery who had been impregnated by her owner) so that they could mate and she conceive. Since that was accomplished, she had been taken back by her owner, who lived somewhere else.

Will she be back? I asked.

They didn't know.

Blue was like a crazed person. Blue *was,* to me, a crazed person. He galloped furiously, as if he were being ridden, around and around

his five beautiful acres. He whinnied until he couldn't. He tore at the ground with his hooves. He butted himself against his single shade tree. He looked always and always toward the road down which his partner had gone. And then, occasionally, when he came up for apples, or I took apples to him, he looked at me. It was a look so piercing, so full of grief, a look so *human*, I almost laughed (I felt too sad to cry) to think there are people who do not know that animals suffer. People like me who have forgotten, and daily forget, all that animals try to tell us. "Everything you do to us will happen to you; we are your teachers, as you are ours. We are one lesson" is essentially it, I think. There are those who never once have even considered animals' rights: those who have been taught that animals actually want to be used and abused by us, as small children "love" to be frightened, or women "love" to be mutilated and raped. . . . They are the great-grandchildren of those who honestly thought, because someone taught them this: "Women can't think," and "niggers can't faint." But most disturbing of all, in Blue's large brown eyes was a new look, more painful than the look of despair: the look of disgust with human beings, with life; the look of hatred. And it was odd what the look of hatred did. It gave him, for the first time, the look of a beast. And what that meant was that he had put up a barrier within to protect himself from further violence; all the apples in the world wouldn't change that fact.

And so Blue remained, a beautiful part of our landscape, very peaceful to look at from the window, white against the grass. Once a friend came to visit and said, looking out on the soothing view: "And it *would* have to be a *white* horse; the very image of freedom." And I thought, yes, the animals are forced to become for us merely "images" of what they once so beautifully expressed. And we are used to drinking milk from containers showing "contented" cows, whose real lives we want to hear nothing about, eating eggs and drumsticks from "happy" hens, and munching hamburgers advertised by bulls of integrity who seem to command their fate.

As we talked of freedom and justice one day for all, we sat down to steaks. I am eating misery, I thought, as I took the first bite. And spit it out.

ETHICAL OPENINGS IN "AM I BLUE?"

What are the chief moral values that Alice Walker invokes in this essay? How does she speak to basic needs and legitimate expectations? What does she—and what does Blue, through her—tell us about ethics? Whether we agree with her or not is not the question right now: let us simply try to understand her essay as an ethical expression.