The Moral of the Story

AN INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

Ninth Edition

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

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For Craig and my parents

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

—*Design for Living*

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PART 3

How Should I Be? Virtue Ethics

Preface

The ninth edition of *The Moral of the Story* represents 25 years of editions, with the publication year of the first being 1994. It has been a humbling experience for me to contemplate the fact that I have been privileged to teach as well as write about issues that have concerned us for over a quarter of a century—some issues reflecting the changing times and others being timeless discussions about moral issues rooted in our common human nature.

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

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

Organization

Like the previous editions, the ninth edition of *The Moral of the Story* is divided into three major sections. Part 1 introduces the topic of ethics and places the phenomenon of storytelling within the context of moral education and discussion. Part 2 examines the conduct theories of ethical relativism, psychological and

ethical egoism, altruism, utilitarianism, and Kantian deontology, and explores the concepts of personhood, rights, and justice. Part 3 focuses on the subject of virtue theory and contains chapters on Socrates and Plato, Aristotle, contemporary virtue theories in America, theories of authenticity in the Continental tradition, and gender theory. The virtues of courage, compassion, loyalty, and gratitude are examined in detail, and the book concludes with a more detailed discussion of a broad selection of moral issues, applying theories introduced in previous chapters. Each chapter concludes with a set of study questions, a section of Primary Readings with excerpts from classical and contemporary texts, and a section of Narratives, a collection of stories that illustrate the moral issues raised in the chapter. The Primary Readings are selected for their value as discussion topics; they don't necessarily reflect my own views, and I have made no attempt to select readings that cover all possible angles, because of space limitations. The Narratives will be described in more detail below.

Major Changes to the Ninth Edition

Throughout the ninth edition, all examples and discussions reflecting moral and social issues in the news have been updated wherever an update seemed reasonable. However, because of the particularly volatile and adversarial political climate we are currently experiencing, I have opted for minimizing references to the current political situation in the United States as much as possible, rather than plunging into the debate. Whenever it has been unavoidable, I have made every effort to present issues in a fair and nonpartisan manner, true to the (at least approximated) evenhanded style of previous editions. Major changes to the ninth edition include the following: As with every new edition, **Chapter One** has been revised, with a new introduction, reflecting the fact that we still live in a "50/50 nation," morally and politically. The section "Good and Evil" has been updated and expanded to examine current stories of egregiously evil behavior as well as extraordinary selflessness. Finally, the Narratives section now includes a summary of the film *The Eichmann Story*, reflecting the discussion in the chapter about the "banality of evil."

Chapter Two has been updated with current examples of films and television shows illustrating moral problems, including the videogame *Red Dead Redemption 2*. New boxes feature the Superhero phenomenon in entertainment and an update on the moral complexities of the HBO series *Game of Thrones*.

Chapter Three has a new introduction discussing the case of a young American missionary losing his life as a result of intruding on another culture, and updates of other current issues.

Chapter Four updates the actions of individuals giving up their lives to save students and co-workers in mass shootings and acts of terrorism. In addition, the Narratives section now includes a summary of John Steinbeck's classic novel *The Winter of Our Discontent*, a chilling exploration of fundamental selfishness as well as its antidote.

Chapter Five has a new box on utilitarianism and the Enlightenment, as well as a box on the trolley problem, seen from a utilitarian perspective, and the Narrative section now includes a companion story, the "Trolley Problem" episode from the television series *The Good Place*.

Chapter Six has a new box featuring an illustration of the categorical imperative taken from a classic episode of *The Simpsons*, "Bart's Inner Child." In addition, a new box on treating others merely as a means to an end provides examples from current debates including the #MeToo movement.

Chapter Seven has been updated with discussions about cloning and personhood, a reference to recent shootings, a new box on the issue of siblings being organ donors, and a new section on equity. A new Primary Reading has been added, an excerpt from John Rawls' "The Priority of Rights and Ideas of the Good." The Narratives section has a new story, the Academy Award-winning film *Green Book*.

Chapter Eight has a new box Stoicism and its connection to Platonism.

Chapter Nine has a new Primary Reading by Tom Chatfield, *A Balanced Life*.

Chapter Ten now includes a discussion of the college admissions scandal of 2019 as well as updates in the Nietzsche section.

Chapter Eleven has a new box on the virtue (or vice) of *loyalty*, and the Mexican Academy Award-winning film *Roma* has been selected to illustrate the concept.

Chapter Twelve has been updated with references to current discussions concerning gender equality and gender identity as well as a box on Plato's feminism in dispute, and a box on the #MeToo movement. The Narrative section now includes the novel (with reference to the TV series) *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Chapter Thirteen has several thoroughly revised sections, including the renewed debate about abortion in the United States, as well as updates regarding euthanasia, media ethics, just war, animal rights, environmental issues, and the death penalty. A few new boxes have been added, including a box on profit vs. pets (the melamine scandal) and one on Artificial Intelligence. In addition, a new section now addresses the issue of gun control and gun rights.

I would like to mention an issue that has been in effect since the eighth edition: the field of textbook publishing is changing, and some changes have impacted this ninth edition of *The Moral of the Story.* Those readers who have used this book through several editions will notice some changes in the Primary Readings and Narratives sections: Some texts have disappeared, or have been replaced with public-domain translations, paraphrased summaries, and short excerpts. These decisions have been necessary due to the fact that permissions to include lengthy text excerpts in textbooks have become much harder or downright impossible to obtain, and I had no choice but to exclude some texts despite them being a staple in the book for many editions. In addition, I've had to abandon the inclusion of several new, planned primary readings, such as an excerpt from Mary Midgley's "Mythology of Selfishness." As a compromise I have chosen to maintain the presence of such texts in the book by placing detailed descriptions and short excerpts into the chapter text itself, or in the case of narratives (particularly the novels), paraphrasing the stories and keeping brief excerpts of an essential paragraph or two allowed under the public domain notion. I hope I have done those texts justice. In addition, some cartoons have been replaced by others—in some cases because fresh material seemed like a good idea, but in other cases because the cartoons from previous editions were no longer available.

Using the Narratives

The Narratives have been chosen from a wide variety of sources ranging from epic prose, poems, and novels to films, one graphic novel, and new to this edition, a narrative videogame at the request of many students (despite the fact that I am admittedly not a gamer). I wish to emphasize that from a literary and artistic point of view, summaries and excerpts do not do the originals justice; a story worth experiencing, be it a novel, short story, or film, can't be reduced to a mere plot outline or fragment and still retain all of its essence. As Martha Nussbaum says, the form is an inherent part of the story content. Usually, there is more to the story than the bare bones of a moral problem, and in writing these summaries I have had to disregard much of the richness of story and character development. Nevertheless, I have chosen the summary or excerpt format in order to discuss a number of different stories and genres as they relate to specific issues in ethics. Because I believe it is important to show that there is a cross-cultural, historic tradition of exploring moral problems through telling a story, I have opted for a broad selection of Narratives. Each chapter has several Narratives, and some additional narratives—or narratives from previous editions—now appear in boxes within the chapter text, but it is not my intention that the instructor should feel obligated to cover all of them in one course; rather, they should be regarded as options that can be alternated from semester to semester—a method I like to use myself for the sake of variety. There are, of course, other ways than summaries in which stories and ethical theory

can be brought together; one might, for instance, select one or two short stories or films in their original format for class discussion, or make them available to the students for extra credit. I hope that instructors will indeed select a few stories—novels, short stories, or films—for their classes to experience firsthand. However, the Narratives are written so that firsthand experience should not be necessary to a discussion of the problem presented by the story. The summaries and excerpts give readers just enough information to enable them to discuss the moral problem presented. I hope that some readers will become inspired to seek out the originals on their own. In most cases, the ending is important to the moral significance of a story, and whenever that is the case, I include that ending. In cases where the ending is not significant to the moral drama, I have done my best to avoid giving it away because I don't want to be a spoiler.

Because space is limited, I have not been able to include more than a sampling of stories, and I readily admit that my choices are subjective ones; I personally find them interesting as illustrations and effective in a classroom context where students come from many different cultural backgrounds. Because I am a naturalized U.S. citizen, originally a native of Denmark, I have chosen to include a few references to the Scandinavian literary and film tradition. I am fully aware that others might choose other stories or even choose different ethical problems to illustrate, and I am grateful to the many users of the previous eight editions, instructors as well as students, who have let me know about their favorite stories and how they thought this selection of stories might be expanded and improved. The new Narratives reflect some of those suggestions.

As in previous editions, I emphasize that I wholeheartedly welcome e-mails from students as well as instructors who use this book, with relevant comments and suggestions for new stories as well as additional philosophical perspectives: nrosenst@sdccd.edu.

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

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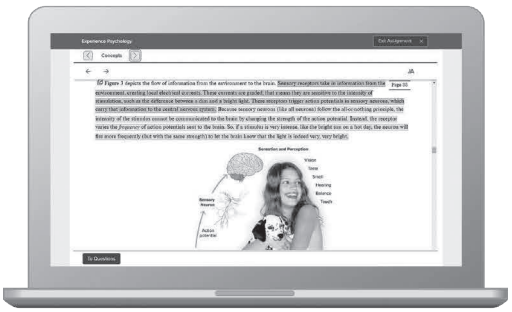

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- Jordan Cunningham, Eastern Washington University

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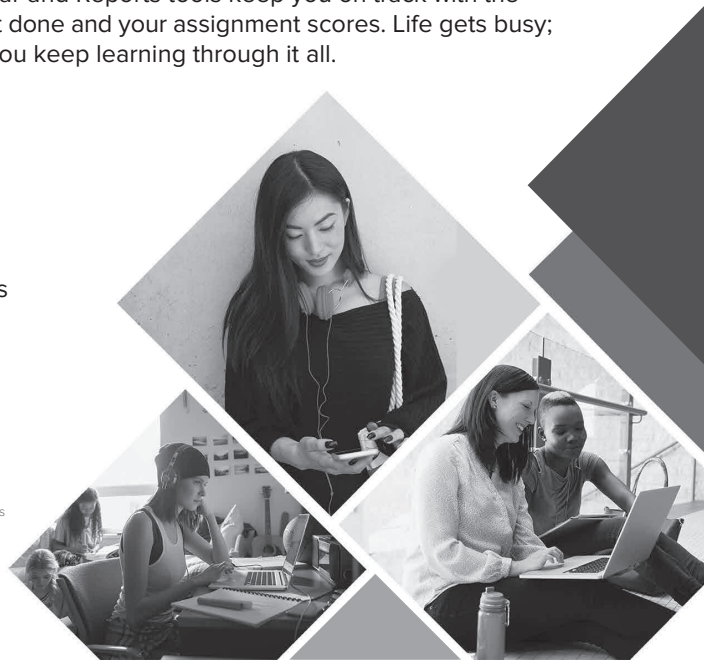

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At Mesa College, we have a biannual *Meeting of the Minds* tradition where philosophy faculty, contract as well as adjuncts, meet and share our thoughts about teaching and engage in debates about classical and current philosophical topics. I want to express my appreciation for the professional enthusiasm of all the philosophy faculty who participate regularly in these meetings. My colleague John Berteaux, philosophy professor at Monterey State University, deserves my heartfelt thanks for being an old friend and colleague from the

adjunct days who shares my concerns for issues in social ethics and who has generously shared his work, including his archive of newspaper columns with me. A special word of appreciation goes to my friend and colleague Harold Weiss, professor of philosophy at Northampton Community College who has been enormously helpful in suggesting new material for past as well as the current edition, including several films I would otherwise not have thought of including. I would like to extend my gratitude to Michael Schwartz, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia, a supportive friend and a source of inspiration over several editions. I appreciate his bold thought that readers of the anniversary issue of *Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations* of which he is joint editor might be interested in reading about my journey through 25 years and 8 editions of *The Moral of the Story*. In addition, I can't express enough relief and thankfulness for the guidance and advice from game master Jessica Humphrey when I was trying to get a grip on the concept of videogames as well as *Dungeons & Dragons* games. She steered me through the conceptual maze of *Red Dead Redemption 1* and *2* and made me understand the potential moral richness of the new story medium.

Because this edition builds upon the previous eight editions, I would like to acknowledge the generous support and suggestions I have received in the past from a very large number of people—friends, colleagues, and other professionals from a wide variety of fields—who have graciously given me their time and assistance. Your input has been invaluable to me, and I am profoundly grateful to you all.

My father, Finn Rosenstand, *raconteur par excellence*, frequently mentioned that if given the choice, he would like to live every single day all over again—something that Nietzsche would have appreciated as a sign that one truly loves life and is not a nay-sayer. Throughout my career as a philosophy instructor, and writer of textbooks and other works, he tirelessly looked for material I might be able to use. As I have mentioned in previous editions, he was instrumental in opening my mind to intellectual curiosity, human compassion, and a passion for history, literature, and film. My appreciation for what he has meant to me has no boundaries.

Most of all, I want to thank my husband, Craig R. Covner, for his strength and loving support. We share a love of American and world history as well as film history, and I appreciate being able to run impressions and ideas by him, and being sure to get a thoughtful and honest response. For four decades, he has put up with my periodic writer's work-mode, always being there for me with patience and a wonderful sense of humor.

Part 1 *The Story as a Tool of Ethics*

Chapter One
Thinking About Values

The Best of Times, the Worst of Times?

Entering into the third decade of the twenty-first century, a future that to some seemed fairly predictable 10 years ago is anything but. A snapshot of the beginning of 2020: the unemployment rate in the United States down to 3.6 percent; the GDP growth rate advancing 2.3 percent, and the S&P 500 (the stock market), while undergoing fluctuation and adjustments, hitting 29,348.10 in February of 2020. American troops coming home from Syria and Afghanistan, with just a small peace-keeping force left; the militant group ISIS, a huge threat to the Middle Eastern region and even the world, seemingly close to being defeated. The commitment to space exploration back on the agenda, both from the U.S. government (NASA) and from the private sector (SpaceX), as well as around the world. In other words, peace and prosperity. And yet, a new virus spreading across the globe, with subsequent stock market unrest; populations on the move from Central America toward the United States, causing border unrest; school shootings and other mass shootings in the United States; weather patterns apparently changing, requiring massive human responses and commitment; the United Kingdom having gone through "Brexit," leaving the European Union, reflecting deep internal political and existential disagreements; funding for science programs in the United States down, and a profound sense of political disagreement within the United States, with an impeached—and acquitted—president, a divided press, and even private citizens of a different political opinion having a hard time engaging in a civil discourse.

Charles Dickens' words from his 1859 novel, *A Tale of Two Cities,* "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," referred to the era of the French Revolution, but once again they seem appropriate for today. Our quick snapshot does not evoke the enormous upheavals of a recession, or a world conflict, or the threats of terror that we have become so familiar with in the first decades of the twenty-first century (upheavals that may again be on the horizon, of course), but instead we see fears of a pandemic, and the political climate of hostility within the United States has reached levels not seen in a generation. We are, once again, aptly described as a "50-50 Nation." The presidential elections in 2000 and 2016 were particularly close. In 2016, the Republican candidate Donald Trump became our 45th president as the clear winner of the electoral vote, while Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton won the popular vote. And at the time of writing this, a new presidential election is underway.

Even if we have "blue states" and "red states" showing up on the electoral map, there are blue and red areas within each state. This is of course politics, and our main topic is going to be ethics and values, but there is a relevant connection: There is a set of moral values commonly associated with Democratic policies, such as being pro-choice/pro-abortion, increased gun control, LGBTQ rights, and scaling back military operations, and another associated with Republican politics generally advocating pro-life policies, pro-gun ownership

rights, and strong support for the military as well as border security. A theory has been voiced by several commentators that there seems to be a drift toward the "left" in the American public, with the gradual acceptance of same-sex marriage, women in combat roles, and concern for intersex equity, but that some viewpoints, often identified as conservative, remain strong, such as support for the 2nd Amendment (gun rights) and border security. These stereotypes don't always hold up, and in addition there is a growing movement of Independents, voters who decline to state a party affiliation on their voter registration form. So it may be misleading to say that the nation is divided down the middle—but it is a clear indication that across this nation we just don't all agree on the details of how one should be a good citizen, other than it is a good thing to have a form of government where the people have the opportunity to vote. So if we're looking for a code of ethics to live by, and even to promote, we should expect that not everyone is going to agree. But what is also commonplace is that we tend to think that those who disagree with us are either stupid, ignorant, or perhaps even evil. Social media are full of such assumptions. And that lends itself to thinking that we, perhaps in fact, are citizens of two cultures within the United States, the culture of liberal values and the culture of conservative values (a pattern known in many other countries with a Western tradition of democracy and right to free speech). Some call it a *culture war*. It has even been labeled a "cold Civil War." So here I have a little recommendation—an introduction of a moral value, if you will: For the sake of a good discussion, whether in the classroom, online, or perhaps just as an internal dialogue with yourself, it may be useful not to jump to the immediate conclusion that people who disagree with you are stupid, ignorant, or evil. As we strive to become a nation of successful diversity, we sometimes forget that *moral and political diversity* also deserves a place alongside diversity of gender, race, religion, economic background, sexual orientation, and so forth. In other words, people have a right to have a wide variety of opinions, and some of these opinions are arrived at through honest and conscientious deliberation. This is where this textbook, true to its previous eight editions, will champion the concept of open-mindedly listening to what the "other side" has to say, even as we may remain convinced of the rationality of our own view. We have little chance of being able to talk with one another and even learn from one another if we keep thinking that everybody who doesn't agree with us is automatically wrong or wrongheaded.

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

Living in Interesting Times

Sometimes we hear about an old Chinese saying, *May you live in interesting times*, and, according to tradition, it is meant as a curse, not a benign wish. As a matter of fact, there doesn't seem to actually be such an ancient Chinese expression; the one that comes closest seems to be 1600 century Chinese writer Feng Menlong's opinion that it is "Better to be a dog in a peaceful time than a human in a chaotic world," and the "interesting times" expression seems to have been introduced by Western writers in the 1930s. But whether or not it really is an ancient Chinese curse, or an idea concocted by sarcastic Westerners and attributed to Chinese wisdom, it strikes a chord in many hearts these days. As much as we in the Western modern world have been used to thinking that an exciting life is a good life, there is an ancient cross-cultural wisdom present in the saying, echoed in famous French seventeenth century philosopher René Descartes's personal motto, *Bene vixit qui bene latuit*, "One lives well who hides well": a quiet life, safe from turmoil and violent death, has been the dream of many a human being who has fled destruction and persecution, or kept a low profile hoping that the tide of violence might pass them by. And here we are, in our various cities and regions of the West and around the world, living two kinds of lives these days, our normal lives with their normal hopes for our families, our

health and our jobs, and a New Normal life where we are constantly reminded that we are vulnerable, to a degree that few of us had imagined only a few decades ago. The threat of climate change, pandemics, terrorism, and random violence haunts us, and "hiding well" is no guarantee that sudden disaster will pass us by. All this unpredictability takes its toll; even people from cultures that have previously registered high on the "happiness" scale are registering lower than before. Many of us are worried about tomorrow, overall. Some people predict that we in the next half-century may be facing challenges, environmental as well as financial and political, never seen before in recorded human history.

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

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

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

As I frequently mention to my students, and I will pass it on to you, the reader, the future envisioned in overall positive terms by Pinker and in negative terms by Gray is, in many ways, in your hands. You may not have the actual power to mold the future, but you will have the power to help inspire and even mold reactions of fellow human beings to whatever challenges are waiting for us, up ahead in the stream of time, through social media, and whatever other kind of media we may have in the future. Being forearmed with knowledge, not only of the past, but with the *values* of both past and present, will help you in your decision-making. And so we embark on this journey into *The Moral of the Story*, examining moral value systems of primarily the Western culture in contemporary and modern times as well as past centuries—because each new idea is generally a reaction to older ideas that have somehow become inadequate. The book, however, is not a chronological journey. It moves through modern moral problems, to equivalents in the past, and back to contemporary scenarios.

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

For each of the issues mentioned above there is generally a side promoting it and a side arguing against it. We're used to that kind of debate in a free society, and you'll see some of those questions discussed in this book, in particular in Chapters 7 and 13.

Values, Morals, and Ethics

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

When they hear I teach ethics, people who are unfamiliar with how college classes in the subject are taught say, "Good! Our college students really need that!" That response always makes me pause: What do they think I teach? Right from wrong? Of course, we do have discussions about right and wrong, and we can, from time to time, even reach agreement about some moral responses being *preferable* to other moral responses. If students haven't acquired a sense of values by the time they're in college, I fear it's too late: Psychologists say a child must develop a sense of values *by the age of seven* to become an adult with a conscience. If the child hasn't learned by the second grade that other people can feel pain and pleasure, and that one should try not to harm others, that lesson will probably never be truly learned. Fortunately, that doesn't mean everyone must be taught the *same* moral lessons by the age of seven—as long as we have *some* moral background to draw on later, as a sounding board for further ethical reflections, we can come from morally widely diverse homes and still become morally dependable people. A child growing up in a mobster type of family will certainly have acquired a set of morals by the age of seven—but it isn't necessarily the same set of morals as those acquired by a child in a liberal, secular, humanist family or in a Seventh-Day Adventist family. The point is that all these children will have their "moral center" activated and can expand their moral universe. A child who has never been taught *any* moral lessons may be a sociopath of the future, a person who has no comprehension of how other people feel, no empathy. A case that garnered attention some years ago, and introduced a new concept, "affluenza," was the 2013 case of Ethan Couch, then 16 years old, whose drunk driving resulted in the deaths of four people. At his trial, a psychologist testified for the defense that growing up in a very affluent, permissive family had not taught him right from wrong. Whether or not this argument was just a lawyer's clever trick, it highlighted the possibility that we indeed have to be exposed to ideas of right and wrong as children in order to recognize them as significant later in life. And with the attempted flight of Couch and his mother to Mexico in 2015, it seemed clear that Couch's lack of understanding that one must take responsibility for one's actions was something that his mother may not have sufficiently understood, either. In 2016 a Texas judge ordered him to serve 2 years in prison, 180 days for each of the four victims. Couch was released in April 2018, but in January 2020 he was again arrested for violation of his probation.

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

Box 1.1 THE FOUR CLASSIC BRANCHES OF PHILOSOPHY

In the chapter text, you read that philosophy traditionally asks the question *Why?* This is one of the features that has characterized Western philosophy from its earliest years in Greek antiquity.

The word "philosophy" itself comes from Greek: *Philo* = love, and *sophia* = wisdom. So someone who loves wisdom is essentially a philosopher, at least according to the ancient Greeks. Notice that they didn't call it "love of knowledge." You might ask yourself, why? Does the search for knowledge always result in wisdom?

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

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

To the four classic branches, philosophy has added a number of specialized fields over the

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

If having values is such an important feature of our life, should elementary schools teach values, then? It may be just a little too late, if indeed a child's moral sense is developed by the age of seven, but at least there is a chance it might help; and for children whose parents have done a minimal job of teaching them respect for others, school will probably be the only place they'll learn it. Some elementary schools are developing such programs. Problems occur, however, when schools begin to teach values with which not all parents agree. We live in a culture of diversity, and although some parents might like certain topics to be on the school agenda, others certainly would not. Some parents want their children to have early access to sex education, whereas others consider it unthinkable as a school subject. There is nothing in the concept of values that implies we all have to subscribe to exactly the same ones, no matter how strongly we may feel about our own. So, beyond teaching basic values such as common courtesy, perhaps the best schools can do is make students aware of values and value differences and let students learn to argue effectively for their own values, as well as to question them. Schools, in other words, should focus on *ethics* in addition to *morality*.

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

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

Most people, in fact, do just that, even in their teens, because it is also considered a sign of maturity to question authority, at least to a certain extent. If a very young adult is told to be home at 11 P.M., she or he will usually ask, "Why can't I stay out till midnight?" When we have to make up our minds about whether to study over the weekend or go hiking, we usually try to come up with as many pros and cons as we can. When someone we

have put our trust in betrays that trust, we want to know why. All those questions are practical applications of ethics: They question the rules of morality and the breaking of those rules. Although formal training in ethical questions can make us better at judging moral issues, we are, as adult human beings, already quite experienced just because we already have asked "Why?" a number of times in our lives.

Good and Evil

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

Tham Luang Rescue Operation Center/AP Images

For 18 days in June and July 2018, twelve boys between 11 and 16 years of age from a junior football team and their 25-year-old coach were trapped deep in a system of caves in Thailand by rising waters. What was supposed to have been an outing after football practice became a nightmare in the dark. After nine days, they were located by two British divers, all alive, but the rescue mission was in itself a challenge. The boys had to be taught how to stay calm during the long trek out, some of it under water. The world was watching on TV as the boys emerged, one by one over several days, in time before the next heavy rainfall. All the boys and their coach were rescued, but one rescuer, a former Thai Navy SEAL, died from asphyxiation, and another Thai SEAL died later from blood poisoning, a result of the rescue ordeal. Thailand opened the Tham Luang caves to tourism in November of 2019.

When terrible things happen to ordinary people, including natural disasters as well as calamities of human origin, we frequently hear stories of people who are not only victims of the disaster, but also subsequent victims of human schemes of violence or fraud. But we also hear about people who go out of their way to

help others. In 2015, three young American males, two service members and a college student, thwarted a terrorist attack on a high-speed passenger train headed for Paris by tackling and subduing the terrorist, risking their lives in the process. In October 2017, a shooter targeted a concert audience in Las Vegas; from his windows at a high-rise hotel, he shot 58 people to death and wounded more than 400. Several people in the audience went out of their way to help others to safety. Among them was Jonathan Smith, who helped 30 individuals get out of harm's way. He was himself injured but survived. In June 2018, twelve boys between 11 and 16 years of age and their 25-year-old leader were trapped in a cave in Thailand, with waters rising. After nine days in the cold and dark cave, they were discovered by two divers, but it took almost two weeks for the boys to be rescued because of the very difficult layout of the cave system. A team of Thai SEALs brought them all out safely over the course of three days, but it cost the lives of two of the SEALs (see the photo on p.8). And in New Zealand in March 2019, Abdul Aziz, having immigrated from Afghanistan, confronted and attacked the gunman who had just murdered 50 worshipers at two mosques, and forced him into fleeing, making it possible for two local police officers to apprehend him.

Such stories (of which you will hear more in Chapter 4 where we will discuss the phenomena of selfishness and altruism) remind us that dreadful things can happen in the blink of an eye, sometimes due to natural disasters and sometimes due to deliberate actions by fellow human beings, but also that there are extraordinary people who will rise to the occasion and make decisions that may cost them their lives for the sake of others. That, to most of us, may be the ultimate form of goodness, but the everyday kindness of a helping hand or a considerate remark shouldn't be discounted, even if the kind person isn't endangering his or her life.

There is hardly a word with a broader meaning in the English language than *good*—we can talk about food tasting good, test results being good, a feeling being good, but also, of course, of actions being good and persons being good, and we mean something different in all these examples. In Box 1.2 you'll find a discussion of moral and nonmoral values, and "good" fits right into that discussion: It is a value term because it expresses approval, but it can be an approval that has to do with moral issues (such as actions and a person's character) or it can be unrelated to moral issues, such as judging the result of a quiz, or a medical test, or something we approve of because of its aesthetic qualities (it looks good, tastes good, sounds good). If we assume that we're interested mostly in the moral value of "good," we have only narrowed it down somewhat, because now we have to define what, in our context and in our culture, is considered a morally good act. It could be acting according to the rules of one's culture's religion; it could be acting with compassion or with foresight as to the overall consequences of one's actions; or it could be simply doing one's duty. A "good person" could be someone who is simply nice by nature, but it could also be someone who struggles to do the right thing, perhaps even against his or her nature. Or it could be simply someone we approve of, based on our cultural rules. That particular moral attitude will be discussed in Chapter 3, *Ethical Relativism*.

Box 1.2 MORAL AND NONMORAL VALUES

What is a *value?* Most often the word refers to a moral value, a judgment of somebody's behavior according to whether or not it corresponds to certain moral rules (for example, "Madison is a wonderful person; she always stays after the party to help with the dishes"). However, some value judgments have nothing to do with moral issues, and so they are called *nonmoral,* which is not the same as *immoral* (breaking moral rules) or *amoral* (not having any moral standards). Such nonmoral value judgments can include statements about taste (such as "The new gallery downtown has a collection of exquisite watercolors"; "I really dislike Ramon's

new haircut"; and "Finn makes a great jambalaya"), as well as statements about being correct or incorrect about facts (such as "Lois did really well on her last math test" and "You're wrong; last Saturday we didn't go to the movies; that was last Sunday"). Like moral value judgments, nonmoral value judgments generally refer to something being right or wrong, good or bad; but, unlike moral value judgments, they don't refer to morally right or wrong behavior. Nonmoral value concepts abound in our present-day society: What we call *aesthetics,* art theory, is a form of nonmoral value theory, asking questions such as, Are there objective rules for when art is good? and Is it bad, or is it a matter of personal taste or of acculturation? If you dislike hip-hop music, or like Craftsman-style architecture, are there valid objective justifications for your likes and dislikes, or are they relative to your time and place? Art theory even has an additional values concept: the relationship between light and dark colors in a painting. But the most prevalent nonmoral value concept in our everyday world surely has to do with getting *good value*—with buying something for less than it is worth. That prompted a political commentator, Michael Kinsley, who was fed up with the political talk about moral values a few years ago, to quip, "When I want values, I go to Wal-Mart." And McDonald's has been running a commercial suggesting that parents who want *family values* should take their kids to McDonald's for the Value Meal, appealing to the perennial parental guilt. In other words, satirists and copywriters can have a field day doing a switcheroo on our conception of values, from nonmoral to moral and back again, and what we readers and consumers can do is stay on our toes so we aren't manipulated.

In our everyday life, we encounter the term *evil* frequently in the media and entertainment, and most of us use it regularly. We even have a character in a popular series of comic movies about retro hero Austin Powers, Dr. Evil, who really is quite evil, and enjoying it. Entire film franchises and book series are centered around the fight against evil, such as the *Harry Potter* series, *X-Men*, *Lord of the Rings,* and perhaps more than any other story franchise, *Star Wars.* But entertainment is one thing that we can leave behind. Real life is another thing: Survivors of massacres will carry those memories with them for the remainder of their lives, and friends and relatives of victims lost to violence will feel that loss forever. The first decades of the twenty-first century have been marred and punctuated by deliberate acts of harm toward what most of us would call "innocents"—people, including children, who have never in their lives committed any acts that would warrant any aggressive action toward them. There have been acts of terror against entire communities, from the terror attacks of 9/11, 2001, to the Boston Marathon bombings of 2013, the mass murders in San Bernardino in 2015, and the synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh in 2018. There have also been numerous school shootings over the years, such as at Virginia Tech in 2007, at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, in 2012, and the Parkland, FL school shooting in 2018, prompting school administrations around the country to take measures and train school personnel in "Active Shooter" scenarios.

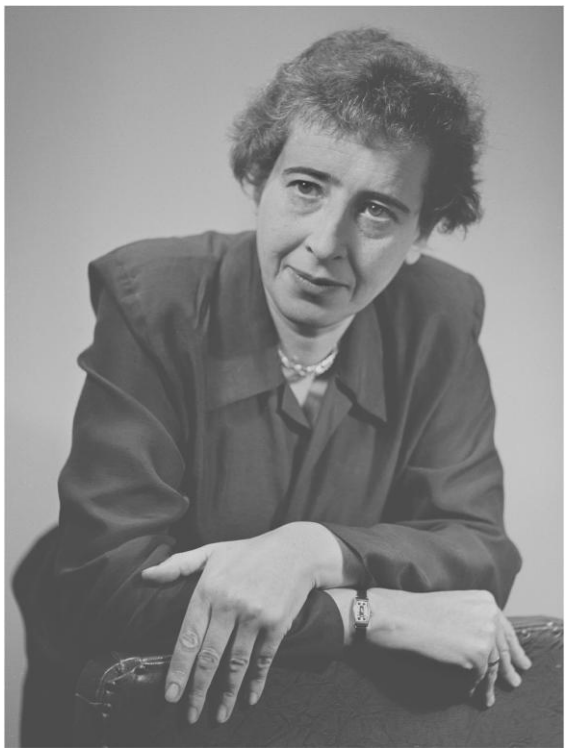
And then we have the media favorites: the serial-killer stories where killers manage to evade the law for months, sometimes even decades, preying on young or otherwise vulnerable members of society—children, prostitutes, and drug addicts. From the BTK (Bind, Torture, Kill) killer Dennis Rader, to Joseph Duncan, who killed an entire family in Idaho so he could abduct and abuse the two youngest children (of whom only the little girl survived, to become an excellent and clear-minded witness against him) to the Golden State Killer, captured in 2018 and accused of 12 murders and 40 rapes over a period of 30 years. In Austria Josef Fritzl was arrested for having kept his own daughter captive in a hidden room in the basement for twenty-four years, raping her and fathering seven children with her. In Perris, California David and Louise Turpin pleaded guilty to shackling and torturing their 13 children. They are serving a 25-year-to-life sentence. And in Minnesota, 13-year-old Jayme Closs was kidnapped and kept prisoner by a man who had killed her parents so

he could abduct her. After almost 3 months she managed to escape, and her kidnapper was caught. Bottom line: Extreme wrongdoing, with devastating consequences for victims, doesn't have to be on a grand scale such as mass murders and serial killings; victimizing defenseless children also qualifies.

The question we need to ask here is this: Are such people who victimize others—humans or animals—evil? Or should we just say that their *actions* are evil? Or should we use another term entirely, such as being *morally wrong*?

What do the professionals—the ethicists who make a living teaching theories of moral values and writing papers, monographs, and textbooks—say? For centuries scholars distinguished between *natural evil* (disasters) and *moral evil,* referring to human choices going against the will of God. Until the end of the nineteenth century it was still quite common for philosophers to talk about moral evil, but for most of the twentieth century ethicists preferred to talk about issues such as selfishness and unselfishness, informed consent, group rights versus individual rights, as well as moral right and wrong, even occasionally moral *goodness,* but up until recently we rarely heard professional ethicists mention the concept of *evil*. Exceptions would be American philosophers such as Philip Hallie and Richard Taylor and the British philosopher Mary Midgley. However, times are changing, and even in the philosophical debate today the term *evil* is seeing a resurgence. So why were so few philosophers up until very recently interested in talking about good and evil, when it was one of the key topics in centuries past? For one thing, there has been an underlying assumption that good and evil are *religious* concepts, and as we shall see, the philosophical discussions about ethics and values have generally tended to steer clear of the religious connection to ethics. For another, talking about good and evil generally implies that we *pass judgment* on what is good and what is evil—which means that we take sides. We no longer analyze concepts in some lofty realm of objectivity, we engage ourselves in seeking good and shunning evil. It also means that we condemn those who are labeled evil and praise those we call good. In other words, we engage in what some would call *moralizing,* and most ethicists have for decades tried to avoid just that, with some exceptions. However, since September 11, 2001, the concept of evil has been part of our political vocabulary, spearheaded by President Bush, who labeled nations supporting terrorism as an *axis of evil* and referred to the terrorists of 9/11 and others as *evildoers*. A precedent was created when President Reagan labeled the Soviet Union "The Evil Empire" in the 1980s. Although that terminology, to some critics, is far too close to a religious vocabulary for comfort, for other Americans there is great relief and, indeed, comfort in being able to use a word with the weight of tradition behind it to describe something most of us consider dreadful acts committed by people with no consideration for human decency, and the more of such acts we see perpetrated on what we might call innocent people, the more we're likely to use the "E-word." But what exactly do we call evil? Is evil a force that exists outside human beings—is there a source of evil such as the devil, some satanic eternal power that tempts and preys on human souls? Or is it, rather, a force within the human mind, disregarding the needs and interests of other human beings just to accomplish a goal? Or might it perhaps be a *lack of* something essential, similar to what medieval scholars called *privatio,* absence of goodness? Maybe a blind spot in the human mind, a lack of a sense of community, belonging, empathy for others? In that case, might we explain the acts of evildoers as those of sick individuals? But wouldn't that entail that they can't be *blamed* for what they do, because we don't usually blame people for their illnesses? Those are questions that involve religion, psychology, and ethics, and there is to this day no consensus among scholars as to how "evil" should be interpreted. Some see terrorists, serial killers, and child molesters as evil, but we may not agree on what makes them evil—a childhood deprived of love, a genetic predisposition, a selfish choice that involves disregard for other people's humanity, a brainwashing by an ideology that distinguishes between "real" people and throwaway people, an outside superhuman evil force that chooses a human vehicle? For the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, whom you'll meet in Chapter 6, there was no doubt what evil is: the self-serving choice that individuals make freely, even when they know full well the moral law they ought to be following.

Kant's view comes out of the eighteenth century, however, and as you have seen above, philosophers of the twentieth century generally steered away from calling people or actions evil, with one notable exception, and that exception started a trend that continues to this day: the introduction of the concept "the Banality of Evil," a term coined by German philosopher Hannah Arendt in 1963 in her book *Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil.*



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Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) was a Jewish-German philosopher who narrowly escaped the Holocaust of World War II. She left Germany in 1933, the year Hitler came into power, and spent some time in Switzerland and France, but with the Nazi occupation of Northern France in 1941, and the subsequent collaboration by the French government, she was interned in a labor camp with French Jews. She was released and able to emigrate to the United States, where she became a naturalized citizen in 1950. Her major works are *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), *The Human Condition* (1958), and *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963). Her life was chronicled in the 2012 film, *Hannah Arendt.*

Arendt was living in Germany when Hitler came to power, but she managed to flee to Paris before the Holocaust: She was a German Jew, and would undoubtedly have been swept up in the extermination process. Years after the war she was tormented not only by the thought of the atrocities perpetrated in the death camps but also by the knowledge that so many human beings either stood by and let the Holocaust happen or actively participated in the torture and death of other human beings. (And, for the record, the Holocaust *did* happen—13 million people perished in the Nazi death camps on the orders of Hitler and his henchmen Himmler and Eichmann, and those who deny that fact are playing political games. Enough said.) The conclusion reached by Arendt and published in her book from 1963 after having witnessed Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem is that the German public who had an inkling of what was going on and the Nazis who were actively engaged in the *Endlösung*, or the "Final Solution," were not evil in the sense that they (or most of them) deliberately sought to gain personal advantage by causing pain and suffering to others. Rather, it was more insidious: Little by little, they came to view the atrocities they were asked to perform, or disregard, as a duty to their country and their leader, as something their victims deserved, or simply as a normal state of affairs and not something hideous or depraved. They became *banal*, everyday acts, corrupting the minds of the victimizers. In Arendt's words about Eichmann's execution for his participation in the Holocaust:

> It was as though in those last minutes he was summing up the lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us—the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought- defying *banality of evil.* . . . The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal. From the viewpoint of our legal institutions and of our moral standards of judgment, this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together, for it implied—as had been said at Nuremberg over and over again by the defendants and their counsels—that this new type of criminal . . . commits his crimes under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or to feel that he is doing wrong. . . .

With Arendt's introduction of the banality—or normalcy—of evil, the philosophical discussion of moral wrongdoing took a new turn. Could it be that horrendous acts of harm done by ordinary people should be seen as "not really their fault"? As something they were brainwashed into doing? Arendt herself seems to

lean in that direction by viewing Eichmann himself merely a bureaucrat who was somehow swept up by an ideology, but as German philosopher Bettina Stangneth mentions in her book *Eichmann Before Jerusalem: The Unexamined Life of a Mass-Murderer* (2014), Eichmann was anything but a victim, he was truly the mastermind behind much of the Holocaust, knowing full well what he did, and how it affected the lives of fellow Germans. According to Stangneth, in her desire to show that ordinary people can be manipulated into doing horrible things, Arendt ended up casting her net too wide, and making apologies for the truly malicious indiuals, the manipulators themselves. But regardless of whether Arendt was right or wrong about Eichmann himself, her notion of Banality of Evil allowed philosophers to once again engage in discussions about evil, without having to deal with any religious context, and the term "evil" once again found a home in moral debates, in a limited way, and it has turned out to be eminently useful in explaining group pressures and bullying, even among children. In the Narratives section at the end of the chapter, we look at a film depicting the trial of Adolf Eichmann, *The Eichmann Show,* which raises the question whether we might all be capable of doing monstrous things to innocent fellow human beings.

In addition, coming out of the concept of evil becoming everyday-like, banal, there is an implication: that it is possible to fight the group-pressures or pressures from authorities that may result in a Banality-of-evil scenario. Many of you have heard of Stanley Milgram's obedience experiments at Yale University in the 1960s, wherein Professor Milgram showed that if you are under the influence of an authority who takes responsibility for your actions, you are likely to be willing to commit acts of atrocity toward other human beings; he demonstrated that test subjects, believing themselves to be assisting with an experiment, would overcome their unwillingness to give electric shocks to test subjects in another room (in reality actors who weren't being harmed at all) to the point of killing them, as long as they were told they had to do it, and it was not their responsibility. A film, *Experimenter* (2015), explores Milgram's obedience experiments and their impact on our self-image. The other infamous experiment that you may have heard of is the Stanford Prison Experiment in 1971, conducted by psychologist professor Philip Zimbardo, wherein a group of experimental subjects—ordinary male college students—were divided into "prisoners" and "prison guards," in order to examine why conditions would deteriorate so quickly in a real prison setting. Before long the "prison guards" began treating the "prisoners" with abusive cruelty, believing that such behavior was somehow warranted to maintain authority, and Zimbardo had to terminate the experiment within less than a week. Both an American film, *The Stanford Prison Experiment*, and a German version, titled *The Experiment,* are chilling reenactments of the experiment. Some see such an event as proof that human nature is fundamentally bad—it doesn't take much for the veneer of civilization to wear thin, and our true, evil nature surfaces. For others, all this means is that there are all kinds of reasons why people do what they do; some of what we call evil is based on a moral choice, and some of it is an outcome of environmental pressures or brain anomalies.

In 2007 Zimbardo published a book, *The Lucifer Effect,* in which he drew parallels between the experiment and the Abu Ghraib incident of 2004 in which American military personnel guarding suspected terrorists in Iraq subjected them to psychological torture, focusing specifically on the power of humans to resist the pressure from authorities, find enough moral fortitude, and say no to allowing acts of harm to escalate into some kind of permitted, normal, banal behavior. In his own words, "Three decades earlier, I had witnessed eerily similar scenes as they unfolded in a project I directed, of my own design: naked, shackled prisoners with bags over their heads, guards stepping on prisoners' backs as they did push-ups, guards sexually humiliating prisoners, and prisoners suffering from extreme stress. . . . As the project's principal investigator, I designed the experiment that randomly assigned normal, healthy, intelligent college students to enact the roles of either guards or prisoners in a realistically simulated prison setting." Zimbardo sees a similar group mentality being responsible for both the Stanford Prison experiment and the American soldiers at Abu Ghraib in Iraq in 2004.

But before we begin to assume that all evil acts are of the kind that may lurk in ordinary people's hearts, let us just remind ourselves that not all evil acts are banal. Surely, the deliberate torturing and killing of children is not the kind of evil that ordinary people are periodically persuaded to perform under extraordinary

circumstances, and neither are deliberate mass murders. For such acts involving deliberate choices directly intending and resulting in harm to innocent people we may want to reserve the terms *egregious* or *extreme evil*. If we want to adopt the vocabulary of "evil," in addition to "morally wrong" and "misguided," we must also recognize that there are *degrees* of evil, ranging from reluctantly causing pain (such as in the Milgram experiments) to humiliating other human beings, to abusing, torturing, and killing them with deliberation and gusto. And perhaps it is a disservice to our sense of evil to assume that "we're all capable of doing evil." Some forms of evil are the result not of ordinary people being seduced into insensitivity but of some people's deliberate choices to cause harm—such as Adolf Eichmann. A study by Allan Feinigstein in *Theory and Psychology* (2015) points out that most Nazi perpetrators actually didn't show any remorse, and some even seemed to relish the torture and suffering they inflicted—so they actually didn't fall under the "banality of evil" category at all. And on the other hand, even in the Stanley Milgram experiment some test subjects refused to push the shock lever. In Chapter 11, in the section about the philosopher Philip Hallie, you'll read a story that goes into detail about rising up against evil: the story of a French village that rebelled against the Nazis. Hallie presents this story as an "antidote to cruelty," and you will find an additional reference to Philip Zimbardo and his coining of a new term, "the banality of heroism," a theory that claims that if evil is a possibility in our hearts, so, too, are heroism and altruism—in other words, inherent *goodness*.

Even if we have now taken a look at some different meanings of the term *evil*, we have of course by no means exhausted the topic, but a further discussion would be outside the scope of an introductory chapter. We might continue talking about where we think evil originates—as a failing to see others as equal human beings, maybe even a brain deficiency that excludes empathy? Or is it willful selfishness? In Chapter 4 we look at the concepts of selfishness and unselfishness. Or is it just a matter of perspective—one culture's evil is another culture's goodness? And does it matter whether a deliberate, harmful act is committed in the name of a political or religious cause? Would that make the act less or maybe more evil? We look at the question of different cultural values in Chapter 3. Or we might also ask the question that has troubled many cultures for thousands of years, generally known as the *Problem of Evil:* If there is a god, and he, she, or it is a well-intended, all-powerful being, then why do terrible things happen to good people? That question, profound as it may be, belongs within *Philosophy of Religion* and lies beyond the scope of this textbook. That doesn't mean you're not welcome to think about its implications.

Debating Moral Issues from Religion to Neurobiology and Storytelling

Every functional society on earth has had a philosophy of what one should do or be in order to be considered a good person. Sometimes that moral code is expressed orally in stories and songs, and sometimes it is expressed in writing. When it is expressed as a set of rules with explanations justifying the rules, we may call it a *code of ethics*. For it to become a philosophical discipline, we must add the practice of examining and questioning the rules.

The Socratic Beginnings of Ethics

The Greek philosopher Socrates (fifth century B.C.E.) is often credited with being the first philosopher in the Western tradition to focus on ethics. That can be a reasonable observation, provided we don't confuse ethics with morals. It would, of course, be preposterous to claim that any one person, including a famous philosopher, should get credit for inventing morals. Every society since the dawn of time has had a moral code, even if all it consisted of was "respect the chief and your elders." Without a communal moral code you simply can't maintain a society, and in every generation parents have been the primary teachers of the continuity of morality. In addition, as we'll see in the next section, every society on the planet seems to have had a

religion of some sort, and into every religion is built a moral code. So what did Socrates contribute, if he didn't invent morals? He elevated the discussion of morals to the level of an academic, critical examination, exploration, and justification of values. It became an abstract discussion that was, for the first time in the West, removed from both religious dogma and social rules, at the same time becoming a personal matter of growth and wisdom. Most of our knowledge of Socrates comes from the works of the philosopher Plato, one of his students. In his series of *Dialogues,* conversations between Socrates and various friends, students, and enemies, Plato has Socrates observe, on his final day before being executed for crimes against the Athenian state (see Chapter 8), that "the unexamined life is not worth living," and that the ultimate question for every human being is, "How should one live?" Acquiring moral wisdom is thus a requirement for a person who doesn't want to go through life with blinders on. Although we can imagine that wise old men and women may have taught the same lesson throughout human time, Socrates was the first that we know of to incorporate critical questions about moral values into a study of philosophical issues for adults. In other words, Socrates became the inventor of ethics as an *academic discipline,* not just a critical lifestyle. And for over 2000 years, philosophers in the West have included the study of ethics in their curricula, including the notion that to be a morally mature person you must engage in a personal critical examination of your own values and the values of your society. The famed *Socratic* or *dialectic method* has two major points: that if you approach an issue rationally, other rational minds will be able to accept your conclusion, and that a useful approach is a conversation, a *dialogue,* between teacher and student. The teacher will guide the student through a series of questions and answers to a rational conclusion, rather than give the student the answer up front. The method is to this day a favorite among philosophy instructors, psychotherapists, and law school professors.

Moral Issues and Religion

Cultures developing independently of the Western tradition have experienced a similar fascination for the subject of acting and living right. Socrates' version remains unique among ancient thinkers because he encouraged critical thinking instead of emphasizing being an obedient citizen. In China, Confucius expressed his philosophy of proper moral conduct as a matter of obedience to authorities and, above all, respect for one's elders at approximately the same time that Socrates was teaching students critical thinking in the public square in Athens. In Africa, tribal thinkers developed a strong sense of morality that stressed individuals' sense of responsibility to the community and the community's understanding of its responsibility to each individual—a philosophy that has become known to the West in recent years through the proverb "It takes a village to raise a child." Among American Indian tribes, the philosophy of harmony between humans and their environment—animate as well as inanimate nature—has been part of the moral code. (We take a look at traditional Chinese values in Chapter 11, and in Chapter 8 we return to traditional African as well as American Indian value systems.)

For all cultures, however, there is a common denominator: Go back far enough in time and you'll find a connection between the social life of the culture, its *mores,* and its religion. In some cultures the connection is clear and obvious to this day: Religion is the key to the moral values of the members of the community, and any debate about values usually takes place within the context of that religion. In other cultures, such as large parts of Europe, Canada, Australia, and to some extent the United States, the connection to religion has become more tenuous and has in some cases all but vanished; public social life has become secularized, and moral values are generally tied to the question of social coexistence rather than to a religious basis. That doesn't mean that individual people can't feel a strong connection to the religious values of their family and their community. This raises several questions, all depending on one's viewpoint and personal experience.

If you have grown up in a culture where religion is a predominant cultural phenomenon, or if you have grown up in a religious family, or if you find yourself deeply connected to a religious community today, do you regard your moral values as being inextricably tied to your religion? Do you regard moral values as being closely connected to religion as such? If that is your background, then chances are that you'll answer yes.

And if you have grown up in a Western, largely secularized culture such as big-city USA, and have not grown up in a religious family, or have distanced yourself from religion for some reason or other, do you view the question of religion as irrelevant for moral values in a modern society and for your own moral decisions? Chances are that you'll answer yes, if this description applies to you.

Here, in a nutshell, is the problem when talking about religion and values. In this diverse world—diverse not just because of nationalities, ethnicity, gender, and religion but also because of the vast variety of moral and political views even within one community—it is very hard for us to reach any kind of consensus or find common ground about values if we seek answers exclusively in our religion. Chances are that if you have a religion, it is not shared by a large number of people you associate with. If you stick exclusively to the group you share your faith (or nonfaith) with, of course you will feel fortified by the confirmation of your views through your religion, and your ideas aren't going to be challenged; but if you plan to be out and about in the greater society of this Western culture, you can't expect everyone to agree with you. (In Chapter 3 we discuss the issue of how to approach the subject of moral differences.) So how does moral philosophy approach this issue? Interestingly, you'll find religious as well as nonreligious moral philosophers in modern times. Go back to the nineteenth century and beyond, and you will find that almost all the Western moral philosophers were religious—Christian or Jewish. In the twentieth century there was a sharp increase in moral philosophers who chose a secular basis of reasoning for their ethics, and that remains a feature of today's ethical debates. But even in centuries past, most philosophers who argued about ethics and who professed to be religious tended to avoid using their religion as the ultimate justification for their moral values. Because, how can you argue with faith? Either you share the faith or you don't. But argue on a basis of rationality, and you have a chance of reaching an understanding of values, even if you disagree about religion—or at least you may gain an understanding of where the other person is coming from. *Reason* as a tool of ethics can be a bridge builder between believers, atheists, and agnostics. For agnostics and atheists, there can be no turning to religion for unquestioned moral guidance, because they view religion itself as an unknown or nonexistent factor. Agnostics claim that they do not know whether there is a God or that it is impossible to know. Atheists claim that there is no God. Both the agnostic and the atheist may find that religion suggests solutions to their problems, but such solutions are accepted not because they come from religion but because they somehow make sense.

For a philosophical inquiry, the requirement that a solution make sense is particularly important; although religion may play a significant role in the development of moral values for many people, a philosophical investigation of moral issues must involve more than faith in a religious authority. Regardless of one's religious belief or lack thereof, such an investigation must involve reasoning because, for one thing, philosophy teaches that one must examine issues without solely relying on the word of authority. For another thing, a rational argument can be a way for people to reach an understanding in spite of having different viewpoints on religion. Accordingly, a good way to communicate about ethics for both believers and nonbelievers is to approach the issue through the language of *reason*.

Moral Issues and Logic

As we saw at the end of the section on moral issues and religion, it has been a choice of philosophers from the earliest times to argue about moral issues on the basis of reasoning rather than religious faith, regardless of their own religious affiliations. That means that the classical philosophical field of *logic* is considered a valuable tool for discussing moral issues, because if philosophers can agree on anything, it is usually whether or not an argument violates the rules of logic.

An "argument" in philosophy is not a heated discussion or a screaming contest but a certain type of communication that strives to convince a listener that something is true or reasonable. Here is an ultrashort account of the basic principles of logic: An argument has at least one premise, and usually several premises, followed by a conclusion. Such an argument can be either *inductive* or *deductive*. The conclusion of an

inductive argument is based on a gathering of evidence (such as "Tom probably won't say thank you for the birthday present—he never does"), but there is no certainty that the conclusion is true, only that it is probable. On the other hand, in a deductive argument the premises are supposed to lead to a certain conclusion. A *valid* deductive argument is a deductive argument whose conclusion follows necessarily from its premise or premises. (For example, "All dogs are descendents of wolves; Fluffy is a dog; therefore, Fluffy is a descendent of wolves." This is valid whether or not dogs actually are descendents of wolves, which *inductive* evidence shows they probably are.) A *sound* deductive argument is an argument that is valid and whose premises are also factually true (such as "On the vernal [spring] equinox, night and day are of equal length all over the planet. So, on the vernal equinox, the day is twelve hours long in Baghdad as well as in Seattle").

Logical fallacies invalidate a moral viewpoint just as they do any other kind of viewpoint. Have you heard someone claim that because she has been cheated by two auto mechanics, no auto mechanics can be trusted? That's the fallacy of *hasty generalization*. Have you heard someone who is an expert in one field claim to be an authority in another—or people referring to some vague "expert opinion" in defense of their own views? That is the fallacy of *appeal to authority*. When someone tries to prove a point just by rephrasing it, such as "I'm right, because I'm never wrong," that is the fallacy of *begging the question,* a circular definition assuming that what you are trying to prove is a fact. How about a bully arguing that if you don't give him your seat/purse/car, he will harm you? That's the *ad baculum* (Latin for "by the stick") fallacy, the fallacy of using physical threats. And if someone says, "Well, you know you can't believe what Fred says—after all, he's a guy," that's an *ad hominem* ("to the man") fallacy, which assumes that who a person is determines the correctness or incorrectness of what he or she says. And a politician declaring "If we continue to allow women to have abortions, then pretty soon nobody will give birth, and the human race will die out" offers a *slippery slope* argument, which assumes that drastic consequences will follow a certain policy. Closely related is the *straw man* fallacy, inventing a viewpoint so radical that hardly anyone holds it, so you can knock it down: "Gun advocates want to allow criminals and children to own weapons, so we should work toward a gun ban." And if you claim that "it is my way or the highway," then you are *bifurcating*—you are creating a *false dichotomy* (unless, of course, we're really talking about a situation with no third possibility, such as being pregnant—you can't be a little bit pregnant; it's either/or).

Another fallacy is the famed *red herring,* familiar to every fan of mystery and detective stories. A "red herring" is placed on the path to confuse the bloodhound. In other words, it is a deflection away from the truth. In an everyday setting, this can be accomplished by changing the subject when it gets too uncomfortable ("Why did you get an F on your test, Kevin?" "Mom, have I ever told you you're prettier than all my friends' moms?"). The notoriety of the red herring fallacy in court cases is well known, such as attacking a rape victim's sexual history to deflect attention away from the defendant. A fallacy most of us who make our living teaching are very familiar with is the fallacy of *ad misericordiam,* appeal to pity: "Please, can I get an extension on my paper? My backpack was stolen, my cat ran away, my grandma is in the hospital, and I've got these really painful hangnails." Or is it hangovers, perhaps? We've heard them all, all the bad excuses. But an excuse becomes an *ad misericordiam* fallacy only if it is nothing but an excuse. Sometimes a person truly deserves special consideration because of individual hardship, of course. Those and other logical fallacies are rampant in media discussions, and part of proper moral reasoning consists in watching out for the use of such flawed arguments, in one's own statements as well as in those of others.

Moral Issues and the Neurobiological Focus on Emotions

But is logic all there is to a good moral argument? Some philosophers would say yes, even today: The force of a moral viewpoint derives from its compelling logic. But increasingly, other voices are adding that a good moral argument is compelling not just because of its logic but also because it makes sense *emotionally*. If we have no feeling of moral approval or outrage, then do we really *care* about whether something is morally right or wrong? If we don't *feel* that it's wrong to harm a child, then how is logic going to persuade us? A classic

answer has been an appeal to the logic of the Golden Rule: You wouldn't want someone to harm *you,* would you? But, say some, that's an appeal to how you'd *feel* in the same situation. An appeal to pure feeling isn't going to be enough, because feelings can be manipulated, and appeals to emotions don't solve conflicts if we don't share those emotions; but combined with the logic of reasoning emotions can form the foundation of a forceful moral argument, according to some modern thinkers. And they find support from a group of researchers who normally haven't had much occasion, or inclination, to converse with philosophers: neuroscientists.

In 1999 researchers at the University of Iowa led by neuroscientist Antonio Damasio found that a general area of the brain, the prefrontal cortex, plays a pivotal role in our development of a moral sense. And in 2007 came a new conclusion, also published by Damasio with other scientists in the journal *Nature,* that the human brain contains an area that enables us to think about other people's lives with empathy. And while Damasio is not a philosopher, he has a keen understanding of, and an interest in the history of philosophy and the philosophical and moral implications of his findings. Damasio sees human beings as primarily emotional beings, not predominantly rational beings. For generations philosophers have relied on the power of *reason* and logic to come up with solutions to moral problems; now that is being challenged by neuroscientists such as Damasio, and philosophers such as Martha Nussbaum (below), claiming that there is more to a good moral decision than relying exclusively on logic. But laypeople, without having much knowledge of the more elaborate moral theories expressed by philosophers, have generally relied on their moral and religious upbringing as well as their *moral intuition*: Some actions have just seemed obviously right, and some obviously wrong, based on each person's cultural and religious background (in Chapter 3 we discuss whether there might be universal moral values). Now neuroscientists are telling us that the old controversial assumption that we have a moral intuition is not far wrong—most of us seem to be born with a capacity for understanding other people's plights, which means that naturalism as a moral philosophy is staging a strong comeback (Box 1.3 explores the new interest in *moral naturalism* as a result of the latest findings in neuroscience). But that doesn't mean we always automatically know the right thing to do, or the proper way to be, especially when the world changes dramatically within a generation. Scientists tell us that much of what goes on within our moral intuition is based on the way humans used to live together thousands of years ago when we were living in small tribal groups consisting of perhaps 100 members, all of whom we knew personally. Our sense of duty, our concern for others, our joys of friendship, and our sense of fairness have for tens of thousands of years evolved within such small groups, and we have not yet adjusted to the world of relationships being so much bigger and more complex. But we all (at least those of us who are born with an undamaged brain) come equipped with a sense of empathy. While not exactly a "moral center" (Damasio has been careful to point that out), the normal function of that area of the brain will result in a reluctance to cause harm to others, even if greater harm to a majority could thereby be avoided. This study dovetailed with previous research and speculations by other scientists: On the basis of a study of thirty people, out of whom six had suffered damage to their ventromedial frontal lobes, the neuroscientists concluded that we humans have an area in the brain that, when undamaged, makes us hesitate if faced with a tough decision involving other people's lives. We have, from ancient times, developed an emotional reluctance to make decisions that will cause the death of other people, even if it is for the common good. The research subjects with damage to that specific part of the brain had no problem making moral decisions that would save many but cause the deaths of one or a few humans. These subjects did not come across as callous, unfeeling people and were absolutely not classified as sociopaths. They would no more sell their daughters into sex slavery or torture an animal than would the "normal" subjects. However, when asked to make decisions that would cost human lives, they showed much less reluctance than the subjects with no damage to that part of the brain. Questions such as "Would you divert a runaway vehicle so that it will kill one person instead of the five people in its current path?" were answered affirmatively. (You will encounter that scenario below, in the notorious trolley problem.) The researchers concluded that the "normal" brain has evolved to recognize the value of a human life emotionally, probably because we are social beings and need to be able to have emotional ties to the people in our group.

Box 1.3 THE RETURN OF MORAL NATURALISM

Over the course of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, ethicists (moral philosophers) have been divided as to the nature and origin of moral values. Some have claimed that, somehow, values are embedded in the human psyche and that every human being within the normal range, psychologically, has a set of values. Although such values will evidently differ somewhat from culture to culture, according to this theory values will not differ radically from culture to culture, since we all come equipped with a moral intuition, hardwired from birth. Such viewpoints are referred to by the general term **of moral naturalism.** Others have claimed that our value systems are exclusively a matter of social convention, convenient systems for living in groups, so they can be completely different from culture to culture. Yet others have held that our morals, although not hardwired, are not relative but a result of rational deliberation. In upcoming chapters we look at the theories of cultural and ethical relativism as well as the entire question of which values we ought to have—values that simply reflect the culture we live in, values that we feel naturally drawn to, or values that reflect a timeless rational system of ethics regardless of our cultural affiliation.

In a manner of speaking, both the view that morals are relative and the view that we have a moral intuition have found support in twenty-first-century science: The relativist points to the vast knowledge amassed by anthropology over a hundred years showing that, indeed, moral values differ dramatically all over the planet; in addition, psychology has shown how flexible the mind of the human child is, ready to adapt to any social convention favored by the group it grows up within. And yet, moral intuitionism has seen a boost from neuroscientists within the last few years, and in the chapter text you'll see how the studies performed by Antonio Damasio and others have provided support for philosophers who think our sense of right and wrong is somehow hard-wired into our nature: What makes us flourish as a social group is *good for us,* and as such deemed good by the society in question. But the idea is not new—twenty-four centuries ago Aristotle (see Chapter 9) had similar thoughts.

This study has made waves for several reasons. For one, it corroborated that we do appear to have been equipped with some sort of *moral intuition* from birth. For another, it weighed in on an ancient debate in moral philosophy: Are our moral decisions primarily emotional or primarily logical? And *should* they be primarily emotional or primarily logical? The vast majority of philosophers since the time of Socrates and Plato have argued that the more we are able to disregard our personal emotions when we make moral decisions, the better our decisions will be. As you will see in several chapters in this book, philosophers (such as Plato, Chapters 4 and 8; Jeremy Bentham, Chapter 5; and Immanuel Kant, Chapter 6) have argued that moral decisions ought to be either exclusively or predominantly rational, logical, and unemotional. It is a rare exception to read a philosopher who argues either that our moral decisions *are in fact* emotional (such as David Hume does; see Chapter 4) or that they *should be* emotional (argued by Richard Taylor; see Chapter 11). A handful of thinkers from Aristotle (Chapter 9) to Martha Nussbaum (in this chapter) argue that we shouldn't make moral decisions without using our reason but that we shouldn't disregard our emotions either. In Chapter 11 philosopher Jesse Prinz discusses whether we need moral empathy to make moral decisions. Box 1.4 discusses the British philosopher Philippa Foot's so-called trolley problem and its implications for our understanding of emotional and rational responses to moral dilemmas.

Box 1.4 THE TROLLEY PROBLEM AND EMOTION VS. REASON

The famous (or infamous) trolley problem is a so-called *thought experiment* first envisioned in 1967 by British philosopher Philippa Foot (see Chapter 10) and later developed further by American philosopher Judith Jarvis Thomson. In Foot's version, a trolley (or "tram") is headed straight for five workers on the track. You are the trolley conductor, and you can divert it to another track, but on that track there is one worker. Either way, someone is going to die. Foot's question is not only, *Could* you make yourself divert the trolley, but *should* you? Foot's point was, for one thing, to bring up the issue of whether there is a difference between "killing and letting die," and for another, to illustrate various responses based on different moral philosophies (which we look at in upcoming chapters), and in particular to show that an exclusive focus on the well-being of many [as in the philosophy of utilitarianism (Chapter 5)] is not a satisfactory moral response. We take a closer look at the trolley problem in Chapter 5. However, Thomson's version is even more challenging: Imagine that the only way you can stop the trolley is by pushing "a fat man" next to you in front of the tracks. Here, she says, you're not just deflecting harm, you are causing additional harm, to someone with rights (although her point is also that pulling the lever and diverting the trolley to the track with the person is also taking responsibility for a life).

Subsequent versions have various numbers of people on the tracks versus having to sacrifice a larger or smaller number of people to save them—including imagining that the person you must sacrifice is someone you love, such as your mother or your son. Such questions are good at illustrating a variety of moral concerns about rights, equality, and consequences, but very few people will ever have to make such agonizing "Sophie's choices," the term deriving from the film classic *Sophie's Choice* where a mother captured by the Nazis during World War II has to choose life for one of her two children and death for the other. However, the trolley problem has also been picked up on by experimental philosophers (philosophers believing that practical experience and experiments should dictate our philosophical theories) Joshua Green and Jonathan Cohen. What they found under lab conditions was that even if the test subjects know that they can save five by killing one, the emotional response conflicts with the rational response. We just don't want to harm that one person, even if we can save five. And Damasio, in his 2007 study, adds to the result: Most of us have a natural empathy that makes us reluctant to cause harm, even if reason tells us it is the only logical way. The philosophical question here is, of course, whether it sometimes makes sense to override our empathy and be rational—and save the many by sacrificing the few. The popular television series *The Good Place* dedicated an episode in its second season to this question, and we discuss the trolley problem further in Chapter 5, as well as the episode from *The Good Place.*

The neuroscientists' study seems to say that a healthy human brain will intuitively incorporate emotions in its moral decisions involving other people's lives—which would mean that all the philosophers who have argued that emotions should be avoided in moral decision making are somehow wrong and are even advocating something inhumane. So is that all we need to disprove them? Hardly. Neuroscientists can tell us *where* in the brain our moral decisions take place, and evolutionary psychologists can tell us how the whole field of ethics has evolved, and some scientists even claim that when we make big complex decisions we tend to rely on our

emotions, while smaller, simpler questions are typically solved rationally. These findings may be enlightening to the field of moral philosophy (and I personally think they are fascinating and not to be disregarded). However, these scientists can't necessarily tell us which moral decisions are *better*. But what may be even more important is that the classical philosophical point of arguing in favor of reason and against emotion is that even if it is hard to disregard our emotions in key moral decisions, then that is perhaps precisely what we ought to do from time to time? We may feel reluctant or squeamish about sacrificing one life to save a hundred, but that may be what is required of us in extreme situations, not because it is easy, or because we enjoy it, but because it is *necessary*. The difficulty with this approach is that such arguments have been used, through time, to enslave countless innocent human beings, or use them as cannon fodder, or exterminate them, all in the name of reason. But it is also the only argument we have to justify shooting a plane full of passengers down if it has been hijacked and is headed for the Capitol, or to not forget about the law when a serial killer of children shows contrition in court and claims he has had a horrible life of abuse himself. At a less dramatic level, reason's override of emotions is what we need when our child is crying because she doesn't want to go to the dentist or to kindergarten; you will encounter this question again in Chapter 5. So, again, the neuroscientists can tell us what are normal and abnormal brain reactions, but without further philosophical discussion they can't tell us what is *morally right*. Furthermore, if we take into account the results of the Stanley Milgram obedience experiments and Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment, we can't conclude that humans will not harm one another—they may be reluctant, normally, to harm one another, but that reluctance can be overridden by other factors, such as threats, fear for their own safety, ambitions, and a wish to please their superiors. It takes a moral philosopher (with or without academic credentials) to engage in that discussion.

And that is precisely what moral philosophers do. Some, such as Patricia Churchland and Joshua Green, focus on the biology of the brain to get a more complete picture of where moral decisions originate and how they work within human evolution and human social life. Others, like Martha Nussbaum, look at human behavior in general, to get a sense of how we understand our norms and values from a point of view that includes human emotions. We return to Nussbaum shortly.

Moral Issues and Storytelling

All cultures tell stories, and all cultures have codes for proper behavior. Very often those codes are taught through stories, but stories can also be used to *question* moral rules and to examine morally ambiguous situations. A fundamental premise of this book is that stories sometimes can serve as shortcuts to understanding and solving moral problems. Many literature professors may be inclined to tell us that people don't read anymore, that the novel is dead, or that nobody appreciates good literature these days. I myself am rather disappointed when students are unfamiliar with the classics of literature or have grown to hate them through high school manglings. However, it just isn't true that people don't read novels—bestsellers are flourishing as never before. And an element has been added to our appreciation of good stories: *movies*. The American film industry has been in existence for over a hundred years and TV dramas have become increasingly morally and psychologically complex. It should be no surprise to anyone that as much as films and TV dramas can provide simple entertainment, they can also give us in-depth, unforgettable views of human life, including moral issues. This book makes use of that treasure trove of movie stories as well as novels, short stories, epic poems, graphic novels, television shows, and plays as illustrations of moral problems and solutions.

Using stories here has two purposes. One is to supply a foundation for further debate about the application of the moral theories presented in the chapter; the other is to inspire you to experience these stories in their original form, through print or video, since they are, of course, richer and more interesting than any outline can possibly show.

Martha Nussbaum: Stories, Ethics, and Emotions

For the greater part of the twentieth century most Western philosophers had a tacit agreement that stories were best left in the nursery, but times have changed: There is now a growing interest in the cultural and philosophical importance of storytelling, in technological as well as pretechnological cultures, and stories are becoming shortcuts to understanding ourselves on an individual as well as a cultural level. One of the most influential voices speaking for narratives as a way to communicate about values is Martha Nussbaum (b. 1947), a philosopher and a professor of law and ethics; her main interest is not the intellectual value of storytelling as much as the emotional force of narratives.

Nussbaum believes there was a time when philosophers understood the value of narratives. The Greek thinker Aristotle (whom she greatly admires) believed that experiencing a drama unfold teaches the viewer basic important lessons about having the proper feelings at the proper time—lessons about life and virtue in general. As modern Western philosophy took shape, however, the idea of emotions seemed increasingly irrelevant. But within the past decade American philosophers, sometimes inspired by the new findings in neurobiology and sometimes on their own, have increasingly argued that emotions are not only a legitimate, but also an essential part of moral decision making—not the only important part, because reason is also crucial, but something that can't be ignored. In a sense you're getting the end of the story here before you're treated to the beginning, because in the upcoming chapters you'll be hearing much about the philosophical tradition of past centuries where emotions have been considered more or less irrelevant for moral decisions (such as Chapters 5 and 6 in particular), but the interesting thing is that philosophers today who do want to regard emotions as an essential part of thinking about ethics are in a sense revising a viewpoint that was introduced by Aristotle himself 2,400 years ago: relevant emotions, in the proper measure, are indeed essential to our sense of moral right and wrong. Martha Nussbaum has found inspiration in the literary tradition. In the late twentieth century Nussbaum was one of the first voices for a reevaluation of emotions in moral philosophy with her book *Love's Knowledge* (1990) and she has explored the concept of rational emotions in her later work, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (2001), *Hiding from Humanity* (2004), *Frontiers of Justice* (2004), and *From Disgust to Humanity: Sexual Orientation and Constitutional Law* (2010). She points out that emotions weren't excluded from philosophy because they did not yield *knowledge;* in other words, it is not because of any lack of *cognitive value* that philosophers have refused to investigate emotions. There is actually much cognitive value in emotions, for emotions are, on the whole, quite *reasonable* when we look at them in context. When do we feel anger? When we believe that someone has deliberately injured us or someone we care about—in other words, when we feel the situation warrants it. Feelings such as disappointment, elation, grief, and even love are all responses to certain situations. They develop according to some inner logic; they don't strike at random. How do we know? Because if we realize that we were wrong about the situation, our anger slowly disappears. Imagine this situation (which is an example of my own concoction, not Nussbaum's!): You own a pair of expensive "AirPods" (ear buds). You go to the school library to do some research, and for some reason leave your bag unattended for a few minutes, with somebody sitting at the computer station next to you. The AirPods case is in your bag. You come back, take your bag, and leave. Later you look for your AirPods, and the case isn't where it is supposed to be. Oh no! You think back to the moment where you left your bag unattended. Somebody must have stolen it! And you hightail it back to the library where the same person is still sitting there, doing research, so in anger you accuse him or her of having stolen your AirPods. He or she denies any knowledge of your device, and a confrontation ensues. Your bag is shuffled around, and all of a sudden out pops the case from another pocket. It was never stolen—you just didn't look carefully enough. So now, if you are a rational being, what becomes of your anger? It would have been righteous if your AirPods had indeed been stolen, but now you have egg on your face. So do you apologize? Or do you leave, sneering and convinced that person surely must have had something to do with it after all? If your anger fades away and turns into embarrassment, then you have an example of a rational emotion with moral relevance. If you still feel somewhat angry, then the feeling is irrational—unless you're

angry at yourself. The film *Smoke Signals,* discussed at the end of the chapter, is an example of exactly this type of emotion when a main character's strong feelings of anger and envy are transformed through a confrontation with reality. And most feelings have such an element of rationality—if they are responses to real situations, they are usually somewhat logical—except love, says Nussbaum. Perhaps love is not that easy to analyze—people in love don't seem to respond logically to situations that ought to change their feelings of love. (The person you love is seeing someone else, and what do you do? Continue to be helplessly in love.) But even love responds to such challenges in a way; we probably realize that our feelings are, somehow, out of place.

Why, then, have so many philosophers refused to deal seriously with emotions? Not because emotions lack cognitive value, but because they show how we react to situations outside our control. When we are emotional, we are not *self-sufficient,* and most philosophers have, according to Nussbaum, preferred to investigate a more autonomous part of the human character, our reason. (Of course, some philosophers and psychoanalysts have pointed out that reason is not immune to outside influence, either, but Nussbaum is addressing the trends in traditional philosophy before the twentieth century, when the idea of reason being affected by the Unconscious was not yet commonly accepted.) So Nussbaum makes two major points that are important for our discussion about using stories to illustrate moral problems:

(*1*) *Emotions can be morally relevant in moral discussions if they are reasonable*, i.e., they reflect the reality of the situation.

(*2*) *One of the best ways to investigate such moral emotions is to read fiction*.

Roberto Serra – Iguana Press/Getty Images

Martha Nussbaum (b. 1947), American philosopher. The author of *Love's Knowledge, Upheavals of Thought, Hiding from Humanity, Frontiers of Justice,* and *From Disgust to Humanity: Sexual Orientation and Constitutional Law,* she suggests that novels are supremely well suited to explore moral problems. Through novels we have the chance to live more than our own lives and to understand human problems from someone else's point of view. Since others can read the same novels, we can share such knowledge and reach a mutual understanding.

For Nussbaum, emotions provide access to values, to human relationships, and to understanding ourselves, so they must be investigated. And where do they manifest themselves most clearly? In narratives. Stories are actually emotions put into a structure. When we are children and adolescents, we learn how to manipulate objects and relate to others; we learn cognitive skills and practical skills, and among the skills we learn are when to feel certain kinds of emotions. The prime teacher of emotions is the story. That means, of course, that different societies may tell different stories teaching different lessons, so we must retain a certain amount of social awareness and social criticism when reading stories from any culture, including our own. People in their formative years are not just empty vessels into which stories are poured. Nussbaum maintains there is no rule saying that people must accept everything their culture teaches them, so those who don't approve of the stories being told or who think the stories haven't been told right will begin to tell their own stories. Important as emotions are, alongside our reason, in shaping our moral values, Nussbaum has of late found it necessary to specify that two particular emotions should not be considered conducive to moral understanding: *disgust* and *shame*. Here Nussbaum enters the political arena

by claiming that some emotions are more morally and politically appropriate than others. When we say we are disgusted with something or someone, we set ourselves on a pedestal as being better and purer, says Nussbaum, and that to her is an unrealistic assessment that does nothing more than create an us-versus-them environment.

To understand emotions we must read stories, but that ought to come easily to us, Nussbaum believes, since we already enjoy doing just that. She does stress, however, that we have to read the entire story, not just rely on a synopsis. There is an integral relationship between the form and the content of a story. As she says in her book *Love's Knowledge,* we can't skip "the emotive appeal, the absorbing plottedness, the variety and indeterminacy of good fiction" without losing the heart of the experience. So in a sense Nussbaum does not specifically advocate *using stories to illustrate moral problems,* as we will be doing in this book. Instead, she supports reading stories as a way of *sharing basic experiences of values* and using philosophy as a tool for analyzing that experience. For her, the story comes first, and then the analysis can follow. In the Primary Readings section, you'll find an excerpt from *Love's Knowledge*.

Why use stories, though? Why can't we approach moral issues by more traditional avenues, such as examples that are "made to order" by philosophers? Because, says Nussbaum, they lack precisely the rich texture that makes the story an experience we can relate to. Besides, such examples are formulated in such a way that the conclusion is obvious. Novels tend to be quite open-ended, a feature that Nussbaum believes is valuable. Novels preserve "mystery and indeterminacy," just like real life. Let's take a quick look at her theory, because, as luck (and planning) will have it, you're already well acquainted with a "philosophical example" of the kind Nussbaum had in mind, a couple of pages back: the trolley problem. So let us apply her criticism to that famous example. The original version by Philippa Foot is indeed terse. There is no "particularity, emotive appeal, absorbing plottedness, variety or indeterminacy" of a good story, quoting from Nussbaum's own text in the Primary Readings section. There is just the basic question of saving five people and killing one, or saving the one and letting five people die. They might as well be faceless stick figures—they have no story. It takes the subsequent versions of the trolley problem to add the human element; in other words, story lines are added, and the moral dilemma comes to life. What if the person on the track is your daughter? Your beloved? May they not seem more important than 5 strangers? But what if the five strangers are top scientists, on the verge of a universal cancer cure? Stories add a moral dimension, so in that respect Nussbaum is right: stories create an emotional appeal that may well be relevant in a moral decision process.

However, here we must not forget that Philippa Foot didn't intend the trolley problem to present a solution to any moral conundrum; she wanted to point out the *bones* of a moral problem and how a seemingly easy solution may not be so simple after all. Sometimes a straightforward little philosophical example is indeed all that we need—not an entire novel, short story, or movie.

Why not just rely on your own experiences to learn about life? Some of them must certainly contain both mystery and indeterminacy. To some extent we do that already; we draw on our own experience as much as we possibly can when judging concrete and abstract cases. But the trouble is, one human life is just not enough for understanding the myriad ways of being. As Nussbaum says,

> We have never lived enough. Our experience is, without fiction, too confined and too parochial. Literature extends it, making us reflect and feel about what might otherwise be too distant for feeling. . . . All living is interpreting; all action requires seeing the world *as* something. So in this sense no life is "raw" and . . . throughout our living we are, in a sense, makers of fictions. The point is that in the activity of literary imagining we are led to imagine and describe with greater precision, focusing our attention on each word, feeling each event more keenly—whereas much of actual life goes by without that heightened awareness, and is thus, in a certain sense, not fully or thoroughly lived.

Furthermore, it is much harder to talk about events in your own life than it is to discuss events in a story. We may not want to share our deepest feelings, or we may not be able to express them. But if we talk with friends about a passage in a favorite book or film, we can share both an emotional and a moral experience. One final

word about Nussbaum's theory: It is important that we remember that she has no wish to replace the traditional rational approach to moral issues with an emotional approach—to her, emotions can be relevant in moral decision making, but that doesn't make reason irrelevant. But we have a fuller understanding of being human, and making moral decisions, if we allow our focus to include relevant emotions as well as reason.

Today? An Assessment

One might ask how Nussbaum's two suggestions have played out since she launched them in 1990. Are philosophers using more stories to illustrate moral issues? Most definitely. Whether inspired by her, or arriving at their own conclusions, a great many philosophers today find that stories—novels, short—stories, movies, TV shows, and even graphic novels and narrative video games—can be a great asset to a discussion about moral values, particularly in the classroom and online, and that topic is what we are going to explore in Chapter 2. But what about her other suggestion, that emotions can be morally relevant if they are reasonable? When she suggested as much in *Love's Knowledge*, the tendency in moral philosophy was, as it had been for a very long time, to regard *reason*, not emotion, as the golden road to making moral decisions, but over the last few decades a different trend has emerged—not just in moral philosophy, but in the public debate in general: that it is how you *feel* that matters. Reality has, in many cases, become a matter of emotional interpretation (we return that that phenomenon at the end of Chapter 7). That goes far beyond what Nussbaum suggests in her book from 1990, because her focus on emotions specifies that they have to be reasonable and rational—they have to have their origin in some factual situation, not just reacting to a perception. So one might say that the trend has gone in favor of emotions in moral decision making in a far more radical way that Nussbaum had in mind.

At the end of the chapter you'll find a narrative that illustrates Nussbaum's theory of storytelling as a key to understanding ourselves and one another and of emotion as having a rational component: *Smoke Signals* shows the character development of an angry young man who learns that the cause of his anger against his father was mainly in his own head.

Furthermore, the narrative *The Eichmann Show* serves two purposes: to illustrate Arendt's concept of the *banality of evil*, and also to illustrate Nussbaum's point that sometimes we understand a moral problem better by experiencing a story with "particularity and emotion," rather that reading about it as an event in a history book.

In this book we will follow Martha Nussbaum's suggestion and, at the end of each chapter, look at a variety of stories, each with their own moral problem and possible solution. The chapter text itself will have philosophical examples and real-life events, too, for good measure.

Study Questions

1. Would you consider it a reasonable excuse for wrongdoing (such as drunk, reckless driving) that the perpetrator was never taught moral values as a child due to the sense of privilege and affluence of his or her family? Why or why not? (Incidentally, a similar argument was first used in the infamous Leopold and Loeb case in 1924 by famous lawyer Clarence Darrow.)
2. In your opinion, should children learn values in elementary school? Explain why or why not, and craft an argument for and against the idea as it might be presented by a teacher and a parent.
3. Give three examples of statements about moral issues, illustrating three logical fallacies.

4. In your view, does evil exist? If yes, is it a force outside, or inside of humans? Is there a difference between *being* evil and *doing* evil? Explain.
5. Comment on Nussbaum's statement that "We have never lived enough. Our experience is, without fiction, too confined and too parochial. Literature expands it, making us reflect and feel about what might otherwise be too distant for feeling." What does she mean? Do you agree? Why or why not?
6. Would you agree with Nussbaum that the well-written story does a better job of enlightening us about moral issues than the philosophical example or the real-life event? Explain.

Primary Reading and Narratives

The Primary Reading is from *Love's Knowledge* by Martha Nussbaum, explaining why fictional stories are better at teaching moral lessons than real-life stories and little made-to-order philosophical examples are. The first Narrative is a summary and short excerpt from Shirley Jackson's short story "The Lottery," an American classic about the banality of evil in a fictional society with traditions. The second Narrative is a summary of the film *Smoke Signals* linking up with the Nussbaum excerpt. Two young American Indian males embark on a journey on which one, Thomas, grows as a storyteller, and the other, Victor, loses his anger toward his father and his jealousy of Thomas. The final Narrative is the television film *The Eichmann Show*, depicting the Eichmann 1961 trial seen from the point of view of the television crew shooting the a documentary of the trial and broadcasting it to the world.

Primary Reading

Love's Knowledge

MARTHA NUSSBAUM

Excerpt, 1990.

In this excerpt, Nussbaum argues that novels, short stories, and dramas are very well suited to providing an emotional lesson in moral issues because of the brevity of human life: We just can't experience everything ourselves, so fiction provides a shortcut to understanding the range of human emotions. She also explains why such philosophical examples as those you will encounter in this book (such as Kant's example of the killer at the door looking for your friend, see Chapter 6) aren't good enough to teach the same lesson. You may be interested to know that in Nussbaum's later books she also considers films a valid medium for discussing moral issues.

> Not only novels prove appropriate, because (again, with reference only to these particular issues and this conception) many serious dramas will be pertinent as well, and some biographies and histories—so long as these are written in a style that gives sufficient attention to particularity and emotion, and so long as they involve their readers in relevant activities of searching and feeling, especially feeling concerning their own possibilities as well as those of the characters. . . .
>
> But the philosopher is likely to be less troubled by these questions of literary genre than by a prior question: namely, why a literary work at all? Why can't we investigate everything we want to investigate by using complex examples of the sort that moral philosophers are very good at inventing? In reply, we

must insist that the philosopher who asks this question cannot have been convinced by the argument so far about the intimate connection between literary form and ethical content. Schematic philosophers' examples almost always lack the particularity, the emotive appeal, the absorbing plottedness, the variety and indeterminacy, of good fiction; they lack, too, good fiction's way of making the reader a participant and a friend; and we have argued that it is precisely in virtue of these structural characteristics that fiction can play the role it does in our reflective lives. As [novelist Henry] James says, "The picture of the exposed and entangled state is what is required." If the examples do have these features, they will, themselves, be works of literature. Sometimes a very brief fiction will prove a sufficient vehicle for the investigation of what we are at that moment investigating; sometimes, as in "Flawed Crystals" (where our question concerns what is likely to happen in the course of a relatively long and complex life), we need the length and complexity of a novel. In neither case, however, would schematic examples prove sufficient as a substitute. (This does not mean that they will be totally dismissed; for they have other sorts of usefulness, especially in connection with other ethical views.)

We can add that examples, setting things up schematically, signal to the readers what they should notice and find relevant. They hand them the ethically salient description. This means that much of the ethical work is already done, the result "cooked." The novels are more open-ended, showing the reader what it is to search for the appropriate description and why that search matters. (And yet they are not so open-ended as to give no shape to the reader's thought.) By showing the mystery and indeterminacy of "our actual adventure," they characterize life more richly and truly—indeed, more precisely—than an example lacking those features ever could; and they engender in the reader a type of ethical work more appropriate for life.

But why not life itself? Why can't we investigate whatever we want to investigate by living and reflecting on our lives? Why, if it is the Aristotelian ethical conception we wish to scrutinize, can't we do that without literary texts, without texts at all—or, rather, with the texts of our own lives set before us? Here, we must first say that of course we do this as well, both apart from our reading of the novels and (as [French novelist Marcel] Proust insists) in the process of reading. In a sense Proust is right to see the literary text as an "optical instrument" through which the reader becomes a reader of his or her own heart. But, why do we need, in that case, such optical instruments?

One obvious answer was suggested already by Aristotle: we have never lived enough. Our experience is, without fiction, too confined and too parochial. Literature extends it, making us reflect and feel about what might otherwise be too distant for feeling. The importance of this for both morals and politics cannot be underestimated. *The Princess Casamassima* [1886, a novel by Henry James]—justly, in my view—depicts the imagination of the novel-reader as a type that is very valuable in the political (as well as the private) life, sympathetic to a wide range of concerns, averse to certain denials of humanity. It cultivates these sympathies in its readers.

We can clarify and extend this point by emphasizing that novels do not function, inside this account, as pieces of "raw" life: they are a close and careful interpretative description. All living is interpreting; all action requires seeing the world *as* something. So in this sense no life is "raw," and (as James and Proust insist) throughout our living we are, in a sense, makers of fictions. The point is that in the activity of literary imagining we are led to imagine and describe with greater precision, focusing our attention on each word, feeling each event more keenly—whereas much of actual life goes by without that heightened awareness, and is thus, in a certain sense, not fully or thoroughly lived. Neither James nor Proust thinks of ordinary life as normative, and the Aristotelian conception concurs: too much of it is obtuse, routinized, incompletely sentient. So literature is an extension of life not only horizontally, bringing the reader into contact with events or locations or persons or problems he or she has not otherwise met, but also, so to speak, vertically, giving the reader experience that is deeper, sharper, and more precise than much of what takes place in life.

Study Questions

1. Is Nussbaum right that philosophical examples don't work as well as fictional stories when it comes to conveying a moral point? Why or why not?
2. What does she mean by "no life is 'raw'"? Is she right in saying the "We have never lived enough"?
3. Nussbaum's theory of moral discussion through fiction also includes films; can you think of a film, not mentioned in this chapter, which would teach a lesson that is both a "horizontal and a vertical extension of life"?

Narrative

The Lottery

SHIRLEY JACKSON

Short story, 1948. Excerpt and Summary. **Short film, 1969. Larry Yust (Director and Screenwriter)**

The first narrative in this book is an American classic that shocked its readers when it was published in *The New Yorker,* June 26, 1948. "The Lottery" is a short story with a moral message, and readers have often compared it to Hannah Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* even though it predates Arendt's book by fifteen years, because it, too, deals with what we now have become accustomed to calling the **banality of evil.**

It is a nice sunny morning, June 27, in a world that sounds like small-town America of the mid-twentieth century. (Astute readers would notice that the fateful date in the story would be the day after the publication of the short story.) Everybody in the little village is gathering in the square between the post office and the bank for the annual tradition of the lottery, a tradition that reaches far, far back in time, not just in the village, but in the entire extended community where the story takes place. The beginnings are lost in time, but the village elders still hold on to a very old box, replacing even older boxes, where the wooden lottery pieces used to be kept, but nowadays they have been replaced by folded-up pieces of paper, one for each member of the community, young and old. Everybody is anxious to get the lottery over with because they have plans for the day and want to get home early. In anticipation, some are filling their pockets with stones. There used to be rituals of some kind associated with the lottery, but now everybody is just sworn in, and one of the businessmen in town, Mr. Summers, a man without a family, is ready to conduct the lottery. One of the last people to arrive is Mrs. Hutchinson who didn't want to leave her home and join her family at the lottery before she'd finished the dishes.

The lottery begins; everybody draws for themselves if they are adults; a family member draws for those who are home sick or are too young to draw. People talk among themselves in the crowd, about a neighboring village where they've given up on the lottery, and one of the older men, Mr. Warner, who has taken part in seventy-six lotteries, dismisses the idea as socially dangerous.

Where would they be without the lottery? Headed for total chaos. Nobody would want to work anymore, he says, and everybody would be living in caves. Eventually all lots are drawn, and now comes the time to open up the pieces of paper to see who has "got it." It turns out to be Bill Hutchinson. His wife Tessie, who arrived late, protests and says he didn't get enough time to draw a lot, but her husband tells her bluntly to shut up. Everybody took the same chance. Now the drawing has to be narrowed down between Bill and Tessie and their three underage children. Each of the little kids gets to pick his or her own paper, and Tessie and Bill reach in and pick their own. The kids open their papers and are overjoyed to discover they're blank. And Bill's is blank as well, which means that Tessie got the one with the black spot on it. Bill holds it up for everyone to see. Mr. Summers tells the crowd to finish quickly, and without delay, everybody moves over to the pile of stones gathered for the lottery purpose.

> The children had stones already. And someone gave little Davy Hutchinson a few pebbles.
>
> Tessie Hutchinson was in the center of a cleared space by now, and she held her hands out desperately as the villagers moved in on her. "It isn't fair," she said. A stone hit her on the side of the head. Old Man Warner was saying, "Come on, come on, everyone." Steve Adams was in the front of the crowd of villagers, with Mrs. Graves beside him.
>
> "It isn't fair, it isn't right," Mrs. Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her.

Study Questions

1. Is Tessie Hutchinson right that the lottery was not *fair*? Was it not conducted according to the rules? If so, why is she saying it wasn't fair? Is her statement essentially a lament that life isn't fair, or does it have another meaning? And what does she mean by saying it isn't *right*?
2. What is the significance that "little Davy Hutchinson" is forced to participate in stoning his own mother to death?
3. What would you say is the moral message of this story, if any? Might there be several messages?
4. How can this story be said to illustrate the "banality of evil"? Compare "The Lottery" to Hannah Arendt's analysis of Nazi atrocities, Stanley Milgram's obedience experiments, and Philip Zimbardo's Stanford Prison experiment.
5. Since 1948, American fiction has seen a number of stories with a similar scenario of rituals involving the suffering of innocents, from Ursula Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" (see Chapter 6) to the movies *The Island* (see Chapter 7), *The Purge,* and *The Hunger Games*. If you are familiar with these (or other) stories with the same motif of ritual sacrifice for the community, comment on the similarities and differences between them and "The Lottery."

Narrative

Smoke Signals

SHERMAN ALEXIE (SCREENWRITER)

CHRIS EYRE (DIRECTOR)

Film, 1998. Based on the short-story collection by Sherman Alexie, **The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven.** ***Summary*****.**

Thomas and Victor are young Coeur d'Alene Indians living on the reservation in Idaho in the late 1990s. They grew up together and share the story of one fateful night when they were babies. On that night Thomas's parents' house burned down, with Thomas, his parents, and Victor inside. Someone saved Victor, and Thomas's parents threw their baby to safety out the second-story window while they themselves burned to death. Thomas was caught in midair by Victor's father, Arnold. Since then, Thomas has lived with his grandmother.

The selection of this movie is intended to illustrate Martha Nussbaum's theory of rational emotions. One might say (and this is your author's interpretation) that Victor has three major issues. One is his deep-seated anger toward his father, a violent drunk who left the family, presumably never to return. Another is an equally deep-seated jealousy toward Thomas, because Arnold saved him from the fire, and not his own son. And last is a fear-mixed resentment of the white culture surrounding the reservation, based on hundreds of years of history plus Arnold's casual jabs against "white people who should go back where they belong." These issues are at least partially emotion based, and in the course of the film we watch as they are each challenged and modified by reality checks.

Not much happens on the reservation; everyone knows everyone else, and the height of excitement seems to be playing basketball at the gym. One of the young Indians remarks, "Sometimes it is a good day to die—other times it is a good day to play basketball." Sometimes they watch Westerns on TV and discuss whether the cowboys always win or whether the Indians sometimes win. Thomas remarks, with a grin, that there is nothing more pathetic than Indians on TV—except Indians watching Indians on TV!

Thomas is a seer and a storyteller; everything he has experienced in his short life turns into stories—and his stories contain a considerable amount of pure fantasy too. That irritates Victor, who wants him just to tell the truth. Much about Thomas irritates Victor: Thomas braids his long hair very tightly; Victor wears his long hair free-flowing. Thomas always wears a dark three-piece suit, whereas Victor wears blue jeans and T-shirts. And Victor cultivates a warrior's inscrutable face, whereas Thomas has a ready smile for everyone. What irritates Victor most is Thomas's stories about Victor's father, Arnold. Victor knows him as a man who got drunk and beat him and his mother. Thomas sees Arnold as his hero, a magic man—the man who not only saved his life but also took him to a breakfast at Denny's in Spokane once. They met on the footbridge across the Spokane Falls, and somehow Thomas has associated Arnold with that spot ever since; it has become a power

place to him. And Arnold was a storyteller, like Thomas—with a love for a *good* story rather than a *true* story. But Arnold is no longer around for Thomas to tell new stories about—he left his family in anger when Victor was a child.

Their quiet life is interrupted by a phone call from Phoenix: A woman named Suzy calls Victor's mother with the news that Arnold is dead. He lived in a trailer close to her, and his things are still there, including his truck. Someone needs to get him and his belongings. Victor is reluctant to go because he harbors immense resentment toward his father for leaving him, but Thomas puts up the money for the ticket from his piggy bank under one condition: that he gets to go to Phoenix too.

On the bus, Thomas and Victor have a variety of encounters with the world of the whites, not all of them pleasant. For instance, a pair of rednecks take their seats and force them to move. But Victor is not very pleasant either. He calls a young girl a liar for embellishing her one life story: her near chance of going to the Olympics. And he gets on Thomas's case for not knowing how to be an Indian: He must have watched *Dances with Wolves* two hundred times, says Victor, and he still doesn't know how to act like he's come home from the buffalo hunt. Thomas protests that their people weren't buffalo hunters but fishermen. Victor replies that there is nothing glorious about coming home from fishing—the movie wasn't called "Dances with Salmon"!—and we get a sense that perhaps it is Victor, not Thomas, who feels uncomfortable about his role and his culture.

Photo 12/Alamy Stock Photo

In *Smoke Signals* (1998) Victor (Adam Beach, left) and Thomas (Evan Adams) from the Coeur d'Alene Indian reservation in Idaho are on their way to pick up the ashes of Victor's father Arnold in Arizona. Thomas irritates Victor because he wears his hair in tight braids, wears a three-piece suit—and was rescued as a baby by Arnold, whereas Victor believes his own father didn't care about him.

After days of traveling nonstop, they finally arrive in Phoenix and walk to the desert hideout of Arnold and Suzy. She turns out to be a hospital administrator and much younger than Arnold, but for years she has had a close relationship with him—"We kept each other's secrets," she says. The three of them share her frybread, traditional American Indian fare, and Thomas tells a wonderful story of how Victor's mother fed a hundred Indians with only fifty frybreads—which turns out to

be not quite true, although it is a good story. Suzy has heard about Victor and Thomas and all the basketball games Arnold played with Victor. And she has heard the true story about the night of the fire. After Thomas has fallen asleep, Suzy tells Victor the story that he has never heard, about the night of the fire: What had haunted Arnold for all those years was that he set the fire by accident in a drunken stupor. He left his family because he couldn't stand his own memories, but he never intended to stay away forever. But now that Victor hears the truth, he also hears something he dares not believe: that Arnold ran back into the burning house to save him. For years, Victor has resented Thomas for being the one saved by Arnold. And now he has to revise all his resentments. Coming face-to-face with the loss of his father, Victor grieves in the traditional Indian way: He cuts his long hair.

The next morning, Victor and Thomas leave in Arnold's truck, taking with them only Arnold's ashes and his basketball. Victor is in a panicked, angry rush to get home, but there is yet another trial ahead for him. Late that night, on a dark desert road, he and Thomas crash the truck, barely avoiding ramming into two cars that had collided moments before the boys' arrival. The driver of the car that caused the accident, a white man, is drunk and obnoxious, and his wife is desperately apologetic. But down in the ravine is a car with two injured women, and the nearest town is twenty miles away. Victor's truck is disabled, but he doesn't hesitate for a moment: He must run for help. And he starts out running into the night, with the long stride of his ancestor warriors. He runs until his side hurts and his vision blurs, and by dawn he collapses. But he is close enough to a town to be seen by a road repair crew, and he gets the message about the injured motorists through.

As Victor and the women—who might have died if it hadn't been for his heroic run—are recovering in the hospital, Thomas is standing by, and we can tell that he has the material for many future stories. One woman says they are heroes, coming to the rescue just like the Lone Ranger and Tonto—and the boys answer that they're more like Tonto and Tonto. One snag develops, though: The man who caused the accident has filed false charges against the boys for assault and causing the accident, and Victor and Thomas are taken to the police station. All the old fear and resentment of the white power structure descend on the boys, who feel they won't be believed—but not everyone outside the reservation is like the drunken white driver. His wife, for one, has issued a statement against her husband, and the two women who were in the other car side with the boys, too. And the police chief, a white man, has good sense and sends the boys on their way.

Six days after leaving Idaho, Victor and Thomas are back with Arnold's ashes. The one who has undergone the most profound change is Victor; he now understands that his dad never planned to leave and that he just hadn't gotten around to going home yet. Now he understands the ghosts his father lived with year after year. So he barely picks on Thomas anymore and even offers him the deepest gesture he can think of: *He shares his father's ashes with him*. So (again, your author's interpretation) one might conclude that Victor's three issues have been resolved in the light of reason. His anger toward his father turned out to be somewhat unfounded (although Arnold would of course still be remembered as a father who was a violent, heavy drinker), and his emotions changed accordingly. His jealousy of Thomas was completely unfounded, and the jealousy becomes a sense of brotherhood instead. And the resentment toward "white people"? On their journey some white people were unpleasant, and some were understanding and helpful. It doesn't take away centuries of justified resentment, but it helps modify Victor's feelings toward the world outside the "rez." At last, Victor gets to scatter Arnold's ashes where both he and Thomas feel Arnold's spirit belongs: over the Spokane Falls. Meanwhile, in a voice-over, Thomas leaves us with thoughts about forgiving our fathers: "How do we forgive our fathers? Maybe in a dream? . . . Do we forgive our fathers for leaving us too often when we were little, or scaring us with unexpected rage or making us nervous

because there never seems to be any rage at all? . . . Shall we forgive them for their excesses of warmth, or coldness, shall we forgive them for pushing, or leaning, for shutting doors, for speaking through walls, or being silent? . . . If we forgive our fathers, what is left?"

Study Questions

1. What do you think made Victor come to terms with his father's disappearance and death? How has Victor changed? Why didn't Thomas change as much?
2. Thomas can make any mundane situation into an interesting, magical time by telling stories about it—but the stories are not always true. Is this morally acceptable? Why or why not?
3. Apply Martha Nussbaum's theory of the rationality of emotions to Victor's situation: Was Victor's anger at his father rational? Why or why not? How can we tell? (Clue: What happened to Victor's anger when he learned the truth about his father?) Why did his jealousy toward Thomas disappear? And what happened to his resentment of "white people"?
4. Why do Western movies play such a big role in Thomas's and Victor's lives? Do you think it is a positive or a negative role?
5. What is funny about the boys' remark that they are more like Tonto and Tonto?

Narrative

The Eichmann Show

SIMON BLOCK (TELEPLAY)

PAUL ANDREW WILLIAMS (DIRECTOR)

BBC Television film, 2015. Summary

Based on the Fruchtman-Hurwitz documentary series, *Eichmann on Trial*, 1961.

The Eichmann Show, a British television docudrama, qualifies as a story suited to raise a moral issue according to Martha Nussbaum's criterion for a biography and/or a history because it contains "particularity and emotive appeal." In addition, it features an analysis of evil that matches what you have read earlier in this chapter, inspired by the very same event witnessed by Hannah Arendt, after which she gave the world the concept "banality of evil." The film blends authentic footage from the 1961 documentary with filmed sequences telling the story of the television production, and we see the Eichmann trial through the lenses of the cameras in addition to following the discussion between the producer and the director about what was most important, the documenting of Nazi atrocities for the world to see and remember, or an analysis of Eichmann himself and his inner motivations and emotions.

It is 1961, and Adolf Eichmann, the brain behind the Holocaust, has just been captured in Argentina and transported to Israel where he is about to stand trial. American TV producer Milton Fruchtman hopes to be given permission to televise the trial live to the world, and contacts Hollywood documentary director Leo Hurwitz, who has been blacklisted by the 1950s hunt for communists and communist sympathizers, the phenomenon we today know as McCarthyism. Hurwitz is happy to be offered the job, and they meet in Jerusalem. The trial judges aren't yet on board with the project, but once they see that camera can be totally hidden from view, they give their permission. Leo Hurwitz meets his Israeli camera crew and gives them an introductory speech about what they are about to witness: the trial of a man who has done monstrous things.

> Hurwitz: "I don't believe in monsters, but I believe that men are responsible for monstrous things. What transformed this ordinary man [Eichmann] into someone who was capable of sending hundreds of thousands of children to their deaths, and then going home every evening and kissing his own children goodnight? A human being like any of us?"
>
> Yaakov Jonilowicz, one of the camera crew, speaks up: "He is not like us. I am not Eichmann."
>
> Hurwitz: "Under the circumstances anyone is capable of fascist behavior."
>
> Yaakov: "Not I."

Later on in the film, we find out Yaakov's background, and his reason for being so adamant.

The trial begins, with Eichmann in a glass enclosure. Fruchtman is committed to reaching a worldwide audience, but people's TVs are tuned to the developing crisis in Cuba known as the "Bay of Pigs," and the first man in space, the Russian cosmonaut Juri Gagarin. Fruchtman predicts that once the witness testimonies start, the audiences will return. And he is right.

Eyewitness after eyewitness is presented in court (here we see the actual footage from the trial): One man, a Jew who was a death camp prisoner but ordered to be a gravedigger, tells how he witnessed truckloads of Jews arriving at the death camp and being gassed inside the trucks. The trucks were then driven to a mass grave site where the bodies were dumped. Among the bodies he had to bury were his own wife and their two children. Another witness, a Jewish woman, tells how she escaped a mass shooting. Everybody was forced to strip naked and herded to a pit, and there they were gunned down, including babies. She was not mortally wounded, and managed to crawl out from under the mounds of bodies. Yet another witness recounts how four trucks arrived from Paris with Jews—1,000 children and 200 adults in each truck, all dead. One witness is overcome with emotion at his own testimony, and collapses in court. Another witness tells of how he was forced to work in Auschwitz as 14-year-old, and being so cold that he hid out inside the warm crematorium with bodies still in the ovens. Furthermore, he was forced to spread the ashes of the dead on the paths so the Nazis wouldn't slide. We learn that overall, 112 survivors and eyewitnesses bear testimony against Eichmann. Eichmann is listening to it all, and we watch his face (the real footage from 1961), and there is hardly any reaction. A smirk, a drawn corner of his mouth, but no emotional reaction that would indicate that he feels anything at all.

Under the testimonies Yaakov is beginning to feel ill, and several of the younger men in the camera crew have to leave the room, overwhelmed with disgust and emotional turmoil. It becomes clear to Fruchtman and Hurwitz that Yaakov has been in a death camp himself, and is suffering from what we today call PTSD, posttraumatic stress disorder—and this is why his denial of having any fascist tendencies was so heartfelt. He says that he wants to continue with the production because this is the first time after the war that survivors feel they can speak out and be believed. The same thought is expressed by Hurwitz's landlady in Jerusalem, hotel and restaurant owner Mrs. Landau,

who also survived a concentration camp. She tells Hurwitz that the survivors haven't talked about their traumatic experiences because nobody was willing to believe them, but now that the trial is being transmitted, people are willing to listen—because of him. And she gives him a piece of chocolate cake, on the house.

While the trial is being filmed and transmitted, an argument erupts between Fruchtman and Hurwitz, because Hurwitz was focusing the camera on Eichmann's unemotional face, and missed the collapse of the witness. Fruchtman accuses Hurwitz of conducting "a personal investigation of the nature of evil" instead of doing what he is paid to do, filming the whole trial. Hurwitz insist that they can do both, but Fruchtman says that the two visions get in the way of each other. Hurwitz is waiting for a sign in Eichmann's face that he is cracking up—that somehow, the horror of the stories will affect him emotionally so much that he will have a breakdown. And it will be the face of a person confronting his own evil deeds. Fruchtman says Eichmann probably isn't going to crack, because he has been trained in watching atrocities, but it really doesn't matter if he cracks or not, because the story of Nazi atrocities will be exposed to the world regardless of Eichmann's reactions. The two completely different moral narratives—exposing the Nazi atrocities, and exposing one man's struggle with himself, are competing for attention in the TV production. Even on a day off, Hurwitz can't stop thinking and talking about Eichmann, and he explains to one of the young TV crew that it is important that people watch the TV coverage of Eichmann so they will see that we are all capable of it, and how we can resist the temptation to submit to authority pressure and prejudice.

The cross-examination of Eichmann begins, and Hurwitz watches for any emotional reaction. Eichmann, as well as the entire world through television, watches films shot at the liberation of the death camps, with emaciated prisoners, piles of bodies, all the atrocities documented for the world to see. We see how the camera crew (the actors) and the audience at the trial (in 1961) react in horror and revulsion. But Eichmann still isn't reacting.

Behind the scenes Hurwitz and Fruchtman have another talk, less confrontational than the previous scene. Hurwitz wants to leave, quit, and go home, even if his wife is there to provide moral support. He feels that he has failed because his camera hasn't picked up any change in Eichmann's demeanor. Fruchtman responds, "Because you couldn't find any humanity in Eichmann? Maybe because it isn't there?" It is the filming of the trial that is the important story, and it is unfolding successfully. The Nazi horrors are now documented and will never be forgotten or explained away.

And in the end Eichmann caves: He denies ever having given orders resulting in torture and deaths; he claims he has been following orders (from heads of security and others) and that he is not responsible. But in a certain case where Jewish prisoners were forced on a long march to their deaths, he concedes that it was he who *proposed* it. The judges now pronounce him guilty of the murders of millions of Jews, Poles, Gypsies, and other people targeted for extermination by the Nazis, and sentence him to death by hanging, claiming that even if he blindly followed orders, he should still have refused. (The following year, 1962, Eichmann was indeed executed by hanging.)

Milton Fruchtman's and Leo Hurwitz's television coverage was the first global documentary series, and it ends with these words, spoken by Fruchtman himself:

> "For each of us who has ever felt that God created us better than any other human being has stood on the threshold where Eichmann once stood. And each of us who allowed the shape of another person's nose, or the color of their skin, or the manner in which they worship their God to poison our feeling toward them, have known the loss of reason that led Eichmann to his madness. For this is how it all began, for those who did these things."

Study Questions

1. This story features two competing moral narratives, one where the evils of the Nazi reign need to be exposed to the world so we will never forget, and the other being the attempted insight into a person responsible for many of those evils, trying to gauge the depths of his heart and his conscience. Which story do you think it more important? Do they really "get in the way of each other"?
2. Hannah Arendt's concept "the banality of evil" is never mentioned in the film, but even so, one might say it provides the foundation for some of the statements from Hurwitz and the judges. Identify which ones.
3. Is Fruchtman right that each of us could be standing on the threshold of fascism if we think we are better than others? Is Yaakov, and victims like him, an exception (remember he says, "He is not like us. I am not Eichmann!")? Explain.
4. The defense "I was just following orders" has been considered unacceptable in Western courts ever since the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals in the late 1940s, because it is assumed that we ought to have enough character to refuse to follow orders that go against our common sense of humanity. Can you think of a case where someone might claim to just having been following orders, committing some atrocity, and the court might take it under consideration?
5. How might Martha Nussbaum evaluate the value of this story as a way to discuss moral issues?

Chapter Two
Learning Moral Lessons from Stories

We may think that the most powerful moral lessons are learned from events in our childhood (when we are caught doing something we aren't supposed to do, or when we *aren't* caught), but chances are the most powerful lessons we carry with us are lessons we learn from the *stories* we have read or that were read to us.

Didactic Stories

Many of you may recognize this typical, unpleasant event from childhood: Your authority figure takes you aside to tell you Aesop's fable "The Boy Who Cried Wolf." A lad was tending sheep at the outskirts of town, and he thought it might be fun to give the village a scare, so he cried, "The wolf is here! The wolf is here!" And the villagers came running, but there was no wolf. The boy tricked the town again and again, until that fateful day when the wolf really did come. The boy cried for his life, "The wolf is here!" but nobody believed him anymore. The wolf ate the sheep and the shepherd too. At least, that is the way the story was told to me when I was five years old.

Why are children told such a gruesome story? Because adults deem it necessary to teach children a moral lesson. Even a child understands the message: "The shepherd boy lied and suffered the consequences. You don't want to be like him, do you?" It is a powerful lesson. Indeed, the appeal of the story seems to go beyond European and American traditions: I have a colleague from India who tells me that when she was a little girl in Calcutta, she was told the story of the boy who cried tiger.

Stories that are told to teach a moral lesson are called *didactic* stories. These instructional stories may well be as old as humanity. When giving a keynote address about stories in ethics at a philosophical retreat in Denmark some years ago, I asked the audience, a mixed group of several hundred people ranging from their teens to their eighties, if they had been told the story of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" when they were kids; a forest of hands went up, young smooth hands alongside gnarled old hands, and all of a sudden it seemed to me that I was looking down the corridor of time, from these living generations backward to the other generations long gone, each one of them telling their children about the lying shepherd boy—in all likelihood a story so old that it predates Aesop's version.

The New Interest in Stories Across the Professions

The interest in using stories (narratives) to explore moral problems is increasing, for stories can serve as a laboratory in which moral solutions can be tried out before any decisions are made. Here are some examples of how stories are being used as moral laboratories today.

- In an op-ed piece in the *New York Times,* "Practicing Medicine Is Grimm Work," medical student Valerie Gribben tells how she deals with difficult situations as a prospective medical doctor by keeping in mind the lessons in human nature she believes she has learned from reading the fairytales collected by the Brothers Grimm:

> The Grimm fairy tales once seemed as if they took place in lands far, far away, but I see them now in my everyday hospital rotations. I've met the eternal cast of characters. I've taken down their histories (the abandoned prince, the barren couple) or seen their handiwork (the evil stepmother, the lecherous king).
>
> Fairy tales are, at their core, heightened portrayals of human nature, revealing, as the glare of injury and illness does, the underbelly of mankind. Both fairy tales and medical charts chronicle the bizarre, the unfair, the tragic. And the terrifying things that go bump in the night are what doctors treat at 3 A.M. in emergency rooms.
>
> So I now find comfort in fairy tales. They remind me that happy endings are possible. . . . They also remind me that what I'm seeing now has come before. Child endangerment is not an invention of the Facebook age. Elder neglect didn't arrive with Gen X. And discharge summaries are not always happy; "Cinderella" originally ended with a blinding, and Death, in his tattered shroud, waits at the end of many journeys.

She is not alone. For the past few decades medical students have been increasingly exposed to not only case studies involving medical ethics but also to stories of fiction, such as Leo Tolstoy's "The Death of Iván Ilyich" (1886) and the 1994 film *Philadelphia,* that deal with medical problems. The students seem to feel better equipped to deal with "real" problems because of this exploratory background. Why? Because no matter how many case histories she examines or how many colleagues she talks to, a medical student may not be able to understand a patient from the inside quite as well as when a great writer tells the story from the patient's point of view. The New York University School of Medicine's Literature, Arts, and Medicine Database is a website dedicated to listing films and works of literature that may be of help as a resource for medical personnel, such as *And the Band Played On, Awakenings, Gattaca, Lorenzo's Oil, The English Patient, The Doctor,* and even *Million Dollar Baby,* with its euthanasia theme. Books include Christy Brown's *My Left Foot,* Camus's *The Plague,* and Jane Austen's *Emma.* The AllhealthCare website lists 10 recommended movies with medical themes, including *Patch Adams* and *My Own Country*, and Scrubsmag.com has its own list, including both tearjerkers and comedies. The Literature and Medicine program in Maine has since 1997 gathered health care professionals around the concept that reading and discussing literature can improve their professional skills and help them understand their patients and clients. In addition, patients with psychological issues have occasionally been encouraged to use movies as a sort of self-treatment, but such advice should always be followed up with a discussion. There are no quick fixes to our psychological, social, and moral problems; good stories can help us begin to explore an issue—but they can't be a substitute for insight or discussion. That also means that the stories you encounter in this book are meant to illustrate typical moral problems and possible solutions, but they aren't meant to stand alone as problem solvers.

- Some psychologists are advocating a method called *bibliotherapy* to facilitate communication between parents and children. Through reading stories with their children, parents may find it easier to explain difficult issues, because together, through the fictional universe, they can explore issues and emotions that may be more difficult to approach on either an abstract or a highly personal level. For example, it's hard to explain death to children—either as a concept or as a real event in a family. Perhaps a story about the death of a pet could help focus the discussion. Of course, this may be just an easy way out for parents who don't have a clue how to relate to their children, but ideally the sharing of stories is a positive way to make the child understand about arrivals of new siblings, a move to a new home, deaths in the family, and other traumatic events. (It may sound like a brand new idea, but in the next section you will see that this is in effect how myths and fairy tales used to work in traditional societies.) An offshoot of bibliotherapy is the new field of *cinematherapy*, advocating not only viewing TV series and movies to de-stress, but even to binge-watch, in order to chase the stress components of one's life away from one's immediate attention. Critics have pointed out, however, that once the bingeing is over, the stress factors tend to reappear.
- The criminal justice system is experimenting with the use of stories. The *ABA Journal* has a dedicated website, "The 25 Greatest Legal Movies," updated regularly, topped by *To Kill a Mockingbird* and including *12 Angry Men, My Cousin Vinny, Anatomy of a Murder, Inherit the Wind, A Few Good Men*, and *Witness for the Prosecution*. The interest in the didactic value of such films to the legal community is no

longer something that just happens by accident after someone goes to the movies and sees a connection to real-life cases—it is now something that is an accepted and established form of learning. But this isn't just of abstract interest to scholars and lawyers: Increasingly, the courts in the Western world are experimenting with exposing convicted criminals to novels and films that may cause them to rethink their own lives and understand the severity of their crimes. Case in point: A poacher in Missouri who had been arrested for illegally killing hundreds of deer, cutting off their heads and leaving their bodies to rot, was sentenced by a judge to one year in prison, *and* to watch the Disney movie *Bambi* at least once a month.

- Psychotherapists are having patients tell about their own lives as if they were stories or asking them to select a famous fairy tale as a model or template of the way they see their own lives. The idea of telling one's own story as a form of therapy and moral education is something we will look at in detail in the final chapter.
- Stories have been found to have great potential for promoting cross-cultural or multicultural understanding. They can highlight cultural differences in a way that presents them as exciting and worth exploring, while emphasizing the fundamental human similarities underneath the surface differences.
- NASA and Tor/Forge Books have teamed up in an attempt to create exciting stories about space exploration. NASA's hope is that such novels, written with both scientific accuracy and imagination, can awaken an interest in space and science in general among young people, similar to the way science-fiction novels in the 1950s and 60s inspired an entire generation of space scientists and astronauts. We'll have to wait a couple of decades, though, to see if the idea has caught on, but evidence is in that the 2015 film *The Martian* and the 2018 film *Ad Astra* have reawakened the interest in space exploration, and NASA has followed up with the release of a series of "travel posters" depicting future space destinations such as Mars. JPOL strategic visualist Dan Goods says, "Imagination is so critical to creating a future you want to be part of. Many of the things we are doing today were imagined by artists and science fiction writers decades ago. These destinations are all actual places that we know about, and one day, perhaps humans can go to them in the future."
- Last on this list, but not least: An increasing number of *philosophers* are now looking to stories as a way not only to explain difficult theories to their freshman students but also to explore the philosophical richness of literature and films in itself. The venerable publishing house Blackwell has had enormous success with its expanding series of philosophy books featuring a work of fiction, such as *The Ultimate Star Trek and Philosophy, Game of Thrones and Philosophy, Lord of the Rings and Philosophy, Harry Potter and Philosophy,* all the way to *The Good Place and Philosophy*. Active on the social network Twitter, Blackwell has solicited public participation, asking for new movie/graphic novel/novel title recommendations to add to their series. Unthinkable a few decades ago, such a success doesn't happen in a vacuum: There is a genuine professional interest in reading philosophy into fiction, and interpreting fiction through philosophy these days, to the enthusiastic applause of some, and head-scratching of others.

Courtesy NASA/JPL-Caltech

NASA is actively hoping to recruit a new generation of space-interested young people by supporting realistic stories of space exploration such as *The Martian* and releasing posters such as this one, designed by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) Studio, imagining Mars as a habitable world. In addition, NASA is sending out a call to college students to consider applying for astronaut training, in particular for a future mission to Mars.